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**A PHILOSOPHICAL
INVESTIGATION OF
MARRIAGE**

**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
to the Department of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Arts
University of Glasgow**

July 1997

by

Dolina Sylvia Dowling

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Abstract

In this essay I will ask if getting married and remaining married are rational things for a reflective person to do. I will limit my discussion to marriage within the western tradition. Most people in this tradition marry at some point in their lives. When they do, they are usually thought to be doing something worthwhile. Yet all too many marriages end in disappointment and divorce. So is it rational for us to choose to bind ourselves to another person in perpetuity in this way?

To answer this question, I will begin by examining the sociobiological thesis which claims that human beings are gene-governed to pair bond. If this is correct, it might be thought that it explains the practice of marriage. However I will show that one implication of sociobiology is that, given this thesis, monogamous marriage goes against our natural inclinations; while pair bonding may be natural to us, exclusive pair bonding for life is not.

I will go on to discuss the fact that monogamous heterosexual marriage is part of the traditional mores in western, Christian societies. The main reasons given in the past to support this tradition are that marriage provides a safe framework in which a couple's sexual needs can be met; it is the best setting for the procreation and rearing of children; and it provides couples with residential and economic advantages which are not open to non-marrieds. I show that there are good arguments for thinking that these reasons do not apply with quite the same force today. So we are still faced with our question: is it rational for a couple to choose to marry?

There is, however, a more positive side to my account. For I will point out that even today when a couple choose to marry they believe that their marriage

will be a good one and thereby both of them will lead happy lives. I will then identify some of the conditions which are necessary for the concept of 'a good marriage' to apply to a relationship and which are presumably conditions which guide most people's decisions in this matter. I will argue, firstly, that to be in a good marriage the couple must have strong affectional bonds, they must regard each other as best friends and enjoy an appropriate level of intimacy with one another. Next, they must want to share important segments of their lives with one another; and, most importantly, they must wish to demonstrate their commitment to each other by publicly making legally binding vows. I will go on to show that generally we think that a very important (yet contingent) feature that is likely to be a by-product of a marriage, where all of these conditions are met, is a distinctive form of happiness.

However some writers believe that marriage does not bring happiness. I will investigate de Beauvoir's claim along these lines, to the effect that it is not merely irrational but that it is not morally right for a woman to marry. In a nutshell, the reasons she gives for claiming this are, firstly, that such a relationship necessarily entails the subordination of one spouse to the other - usually the woman to her husband. Secondly, a spouse (usually the woman) who remains at home to do the housework and childrearing foregoes transcendence, i.e. the growth of herself as a person. Thirdly, the sexual relationship between a husband and wife cannot be satisfactory since in marriage sex is a duty and thereby all sexual spontaneity must be lost.

It might be supposed that most present day marriages do not encounter the kinds of problems that de Beauvoir identifies; after all she was writing 50 years ago. However I show firstly that the substance of de Beauvoir's attack on marriage is philosophical. Given what we know about human nature, she argues, the institution of marriage will always contain these

irremediable flaws. I will also show that most recent attacks on marriage by other feminists are simply footnotes to de Beauvoir's seminal work. Alongside this, I will offer a range of empirical data to show that the conventions and practices she criticized then, remain in essence the same flaws that we find in marriage today.

In response to these condemnations of traditional marriage I will argue against de Beauvoir that it is possible to have a marital relationship in which neither spouse dominates the other. I will identify and discuss a democratic (egalitarian) form of relationship based upon a mutual respect the partners have for each other in a good marriage. I will then show that as de Beauvoir contends, any person whose life is exclusively confined to housework and childrearing will not find transcendence. However I will argue that in a good marriage there is no reason for a person to have his or her life so confined. Lastly, I will argue against de Beauvoir that there are no *a priori* reasons for sex in marriage to be bad or unsatisfactory.

From the discussion above it will be seen that the striking feature of this thesis is an account of 'a good marriage' which presumably reflective individuals have in mind when they choose to marry. In addition to the conditions already noted, this concept entails importantly that within the relationship both partners must enjoy a sense of their own autonomy; secondly that they define themselves through their creative projects; and thirdly they have satisfactory sexual experiences within the marriage. I will go on to point out that a further important necessary condition for a good marriage is that the outlook of a person upon marrying needs to be transformed. I will argue that if these conditions are met a couple are behaving rationally (and morally) by getting married or remaining married. However, a less welcome result is that given my account, many couples have bad marriages.

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A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION OF MARRIAGE

Introduction

The overwhelming majority of British people get married and a large part of their adult life is spent in the setting of marriage. Some marry once, others marry two or even three times. Clearly, whatever the duration or style of their marital relationship, they participate in a very popular and pervasive tradition. (I will confine my discussion to marriage within western Christian culture.¹)

Upon getting married, all couples formally assent to the legal marriage contract. By signing this contract, among other things they agree to engage in an exclusive sexual relationship with each other; they agree to support any children which may result from their union; and they agree to mutually support each other in a shared life together. Moreover there is a lot of empirical evidence to show that even nowadays by far the majority of married people expect to remain faithful to their spouse throughout their married life; they expect to perform the traditional duties of a father and mother in the nurture of their children; and they expect to follow the traditional division of labour within their marriage (although some devise their own distinctive kind of relationship).²

Most people probably do not give much thought to the rationality of what they are doing when they get married. There are many reasons for this. We are creatures of passion, for one thing. Many of our decisions in this context derive from emotion or sentiment rather from reason. For another, we are often less actors than reactors in this matter. We let ourselves be unduly influenced by others, or by the traditional expectations of the society in which we have been raised. In my thesis I will ask if getting married and remaining

married is a rational thing for a person to do. My general argument will be that it is only indisputably rational if one's marriage meets certain conditions; those conditions necessary for what I will call 'a good marriage'.

It might be doubted that a philosophical discussion could establish what is to count as 'a good marriage'. For one thing, my opponent might say, people will always differ from each other in their beliefs about what makes a marriage good or bad. Moreover this seems to be primarily an empirical matter whereas philosophical analysis is usually considered to be an *a priori* undertaking, the search for necessary and sufficient conditions which determine the correct application of a concept or meaning of a term; (although this is not its only task of course). So how can a philosophical investigation illuminate such an issue?

I hope to show that an account of many of the important necessary conditions of 'a good marriage' can be given. I will do this by bringing together two seemingly incompatible sets of conditions. These are, on the one hand, a set of assumptions about the worthwhile nature of marriage that we find in our normative tradition, like 'being in a loving relationship with a close friend or soulmate', or of 'sharing a joint identity with someone we love'. On the other hand, there are a set of assumptions which are thought to be necessary for a person to live a satisfactory life, like 'having a strong sense of their own autonomy' and of 'experiencing personal growth' and of 'having satisfactory sexual relationships' which seem to be antithetical to the normative tradition. I will argue however that all the above disparate conditions are necessary for 'a good marriage'.

It might be objected also that even if they have a good marriage, there is bound to be disagreement about whether or not getting married or remaining married is a

rational thing for a couple to do. Following de Beauvoir (1988), many feminists insist that it is quite irrational, particularly for a woman, to marry. They maintain that in such a relationship the woman must lose her freedom. This point (and many others) is equally relevant to men as well when they marry. This loss of freedom has at least two aspects to it. Firstly, when they are married, their new mutual obligations - e.g. being the main breadwinner or the housewife - entail a limit to the kind of freedom each is likely to have previously enjoyed as a single person. Before they can do many of the things they might want to do, they have to consider the perhaps different preferences, wants and interests of another individual as well as their own. There is a second more serious restriction on freedom. De Beauvoir (1988:483) claims, in any marriage a dominant/subordinate power relationship is unavoidable. This in turn usually means that the wife will be dominated by her husband (though in some cases she may try to dominate him). This unsatisfactory power relationship is manifest in the traditional marriage, where the husband is regarded as the head of the house. When there are major decisions to be made, it is expected that he will be the final authority. In which case, his wife is no longer responsible for her own choices; her husband determines many of the important aspects of her everyday life. Why would a rational person opt for this kind of constraint on her autonomy?

De Beauvoir and other writers also add that in such a relationship a woman must sacrifice her opportunity for intellectual or aesthetic growth. For as a wife she will have certain demarcated gender roles. She is expected to do the shopping, cooking and cleaning; if and when they have children, as their mother, she must take the (major) responsibility for them. Even if both partners are in paid employment outside the home, she is expected to be the primary caretaker of the children. As a result, in

such a relationship a woman sacrifices her intellectual and creative development to the tiresome routine of married life. We need to ask, once again, would a rational person opt for this kind of deprivation?

A last set of problems to which de Beauvoir and other feminists draw our attention concerns the sexual relationship within marriage. Marriage begins with the wedding ceremony. In this ceremony, the bride and groom make a solemn, public and legally binding vow to give exclusive sexual rights to their partner for as long as they live. We seem to think that the pledge 'to forsake all others' is of greater importance than many of the other promises we give or receive in the marriage vows. Marriage, then, is deemed to be an exclusive, lifelong sexual commitment. The problem is that very often we find that this does not work out. For one reason, it is unlikely that the original, spontaneous thrill of the sex act will last. But once the initial enthusiasm has worn off, wouldn't it be more rational for each of them to try to recapture sexual excitement with other partners and then the whole exhilarating process could take place again? Rather than make vows to live together in a monotonous sexual marital relationship, why shouldn't a rational person try to enjoy as many brief and thrilling love affairs as possible?

I need to make one last introductory remark. It might be objected that nowadays things are nothing like as bad for married women as they used to be at the time de Beauvoir was writing. Conventions and rules concerning housework, mothering, and the like, are far less demanding both in their extent and in the firmness with which they are enforced. Nevertheless, I will mention a variety of empirical data which suggests that many roles and conventions of the traditional kind still do remain. Although they do not force married women to submit to the authority of their husbands, they still create an asymmetry of status, power and dependence

between most married couples.

The above are some of the more important problems that I will be discussing in this essay. In response to them, I suggested earlier that in a good marriage the difficulties we have noted, do not arise. Hence we cannot decide one way or another about the rationality of marriage until we have made an attempt to work out a substantial theory of 'a good marriage'. I will now outline the structure of my essay in more detail.

In Chapter One I will consider a sociobiological account of pair bonding in which it is claimed that lasting monogamy is natural for human beings and that traditional family values are in our genes. The sociobiological thesis also purports to identify the underlying causes of our falling in love, our choice of a partner, and of our sustaining the love relationship. In a nutshell, they claim that due to our long evolutionary history as hunter-gatherers our feelings of love are innately directed ('gene-governed') towards someone with whom we are likely to successfully reproduce our genes. I hope to show that one implication of this thesis - especially for men but also for women - is that on the sociobiologist's account, while pair bonding is natural, exclusive pair bonding for life is not. Our natures appear to incline us towards having indefinitely many sexual relationships. If this is the case, the theory seems to imply a repudiation of the institution of monogamous marriage.

In Chapter Two, I look at a different explanation of marriage, namely, the claim that marriage is part of our social conditioning. From early childhood we are made aware that marriage plays a major role in the lives of most men and women. Furthermore we are persuaded that when a couple marry they are doing something worthwhile; and we think that those who have a long and happy marriage have something really worth having. I consider three important claims that are commonly used to justify

the worthwhile nature of marriage. Firstly, it provides the framework in which a couple's sexual needs can be legitimately met. Secondly, it is the best setting for the procreation and rearing of children. Thirdly, it provides the spouses with many economic and residential advantages. I will argue that for many reasons, nowadays most of these claims no longer have the same force that they might have had in the past. So we will need other arguments to support the (alleged) value of marriage in present times. Are there any good reasons which apply today for getting married, or are there good reasons by virtue of which we should still regard marriage as worthwhile?

In Chapter Three, I argue that there are certain general conditions - like having a close friend, or a soulmate, or being in a relationship with someone we love and with whom we wish to forge a joint identity - which even today count as good reasons for the decision to marry; moreover I claim that these conditions need to be met in a relationship if it is to count as a good marriage. At the same time, I note that such requirements could also be met in a long-term pair bonding relationship between non-marrieds. I go on to discuss two further conditions - a legal commitment to another person and a type of happiness within marriage - which are distinctive to the marital relationship and which are part and parcel of the idea of a good marriage.

In Chapter Four, I outline the three major indictments directed at marriage (as we have discussed it thus far). Firstly, de Beauvoir's claim that in marriage, one or other of the couple - in a traditional marriage it is the woman - must lose their autonomy due to the subordinate power relationship they must have with their spouse. Secondly, the claim that a woman must sacrifice her intellectual and creative development due to her role of housewife and mother in the marital home. Thirdly, the claim that bad sexual experiences are an

inevitable feature of married life. In the light of this, de Beauvoir thinks that it is not only irrational but immoral for a woman to marry. For the woman who marries not only elects to be oppressed, non-creative and sexually frustrated herself, she reinforces an institution that for these same reasons oppresses all women.

In Chapter Five, I investigate the power relationship in traditional marriages in which the husband is 'head of the household' and his wife is subordinate to him. As the head of the household, we noted, the husband will expect to be ultimately responsible for the major decisions that affect both of them, like where they will live, the kind of lifestyle they will have, and so on. The question I ask in this chapter is: does marriage entail a relationship like this? And if it doesn't, should we - as some philosophers maintain - want a relationship like this? I argue that a quite different, more equitable link between husband and wife is possible and is needed for a good marriage.

In Chapter Six, I consider the claim that being a housewife and a mother - or at least having the responsibility for the housework and the children - are stereotypical gender roles that a woman, rather than a man, must perform in marriage. I ask which of our gender roles in marriage, if any, are necessary? More importantly, if they have to be a wife's or husband's function, what exactly is wrong with such roles? Secondly, I discuss the claim that no matter how equal she is with her partner, being a mother and housewife impairs a married woman's intellectual growth, her creative projects - her transcendence. I argue for a married woman to enjoy a sense of intellectual or creative growth will depend importantly on her not regarding herself exclusively (or even mainly) as a wife and mother. I argue that this too is a feature of a good

marriage.

In Chapter Seven, I deal with the claim that the sexual relationship between a married couple must change from (what begins as) an erotic relationship - a 'spontaneous thrilling event' - into an insipid, passionless one; and the view that a satisfactory sexual relationship can only be achieved with a series of different sexual partners. If this is so, the requirement of fidelity in marriage is bound to result in sexual discontent. However I show that this is not a price that a married person must pay. I investigate also the other feminist indictment of sex within marriage, namely, that it gives the husband a legal right to have sexual intercourse with his wife. This seems to legally entitle him to sexually harass and (until recently in Britain anyway) even to rape his wife. I argue that this is not merely most people's idea of a bad sexual relationship, it is antithetical to the idea of a good marriage.

In Chapter Eight, drawing on some of the conclusions from our earlier discussion, I argue that for a married relationship to be regarded as 'a good marriage' further conditions (other than those put forward in Chapter Three) need to be met; we need a sense of autonomy and personal growth within the relationship. Furthermore, for a good marriage, an often overlooked condition is required which relates to the transformation of outlook of the person who is married. Lastly, I argue that insofar as they meet these conditions in their marital relationship both partners are behaving perfectly rationally and morally by getting married and remaining married. The problems associated with marriage nowadays lie in the gap between the ideal and the practice.

Chapter One

Is monogamy natural?

A man and a woman may fall in love. They both may think that their partner is the 'one and only' mate for them; they may make deep and personal commitments to one another. And they may decide to get married. But what is the basis for their reciprocal attraction in the first place? Why do they fall in love with one particular person rather than another? And why should they expect to remain loving each other in marriage 'till death do us part'?

Some philosophers suggest that an adequate answer to these questions can be given along sociobiological lines.¹ According to this theory, human beings are a pair bonding species, lasting monogamy is natural for us and certain family values are in our genes. If this is the case, we seem to have an explanation of some of the practices concerning love and marriage which a person, rational or otherwise, cannot avoid. In this chapter however, I hope to show that lasting monogamy is not implied by the sociobiological thesis. On the contrary, an implication of this theory is that our natures incline us to indefinitely many such relationships. Furthermore I will show that there is a problem with the sociobiologist's view of love in a pair bond. I will argue that this approach cannot account for the complexity of our experiences of love or the value we place on certain aspects of this emotion. I will begin by making a few general remarks concerning the sociobiological account.

Sociobiological account of love

Sociobiologists believe that important forms of behaviour are inherited through the genes, (much like the way one inherits eye colour or hair texture).² The reason for such behaviour having a genetic link is simply that

it has proved to be advantageous for a species' survival throughout evolution. For example, in an environment with many predators an animal who was vigilant and agile stood a better chance of surviving than one who was slow and sluggish. Over a long period of evolutionary time such forms of behaviour then become genetically encoded in the population of a species since they contribute to their fitness and survival.³ The same reasoning is applied to human beings and their complex social behaviour.

Sociobiologists maintain that the behaviour of human beings cannot be adequately understood in isolation from other species.⁴ We are one social species among many in the evolutionary range. As Wilson (1978:32) writes:

The heart of the genetic hypothesis is the proposition...that the traits of human nature were adaptive during the time that the human species evolved and that genes consequently spread through the population that predisposed their carriers to develop those traits.⁵

It is postulated that our intelligence, interests, emotions and species-specific patterns of social interaction are all the evolutionary residue of the success of *homo sapiens* in the pre-historic hunter-gathering adaptation.⁶ In effect, modern human beings carry essentially the same genetic heritage as early human beings.⁷ Once we recognize this we must also accept, firstly, that like any organism our genes are the important causal factor behind most of our natural drives, capacities, attitudes, and other behaviour and secondly, that natural selection operates over human beings as it does over all living things.

Of course no sociobiologist wants to claim that our genes determine every fleeting thought that we happen to have or every action we perform. The DNA does not contain sufficient information for that. The genes have to act by proxy (so to speak); they lay down the basic appetites and desires within us which prompt us to choose and act in this or in that way. Nor do most

sociobiologists want to argue that the desires and promptings laid down by our genes are all powerful. We are evolutionarily equipped with a useful ability to override even the most urgent drives. Thus a hunger striker can override one of his most basic and vital drives, the desire for food; whilst watching a play, a theatre-goer can remain silent and motionless even though feeling cramped and restraining herself from coughing; or a husband may be moved by his sexual drive to have an extra-marital affair but nonetheless resolve not to stray. At the same time, however, the sociobiologist could point out that it is statistically highly improbable that a person will starve himself to death and that it is very likely that the theatre-goer will be irked by the very strong urge to cough and that the incidence of male infidelity is very high. While they may not be omnipotent, our natural drives and desires appear to be very powerful.

The second important point we noted concerned natural selection. According to the sociobiologist, we must accept that in human beings (as in all animal life) through natural selection, genes which are advantageous for reproductive success are carried into the next generation. To summarize the process: we start with a population that has a particular distribution of genes in which children will have a greater genetic resemblance to their parents than to other individuals. Generally the offspring who then survive and reproduce will be those who are more effective in gaining access to critical resources - food, shelter, clean water, etc. As a result of this differential survival, the genetic structure of the population will change over time and the individuals within it will be better adapted. Particular genes survive because the behaviour (or characteristics) produced by them is advantageous to the individual and enables it to compete successfully.⁸ Those who have the maximal conditions for reproductive success in the

original population are likely to be better represented than those who have not.

Sociobiologists go on to claim that - as in all other animals - the drive to transmit our genes into the next generation is an ultimate goal of the behaviour of human beings.⁹ It may be that some individuals override this drive but again, this is not statistically significant. The vast majority of human beings behave in this way; they have a natural drive to pass on their genes into the next generation. It follows also that like all living things, we have a natural drive to behave in ways which are required to obtain the reproductive advantage necessary for the desired goal; we act so that we will attract a mate who is likely to maximize the genetic fitness of our offspring.

Once again, this does not mean that every act is directly pursued with this end in mind. For example, we drink when we are thirsty, we sleep when we are tired; quenching our thirst and sleeping do not seem to contribute directly to our obtaining reproductive advantage. However most sociobiologists would maintain that states like thirst or tiredness are the proximate causes of behaviour, not an ultimate cause of it. They would say that we drink and sleep to maintain physiological homeostasis, for this in turn contributes to our genetic fitness.¹⁰ The adaptive significance of behaviour, thus, should be understood in terms of ultimate, not proximate causes. Or to put the point in a different way: proximate causes are the immediate elements which are generally responsible for a particular response. They should be understood and explained, nonetheless, in terms of reproductive advantage. As Barash (1982:28-29) writes:

...ultimate causes are the evolutionary elements which bestow selective advantage on particular proximate mechanisms.

The more simple an organism, the bigger the role of the ultimate cause, i.e. the transmission of genes to the

next generation; the more complex an organism, the larger the part played by proximate causes. Thus it is assumed, quite reasonably, that ultimate causes played a more dominant and direct role in the (presumably) less complex conduct and lifestyles of our ancestors. In the distant hunter-gathering past, individuals would have been more likely to have acted directly in a way that would maximize their genetic fitness - to transmit their genes into the future - whether or not they were aware of the actual consequences of their sexual behaviour. As a result, the number of pregnancies a woman had would have been much higher throughout this period. But without the aid of modern medicine and sanitation, the population would have been kept in check by high rates of miscarriage, infant mortality, and so on. Like other living things, every natural thought, feeling or action of our human ancestors was connected in some way to his or her gaining the reproductive advantage necessary to successfully transmit his or her genes into the next generation. Thus feelings of lust, no less than the sex organs, are with us today because they aided reproduction directly. Similarly our every shifting attitude towards a mate or prospective mate - warmth, trust, suspicion, iciness, revulsion - is best explained in terms of the potency of natural selection that remains in us today because in the past they led to behaviours that helped spread our genes. At the very least, the otherwise inexplicable thoughts and feelings we have are best understood in these terms.

Even if we believe that our actions are causally determined in the way proposed, one of the many objections that might be raised is that surely the development of any organism depends upon nurture as well as nature. It depends, for instance, upon when and where we were born. Thus a quite general but significant determining factor of our sexual behaviour is the fact that we are born and raised at a given point in history.

We are not, for instance, reared in 200 BC without the influences of film, television, books, magazines, and reliable methods of contraception. Had we been, how we think, behave, and the attitudes we have to members of the opposite gender would have been significantly different. Further, even if people are born at the same point in time, their behaviour varies significantly due to the particular geographical and cultural circumstances in which they are born. Different cultures have quite different attitudes towards gender relationships. These are part of the traditions and customs which people absorb from their early social environment; parents transmit such beliefs and attitudes to their children as do other individuals (teachers, religious figures, role models, peers). As a result, there can be no doubt that our adult beliefs, attitudes and conduct are significantly influenced by them. The point is: our social institutions and customs can significantly affect our behaviour towards one another.

If this is correct then genes alone do not appear to ultimately determine all types of behaviour. There must be at least an interplay between our genes and our social environment. The general point can be made in a different way. If the sociobiologist is correct and genes ultimately govern all of our behaviour, wouldn't we expect to find a conformity in the traditions and behaviour of all people, irrespective of their culture? But we do not appear to find this. So how is 'the (unconscious) drive to transmit our genes' an ultimate cause of our beliefs and conduct?

Wilson's answer (1978:18) to this question is:

Each person is molded by an interaction of his environment, especially his cultural environment, with the genes that affect social behavior.

We all have the same hard-wired, evolutionary selected, environmentally stable, ultimate drives. We noted that 'maintaining physiological homeostasis' (nutrition,

warmth, sleep, etc.), 'attracting mates who are likely to maximize genetic fitness', are examples of these. In service of these ultimate drives, we have very many more environmentally labile, proximate drives. As a result, there can be diverse cultures without there being underlying genetic differences. Each culture gives expression to the same fundamental human drives but in different ways.¹¹ On the other hand, a practice that runs directly counter to what is wired into us by our genes is unlikely to last or to be widely adopted. A prehistoric forebear who lacked feelings of lust, for example, would have been discarded by natural selection.

Thus we can distinguish between the universal genetic hard-wire and the variety of ways in which this can be expressed. Or to make the point in a different way: our basic genetic structure places definite limits on the range of possible human cultures there can be. As Lumsden and Wilson (1981:13) write:

...genetic natural selection operates in such a way as to keep culture on a leash.¹²

If this is correct then differences, even wide differences, in the attitudes and behaviour of people in different societies are quite compatible with the sociobiologist's theory. At the same time, all behaviour has its ultimate cause in the genetic structure.

Let us now turn to the way these general aspects of sociobiological theory apply to the questions concerning love and marriage that we noted at the start of the chapter. Sociobiologists maintain that we have a natural tendency to become physically and emotionally attached to just one other individual, or to use their phrase, we 'pair bond'.¹³ Pair bonding is a congenital predisposition in most primates; most animals bond and some animals bond for life. It has endured over evolutionary time because it is a relationship that is favourable to successful reproduction. Thus like other animals, human beings pair bond for the purposes of reproduction.¹⁴

However unlike females of most other primate species who are only sexually active at the time of ovulation, female *homo sapiens* are continuously sexually responsive. It is this constant openness to a sexual relationship that sustains the pair bond in human beings; frequent sex, Wilson (1978:140-141) claims, is the main tool by which the human pair bond is maintained. It keeps the male attracted to the female.

Surely, we want to respond, usually human beings do not have sexual intercourse - or even frequent sex (whether or not they are in a long-term pair bond) - merely in order to have diversity in reproduction. Among other things, we do it for pleasure! However the sociobiologist can deal with this. Because of the pleasure to be obtained from sexual activity, they would respond, human beings are keen to indulge in it. This enhances reproductive success in two ways; frequent sex is likely to lead to successful mating, and it sustains the pair bond which, as we shall see, is needed for the rearing of children. A great many of the particular pleasures found in human sexual activity, e.g. kissing, fondling, are to be thought of as reinforcers that evolution (if we may personify it) has given us to facilitate pair bonding. Such pleasures ensure the success of the pair bond. Wilson (1978:140) explains the connection succinctly:

...most of the pleasures of human sex constitute primary reinforcers to facilitate bonding.

This seems to give us a clue for the causal explanation to our earlier query. The phenomenon of 'falling in love' - where, as we noted, it appears that two people of the opposite gender meet and are inexplicably drawn to each other - might be accounted for along sociobiological lines. When we talk about two people experiencing an inexplicable attraction for each other, or of 'sexual chemistry' or of 'animal magnetism' which pulls them together (as if they have no will of

their own), we can begin to explain this attraction in terms of the instinctive response of each of the couple to find someone with whom they can transmit their genes into the next generation.

But if this is all there is to it, why not mix our genes as early as possible with someone closely related to us? After all, in almost all families there are other males or females. Why not transmit our genes with them? Wilson's response (1978:198) is that

...a correct application of evolutionary theory also favours diversity in the gene pool as a cardinal value.

Why should we naturally mix our genes with someone unrelated to us? The sociobiologist suggests that it is a device which encourages diversity or 'out-breeding'.¹⁵ It forces children to leave their own family structure in search of a mate. This results in a richer variety in their progeny's gene pool; and the more diverse the combination of genes, the more genetically fit he or she is likely to be. On the other hand, the mating of close kin typically produces children that are substantially less genetically fit. Inbreeding results in a higher proportion of homozygous genes which are manifest in certain inherited diseases.¹⁶

Why this rather than that partner

The next question we need to ask is: why do we fall in love (or transmit our genes) with **this** particular individual rather than **that** and why do we sustain the love relationship with them? The sociobiologist maintains that we are (somehow) aware that our reproductive success depends largely on our choice of a partner.¹⁷ This is to say, the brains of both males and females are gene-governed to look for partners that are most likely to provide them with offspring who will ensure the survival of their genes.¹⁸ How do they do this?

It seems that the genders are quite different in

this regard. It is claimed that there are two selection strategies which the female naturally adopts, those of 'he-man' and 'domestic bliss'.¹⁹ She has a gene-governed urge to find certain physical traits in advance of committing herself sexually to a male, for she needs to join her genes with those of a male who will strengthen her chances for reproductive success. Thus she instinctively adopts the 'he-man' strategy. When she seeks a mate for 'qualitative fertilization'²⁰ she looks for a robust, clever mate whose genes may bode well for the offspring's robustness and cleverness. This is to say, she will be sexually and emotionally drawn towards a good-looking male who is markedly above average intelligence; a mate who will enhance her offspring's chance to reach maturity and then for the offspring in turn to achieve reproductive success.

The other strategy that a female naturally adopts is 'domestic bliss'.²¹ She instinctively tries to find a mate who will be faithful and persevering in advance of committing herself sexually to him. The explanation of this is that human females (as with all of the larger primates) have limited opportunities for reproducing and their biology is such that the reproductive process is long and physically arduous. She has to undergo a long confinement in order to give birth and then the newly born infant is totally dependent on her for food, shelter, clothing, for many more years. So she needs to attract a male who is most likely to cooperate in parental care until their offspring reaches maturity; a mate who will contribute food, clothing and shelter as well as assist in the rearing of the child.²² Ideally he will also be someone with the (economic) means to provide protection and material comfort for herself and their offspring. Thus she will be attracted to a (usually older) male who has power or social status. Women, then, have two instinctive strategies; they naturally are attracted to a mate who is sexually robust and

intelligent, and to one with wealth and status.

It might be objected that the appeal of rich or powerful men might have been a natural tendency in the past but would lose its strength as more and more women enter the professional workforce and can better afford to base their marital decisions on something other than a man's income or status. But, according to the sociobiologist, we are dealing with deep-rooted causes, not merely conscious calculations. To stress this important point: out of the few million years that human beings have existed, 99% of this time has been spent in hunter-gathering societies.²³ As Wilson (1978:34) writes:

...most of the genetic evolution of human social behaviour occurred over the five million years prior to civilization, when the species consisted of sparse, relatively immobile populations of hunter-gatherers.

This long period of existing in a hunter-gathering way of life has firmly established certain behaviours in the gene pool. As a result, a modern woman has a gene-governed urge to choose a powerful male (etc.), the genes for which have been naturally selected because they are conducive to the successful rearing of children who will themselves later mate.

Of course a modern woman can be aware that she is driven to look for such features in a mate. She can be aware of her drive to find a robust mate with 'good' genes and that she seeks a male who will assist her in the process of childbearing and rearing. In which case her conscious calculations coincide with her natural drives; the innate programme is accompanied by a conscious overlay. But although she can decide what to do about such urges and drives, the latter do not themselves form part of her conscious decision.²⁴

One implication of the above account that has been overlooked by many sociobiologists concerns the monogamous marital relationship.

We are told that women naturally seek a mate who is a

'he-man' and who is most likely to provide 'domestic bliss'. But what if she can not find one man who has both features? It goes without argument that this will be the probable outcome for most women. There are not that many rich yet physically robust men around! One solution would be to trick a wealthy, devoted and generous - but not especially muscular - mate into raising the offspring of another mate who has the latter (robust) quality. As Ridley (1994:236) suggests:

...deep in the mind of a modern woman is the same basic hunter-gatherer calculator...strive to acquire a provider husband who will invest food and care in their children; strive to find a lover who can give those children first-class genes.

She would only need to attract the muscular mate around ovulation, when she is most likely to get pregnant. But she would need to deceive the affluent mate into believing that he is the father of her offspring. Alternatively if she were to pair bond with an impoverished he-man, she might extract the goods and services she naturally desires from a wealthy paramour during the infertile part of her monthly cycle, in exchange for his fruitless sexual conquest. Another problem she might have to face occurs when the 'he-man' she marries, due to either familiarity or lack of exercise, becomes less of the man that he was.²⁵ Presumably to satisfy her natural impulses she should seek a new unfamiliar, robust mate.

I am suggesting that these would be rational strategies for a woman to adopt, given her natural drives and the shortage of males that meet the desired criteria. On the other hand, if she does not adopt tactics something like the ones I am proposing, it would seem that her natural impulses will be frustrated. She would be acting in ways which conflict with the kind of behaviour directed by her genes. But no matter how she deals with the problem, the implications of both of her natural urges seem to auger badly for the type of

exclusive pair bond that we find in a monogamous marriage relationship. I will return to this point shortly.

The causal explanation for a male's choice of the particular object of love is different. His instinctive drive also is to find a mate with physical attributes which indicate fertility; a female with whom he can successfully transmit his genes into the next generation. In a nutshell, he naturally seeks youth and beauty in a mate. Youth and beauty in a female, it appears, equals fertility. Because he cannot know her age (and thus her potential for fertility) directly, he must infer it from her physical appearance. So he naturally looks for, as Ridley (1994:285) writes:

...unblemished skin, full lips, clear eyes,
upright breasts, narrow waist, slender legs...

He will realize, presumably, that to make himself attractive to such a female, as well as being in a robust physical condition, he needs wealth and social status. The more fit and socially successful he can be, the more likely he is to be desired by youthful, beautiful, fertile females. (So the ultimate cause of the wealth and power that men seek so ardently, it appears, is their own genetic proliferation.)

The account thus far makes it puzzling why those individuals who are not good-looking, or otherwise eligible, pair bond at all. However there is an abundance of commonplace evidence that suggests there is something we can do about this. We are persuaded, for instance, by numerous features in magazines, that to be sexually attractive there are certain requirements that men and women need to meet and, further, that there are things that we can do in order to improve ourselves in this matter. Men are encouraged to wear designer clothes, have high-performance cars or access to a penthouse in the city centre; whereas women are urged, in particular, to emphasize their good bodily attributes in order to look as sexually alluring as they can.²⁶ Young

women especially are under enormous pressure to fit in with this perpetual beauty competition; to judge and criticize their own bodies from the outside (as it were), presumably in the way they think that men will see them. However it is evident also that the general opinion as to what constitutes a sexually attractive female depends upon the fashions of the time. Let it suffice to say that during the 1960s, the paradigm of female attractiveness seems to have been thin and waif-like,²⁷ on the other hand, in the 1990s, the sexually attractive woman is the one who has 'toned curves'.²⁸ Her body should be well-made and firm.

It seems to many critics of such fashions that women should not be constantly looked at and assessed in these sexual terms. For instance, Souhami (1986:126) writes scathingly:

Advertisements continually make women aware of their alleged imperfections, then offer to sell them solutions to their supposed problems through slimming foods, skin creams, shampoos, deodorants, and so on.

However if this sexual aspect of our conduct is so much under the influence of our biology, then it is difficult to see how women (or men) can avoid behaving like this.

If youth, beauty and fertility are natural desiderata when a man looks for a mate, as the sociobiologist maintains, there seem to be more unwelcome implications for the monogamous marital relationship which many sociobiologists overlook. Unlike a female, who regardless of how many sexual partners she has, can (speaking generally) have only one offspring a year, a male can reproduce at any time if he has access to a fertile female. Thus from the perspective of his maximal reproductive success, one would have thought that it is to his advantage to impregnate as many youthful and fertile females as he can. Each new mate would offer him a chance of projecting his genes into the future. This suggests he would have a natural inclination for a

relationship quite different to monogamous pair bonding. For if a male's (unconscious) drive is to successfully reproduce his genes, surely he should try to do so with as many young females as possible. To put the point succinctly: while pair bonding may be natural for a male, exclusive pair bonding for life, is not. And what is more, if a male is prudent he will endeavour to have his offspring reared by other males.

There is however another side to this coin. He has to guard against being put in the position of raising another male's offspring. There is no future for the genes of a male who showers time and energy on children who are not his own. To avoid his raising children that are not his own, the male needs to have exclusive sexual rights with one mate, so that he knows he is investing his energies in the upbringing of his own genes. Maybe this explains why men (we are told) naturally prefer women with hour-glass figures; slim waists are usually an indicator that the female is not pregnant and that she is fertile.²⁹ This may explain also why a male might continue with the pair bond long after the initial sexual attraction has subsided. If he were to seek a new sexual partner, this could lead him to withdraw or dilute his investment in the offspring with his original mate. It could jeopardize the successful survival of his genes.

We might think then that the male's stake in his reproductive decisions is different but no less weighty to that of the female's.³⁰ Our biological differences mean that when the male is unfaithful to his mate, the most the latter has to lose is her financial (material) security whereas if the female is unfaithful (without telling her mate) and a child results from the relationship, the male commits all of his energy and financial resources, not to ensure the survival of his own genes, but someone else's.³¹ In which case we might think that the male has a vested interest in supporting the exclusive pair bond.

However another unwelcome implication of this account needs to be noted. On the sociobiologist view, a man instinctively wants to reproduce his genes. To do this, he does not need to have an exclusive relationship with one female - a monogamous pair bond. His nature would be better served, if he were to have lots of sexual partners. The problem, as we noted, is how can he do this and maintain the progeny of his original pair bond? The answer is obvious. He does not need to abandon the children from his first partner to satisfy his natural impulse for different sexual partners. While he is enjoying other sexual relationships, he could stay near the existing offspring and keep giving them his support. Alternatively, it would seem to be more in keeping with his natural inclination that he should have a polygynous marital relationship, or multiple wives. This would seem to meet both of his natural desiderata. And some sociobiologists agree that polygyny is more in keeping with his natural impulses.³²

To make matters worse, there is considerable empirical evidence to support the idea that there is a significant polygynous impulse in males.³³ There are many cultures in which men have a number of wives.³⁴ However today in such cultures it seems that polygyny is an option for only the most affluent; those men who can afford the expenditure associated with marriage to many wives. On the other hand, in societies where polygyny is illegal, it might be claimed that the polygynous impulse will find other outlets, such as in several acts of adultery. If he can avoid discovery, the unfaithful husband can maintain his investment with his children whilst enjoying other sexual partners. Alternatively, the many instances of serial marriages we find today might be seen as another form in which the polygynous impulse is manifest; the ever increasing number of divorces may be explained in large measure to the natural polygynous impulse in men.

So we might conclude that on the sociobiologist's account, lifelong monogamous pair bonding is not natural or necessary, especially for males. In contrast, due to her limited opportunities for reproducing, a female needs to be more selective about choosing her mate; she needs to have a permanent relationship with a male who will provide for her and protect her. In return she needs to offer him exclusive use of her sexuality and perform nurturing and other domestic services for him. Thus we might assume that according to sociobiological theory, females have a stronger genetic interest in a durable relationship with one sexual partner than do males. But even in her case, while pair bonding may be thought to be natural, it is not clear that this means an exclusive pair bond for life.

I want to end this section by highlighting one further implication of the sociobiologist's account which applies to both male and female choice of partners. This concerns some of the gender roles we find operating in most (western) marriages and that operate in society generally. A commonly held view, what I will call the traditional view of marriage, is that men and women should have different functions in marriage and that each should avoid the character and activity which is the proper preserve of the other. This requires, as Radcliffe Richards (1986:185) puts it:

...a sensitive division of labour for the good of all, with each individual being encouraged to contribute whatever is most suitable for them to give.

It is maintained that women, for instance, should be the primary caretakers of any children. After all, she is the one who gets pregnant, carries the fetus until birth and only she can breast-feed the infant.

Most feminist critics take exception to this traditionalist argument. They see it, as Rogan (1978:85) writes:

...[as] opening the door to justifying the

oppression of one group by another on the basis of biological inferiority.

However according to most sociobiologists, women are naturally predisposed to act in nurturant ways towards their families and to have special feelings towards the young.³⁵ Bearing and nurturing children, gathering plant foods, etc., have been the tasks of women over long stretches of evolutionary time.³⁶ Their minds, it could be argued, have been hard-wired in such a way as to suit gender roles such as these. In other words, women have a natural biological advantage over men when it comes to nurturant behaviour; they are congenitally pre-disposed to behave in this way. As Rossi (1977:24) writes, women possess

...a biologically based potential for heightened maternal investment in the child... that exceeds the potential for investment by men in fatherhood.

In other words, it seems that sociobiology provides scientific collateral for the traditional assignment of some of the more obvious gender roles we find in monogamous marriage.³⁷

Problems with the sociobiological account

In response to the account above I want to begin by making two different observations. Firstly, we are able to resist our natural urges. Our sexual desires and related drives may be instinctive but we do not need to be the slave to our passions or instincts. Some place in such an account must be given to our ability to reason and to make choices of a rational nature.³⁸ We can, after all, choose to lead an examined life, subjecting our thoughts and feelings to moral scrutiny and adjusting our behaviour accordingly. So our behaviour within (or outside of) marriage in matters concerning sex cannot be accounted for as being something wholly independent of our will and over which we have no control. We can inhibit our natural impulses, for instance, for the sake

of our marriage. Thus I might have a strong sexual desire for a robust, young and clever prospective paramour but I can choose to behave in ways different from my natural urges.

This brings me to my second point: the natural urges we have are not necessarily morally good. The sociobiologist seems to think that from facts (if they are facts) about the nature of human beings as biological organisms with a specific history, we can draw ethical conclusions about how we ought to behave. Let us suppose polygamy really is (as a matter of fact) 'natural' and monogamy 'unnatural' for both men and women as the sociobiologist implies. Very few philosophers would think that one can validly argue from this 'fact' (*sic*) to the conclusion that polygamy is morally right or monogamy is morally wrong.³⁹ Obviously there are many things, like jealousy or hatred, that might be thought to be natural but these sentiments are not thereby usually thought to be morally right or acceptable. We still have to decide whether or not to act on our natural sentiments and these decisions call upon values; in this way, reason can check our passions. Similarly, facts about the genetic basis of pair bonding - even facts which show that our drives and emotions reflect the evolutionary adaptations that have enabled human beings to survive - do not bridge the gap between fact and value. Although it may be factually true that pair bonding has an inexorable biological basis, this fact does not entail the prescription 'so we ought to pair bond'. It might be natural to (unconsciously) want to transmit our genes but this does not mean that this is a good thing to do or that men and women morally ought to do so. Facts of this kind cannot compel us to rationally accept any value or conclusion about what we ought to do. If this point is not conceded, moreover, there is a danger that people will react to the findings of sociobiology by surrendering to their natural impulses, as if what is in

our genes are beyond the reach of self-control. They may even conveniently believe that what is 'natural' is 'morally good'. However some of our natural urges are, quite reasonably, thought to be bad.

Following on from the last point, we might try to inhibit what are thought to be morally unacceptable natural inclinations in this context by, say, placing severe restrictions on things like extra-marital sexual activity, or by punishing infidelity or legally prohibiting divorce. On the other hand, we might do more to inculcate at home and in schools the belief that household duties in the family should be shared more equally. Wilson (1978:21) cautions, however, that if we implement reforms which go radically against our biological tendencies, there may well be costs which we cannot measure. For instance, even though Wilson thinks that there is a genetic basis for much of the male/female division of labour in the nuclear family, he concedes that we could change this by training and other forms of gender stereotyping, which deliberately set out to erase some of the existing differences between males and females. With suitable training, for instance, fathers could become the primary, if not the sole caretaker of the newborn infant.

However there could be a price to pay for any attempt to set our culture against our nature in this way. In the first place, it costs at least the time and the energy required to inculcate and enforce the preferred moral standard, which runs counter to our inherited tendencies. More importantly, long-term defection from our biological motivators can only produce an ultimate dissatisfaction of spirit, which in turn could eventually lead to social instability and significant losses in genetic fitness. Eventually there may be an even greater cost as Wilson (1978:21) warns:

Personalities would quickly dissolve, relationships disintegrate, and reproduction cease.

In short, behaviour that has taken millions of years to evolve cannot be completely changed to meet one or other morally preferred blueprint, without risking extensive damage. Let us put this problem to one side for the moment.

It seems that we have found a very general answer to our question: why do we have a sexual relationship with this rather than that person? According to the sociobiologist, whatever their conscious motives may be, the underlying thoughts and feelings of a woman when she chooses, is to look for physical robustness and devotion in a mate and a man naturally desires youth and beauty in a woman. Without such an account, we are left with a conceptually deficient view that for no apparent reason, love simply strikes. But there is a further implication of the thesis that we should note. Given the condition above it seems reasonable to conclude that most men and women could be successfully matched with a vast number of different partners. This point will be unwelcome to the widely held view that when it comes to marriage there is one person for whom each of us is 'made', there is 'one and only one correct choice'.⁴⁰ As we shall see this is one way in which many traditionalists justify the life-long, exclusive, marital commitment (see p.71).

It may well be objected that the implication we have drawn - that we could be successfully matched with indefinitely many partners - shows that the sociobiological account is deficient. Surely there must be more to the causal nexus for our 'choices' (*sic*) in this context. Don't we need to take account, for instance, of the fact that people are usually reciprocally attracted to someone from the same ethnic or social group as themselves or with the same religious ties?⁴¹ Often we find someone sexually attractive due to their values or interests, particularly when these are similar to our own. Many empirical studies highlight this aspect of sexual attractiveness.⁴² They suggest that

the discovery of this type of similarity in another confirms one's own sense of worth and the validity of one's own world view. Also don't we need to take account of the fact that most societies have a class-structure and as a result, the person with whom we pair bond is importantly determined by our social class, occupation or education? The daughter of a dustman is likely to have a different circle of friends and love relationships to the daughter of a banker. The point is: there tends to be similarity of manner and outlook between people belonging to the same ethnic, religious group, social class, etc., and these factors play a major role in determining with whom individuals pair bond.

I think that Wilson *et al* might admit this. The so-called ultimate cause of our behaviour is concealed beneath a whole range of other significant societal variables. In this way, they would remind us that our nature is controlled only by evolutionary tendencies, not by immutable laws. But this is a weaker thesis. It seems that we would need to dig beneath a very wide range of surface (or proximate) causes to confirm the claim concerning the ultimate cause of our behaviour in this context.

However it does nonetheless seem to me to be plausible to maintain that a significant set of behaviours are caused in the way postulated by the sociobiologist. Along these lines, for instance, we might ask a young childless wife who finds her husband intolerably insensitive, why the insensitivity was not so oppressive a year ago before he lost his job and before she met the kindly, affluent bachelor who seems to be flirting with her. We might ask the middle-aged office worker if his wife really is duller and more nagging than she was twenty years ago, or maybe his tolerance of her nagging has dropped now that she is fifty and has no reproductive future. Added to this, the promotion that he has recently achieved, which has already drawn

admiring glances from younger women at work, may be part of the total picture. Similarly we might understand some of our nebulous, fluctuating perceptions about our mate - feelings of warmth, passion, suspicion, loathing - as manifestations of our (rather absurd) natural urge for genetic proliferation. In other words, the factors that the sociobiologist emphasizes provide a very general direction to a person's sexual feelings, preferences, desires.

Love and sociobiology

A more significant difficulty we might raise against the sociobiologist's thesis is that even if we were to regard it as going some way to providing a plausible answer to the earlier queries concerning our desires for a partner in a pair bond, it does not explain where love fits into the picture. Indeed, I will argue shortly that it does not account for the complexity of our experience of love at all or the value we give to some forms of love.

Love is a real and important element in human experience; for many (especially nowadays) it is the *raison d'être* of marriage. On the other hand, the pair bond as we have discussed it, is for begetting and rearing children. What has love got to do with this? Are we to say, as Midgley (1979:286) says:

Essentially...the root of human pair bonding is the need to procreate. This is the underlying explanation of emotional feelings such as love.⁴³

In other words, the explanation of the capacity for love is that it too is genetically determined. It too is rooted in the need to procreate successfully. The question presents itself: could an empirical explanation of a sociobiological kind provide us with a satisfactory account of love?

Harlow (1974) suggests that it can. He (1974:viii-ix) maintains that we find the same sentiment in other

primates, where the capacity to love develops within a regular and predetermined framework. We all begin with an instinctive need for contact; Harlow (1974:x) suggests, this is the primary factor for affection in the mother/infant relationship. In his experiments, baby rhesus monkeys were given a choice of surrogate mothers, one made of soft material which provided no nourishment, the other made of wire which provided milk. Almost always the infant monkeys opted for the former. Harlow (1974:28) concludes from this:

It is clearly the incentive of contact comfort that binds the infant affectionately to the mother.

In a normal environment, an infant will, during a sensitive period of its development, form a deep and lasting attachment to its mother. On the other hand, Harlow (1974:95) discovered that monkeys brought up without 'contact comfort' were emotionally disturbed 'their ability to bond in later relationships was damaged'. He inferred from this that since they were not loved in their earliest stage as infants, they were unable to love as adults. Harlow (1974:3) claims that we can extrapolate these results to human beings. Just as his rhesus monkeys both display and need affection of this kind, we too in early infancy need contact and to receive and show affection.⁴⁴ If children are deprived of love at this critical stage they will grow up emotionally disturbed, unable to form stable sexual relations and they may possibly be psychopathic.

It will be objected that Harlow's analogy between the love which an infant rhesus monkey appears to exhibit for a fluffy object and the relationship found between a human baby and its mother, is false. One obvious condition that is missing from Harlow's account is the fact that a human baby is responding to the love given by its mother. This typically involves more than her providing 'contact comfort'. The appropriate comparison would seem to be between the human and rhesus monkey

mothers (not between the human mother and the fluffy object). Presumably in the Harlow experiment the fluffy substitute mother did not compensate for the lack of care and affection provided by the rhesus monkey mother. But even the analogy between a rhesus monkey and human mother looks suspect. In the latter case, we value such love since we believe the sentiment is positively endorsed from the mother's rational personality. This includes such things as the pleasure the mother shows at the child's presence, her encouragement and appreciation of the child as it begins to develop certain skills, like its first words. More importantly, even in early infancy, mother-love of this kind is distinguished by feelings of affection and appreciation of the child simply for its own sake. This is a feeling. But it is a feeling which can be identified by its function. It is a feeling by which the mother recognizes the child's worth and affirms the child's developing sense of its own worth as a person. We may suppose that few, if any, of these qualities are present in a rhesus monkey mother and as a result it seems reasonable to believe that the love relationship between human beings even at this age, will be accordingly different.

More importantly, we need to know how the 'love' (*sic*) which an infant rhesus monkey exhibits is supposed to relate to the heterosexual love enjoyed between adult human beings. Harlow has an answer to this. He (1974:1-2) identifies five affectional systems through which, he claims, we normally progress; they are tendencies by which the capacity to love normally develops in people. These are: maternal love, infant love, peer love, heterosexual love, and paternal love. For a developed capacity to love we need to progress from stage to stage.⁴⁵ If each stage is not successfully passed through, problems will result in adult life because the basis for future affectional development is thwarted. He goes on to claim that one of the three components which

constitute the heterosexual stage of the affectional system is romantic love. Of this stage in the system Harlow (1974:69-70) writes:

[it involves]...a sequence of postural potentialities, elicited by external stimuli and leading to the complex interbody positioning which adult coital behavior requires; a flow of gonadal [hormones] which indirectly and directly facilitate heterosexual interactions beginning at puberty...

In a manner not dissimilar to Harlow, Wilson (1978:139) maintains:

Sexual love...can be reasonably based on enabling mechanisms in the physiology of the brain that have been programmed to some extent through the genetic hardening...

This presents a number of important problems. By identifying love in these terms, firstly, the sociobiologist conflates love with sex. This is to say, Harlow and Wilson attempt to account for love in terms of 'the innate and inexorable drive to maximize reproductive success'. But we might quite reasonably insist that our understanding both of heterosexual 'love' and of heterosexual 'sex' is that these two phenomena are quite different, as a brief comparison of the two will show.

In the first place, there are things to be said about sex that do not apply to love and vice versa.⁶ For instance, no overt bodily changes need occur where one person loves another. On the other hand, various overt changes necessarily take place in a person's body during the sex act. Regarded in this light, sex can be mainly a matter of a release of physical tension. And if all one wants is a physical release (or this kind of pleasure) the particular person with whom one is having sex seems to be unimportant. The sex drive can be directed towards any object that will satisfy it. On the other hand, love is almost always directed towards a specific person. Another contrast between the two is that the sex act is usually an intense and short-lived episode whereas love (in the sense in which we shall be

discussing it) generally develops slowly and typically belongs to a long-term, if not permanent, exclusive relationship between two persons. Another point to note is that we can sexually desire an indefinite number of other persons whereas generally we only love deeply a few times in our lives. And as we noted earlier, from the viewpoint of sex to choose an exclusive (monogamous) relationship would seem to be a sacrifice whereas we would usually say that where a couple are in love it is not. Lastly, sex, not love, is needed for procreation; the former, not the latter, is fundamental for the transmission of one's genes. Just from these brief considerations it seems reasonable to conclude that while there could be one or an admixture of motives behind an act of sexual intercourse, love need have played no part in it.

More importantly, it might be objected that by reducing love to the sexual act, sociobiologists dehumanize it. Sexual intimacy can be rooted in love, of course, whereas, on the account above, any display of loving behaviour might seem to amount to nothing more than going through the motions (of loving the other person) to obtain sexual gratification. As such, there need be little trust, friendship, empathy, etc., between the couple. Each party need only exist for the other as an object to be enjoyed and discarded once sexual satisfaction is attained. If this was all there is to love - sex with no interpersonal relationship - as we shall see, it could well lead to intense feelings of loneliness.

This brings us to a more general problem with the reduction of heterosexual love to sex. Love is a far more complex emotion than the sociobiologist's account of it suggests. In the first place, the love we feel for another person might be a manifestation of the kind of love often referred to as *eros*. *Eros* is usually understood to be a state in which one's personality is

dominated by strong sexual and romantic feelings for the beloved. At first blush we might think that the sexual drive (by which we seek to transmit our genes) is eros. However while sex and eros are both based on strong erotic feelings, eros is more than just sexual activity and conversely, as Lewis (1977:85) points out: 'Sexuality may operate without Eros...'⁴⁷ As we have just noted, for the sociobiologist, sexual intercourse is performed mainly in order to procreate or merely for pleasure whereas with eros the lover is in love with a particular person, the person he or she sexually desires.⁴⁸

To add to the complexity there are a variety of ways in which love of this kind is manifest. At one extreme, spoken of particularly in glossy magazines, films, television, novels, popular songs, etc., the emotion seems to be so excessive to the point of being all-consuming. Sleep, hunger, and the common concerns of everyday life seem to be replaced by this passion. Its peaks of joy are incomparable, its depths of despair are bottomless. As Luhmann (1986:26) writes:

...one is subjected to something (irrational), something unalterable and for which one is unaccountable.

When a person is 'in love' with another in this way, he has recurrent thoughts about her. He regards his beloved as the most important person in his life. He focuses only on her and most other things that he might have thought about, are put to one side. It usually involves also emotions and feelings of intense excitement, probably because the lovers are new to each other. For many people, being 'in love' is a very intense emotion. It seems to take over the whole person.

When they are in love in this way, it is claimed that a person's emotions, feelings, or senses are heightened.⁴⁹ This supposedly causes them to experience life more vibrantly or intensely. The flower seems to smell more sweetly, the landscape is more colourful.⁵⁰ As a result of this heightened experience, moreover, it is

suggested also that each of the lovers learns more about themselves.⁵¹ Presumably they gain an improved understanding of themselves by being made aware of their own hitherto hidden qualities, due to the responses of their beloved.

Each lover may well think the other exemplifies everything that they desire in their lives and they suppress any differences that could come between them. Mundane disagreements will be overlooked (like his tendency to wear colours that clash or her choice of strong perfume). We are inclined also to invest the other person with certain interesting, attractive or lovable qualities.⁵² We are inclined to recognize in them - or anyway, endow them with - the attributes that we deem to be the most worthwhile a person can have; like kindness or strength of character. Often we see the beloved as having a surfeit of such good qualities. Beliefs of this kind are often expressed in highly idealistic terms.⁵³ We not only think that the beloved has such qualities but that he has potential skills or talents that we can help him to realize and thereby perhaps help him to realize 'himself'. To see the potentialities in the beloved, one needs to have, as Goldberg (1983:38-39) writes:

...trust...not just in the existence and value and strength of certain potentialities...but also in one's own need, capacity and commitment to appreciate those potentialities...

Alternatively, in projecting good qualities onto the beloved it seems that we unconsciously hope that we will nurture these qualities in our partner.⁵⁴

In some cases the person in whom she is investing these attractive or lovable qualities does not in fact have any of the qualities in question. Such a lover is, as Babbitt (1955:178) suggests:

...in love not with a particular person but with [her] own dreams.

In which case, as it need not be a true reflection of the

beloved's actual qualities, character traits or any other feature about him, it would not seem to matter who the particular individual is for whom the lover feels erotic love. Perhaps any person will do!

At another extreme, erotic love seems to be for the game of love itself rather than for the love object. In the kind of case I have in mind, the lover may take pride in engaging in several relationships at one and the same time. The point seems to be to get herself as sexually involved as possible while carefully avoiding entangling commitments or emotional dependence herself. It seems plausible to suggest that at least this emotional state may be consonant with the sociobiological account of sex in pair bonding.

However *eros* is still more complex than this. Something needs to be said, for instance, about its more egoistical forms where this is the kind of love that is for love's sake. If we were to be in this state, there is nothing we have to believe about the object of our love. We can love even when the object of our love does not exist. Perhaps the lover is only in love with herself. According to Freud (1963:360-362), self-love of this kind is possible but it is a psychiatric disorder - narcissism. On the other hand, we might interpret 'love for love's sake' to be the case where the lover is in love with the idea of being in love rather than loving another individual. There need be no objects only a subject; the lover does not need to move beyond her own ego.

It might be objected that the concept of love is attenuated when applied to such cases. This can be seen if we consider briefly some of the logical properties usually predicated of the love relationship. For instance, adult love is usually considered to be a non-reflexive relation. But if there are some who love only themselves, it is reflexive; i.e. it holds between the individual and herself. Further we usually consider the

adult love relationship as being symmetrical; X loves Y and Y loves X, or in cases where the love is not returned, the relationship is asymmetric; X loves Y but Y does not love X. However a relationship where there is no objective basis for love, is neither symmetric nor asymmetric. It is non-symmetric. This points to the unusual nature of love that lacks an objective basis. However I do not want to argue that each of these alternatives are not possible states of a person who claims to be in love. No doubt there are some cases where there is no other person at all, and in other cases there is no objective basis for the traits one so admires in the character of the beloved. Erotic love of this kind seems to be possible. The point I want to stress is the difficulty of seeing how erotic love of the types discussed could be adequately explained in terms of behaviour based upon the drive to transmit one's genes in acts of sexual intercourse.

In contrast to the cases above, some love can be companionate (*philia*). This mode of love is rooted in long-term friendship. The usual grounds for it occur when a couple are long-established friends or if they discover that they have some common interest, goal, or vision.⁵⁵ Sometimes it gradually takes on romantic overtones.

However *philia* is not usually so much an emotional state as an attitude; the love we have for the other person is shown by our attitudes towards them. This is to say, *philia* or companionate love is more usually manifest in the settled behaviour between a loving couple, or in the kindly manner of their actions towards each other. Of *philia*, Lewis (1977:72) writes:

This love, free from instinct, free from all duties but those which love has freely assumed...is eminently spiritual.

Philia is stable, relatively non-demanding, committed and trusting. Lovers in this mode can disagree or even fight with one another without threatening the relationship,

and long separations can be survived easily. It (*philia*) does not seem to depend on the particular attributes or qualities of the beloved. According to Lewis (1977:121) most people have some personality traits that are unpleasant or ignoble. Where feelings of *philia* are present, however, the lover may know about such traits in the character of the beloved but the love felt or given will not diminish because of this. For in *philia* the lover may love what is not 'naturally lovable'.⁵⁶

Usually a love of this kind also will pass-up opportunities for a perhaps more genetically rewarding or a sexually more exciting relationship rather than be disloyal or abandon her present lover. And sexual intimacy - when this is undergone for the sake of the beloved - can become an act of *philia*, rather than an act of self-interested pleasure.⁵⁷ One's own gratification is not necessarily the primary goal of sexual intercourse in a loving relationship. We do not need always to sexually desire the other person, or, if we do desire them, we do not need the immediate satisfaction of this desire when we engage in sexual intercourse. Let me use a well-worn analogy. We can spend a lot of time and considerable energy preparing a meal that can be shared and enjoyed with those whom we care about. The purpose of the meal need not be to satisfy hunger; often this assumes a secondary role. It can be to celebrate our friendship, or to share the friend's success, failure, and so on. In much the same way, the satisfaction of one's sexual desire is often not as important as the shared intimacy. In such instances, we may be showing our care and concern for the welfare of the other person; the lover is made happy by making the beloved happy. In other words, the motivation behind a particular act of sexual intercourse can be *philia*, not sex. (We will return to the discussion of *philia* in Chapter Three.) For the moment it seems reasonable to suppose that *eros* and *philia* can co-exist; a couple may love each other in both modes.⁵⁸

However I am unable to see how a couple who share love of this kind can be readily assimilated to the sociobiological account of the matter at all.

In addition to the above, there is a style of love known as *agape*. '*Agape*' is usually understood to mean a love which can be shown to any human being; the disinterested love of one's neighbour. To love someone in this way is to value that person for their own sake as well as wishing to benefit that person or to advance their welfare. If it applies to one's beloved, this is because he is human, not because he is one's beloved. So, at first blush, *agape* is not likely to be overly present in a personal relationship. As Lewis (1977:117) writes this mode of love:

...is wholly disinterested and desires what is simply best for the beloved.

If it is shown to one's partner it is kind, caring, and sensitive to his needs in a self-effacing way that requires nothing in return. However *agape* can be a correcting factor in personal relationships.⁵⁹ We can take steps to help our beloved, for example, because we are aware of their predicament (*qua* human being). Once again, love of this kind is usually manifest in the attitudes we have towards the other person rather than by an emotional state.⁶⁰

For the moment let it suffice to stress that once again I am unable to see how a couple who love in this way can be covered by the sociobiological account of the matter. Rather than being compatible with the natural drives and feelings described by the sociobiologist, *agape* seems antithetical to them. Moreover, it seems to be due to qualities found in *agape* and *philia* that we value the love relationship we find in marriage. It might be objected that these feelings are not completely unconnected with the transmission of genes. For example, their tendency to be associated with pair bonding might be explained in terms of the useful function they serve

in keeping parents together and thereby increasing the chance that their children survive to have children themselves.⁶¹ However this does not explain why a reflective person might value love of these kinds and the sociobiologist could not address this question.

Before I close this part of the discussion, there is a more promising way in which we might try to interpret the sociobiological use of 'love'. This would be to identify it with the kind of pragmatic love that takes practical matters into account as a guide to sexual involvement. The latter would include a careful evaluation of one's partner's good and bad points, 'Is he physically robust, powerful and wealthy?' or more practically, 'Will he handle the household finances satisfactorily, repair the car, be able to deal with aggressive salesmen, etc.?' If this is love, it is the opposite of eros (romantic love) in that it is rational, practical, fully aware of the alternatives, and not especially intense. Unlike eros, if a person loves in this way, it is unlikely that this would be an intense commitment to the other person. Love of this kind would be regarded as renegotiable if conditions change. It is quite lacking in the qualities of love that are usually thought to be the basis of the modern marital relationship. However a sexual relationship of the kind suggested by the sociobiologist could be compatible with love (if it is love) of this kind.

In most heterosexual love relationships we will no doubt experience an admixture of some or most of these different forms of love, or we may adopt different mixes at different times within the same relationship. (These are only some examples of the kinds of love we experience in a pair bond with which the sociobiologist would have difficulty; see pp.83-84). What this discussion suggests however is that love in the human pair bond is complex and that it can be of a form quite different from that suggested by sociobiology. Or at the least, I hope I

have said enough to show that the concept of love we employ in a marital relationship can involve something over and above the sociobiologist account of it. There is usually more to it than just being driven by a flow of passion, of which we are - so to speak - the passive source.

The last problem I want to discuss raised by the sociobiological account concerns the reasons that one would give for loving one's partner. We have seen that a man may be attracted by a woman's beauty or displays of care and concern for him. He may believe, further, that with such qualities she will make a good mother for his children. On the other hand, a woman might be attracted to a man because she sees that he has a robust physique, or that he wants to do things for her or wants to spend his time with her and she may assume that this is evidence of significant affinities between them. Thus she may make a conscious choice to pursue the relationship. But if a woman might say that she loves a man because of this or that character trait, wouldn't this mean that she is committed to loving anyone who has these traits?⁶² Moreover if she discovers another man who has them in greater abundance presumably the reasonable thing for her to do - if we could choose in such matters - would be to transfer her love to this other person. If she says she loves Y due to his gentleness and if Z comes along and she finds that not only is he gentle but that he has this quality (so to speak) in more abundance then why would she love Y rather than Z? Another point we need to bear in mind is that we can value specific character traits of a person but this does not necessarily mean that we love them, or that we love other aspects of their character. Or if we do love them, this would be an odd sort of love because it would seem to imply that we only love a part and not the whole person.

Might we say then that what a woman loves in a man is a particular combination of qualities that her beloved

has? Unfortunately this does not get us very far. It just adds to the difficulty of the earlier response to the question: what does the lover love? The earlier answer was 'his particular qualities'. Now the answer is 'the combination of these qualities'. This falls prey to the same objection. If it is a combination of traits, someone may come along with a better set of the same combination.

A further reason why it does not do to say that we love someone because of a specific quality or combination of qualities is that this would seem to mean that he is only loved for as long as he retains these qualities. What if he loses them? Will he no longer be loved? And if he is still loved, why? It might be objected also that this seems to make the mixture of a person's qualities measurable and quantative. It is as if, of the various combinations of qualities a person has, one person could have more or less of the combination than another. Now while it might make sense to say of one quality, e.g. a robust physique, Y is better than Z, surely we cannot claim this of the indefinitely extended and uniquely different combination of qualities each individual has.

If this is correct and we cannot account for our choice due to beliefs we have concerning our partner's qualities, might we say that we love them for their own sake? In other words, one does not need to know which qualities one loves in order to love the other person; one loves that person for themselves alone. I think this is the correct answer. Our love generally directs itself towards persons rather than their attributes (sociobiological or otherwise). A particular trait or combination of traits may have been the cause of the initial attraction. But at some point in the relationship, our love is given to the beloved for the unique person he is, and not to an isolated trait or class of traits. Our love develops and is focused on the

other, *qua* person. To put this point in a different way: even if a person could be analyzed into the sum of his or her parts, it is his or her particular totality that we normally love, not a balance sheet of positive and negative qualities. If all of this is correct, it would then serve to excuse the typical inability we have in saying which qualities in one's beloved constitute the grounds for our loving them. It is not just that one lacks the skills needed to explain what it is one loves in the nature of the other person, one loves them because they are the very complex person they are.

Unfortunately, however, the proposal is not as perspicuous as it might at first seem. We do not justify why in a marriage, a spouse X is expected to continue her relationship with spouse Y by responding 'Because of the sort of person Y is'. The answer appears to beg the question. Further if the beloved becomes a 'different person' say, due to Alzheimer's disease, if we continue with the relationship it is probably out of loyalty to the person he once was; to the shared history and memories of better times. We do not necessarily have to love the person he is. Our choice to continue with the relationship could be based upon the person 'he was' or used to be.

It might be objected that the above discussion is too voluntaristic and rationalistic. One could love someone without saying that this is because of the sort of person he is; and even if there are reasons (which one might be able to give) one cannot **choose** whether or not to love someone on the basis of them, for we cannot **choose** to love them or not. For the moment let it suffice to say that one can choose whether or not to start or to continue with a loving relationship and reasons of this kind - one loves them due to the person they are - might be a sufficient explanation of why we have so decided.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the view that long-term pair bonding is natural. Human beings are a pair bonding species. However the discussion has been primarily about sex in such a relationship, not about marriage. At the moment, it is difficult to see where marriage fits into the picture. On the one hand, if we were to understand the sociobiologist to be saying that monogamous marriage is natural for us (i.e. an exclusive pair bond for life is natural) we might wonder why we go through all of the complications of making this a legally binding relationship. Why should a couple be required to make a public and legally binding promise to love each other 'for as long as they both shall live'? Why not simply pair bond for life? On the other hand, if we are not naturally monogamous - and this is an implication we drew in the earlier discussion (particularly for males) - then monogamous marriage seems to fly in the face of our natural inclinations. If it is not natural for us to sustain the exclusive pair bond, why should we want to bind ourselves to another person with vows and a legal contract of the kind we find in monogamous heterosexual marriage?

Chapter Two

Arguments for the marriage tradition

Monogamous heterosexual marriage is part of the prevailing mores in western (Christian) societies. From early childhood we are made aware of the fact that marriage plays a large, if not major role, in the lives of most men and women. We are encouraged to think that it is the best setting for a long-term heterosexual pair bond; it is the relationship traditionally accepted as being most appropriate for adults who love each other and desire to secure their love. We are persuaded that, once married, both of the spouses sexual needs will be met within this relationship.¹ It is supposed also to be the best setting for the procreation and rearing of children; their parents need to be married for the children to enjoy a secure family life.² Moreover the traditional type of marriage gives each of the partners economic and residential advantages, it is supposed to meet certain of their religious convictions, and to serve a number of other important social functions.³ In assessing marriage as an institution in which a rational person might choose to - or choose not to - participate, we need to consider if these alleged advantages really do apply today. (Let me stress again I will confine my discussion to the main characteristics of marriage within western Christian culture.⁴)

Normative traditions

We are born into a world in which there are existing rules, norms of behaviour, beliefs about the acceptable and unacceptable ways in which relationships between people ought to be conducted, and so on. From infancy onwards we learn such norms - by practice rather than by learning a body of theoretical knowledge; they are reinforced (either directly or indirectly) by our

parents, peers, teachers and most other influences on our upbringing. In such an environment, for instance, boys and girls are usually brought up to conform to stereotypical roles. By following the examples of their parents and other adults, through watching television, reading books, etc., children are presented with a fairly consistent picture of the particular types of behaviour which are thought to be appropriate to men, and those which are appropriate to women. Of course, the norms in our society change and are changing all of the time. However, speaking generally, at present we may say that things such as mending appliances, cleaning the car, mowing the lawn, are deemed to be mainly male activities, whereas doing the housework, the shopping, looking after the baby, are typically thought to be part of the female domain. There are also different typical attitudes and mannerisms that are expected. For instance (until recently) crude and loud behaviour on the part of a man was acceptable ('he is just being manly') but not when such behaviour was displayed by a woman; they were usually expected to be less assertive, quiet, and even submissive. Of course there are many notable exceptions to these norms both at the individual and the group level. Nevertheless they indicate the way in which behaviour and attitudes between the genders are expected to vary.

Many of our unreflectively held moral beliefs - 'tell the truth', 'keep your promises', 'do your fair share of work in a joint enterprise', 'be loyal to your family and friends' - are acquired from our early social environment. Usually these beliefs are not stated explicitly. It is not a matter of understanding their rationale. We are not taught why they are the required conduct or why they are right or wrong. We are told simply that we must conform to such practices, for they are norms of behaviour which are generally accepted and practised. If an individual fails to comply with them,

they can suffer social condemnation and ostracism. On the other hand, they are also empowering practices, in that it is thought that by acting in accordance with them, members of the society are more likely to live happy and contented lives.

On most occasions most of us unreflectively conform to the existing practices in which we were raised. The tradition informs our day-to-day view of things. Very often this delineates important aspects of the character of individuals who belong to the same tradition. They are united due to their shared attitudes, behaviour, moral outlook or a common world view. As a result there are many ways in which we can recognize them as belonging to the same tradition. We see it in their behaviour and gestures; for instance, the way they greet each other. We see it also in their rituals and ceremonies, the way that important occasions like birth, death, and marriage, are commemorated. There is, this is to say, a 'common wisdom' of the proper way to respond to particular events in life.⁵ These in turn create a sense of belonging. They enable members of a tradition to recognize and be at ease with each other. Similarly, most people have wants, hopes, plans that accord with the established practices; they have goals that are traditionally accepted as legitimate goals and they adopt the customary means to achieve these goals. Hence the mores may be said to shape how we think about many things, and it is manifest in many different aspects of our behaviour.

There can be no doubt, also, that the normative tradition in which we are raised strongly influences (if not determines) many of our choices and actions. So that though we may seem to be choosing and acting voluntarily, often the choices we do make are due to the factors which have influenced our development. Or more cautiously, we might say that the tradition often provides the framework in which we make our choices; it determines which of the several alternatives we may select. And, moreover, this

framework is something beyond our control.

Opposed to the overly deterministic tone of this account, it might be asked: what about those who deliberately choose not to participate in a given norm or custom? Most individuals can and do think critically about at least some aspects of the tradition in which they have been raised; they can and do make choices which are opposed to their received norms or values, and they can act accordingly. However, it could be pointed out that such an opposition usually arises in a situation where the expectations of individuals are disappointed by a generally accepted tradition; it is thought to be failing them, or breaking down. But whatever the cause may be, the most strident critics of a tradition cannot live completely outside of it. If they did, there would be nothing for them to criticize since they would be ignorant of what the tradition expects them to do.⁶ Or to put the point in another way: they can only recognize a problem as a 'problem' because they are aware of the tradition. Thus it seems plausible to argue once again, that the latter determines their range of choices, some of which they reject. All of this implies that we cannot be wholly indifferent to the mores within which we are brought up, or in which we live and operate. We are all creatures of our social environment. For most of us, who live our lives within the established framework however, the society is morally untroubled. And since most people in a society, although they conform to it, are not aware of its existence, we might say (figuratively) that the mores has achieved its purpose.

Monogamous heterosexual marriage, we noted, is part of the prevailing mores of western (Christian) societies. It is one of the most important and pervasive features of our tradition.⁷ Our understanding of the relationships between people, the stereotypical roles of both men and women and of what is considered right and wrong conduct for them, owes a lot to this institution.⁸ It is

important to emphasize that many of the more obvious features of the traditional marriage still persist today and are built into our beliefs and expectations. They are reinforced in films, on television soap operas, in a wide range of literature - from the books of a literate minority to popular women's magazines - in popular songs, and either implicitly or explicitly in a vast number of other things. All of these influences say much the same thing.

Firstly, (and speaking generally) when a couple decide to get married they are doing something worthwhile. We approve of most features of this kind of relationship. We think - perhaps wrongly - that when a couple get married, they have intentionally undertaken something valuable; they have done something we regard as good and as a result their lives should be changed for the better. Similarly, we think that those who have a long and happy marriage have something really worth having.

At the same time, however, we think that marriage is a choice (among alternatives) for those couples who desire this. They can marry or not. Also they can choose to become unmarried; divorce is tolerated more than it was a generation or so ago.⁹ It is thought by most people to be an acceptable solution to severe marital difficulties.¹⁰ The high incidence of divorce, however, seems to reflect disappointment with a particular marital partner not with the institution of marriage itself.¹¹ For despite the options to married life that are open to them, the vast majority of people choose to marry at some time in their lives; few eligible adults decline the opportunity altogether.¹²

There are a number of other ways to support the claim that 'getting married' and 'being married' are generally thought to be worthwhile. In the former case, a simple way this approval can be seen is in the custom of congratulating the couple when they marry. It would

be strange if whenever anyone gets married we expressed our sorrow, or we thought that this would mean that their lives will be changed for the worse. Generally we think that for two people to get married, is something worth their doing. On the other hand, in the case of 'being married', one way our general approval is manifest is in our attitude nowadays towards the increasing number of divorces.¹³ Although, as we noted, divorce is no longer attended by the sense of moral shame and disapproval that used to accompany it, nonetheless divorce is often presented in a manner that suggests that the rise in the divorce rate is a social problem.¹⁴ But it is a problem only if there is something wrong with the breakdown of a marriage. If a couple divorce, we still feel that something distressing has happened to them. This is not just because of the unhappiness to the former partners that usually accompanies the divorce but is also due to the breakdown of something that we deem to be of value.

Marriage is, in these senses, a commendatory term.¹⁵ There are, of course, more neutral ways of using the term. A social scientist, for instance, might describe the marriage relationships of a community without implicitly or explicitly approving of the institution. Nevertheless the implication is that a community who has marriage as a part of their mores, considers that it involves something desirable. For them, like us, 'marriage' is a commendatory term in that it implies that the institution is deemed to be worthwhile both by those who are married and by the society at large.

Although generally we think that marriage is worthwhile, this does not mean that everyone about to get married, or the marriages of all of the people we know, can be regarded in this light. We might think, for instance, that X and Y should not be getting married, they are too young, they are not compatible, and so on. Similarly we speak of X and Y having 'a poor marriage' when we think that a good institution is being spoiled,

or we may talk of them having 'a bad marriage' when we think that much of what is going on in the relationship is destructive. We even say, figuratively, of a particular relationship that 'the couple do not have a marriage at all'. But these are exceptions that prove the rule. This is to say, we would not condemn such conduct or bemoan the relationship unless we thought that such things can and should be improved. We may say 'X and Y have a bad marriage' in virtue of the belief that marriage is something worthwhile and there is an implication that we have in mind some conditions that together make it worthwhile. To put the point in a different way: we have an idea of some of the conditions required for a relationship to be a good marriage and it is the latter that is thought to be really worthwhile.

When I say that generally we think that marriage is worthwhile, it might be asked: worthwhile for what? The question suggests that 'worthwhile' is a relational notion, and that what is regarded as being worthwhile is relative to some further end. It is only when we know what the latter is that we can identify what it is about marriage that makes it worthwhile. For the moment, I hope it will suffice to say that if the relationship is regarded in this way - i.e. as being worthwhile to achieve a further end - then this is because it is thought to contribute significantly to the overall happiness of the couple's lives. We think that they will live or have lived more rewarding lives as a result of this relationship, or at the least that they would have fared less well without it.

An alternative answer to the question above would be that the relationship just is worthwhile in itself. Marriage itself is of intrinsic value. At first blush, this answer seems unsatisfactory if only for the reason that the claim is contested. As we shall see in Chapter Four, several writers claim that the institution (itself) is anything but worthwhile. When a claim about the

self-evident value of a thing or institution is denied, the key assumption (of its self-evidence) is forfeit. However there might be certain conditions conceptually connected to the relationship of marriage that are uncontroversially worthwhile.

The marriage contract

I claimed earlier that many aspects of the tradition still influence our beliefs, attitudes, and decisions about marriage today. One obvious feature is the belief that long-term heterosexual relationships need to be strengthened and sustained by a legal contract. This I take to be a necessary and sufficient condition for a relationship counting as a marriage: there must be a legal (or in some cultures a quasi-legal) contract that is agreed to by both of the partners in the relationship.

With this contract in view, the law is required, for instance, to ensure that the couple are of an age at which they are able to cope with marriage. Every State has a minimum age for marriage without parental consent and most have a lower age at which young people are not permitted to marry even if they have parental consent. The law's intervention here is quite reasonable; a minimum standard of personal competence is required by any legal contract, including marriage. A person must be of a sufficient intellectual capacity and emotional stability to know what he or she is doing. This is one good reason why children are prohibited from marrying. Moreover, the burdens of marriage are thought to be too heavy for a young person to bear. There is ample empirical evidence to support this view. Couples who marry in their teens, for example, are almost twice as likely to divorce as couples who are older.¹⁶

Secondly, the law is thought to be needed to prevent a couple from marrying when they are in a close kinship relation.¹⁷ For instance, the law in Scotland prohibits women from marrying their father or their grandfather,

their son or their grandson, whether this is by a blood relationship or by adoption. They may not marry their brother - full, half, or step - or their uncle or nephew. Males are prohibited from marrying the equivalent female relatives.¹⁸ Presumably the original justification of these prohibitions was the fear of the consequences of incest. Every culture has rules prohibiting incest. It is often suggested that such rules have a genetic function.¹⁹ As we noted, the richer the variety of the infant's gene pool, the less likely he or she is to manifest certain inherited diseases. Further, we noted that incest restraints force young people to leave the family in search of a mate. This results in the cross-bonding of families and in cultural cross-fertilization which enhances the gene pool. However prohibitions against incestuous relationships are far older than our understanding of the laws of genetic inheritance so this explanation would not account for the origin of the ban. Besides while genetic considerations may apply to consanguineous relations, some of the persons prohibited from marrying one another - adopted brothers, ex-fathers-in-law - have no blood-ties whatsoever.²⁰

To justify the prohibition of a young person marrying someone who is a close adult relative, however, it could be pointed out that within a family, young people are vulnerable to adult sexual exploitation. At the same time, adults within a family are usually responsible (and held to be responsible) for the protection and support of immature young family members. In the light of this, strong sanctions are needed to protect children from sexual exploitation in familial relationships. Thus it seems reasonable to argue, for instance, that because of the value placed on trust and support of children by adults in such contexts, the former ought to be excluded from the arena of sexual competition for the latter. (For parallel reasons, the ethical code of, for instance, the medical profession

prohibits doctors from taking sexual advantage of those in their charge.)

A third legal condition which has to be satisfied before they marry, is that neither party may already be in the state of matrimony.²¹ In western culture, marriage is a monogamous relationship. There are severe penalties for those who commit bigamy. From the evidence to hand, this offence is usually the result of someone not bothering to get a divorce from their estranged spouse before remarrying.²² Although in some cases, a person (usually a man) maintains separate wives and families in different places, neither of whom know about the other.²³

A number of quite general reasons might justify this prohibition and the punishment given for its transgression. One reason is that usually the joint ownership of property, money and related matters are part of the marital arrangement between the couple. If it turns out that one of them has been lying about their personal circumstances unbeknown to the other, then this is likely to cause considerable harm to the financial interests of the innocent party. More importantly, in the marriage contract both pledge 'to forsake all others' in an exclusive, lifelong relationship. Both partners assume that the other is telling the truth about the details he or she has given about themselves and that they can be relied upon and trusted in this regard. If it is discovered that one of them has lied and is already married, this is most likely to result in a major crisis in the life of the other, due to the violated trust and thwarted expectations. Considerations like the above, give rational support to the legal prohibition and punishment of bigamy.²⁴

Presumably the marriage contract (itself) is thought to be needed to protect the interests of both parties once they are in a long-term pair bond. It (the contract) establishes certain legal rights and duties between a husband and a wife; rights and duties with

reference to the person with whom the marriage is contracted and against the world. By the latter I mean that the couple are legally entitled to particular types of behaviour from other people, in relation to themselves. Also they can expect certain types of behaviour from each other that other people cannot claim. Otherwise the contract itself (in western societies anyway) is quite unlike most legal contracts. It cannot be amended, or parts omitted to suit the preferences of the couple concerned. Its provisions are largely unwritten. Its penalties are unspecified. Prospective spouses, moreover, are not usually informed of the terms of the contract. As a result many of its implications will be unknown to most of the contracting parties. At the same time, by assenting to the marital contract the couple publicly accept certain formal obligations for the rest of their lives. In most cases, no doubt they do so unreflectively. They are simply conforming to the existing social/legal practices in which they have been raised. It seems reasonable to speculate that some individuals would not agree to the contract if they were fully aware of the body of reciprocal obligations that the law and judicial decisions have established, to which they commit themselves.²⁵

Of main interest to us in this essay are the following three legal requirements. Firstly, the couple are legally obliged to engage in an exclusive sexual relationship. This condition is assumed to be necessary and to follow from their having been granted a marriage licence. Both of the partners' sexual needs, moreover, are expected to be met within the marriage. Also the marriage contract commits both of them to a monogamous relationship. They contract to give exclusive sexual rights to each other for as long as they both live.

Just as pervasive as the legal contract in this context, are the informal norms and customs which are powerful exponents of pressures upon the marriage

partners. The nature and extent of the pressure differs among social groups. But as we noted, there is a (traditional) range of attitudes, values and conduct into which we are all socialised from infancy, that influence us to behave in the preferred ways when we are married. Again they are fixed habits of thought and patterns of feeling rather than arguments; they may not occupy the forefront of our minds when we think and act but they appear to limit and guide the alternatives that present themselves to us in marriage. In this regard having sexual affairs outside of marriage is still generally considered to be morally wrong.

A second legal requirement central to the marriage contract concerns children. The couple are legally expected to support any children which may result from their union. Various laws associated with the marital contract stipulate the rights and duties that the couple undertake, if and when they have children.²⁶ Further, the norms or customs in this context are very pervasive: the mother, as we will see, is still deemed to be primarily responsible for their children's well-being, while the father is still expected to go out to work to earn the money to keep them all.

A third requirement I wish to highlight is the legal obligation for the couple to establish and maintain a shared household.²⁷ In the tradition, we noted, the husband is expected to be the main breadwinner and to provide for the material needs of his wife and family.²⁸ Possibly as a result of this, he is considered to be the head of the matrimonial household, by law as well as by custom. His wife takes on his name and status and within limits is subject to his authority. On the other hand, also in this tradition, the wife is expected to perform certain services, such as taking the main responsibility for doing the shopping, cooking and cleaning.²⁹

Let us look at some of the arguments which may be used to persuade a rational person of the value of these

legal and social requirements.

The sexual justification for the traditional marriage

We noted that one important condition for which the marriage contract was required, concerned the sexual relationship between a couple. In the past anyway, a couple were expected to refrain from sexual intercourse prior to marriage and they were and are required nowadays both legally and morally to engage in an exclusive sexual relationship with each other upon getting married. And there seems to be good grounds for all of these constraints.

Consider, first, the traditional requirement that sexual intercourse should not take place before marriage. In the recent past, there was a strong norm in the mores that one should be faithful - in advance so to speak - to one's prospective spouse by 'saving oneself' sexually for them alone. This was especially the expectation for women. The convention (until recently anyway) was that it is immoral for a full sexual relationship to occur between two people who are not married. It did not matter whether they did so with every intention of marrying at a later stage. When the couple vowed to be faithful this was considered to be a confirmation of their past chaste sexual conduct. And there were laws that tried to guarantee this norm. For example, if a man asked for a woman's hand in marriage but then before the wedding reneged on the engagement, he could be sued for breach of promise. One of the supporting reasons seems to have been that (despite the social prohibition) the would-be groom might have taken sexual liberties with his bride-to-be. If he broke off his engagement she would have to return to the marriage market 'sullied' since she might no longer be a virgin.

In support of the traditional view also it was recognized that women (particularly teenage girls) could make a disastrous mistake by having sexual intercourse

before marriage. Sex before marriage sometimes involved deception and exploitation by one or the other partner, usually the man of the woman, for his own sexual gratification.³⁰ A typical case seems to have been where a man, in order to get a woman to have sexual intercourse with him, would dishonestly tell her that he loves her or that he intends to marry her, and as a result of this, she would surrender herself sexually to him. More importantly, a single act of sexual intercourse could result in the female becoming pregnant, which could in turn lead to misery due to the unwanted pregnancy. Single motherhood placed a great burden on a young woman and her child; as well as the strong social stigma associated with this state, many young women had a precarious financial existence.

I should add that in the past, methods of contraception were either unavailable or quite unreliable. So contraception was not a dependable way of avoiding unwanted pregnancy. It might be countered that this was a problem in the past; nowadays techniques of birth control have reached new levels of efficiency so that sexual intercourse may take place with little likelihood of pregnancy. And since with readily available and safe contraception, a woman can avoid becoming pregnant, if sexual intercourse is entered into responsibly by both partners, surely this is no longer a good reason why it should not occur premaritally.

However it could be pointed out that despite the availability of reliable contraceptives, in recent times the number of premarital pregnancies have increased.³¹ No doubt the causes for this increase are complex. Any list of contributing factors would have to include a variety of social conditions, like the fact that the media is filled with representations of casual sex, which in turn could result in a casual attitude towards contraception. Another contributing cause might be the fact that abortion is legally permitted and in most western

countries is quite easily obtained. Given such factors, together with the normal conditions of adolescence (lack of maturity and responsibility, peer pressure to engage in sexual intercourse, etc.) it is little wonder that premarital pregnancies abound.

However there is a stronger *a priori* line of argument which attempts to show why premarital sex is wrong. Young unmarried people must lack the appropriate level of responsibility for a satisfactory sexual relationship. Scruton (1996) tries to give philosophical support for this view.³² Firstly, he (1996:84) claims that our sexual development cannot be separated from our development as persons. Thus how we learn to deal with our sexuality when we are young is crucial to the kind of persons we become as adults. Our beliefs and attitudes concerning sex contribute, for good or bad, to our adult sense of self-worth and dignity. From this, Scruton (1996:85) goes on to claim that only an upbringing in which one abstains from sexual intercourse will yield the desired level of self-worth and dignity. On the other hand, if the preferred kind of attitude is not developed, sex is likely to be regarded as being a merely physical act, which in turn may lead us to use our bodies indiscriminately to satisfy our sexual needs whenever they arise. With this in mind, Scruton (1996:84) writes:

The child [ought to] regard his body as sacred, and as subject to pollution by misperception or misuse.

In other words, to engage in sexual intercourse when we are immature could lead to a lack of respect for our own bodies (and by extension, a lack of respect for ourselves).

From this perspective, sexual intercourse ought only to be experienced by mature, well-adjusted persons. For only in such cases is it likely that all aspects of the individual's 'personhood' will be involved - the right or appropriate emotions, thoughts, desires. In this way

Scruton (1996:87) claims:

...the self and its responsibility [ought to be] involved and indissolubly linked to the pleasures and passions of the body.

In short, a person's whole being needs to be involved when sexual intercourse occurs. Furthermore only when the act is experienced in this way, is a person likely also to see his or her sexual partner as a complete personality - not just an object to be used for their own gratification - and this in turn implies respect for one's partner. Thus to engage in acceptable sexual relationships requires firstly, that we have the appropriate level of maturity to engage our whole personality in the act and, secondly, that we genuinely care for and respect the other person; we do not merely desire their body. And for these reasons, Scruton (1996:85) writes, we ought to impede the sexual impulse

...until such a time as it may attach itself to the inter-personal project...of union with another person...

For so long as the two conditions are not met, we ought not to have sexual intercourse.

At first blush, we might think that there is something in the claim that the sexual act needs to be integrated into the wider emotional and intellectual life of a person. But this does not lead to the conclusion that sexual activity ought only to occur within marriage. All that is necessary is that a would-be lover has not only sexual desire for the other person but genuine feelings of affection for them. So on Scruton's account there seems to be no reason why couples - cohabiting couples, long-term lovers - in whom the appropriate affection as well as passion is present, should not have sexual intercourse.

But Scruton (1996:85) goes on to claim that when we consider the changeableness of human desire, how men - and to a certain extent women - are prone to philander,

in order to prove that we genuinely care for and respect our sexual partner, we need also added guarantees of sincerity and fidelity. And only marriage can provide these guarantees. Hence a mature couple who are in a long-term pair bond should not have intercourse because they will lack the trust and reliance that can only be found in matrimony. If these arguments seem to be familiar it is perhaps because many of us were traditionally brought up to value chastity for reasons not dissimilar to those above.

Of course Scruton's confident assertions contain a number of assumptions that could be contested. It might be counter-asserted, for instance, that sex does not need to be taken so seriously. Amongst other things, it can be a means by which we express our love. On the other hand, it can be argued that amongst consenting adults there is no good reason nowadays why sexual activity should not be engaged in simply for pleasure, it may be just the desire to have contact with another person's body and the pleasure which is derived therefrom. If it is enjoyable and safe and no-one else gets hurt, why not do it?

Further, why should an unmarried person be obliged to involve herself in the moral soul-searching about sex that Scruton requires, as opposed to any other aspect of her life? She might say: 'No doubt sexual relationships are very important to some people and need to be an interpersonal project for them but if others think differently, who is to say they should not?' Even if it could be shown that loving sex within a marriage is better - more pleasurable or fulfilling than loveless sex (which as we will see, is forcefully denied) - what is the moral significance of the difference? If both partners are consenting adults who take the necessary precautions against pregnancy and disease, and no-one else gets hurt, it is unclear why a non-married couple should not engage in sex for pleasure if they choose.

A corollary of this counter-claim is that just because some (or even many) young couples behave irresponsibly prior to marriage by having casual or unprotected sex and this results in unwanted pregnancies, this should not be a sufficient reason to require that all non-married couples should be obliged to restrict their sex lives to intercourse within marriage. The solution lies in education and easy access to birth control, not in harsh prohibitions. In which case, on this argument non-marrieds have no obvious obligation to remain chaste; or what seems to be even worse, to get married in order to have sex.

For there is another side to the counter-claim against Scruton. As we shall see, a good sexual relationship is considered to be one of the important bases for a good marriage (see pp.226-233). But this seems to be a sound reason why people should see they are sexually compatible with one another before they commit themselves in marriage. On the other hand, surely young people should not enter marriage - as many of them seem to have done in the past - merely to satisfy their growing desire to have sexual intercourse with each other.³³ Erotic love whilst it may be intense does not always develop into the sort of love which is necessary for a couple if they are to achieve a good marriage. For such reasons, it might be claimed that the restrictive social attitude towards unmarried people having sexual intercourse is not justified.

Lastly, we have noted the claim that if sex is not discouraged before marriage, this will increase the possibility of deception and exploitation by one or the other partner (to strive to have intercourse simply for his or her own sexual gratification). But while it may be true that people can suffer in such ways in sexual relationships before or outside of marriage, surely it is equally true that the same or similar things can happen inside marriage. Just because sex is safely confined to

marriage and hedged-around with legal and social safeguards, this does not mean that sex will be morally unproblematic in the marital setting.

Let us briefly turn to a second legal aspect concerned with the set of reciprocal sexual obligations which apply as a result of marriage. As we noted, both of the partners sexual needs are expected to be met within the marriage. To this end, it is thought that husbands and wives should be sexually available to one another and be responsive to each other's reasonable sexual approaches. (What is held to be 'reasonable' is beyond the scope of this chapter.) However some measure of sexual intercourse is expected and this expectation is reinforced as a legal right of each spouse. Thus to refuse to engage in sexual intercourse from the beginning of the marriage is grounds for annulment (both according to Canon Law as well as Civil Law). In effect, to marry and then to deny sex is considered fraudulent; if one of them refuses to meet this expectation, they have deceived the frustrated partner. Withholding sex for too long a period at a later stage in the marriage is also seen as a serious breach of their legal contract. It is possible to sue for divorce on the grounds of 'unreasonable behaviour'.³⁴

However we might question the entitlement of a law that requires each to be sexually available to the other within the marriage. Despite her disinclination or aversion to the sexual act with her husband, at some times in the marriage a wife is required by law to be sexually available to him. A worrying implication of this is that it seems to make rape impossible in marriage. For a husband can always defend his demand for sexual intercourse with his reluctant wife in terms of his legal entitlement. Let it suffice to say for the moment that rape can be a particularly offensive form of marital violence. Most of us would go on to say that rather than being a justified legal requirement, changes

in the law are required to permit charges to be brought by wives in such instances, just as they can in cases of other forms of abuse (see pp.243-246).

This brings us to the third aspect of sex which seems in the past to have been used to justify the marriage contract. It concerns the pledge in the marriage vow 'to forsake all others'. Husbands and wives commit themselves to confine their sexual activities to the marriage; they contract to abstain from sexual relationships outside of their marriage.³⁵ There are many reasons for this. For the moment we might try to find rational support for the demand for fidelity merely in the fact that adultery is an obvious breach of the contract; a violation of an aspect of the contract to which, it seems quite reasonable to believe, both partners have knowingly and willingly consented. Their marriage contract was a plain sign to each of them - and to the rest of the world - of their acceptance of the requirement of sexual fidelity.

But this response begs the question: for we want to know if a promise of sexual exclusivity should be a matter for a legal contract in the first place. This is to say, we might question if the law should have an interest in this aspect of the sexual behaviour of the married couple? At first blush, it might seem to be merely a relic of our legal/cultural history when, as I suggested, the concern seems to have been that any acts of sexual intercourse could result in an unwanted pregnancy. But it seems difficult to justify the contract in these terms in modern times when sexual intercourse - outside of marriage - can be safely engaged in and need not lead to conception. But clearly there is more to the demand for exclusivity than this. (We will discuss this in detail in pp.247-258.)

The marriage contract is needed for children

A related matter which is used to justify the

marriage contract, we noted, concerns reproduction.³⁶ The contract stipulates certain rights and duties the couple accept, if and when they have children. Not all marriages produce children of course - and not all children are born within marriage - but at some point in marriage nearly every couple will decide whether or not they will try to have children. (Usually their decision on this matter is revealed by their adopting methods of contraception in order to avoid having children.) If they do have them, the care and upbringing of their children becomes a central element in the laws relating to their marriage and thereby is used to justify the need for a contract.

Earlier we questioned if the law should be entitled to regulate the private lives of individuals (in their sexual relationship). It seems that here we find a good reason for it doing so. For it was suggested in Chapter One that women are naturally inclined to attachment and dependence on men during their childbearing years; and at the same time, men are naturally inclined to engage in many sexual affairs. As a result, at least prior to effective contraception, they could go around fathering children with no accompanying commitment to their partner's or to their offspring's support. So at least some form of legal requirement seems to be justified as a response to this 'natural state of things'. The law is needed to tie men down to the job of protecting, helping and maintaining their wives and families, during their progeny's infancy and the woman's childbearing years. Hence it might seem that the traditional marriage contract can be defended by an argument based upon the advantages for women and children.

However what the argument above more exactly suggests is that laws relating to the rearing of children need to be binding on fathers by virtue of their being parents, not on men and women by virtue of their being married. We need the law to ensure that men - married or

single - should be subject to legal penalties and social disapproval if they are found not to have fully accepted the responsibility of fathering a child. In other words, given the concern is for the protection of women and children, we need laws to make sure that they are as materially secure as possible if men try to avoid these responsibilities.³⁷ But there is another side to this coin. If the law is required to protect women and their children - i.e. to make sure that fathers help and maintain their families - we would not seem to need laws binding women to men (as we find in the present marriage contract) since - if this aspect of the sociobiological thesis is correct - a woman, being vulnerable and dependent during this period, would need and want to keep the relationship going with the father of her children.

However, we find in the sociobiological account also a possible justification for men wanting to tie women down to a legal contract, (in a way that is different from the reasons why women might want to tie men down). Men need a legal contract in order to control their mate - who, if the sociobiologist is correct, are by nature mildly philanderous - so that they (men) can identify their children as their own, which women, unconstrained, cannot be relied upon to allow them to do. Women, by virtue of the nature of pregnancy and childbirth, are able to identify their own offspring and to commit themselves to them, knowing the infant to be their own. Men are not. To put the point differently: in Hume's (1911:268) words,

...in order to induce the men to...undergo cheerfully all the fatigues and expenses, to which [marriage] subjects them, they must believe that the children are their own...

In other words, this aspect of the marriage contract can be defended by an argument based on the advantages for men. They need to be certain of their paternity so that they are sure it is indeed their progeny in whom they are

investing their time and resources and, in some cases, who will inherit their wealth.³⁸ A legal contract with their mate might be thought to be taking steps in this direction.

This seems also to be a plausible candidate for the exclusivity clause in the contract which is aimed at limiting sexual relationships to one's marital partner. It seems to be justified due to the unacceptable consequences that might result for either partner when pregnancies occur from non-marital sexual affairs. Further, it might be argued that we need to commit ourselves legally, in particular, since the cooperation of both partners is required when having and raising children. On these grounds alone, we might think that there are good reasons for the State still setting a legal framework for the monogamous long-term pair bond. The law is needed to ensure that both the father and the mother take the responsibilities of parenthood seriously.³⁹

However we do not need to marry to take seriously the responsibilities of parenthood. Nowadays single parent families are commonplace and most of them seem well able to cope. The well-being of children might be equally well provided for by a group of women or men. There is of course no *a priori* reason why this should not be so. And even if such parenthood is regarded as undesirable, it could be argued that all that this discussion has shown is that we need laws which govern the responsibilities of adults by virtue of their being parents, not by virtue of their being married. Moreover, if the State is concerned with the best interests of children, surely it could and should grant all children as many rights as is necessary for their interests to be met, quite independently of the marital status of their parents.

One last point could be added to those above. The arguments in this context for marriage will not justify

the legal contract for either party when the couple do not have children or when their grown-up children have left the family home. If they marry only for the sake of their children there would be no obvious ground for their living together after the children have left home. And there would be little point of marriage on these grounds for couples who choose not to have a child at all.

Let us now consider the third argument I mentioned in favour of a marital contract.

Financial and domestic justifications for marriage

A quite different justification for the marriage contract concerns the fact that in most long-term pair bonds, increasingly complex financial and property arrangements develop. When a man and a woman live together they typically acquire a common dwelling, household furniture, a family car, and have many other common financial interests. It seems mutually beneficial to preserve the financial interests and property entitlements of both parties in a legal contract. The marriage contract serves in this way. It gives each of the partners an economic and residential guarantee that both of them will keep to their (mutual) financial and domestic commitments.

However even if provisions relating to financial and domestic arrangements are thought to be desirable, it could be argued that a more specifically financial or property agreement - than we find in the present marriage contract - is needed to meet these assorted desiderata. For example, if we really are concerned about the protection of both parties' financial and property interests in an unprejudiced way, presumably, in such an agreement we would try to arrange for the protection of the weaker party's interests (usually the wife's interests). We might, for instance, try to make the financially weaker of the two stronger by giving them extra powers to defend themselves in the event of a

breakdown of the pair bond. Alternatively we might try to lessen the powers of the financially stronger; or at least make rules to prevent them getting richer as a result of the breakdown. As Radcliffe Richards (1994:370) writes:

...you would...want to make sure that [women] were left as well off as possible whenever men did try to evade their responsibilities...

What these brief considerations indicate, if they are correct, is that a financial or property contract is needed rather than the more wide-ranging marriage contract.

There are many (other) provisions in the laws relating to the marriage contract which reinforce this practical aspect of the relationship. The State, for instance, legally obliges married couples to live together. Temporary separations - due to war, employment or illness - are accepted but it is expected that in normal situations the husband and wife will live together. Refusal by one partner to do this for a long period of time (when they could do so) is usually interpreted as desertion and is a reason for concluding that the marriage has broken-down irretrievably.⁴⁰

Over and above merely living together, a husband is held responsible for providing a suitable home for his wife and family. Presumably by 'a suitable home' is meant accommodation of their own, if the husband is financially able to provide it. We seem to think also that the home should reflect the husband's financial and social status. If he insists they live in a squalid apartment when he has the financial resources to provide better housing for them, this too is grounds for the wife to feel aggrieved (mental cruelty) and is a reason for concluding that the marriage has broken-down. Further, a wife has a right to be the sole mistress of the home.⁴¹ If a husband placed his mistress there, this would be treated as a breach of the marriage contract. (Similar

prohibitions would apply *mutatis mutandis* if a woman tried to introduce her lover into the home.)

But we might protest that married people might choose to live in an open sexual relationship.⁴² And so we might question if this is the proper business of the law. Of course it is the law's business only if one of the partners decides to make it so by objecting to this arrangement. Social pressures of this kind can be formidable. However, like Mill (1975:71) we might insist that the only purpose for which the law or social pressures

...can be rightfully exercised over a member of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others.

As fear of pregnancy has been removed by reliable contraception, women in such an open relationship no longer need legal protection against unwanted pregnancies; men no longer need to fear having to raise another man's child. So on the face of things, if they both agree to such a relationship, we may question if the law or society is entitled to try to regulate private lives in this way.

There are other marital and domestic advantages for men and women to be gained beyond those I have suggested so far. For instance, living on her own a woman might feel incompetent to handle the maintenance of her home, plumbing and electricity repairs, aggressive sales people, etc. On the other hand, since most housework in the traditional marriage is done by a woman, a man might choose marriage rather than put himself in a situation where his workload is almost doubled. And even if both partners feel competent to deal with every domestic aspect of living alone, the prospect of dealing with them all by themselves may seem overwhelming. However, in such cases a long-term pair bond would seem to meet the practical needs of the individuals involved just as well. It is absurd to suggest that someone who seeks assistance

with his or her domestic concerns will find this only in marriage.

In this section we have considered some of the reasons which support the legal requirements and social pressures which are given to justify the traditional marriage contract. There are of course many other such provisions which we have not discussed. I have argued that if a contract is needed to protect both partners in a long-term pair bond, it could be directed at more specific constraints on a married couple's sexual, reproductive, financial and domestic conduct, rather than the provisions which the present ubiquitous marital contract provides.

Traditional marriage and the well-ordered society

In an attempt to justify the marriage contract, something needs to be said about the value to the wider society of this relationship. When a man and a woman decide to marry, the decision may seem to them to be one that concerns only themselves or their immediate relatives and friends; so also does the decision about whether or not to have a child, to rent or to buy a house, to move from one district to another, or to stay together or to separate - all of these must seem to the couple to be decisions having consequences primarily for themselves. Yet at the same time, marriage and divorce rates increase or decrease, the population explodes or shrinks, houses and school buildings multiply or decline, the economy booms or falters; in other words, the cumulative effects of the decisions made by couples shape, for better or for worse, the whole of society. Thus it could be argued that society too has an interest in maintaining the on-going marital tradition. It is not surprising then that we find that not only through the law but also due to many other practical pressures, norms and customs, society generally exerts a clear pro-marriage influence. Speaking generally, marriage is

regarded as necessary for a stable well-ordered society.

A good discussion in support of this view - that marriages are needed for a stable well-ordered society - would need a logically and empirically sound argument setting out what such social norms and pressures might be; then we would need to consider counterfactuals about the sorts of things which might occur if the monogamous marital contract were to cease or did not exist within it, (and there would need to be evidence in support of this, not just an absence of evidence for the opposite view). However we can avoid some unnecessary exposition by considering those aspects of Rawls' (1972) account of a stable, well-ordered society which tend to show how the latter has an interest in fostering the traditional marital relationship. (Presumably factors like those discussed also reinforce the general belief people have concerning the worthwhile nature of marriage as an institution.)

On Rawls' account of the matter, a well-ordered society would seem to have an interest in preserving and encouraging marriage; or a well-ordered society is more likely to be achieved or preserved where monogamous marriage is the practice. This claim can be supported by a number of considerations we have not yet covered. Firstly, we noted that monogamous marriage regulates sexual behaviour and this has clear advantages for a well-ordered society. It is the traditional acceptable outlet for what we saw is a very strong biological force which rises up inside individuals and needs to be controlled.⁴³ Marriage is (and is expected to be) the usual relationship in which sexual activity occurs, if only because so many people are married for the major part of their lives. When people marry, moreover, they do not expect to have to compete with others for their spouse's sexual favours. They expect to be the only one in their partner's sexual life. When there is a more-or-less permanent coupling of people, as there is due to the

traditional marriage, this means that sexual competition for members of the opposite gender, jealousies, resentments, and the friction to which all of this can give rise, will almost certainly be reduced. Thus it seems reasonable to claim that it is in the interests of the smooth running of society - to avoid constant jealousy and sexual competition - that people's sexual needs are and ought to be mainly satisfied within the marital relationship.

Secondly, in the marriage contract, a spouse promises to be sexually faithful. If he or she then indulges in extra-marital sexual activity this will probably hurt his or her partner, and perhaps other members of their family, friends and associates.⁴⁴ This aspect of marriage too fits in with what Rawls has to say about a well-ordered society. He (1972:347) writes:

In a well-ordered society...when its members give promises there is a reciprocal recognition of their intention to put themselves under an obligation and a shared rational belief that this obligation is honoured.

Rawls claims not merely that we should keep our promises but that a well-ordered society will have promise keeping institutions; one facet of which (presumably) is fidelity in marriage. In other words, in a very practical way marriage reinforces the practice of promise-keeping which is necessary to a well-ordered society. (But only if we overlook the very many cases where the promise in question is broken.)

Thirdly, we have seen that monogamous marriage is thought to be the institution best-suited to the rearing of children. If this is so, this is of interest to society generally, for at least two reasons. Firstly, as we noted, infants are vulnerable, they are unable to perform the most basic tasks for themselves. In most cases within marriage, both the father and mother are glad to take on the new responsibilities for another member of the family; they are more than willing to meet

the child's need for security, nourishment, and so on. This is to say, insofar as a well-ordered society has an interest in the protection and well-being of children (as future citizens) living within it, it could be argued that a married couple, rather than other agencies in society, can best provide the necessary protective environment for them.

Again following Rawls (1972:107), for a society to be well-ordered, there needs to be adequate provision for the training and socialization of children. As they grow up, they need to be controlled and trained if they are to develop into socially well-adjusted adults. It could be argued that marriage provides an effective way of meeting the above. In the marital setting, for instance, the child shares the same name as its parents, the same home, the same neighbourhood, the same collective reputation, the same intricate 'private culture' of its parents' making. Usually the child shares the same sources of pleasure and the same areas of conflict; the same vagaries of fortune, the same losses and griefs as its parents. Also children are usually taught the appropriate (socially approved) norms, values and modes of behaviour within this relationship; for instance, the qualities of kindness and sympathy, of cooperation and forbearance, of tolerance, justice and impartiality, of generous concern for the freedom or the fulfilment of others.⁴⁵ In short, it is claimed that this is the setting within which the child's basic experience of day-to-day values is most likely to occur. Children trained in the preferred social values are necessary, Rawls (1972:491-494) writes, for them to become motivated to become citizens of a well-ordered society. In this way, the married couple, it is thought, are best-suited to fit the next generation for life in the society.⁴⁶

Clearly where children are reared by their parents, the latter will have a strong influence on them. But this is not to argue that this ought to be so. We need

to know at least if the influence is good or bad for the children. We should not overlook the fact, for instance, that instead of learning kindness and sympathy from their parents, children might learn mainly indifference and cruelty; instead of cooperation and tolerance, they might learn egotism and antagonism; instead of tolerance, dogmatism and obstinacy; instead of concern for others, the ability to dominate the other (whether by overt bullying or in psychologically more subtle ways).⁴⁷ Along similar lines, it could be argued that if children are subjected to gratuitous violence and other forms of abuse by their mother and father, there would be strong arguments for the removal of children from such parents.

A fourth value of the marriage to the wider society is that a married couple play a central role in the economic life of a well-ordered society.⁴⁸ In this regard, a married couple may be thought of in terms of a basic consuming unit (rather than a producing one). They need houses, cars, a host of gadgets and services all of which, presumably, helps to keep an economy flourishing. From a societal point of view, this is to say, married couples are important elements (probably the most important decision-makers) in the private sector economy.

Once again, it could be pointed out that nowadays there are many kinds of relationships that could equally well serve as the important economic unit. In present times, there is a wide diversity in bonding and family patterns; ranging from same sex pair bonds, to one parent families, cohabiting partners with (and without) children, and so on. Surely each would operate just as well as a basic consuming unit. Further, given these patterns of diversity, the idea of forcing the population into a single type of relationship - the 'traditional marital unit' - for economic purposes (or for the purposes of a stable and well-ordered society) would require a level of social engineering which most of us would find distasteful and would want to resist.

The Church's justification of traditional marriage

Such a sketch would not be satisfactory if something was not added concerning the influence of the Church in supporting the traditional marriage. Like most religions, Christianity has an interest in maintaining the institution of marriage. In the past, it has largely shaped family life through its control of marriage and it still has very considerable sway today.⁴⁹ In short, the laws and the mores of society have been reinforced by the religious system.⁵⁰ I will highlight just two of the arguments for marriage given by the church that we have not discussed so far.

One argument is that marriage alone provides the structure in which the couple can foster their mutual love and companionship. The authorities in the Anglican Church (*An Anglican Prayer Book* 1988:458) put the matter thus:

...in marriage alone, sex and affection find their true and lasting expression in an indissoluble relationship.

Once married, a couple have the best relationship in which to love each other. Furthermore, it seems they have a religious duty to do so (to love each other). We might question both assertions. Firstly, merely to assert that only in marriage can sex and affection find their true expression, is to beg an important question. We will see shortly that non-married couples, living in a long-term love bond, forcefully deny this. So we need independent arguments to show why this is so (if it is). Secondly, it is difficult to see how love can be a duty in the marital relationship when, perhaps for reasons for which neither of the couple are to blame, their mutual love has ceased. In other words, is a duty to love one's marriage partner coherent?⁵¹ (We will take this up also in the next chapter.)

A second claim given by the church about marriage is that it (marriage) is a sacrament ordained by God; as

such, it is a supposedly unbreakable bond between spouses. Pope Leo XIII (quoted in Fletcher 1973:39) stated the matter as follows:

...in Christian marriage the contract is inseparable from the sacrament, and for this reason the contract cannot be true and legitimate without being a sacrament as well.⁵²

It is claimed (in Christian doctrine) that God blesses each conventional marital bond and actively looks after it. It is well-known that one consequence the Catholic Church draws from this belief - that marriage is a sacrament in its own right, constituting an indissoluble union - is that divorce is wrong. And even in other denominations of the church, it is not surprising that - particularly in the past - divorce was difficult to obtain and shameful to acknowledge. But why should anyone believe that when two people marry, God blesses their union?

It might be comforting to believe this. Choosing a mate and settling down to the routine of married life is not always done without regrets. Presumably it helps if one believes that one's union is blessed in heaven. Furthermore having married this particular person, the idea that 'in God's eyes' he or she is the only one for you, sets the relationship apart from others that one might have had. For if God (omniscient and all loving) has joined one together, one's relationship must be unique and irreplaceable.

However this seems to overlook the fact that the latter will happen - the relationship will become unique and irreplaceable - without one needing to suppose that it must be due to God's benign intervention. For after they marry, a couple inevitably develop a joint history, a series of meaningful shared commitments and experiences, that in time will make their relationship seem to be unique and irreplaceable. The claim that 'in God's eyes' one's marital partner is 'the only one for

you' also would need to answer the point we made earlier - in our discussion of the implications of sociobiology - that we could be successfully matched with indefinitely many partners. Although 'the one and only' claim is still rhetorically influential, as we have seen from our discussion of sociobiology (p.21) the evidence seems to be weighted against it.

Conclusion

I hope that enough has been said in this chapter to show that society, the State and the church regard marriage as worthwhile. The State has built a framework of legal requirements and judicial decisions in order to protect this institution. However, we have seen that it is doubtful that a reflective person should accept some or all of these requirements. There are arguments which show why society generally, and the church in particular, support the tradition of marriage, and the parameters of conduct that are required by the tradition. But once again, many of these claims are not supported by good reasons. So the question remains: what possible reasons could anyone have nowadays for deciding to marry? Or to put the question in another way: why do we regard this decision as worthwhile?

Chapter Three

Some necessary conditions for a good marriage

We noted earlier how it is generally thought that when a couple decide to marry, they are doing something worthwhile and that as a result of this decision - if they have a good marriage - their lives will be changed for the better. For we noted also how those who have a good marriage are thought to have something really worth having. The problem with these claims is that whilst they may be correct, they are very general; they do not tell us, firstly, what conditions need to be met for a marital relationship to be regarded as 'a good marriage', and secondly, what it is about a good marriage that is so worthwhile. In this chapter, I want to ask what reason - or reasons, for most of the things we believe, we believe for more than one reason - could be given to support these generally held beliefs.

Clearly different people might give a wide range of sometimes conflicting reasons which they regard as important if a marriage is to be thought of as good. Some people might regard things like mutual sexual satisfaction, or having children, or having a home and family of one's own as important; others might see self-development, intensity of experience, or even honour, as vital elements of a good marriage.¹ This does not mean, however, that there are not some general criteria to which nearly everyone would agree. In this chapter I will identify the more important of them; for instance, a good marriage must meet the desire most individuals have for a close friend, or for a soulmate, or the love we feel for our partners must flourish in this type of relationship. For many, the requirement goes beyond the latter. The hope seems to be that where their love is fully reciprocated, this will integrate and (somehow) 'merge' both of them. There are conditions, in other

words, which most of us would accept to be important necessary conditions for the idea of a good marriage to apply and in the absence of which, we would find it difficult to understand why someone should regard a particular marriage to be worth having. However, we will see that all of these factors are just as relevant to long-term non-marital cohabitation as they are to a good marriage, so we will need to consider also if there is anything over and above factors which can be found in long-term cohabitation which make a good marital relationship more rewarding. I will suggest two: the kind of commitment we find in marriage and the belief that marriage will bring the couple a distinct form of happiness.

Close friends

Firstly, people marry and remain married because they hope to find in this relationship a close friend. Of course, close friendship is not something that can only be achieved in marriage. Nonetheless one of the reasons that is given to explain the decision to marry or to remain married is that close friendship is a condition that will be met in a good marital tie.² So what does the notion of 'close friendship' involve?

At its most basic, this might be seen simply in terms of a need to overcome feelings of isolation or separateness.³ It is commonly assumed that most unattached people experience a sense of isolation, of being separate from others, and they do not like this. There appears to be a need in all of us to overcome these feelings. As Fromm (1985:15) writes:

The deepest need of man...is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness.⁴

In a close friendship with a member of the opposite sex (that we find in a good marriage) we meet this need.⁵ I can think of no *a priori* reason why this should be so. It could have been the case that most of us are able to

achieve mental equilibrium in casual relationships with others, or in isolation from one another. However we do not. And we have considered an explanation of the evolutionary kind as to why this might be so. If as adults we are gene-governed to pair bond then we will be unhappy in circumstances where this condition goes unmet for a long period of time.

The desire for a close friend, however, is different from simply not wanting to be alone. It is not just a wish to remedy something lacking in one's life; it is rather the desire for a positive experience. So what does this positive notion of 'friendship' involve? Elizabeth Telfer's (1971) analysis of the relationship is informative and I shall make use of her account. She (1971:224) identifies three necessary conditions of friendship: 'reciprocal services, mutual contact and joint pursuits'.

The first condition, Telfer (1971:223) suggests, is that a couple who are friends will want to do things for each other. She (*ibid*) writes:

...there is a certain type of activity which all friends, *qua* friends, engage in: the performing of services of all kinds for some other person.

This claim is not wholly satisfactory. Obviously if one's friend is far away, due to employment perhaps, or if one's spouse is a permanent invalid, a reciprocal performing of services will not be possible. However we can modify the condition to 'a willingness to do things for each other'. A close friend must be willing to help her partner and to feel able to ask him to do things for her - the usual things, like collecting her library books, visiting her ailing mother, and unusual things, like loaning something to her that he values - and he must feel able to make the same demands of her. To put this point differently: to be close friends entails a willingness to perform such services for each other; we would not understand the use of the concept if neither

was ever willing to do so. Incidentally, it seems empirically true to say also that this arrangement cannot be too one-sided. If we put ourselves too much into our friend's debt, the relationship becomes unequal. This can put a strain on any kind of friendship. If, say, a wife is always doing things for her husband and she receives no reciprocal service, she might well resent this - which is not conducive to the continuing friendship (or in turn to our idea of a good marriage).

While 'a willingness to perform services for each other' may be necessary, obviously it is not a sufficient condition of friendship. Reciprocity of this kind is a common occurrence in all sorts of everyday relationships. As Telfer (1971:223) points out, I may regularly do some shopping for the old woman next door while she looks after my child, or I may often help a colleague by lending him a book and vice versa. This sort of *quid pro quo* activity need not mean that we are friends. It need not be done out of friendship at all but out of duty, or it may be a matter merely of one conforming to the accepted social or work practice. More importantly, friendship based only on this condition suggests it is founded on mutual usefulness whereas it would not make sense to ask of most friendships: how useful are you to one another?

A second condition Telfer (1971:225) suggests that needs to be met for the couple to be friends is that they desire, at least on some occasions, to be in one another's company and derive pleasure from this. They may desire to be with each other because they want to pursue projects with one another; or it might be due to their shared past history; 'We were playmates as children.' Or it may be because of their similar way of thinking. This is akin to Kant's (1991:216) view that to be friends the couple need to share the same intellectual and moral principles; their desire to be together may be due to a similar moral seriousness and shared moral

purpose.⁷ An association with another person which meets this condition, however, may still not be one of friendship, for it is compatible with relations we may have with non-friends. Sometimes we might desire the company of someone whom we know to be a scoundrel - and whom we do not consider to be a friend at all.⁸

In addition to the above, a third condition of friendship Telfer (1971:222) suggests is that there must be mutually satisfying, shared activities. Whatever it is they want to do with their lives, the couple are expected to want to do at least some of the important things together.⁹ They may go to the theatre or on holiday together; they may pursue joint hobbies, start a business together, and so on. These activities are supposed to be enjoyed all the more because they are carried out with each other. On the other hand, if most of the things they do are enjoyed only by one of them then we think that an important element of friendship is lacking for the bored partner.

There is still something important missing, however, from the account above. It is not enough that our friend does a service for us, wants to spend his time with us and likes to do things with us, we expect all of this to be motivated by the fact that he or she values us. 'Valuing us' is not simply a flow of feelings in which, so to speak, the owner is passive. It has an active side. It is manifest in the attitude he has towards us, positively endorsed by his behaviour towards us. He shows this not merely in giving or doing things but, for instance, in his goodwill towards us, by his showing pleasure at our presence, or by giving us support and encouragement as we attempt to realize our own projects. The point is: if the activities above are to be regarded as acts of friendship this is because we believe that our friend values us or that he feels a selfless concern for us.¹⁰ On the other hand, if X believes that Y has an ulterior motive for some assistance he has given her -

for instance, if she believes that it was really done for his self-interest or his own profit - then it would be a mistake to regard this as an act of friendship. His motives or intentions must be those of a friend.

We can make the point in another way. If they are friends, each must feel and show a genuine and significant level of care and concern for the other's welfare. We can see this more clearly when we distinguish between 'caring for' which involves emotions, motives and attitudes, and 'taking care of' which involves effective action and sometimes may not be motivated by care. When we 'take care' of someone, if we nurse them, for example, we may do so from motives other than caring for them, such as the financial reward this brings. In contrast, the notion of 'caring for' with which we are concerned follows from the idea of valuing the other person. This sentiment may be demonstrated in any number of ways. For instance, we can be moved by each other's happiness. If X's friend, Y, feels pleased, then X can feel pleased for him. If Y's pleasure is the result of an action of another party, Z, X can warm towards Z and Z's action. She will approve of what Z has done. On the other hand, if her friend Y suffers, X will feel distress for him. If the suffering is caused non-accidentally by another party, Z, she may well feel hostile towards Z or Z's actions. We think that she should morally disapprove of what Z has done.

There can be no doubt that married couples, even in a good marriage, differ in the way they value or show their care and concern for each other. There are times, no doubt, when this sentiment may be lacking or inhibited. One may be so wrapped up with one's own problems that one may overlook one's partner's distress. However if this were always to be the case - if one or both of them never cared or felt genuine concern for the happiness or well-being of the other - we would seriously doubt that they had a close friendship, to say nothing of

a good marriage.

A question which arises now is: is friendship so analysed a sufficient account of the kind of friendship we suppose to exist in a good marriage? Clearly, it is not. Firstly, our friendships, on Telfer's account, could be many and short-lived. I may well enjoy reciprocal services, mutual contact and joint pursuits with someone for only a short while, when our paths happen to run in the same direction. As a result, we often leave behind the close friends of our childhood or youth, only to find others as we embark on new paths or careers. In contrast, a close friendship in marriage is expected to be lifelong.

Secondly, friendship, on Telfer's account, could be an open relationship, one would not be overly restricted by it in the kinds of relations one could have with others. In contrast, the friendship associated with marriage is exclusive. Thus if a close friend tells me that he is in love with someone and they plan to start a new life together, it is very likely that I will be happy for both of them and supportive of their relationship. On the other hand, if my husband tells me that he is in love with someone else, or that he intends to start a new life with her, I would expect to be grief-stricken, desolate and resentful towards him and his new relationship.

Thirdly, the kind of emotions, attitudes, and affection one expects to have for a friend also differ from those which one expects to feel for one's marital partner in a good marriage. We are supposed to feel affection for the former, we are supposed to love the latter. What this indicates is that the character of the relationship is in part a matter of the kind of emotion it involves; the affection which is felt for a friend or the love felt for the beloved is in part an explanation of the differences in these relationships. This does not mean that friendship in any of its forms can be

understood simply as the immediate and spontaneous expression of an emotion; rather than transitory feelings, it is more a matter of a distinctive kind of emotional commitment. So that I may be angry with my friend (or with my husband) at a given time yet still recognize that the underlying relationship demands of me a certain kind of affection (or love) for him.

Fourthly, and more importantly, friendship, on Telfer's account, need not lead the friends to want to share confidences and intimacies - to be with someone in whom they can 'ground their being',²¹ or with whom they can be a soulmate. This is a feature which we typically expect to find in the ideal type of marital relationship. I will say more about this shortly.

A fifth difference between close friendship as described by Telfer and friendship in (a good) marriage does not concern the quality of the relationship so much as the type of commitment that accompanies it but which could well affect the nature of the friendship. In marriage, but not in non-marital friendship, love is tied with vows of commitment. This is not to deny that commitment to one's close friend is part of what is involved in this relationship. For instance, I expect to stand by my friend in his adversity just because he is my friend; and if I did not, I would not be a 'true friend'. Someone who did not understand this commitment would have failed to understand what is involved by this relationship and the kind of affection it involves. However in the case of marriage, as we shall see shortly, we have the additional complication of a formal contract, to secure our commitment to our friend in perpetuity.

Let us now look at some of these other aspects of friendship in marriage.

Soulmates

'A soulmate' is an uncommon and rather prosaic term. However it describes fairly accurately the kind of close

relationship most people regard as necessary to a good marital relationship. As in friendship, it requires that the couple desire to do things for each other, to be in one another's company, to derive pleasure from doing things together, and that there will be care and concern shown for each other. But these are minimal conditions of being a soulmate.

At the core of the desire for a soulmate is the need, which most human beings seem to have, to share their deepest thoughts and to express their innermost feelings with another person. As Troupp (1994:37) writes:

...we need a secure base...someone we can trust, who will be there for us...

As soulmates, a couple must want to share the most private parts of their lives with each other.

We can identify at least three types of intimacy in this regard, cognitive, emotional and sexual. By cognitive intimacy, I mean a full level of information about one's partner's life-history. Not only will a woman (*qua* soulmate) want to know the important details of her partner's present and past life, she will want to know what they mean to him. She will want to know most of his beliefs, plans, aspirations, moral priorities, his typical emotional states or feelings towards other persons, or towards different events or circumstances; and he will want to know the same kinds of thing about her. Further when I say that they will want to know one another's life-history and beliefs, this does not mean that they expect merely to acquire propositions about each other. What is required also is that they have the appropriate reactions to the intimacies they share. When they are intimate it is not information about thoughts and feelings that are shared but the thoughts and feelings themselves.¹²

As soulmates they will want also to have lowered all emotional barriers to each other - which presumably they

erect against other people - believing that they can trust and rely upon one another. They will want to be able to unburden themselves of their most intimate worries, fears, hopes, fantasies. Thus they will reveal things to their soulmate of an emotional nature that they would not normally reveal to anyone else (and which we think they have the right not to share with anyone at all).¹³ In other words, the idea of a soulmate requires the lowering of barriers where, as it were, one reveals one's 'true self' to the other; one's social self is stripped away.¹⁴

For such intimacy to develop, each must trust the other. A soulmate is someone who, we assume, can be relied upon without fear of censorship, ridicule or betrayal. As Kant (1991:214) puts the matter, we need to regard each other as

...one in whom we can confide unreservedly, to whom we can disclose completely all our dispositions and judgements, from whom we can and need hide nothing, to whom we can communicate our whole self.

Anything which a woman confides to her partner must not be used against her - neither for gossip or to serve his interests at the expense of hers - and vice versa. It is expected also that they are not judgemental about the intimacies they share; at least the secrets disclosed are not expected to adversely alter his opinion of her, nor her feelings for him.

The emphasis I have given so far on shared cognitive and emotional intimacies still makes this aspect of a soulmate more impersonal than one's experience of it suggests. What is missing is sexual intimacy. The kind of intimacy referred to ranges from hand-holding to sexual intercourse. A good marriage is expected to provide the framework for this most intimate aspect of friendship. Soulmates in a good marriage will want to have sexual intercourse with each other. Moreover they will hope to enjoy on-going sexual intimacies of an

intense kind, in a way that takes them into the depths of their relationship. But this involves more than the physical act. For soulmates, sexual activity is a manifestation for each of them of certain kinds of strongly felt emotion - and for each, of being the object of the same kind of emotion. Hence although the distinctively physical aspect of sex (gratification) is important, how the physical gratification is obtained, the fact it is with **this** particular individual, the degree of mutuality of the experience, the qualities of affection and tenderness expressed - all of these factors go to determine a sense of sexual satisfaction which is distinctive of their being soulmates. This is not to say, *pace* Scruton, that only soulmates can or should have sex. I suggested earlier that in many other kinds of relationships one can satisfactorily engage in sexual intercourse. The point is that in a good marriage the couple are expected to have an on-going sexual relationship; to the extent that it is lacking, we regard the relationship as deficient. This brings us to love.

Being in love

Another important factor which is co-extensive with the idea of a good marriage is that a couple love each other. We live in a culture in which the mutual love of the couple is thought to be a necessary condition for those about to marry and of great intrinsic value to an established marriage. It is a necessary condition for a good marriage. Notice I am not arguing that to be in a loving relationship one needs to be married and clearly one can be married in a non-loving (marital) relationship. But I am claiming that if they do not love each other we would deny that the couple have a good marriage. As we saw in Chapter One, we are faced with a range of contrasting types of love relationships - none of which are mutually exclusive - yet at least one of which is expected to be present in the good marital

relationship.¹⁵ To see what this might involve we need to consider again briefly the difference between being 'in love' (eros), companionate love (*philia*) and the 'wholly disinterested love that desires what is best for the beloved qua human being' (*agape*).¹⁶

In the early days of marriage the partners are expected to be 'in love'. We noted some of the feelings and emotions associated with this state. Each will have recurrent thoughts about their beloved; each is likely to regard the other as the most important person in their life. Each of them is likely to experience life more vibrantly, to feel more complete as a person, and so on. However being 'in love' is not usually a long-lasting state. Over time, the quality of love almost always changes. Once they are married for a relatively short period of time, for instance, the love a couple feel for one another will begin to lack the excitement of each discovering new things about the other. However this need not mean that love for the other person diminishes but simply that it changes. In a good marriage they will share a distinctive kind of love, which is less obsessive than being 'in love', namely companionate love.

Among other things, an adequate account of companionate love will include the different features of close friendship we have noted. Each will desire to be with the other person; to share their daily concerns with them. This desire is likely to be manifest in the pleasure each feels and shows at the other's presence. It is manifest in the care and concern they show for each other's welfare or when one of them puts the other's interests before their own. It is manifest also in the way they regard each other as soulmates; the companionate lovers will share their deepest thoughts and feelings with one another.

It might be objected that the reasons I have given for valuing companionate love in a good marriage seem to be entirely of a self-interested nature; i.e. wanting a

close friendship, a soulmate, etc. On the other hand, companionate love is usually experienced as a non-self-interested emotion. As B. Russell (1961:86) writes, when we love in this way, we

...feel the ego of the beloved person as important as own's one ego, and realise the other's feelings and wishes as though they were one's own.

Rather than loving the beloved for self-interested reasons, the lover usually regards the needs of the beloved to be of equal (or even greater) importance than her own. She can be caring and sensitive to his needs in a self-effacing way that requires little in return. This - not self-interest - is a most important ingredient in the mixture of reasons that lead us to value companionate love in marriage.

I do not regard this emphasis on self-interest to be a problem. There is a difference between entering a relationship for such reasons and the relationship being self-interested. There are a number of explanations for this. Firstly, no matter how self-interested the origins of our reasons may be, it is very probable that once we have started, we are led beyond these motives. For we can and do take other matters into account. In other words, whilst we may enter into the marriage for self-interested reasons, as it progresses, one's own interests can take a backseat to those of the relationship. Secondly, the important element driving the relationship may not be what is good for oneself but what will be good for the marriage. In this way I can put the health of the relationship before my own needs or preferences. I can choose to do things for the sake of my marriage. Thirdly, it might be that I put the marriage first for 'my own sake'. I can say 'I would be happier (myself) if I forget myself and get involved with my spouse in our relationship.' In which case there does not seem to be anything self-contradictory in one's being 'other-regarding' for one's own sake.

Alongside companionate love, in a good marriage we expect to find the form of love in which each is sensitive to the other's needs qua person, because he or she is a human being. In marriage I think this is manifest, for instance, in the respect each shows for the other's autonomy. As Midgley (1983:95) notes: 'respect is the backbone of [this kind of] love.' It is shown in the worth they accord to each other as persons. At a slightly less abstract level, agape is also seen in the empathy they show towards one another. We noted earlier how in a good marriage each of the partners will want to know - and want the other to know - all about themselves, not merely their hopes and strengths but also their fears and weaknesses. They will want nothing to be held back. As a result of this exposure to each other, it is likely that they will regard one another with compassion. Perhaps this will be based upon a realization that both are faced by a range of problems that they probably feel in private are too much for them to cope with. It is a response to what Vlastos (1962:47) calls their 'human worth'.

Obviously, there is more to a loving attitude within a good married relationship than this - I will discuss some of the other aspects more fully in the pages ahead - but those we have noted indicate again some of the different kinds of love in question. For the moment, the important point for us is that a loving relationship along the lines above is regarded as crucial to a good marriage.

Finally, I want to emphasize one point in the discussion above. I began by saying that I wanted to make clear the distinction between being 'in love' on the one hand and 'a loving relationship' on the other. I realize that most marital relationships will not always be just one of these, though one may predominate. The quality of the relationship may change in the course of time. Love often starts as a variety of feelings and

emotions. But feelings of this kind are usually short-lived and unreliable, whereas the kind of love we hope for in marriage is one which is long-lasting; in other words, companionate love or the disposition to have loving thoughts and feelings for our partner.

The desire to merge oneself with another

We noted earlier that related to the ideas of both being a soulmate and loving someone in a good marriage is the hope (many couples have) that where love and intimacy are fully reciprocated, this will integrate and (somehow) merge both of them. Often the couple desire, as Aristophanes (Plato 1970:132) declares, 'to grow together in the embrace'. This is not to be taken to be merely aspiring to a feeling of oneness but rather to a fusion of two personalities. As Plato has Aristophanes (*ibid*:134) say, that which a man really desires is

...to be united and melted together with his beloved, and to become one from two.

Through their love for each other, it seems that they hope that (somehow or other) two distinct beings will become one.

At first the idea of merging is logically odd. Two human beings cannot literally become one. No matter how close a couple are, how much they think and feel alike about a wide range of things, they are nevertheless still two distinct individuals. Furthermore, even if it were possible for two individuals to merge into one, not everyone would want this. For one reason, whatever 'merging' amounts to, if such an expectation were to be realized, it would significantly limit each partner's autonomy. As Clulow & Mattinson (1989:36) write:

Fusion, like separation, brings the fear of losing oneself.

However for the moment this is besides the point. We need to understand what the idea of 'merging' might involve to see if it is an important condition for a good

marriage. For even though we cannot make literal sense of this notion there seems to be a ring of sense about it.

To see this, we might begin by noting a point about the emotional state of people who are deeply in love. We said that most of the emotional and physical barriers between them will have disappeared so that there may not seem to be any significant demarcation lines. They may well believe that nothing could ever come between them. We might go further and allow that as this relationship grows - as the lovers construct a new life out of mutual friends, interests, goals - they become increasingly bound up with each other (in soul as well as in body) so that they feel as if they have become one. In other words, on this interpretation, the language of 'merging' might seem to be intelligible due to the intensity of the experience of being a soulmate and, perhaps, may be understood in these terms.

However 'merging' is used in this way as a metaphor. Of course the lovers must know that they are and will remain distinct people. They bring into the relationship their previous separate experiences, memories; they know that in their relationship they each will go off to their separate workplace in the morning, etc. But at the same time they each experience 'a sense of oneness' with the other. By dropping emotional and other barriers, the lovers allow each other access to the most intimate aspects of themselves. As a result, they may well have a strong and deep sense of interdependence. Furthermore in these circumstances, they open themselves also to quite a significant change in perspective and personality. The couple may claim that because of their love, and by their sharing important segments of their lives with each other, each has become a new person.

But there seems to be problems with this interpretation. Solomon, for instance, suggests that both must lose their 'own selves' so that they can become

part of a larger whole, which would be some sort of compilation of the two. He (1990:268-269) adds:

The paradox of love is this, that it presupposes a strong sense of individual autonomy and independence, and then seeks to cancel this by creating a shared identity... this goal is impossible, unachievable, even incomprehensible.

If the lovers were to reach the goal of a shared identity, Solomon claims, this would necessarily frustrate their autonomy. They cannot have both. To this difficulty, we might add Nussbaum's (1991:287) worry that if the lovers were able to become one:

...what they thought they most wanted out of their passionate movement turns out to be a wholeness that would put an end to all movement and passion. A sphere would not have intercourse with anyone...

Solomon is only correct if by 'merging' we mean that one or the other were to lose the sense of their own identity completely and merely take on the persona of the other. However we would not then be talking of merging. What would have happened is that the dominant partner would have taken over the other's personality. If their character is so dominated, moreover, it is not clear that they would have anything to give to a shared identity. A more plausible interpretation of 'merging' is that each may have a sense of their own autonomy together with an expanding awareness of their shared identity. Each may enjoy their separate identity whilst at the same time developing a mutual shared identity between them. By analogy a jacket and skirt can be regarded as two separate items or they might work very well when worn together as two aspects of the same suit or outfit.

To see the sense of this we might stress that there will be many things that a couple cannot do together; thoughts, feelings, events, experiences, which they do not share. On my interpretation, even if they share large sections of their lives, even if they are willing to merge many of their desires and wishes, there will

always be moments when their individuality - and with this their autonomy - asserts itself. Let us suppose that X wants to spend Saturdays shopping in the city, and Y detests shopping and wants them both to go to a football match. In such an inconsequential case, their separateness (or individuality) comes to the fore. If such occurrences became too frequent, they no doubt would wonder if their relationship was going to last; they might doubt that they were going to 'make it' as a couple. Very often when they find this happening the value they place on their relationship pulls them back (so to speak), since they determine to give it priority.

It is for this reason however that Solomon (in a Sartrean vein) (1990:269) writes:

Love is this process, not a state of union but a never ending conflict of pushing away and pulling together.

A love relationship on this account, is a struggle for and against merging, i.e. to merge and to retain one's freedom. However according to Solomon (like Sartre) this constant compromise and struggle is doomed to failure.¹⁷

But it seems that Solomon has failed to take account of my sense of 'merging'. On my account, 'merging' does not mean that the lovers could no longer have separate selves or that they must completely give up their autonomy. What 'merging' boils down to is that most couples want important segments of their lives to be shared with each other and, as a result of this, they hope to develop a shared identity. To meet this desire, of course, each partner's autonomy will be limited in some ways but, presumably, this is not thought of as a hardship; or rather, the rewards of the (new) marital identity will be thought to more than make up for any loss of absolute freedom.

This brings us to Nussbaum's worry that if the lovers were to merge they would be complete, so that they would have no reason or ability to have sexual intercourse. If as I am claiming, a shared identity does

not rule out a strong sense of oneself as an individual, then (on these grounds anyway) I do not see why a couple intent on 'merging' should not enjoy a perfectly satisfactory sexual relationship. The point is: the notion of merging is not to be understood in a literal way - it is only a metaphor. When a couple share an extended period of their lives together inevitably they will define themselves (at least in part) in terms of their shared relationship.

It might be objected however that the important question remains unanswered: 'Why would anyone want to restrict their autonomy by binding themselves to another person in this way?' Why would they want to lose any aspect of their own identity in the marital mix? I will return to this point later. Of more immediate concern to us is that it might be objected that all of the factors we have considered so far could be met in any long-term pair bonding relationship. We do not need to get married or have 'a good marriage' in order to have a close friend, soulmate, someone whom we love above all others; or even to merge with this other person. This brings us to a further quite different justification for the marital relationship that we need to consider.

The desire for commitment

Very often, one or both of the couple wishes to secure their relationship permanently. Indeed there seems to be a correlation in most pair bonds between, on the one hand, a willingness to share deep and personal intimacies, to merge, etc., and, on the other, the willingness of both partners to commit themselves to each other and to their relationship.¹⁸ But the commitment in question is not merely an attitude that the partners are expected to have; it is, rather, an action they are expected to take. Numerous freely-given declarations of love are not thought to be enough. There appears to be a limit to how deep most couples will go with each other,

how far they will explore their relationship, if their attachment to each other is not secure, if there is uncertainty about whether their partner will be there in the future.¹⁹ We seem to require an act of mutual commitment from each partner to the other and to the relationship.

It might be pointed out that a couple can commit themselves by making private vows or they might make public vows to one another but these need not be in the form of a legal (marriage) contract. But in western mores neither (non-marital) private or public vows would carry the same weight or have the same legal or public force. In our mores, marriage is the most powerful symbol of each partner's commitment. It is an action which publicly and legally establishes that both of the partners in the relationship are committed to one another.

There is an empirical explanation for the desire for a publicly made commitment worth our noting. Any long-term intimate relationship is going to have difficulties. There are many differences that a couple inevitably face, about spending money, concerning the upbringing of children, about their respective careers, about their relationships with their extended family and friends, etc. No matter how much they love each other, from time to time they are going to have tensions and conflicts. Contests of wills or differences of value can generate hurt and resentment and replace the warm feelings that brought the partners together; or pressures from outside of the relationship (as well as within it) may sometimes get in the way. The conflicts may become so serious or numerous that this could lead either of them to terminate the relationship if they were merely with a close friend. At the same time, we noted that most people want an indefinitely long, loving, sexual friendship; they want a continuous relationship that endures through sincere, but temporary, changes of mood.²⁰ As Midgley (1979:302)

writes:

Marriage is difficult...no long-term commitment is ever always easy and unforced. And no commitment involving more than one person ever suits all parties equally. Yet human nature certainly demands long-term enterprises. We are therefore bound to be frustrated if we cannot finish them, so commitment [in marriage] is necessary.

By binding themselves together in marriage, the couple make a permanent commitment to maintain their relationship through the bad as well as the good times.

But there is more to the explanation of why commitment in marriage is regarded as important. When we get married, we noted, we are taken to have decided to do so. This decision is a very significant one in our lives. Although we can make it in a purely arbitrary way - by flipping a mental coin, so to speak - when we make the marriage vow, we are understood to have made the decision rationally. Do we really want a relationship of this kind? Does the relationship with this particular person really mean that much to us? In other words, before making the marriage vow, we are assumed to have thought the decision through carefully. If one does decide to marry, one cannot then stand outside of the marriage and (as it were) decide whether or not to accept the commitments involved; one chooses to accept the commitments to one's spouse and to the relationship by choosing to marry. In contrast, an unmarried cohabiting partner cannot be told that he ought to respect the commitments of marriage by being shown that this is a constitutive requirement of the marriage vows. If he does not choose to participate in the institution, it is entirely rational for him to reject the corresponding commitments.

Perhaps it will be objected that I have overstated the matter. For some people the decision to marry (or to remain married) is not an easy one to make. There might be, after all, many ways in which this decision can seem

to be wrong. Or the decision can be right in one way, wrong in another. The best reasons of one kind will support it while, as we shall see in the next chapter, reasons of another kind may well suggest the opposite course of action. In cases like this, however, if we decide to marry (or to remain married), we are nevertheless understood to have decided which course of action 'all things considered' is best. The all-things-considered judgement is taken to reflect what matters most to us; from all of the conflicting reasons, marriage is understood to be the direction in which we want to take our lives. So let us now consider the commitments we choose to accept when we make the (wedding) vow.

When someone marries, they commit themselves to a life-long relationship with their partner. Thus the groom pledges to '...love her, comfort her, honour and protect her, and forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as (they) both shall live'; the bride does likewise.²¹ When they make their vow, there are a number of necessary conditions that are assumed to be met.

First of all, as we noted, it is thought that the persons making the vow want to commit themselves to the other person in this way (and also that they believe that the commitment is desired by the latter). By their wanting to make such a commitment, moreover, we usually take them to be saying also that they feel a quality of love for the other person, of a kind that they do not feel for anyone else, and that they value this relationship above any other in which they might be involved. The idea of wanting to commit themselves in marriage, this is to say, implies that marriage to the other person matters a great deal to them; it would not make sense for a person to want to commit themselves to something that they deemed to be valueless or inconsequential. By their wanting to marry, they are also understood to be saying that they believe the marriage relationship provides the best framework within

which their relationship can flourish. They want the marriage relationship to be an important and indispensable part of their lives.

A second assumption we make when we give or receive the marriage vow is that this expresses one's present intentions about one's future behaviour. When the bride or groom says 'I promise' (or when they make any of the other typical utterances by which vows are made) part of what is meant by saying this is that they intend to behave in the future in the ways that they say they will. This, I maintain, is a necessary condition. For let us suppose that my opponent says that he does not think that the marriage vow conveys the intention to behave in certain ways in the future. I would find his use of 'vow' perplexing. Presumably for him 'the marriage vow' (*sic*) would imply something like 'I haven't decided yet how I will behave in the future' or that 'I just might behave in the desired way' which is to completely misunderstand the binding character we are supposed to recognize in this vow. If we could not ordinarily assume that someone who makes the vow intends keeping it, we would not have a practice of vowing at all.

As we noted the commitment we make about our future conduct is expected to override the periodic fluctuations of feelings that the couple may have for one another. It is not that 'I promise to love...as long as I feel able to do so' or '...for as long as I am getting something out of it'. Indeed the marriage vow explicitly states that there may be a downside to the relationship. It might become a burden. The couple promise to love 'for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health...' Their commitment to each other in marriage, in other words, obliges them to care for and support each other even when they do not feel like doing so. The fact that disbenefits do occur, is not a sufficient reason for either of them to believe they are relieved of the commitment.

There are plenty of ways of publicly stating an intention without making a vow; for example, I may tell you 'I propose to do such-and-such'. So how do we recognize a vow from the wider set of intentional statements? One obvious way is by the utterance 'I promise...' By saying this, the speaker emphasizes her commitment to do whatever she says she will do. As importantly, such a statement (of intention) strengthens the listener's assurance that the vower will so behave in the future. So a third general assumption we make when we give or receive a vow is that the speaker's commitment to do what she says she will do, can be recognized by her use of a locution like 'I promise'. The phrase 'I promise' is not crucial here. The bride (or groom) might equally well say 'I do'. Let it suffice to say that it is necessary for the speaker to make an utterance bearing a similar illocutionary force to 'I promise' for her utterance to have the level of commitment we find in an avowal.

Finally, by saying 'I promise' the speaker wants it to be understood that she can be counted upon to keep her word. To vow something to another person is to raise an expectation in the mind of the recipient; the promisee can count upon the speaker to do something. But more than this, we assume that the intention of the speaker is to create a relationship of reliance and trust between herself and the groom. The implication is that they will establish an intimate and trusting alliance with each other.

All of this does not mean that we assume that every marriage vow is made honestly and it certainly does not mean that every marriage vow that is made, is actually kept. What it means is that in the absence of any special knowledge to the contrary, the above are the assumptions that operate at the time the vow is made. Accordingly, if someone getting married were to make a lying vow, this trades on the presumption that those who

make the vow want to commit themselves in the ways outlined.

It needs to be stressed that when it is understood in the light of the conditions above, the marriage vow has implications not only for the attitudes, emotions and beliefs of the person who makes it but for their actions too. By committing themselves in this way, for instance, a person must not only believe that doing so is worthwhile but this belief must also guide their attitudes and actions. To see this, consider the case in which a married person's actions do not reflect the belief; for instance, a husband who claims he is committed to his marriage yet insists on sticking to his bachelor lifestyle (e.g. going out with 'the boys' every night). If he claims to be committed yet does not allow this to influence his conduct at all, this would not only raise serious doubts about his putative commitment, it would lead us to conclude that he does not in fact value his marriage. On the other hand, neither is a person committed if he merely acts in a way that we would expect from someone who is committed - he scrupulously carries out his marital obligations - yet he does not have the appropriate emotional attitudes or beliefs. To have the appropriate level of commitment, then, the vower must meet both the formal conditions, and have the emotional attitudes, and perform the relevant actions.

In the light of the kind of commitment that the marriage vow requires, it is not surprising that this aspect of the relationship is resisted by an increasing number of couples who love each other, are soulmates, etc., who choose to live together and perhaps to have children, and in all respects simulate the married relationship yet who refuse to go through the formal procedure of marrying one another.²²

Some say it is the paraphernalia of weddings - the stage-managed ceremony, the glittering reception or an elaborate honeymoon - that justifies their opposition to

marriage, rather than a distaste for this commitment. But in these cases the wedding celebrations have assumed an exaggerated importance and the substance of marriage (the serious commitment that is being undertaken) is overlooked. Where this is the case, the fault - if it is seen as a fault - is not to be found in the idea of commitment but in the unwelcome aspects of the consumer-oriented society in which we live. The solution to this is simple. Steps can be taken by the couple to dispense with the theatre of marriage altogether or to find ways to highlight the solemn nature of the commitment.

A more challenging objection is where couples assume the roles and perform the duties married couples assume and perform, yet refuse to commit themselves legally in marriage because, they may say, when a couple really love one another, such a commitment is unnecessary. They argue that the public making of vows before witnesses and the concomitant social and legal commitments do not add anything to their relationship or change the degree of love that they feel for each other. The strength of their love binds them together and the added commitment required by the legal marriage contract is superfluous. 'It is just a piece of paper after all.'

There are a number of limitations to this position. In the first place as we have noted (p.62), when they live together for a long period of time this usually gives rise to monetary commitments (like buying a house or sharing the rent) which are not outside of the legal domain. The law makes equally burdensome provisions for individuals in such cohabiting arrangements. If they decide to separate, moreover, they might well have recourse to the law to help them sort out their affairs. Secondly, often such couples want to be treated as if they were married: thus they feel qualified to the same entitlements from the social services and other legal protection enjoyed by a married couple. However if they wish to be accorded the same rights and privileges, then

it is difficult to see what their objection is to the formal marriage contract. They might claim, of course, to be trying to get the best of both worlds; the advantage of sharing living arrangements in a loving relationship without a formal contract. But if they mirror the lifestyle of a married couple and are subject to the equally onerous provisions the law makes, it is difficult to see exactly what these advantages are. It seems to their opponent to come down to a lack of commitment of one or the other; an unwillingness to give themselves unconditionally to the other person in their relationship.

But the point might still be pressed that this need not be a lack of commitment to each other. The decision not to marry might be taken because the couple find the idea of a legal marriage contract incoherent. All that they regard to be necessary is a legal arrangement to deal with the business side of their relationship. We will consider this kind of non-marital cohabiting in the pages ahead. For the moment let it suffice to say that this is to overlook the earlier points we raised: in our mores the publicly made marriage vow is the most powerful symbol of each partner's commitment to the other; that if it is correct that a man and a woman need long-term commitments from one another then, at present, only the marital contract binds them in such a long-term way. It binds them particularly in those occasions when they are engaged in a temporary but substantial conflict with one another. In short, we need a secure relationship like marriage to bind us through temporary difficulties in a cohabiting relationship.

Another kind of objection to the account I have given is that the commitment in marriage is not as I have described it; for most people, making the marriage vow is simply a matter of conforming to social custom or 'a mere unquestioning acceptance of a social institution'.²³ However, I have argued that they choose to bind

themselves to each other in a personal, social, legal (and in some cases religious) commitment. To blame or censure someone, for instance, for their lack of commitment to their marriage presupposes that they have, or could have, chosen freely and rationally to accept the commitment at the outset. Thus in order to make a commitment of this nature, a person needs a level of maturity and rational competence, they need, in advance of getting married, to understand what it is they are about to choose to do. But if this is the case, this rules out a mere unquestioning conformity to the conventional practice. In other words, if the objector were to carefully consider the implications of the marriage contract and understand the seriousness of the required commitment then I do not see how he could regard this as a meaningless custom. If it is countered that this is the way in which most people think of their marriage commitment, then what this indicates is the need for more effective premarital education.

Let us turn now to a more troublesome objection which is directed at the unconditional commitment 'to love another person' that the marriage vow requires. It is often objected that it is counter-intuitive to think that we could rationally make such an important commitment with no possibility of rescinding it, when the relationship may extend for fifty years or more.²⁴ As we noted, I make the marriage vow because I believe that I will continue to love my spouse. What do I do if I subsequently find that I do not, and that there does not seem to be any prospect of rekindling this love? An important reason why I entered into marriage, whilst being strong enough for me to make the commitment then, does not now provide a reason for me to persist with it. Is it reasonable to expect someone in such a situation to remain in the marriage because of the unconditional commitment that was made on entering it?

At the heart of the problem is the unease which

surrounds the idea that we can choose to have certain feelings for our spouse in perpetuity. This aspect of any relationship, surely, is non-voluntary - it is not something to which we can choose or commit ourselves. As Moore (1970:316) writes:

...to love certain people...is a thing which is quite impossible to attain directly by the will...²⁵

Yet, paradoxically, when we get married we promise to have certain feelings for our partners that will last over the years; a commitment that directly conflicts with our commonsense belief that we cannot choose our feelings.

One way of dealing with this is simply to insist that having made the commitment, I have an obligation to keep it irrespective of whether or not the love which motivated it in the first place is present; in committing myself, I accepted an obligation to fulfil the terms of my marriage contract with my spouse whether or not I still love him. Otherwise (as we are reminded by those who enjoy a long-term pair bond but who do not marry) we could love the other person but not make this kind of commitment to him or her. If this is so, we must not confuse 'commitment' with 'love'. I make the commitment because I love my spouse but there is no necessary connection then between the commitment and love; the former continues even if the latter does not.

However it cannot be denied (and needs to be stressed) that part of the commitment we make in the marriage vow is 'to love...till death do us part'. This is often taken to say, we vow to sustain our loving disposition. As it is generally accepted that we cannot choose to have or sustain feelings we need to ask if it is appropriate (and honest) to vow to do so? Is it rational to make such a vow if part of what is involved in this, rests on a disposition (thoughts and feelings) which we cannot necessarily preserve?

A more accommodating way of dealing with the problem

above is to understand the commitment one makes as simply a statement of one's present intentions. It is not to be understood as a prediction that I will never change in my affection for my spouse. Malcolm (1967:81) writes in support of this interpretation:

...the assertion describes my present attitude towards the statement (the marriage vow)...it does not prophesy what my attitude would be if various things happened.

Why not say that when I made the marriage vow to Y, this just indicated that my present intention was to do something permanently, not that I had a permanent intention?²⁶ Thus we seem to be able to hold that my commitment to my spouse is binding and still allow that circumstances may arise in which I will be justified in breaking it.

However this is an unusual interpretation. The customary interpretation is that in making the marriage vow, one commits oneself unconditionally. An unconditional commitment is not analogous to a mere statement of intention; it seems more like a declaration of permanent intention. Added to this, there is a general (social, legal) insistence on commitments being regarded in this latter way and honoured (up to a point), even if they have been made in error. One's love may wane but the absence of love cannot be the sole guide in such circumstances. Marriage implies commitment and some of the obligations generated by the commitment remain even if love no longer endures.

Another possible way out would be to argue that if I (or my spouse) change radically over time, I may think of myself (or my spouse) as not being the person who made the commitment but as a different person. Thus when I promised to love exclusively 'till death do us part', I may have done so unconditionally but twenty years on I may have changed. I am no longer the person who would make such a promise at all, or who would make it to this particular person. If this were to be accepted,

presumably, we would have to say that all commitments are conditional upon there being no change in the character of either party involved. If my (or my partner's) feelings, beliefs, character or ideals change, it is proper for me to look upon myself or him as someone other than the person who made the commitment.²⁷

This seems to be a recipe for chaos. Most commercial or other contractual transactions are based upon promises; services are performed, or things given, in the belief that the contracting party will fulfil his part of the deal, e.g. the customer will pay for the goods or services rendered. If we were to accept the proposal above, presumably if there is any change in the character, attitudes, beliefs, of either of the contracting parties, it does not then matter if they do not fulfil their part of the bargain. I think we would say that the person who regarded any commitment in the way suggested, does not make a commitment at all.

One further way of dealing with the problem is to accept that the commitment to love in the wedding vow is lifelong but to ask if it is true to say that we cannot choose to have feelings of love for our spouse in perpetuity? Is it true to say that feelings of love and affection within marriage are beyond the bounds of rational choice and thus genuine commitment? It is after all, generally thought that we are able - or can learn - to control certain feelings, e.g. destructive feelings like rage and jealousy in marriage, and even how to feel differently in circumstances where feelings of this sort typically occur. Let us suppose that I am furious because my husband fails to greet me. I lose my temper in a way that is quite inappropriate and entirely out of keeping with the cause. (Perhaps I had a row with a colleague at work and this is why I vented my anger on my husband.) We would say my anger is irrational. It makes sense to say also that I can (and should) control such inappropriate emotions or at least that I can reflect on

my behaviour and in future exchange appropriate for such unfitting feelings. For instance, I might train myself to feel concern at such uncharacteristic behaviour as his failing to greet me. In which case, my feelings would be the product of a rational decision.

It seems odd then to suppose that I cannot similarly control - and by this I include cultivate - positive, rationally appropriate sentiments, such as feelings of companionate love - if not the emotions of romantic love - for my spouse. Once again my feelings would be the product of a rational decision. With a good will and by working hard at it, in other words, at any stage in marriage, could not one change inappropriate emotional feelings, for appropriate loving ones?

Perhaps it will be objected that to speak of this as 'love' sounds excessively intellectualistic. The trouble is that love, as we have described it earlier, is a non-rational and spontaneous emotion. It is an immediate and automatic feeling. But even if it is true that I could not feel love for him in the way described, presumably, at any point I can reflect upon my relationship with my husband, ask myself what the response of a loving wife ought to be, and then decide - as a matter of duty - to act or behave accordingly. After all, our usual assessment of a situation where someone else attests to feelings of love, is in their behaviour. Sometimes we take their word for it, but usually we consider the way they act. So couldn't it be argued that even if the account of unconditional love in perpetuity is suspect, a promise always to behave in the appropriate ways of a loving spouse is not?²⁶

However it seems odd to express loving sentiments and behave as if one loved one's spouse merely out of duty; to say, for instance, 'I love you' to one's spouse merely out of duty when there is in fact a lack of genuine love for him. The proposal would make feelings of affection superfluous to the expression of love.

Furthermore we would say that someone does not (really show) love if their heart is not in it; rather, they feign it. For love not only requires the appropriate spoken utterances and behaviour; more importantly, it requires that this is given in the right spirit. If this is correct, I am not obligated merely to express and behave appropriately; I am supposed to feel it. The expressions of love (and other appropriate attitudes and behaviour) are usually thought to be a manifestation of this feeling. Loving actions are expected to derive from and be an expression or evocation of a feeling or passion, not a matter of duty or decision.

Whether or not it is conceded that we can (and ought) cultivate an affectionate attitude for our partner or that we ought adopt the appropriate affectionate behaviour, there will no doubt be some points in every marriage where one or other of the couple has to decide whether or not to keep their commitment. Being married is not a static event but more like a process and some of the features which constitute that process may make it unpalatable. We might discover that the person to whom we are married is very different from how we first took them to be. Alternatively, there are many differences that any married couple inevitably have to face concerning, for instance, children, money, family, or other relationships, etc. There is bound to be discord from time to time. At some point, such difficulties may intensify to such an extent that one or other of the couple may find things intolerable and may be unable to keep their marital commitment.

If they both wish to end their marriage it seems reasonable to argue that this is morally acceptable.²⁹ They are free surely to release one another from this mutual commitment just as we are free to release each other from any other promise. On the other hand, if one of the partner's behaviour (but not the other) over a long period of time seriously transgresses the marriage

vows then the innocent partner is justified in ending the commitment. That the commitment has been constantly transgressed gives sufficient grounds for the innocent party breaking her part of the bargain. The difficult case is where the partner who transgresses the vows wishes to terminate the commitment but not the innocent party. Few of us would say that this is a good thing to do. But, as I will suggest shortly, there are worse evils than breaking one's commitment. However even here there is a need for gentleness and well-intentioned support, if only for a time. To stress the point: marriage involves a range of commitments to the other person and even if love dies, some of the obligations generated by the commitment remain.

However things may not be quite as gloomy as the discussion of commitment seems to suggest. In the first place, the idea of a good marriage entails that both partners actually wish to secure their relationship (fully understanding the implications that this commitment involves). They actually want to be committed to their partner and to their relationship. Secondly, there is one other aspect of the notion of commitment that is often overlooked, namely, that marriage requires a transformation of many aspects of each of the couple's lives. But before we can discuss the breadth of the required transformation we need to investigate fully the ideas of autonomy, self-development and good sex. I will return to this aspect of commitment in Chapter Eight.

We must turn now to a reason of a more general nature that needs to be considered for marrying someone as opposed to living with them, namely, the widely held belief that marriage brings happiness. Someone might well justify their decision to marry (or to remain married) with the reason that this will bring them a special kind of happiness. In the next section I will examine what this claim might involve.

Happiness

'Happiness' is not a simple notion. In ordinary discourse, we speak of a person having 'a happy temperament' or of their being 'happy-go-lucky', by which we mean that they have a cheerful or sunny disposition which is, presumably, with them from day-to-day throughout the years; we speak of someone 'feeling happy' or of their 'being in a happy mood' meaning by this that they find things agreeable (even sometimes when the things in question are bad); we speak of them as being 'happy with their lot' or of their 'leading a happy life' meaning that they are pleased or contented with the way things generally are working out in their life.

When we refer to happiness in the context of marriage, as well as the senses noted above, there are other possible uses of the term. For instance, we may offer someone advice like 'To be happy in marriage one needs to compromise.' A person may not be too happy with her married life and the prescription offers a way to improve it. Presumably in giving such advice we are usually referring to their day-to-day attitude or state of mind; to suggest that she needs to compromise might not mean that she will need to sacrifice anything in particular but just that she needs to change her attitude to the relationship. On the other hand, it could mean that something she wants (to be happy in her marriage) cannot be achieved without sacrificing other things, like close ties with other men, or spending all of her income on herself; so the compromise in question may require her to forsake certain things.

If we were to compile a list of factors, like compromise, which are considered to be conducive to happiness within a marriage, we might include such things as being a close friend or soulmate to one's partner, being in a committed relationship with them, sharing important segments of one's life with them or (as we shall see) of gaining a sense of autonomy due to this

relationship, and so on. On the other hand, we might include in the list things like financial security, or material comforts within the home, or having healthy children, and so forth. The above are sources of happiness within a marriage and the latter might result from some or all of them being met. Furthermore, presumably if happiness does result from each or any of these things it will be somewhat different in each case; for whatever such states have in common which leads us to talk of happiness in relation to them, it does not seem that the happiness in question can be fully characterised without reference to the state in question. Thus someone might say 'I am happy because I realize that on marrying me my husband showed everyone that he loves me.' Perhaps we can see this point more clearly if we consider the kind of reasons people give for the unhappiness they feel when their marriage breaks down or ends. 'My life has become meaningless, it lacks any point since my husband left me.'

However we might desire some of the things listed above for their own sake and not as a means to happiness. For instance, even where autonomy seems to give rise to anxiety and unhappiness for a woman in marriage, we might advise her that such anxieties and unhappiness should be accepted or overcome rather than curbing her sense of independence. On the other hand, sometimes the straightest route to happiness is to forego one's autonomy. This suggests that autonomy is one thing and that happiness is another, and that one cannot always have them both. Or to make the point in a different way, a single woman may realize that her close friendship with a married man is inimical to her own happiness. She may realize this but nonetheless choose to continue with the affair. However one could choose to pursue any of the other items listed for their own sake, when one believes that doing so will not bring one happiness.

When we refer to happiness within marriage I take it

to mean something like someone is pleased with the way the important aspects of their married life - close friendship, soulmate - are going. However this is not the same as a feeling of pleasure that one has towards specific items or in specific situations - like the pleasure of eating, or reading a good passage in a book, or of having a sexual experience - where we may talk of the pleasure lasting a few moments and then ceasing. It would be strange to talk of happiness in this way. For the latter is usually not short-lived and subject to change at a moment's notice (in the way that most pleasurable experiences are). More importantly, a person may have many such pleasurable experiences without being happy. At the same time, however, there does seem to be a close connection between pleasure and happiness. I doubt that we can be happy (at the way things are going within our marriage) without sometimes having pleasurable experiences of one form or another.

I suggested that certain things, like being a close friend, or security, or material comforts, are conducive to happiness in marriage. However, although happiness within marriage often follows from the fact that these conditions are being met, it does not automatically follow from this. In the first place, our enthusiasms and preferences are widely different. We do not all find happiness in the same things and we may not all find marital happiness in the same kind of things, events or activities. At least there is no one activity that comes to mind about which it could be said that everyone finds happiness as a result of experiencing it. But we need to be circumspect. While as a matter of fact these elements are not necessary to someone's experience of happiness in marriage, they are necessary to the idea of a good marriage. If, say, close friendship is lacking, we would find it difficult to understand why they should claim that their marriage is good. And a parallel argument applies to happiness. No matter what the conditions are

that give rise to it, I am claiming that happiness in marriage is a necessary condition for a good marriage. Thus we might say: 'Your marriage would be better if it made both of you happy.'

Another reason for maintaining that happiness is a separate constituent of a good marriage is the fact that sometimes people feel guilt at not being happy in their marriage where the other conditions we have noted, seem to be met. Consider the case where, for no obvious reason, X does not manage to feel happy. 'Given all the advantages that I have in my married life' she might say 'how is it that I cannot manage to feel happy?' Along these lines Friedan (1965:17) writes:

If a [married] woman had a problem, she knew that something must be wrong...with herself. Other [married] women were satisfied with their lives...She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction...

People who feel guilt at not being happy within marriage often regard the fault as their own. They sometimes think of it as a moral failure, like their lack of application or perseverance, or simply that they have the wrong attitude towards their partner or their marriage.

In the light of the connection I am maintaining between the other elements within a good marriage and happiness, the question might be pressed: how exactly do matters such as 'being a close friend', etc., relate to happiness in marriage? Why should the satisfaction of these desiderata usually result in happiness within the marriage? As far as I can see, there are no *a priori* reasons why this is so. Certainly there is not a simple equation between these conditions being met and happiness. It could have been the case, surely, that people's happiness is always found not in marriage but in activities outside of it. Yet it does seem to be a fact of experience that marriage (in which the various other conditions are met) and happiness are directly linked. As a matter of fact, most people need a degree of

supportive recognition from a close friend in a committed relationship in order to be happy. The evidence for this claim is mainly empirical;³⁰ as a matter of fact, most people think that being in such a marriage does bring the couple happiness.

As I have said there is no *a priori* reason why there should be this continuity between the two. However once again a plausible explanation of a sociobiological kind might explain why generally this is so. Clearly conditions which make for successful long-term pair bonding, like close friendship and commitment, are more likely to be satisfied if they are also the conditions which make for happiness. It would be very odd if meeting them always resulted in frustration or conflict. Accordingly it is not surprising that the human species should have developed in such a way that the two do coincide. Doing things that meet our basic biological drives - having a close friendship, having a soulmate, a home of one's own, healthy children, etc. - is very likely to make us happy. Hence we should not be surprised that the fact X believes that marriage will make her happy - or that she wants to continue in this state because it makes her happy - is regarded as a good reason for her choosing to marry or to remain married. If something will make one happy this is a *prima facie* good reason for doing it; and if my arguments concerning the major elements in a good marriage are sound, we have good reasons for thinking that satisfying them in marriage, will make someone happy.

I have ruled out the suggestion that the happiness one believes one will find within marriage is the only criterion we have for a good marriage. Even if we could employ the concept in this all embracing way, it would be useless unless it were filled out with a host of more specific concepts. In other words, it will not do to try to make 'happiness' do all of the work. The fact is that we do not assess a good marriage simply as consisting of

the happiness a couple experience due to it. Furthermore, as we noted, a person may enter a marital relationship in pursuit of goals that seem quite remote from happiness. And they might want to continue being married even if they are unhappy, especially when other matters are a stake - like the well-being of their children. Nevertheless, we normally think that the happiness we believe it may bring, if not in the short-term, in the long-run is a good reason for getting married and/or remaining married.

I hope that I have established: (i) if the other conditions we have discussed are met this usually gives rise to happiness in marriage; (ii) happiness within marriage is a necessary condition for a good marriage. This brings us to another interpretation of 'happiness' which is also usually implied by the decision to get married or *mutatis mutandis* to remain married. X might say 'I believe that if I marry Y this will bring me happiness in life' or 'being married to Y has brought me happiness in life'. This sort of happiness does not seem to refer to one's mood, nor is it a feeling that one occasionally might get, neither does the happiness need to involve the particular things or experiences within the relationship we have discussed which might make one happy. Happiness in the sense we are now discussing has to do with being contented with one's lot in life, or in being pleased with the way one's life is progressing over a long period of time. In this sense, someone who has been married a long time might claim to have 'found happiness in life due to marriage'.³¹ Again 'happiness' in this context refers to her continuing experience of married life as a whole; over a period of time, her marriage has given her something she wants, happiness. In other words, a good marriage is regarded as a way of achieving a happy life; it is thought to be a sufficient, though not a necessary condition for a happy life.

It should be stressed that happiness in life need

not be the same as happiness in marriage. The former state is compatible with the undeniable fact that different people pursue a diversity of activities and relationships in the name of happiness. Clearly we do not all find 'happiness in life' by engaging in the same kind of things. The happiness experienced by a man of action may be quite different to that experienced by a contemplative scholar, the dedicated artist, the religious recluse.³² Such people might well claim to find happiness in their lives without their being married. If I am correct, it seems that while happiness within marriage, like happiness in life, is general, the latter is more general than the former. It follows that a person might find happiness in marriage but not happiness in life; it is perhaps her chief desire to succeed as an academic, but she cannot. Happiness in marriage is not a sufficient condition for a happy life. On the other hand, it seems possible (but unlikely) to suppose that a person can be unhappily married but happy in life, if other things are far more important to her than her marriage.³³

There is another aspect of this general point that is worth noting. It could be argued that a couple are not obliged to sacrifice their own happiness for the rest of their lives, if their marriage seriously encroaches on this. Why? Part of the answer is that where the unhappy marriage clearly conflicts with their happiness in life - and if everyone concerned would be happier if the marriage were dissolved - we seem to give priority to the latter. If this is the case we can further modify our notion of the commitment we make on marrying as a promise which includes (in brackets): 'But not if it will destroy both of our happiness for the rest of our lives.'

One last point is worth our noting: in giving happiness in life as the reason for marrying, one is ruling out the instrumentality of what is being done in relation to some other, different end. If someone were

to ask 'What do you want to be happy in life for?' we would think that the question is odd. We do not want happiness in life for anything else - we just want to be happy, that's all. We do not aim at happiness in order to get other things; although as we have seen, we can and do other things, like marrying, in order to get happiness.

Conclusion

We now have an outline of some of the reasons that could be used to explain why we think that a good marriage is worthwhile. In a good marriage a person will have a close friend or loving soulmate, with whom they will have a shared identity, to whom and from whom they will make a lifelong commitment, and with whom they will find happiness. Or in more practical terms, in a good marriage we believe the partners will be close friends, that communication between them will be open, intimate and supporting, that sex will be good, that because important segments of their lives are shared they will develop a mutual identity, that they are both committed to each other by virtue of their marriage and that all of this brings them both happiness. Regarded as empirical claims the items in this list are still somewhat vague (it is unlikely that we could verify them psychologically) and it goes without saying, the list is as yet incomplete.

However a further test for my claim that the items discussed are necessary conditions for a good marriage is that they count as good reasons why someone might decide to marry or to remain married. In other words, if someone were to ask: 'Why has X decided to marry?' to reply 'She and Y are close friends, etc.' makes the decision intelligible. It has been pointed out to me that whilst this makes the decision intelligible it is not *prima facie* a good reason. It merely offers an explanation. Nevertheless I think that the two (i.e.

reasons that make an act intelligible and reasons that make a decision good) are closely connected and my suggestion is that the concepts - in terms of which the decision to marry can be made intelligible - are the concepts which would count as good reasons for the decision. Perhaps this point is more obvious in an example where the opposite is assumed. Suppose that X says 'I have decided to marry Y'; to point out to her that they are not even close friends is a (*prima facie*) good reason against such a move.³⁴ Reasons thus become good reasons if they are sufficiently strong and appropriate for the decision in question.

On this account, some of the reasons we have discussed count as *prima facie* good reasons for the decision to marry and to remain married. If they are met, these conditions may give us happiness within marriage. And happiness within marriage is a necessary condition for a good marriage. More importantly, I went on to claim that a good marriage is thought to be a sufficient condition (though not a necessary one) for a happy life.

Chapter Four

A critique of traditional marriage

According to many writers a major cause of unhappiness, especially for women, is that we are brought up to think that marriage brings happiness. For women rather than happiness, marriage must result in oppression, boredom and dependence. The seminal exponent of this view is Simone de Beauvoir.¹ She maintains that marriage always subordinates a woman to a man and so erodes her freedom. This is the primary source of women's oppression. It is the source of their lack of self-determination in all other areas of life, their lack of personal growth, the cause of boredom and the occasional feelings of desperation in mothers, and of their sexual oppression. Thus from a prudential point of view it is irrational for a woman to choose to marry. However de Beauvoir (1988:29) goes on to claim that it is not merely imprudent but immoral for a woman to marry.

It might be thought that nowadays de Beauvoir's arguments are entirely beside the point since the traditional marital relationship she criticized no longer exists. Women can do anything now; they can own property, enter the professions, bring up children alone, (at least they can do these things in liberal western countries). This is a common line of argument. To answer it, I will show that many of the features of the traditional marriage de Beauvoir criticizes persist into the present and that most of her criticisms of marriage are still valid today. Concern might also be expressed that this task seems to be mainly empirical. But it is not. For the substance of de Beauvoir's attack on marriage is philosophical. Given what we know about human nature, she argues, the institution of marriage will always contain irremediable flaws.² (It is not surprising therefore that most of the more recent

feminist contributions in this area are expansions upon de Beauvoir's original criticism of marriage.³) I will show that the kinds of flaws de Beauvoir refers to, however, can be thought to show that marriage is a bad thing for both sexes.

The philosophical underpinnings of de Beauvoir's attack on marriage

Underlying de Beauvoir's claim that it is imprudent for a woman to marry is a view of human nature. It is the assumption that all human beings have certain natural desires; the most important of which is the desire for freedom. For our purposes, there are at least two relevant aspects to this. Firstly, following Sartre, de Beauvoir (1972:10-11), insists that freedom is fundamental to consciousness.⁴ Human consciousness must choose whatever theories, beliefs or values go to make up its contents.⁵ We are free to choose our world view. Material things in the world are, up to a point describable by the laws of Science. But no scientific theory or other approach that we use for understanding it, will ever give us the full account we desire. Nonetheless we have to try to make it intelligible. Conscious beings, then (are free to) choose the descriptions and even the basic categories with which they classify the world, be it scientific, religious, humanistic, etc.

Freedom, in this sense, is the basis of our values. As Sartre (1966:76) writes:

My freedom is the unique foundation of values...

If a kind of person, action, state-of-affairs is deemed to have value, it is valuable only because one has consciously chosen it to be so. Nothing else can determine whether one should value this person (action, thing) rather than that. Without human freedom there would be no values. A similar claim underlies de

Beauvoir's view. She (1972:24) writes:

Freedom is the source from which all significations and all values spring.

As well as regarding freedom as a condition of all values, de Beauvoir claims that it is itself a fundamental value. She (1972:24) writes:

The man who seeks to justify his life must want freedom itself absolutely and above everything else.

Since his or her actions are the means of attaining something that a person regards as good - even if it is only in the justification of the significant choices they have made in their life - they must regard freedom as a necessary value. The freedom valued consists (at least) in the ability to control one's actions by one's unforced choices.

De Beauvoir's claims seem to be corroborated by ordinary experience in which most of us believe that in the important areas of their lives, all adult persons ought to be autonomous, i.e. they ought to make their own choices and decisions (and act upon some of them) without undue interference from other persons. Even where such independence seems to give rise to anxiety and unhappiness, we seem to think that this should be overcome rather than decrease the person's self-determination.

Thus we believe that persons must be able to make their own decisions about the important alternatives that face them and to act upon some of these decisions; for instance, whether or not to get married. And when married, each partner must be able to make his or her own choices concerning some of the central features of their lives, e.g. whether or not to pursue their earlier career or hobbies, whether to have close relationships with their extended family, etc. Alongside this, to be self-determining each spouse must be able to choose the groups with whom they affiliate, socially, politically, in religion. They must be able to make choices - both

specific and general - concerning the more intimate aspects of their relationship with their spouse, like whether or not (on a given occasion) to have sexual intercourse with him or, more generally, whether or not to have children, to practice contraception, and so forth. And to be self-determining they must be able to make an enormous number of choices concerning the mundane, inevitable aspects of everyday life; for example, their hairstyle, what clothes to wear, whether to eat this or that, and so on. Lastly, they must be able to choose whether or not they will continue with it if the relationship or the marriage is a bad one.

I might be asked: do we in fact believe that people should be free in all of these respects? My response is that there are good reasons for believing this. To the extent that an adult's capacity for self-determination is underdeveloped, their judgements and actions are likely to be governed by unconscious motives and compensations, their projects are likely to be frustrated, their lives more likely to be empty or dominated by the judgements of others. So a corollary of the claim above is that we are not fully responsible adult persons unless we are self-determining. (However this is not to say that the choices or decisions that we make are expected to be without references to the preferences, wants or needs of others.)

De Beauvoir goes on to couple her account of the value of freedom with what she claims is a natural desire for freedom - which she suggests is found in all human beings - when she (1988:21) writes of the 'urge of each individual to affirm his subjective existence'. Like many others philosophers, de Beauvoir maintains (I think correctly) that there is in human nature a natural desire for (one's own) freedom.

She goes on to claim that there is another side to the desire for freedom that is fundamental to human consciousness, this is a desire we have for power over

others; to dominate and subjugate them, or to turn them into what de Beauvoir calls 'the other'. This latter innate disposition is (1988:17):

...(another) fundamental category of human thought.

Elsewhere de Beauvoir (1988:483) writes:

...the temptation to dominate is the most truly universal...

To have power of this sort requires that one is a subject rather than an object in one's relationship with another person; in other words, the ability to maintain oneself as a subject requires that one has power over those with whom we associate. The other side of this coin suggests that an autonomous person is one who can resist being made an object, or of being dominated by another.

The desire to dominate others takes many forms. In a non-civilized state (perhaps a Hobbesian state of nature) the struggle for power might well manifest itself in a fight to the death; or if one party surrenders - due to fear of being killed - it can result in a master-slave type of relationship. In contrast, in capitalist societies today, the desire to dominate others reveals itself mainly in economic terms. Members of the economically powerful class (usually men) attempt to dominate others - and to gain social recognition and respect from them - by virtue of their greater wealth and economic power. They will use their superior power to exploit those with less of it. In modern bourgeois societies, in other words, economic domination is a way of meeting the basic human desire for power. The relationship between one class and the other in a modern capitalist economy is much more complex and nebulous than this caricature of it suggests, of course, but let us accept that competition in business boils down to the matter of a competition for greater power.

In such societies, however, women typically are denied access to the world of work at the level where the

work in question equates with power.⁶ So they must use other means to meet this desire. They can do this, especially in their relationships with men, by emphasizing their beauty and their seductiveness. De Beauvoir (1988:697-698) writes:

...she (a young woman) subdues her partner to her pleasure and overwhelms him with her gifts ...through promised benefits...or by artfully arousing his desire...

Or as Mitchell (1973:55) puts the matter succinctly:

One of the few resources women have is to 'sell' their bodies.

But women realize that this basis of power is short-lived; their beauty and hence their power as a seductress is limited. However they are encouraged to believe that there is another source of power at their disposal. Marriage is this other way of gaining power and more generally of acquiring economic dominance and social respect. For they are persuaded that the wives of prominent men share their husband's power.⁷ We will see shortly why it is imprudent for a woman to believe this.

A second natural desire de Beauvoir (1988:391) claims that all human beings have, is the desire for self-fulfilment. We all naturally desire to develop our talents or potentialities. (The assumption seems to be that if we do so, this is more likely to result in a happy life.) For most of us, this aspect of our development appears to become rooted in late childhood when, if we are fortunate, we choose to undertake tasks which we find challenging and in which there is some probability of our being successful. Thus a young woman has an aptitude and she is encouraged to develop this aptitude which she has and many others have not. She is encouraged, this is to say, to become an actress, an artist, or whatever.

The development of any talent we may have however needs to be accomplished, we are told, through 'transcendence' (as opposed to 'immanence').⁸ According

to de Beauvoir (1988:28-29) we achieve transcendence

...through a continual reaching out towards other liberties...into an indefinitely open future.

In more practical terms, what this requires is that one is engaged in creative projects which define goals beyond the present and that try to change the world in some lasting way.

De Beauvoir (1988:87-88) goes on to claim that transcendence is typically attained through meaningful and creative work. To engage in meaningful work is to engage in freely chosen projects that do not stunt the personality or force it into one single track and ignore all the rest, but permits one's personality to have a well-rounded development. On the other hand, de Beauvoir (1988:29) insists that without creative work, a human life is incomplete, if not worthless. One reason for this might be that the work a person does, when it is 'meaningful', shapes their idea of who they are; and more generally, others usually identify who or what a person is in terms of his or her work. Thus we refer to 'so-and-so the actress', or the dancer, or the philosopher. Presumably this is because it is the most clearly public aspect of their life. To put the point differently: it is their work⁹ (or more precisely their vocation or professional career¹⁰) that defines a person in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.¹¹ (This throws some light on the sense of rejection and loss of identity that accompanies an extended period of unemployment).

We can find meaningful projects and transcendence in work. However it is obvious from the point above that this should not be confused with mere repetitive work. There are of course many people in the workforce who find their work a drudgery. When work is soul-destroying, this alienates a person from their sense of transcendence. Of such cases, de Beauvoir (1988:29) writes:

...transcendence falls back into immanence,

stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the 'en soi' - the brutish life of subjection to given conditions...

In contrast, meaningful labour enables the individual to find the right orientation of themselves in their work, to fulfil themselves in their current situation and also to see how and in what direction they can develop in the future.

Women - who until recently anyway have been denied access to the sense of fulfilment that is possible in a career - are persuaded that even today marriage 'still offers them the best career'.¹² The traditional view, as de Beauvoir (1988:167) writes, is that marriage for a woman is:

...a most honourable career, freeing her from the need of any other participation in the collective life.¹³

To put the point in another way: our mores suggests that a woman's sense of creative fulfilment can be found when she is a housewife and when she bears and rears children. (As we noted, numerous popular women's magazines, films, television programmes, attest to this.) And as we shall see shortly, this belief too is badly mistaken and it compounds the plight of married women.

A third natural desire we all have is to be wanted sexually and to attain sexual fulfilment.¹⁴ We want to express our sexuality freely.¹⁵ De Beauvoir claims that this is a form of transcendental project for males. During erotic pleasure, she (1988:393) writes, the man's body behaves in keeping with his transcendent consciousness

...he projects himself towards the other, without losing his independence.

It follows that when the male and female have sexual intercourse, she is objectified and possessed by him. Unlike a man, however, de Beauvoir claims that a woman is not able to find transcendence in her sex organs. Her sexual desire is (somehow) 'absorbed back into her whole

body'.¹⁶ In the light of this de Beauvoir (1988:417) writes of a woman engaged in heterosexual intercourse as:

Being more profoundly beside herself than is the man because her whole body is moved by desire and excitement, she retains her subjectivity only through union with her partner.

For a woman the pleasure of sex includes the whole personalities of both partners, emotions as well as physical feelings.¹⁷ And this (so-called) difference between men and women is one of the many sources of a woman's sexual oppression.

As we noted, de Beauvoir maintains that to be desired sexually is one way in which a woman hopes to gain power over men. However, as we saw in Chapter Two, in the traditional mores, for a woman to try to satisfy this desire by having sexual intercourse in advance of being married, or extra-maritally, is regarded as morally wrong. Traditionally, while men have been allowed to 'sow their wild oats', sexual intercourse for women was (and to some extent still is condoned) only within the institution of marriage. Furthermore given the problems of venereal disease and nowadays AIDS, pregnancy, and a lingering social stigma surrounding premarital and extra-marital sexual relationships, to have sexual intercourse outside of marriage is risky for women. Hence they see marriage as the most obvious way of meeting their natural desire for sexual satisfaction. Once again, as we shall see, this belief also is seriously mistaken.

Thus de Beauvoir claims that women, like men, have the natural desire for autonomy over their own lives together with the desire for power over others, they desire transcendence through creative projects and sexual fulfilment. They see marriage as the most obvious means of meeting all of these natural desires. But due to certain irremediable flaws in the marital relationship these expectations cannot be met. If this is the case, it is clearly imprudent for women to choose to marry.

However de Beauvoir goes on to claim that it is not merely imprudent but immoral. She (in conversation with Friedan 1975:18) says:

No woman should stay at home and raise children
...women should not have the choice...¹⁸

For de Beauvoir, this is not simply a matter of marriage being an imprudent choice for a woman (or, presumably for a man if he takes on the domestic role). A woman who chooses to marry, to become a housewife and to bear and raise children is doing something morally wrong.¹⁹

It might be objected that this claim seems to be inconsistent for someone who tells us that her moral perspective is built on the existentialist ontology to be found in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.²⁰ Surely, we would expect de Beauvoir to emphasize the overriding importance of individual choice and not be concerned with moral considerations of right and wrong. So how can we be individually responsible for all of our choices and at the same time have our choice restricted by a moral requirement that rules out the choice to marry? Before we answer this, let us consider de Beauvoir's attack on marriage in more detail.

Marriage and the destruction of a woman's autonomy

Marriage destroys a woman's freedom. This claim seems to follow a *fortiori* if, as de Beauvoir (1988:483) maintains, we are bound to seek power over others: in a close relationship with another person, like being married to them, one's spouse must limit one's freedom in some ways. And if, as we are told, the power relationships within monogamous marriage are always unequal and it is true that wives are bound to be more or less dominated by their husbands due to the inimical power relations in marriage, a woman must always lack the autonomy she naturally desires over her own life. There are a number of empirical explanations as to why this is so.

According to de Beauvoir, a major cause of male domination is the bourgeois system of private ownership, from which the institution of 'male-headed marriage' is the inevitable result.²¹ In the traditional marriage the husband is expected to be the breadwinner, he is expected to 'bring in the money'. With this income, he is expected to support his wife and family. At the same time, however, this entitles him to a privileged position within the marriage. Since he (the husband) earns the income he thereby is taken to own it. As a result he has (financial) control over his wife and family. Usually, what follows from this, is that the husband regards his wife as a kind of private property which he owns. In other words, his financial superiority within the relationship is one form of his power to dominate and exploit his wife. Engels (1986:15) makes the same point graphically when he writes:

Within the family he is the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat.

As a housewife, a woman has to depend on her husband financially and this dependence is one main cause of her lack of freedom.

Two aspects of this general point deserve to be emphasized. Firstly, in the traditional marriage it is the husband's role, mainly due to his superior economic status, to be the head of the household and he has this status in the view of most members of society. As such, usually, he thinks of his wife as being subordinate to him. In the recent past, she took his surname, belonged to his religion, his class, his circle.²² Also as the head of the house, he will expect to make the important decisions which affect them both. Ultimately he decides where they will live, the kind of lifestyle they will have, the friends they will or will not have, and so on. As a result, de Beauvoir (1988:448) writes:

They [men] look to marriage for an enlargement, a confirmation of their existence...

Secondly, since the husband is expected to work in paid employment in order to provide the family income, he will be the one with a career and public status. His sense of identity will mainly come from and will be seen in terms of his occupation. Thus typically a man is not defined by his marital status. As de Beauvoir (1988:446) points out:

...he is regarded first of all as a producer whose existence is justified by the work he does...

In this way, the husband reaches out beyond the domestic sphere. If he is successful in the paid work that he does, moreover, he is likely to find his work meaningful and rewarding and this, in turn is related to his sense of self-fulfilment or transcendence. If he is fortunate, for instance, he may actively and creatively participate in the structuring of society. De Beauvoir (1988:105) claims that such a man is the 'incarnation of transcendence'. She (1988:449) writes:

In his occupation and his political life he encounters change and progress, he senses his extension through time and the universe...

It is little wonder that as a result of these (alleged) advantages de Beauvoir (1988:483) feels justified in claiming 'Marriage incites man to a capricious imperialism.'

On the other hand, marriage is a freedom-destroying experience for a woman. Firstly, the world and its possibilities which are made accessible to the teenage girl are 'snatched away' from her. De Beauvoir (1988:449) writes:

...she breaks more or less decisively with her past, becoming attached to her husband's universe.

Things which had previously been central in her life - perhaps a career and related projects - are forgotten, or at the least, shelved.

Secondly, as a housewife, she is financially

dependent on her husband. At best, she is only free to choose within the parameters of the financial resources allowed to her by her husband. As a housewife, she is excluded from the public sphere of paid employment. As a result, her horizons are significantly narrowed; 'domestic service and attendance upon infants are her roles'.²³ For this reason alone the wife finds herself in a subordinate position. At the same time, the wife is required to loyally serve her husband for her lowly wage or more usually for no wage at all.²⁴ But as Greer (1971:319) points out:

No worker could be required to sign on for life [in this way]: if he did, his employer could disregard all his attempts to gain better pay and conditions.²⁵

On the other hand, the services provided by a woman, as a housekeeper and child caretaker although they constitute a substantial contribution to the family's economic productivity, are ignored as a source of income.

This brings us to the third way in which a housewife's potential for autonomy is eroded, namely, she will lack a robust sense of her own identity. Not only does she become economically dependent on her spouse, she becomes dependent on the marital relationship to provide her with a sense of identity. She is defined in relation to her spouse. She becomes her husband's 'other half'; e.g. the doctor's wife. Some of the conventions that typically we associate with the marriage ceremony symbolize such a subordinate relationship. For instance, the bride is 'given away' by the father, the man 'takes' a wife. At no time does she seem to belong to herself; from being her father's property she becomes her husband's in much the same way as a piece of property is passed from one owner to the next.²⁶

On marrying instead of a man and a woman creating a joint identity together, according to de Beauvoir, what in fact happens is that the man gains a partner who is identified with him, a complement to his identity. On

the other hand, in effect the woman loses her own identity. She loses the identity that she had as a worker and the continuity of her sense of her individuality provided by outside work relationships. As a result of her inferior role within the traditional marriage, she is likely to have a poor sense of who she is, or of self-esteem. She has become 'in essence, a servant and general labourer',²⁷ an object for her husband. Often she becomes so far removed from power, she never contemplates what it would be like to have genuine responsibilities (like that of being head of the house).²⁸

It would be wrong to suggest that de Beauvoir thinks that in the unequal power relationships of the traditional marriage, women are the hapless victims of their enslavement. On the contrary, a woman is usually the willing accomplice in the surrender of her freedom. De Beauvoir (1988:452) suggests that the great majority of women

...are more active than young men in seeking marriage and taking the initiative in the matter.

Why would a woman choose to do this when the results so undermine her freedom? Perhaps as Millett (1972:37) suggests, it is a male conspiracy:

...a sporting kind of reparation to allow the subordinate female certain means of saving face.²⁹

A veneer of choice is given to a woman when she chooses to get married. But it masks the fact that this choice will limit her freedom more than any other she is likely to make in her life. This is the point at which a woman is free to take the initiative for the last time. For as Greer (1971:186) writes, this is the last stage in the romantic adventure

...the one adventure open to her and now it is over. Marriage is the end of the story.

If she is going to be dominated from there on by her

husband, she had better be thought to choose to do so.

A more plausible reason de Beauvoir (1988:168) gives for women actively seeking marriage is that often she does this to find a means of economic support. Through marriage, a woman

...can hope to rise...into a caste superior to her own, a miracle that could not be bought by the labour of her lifetime.

Usually she can attain a better standard of living with a husband than through her own endeavours. In this way, women 'identify their own survival with the prosperity of those who feed them.'³⁰

This is further support for the view that a woman naturally strives to 'marry well' (to find a rich and powerful mate) to improve her social status in the belief that 'some of his privilege will, so to speak, rub off' on her.³¹ So, seemingly, disparate features in her life 'love' and 'status' are inextricably intertwined. Firestone sums up both of the points above - i.e. the conspiracy (to make women believe they choose to marry) and the view of marriage as a means of social advancement - when she (1970:132) writes:

To participate in one's subjection by choosing one's master often gives the illusion of free choice; but in reality a woman is never free to choose love without external motives [improved social status].

Of course, only a small percentage of women in fact gain the economic benefits and social mobility for which, we are told, they marry. However, society makes much of these women. Furthermore, the prize always looks closer at hand than it is.³² One reason why this pursuit of advancement and thereby vicarious power is frustrated is that it is usually self-defeating. A woman about to marry believes that she will share her husband's power but it is usually the woman who becomes the victim of it, by finding herself only in a subordinate role; he has 'ownership and control' of her.³³

Once having accomplished her ambition to marry (for

whatever motive) the woman wants to please her husband. She wants to create a home for them both, where 'he does not have to fight for his position' in the way that he is required to in the competitive world of work.³⁴ She wants to cook for him and to wait upon him. Furthermore she wants to look up to her husband, 'to seek his guidance to think of him as her superior'.³⁵ Added to this she usually sees herself as a sexual object for her husband's enjoyment. She tries to keep her body approximate 'to the accepted image as a condition of his continuing desire and pride in her'.³⁶ In this way she is 'more often a sexual object than a person' for her husband, as well as herself.³⁷ (At the same time, she is unlikely to ask herself whether or not her husband is attractive to her, only whether she is attractive to him.) She makes herself pretty for him and she makes his life pleasurable by tending to his physical and emotional needs.³⁸ Such a woman typically embraces her husband's political opinions and values.³⁹ Indeed, de Beauvoir (1988:663) claims that the woman

...tries to see with his eyes; she reads the books he reads, prefers the pictures and the music he prefers...she adopts his friendships; his enmities, his opinions...

She is usually content (and is expected to be content) to submissively accept her subordinate role, to be the shadow of her man.⁴⁰

However we are reminded that by behaving like this, a woman makes choices 'not in accordance with her true nature...but as man defines her'.⁴¹ She puts herself entirely in his hands; she forfeits her autonomy. As de Beauvoir (1988:653) puts the point:

...she will humble herself to nothingness before him.

But there is a paradox in such behaviour; it is self-defeating. When the housewife lets her identity be swallowed up by her husband in the way described, then there is nothing left for him to love. When she lets

herself be so dominated by her husband, there can be no reciprocal relationship because she has let herself become nothing but a reflection of this man.

There is an equally troublesome reason why this subservient role is counterproductive to her interests. The wife has to be watchful in case she loses her spouse to another woman. She must discover and humour her husband's weaknesses; she must learn to apply in due measure 'flattery and scorn, vigilance and leniency'.⁴² He must be granted neither too much nor too little of the latter. If she is too lenient, she runs the risk of losing him. In which case, whatever money and passion he devotes to this other woman is taken from her, his wife. Furthermore she runs the risk of a mistress gaining enough power over her husband to make him divorce her. On the other hand, if she annoys him with her watchfulness, her scenes, her demands, if she denies him all sexual adventures, she is also likely to turn him against her and again she risks divorce. The position seems intolerable. She may well feel that she has no 'option but to run away'.⁴³

But if there comes a time when the wife can no longer tolerate this state-of-affairs, having chosen to marry and to be a housewife, the woman usually lacks the necessary training to enter any adequately paid profession. Not having any marketable skills she is totally dependent on her husband's goodwill. Without an outside source of income, she becomes reliant on her husband's earnings and hence his generosity. She has become 'his vassal'.⁴⁴ Furthermore in those cases where this goodwill is absent, for a woman to contemplate divorce becomes only a theoretical possibility. Lacking the necessary skills, the wife knows only too well that life would be very hard for her to survive without her husband's financial support. And if she has children, her marketability as a housewife to another man is further minimized. In ways like the above, de Beauvoir

claims the traditional marriage destroys a woman's autonomy and her identity.

A response to de Beauvoir's assessment of autonomy

De Beauvoir (1988:493) claims that an important factor in the loss of a woman's autonomy in marriage is due to her giving up the paid employment she enjoyed when she was single, but it could be objected that this is adrift of the facts. At the time de Beauvoir was writing either middle-class single women did not work or if they did, most of them earned far less than their male counterparts. As a result such women were unlikely ever to have been financially independent. Even nowadays if they work, the majority of women earn at least 30% less than men.⁴⁵ When they marry if they go out to work, this is unlikely to bring about economic parity between a wife and her husband. It seems unlikely that many of them could be financially independent if this means they would earn enough to support themselves.

In response to the point above it might be suggested that women who work, no matter how small their income, get a sense of financial independence since they are no longer completely dependent on their husband's income.⁴⁶ Taylor and Mill (Rossi 1970:105) made the point colourfully (a hundred years earlier) when they argued:

...a woman who contributes materially to the support of the family, cannot be treated in the same contemptuously tyrannical manner as one who, however she may toil as a domestic drudge, is a dependent on the man for subsistence.

What Taylor and Mill suggest is that to give herself a sense of financial independence, a woman should be both a wife and try to have a successful career.⁴⁷

However de Beauvoir (1988:498) seems to think that even in these cases, the husband would financially dominate his wife. To see this, we need to make a distinction between earning money and controlling it. In the traditional relationship the husband will always

control the household income.⁴⁸ Since the husband controls it of course, merely returning to paid employment is not going to automatically solve a woman's lack of financial independence. She might earn an income of her own but this will be controlled by her husband.⁴⁹

It might be pointed out that nowadays most of us do not have the sort of financial arrangements in marriage that de Beauvoir is discussing. Financial dependence and the associated lack of one's own identity are no longer applicable to modern marriages. Societal expectations have changed. More and more women are entering the workforce and have an income of their own and a status in their own right. They no longer need to accept an inferior financial role in marriage.

But it is wrong to suppose that all traces of these differences have disappeared; 'equality is, even so, rare'.⁵⁰ Further, we might query the assumption that in the typical modern marital relationship a husband will always have control over how the household income is spent.⁵¹ Certainly there are no *a priori* grounds for supposing this. And at first blush, one's own experience seems to suggest that couples vary widely as to the part each plays in the financial management of their affairs.⁵² But the empirical evidence indicates that even today, in most marriages, whilst it is the wife who manages the day-to-day household budget, the husband still has the final say over the main financial decisions.⁵³ Despite the current emphasis on the importance of equality and sharing in marriage, the empirical findings indicate that financial equality in the management of their affairs only happens in 20% of cases.⁵⁴ As de Beauvoir (1988:445) suggests:

Modern marriage can be understood only in the light of a past that tends to perpetuate itself.

We are dealing with deep-rooted socio-economic causes whose efficacy might diminish (temporarily) but they do not go away.⁵⁵ It seems, in particular, that in most

marriages today, de Beauvoir's indictment that marriage results in the husband financially controlling his spouse, is vindicated.

Another way in which de Beauvoir's general claim is vindicated in modern times is in the disadvantage that most married women experience (in contrast with their husbands) if they pursue a career. Most people still expect a working woman to assume the main responsibility for the upkeep of the home. It is still her responsibility to continue to do most of the housework and to make adequate provision for childcare. She has, in effect, a 'double shift'.⁵⁶ She has to bear the double burden of two jobs, one paid outside the home, the other unpaid inside.⁵⁷ Most husbands, in contrast only have to work the one shift.⁵⁸ There are some cases, of course, in which married women are successfully engaged in professional or managerial careers and they are not faced by the double burden of housework and childcare.⁵⁹ For instance, some (usually middle-class) women can maintain household standards and avoid the problems of raising children by employing a domestic worker. Working-class women, on the other hand, usually have no option but to bear the double burden. As a result, unlike her husband, the choices of work outside of the home that such wives can make are limited due to their role as a housewife or mother.

This brings us to a related disadvantage which many wives in paid employment experience. If they want to have a career, this usually means that they will have to compete with men in the public sphere. For as Friedan (1965:300) counsels:

If a job is to be the way out of the trap for a woman, it must be a job that she can take seriously as part of a life plan, work in which she can grow as part of society.

However it is pointed out by many writers that the woman's career is typically interrupted when she retreats from the labour force to have and to care for young

children. (For at the same time as pursuing a career, women want to be good wives and mothers; they want to perform their roles as wives and mothers successfully.) Usually this is at the very stage at which ambitious men are taking the first key steps up the promotion ladder. This too places a wife at a disadvantage when compared with her husband who, typically, does not have his career interrupted in this way. As a consequence of this, we are reminded of de Beauvoir's (1988:165) point:

...it is more difficult for woman than for man to reconcile her family life with her role as worker.

This too, surely, is a feature of the traditional marriage which still applies today.

Before we leave this point I have a quite different observation to make. It concerns the expectations which is placed in the traditional marriage upon the husband to provide the family income. At the time de Beauvoir was writing, it was generally expected that when a man married he would support his wife and family. A large portion if not all of his income was allocated to this end. But where this is the case, we might ask: isn't marriage imprudent for him? De Beauvoir also overlooks the point that in having to support his wife and family and having to finance the upkeep of a home, most men have no choice but to continue in paid employment. They are, as Greer (1971:250) colourfully puts it, '...screwed permanently into the system'. Many husbands also find that they are unfulfilled in their work but cannot stop working because of their financial duties to their wives and families. With such economic demands placed upon them it is not clear that in most marriages, husbands are any more economically independent than their wives. Furthermore, no doubt we can all cite cases in which the wife has control over the household purse strings. Her husband brings home the pay packet and the wife is the one who makes the decisions regarding when and how this income shall be distributed. To this extent she holds

the financial power in their relationship. Where this is the case, de Beauvoir's criticism of this aspect of marriage applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to men.

A different difficulty we might have with de Beauvoir's general argument that marriage leads to the destruction of a young woman's autonomy is that this claim is disingenuous. On de Beauvoir's interpretation of the phrase 'to be free to do something', entails that one is able to actually exercise the choice to do that thing. But many women are not aware that they have this choice *vis-à-vis* marriage until it is too late - they are already married and have borne children.⁶⁰ And this is not surprising. For as de Beauvoir (1988:445) writes:

Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society.

The ability to know what we want in the choices we make, is not always as straightforward as it might seem. To paraphrase Sartre (1966:624-625), the choices that are available to us depend upon the factivity of the situation. And we have seen (in Chapter Two) many of our thoughts and actions with regard to marriage are shaped by the mores in which we have been raised. Women typically choose to marry not in an atmosphere where not marrying is a real option but in the facticity of a social context in which the overriding belief is that marriage is the first and foremost of goals for young women.⁶¹ (They often believe also that part of their adult identity is tied up with being a wife and mother.) The choice for most young women is not whether or not to marry but who to marry. Hence the idea of a choice - to marry or not to marry - is not a real option for most women.

However in support of de Beauvoir it might be argued that once they are married, if they realize they have surrendered their freedom, every woman can do something about this. For some, as Greer (1971:18) suggests, it may be that all she needs do is to free herself 'from the

desire to fulfil her husband's expectations'. But often the problem is greater than that. Often she is faced with the choice of whether or not to end an unhappy marriage. She has to choose, this is to say, between staying married with the accompanying frustration of her life goals, or to divorce, with the accompanying upheaval and distress caused not only to her spouse but to their children, parents and family, and often in the awareness of the lack of any acceptable alternatives open to her. If these factors do not completely determine her choice, they significantly circumscribe it. (And similar arguments apply *mutatis mutandis* to her husband).

De Beauvoir is aware of these difficulties of course. She recognizes the conflict between a woman's need to assert herself as an independent person and, at the same time, the restraints that seem to limit this choice.⁶² However de Beauvoir insists that we are all capable of resisting the 'seductions of dependence'.⁶³ A woman can 'cast herself as transcendent and posit a desiring project of her own'.⁶⁴ Like Sartre, de Beauvoir maintains that every human being is both a *pour-soi* and *en-soi*; we are both a transcendence and an immanent facticity. We are limited by our facticity but given these limits, human beings are always free to transcend their present situation and choose a new course of action from the many possibilities that are always before them.⁶⁵

A final difficulty needs to be noted, although it will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. It concerns the claim that in marriage the wife must be subordinate to her husband; the husband must be the head of their household. If this is a logical 'must' it is clearly false; there is no contradiction in denying the claim or demonstrating that the contrary is often the case. Nor is this the 'must' of causal connection; it is not a matter of say, psychological necessity. It is psychologically possible that in marriage the husband is dominated by the wife. And we can all cite cases where

the wife is (or seems to be) the dominant partner. The husband in such cases has a good reason for the claim that he lacks autonomy due to the relationship.

The 'must' in question follows, of course, from de Beauvoir's belief that we are all motivated by the desire for power over others, the basic human desire to turn them into 'the other'. Following de Beauvoir, we need this principle to comprehend human relationships. When we try to make sense of the latter, we cannot escape the universal nature of the 'temptation to dominate'.⁶⁶ Thus the dominant/subordinate relationship in marriage is inevitable. But is it? And if it is, if marriage does entail that one or other must be the head of the house, must this be thought to reflect badly on the institution of marriage, as de Beauvoir claims?

Housework and the loss of self-realization

Another natural desire that all human beings have, we noted, is the desire for self-fulfilment; we want to realize our potentialities as persons.⁶⁷ And we can do this by reaching out beyond our present circumstances (transcendence) in creative projects which define goals beyond the present and try to change our world in some lasting way. While marriage might frustrate a woman's natural desire for freedom and power, it is often claimed that she can at least have a sense of personal growth or fulfilment in a meaningful vocation as a homemaker, or as a housewife. De Beauvoir denies this.⁶⁸ She claims that being a housewife creates a sense of emptiness or 'nothingness' in women. Why is this?

First of all, rather than being engaged in self-developing creative acts, the housewife (or homemaker) will soon discover that she is condemned to a life of mindless and repetitive work, i.e. housework. Rather than being meaningful labour, housework is stultifying labour. Cleaning the house, after all, has little point to it, beyond maintaining a clean house.⁶⁹ It is, as de

Beauvoir (1988:470) says, 'an endless struggle without victory over the dirt'. The housewife's days are, she (1988:466) writes:

A gilded mediocrity lacking ambition and passion, aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently towards death without questioning its purpose...

Her creative and rational capacities are stultified through the repetitive acts of shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, and so on. Rather than growing, the housewife is trapped in a present that always remains the same; she leads a life of immanence as opposed to transcendence.

A housewife's natural desire for self-fulfilment is frustrated in another way. Rather than finding a sense of fulfilment in her relationship with others, she is alienated from her fellow housewives. Typically she lives in a neighbourhood where there are other housewives who are as boring as she is. De Beauvoir (1988:557) claims:

...their correspondence deals especially with beauty counsel, recipes for cooking, directions for knitting.

To make matters worse, underlying such intellectual shallowness there is a competitive hostility between housewives. Each tries 'to keep up with the Joneses'. Each tries to impress the other with her possessions, for these are the signs of success in the housewife's world. They compete for 'the nicest home, the most successful kids'.⁷⁰ And in this battle, each acquisition, each new piece of furniture in one woman's home is seen as a threat to another's relative status. Further, a dress which beautifies a friend may also be seen in terms of a threat from a competing sexual object. Because of this competition and since her greatest allegiance is bound to be towards her husband (upon whom she is financially dependent), true friendship between housewives, we are told, is impossible.⁷¹

At first blush, the account above seems to be a tendentious caricature of a housewife's lot. (I will return to it in Chapter Six.) But even if we were to accept that like any caricature, there is a semblance of truth in the overstatement, it could be pointed out that there is a further feature of self-fulfilment in the lives of most housewives, namely, they have children. Isn't motherhood one creative project in which a housewife can discover true fulfilment and transcendence?⁷² Indeed in the traditional mores it is believed 'motherhood is the only way in which a woman can discover true fulfilment and genuine respect'.⁷³ Every housewife is expected to make motherhood 'a central focus of her life';⁷⁴ otherwise she is 'shirking a responsibility'.⁷⁵ On the other hand, women who are unable to have children and who want to have them, are pitied whereas those who could have children but who do not want them, are thought to be unnatural, selfish and even 'unfeminine'.⁷⁶ As Firestone (1970:228) writes, a woman who does not want to have a child

...can get away with it only if she adds that she is neurotic, abnormal, childhating, and therefore 'unfit'.

There is another way in which the claim above is confirmed. Sometimes in a state of boredom, alienation and loneliness, a housewife believes that she will solve her problem - her sense of loneliness and isolation - by having children; she believes that having a child will make up for the emptiness she finds in her life. She thinks that motherhood must be 'the fulfilment of all that she has wanted in the world'.⁷⁷ Thus for such a woman to intentionally become pregnant seems to be 'the incarnation of a creative project'. It seems to be a *prima facie* example of 'defining goals beyond the present and trying to change the world in some lasting way'.

De Beauvoir (1988:514) denies this. In the first place becoming pregnant is not a creative project. Pregnancy is just a natural, animal (*en-soi*) function

that a woman undergoes; the woman merely submits to her biological nature, 'she does not control it'.⁷⁸ She is arrested 'at the level of biological experience'.⁷⁹ In other words, pregnancy is not a transcending process. The woman does not make the baby, rather her body accommodates the growing foetus which 'makes itself within her'.⁸⁰ She may want to have the baby but she cannot creatively participate in its foetal development. Nor can she determine the nature of the child she will have. Thus there is no creative act or transcendence involved.

Does a woman fare any better in terms of transcendence when child rearing? De Beauvoir does not think so. The mother nourishes the child. She attends to its physical and emotional needs, but she does not transcend herself in the situation. Human creativity requires that one brings a preconceived idea(s) into reality through labour. At best all the mother does is to lay the necessary framework for the child to grow and perhaps to transcend itself at some point in the future. In which case de Beauvoir (1988:539) writes:

...her transcendence through the universe and time is still by proxy.

It is not she but the child who becomes capable of changing the world. If, on the other hand, the mother consciously views her children as a creative project, spending her time with them, manipulating their personalities and interests so that they become what she intends them to be, she deprives them of their autonomy. By smothering them with attention and constant direction, children are not given the chance to experiment with their own projects and so develop the ability to choose what they might like to do with their lives. Nor are they given the opportunity to develop self-reliance and other necessary skills which will enable them to become self-determining agents. In other words, by trying to justify her life through the lives of her children, the

mother my consign her children to immanence as well.

There is worse to come. If a woman does decide to devote herself to motherhood, this is 'a precarious venture on which to base a life'.⁸¹ Pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood are not what most women expect them to be.⁸² It is seldom a solution to her problems. A child seldom satisfies a mother's desire for self-fulfilment. They are not a substitute for rational companionship. The baby, de Beauvoir (1988:525) points out, is not even active in the relationship, 'its smiles, its babble, have no sense other than what the mother gives them'. Added to this, in the early days a mother is usually constantly mentally and physically debilitated due to the fatigues of childbirth and sleep deprivation. And later on, young children make more housework; there is more mess to be cleaned up by the mother. For these as much as any other reasons, it is unlikely that a woman qua mother will find transcendence by having children.

A further factor worth our noting is the claim that many women tend to feel they have lost rather than gained something when they have a child. For women that grow up with hopes of a career, it can be traumatic to suddenly find yourself stuck at home with a baby. As Oakley (1980:280) writes:

What is lost may be one's job, one's lifestyle, an intact 'couple' relationship, control over one's body or a sense of 'self'.

This sense of loss will increase where the responsibility for children is seen to be mainly the province of the woman.⁸³ And despite the many suggestions that there is today a more equal acceptance of responsibility (by fathers), mothers are usually still deemed to be 'solely responsible for childcare'.⁸⁴ Lastly, even if she does get some sense of fulfilment from them, at some point the woman stops having children. When they grow up and leave home, she will be left feeling that she has lost her purpose in life.⁸⁵

In the chapters ahead I want to concentrate on de

Beauvoir's claim that the gender roles we perform in marriage entail a diminution of transcendence. So by way of clearing the ground I want to raise some other concerns I have with her account. Perhaps it is not too difficult to accept the claim that if she merely passively conforms to the tradition, the housewife will be in bad faith.⁸⁶ But it might be pointed out that there is a sense in which an autonomous woman can choose her subordinate role as a housewife. Let us suppose that she conforms to the housewife's role because she sees the advantages of it, not simply because it is 'the done thing'. Suppose the woman makes a deliberate choice to be a housewife and mother. (Autonomy is not co-extensive with wisdom.) If she acknowledges that she always could choose whether or not to remain in this relationship, wouldn't de Beauvoir have to say that the woman is autonomous to the extent that she remains the ultimate judge of what she will do and think, including the decision to be a housewife?

Given the disparaging account of this role we are considering, however, it is an odd choice for a woman to make. She chooses not to utilise her own talents; she would rather have 'a piggyback' than succeed on her own efforts. She invests all of her energy into securing a 'good' husband. She chooses to let her husband be head of the household. She chooses to let him determine her projects. She chooses to let her desires be submerged so that his can take precedence over hers, even if his desires are completely at odds with what she would have chosen for herself. She chooses to be no longer responsible for herself. At some point presumably she chooses to be an *en-soi*, to abrogate her freedom; she chooses to deny her own possibilities and projects. If this is really what happens I think we might agree, using de Beauvoir's terms, that such a woman chooses to live in bad faith. Nonetheless the self-determining housewife could make even this choice.

A second difficulty I have with de Beauvoir's account concerns her views about personal growth or fulfilment that attaches to the world of work. It is naïve to assume that all or most married men have creative and meaningful jobs, a more fulfilling and creative lifestyle than their wives. It overlooks the fact that the majority of men are not privileged, well-educated, middle-class professionals.⁸⁷ They are poorly educated and working-class, with monotonous, lowly paid jobs in which it is difficult to see how in any sense they can be thought to express themselves creatively. The sorts of things de Beauvoir has to say about the advantages attained by men in marriage, in other words, has to be seen at best in the context of middle-class society. Even here the facts appear to be somewhat different to those suggested by de Beauvoir. I suspect that most middle-class men too will experience a lack of fulfilment partly due to their jobs and partly to their gender roles within marriage. In which case, no doubt de Beauvoir would say, if this is the case a man too should not marry.

A third related difficulty concerns the contingent nature of de Beauvoir's claims. She objects to marriage partly because of the roles of housework and mothering since she claims this entails an inevitable lack of fulfilment for women when they perform these roles. A man, on the other hand, seems to gain every advantage from this arrangement. According to de Beauvoir (1988:451) his material needs are attended to; his dinner is on the table in a neat and tidy house, he has clean shirts everyday, he has his children cared for, and generally his existence is enhanced. We might think there is something in this. There is a great deal of empirical evidence for instance, which indicates that the psychological health of married men is significantly better than that of single men or married woman.⁸⁸ However even if this is correct, it needs to be stressed

again that it is only contingently so. These alleged advantages are not necessary features of a man's lot in marriage. It is quite possible for marriage to degenerate for men to the level which, de Beauvoir claims, most women experience it.

This brings me to my last point in this section. As we have seen, de Beauvoir claims that being a housewife and a mother - or at least having the responsibility for the housework and the children - are stereotypical domestic roles that a woman, rather than a man, must perform in marriage. This is not to say that all married women perform these roles. For instance, where birth control is free or readily available a woman need not become pregnant unless she chooses;⁸⁹ and some choose not to, while some find they cannot have children. But where the roles of housework and mothering need to be performed, de Beauvoir points out that they are as matter of fact - and it is generally thought they ought to be - a woman's role. We need to ask: ought such tasks be a wife's role in marriage? In other words: are there good reasons for thinking that this ought/ought not to be her role? We need secondly to be clear about what precisely 'self-fulfilment through creative projects' means and if it is the case that housewifery and motherhood are necessarily precluded from this. We will return to these questions in Chapter Six.

Marriage frustrates a woman's desire for sexual satisfaction

We noted that as well as destroying a woman's freedom and self-fulfilment, marriage destroys the chances of a woman having the kind of sexual satisfaction she naturally seeks. De Beauvoir (1988:400-404) holds, firstly, that sexual intercourse in a traditional marriage makes it extremely difficult for a woman to know and nurture her own sexual desires and needs.⁹⁰ They are required instead to meet men's sexual expectations and

needs. The pre-dominant view of sex for centuries has been based around penetration and the male orgasm; male dominance and female submission in sexual behaviour.⁹¹ But more than this, secondly, the marital sexual relationship is 'the source of her sexual oppression'.⁹² Like de Beauvoir, many feminists contend that sexual activity in a monogamous heterosexual marriage is the place in which harassment and rape are most overt.⁹³ Before discussing these claims however, it is worth reminding ourselves that although they have the appearance of being empirical they also follow necessarily from the claims which de Beauvoir makes concerning power relations and transcendence in a long-term heterosexual relationship.

There are a number of reasons why marriage frustrates a woman's desire for sexual satisfaction. Firstly, as we saw in Chapter Two, marriage changes what begins as an erotic relationship into a legal one. Rather than seducing or being seduced by a woman, who freely gives herself, marriage gives the husband a legal right 'to take his pleasure'.⁹⁴ Conversely the wife has a legal obligation to perform her marital sexual duties, whether she likes it or not. But de Beauvoir (1988:454) objects, when her sexual desires become subordinate to those of her husband's, the married woman loses 'ownership of her own body'. To make matters worse, in many marital relationships the husband feels entitled to have unrestricted sexual access to his wife even - in some cases - when this is against the woman's will. Sometimes this can take the form of his pestering or badgering her to have sexual intercourse with him. However some husbands obtain sexual intercourse with their wives by the use of physical force against her; they rape their wives.⁹⁵ Many women experience rape in the marital relationship - they are physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they do not want this. This kind of behaviour some husbands seem to think, is

justified as a result of what they consider to be their legal entitlement in marriage.

It seems that again married women are inclined to connive in their own downfall here. We are told that in the typical sexual relationship, a woman chooses to offer her body in exchange for marriage; she sees that her role is to 'provide sexual satisfaction for her husband'.⁹⁶ She sacrifices her sexual autonomy and offers herself as a sexual object for her husband's use. As a result, it is little wonder that a husband may think he has a right to have sexual intimacy whenever he so desires and that his wife has an obligation to participate. By having her sexuality used in this way, the married woman is confined to immanence. As Dworkin (1992:116) writes:

...there is nothing for her to discern or construct; there is nothing for her to find out except what [her husband] will do to her...

This is why de Beauvoir (1988:167) claims that the sexual relationship in marriage is a form of prostitution. In return for financial support and social mobility, the woman offers her body as 'capital' for exploitation. She finds it easier to sell herself to a man, her husband, than to try to make her own way in the workplace.⁹⁷

This is part of de Beauvoir's more general claim that marriage (1988:463) is 'obscene in principle'. It transforms into rights and duties those mutual relations which, she (*ibid*) claims, should be founded on a spontaneous urge. Sexual intercourse should be a spontaneous act, not performed to meet a (marital) right which is given in perpetuity to another person. It should be a matter of passion rather than a legal obligation. Incidentally de Beauvoir adds, this kind of sexual encounter is unlikely to be successful. She (1988:463) suggests:

The husband is often chilled by the idea that he is doing a duty, and the wife is ashamed to find herself given to someone who is exercising a right over her.

In time husbands lose out in the exchange too, for their sexuality becomes detached from other emotions which remain ignored and unloved.⁹⁸ So what began as a mutually desired sexual exchange in marriage quickly reduces into an unwanted one.

Another cause of a husband's lack of sexual interest in his wife as a sexual partner, de Beauvoir claims, is due to housework⁹⁹ and motherhood¹⁰⁰. While a woman's beauty is the original source of her attraction and power, both housework and pregnancy 'are its enemies'.¹⁰¹ Pregnancy destroys a woman's figure; housework, her mind. As a result, a husband often loses his sexual desire for his wife.

In contrast with sexual encounters within marriage, sexual intercourse, de Beauvoir (1988:463) claims, has to be based upon a 'spontaneous urge'. What she seems to mean by this is that sexual pleasure is only to be found in spontaneity - not doing what is required of you (by the law or the mores) but rather because you spontaneously desire to do so. De Beauvoir (1988:459) writes:

...in a genuinely moral erotic relationship there is free assumption of desire and pleasure...when the other is recognized as an individual.

Lack of spontaneity seems to be an inevitable feature of sex within marriage. Marriage turns sex, for the husband as well as the wife, into a mundane everyday experience; for once a sexual relationship has been established for a period of time, 'the magic of eroticism spontaneously evaporates rather rapidly'.¹⁰² After a number of encounters between husband and wife, the adventure and erotic excitement of a new person fades. Even where erotic love exists before the marriage, it rarely persists through the long years which follow. All that is left is a 'steady if not satisfactory sex supply'.¹⁰³

What is surprising to de Beauvoir is that anyone should think that it could be otherwise. She (1988:464)

writes:

...it is pure absurdity to maintain that two married persons, bound by ties of practical, social and moral interest, will provide each other with sexual satisfaction as long as they live.

Familiarity breeds both boredom and contempt. When a married couple know each other so well, they will no longer experience their spouse as a freely choosing individual (*pour-soi*) but rather as a sexual object (*en-soi*). At best, sexual relations in marriage lead a man and woman to use each other for their own ends.

Finally, the boredom women experience with the same sexual partner, inevitably leads her to (improper) sexual fantasies with a different man. If she is fantasising about, say, Richard Gere when 'making love' (*sic*), to her husband, she is really not enjoying the latter but another person. Hence de Beauvoir (1988:465) says that sexual intimacy of the kind experienced in an established marriage

...is no longer an intersubjective experience in which each goes beyond self, but rather is a kind of joint masturbation.

De Beauvoir makes this general point in another way. She (1988:466) claims that acceptable spontaneous sex can only be achieved when it plays 'an episodic and independent role'. Monogamous marriage precludes this by the demand it makes of fidelity. De Beauvoir (1988:454) notes:

In regard to her erotic fate, two essential consequences follow: first she has no right to any sexual activity apart from marriage...

De Beauvoir maintains that not only sexual intercourse but fidelity also should be freely given and not be regarded as an obligation. She (1988:464) argues that fidelity has a place in the early stages of any sexual relationship because lovers do not want their sexual intimacy 'to be contradicted by experiences with outsiders; they want each one to be irreplaceable for the

other'.¹⁰⁴ Fidelity in this context is meaningful since 'it is freely given'.¹⁰⁵ However to regard fidelity as a moral duty or a legal obligation is, once again, to turn one's body into an instrument for the other person to use at any time. We should be able to express our sexuality freely and not be constrained by the law or any externally imposed code of conduct; the law or a moral list of 'do's and don'ts' have no place in this aspect of our lives.

Does marriage necessarily destroy the possibility of women having the kind of sexual satisfaction they naturally seek? Is satisfactory sexual intercourse necessarily a matter of two people falling spontaneously and passionately into each other's arms? Must marriage turn what begins as an erotic satisfying relationship into a legal one, in which a husband thinks himself entitled to sexually harass and even to rape his wife? Is it reasonable to demand sexual fidelity in marriage? We will discuss these questions in detail in Chapter Seven.

Why marriage is immoral

We have considered de Beauvoir's claim that it is not in a woman's best interest to marry. It is inevitable that her husband will become head of the house, that her roles in marriage as a housewife and mother will destroy the possibilities of her self-fulfilment or transcendence, and that her sexual satisfaction will be forfeit. To stress the point: a married woman's freedom is thwarted by the power relationship in which she is economically dependent on her husband and in which she gives up her own identity and projects to further the identity and projects of this other person. She thwarts her creativity and the development of her talents and capacities by becoming a housewife and a mother. She thwarts genuine sexual satisfaction (or anyway makes sexual satisfaction very

difficult) by becoming legally bound to a long-term exclusive monogamous relationship. Hence such a choice (to marry) is extremely imprudent for a woman. (And this applies presumably to a man insofar as he fulfils these roles or meets these conditions.) However these are *prima facie* self-regarding considerations. It is not obvious how such reasons lead to the claim that a woman is being immoral if she marries. So where exactly does morality fit into the picture?

The answer is that since we are committed to valuing freedom above all else, then we are committed to value those institutions which protect and enhance freedom. Or conversely, if one values freedom, one is logically committed to oppose those kinds of institutions that limit or destroy freedom. Thus de Beauvoir (1988:28) writes:

...we shall pass judgements on institutions according to their effectiveness in giving concrete opportunities to individuals.

Institutions are immoral insofar as they limit an individual from choosing, or where the choices that are available to a person are severely restricted by the facticity entailed by the institution. We can see now where morality fits into the picture. When the majority of women make this choice, the effect is to limit the freedom - especially in terms of economic and political power - of the entire class of women. Women as a class remain exploited because they lack economic and political power necessary to escape their oppression and this, to a large extent, is due to their choosing to marry. Moreover, as long as being a housewife and mother is the vocation they choose, women will remain oppressed. This too serves to reinforce an institution that limits the freedom of those who make up the class. Hence marriage itself is an oppressive institution; indeed, as we noted, for many feminists it is the primary source of women's oppression.

Moreover, as de Beauvoir points out, a choice of

this nature indirectly influences others. By choosing a particular role, we are endorsing that role. We are saying that it is morally acceptable for a person to choose to be this sort of thing.¹⁰⁶ The most immediate effect of the choices she makes within marriage is on the minds of a woman's children. A mother is an important role model for her children. When she chooses to be a housewife, children grow up believing that this is the most natural role for a woman. In this way an oppressing institution is perpetuated through her children. Because her actions endorse and perpetuate an institution which harms so many, the woman makes a choice which is 'an absolute evil'.¹⁰⁷ (If they were to universalize their choices, presumably they would see that they are reinforcing an oppressive institution.)

In the next three chapters I want to consider some of these claims in more detail. Firstly, the claim that in marriage a head of the house is inevitable. One of the couple (for de Beauvoir it is always the husband) is bound to regard themselves (or to be regarded) as head of the household, which in turn subordinates the other and so destroys their freedom. Secondly, the claim that the gender roles we have in marriage are inevitable and that these roles - especially being a housewife and mother - destroy the need a person has for transcendence through creative projects. Finally, the claim that good sexual experiences must be forfeit in marriage. The former have to be freely chosen events between two *pour-sois* which is only achieved in sexual relationship with a series of different sexual partners. In short, fidelity as a duty entails bad sex.

Chapter Five

The head of the household

De Beauvoir maintains that in a marriage relationship it is inevitable that one or other of the partners will be in the dominant role, 'the head of the household'; and that this in turn entails a severe diminution in the other partner's autonomy. The question we need to ask in this chapter is: does marriage entail a relationship like this? In the traditional marriage, we noted also how de Beauvoir maintains it is the husband who is always the head of the household and his wife is subordinate to him.¹ Presumably this situation is justified if a relevant, unfailing and universal difference could be found between men and women that entailed male domination. Can such a difference be found? In this chapter, I will begin by considering some of the affirmative claims - from the Judaic-Christian tradition, Aristotle, Rousseau, and the more recent sociobiological claims concerning the natural dispositions of the different genders - which aim at justifying (or explaining) male domination. I will go on to consider the claim that even if there is not a universal relevant difference, we want or we need someone to be in authority in a marriage. I will then argue that a more equitable relationship between a husband and wife is possible. However I will show that even here it appears that in marriage a diminution in an individual's autonomy cannot be avoided.

As we noted, de Beauvoir maintains that in the traditional marriage the husband is bound to regard himself (and to be regarded) as the head of the household. Obviously this does not mean that it entitles the husband to be overbearing, to harass his wife, to force her to do things against her will, or to use her in other ways as an instrument for his own ends. He may be

considerate and concerned for his wife, he may support her in her projects and put her interests before his own. What his being 'the head of the household' does require is that the husband is ultimately responsible for making the important decisions and of taking charge when cooperative action is required within the family. It can mean, for instance, he ultimately decides such things as where they will live, the kind of lifestyle they will have, the friends they will or will not have, and so on. As the head of the household, the husband will expect to be responsible for such decisions and on these occasions, presumably, he will expect his ruling to be followed. On a more mundane level, his being the head of the house is manifest in such things as his expectation to drive the family car, or for his wife to launder his shirts for him, or to have his dinner waiting on the table; on the other hand, if she has projects, these are expected to take place unobtrusively and must not interfere with her domestic responsibilities. We need to ask how this kind of domination is to be justified (if at all).

Biblical sources

There are a number of biblical texts which suggest that male domination in marriage is determined by God and as such is morally right. They assert the dependence, subordination and - in some cases - the inferiority of women. To take one from the many examples available, Paul (Corinthians 1, 11:8-9) says:

For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman but woman for man.²

No doubt it will be objected that it is wrong to interpret such passages in a way that takes little account of the culture of the times in which they were written. It could be pointed out, for instance, that Paul's strictures concerning women occur within the general context of patriarchy, as well as against the background of the peculiar circumstances obtaining in the

cities of Corinth and Ephesus at that time.³ Further Paul does make some comments about women which seem to support a more egalitarian outlook.⁴ Nonetheless it would be wrong to minimize Paul's evident attitude in favour of male domination, particularly where this concerns marriage. His view has been very influential. It is regarded by many 20th century Christians as justifying (God-given) male domination of women. The inferior status of women to men is regarded by most fundamentalists at least, as divinely inspired doctrine.⁵

A quick way of showing the moral irrelevance of an appeal to divine (or Paul's) authority on this matter is the following response: either there is a good reason for the divine command that women should be subordinate to men, or there is not. Now if there are 'bad' reasons for God's command - it is just the result of an arbitrary whim or perhaps unfair favouritism - then what reason does a rational person have to accept the claim that we should obey? We may obey simply because we will be punished if we do not. But surely, if the only defence that can be given for a command is a naked appeal to power, then it is better - more courageous - to choose to ignore the command and risk the punishment.

The more likely alternative is that God has good reasons for commanding what He does. But then if there are good reasons for commanding A rather than B, surely, it is because those reasons are good reasons that one should do A, not merely because God says so.⁶ In other words, we require good reasons for male domination in marriage if we are to accept this.

Perhaps the good reasons in question can be found in the fact that the power arrangement in marriage reflects the natural state of things. Many philosophers in the past have given versions of this kind of naturalistic argument. Let us consider some of them.

Naturalistic arguments for male dominance

Men dominate women just because men are naturally dominant; women are dependent upon men because they are naturally inclined to dependence. Some philosophers, like Montesquieu (1977:108)⁷, Rousseau (1911:321), and Schopenhauer (1951:62)⁸ concentrate on the superior physical strength of men to justify male domination. For others, like Aristotle (*Politics* 1259-1260), Comte (1974:504)⁹ and Fichte (1970:394-396) female subordination is mainly due to psychological differences between the genders. For the latter writers it is mainly a woman's lack of rationality that entails her subordination; according to Fichte (*ibid*) it comes down to the matter of 'an intrinsic weakness of her reason'. Both views have their counterparts in modern times.

Let us begin with the overt sexual differences in the physical make-up of males and females. According to Rousseau (1911:321):

But for her sex, a woman is a man; she has the same organs, the same needs, the same faculties.

But sex is not a mere contingency (as we might be tempted to think from the quotation above), rather it determines the entire nature and role of the subject. Everything else follows and ought to follow from a person's sex. Thus a woman ought to have a different education, moral values, role in society, and an entirely different function in the domestic household, from that assigned to a male. In other words, as a result of the sexual difference, male and female are (or rather 'ought to be') quite different ways of being human. And this in turn requires the domination of women by men.

Accordingly, Rousseau suggests in *Emile* Book V that by the end of his (ideal) education, the young man's accomplishments and experience ought to include the ability to support himself, if necessary with a trade, so that he is independent of the goodwill or charity of other men. He ought to be familiar with the arts and the

sciences, with government, the laws and public affairs in general; he ought to be familiar with the moral norms in his own and other countries and he ought to have an independent faculty of judgement. When it comes to marriage, Emile (1911:412) is told by his tutor:

You hope to be a husband and a father: have you seriously considered your duties? When you become head of a family you will become a citizen of your country.

Marriage for Emile ought to involve his proper inclusion into the body politic, whereas his wife and family ought only to be connected to society through him, the head of the household.¹⁰

In contrast, a woman's education ought to be quite different. Rousseau (1911:349) writes, this is because

...the works of genius are beyond her reach, and she has neither the accuracy nor the attention for success in the exact sciences.

As a result, a woman's thoughts should be directed to the study of men. For we are told (1911:328) that she is specially made 'by nature' for man's delight! She is to be trained

To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love...to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.

Rousseau is in no doubt that the sexual difference between a man and a woman requires that a man be the head of the household.

In recent times, a more complex (and plausible) attempt to make the same general point is given by some sociobiologists.¹¹ They claim that due to the long evolutionary past, neurological and physiological differences between the sexes have emerged and they suggest that these are the cause of the many divergences in social behaviour of men and women. The neurological differences referred to include the subtle but significant differences in the way the brains of males

and females develop, due to the effects of their different hormonal environments during fetal growth.¹² Among the physiological differences alluded to is the fact that from an early age most females are smaller and are physically weaker than males of the same age. Adult males have a greater height, broader chests, a higher muscle to fat ratio, etc., and are stronger than adult females. It is reckoned that the muscular strength of the average adult woman is about two-thirds that of a man.¹³ Females have a more delicate skeleton (although they have a larger pelvis, presumably in readiness for pregnancy and childbirth); they have smaller lungs, trachea and larynx; a female has faster pulse rates, less haemoglobin, is less able to metabolise calcium, and so on. No doubt many of these things make a difference to the relative strength of men and women.

I need to make two further points, both of which I will return to later. First of all, if distinctions regarding justified domination were to be made along these lines, the criterion of differentiation would be greater strength, not sex. So whatever distinctions are made on these grounds could apply alike to men and women. Secondly, something needs to be added also, surely, about social influences. From the earliest years, cultural proscriptions begin to interact with the neurological and physiological differences in shaping the experiences of little boys and girls, and presumably lead to a difference in dominant/subordinate expectations of the genders within marriage. Before we consider the question of why this justifies male domination - or how their superior physical strength justifies value judgements concerning the power relationship between a couple - let us consider some of the innate psychological differences between the sexes that are purported to exist.

Significant psychological differences between the sexes were suggested by Aristotle (*Politics* 1259-1260a). He claimed that a woman is not a fully rational being

when compared with a man; at best she is a weak, unaccomplished and botched version, devoid of many of his essential attributes. Aristotle (*ibid*) also suggests that the virtues are different in a woman:

...temperance, fortitude, and justice are not, as Socrates believed, the same in a man as in a woman; a man's fortitude is shown in ruling, a woman's in obeying.

It appears that this dissimilarity ought to mark a difference in gender role expectations within the home. Aristotle thought, particularly, that they show why the male ought to be the head of the house. In *Politics* (1259b) he asserts:

The male is naturally more fitted to command than the female (except where there is a miscarriage of nature)....¹⁴

We might think that Aristotle's general point is vindicated in modern times, by the many subtle yet significant psychological contrasts between the sexes that have been discovered in, for instance, the responses of members of each sex to psychological tests. (Or to put the point more cautiously, it is claimed that although there are no consistent differences in the average scores between males and females in IQ test scores,¹⁵ when the results are analyzed according to the type of ability, we do find consistent differences between the sexes.) As Shafer (1987:361) points out:

...females...have greater verbal ability than males...males outperform females on tests of visual-spatial ability and arithmetic reasoning.

There is evidence which shows that females have greater verbal ability than males. We are told that this involves not merely females being more talkative¹⁶ but, more interestingly, their being generally better at understanding complicated pieces of writing and being more creative with words.¹⁷ Males, on the other hand, appear to have greater mathematical ability and also do better on tests involving what is known as 'visual-

spatial' ability.¹⁸ They are generally better, for instance, at exercises where the subject is required to find a shape (say, a circle) which is concealed in a more complex design.

We could go further and suggest an explanation for this difference along sociobiological lines. In the long hunter-gatherer period, as Ridley (1994:243-244) suggests:

Men needed superior spatial skills to throw weapons at moving targets...women needed skills for success at making allies within the tribe, manipulating men into helping her...

Over the very long stretch of evolutionary time, male and female minds became hard-wired to respond in ways consistent with these gender-related tasks. So that nowadays little boys are the beneficiaries of a more developed latent visual perception while little girls naturally tend to be more fluent speakers and to have better verbal memories.

What (for want of a better word) I will call 'non-intellectual' psychological differences between the sexes, have also been found. For our purposes, the most important of these is aggression. Males, we are told, are generally more aggressive than females.¹⁹ Studies conducted on children in several different societies have borne this out. In all of those tested (from quite different cultural backgrounds) it has been found that boys are likely to play more roughly, more likely to attack each other and fight each other or fight back when attacked, than are girls.²⁰ Also they are more prepared than girls to cause injury to others.²¹ Most importantly for us, it is suggested that aggression is associated with competitiveness and the drive to dominate others. For one obvious way in which aggression is manifest is in trials of strength, or battles of will (which can be seen in activities such as sport, politics, and most obviously in warfare). We might think that this implies, similarly, that being head of the house is a

manifestation of the latent male psychological tendency to be aggressive.

If males are naturally more aggressive than females this has obvious implications for our discussion.²² If the former naturally has a greater competitiveness, ambition and drive to dominate, coupled with a greater physical strength, this helps to explain why the typical male assumes that he ought to be the head of the house. The cause is within his nature. The biologically greater strength and drive to dominate that males have, moreover, might seem to make it futile for women to try to compete with them in this regard. Such a competition would seem to be doomed to failure since she is always naturally handicapped. Thus we might be tempted to conclude that a woman should just accept her subordinate status within the relationship (or as de Beauvoir suggests, keep out of this relationship altogether).

A credible alternative explanation of male aggressive behaviour can be given in terms of nurture (rather than nature). As Broderick (1988:42) writes:

Underlying attitudes...are largely formulated at an early age...these first years in the family are the foundation on which all that follows must be built.

Perhaps the explanation of male aggression is due mainly to social conditioning. In other words, there are no significant natural differences between the sexes that would account for male aggression; however any slight strands within their nature that are present we encourage, educate and coerce males into adopting as they are nurtured.

By itself this does not seem to be the basis for an adequate explanation. We would need to know why not just in ours but in every society, adults should condition children in the same way. For in all societies, as we noted, males are generally more aggressive than females. De Beauvoir recognizes this. The dominant/subordinate roles that exist in marriage today, she contends, are an

inheritance from the very long period in which humans lived in hunter-gatherer societies. She (1988:85) points out that in all known earlier societies:

While man hunts and fishes, woman remains in the home...

During the long hunter-gatherer period the sexes had (and needed to have) different roles. The role difference was essentially due to the fact that women had frequent pregnancies and they had to breast-feed their babies. This meant, roughly, that they needed to stay near the home, gathering vegetable foods, while the men went on hunting expeditions for meat.²³ As a result, females evolved a more benign social character, passive, gentle, while males became tougher and more aggressive. And because physical strength and aggression were the ways in which power was expressed in these primitive societies, males became dominant.

In addition to the point above there is quite different empirical evidence that needs to be mentioned, which supports the claim that males are naturally more aggressive/dominant than females.²⁴ Firstly, a similar strong inclination for the male to dominate is found in males of other closely related primates, for instance in apes.²⁵ Obviously this cannot be explained in terms of human conditioning or socialization. The tendency of males to dominate, moreover, is found in very young animals of many different species when there is little evidence of any conditioning at all. Secondly, aggression and the attempt to dominate has been shown to vary according to the level of the sex hormone testosterone, that is present in a male; males are found to be more or less aggressive according to their testosterone levels.²⁶ Females too become more aggressive if they receive this hormone.²⁷ So it seems that hormones play a significant role in shaping aggressive/dominant masculine behaviour.

In a discussion of the causes of male domination in

marriage, however, while few of us would deny that some role differences are connected with our biological or psychological natures, there can be no doubt that the causal explanation is much more complex than this. So let us return to a cause touched upon earlier, namely, the way males and females are socialized. Rousseau acknowledged this; or rather he was none too confident in his view that being born male naturally means dominance. If it were true, for instance, as he claims that 'a woman is naturally made to be a man's helpmate' then there would be no need for all of the fuss and effort to ensure a certain kind of subordinate role develops in the girl, through her upbringing and training. What is the purpose of the different types of education and other social pressures, if adult males and females are naturally the way they are? You can hardly justify the existence of different education for the different sexes by claims about what they are supposed to achieve, if this would have happened anyway without them. Parent fish do not have to take special steps to make sure that their young can swim. They are born to do that.

In our earlier discussion of a normative tradition we noted that children are presented with a more or less consistent picture of how we expect them to behave when adults. Similarly men and women are subject to social pressure of various kinds to make them behave in stereotypical ways. So that, as Radcliffe Richards (1986:190) writes:

Often it has been impossible for the sexes to trespass on what has been regarded as the other's territory...

We have been socialized into accepting especially stereotypes in which men have greater access than women into status occupations and roles. This brings us to another plausible causal explanation of male dominance within marriage that needs to be mentioned.

As de Beauvoir pointed out, in the traditional marital relationship husbands have greater access to the

economic world of power and status outside of the marriage. In their working lives, men tend to have more opportunities, more resources, more status and more power generally than women and they may bring these expectations home with them into the marital relationship.²⁸ In other words, the power that men possess in their lives outside of the home gives them certain advantages within the home.²⁹

From the above sketch, we may conclude that there is considerable empirical evidence (physiological, psychological, sociological) which is relevant in an explanation of the strong tendency for male domination. I hope I have said enough now to ask: Does this not vindicate de Beauvoir's claim that in a marital relationship men are bound to dominate their wives? Doesn't it justify the commonly held view that in the traditional marriage, husbands ought to be a head of their household?

There is much, of course, that is wrong with the arguments above. Firstly, the alleged superior physical strength of males to females is not universal. As Radcliffe Richards (1986:362) writes:

Even the most dyed in the grain of male supremacists...could hardly claim that all men were stronger (or whatever) than all women.

The empirical data is only of an average. Not all men and all women fit the mould (as is the way with averages). Some wives are stronger, taller, broader, than their husbands; so, as we noted, whatever distinctions are made along these lines apply alike to these women. At the same time, there are pressures for men to conform to the behavioral expectations of the masculine stereotype; which can be difficult for those who do not fit the mould. But - to adapt a point made by Radcliffe Richards (1986:203) - you cannot deride a weak man, on the grounds that he ought to be stronger than his wife in order to be the head of his household and claim that men should be heads of households because they are

physically stronger. If they all were stronger there would be nothing to deride. But if there is thought to be something (to deride), some husbands at least are, by the criterion of natural strength, unsuited to the position of headship.

Yet even if most husbands are stronger than their wives this is a feature that is becoming increasingly obsolete in the relationship between males and females. As de Beauvoir (1988:84) observes, with the advent of modern technology:

...the control of many modern machines requires only a part of the masculine resources and...(the female is) as far as this work is concerned, man's equal. Today...vast displays of energy can be controlled by pressing a button.

Technological advances have made it possible for the weakest person to operate a fork-lift truck which lifts tens of tonnes, or to fire a missile which kills thousands of people. In which case, male dominance which historically might be justified in terms of their superior strength, would be much more difficult to justify in these terms in the light of the developments in modern technology.

Some of the critical points above apply to the alleged psychological differences between the sexes. A significant number of females will be, for instance, more spatially-visually adept than males; the evidence suggests that a quarter of all females tested have greater spatial-visual ability than half of the males.³⁰ Similarly the tests for levels of aggression, etc., between males and females; refer only to average results. Our own experiences will have shown us that there are many wives who appear to be more aggressive than their husbands or many husbands who seem to be more submissive or gentle than their wives. Furthermore many other empirical differences discovered suggest no more than a tendency of one or other of the sexes towards certain attitudes, propensities, or kinds of behaviour. Social

conditioning, no doubt, could moderate or suppress some or most of the differences (or reinforce them) if this was thought to be desirable. To support this observation, there are many case studies which show that where a girl is brought up in a way that teaches her to be independent of males in tasks requiring visual-spatial dexterity, her skill in this area is much higher than where a girl is brought up in a home which encourages dependence on males.³¹ And the same is true *mutatis mutandis* where boys are raised in a home which encourages independence.

We should notice also (for the purpose of the discussion in the next chapter) that any differences that there are, cannot explain more than a small number of the roles that males and females typically perform within the traditional household. An innately superior visual-spatial ability might explain, for instance, why the husband is more likely to be the handyman in the home (put up shelves or hang the wallpaper) or why he is more likely to better perform tasks like driving the car which, perhaps, require superior visual-spatial ability. But we should notice that the extent of the divergence in the social practice cannot be explained simply by a male advantage in visual-spatial ability. It cannot account for the fact that driving the car is almost exclusively regarded as the function of the husband in households.³² For, as I have suggested, the psychological tests in question suggest that at least half as many wives will be as genetically advantaged in this area as their husbands.

Moreover if their superior visual-spatial ability explains why the husband performs certain household functions, we might wonder why there is not a corresponding female influence over household tasks which employ the innate advantages she enjoys, like greater verbal ability.³³ Why isn't the wife typically expected to represent the household at meetings, or in family matters that require the ability to speak or negotiate?

The point is: even if we accept a general psychological explanation for the source of the differences within the sexes, we could argue that these differences are not reflected within the traditional marital household, where women do not appear to have the same opportunities to make the most of their (alleged) naturally superior talents. I will return to this topic in the next chapter.

The last and most important point I want to make is that the few dissimilarities which may be suggested by differences in biology, psychological tests, natural levels of aggression and the like, do not entail a moral conclusion that the husband ought to be regarded as the head of household. Although in the recent past such facts were often used to support value judgements concerning the different spheres of the sexes; (and it seems reasonable to suggest again that many of these ideas persist and are built into our present beliefs and expectations.)³⁴ If you are a woman, we were told, you have less physical strength than a man, so you ought not to engage in occupations that require greater physical strength; you ought not to be a miner, bricklayer, etc.³⁵ If you are a woman you are less aggressive and competitive than a man so you ought to recognize this and avoid getting into aggressive and competitive situations with men. (On the basis of this, it was claimed that jobs such as teaching, typing, assisting in shops, housework, ought to be a woman's domain; whereas business, politics, soldiering, ought to be the preserve of men.) If you are a housewife you are dependent upon your husband so you ought to accept the responsibility for tasks like housework, shopping, etc. If you are a woman and you are able to bear children, so you ought to want to have a baby and to make a home for it, you ought to want to accept the major responsibility for the child's upbringing. And since the weak need the protection of the strong, childbearing women ought to

want men to look after them; they ought to want their husband to be head of the house. On the other hand, if you are a married man you are very likely to be stronger, more aggressive, assertive and self-reliant than your wife, so you ought to regard yourself as the head of your family. This list could be longer, of course, and all of us would have no difficulty in extending it.³⁶

All of the examples above are illustrations of the fallacious move of switching directly from talking about what is the case, to talking about what ought to be the case.³⁷ But most philosophers accept that the mere claim that men and women are by nature different - or the rehearsal of some of these factual differences, whatever the extent of their truth - does not by itself entail or warrant the value judgements that are thought to follow from them.³⁸ On the contrary, since aggression, for instance, is not generally regarded as a desirable characteristic, the chauvinistic husband would find it very difficult to convince many of us that his being naturally more aggressive in itself provides a moral justification for his dominance in the household.

The mistake might be due to the fact that the word 'natural' is equivocal in this context. Sometimes it has connotations of 'conventional' or 'typical' but more usually it means 'inborn' or 'innate'. In the former sense, it would be true to say that in most societies it is natural (typical, conventional) for a woman bring up a baby. But this does not answer the question of whether this **should** be the case. If by contrast 'natural' is taken to mean something like an innate and inescapable potential - as the acorn, if it survives, will naturally turn into an oak tree rather than a pine tree - then one would have to concede that the natural physical and psychological differences between men and women do set some general limits on what each partner in a marriage can do. But it is still debatable if statements about the jobs or careers we ought to perform or, more

importantly, the role we ought to occupy in a family, follow from such innate qualities. And even if some roles are entailed by our natures, this still does not entitle us to draw a conclusion like 'men ought to be head of house'. For while the evidence above may offer an explanation of the fact that in most households, if both sexes compete for power and status, most men have a natural (or nurtured) advantage in gaining dominance, we cannot go on to claim that this shows also that his being the head of the house is morally justified or fair.

If you must have a head of the house, why should this be the more naturally dominant partner? An issue of this kind should be decided by relevant criteria; and it is not obvious that a natural tendency to dominate is such a condition. It is not clear that we would agree to it, say, from behind Rawls' veil of ignorance. In the first place, it seems to add an unfair advantage to the natural advantage one of the couple already has. To paraphrase Radcliffe Richards (1986:203) if you were really setting out in an unprejudiced way, rather than reinforce a natural tendency, you would arrange for the protection of the weak. Or you might try to reduce the power of the strong. The last thing you would do is to encourage institutions like patriarchy which seems to deprive the weak of all other options, in order to force them to depend upon the strong.

The thrust of the argument above can be put in another way. It is not clear why being the head of a household requires the office bearer to have the greater physical strength or aggressive tendencies. Why exactly do these characteristics justify a person's claim to be head of household? Couldn't we say, rather, as Mill (1975:522) pointed out, this view is to blame for

All the selfish propensities, the self-worship,
the unjust self-preference, which exist among
mankind...?

If you must have a head of the house, why shouldn't the one who is more rational, or more experienced, or older,

or more sensitive, be the determining voice in cases calling for a domestic decision or where there is disagreement?

Perhaps the answer is that we want the more dominant personality to occupy this role.

We want someone to be head of the house

A possible explanation of why, in present times, the husband is regarded as head of the household is that some men and women want a hierarchical marriage. De Beauvoir offers one explanation of why some women might prefer this arrangement. She (1988:439) writes:

...[they] prefer to take shelter in the shadow of man.

Some women want to provide their husband with their domestic labour, their emotional and sexual services, and so on, in exchange for economic support from him as the breadwinner. As de Beauvoir would say: a married woman chooses to subordinate herself to her husband in order to avoid the demands of freedom.

This observation seems to be heading in the direction of Nietzsche's contention that in the marriage relationship all women want to completely surrender to their husbands. He (1974:319) writes:

...[a] woman wants to be taken and accepted as a possession.

A woman wants to be her husband's possession; she also wants a subordinate status in the outside world of work, politics and culture.³⁹

It seems doubtful that generalizations of this kind are based on anything like sound inductive techniques.⁴⁰ And even if *per impossible* it is true that all women want to be their husband's possession, the same general criticism applies to this claim (about the putative wants of women) as we made earlier about appeals to nature. Even if it is a fact that all women want to be dominated, this would not make their domination morally justified

(any more than, say, anyone wanting to be a slave would make one's enslavement morally justified). It is clear that we are not prepared (morally) to let people do whatever they want, just because they want it. It is on the basis of this quite reasonable assumption that parents, doctors, social workers, spend a lot of their time trying to persuade individuals to forgo their *prima facie* irrational wants for alcohol, cigarettes, drugs.

Furthermore, even if we overlook this last point, and even if we suppose that generalizations of this kind could be legitimately made about the wants of most - or even some - women, what if anything are we to say about the wants of the (putative) minority of women who do not desire to subject themselves to their husbands, or to the husbands who do not desire to dominate their wives? How in such cases are we to justify the claim that men ought to be head of the house?

In response to this kind of question, it is claimed by Ortega (1957:159) that 'wanting to be a man's possession' or 'wanting to be subordinate in marriage' belong to the essence of femininity.⁴¹ 'Femininity' refers to the appearance, character and behavioral-style expected of a woman, and we are told entails qualities like wearing clothes that enhance the female figure, or, more significantly, being gentle, passive, 'fragile', irrational, weak, and dependent. It seems also to include wanting to spend most of one's time looking after a particular man (and offspring) or, in the unlikely circumstances that she uses her abilities or talents, of making sure that she 'presents no threat to the man's position'.⁴² Evidently these are not sufficient conditions because Ortega (1957:160) goes on to assert

...the classification of human beings into men and women is obviously inexact.

Women who do not desire to be a man's possession, lack one of the necessary conditions of femininity. Thus it is unfeminine, presumably, for women to want to study at

universities, or to have independent political opinions, or to use these or other opinions against their husbands. The ideal 'feminine' woman wants to devote all her endeavour to the service of her husband. The exceptions to this ideal can be explained by the fact that not every woman wants to be 'feminine', wants or can conform to this essence. We might wonder why Ortega should suppose that any woman would want to be feminine, (given what this involves). However I think this view reflects an important current in popular opinion, often found in what I have called 'the traditional marriage'. And perhaps it is not completely absurd if, as the tradition explains, (masculine) men are strong, adventurous, brave, creative - inclining towards genius - while (feminine) women are 'passive, timorous, incapable of coping on their own, and generally nondescript'.⁴³ Even so, as we noted, to want to be his possession cannot mean that a wife wants her husband always to get his own way, for this seems to be a contradiction, or that she wants him to force her to do things against her will, which surely is a contradiction. What Ortega might mean is that a feminine woman wants to depend upon her husband financially and emotionally, to always look to him for encouragement or for reassurance to overcome her anxieties or fears, and so on; or that she desires nothing more than a happy marriage, wonderful children, a lovely home, and that she believes that her husband knows best how to arrange this state-of-affairs. Thus she puts herself under his control, following the advice and instruction that he gives her. By this route she may think that she has found an effective way of getting all of the important things she wants in life. (In contrast, if she were on equal-footing with her husband, her self-determination may lead to the frustration of the things she most wants.)

Let us assume that at least some of the above are the motives for her wanting to be 'a possession of a man'. And let us assume that the traditional marriage is

best fitted to those who do fit the ideal feminine type. Presumably those who do not fit the alleged ideal-type can set up differently organized yet less than ideal marriages. Further let us suppose that most men and women want the kind of marriage relationship Ortega describes - which also seems very doubtful to me in terms of an inductive generalization.

Even then, all that these claims would show is that most people prefer such marriages. Once again they do not show that in marriage, wives morally ought to be subordinate or that their husbands morally ought to dominate. Or rather, their desire to be dominated or to dominate is morally problematic, unless one is committed to a form of radical preference-utilitarianism associated with Hare (1981), which equates 'morally right conduct' merely with the optimum preferences of those affected. Hare would argue that the domination of a woman by her husband in the way described is not morally right because the husband would not accept such conduct if the roles were reversed." The dominant husband, in other words, has a double-standard, one for himself the other for his wife: but (it is often argued against Hare) the consistent husband could accept subordination if he were a woman.

The view that 'wives who want to be subordinate ought to be' is strongly objected to by de Beauvoir, of course, for whom a necessary condition of a *pour-soi* is that the individual needs to choose for herself when important matters affect her. As we noted earlier, where there is little evidence of self-determination, she maintains that the individual is in 'bad faith' and she holds them (I think correctly) to be in some measure defective as a person. So the fact that some men and women may want the kind of marriage relationship Ortega describes, does not establish that it is morally right. Furthermore, although both partners may want it, I will argue that a more egalitarian relationship is required if

they are to show mutual respect for each other (which they need to do in a good marriage).

We need someone to be head of the house

Let us now consider the claim that marriage needs a head of the household. In marriage there are many opportunities for conflicts between the spouses. The disagreements can be so severe they can lead to the break up of the marriage. Such disagreements may be few in number but when they do occur, there needs to be a determining voice in the relationship. To resolve serious differences and thus in the interests of harmony and the permanence of the marriage, one or other of the couple needs to be in authority.

To be in authority is to be in charge of other people; or to regulate their behaviour. This is usually in accordance with agreed rules, (laws, standards). Thus referees, aeroplane pilots, teachers, are typical figures in authority. The referee on a football pitch is required to interpret the rules in order that the game can proceed. When someone plays in the game, moreover, he or she is taken to rationally and wittingly accept the referee's authority; the players agree to do the bidding of the referee whilst the game is in progress. They confer on him or her the right to take certain actions and to inflict penalties if a player transgresses the rules. If the latter has transgressed badly enough, they are taken to have agreed to the referee ordering them off the football pitch. In a similar way, this sort of authority needs to be conferred on one or the other of the partners in a marriage. One of them must have the right to decide, to pronounce, to judge and even to punish, for the sake of the harmony and permanence of the marriage or, in some cases, in order that married life can proceed.

The argument above can be traced back to Hobbes (1962:104) when he points out that the durability of an

institution like marriage requires that

...one of them govern and dispose of all that is common to them both.

Locke (1965:353) argued in much the same way. He noted that a husband and wife will have many conflicts and differences:

It therefore being necessary that the last determination i.e. the rule should be placed somewhere...

In a similar vein Kant (1974:167) points out that where there is no head between husband and wife this will lead to 'nothing but wrangling'. And a parallel claim is made more recently by C.S. Lewis (1974:87) who maintains that the lack of a head can lead to the dissolution of the marriage.

We might challenge the analogy above - like a referee in a football match, in a marriage one or the other needs to be in authority. In the former, given the conflict of interests, a neutral third-party seems to be necessary to ensure that those engaged in the activity stick to the rules or play fairly. But if the analogy with marriage were to hold, one of the competitors in the game would need also to serve as the referee and decide when and how the rules apply. But the referee would not then be regarded as someone who is able to take the standpoint of a neutral or impartial observer. Anyway a married couple are not engaged in a competitive game - where an important point of the activity is that there should be a winner and loser - unless we assume, like de Beauvoir, that necessarily a power conflict will occur within a marriage.

We might dispute the assumption that one or the other has to be in authority in a more interesting way, by pointing out that there are other types of human relationships which clearly do not need to have a head; for instance, friendship. As we saw earlier, friendship is (or rather is supposed to be) a relationship between equals. In such a relationship, X and Y will want to do

things together, to share intimacies, to do things for each other; they will act in ways to promote each other's well-being; each will coordinate at least some of their own projects with those of the other, and so on. On the other hand, if Y were to be using their relationship to demonstrate his power over X (or, say, to support his own self-esteem) we would say that he has missed an important point of friendship. For to be X's friend means that Y recognizes X's worth as a person, that the relationship is not valued merely as a useful instrument for Y's own ends. None of this is to suggest that X will not fall out with Y; that friends are not supposed to have conflicts. However their arguments are not expected to be about their relative power and status with respect to one another in their relationship. Friendship implies an absence of power struggles of this kind; they are not expected to vie with each other for dominance. In other words, their friendship is not supposed to need to have a head. If this is so, why should a marriage need a head?

It might be objected, I think correctly, that the analogy between marriage and friendship is also false. Although in a good marriage the married couple will be friends, we have seen that the former relationship involves more than friendship. I have argued that marriage is a legally binding commitment which is meant (legally) to be exclusive, enduring (if not indestructible) and in which the couple share intimacies, a common property, (usually) children and a common life. Friendship (usually) lacks these features.

So the question with which we are concerned can be put in the following way: when a couple share a common life, etc., and are held together by a legally binding contract, don't they need a head, especially since there can be serious conflicts in such relationships? To resolve such differences and in the interests of harmony and permanence, doesn't a marriage need one of them to be

in authority?

Perhaps there are other kinds of long-lasting legally-binding relationships where property is shared and the association is expected to endure even through conflicts, yet where it is not thought that a head is essential. One such relationship between two (or more) persons, is a business partnership.⁴⁶ Like marriage, such a partnership is given legal recognition and is expected to endure. In fact Mill sees the marital relationship in these terms. He (1975:472) writes:

The most frequent case of voluntary association, next to marriage, is partnership in business: and it is not found or thought necessary to enact that, in every partnership, one partner shall have entire control over the concern, and the others shall be bound to obey his orders.

If Mill is correct, then it is not the case that in all relationships between individuals one of them must be in charge.

Once again, however, it can be objected that this is not a good analogy. In the first place, unlike a marriage contract, in a partnership contract it is usual for the participants to set their own self-interested terms (e.g. an expense account, company car, a percentage of the profits of the business). If these terms are not met, there may seem little point in a frustrated partner wanting to continue with the relationship. A second difference is that business partnerships and marriages are not supposed to be enduring in quite the same way. For instance, it might be quite sensible to sell a flourishing business at a profit, if the partners so desire. This would be a nonsensical thing to consider doing with a flourishing marriage. Similarly, if there are major differences between the partners, it might be reasonable to dissolve the ailing partnership and for the partners to go their separate ways. This is just what most of us do not want to happen to a marriage. We want the marriage to endure. Thus we might suppose on this

analogy, that a senior partner, so to speak, is needed in a marriage to resolve differences since we want the marriage to endure. Obviously there are many other differences between the two relationships. However I hope that enough has been said to suggest that even if a certain kind of business partnership does not require a head, the arguments for this do not transfer easily over into marriage.

Let us assume, for the moment, that a marriage always needs a head to resolve differences. The next question that arises is: why should this always be the rule of one of them - the same particular person - over the other? If there is a serious difference of opinion, surely a marriage is more likely to be harmonious and enduring if the more expert of the two in the particular field has the determining voice. Why not say that each time a conflict of wills or interest prevents an important decision from being made, the decision should be made by the more expert of the two in the disputed area? One problem would be to decide who is the expert in the area of conflict. Let us assume the couple themselves are in the best position to assess the relative expertise *vis-à-vis* each other. If there must be a head, isn't it more rational to let whoever of the two is the more competent decide?

There is a good reason for resisting this approach. Many, if not most of the uncertainties and disputes in married life involve value judgements. Some aspects of the latter can involve complex matters of fact - about which the more expert partner might be thought to know best - but when they are apprised of the facts, it is usually thought that the ability to make value judgements will be within the scope of both partners. For when it comes to making value judgements, this not only requires an awareness of the facts but, just as importantly, it involves sensitivity and moral competence, abilities which do not necessarily result from expertise in a given

area. To take a trivial example: if one of them, say, the husband, has greater economic expertise and he thinks that one large shopping expedition each week is cheaper than two or three smaller excursions, his wife may well defer to his judgement. But if the husband goes on to say that the larger shopping spree is preferable, there is no reason to treat this judgement as automatically superior to his wife's. She might well prefer the more expensive alternative. In this respect, neither of them will have superior wisdom; discernment of this kind is part of each of their rational equipment. And a corollary of this is that neither of them should be trusted with automatic authority. Similar considerations apply to other key issues in marriage, for instance, where they should live, whose career or work is to take priority, whether to have children, and so on. In such cases, who is supposed to be in the better position to make the decision? It seems likely that on these and many other matters neither partner will be better equipped than the other. At the same time, once a decision has been made, both will reap the benefits or disbenefits which result from it.

An answer to this problem might be that in cases of conflict, where neither of the two have expertise yet when a decision is required, the decision-making prerogative should be shared. If on one occasion the husband makes the decision then on the next, it is the wife's turn to decide. This way of resolving conflicts has some advantages. Firstly, if they knew that the decision-making was 'turn-about', the discord arising from the abuse of authority where just one of them makes all of the decisions, would no doubt be greatly reduced. Secondly, such a procedure would establish a greater equality between the partners. Thirdly, such distribution of authority in the family would seem to allow for something like a friendship relationship between the two, which I have claimed will not be met in

a hierarchical structure. Can we say that if marriage needs a head to resolve differences, then a 'turn-about' arrangement is the best way to proceed?

Unfortunately there are serious limitations to this proposal. An unacceptable situation could always arise where an important decision has to be made which crucially affects one of the partner's actions or lifestyle and he or she is not able to decide for him or herself because it is not their turn to make the decision. For instance, the issue in question might be whether or not one of the spouses should make a career decision and override alternative family plans. Should he/she accept promotion in a different part of the country or reject it in favour of the other's career or their children's education? To make such a decision depend upon merely whose turn it is to decide, strikes me as a quite irrational way of proceeding. This brings us to what I think is the right answer to the problem of a head of the household.

A democratic solution to the question of the head of the house

Ideally both partners should participate in the decision-making process, as opposed to having all of the key decisions made by one of them or a 'turn-about' arrangement in the ways described above. Important marital decisions in other words, could always be the outcome of discussion in which both of them are able to state their case and so influence the final decision (even if one of them has eventually to accept decisions that they had previously resisted). We have seen at least one of the supporting reasons for this, namely, that most domestic decisions are matters of judgement, not of fact or computation. Further, on the basis of the present proposal, this would no longer be a matter of the stronger or more wilful partner imposing his or her ruling, when both spouses are significantly affected by

the decision. So it is worth exploring some of the implications of this present proposal.

A form of decision-making is required in which both can participate and in which each partner's voice carries equal weight. One thing to notice concerns the issue under discussion. To have equal status in the process of decision-making, both partners will need to have equal access to the relevant information. What is at stake? Why are the customary solutions, if any, unsatisfactory? What possible solutions are there? How do the various proposals satisfy their different interests? Which of them might be helped or hurt if a given proposal is implemented? Are some of the proposals more value inclusive or such that both of them would accept this compromise? An implication of the considerations above is that in order to make a judgement, each partner will need to have an adequate grasp of the problem, and they will both need to have equal access to the information relevant to the decision. So it will not do if only one of them has up to date knowledge of the family finances, and so on. Each will need to have equal access to the relevant information (e.g. their bank balances), each will need to consider what possible solutions there are, how the various possibilities satisfy their different interests, who would be helped or hurt if a purchase is made or a spending proposal is implemented, whether some proposals are more value-inclusive than others, and so on. Another way in which their equal standing within the relationship can be put under a lot of pressure is when each of the spouses wants to pursue their own careers, and their different desires conflict. Sometimes a major decision has to be made, like: should one of their careers be promoted if this requires that the other partner's career is moderated or even sacrificed? The manner in which they ought to proceed is to work towards a solution by discussion and adjustment; although the process of decision-making, can be complex.

Another aspect to note is the decision itself. Clearly this part of the process can be complex. There may be differences in values or moral or political principles between the two of them; there may be a different order of priorities even when they share the same principles. As a result, any decision that is made at the end of the deliberation will not have the force of an *a priori* demonstration. Yet though there will always be a logical gap between the reasons given in support of it and the decision itself, we can assume that the latter can be rationally supported by the accompanying reasons.

The justification of trying to make all major decisions 'shared decisions' in the way described, resides in a combination of at least three supporting assumptions. The first draws upon the fact that neither partner should be trusted with unchecked power since there will be many issues where the other partner (or neither partner) knows what is best. Secondly and more importantly, there is the assumption of the moral desirability of self-determination of both partners; this is to say, if in keeping with de Beauvoir, we accept that the desire to be self-determining (is within our nature) and that it is morally desirable then it follows the husband and wife should have the opportunity to contribute when making decisions which affect them both. Thirdly, on the assumption that each of them requires as much influence as the other, since they are both affected by the decisions, then we need a procedure that is maximally tolerant and sensitive to both of the competing views. Let us consider these points in more detail.

As we noted, it is obvious that in marriage (as elsewhere) neither partner will have incontrovertible knowledge. Indeed there is more likely to be a general state of uncertainty about most matters. As things are changing all of the time due perhaps to unforeseen circumstances that nature or other people inflict upon them, it is quite wrong to expect certainty as to what

they ought to do, both in terms of immediate tactics or long-term plans. In these circumstances, neither of them should be trusted with unchecked authority - neither should be the head of the house. On the other hand, the procedure I have described is more likely to take account of such uncertainties; they are more likely to adapt and to have control over the changing conditions.

The second point concerned the moral desirability of self-determination and the problem this raises for decision-making in marriage. On the one hand, each individual is expected to be witting and free in the important decisions they make in their lives; such as the choice to marry, or in their conduct within their marriage. As we have seen, even where a woman 'prefers to take shelter in the shadow of her husband' most of us believe that this dependence should be overcome. We might justify this expectation in the way de Beauvoir has 'as a fundamental desire in human nature'. However, if de Beauvoir is correct, one of the major defects of marriage is the lack of autonomy that it involves, particularly for the wife. But if important decisions can be made in the way I have sketched, then it seems reasonable to claim that both wife and husband are able to decide for themselves what they are going to do, in the sense of their being able to make choices among alternative domestic policies, actions, lifestyles. The procedure I am proposing - which is after all, no more than the ideal democratic procedure - appears to meet the requirement for both husband and wife to be self-determining in the marital relationship.⁴⁷ (But no matter how self-determining each partner may be, problems still remain, and I will return to this shortly.)

The third point was that in marriage we need a system that gives each of the couple as much control over their own lives as possible and which allows each to determine decisions which affect the shared parts of their lives. We need a decision-making procedure that

allows for equality of status and influence. The procedure I have outlined is a process that demands sensitivity to each other's interests, compromise and adjustment. If they are both participating in the decision - and if each partner's voice is to be given equal weight - the only manner of proceeding is to work towards solutions by discussion and compromise in the manner suggested.

I need, lastly, to emphasize an implication of the proposal above. De Beauvoir maintains, as a necessary feature of any relationship, that one or other of the partners must try to take the dominant role; and that in the traditional marriage, the husband as head of the household, takes this role. In contrast, I have argued that a husband and wife are capable of having a relationship in which both participate on an equal-footing. If my argument is correct, then a dominant/subordinate order is not a necessary condition of relationships. A situation of equality is possible and there need be no real differences between the genders in this regard. Or more cautiously, my solution to 'the head of the household' question suggests that a different basis for power relationships is possible than that given by de Beauvoir.

Marriage and the loss of autonomy

It might be objected that one important aspect of de Beauvoir's objection remains unanswered, namely, that even where there is an equal relationship between the partners, marriage inevitably leads to a diminution of autonomy. This loss equally applies to men; the marriage relationship and the mutual obligations it entails seem to limit the freedom of both partners, not just the wife's.⁴⁸

To soften the blow, we might note that this charge can be levelled at any egalitarian relationship, for instance, friendship. In friendship there has to be some

loss of autonomy on the part of each individual. We cannot view all of our actions in friendship purely as a matter of our own self-interested concern. If we did, this would inevitably lead to riding roughshod over our friend's interests. We are committed to respecting our friend, to regarding his or her feelings and interests as being of equal value to our own, and so on.

When it comes to marriage, the same sorts of considerations apply. However due to their living together, there is the possibility of a greater loss of autonomy for the individuals involved. This is a common indictment of marriage. It is not just ties of close friendship in marriage that require both spouses to consider each other's interests as well as their own; there are many other factors that dent each partner's autonomy.

When deciding what to do, for instance, they both have to consider the interests of another person as being of equal importance to their own whereas before marriage (we are led to believe) most individuals are free to largely move and act without prior consultation with anyone else. In most marriages many of the preferences, interests, activities of husband and wife will not overlap or even connect with those of their spouse. For one of them an escapist story in a book or on television may seem a good way to spend a quiet evening at home, for the other the prospect of such activities leaves them cold. Thus one or the other may find their autonomy continually intruded upon by the demands of the other.

There are encroachments on each other's emotional space. Different individuals have different preferences for things as varied as how much affection ought to be expressed between them, in private or in public, what is or is not appropriate to tell other people about their relationship, and so on. No doubt some find their partners too demanding in this regard. They think of their partners as having too detailed or rigid

expectations; especially where their partner's attitudes on such issues take on the force of a household law. Faced with such an attitude either of them may feel that they are not free in the sense that they cannot be themselves in the relationship.

A different limitation on freedom concerns the physical space they are allowed by their partner. By virtue of their living together every married person has the living space available to them limited. At the same time, most individuals require some level of privacy, or personal space. If they believe this is insufficient, they regard this as an encroachment on their freedom. A related aspect might be called 'possessiveness'. Couples seem to vary as to how carefully they keep track of the other's activities inside and outside of the home. At one extreme, there are individuals who insist on knowing where their spouse is at all times, or expect to receive full reports on their spouse's activities and plans. In contrast, there is a sense of freedom which comes outside of such a relationship, when no one has any idea of where one is or what it is one might be doing. Another restriction on freedom concerns their partner's expectations concerning time. When one lives on one's own (it is often claimed) one can get up, eat, sleep, when one likes. On the other hand, in most marriages not only is dinner set for a particular time but both partners are required to be present.

At first sight all of this seems to be an unavoidable sacrifice. In which case, each prospective spouse is often advised to decide for themselves prior to making wedding vows whether or not they think that the inevitable diminution of autonomy is going to be sufficiently offset against the benefits that marriage offers. Once they are married, what de Beauvoir calls the 'natural desire for freedom' is most evident when either party feels that important aspects of their freedom are circumscribed by, or sacrificed, in the

relationship. They feel trapped or suffocated by the other and struggle against it. In such circumstances some, for instance, withhold a response valued by the other person, or become addicted to television or alcohol, and a few literally run away from the relationship to avoid the other person. In ways like the above, even where there is a more or less equal relationship between the couple, don't we have to accept that marriage results in a diminution of each partner's autonomy?

There are a number of ways to answer this objection. Firstly, one obvious point needs to be stressed. In any marriage, there will be many decisions which obviously concern only one of the partners. In which case, the other may give advice but they cannot expect this advice to be any more than just that, i.e. advice. What their partner decides has to be respected even if it goes against the advice given. We might note that this is one way in which one shows respect to one's partner. To respect him as a person is to acknowledge that like oneself, he is self-determining. This is not to suggest that in respecting my husband, I necessarily like his choices, or that I respect his intelligence or that, at the time, I even like him or want to spend any time with him. Respecting him, rather, requires that like him or not, I recognize him as an individual whose choices deserve to be taken into account no less than my own. Different as these may be from mine, they should nevertheless weigh equally with my own. In a good marriage, this is to say, we need to exercise autonomy in our self-regarding actions and we need to have this recognized and respected by our partner. In addition, we each need to respect our partner's autonomy, even when we think that their decisions are unwise.

This brings us to a second reason for claiming that in a good marriage the individuals can be autonomous. Our autonomous choices can be other-oriented as well as

self-oriented; we can choose to make decisions in terms of interpersonal values as well as those based on personal preferences. In other words, in the decisions we make, we are quite capable of choosing to sacrifice our own wants and interests for another person's sake, particularly where this is at little cost to ourselves and the decision means a great deal to them. Thus to be autonomous does not require merely that each person pursues their own interests in their own way, as if nothing else but their own self-interest could count as a relevant expression of their autonomy. If autonomous choices were always this self-centred then, clearly, one ought not never to have too close a relationship with another person for, when interests conflict, it would threaten one's autonomy. But also if this were so, autonomous individuals as well as being morally impoverished would be very lonely; for regarded in this way, autonomy implies an undue self-centredness (which in turn implies isolation).

The view expressed in the objection suggests also that autonomy is something an individual has and which he or she then chooses relationships to suit. It is as if self-determination is a given in human nature that naturally takes place at an egocentric level and then, as an optional extra, whoever wants to, can circumscribe or forfeit it in a relationship with another person. Surely this is false. For, in the first place, our sense of autonomy develops out of our dependent relationships as children with adults and our responses to them, and then out of the interdependent relationships we have with others. This is to say, one's sense of autonomy develops and is just as likely to find expression in our interdependent relationships. In this context, we may care about how other people feel in such a way that we may choose to forgo our own interests or want to shoulder responsibilities in order to help them.

Marriage can be such a relationship. After all,

one's connection with one's spouse is not to something wholly external to oneself but integral to one's life. Many of the self-determining choices we make can be made from the perspective of the love we have for them (our spouse). We can choose to do something for their sake, for their well-being, needs or interests. Moreover as an expression of our own autonomy, we can choose to contribute to their happiness even when this means sacrificing our own. We can choose to make such a sacrifice also from the standpoint of what is considered best for the relationship.

There is a related point that is worth stressing. A striking feature of such choices is that one usually experiences them as being self-determined; one does not often feel regret or remorse that one's decision has been constrained by the relationship. Usually one experiences them moreover as a choice made in full awareness of the alternatives, as an expression of one's ability to deliberate, to come to one's own conclusion about what to do and then of acting accordingly. (What point could there be to an experience like this if, when married, we are unable to choose for the sake of our partner or marriage?)

This brings me to a third response to the alleged limitation on one's autonomy in marriage. It concerns those situations where the couple are faced with an important conflict of their different interests. For both individuals to have an equal sense of their autonomy there must be an absence of power struggles. Earlier we saw that when there are important differences between a couple and a decision has to be made, there is a way of making the decision in which both partners can participate and which gives both of their contributions equal weight; a process in which each partner can recognize the other's right to make his or her own decisions and not try to dominate or control them. It follows that when there is a problem, using the procedure

I have outlined, a husband and wife will not vie with each other for dominance. This does not mean that they will never argue. The point is rather that their serious arguments will not be about power and status.

In ways such as the above, I think that autonomy can be accommodated within a good marriage. However if it is still insisted that there is bound to be an encroachment on one's freedom due to marriage, my fourth response is that the rewards it brings - being valued by another person, sharing one's most deep-seated intimacies with them, etc. - might be thought to more than make up for the occasional loss of one's sense of freedom in this relationship. Yet even here by forsaking something or doing something for someone one loves one's experience need not be of sacrificing one's autonomy but rather of satisfying it. By choosing to act in a self-sacrificing way, for the sake of one's beloved, one affirms one's autonomy.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that there is nothing in the physical or psychological natures of males or females which suggest why we must accept that one or other ought to be head of the house. Perhaps the most compelling argument we considered for choosing to have a head of the household is that there needs to be a way of settling disputes when common action is necessary. I argued that such disagreements can be resolved either by deferring to the partner who has the more experience or where each partner in turn takes the responsibility for the decision. But in a good marriage where mutually acceptable decisions have to be made, the more rational alternative will be the kind of practical decision-making procedure I have described, where in effect, both share the role of head of the household.

Chapter Six

Housewives, mothers and transcendence

The next issues that we need to consider are de Beauvoir's claims, firstly that being a housewife and a mother are stereotypical roles that married women almost always perform and they ought not to do so; secondly, that due to housework and caring for children, the housewife/mother is debarred from self-fulfilment through creative work (*viz.* transcendence).

The first point above is based upon an empirical claim. As a matter of fact in most married households there is a distinct - though not absolute - division of labour along sexual lines.¹ However the division in question goes beyond the mere facts about what husbands and wives traditionally do and still do today. It includes also beliefs about the different tasks that the man and woman ought to perform, (as well as beliefs about what the behaviour, character traits, tastes, leisure activities of each of the couple ought to be). Certain of the household tasks are defined as domestic. These jobs are usually unpaid and it is generally thought that they ought to be the wife's work. Other kinds of work are public, paid and ought to be the husband's work.² Most households include children for a considerable part of their history. Usually this also affects how we regard the division of labour. It is generally thought that child-rearing ought to be a woman's role - to be done unpaid in the home by the wife/mother. A different set of roles are prescribed for the husband/father. He ought to provide the income to meet the needs of his wife and children as well as keeping the house and garden in good repair. In this chapter we need to ask: ought such tasks be a wife's and a husband's role in marriage?

De Beauvoir's second claim is that due to housework and motherhood, a married woman is prevented from a sense

of transcendence through creative work. This appears to be an *a priori* claim: if you are the former, you cannot have the latter. To see if this is so, we will need to be clear about what precisely 'transcendence through creative work' means and if it is the case that being a housewife (or a househusband) and a mother are necessarily precluded from this.

Let us begin with the view that housework and motherhood are domestic roles a married woman does and ought to do.

Housework and motherhood

Housework involves cleaning the home, laundering, cooking, washing-up, making the beds and performing a myriad of other trivial tasks. For most of us it is, as Radcliffe Richards (1994:211) says, 'a jumble of mediocre stuff'. However in all households, work of this kind has to be done on some occasions for the home to function at all. The trouble is that in the traditional way of thinking, in the marital home housework is and ought to be a woman's work. At the least, it ought to be her responsibility to see that this work is done even though most of the chores involved may be done for the sake of other members of her family. It is and ought to be her task to see that the home functions smoothly.

Housework is not quite the burden today, of course, that it used to be at the time de Beauvoir was writing. As a result of time and labour-saving household gadgets and the like, women do not need to be tied to the home in quite the way they were fifty years ago. Also pressures directing wives to the domestic service of their husbands and families have lessened considerably, both in their extent and the firmness of their enforcement. Nevertheless insofar they still do remain, the usual expectations concerning what is proper for a woman and a man to do about the home, are of the traditional kind. She is expected to shop, clean, cook; he is expected to

go out to work, maintain the car, repair appliances.

Where the woman stays at home to be a housewife, she is usually taken to prefer this to other roles that she might have performed. She is taken also to regard the chores she performs as her contribution to the well-being of her family. But nowadays more and more women do go out to work. Even so, in most homes a married woman is still expected to be responsible for the housework.³ Even if her husband regularly 'does the washing up', it is commonly thought that the act is supererogatory because it is really his wife's job. Even in more enlightened households, where husbands and wives divide the housework, the household chores are still usually thought to be the wife's responsibility;⁴ it is a rare home in which a man will not presume as a matter of course that whatever a woman's other commitments, she is responsible for domestic matters. In short, we appear to be faced with a differentiation between the domestic roles we believe a married couple ought to perform, which is based merely upon the difference of their sex.

Another traditional role for most women in marriage is motherhood. Not only does the woman bear the child but she is expected to be its primary caretaker. However child-bearing and rearing can be more enjoyable than de Beauvoir's sketch of it above suggests. Once again because of labour-saving devices, disposable nappies, playgroups and the like, mothers do not need to be tied to their children (in first-world countries) in quite the way they used to be. In other words, most women do not seem to find mothering the encumbrance that de Beauvoir describes. Except for a short period around the birth of a child, a woman can combine motherhood with work or a career. Thus nowadays more and more mothers go out to work, especially after their children reach school-going age.⁵ But again, (and despite shifting public attitudes) it is still the mother who is thought to be responsible for looking after the child.⁶ She ought to be responsible

meeting its physical and emotional needs throughout its childhood. Let us consider how anyone would justify the separation of the sexes into these roles.

The traditional domestic roles are natural

For some traditionalists the argument in defence of the long-established domestic roles seems to be based on the fact that men and women just are different by nature. As we noted, the sociobiologist, Wilson lends support to this view when he (1978:132) writes:

...the universal existence of sexual division of labor is not entirely an accident of cultural evolution...[a] biological component delineates the options...

Only the woman can become pregnant and give birth to the infant. She has to undergo a long confinement in order to give birth. And then, in the past anyway, for many more years the infant was dependent on her for food, shelter, clothing and many other comforts. So, as we noted, she needs to make a home for her child and if he was to support and protect them adequately, she needed to make a home for her husband. On this account, a different set of roles were prescribed for the latter. If he was to do all he could to ensure his progeny's survival he was naturally driven to provide (the income for) their food, clothing, etc., repair their home, and generally protect his family. It seems to be thought, as Ruskin (quoted in Millett 1972:132) writes:

Each [naturally] has what the other has not; each completes the other.

In other words, the traditional housework arrangements reflect the natural state of things. The impression given is that men and women would naturally drift towards such tasks in marriage if they were left to their own devices.

Of course the tradition did not permit males and females to behave in any way they were inclined. To ensure that they continued to behave in the required

ways, as Wilson (1978:132) writes:

...each society must...condition its members so as to exaggerate the sexual differences...

Similarly in present times we are subject to a socialising process and pressure of various kinds, to make sure we behave in the conventional ways, and we are discouraged from trespassing on what is regarded as the other's role, by penalties of various sorts (varying degrees of social disapproval). But (we need to ask again) if men and women are just like that. If they do perform different tasks within the household due to their natures, moreover, what is the purpose of the societal rules and pressures supposed to be? You can hardly justify socializing people in such-and-such a way if what they are supposed to do would happen anyway.

A similar argument is used to justify what is still thought to be each of the couple's appropriate role as parents. Since the capacity to bear children is limited to a woman, some aspects of motherhood related to childbirth, are (quite reasonably) regarded as the woman's natural role. The universal biological difference explains the difference in practice. Also it is claimed that women have 'a maternal instinct';⁷ a basic drive which after the child is born, includes her being the primary caretaker of the child during its earliest years. In modern times this seems to require a preparedness by the mother (rather than the father) to stay at home to rear the child at least while the child is of pre-school age.⁸ It is maintained that the roles parents typically perform is no more than building on their natural strengths.⁹ Encouraging a male to earn the family's income, to repair the family house, etc., is only to entrench predispositions that are in his genes anyway and similarly when a female is encouraged to be nurturing and to accept the major responsibility for childrearing, her innate tendencies are being strengthened.

If this is the case, we might think that the same reasoning applies *mutatis mutandis* outside of the home. In which case it seems unlikely that women could ever successfully compete in the public sphere of work, if what is needed are the very features that men naturally have (let us say, aggression, competitiveness) and which women do not. Conversely, men will not be good homemakers and carers of children, for their genes do not predispose them to settle for the uncompetitive and non-aggressive lifestyle of the home. Further, this may help to explain the basic similar pattern of male and female labour in domestic contexts (despite many other variations between societies) in most known cultures. Fundamental biological differences are reflected in their domestic arrangements.¹⁰

It is believed by most people, moreover, that wives ought (morally) to accept responsibility for keeping the family home clean and tidy, it is the duty of women with children to stay at home and care for the child;¹¹ and by the same token, it is the duty of men to fulfil their traditional roles. However new arguments would be needed to show this, i.e. that there are moral duties of this kind. For instance, anyone arguing in support of it might try to show that these activities must be limited to the mother because, say, husbands are universally incompetent at them! (This is not to suggest that it is impossible to find a good argument to support the desired moral conclusion but the task may not be as straightforward as at first it might appear to be.)

The moral argument is nowadays usually given in quite the opposite way. It is argued that even if we grant that a slight biological component delineates some of the domestic options that husbands and wives have, we go far beyond the constraints of biology in most of the tasks that we traditionally think each of them ought to perform.¹² And even if our natural dispositions do strongly influence a few of these roles, such

dispositions may be blunted, (if we think this morally desirable) by taking appropriate steps in a young person's socialization. The biological differences do not seem so large as to make this undertaking impossible. To put the point differently: it is claimed that most of the differences we associate with male and female roles are not due to nature at all but to convention.¹³ Gender roles,¹⁴ which not only account significantly for the way people regard themselves but also the way they experience and react to other people, are socially constructed. We have been socialized, particularly, into most of the beliefs and attitudes we have towards gender roles in marriage. Furthermore such stereotyping is morally objectionable. Let us consider this claim.

Arguments against gender stereotyping

Anyone who has had anything to do with children knows that in all sorts of blatant or subtle ways they learn that the sexes have different roles. Girls are put into dresses and told how pretty they look; boys are dressed in jeans and told they look smart.¹⁵ Boys typically get footballs or construction sets for their birthdays; girls get Barbie dolls, with all of the Barbie accessories, and so on. Soap operas typically present men out at work and women in the home or shopping. International affairs, politics, business, sport in newspapers and television are male-dominated, whereas matters concerning the home or child-rearing are dominated by females. Despite a concerted effort recently by many educators and some parents to show males and females in more diverse roles, gender stereotyping continues unabated (albeit in less explicit ways).¹⁶

More to the point, children are socialized into believing that a woman should be responsible for the housework and that she should accept the major responsibility for the children, and that a man should earn the income to maintain them. But the roles could be

- and in the future no doubt will be - otherwise. Thus it makes sense for de Beauvoir to maintain that a woman chooses to be a full-time housewife and mother; she chooses to put her other projects to one side and devote herself to the service of her home and family. As we have seen, de Beauvoir (and many others) go on to claim that gender stereotyping of the kind described is morally wrong. And that women particularly ought not to accept these roles.

However I have a problem with this claim; at least I have a number of difficulties in understanding it. The first problem is to understand if it is this kind of stereotyping, or stereotyping as such that is wrong. Is the argument 'all gender stereotyping is wrong because all stereotyping is a violation of an individual's autonomy' (as we would expect an existentialist to say)? Or is the argument 'gender stereotyping is inevitable but a certain kind of stereotyping is wrong'? Thus is it wrong to socialize a young girl to believe that she should choose to marry, become a housewife and a mother, when she could be socialized into believing that there are other, better (more fulfilling) ways of life? Let us begin with the claim that any kind of gender stereotyping whatsoever is wrong.

All gender stereotyping is wrong. Watkins, Rueda & Rodriguez (1992:149) write:

...we [must] offer children the widest possible choice to discover what they can BE and DO...

It is wrong to socialize a child into any particular role; people ought to be autonomous from infancy. This assertion is not directed against bringing up boys in a male role and girls in a female role but at socializing them into one or other role as such. If we adopt this position, we rule out a number of things. Firstly, we cannot insist that what is wrong with the present type of gender role stereotyping is that when they become women, females are performing a role that has little

justification in nature. Nor can we claim that we should give boys and girls each a different role expectation than those we presently find. For *ex hypothesi* the thesis is **not** that it is wrong to rear children to have certain gender role expectations but that it is wrong to give them any at all because this violates their autonomy.

The argument in a nutshell is that children should grow up autonomously. But how are children supposed to make autonomous choices especially during their earliest years? There is abundant evidence from developmental psychologists to show that young children could not possibly do this.¹⁷ Cultural and social influences being what they are to human beings in their infancy, they would not survive without some direction from adults. The level and extent of this may vary from child to child, from time to time, but it is not possible either to grow up anywhere without being taught, subtly or explicitly, that some things are expected of you simply because of your sex. So it is difficult to understand how children (to say nothing of toddlers) are supposed to grow up autonomously.

If this point is conceded it is then difficult to see what would take the place of traditional gender role stereotyping in their socialization, in order to avoid the objectionable influences of the present kind. In an attempt to do this (i.e. to avoid the conventional stereotypes) some parents, for instance, might dress their daughters in jeans or teach them to play football. But what this boils down to, surely, is an attempt to make them like boys - as if this is the desired 'neutral' autonomous role (which of course it is not). By itself, moreover, this sort of engineering is not likely to succeed since it is unlikely that we could insulate the child from the myriad of other gender role influences (television, newspapers, peer groups) in their social environment.

Perhaps the point is that gender stereotyping of children could be much more neutral than it currently is. The existing gender role stereotypes go far beyond the constraints of biology. Men and women are biologically different but these differences are not that radical. We are closer to each other, for instance, than either sex is to anything else. Rubin reflects this view when she (1975:179-180) asserts:

Far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities.

Could we go on to argue that this 'natural similarity' between males and females is such that their upbringing could be and ought to be gender neutral?

There are a lot of problems with this view. Firstly, even if we say that children ought to be reared to fill the same neutral role it seems to me that children will not be autonomous (to the same extent as present gender role stereotyping) but the product of their upbringing. To change the mix does nothing to foster or lessen the degree to which children are directed into a particular type of role. And the question arises: change the mix to what? If children are brought up in an environment where example, exhortation, books, television and peer group behaviour offer no clear stereotypes, but which either presents female or male roles as identical - or indiscriminately mixes them up - they would be no more free to choose 'what they can Be and Do', to exactly the same extent, (whatever the extent may be) as they are at present. They would still be products of their social environment.

There is another difficulty. The parent who does not want her child growing up in the conventional gender role pattern, must censor books, etc., and avoid displaying a consistent female pattern of behaviour herself, and attempt to thwart consistent patterns projected by friends and neighbours. And there is in addition a moral problem to be faced by such an approach:

children will, as a result of such an upbringing, face many dissonances and difficulties particularly with their peers. Most people would wonder about the moral justification of this type of gender role engineering. But while all of this weakens the thesis, it does not get rid of the view that the stereotypes in which children are raised should be gender neutral.

However the latter claim overlooks a major problem. Given the sorts of changes envisaged, the outcome would be different and one might start from there to try to mount an argument in favour of this difference in upbringing. But we would be presenting an argument to the effect that it is better to socialize children into this stereotype rather than that; rather than an argument against stereotyping as such, or in favour of autonomy. To stress the point I made earlier: to change the mix, in which ever way this is done, does nothing to put an end to the fostering of assumptions, or to lessening the degree of direction in the upbringing of a child. It does nothing for the person's autonomy. So if autonomy is what is required, we need to look elsewhere than the bias in the way we presently stereotype our children.

To summarize the points above: if the argument is that children should grow up unsocialized, autonomous beings, my response is that in realistic terms they cannot be. If the argument is that they should grow up with their gender role options open, again the answer is that in realistic terms, most could not. If the argument is that we should bring children up identically, making males and females indistinguishable in books, on television, and so forth, this would make it harder to predict what either of them would turn out to be in adult life, but this is a different matter from giving them the freedom to choose what 'they can Be and Do' in this context. For they will be subject to stereotyping, only the stereotypes will be different to the present ones.

Let us suppose that de Beauvoir's claim is the *prima*

facie more plausible one that although we cannot grow up with our options open, we can choose the gender role we wish to adopt when we are adults. In other words, although we have to socialize children, we ought to let them decide the gender role they will adopt for themselves once they are adults. One (extreme) way this choice could be accomplished is by the young woman choosing to change her sex. Modern medicine has given women (and men) this choice, so a female can choose to become a male and take on a male role. Further despite the fact that there are enormous constraints placed on such a choice - social, economic, legal - there are a few instances of women (and men) who do change their sex in this way. It might be countered however that rather than a genuinely autonomous choice, what this could show, equally plausibly, is that in such cases the child that was born female was never effectively initiated into the female gender role. With more effective socializing she would not have even contemplated the choice.

Let us suppose now that the desired change is simply of gender role and not of sex. Some individuals - for instance, some lesbians - do seem to disentangle themselves from most aspects of the gender roles in which they were raised. But it is the exceptional rather than the average woman who is able to overcome such odds to make this notion of choice meaningful. So much so that such cases do not really amount to evidence that once attaining adulthood there is no difficulty in the idea of adopting the gender role of one's choice. Nor do they seriously challenge the fact that most of us are prisoners of the role that we have acquired through our socialization. Most people are to a greater or lesser extent, successfully socialized into their gender roles by the time they become adults. So that we are no more free to change our role any more than we are to become totally different people. Perhaps de Beauvoir is correct when she suggests that there is nothing by virtue of our

nature that prevents this if we wish it, but by and large we are not able to and neither would we wish to, if we could. For most of us do not seem to resent the roles into which we have been socialized. Indeed we happily accept them.

But de Beauvoir and other feminists claim that the cause of most women's acquiescence to housewifery and motherhood is, in effect, a socially fostered ignorance of a woman's alternatives. So our acceptance of these roles should not count.¹⁸ But what if most women were to say that they have freely chosen their roles, and if they wanted to change them, they could? If truly autonomous rejection of our stereotypical gender roles is possible, how can we deny the claims of those women who say that they have chosen to be a housewife/mother and they would not change it for anything (which is probably what many women would say)? It will not do to insist that they say this because they are in a state of socially fostered ignorance. For if autonomy in such cases is not straightforwardly possible, then by a parallel argument, none of us make the choices we think we are making and it makes little sense for de Beauvoir to prescribe autonomy (or for others to demand the widest possible choices in order 'to discover what we can BE and DO'). Perhaps the best that can be said is that a woman's conviction that she has chosen to marry, to become a housewife and mother, while not conclusive evidence that she has chosen this, is the best evidence we have that she has.

There is a last way we might interpret the claim that we do not need to adopt the traditional gender roles of wife or husband; this is the more modest proposal that an adult person is able and ought to choose some aspects of their gender roles for themselves. If all that is meant by this is that they could decide for themselves some aspects of how they will behave, take on some roles traditionally assigned to the opposite sex, and so on, this would not present insurmountable difficulties for

the idea of autonomy in this context. Some women (and many men) can and do make such independent choices. No doubt given an upbringing with less pervasive gender role stereotyping - like, for instance, if children were given role models of parents exercising equally free choices - the number of adults making significant choices of this kind would increase.

But a problem still remains. There can be little doubt that some male and female traits in this regard do have a genetic origin. As Wilson (1978:132) writes:

At birth the twig is already bent a little bit...

If this is so, even with an education, training and upbringing as gender neutral as possible, many males are still likely to fail to participate fully in, say, child rearing; many females are still unlikely to engage in car maintenance or replace the washer on a tap. If we try to eliminate this and insist on equal participation in the domestic roles, the amount of regulation that this would require might well place many of the personal freedoms that we enjoy in the current practice in jeopardy.

The common domestic good

A different way of justifying the traditional domestic roles (to their being based upon putative differences in nature) is in terms of domestic efficiency. What this justification stresses is the usefulness of the division of labour to be found in the traditional marriage. It results in a convenience for everyone, or 'the common domestic good'. The view is usually supported by the claim that, for whatever reason, most men and women are just more competent to perform their traditional domestic roles. Women just are better at jobs such as ironing, cleaning, washing. So much so that men should be excluded from such activities for their own good. They should not be allowed to waste their energies doing chores which will nearly always

elude them. Along the same lines it is claimed that men are just not as good at 'mothering' as women. The impression is given that many children would be seriously damaged if fathers generally were expected to be the primary caretakers. Just because there are the occasional exceptional husbands who are more competent at such things than their wives, this should not be allowed to make everyone else suffer by changing the traditional roles. A similar appeal to a common good to be brought about through efficiency, saving time or personal safety, is used to justify the exclusion of women from certain activities inside (and outside of) the home; for instance, servicing or driving the family car. It is not that we cannot perform such tasks but that we would be less efficient at them than men, or that we could be seriously damaged by being allowed to try.

One further point might be added: even though we are more or less efficient, there need be no suggestion of inequality between the roles of husband and wife. It is sometimes added that this is what is objectionable about our attitudes towards the traditional housewife's or mother's role in marriage. It is the inferior status that is usually associated with the former or the demeaning attitude that some people (particularly feminists) have towards the latter, that is so unfair.¹⁹

Along these lines it is claimed that housewives and mothers provide a much more important service than their antagonists suggest. For instance, a home is more than just a house and a homemaker is more than just a housewife. As Broderick (1988:189) (somewhat sentimentally) suggests:

The design and...level of maintenance and general ambience of a family residence are major indicators of the character and social position of those who live there. She who takes responsibility for it is thereby...the producer and director of the family's life-style and social image.

Grocery shopping or preparing meals is more than the mere

provision of food for the family. The evening meal may be, for instance, the basis on which family cohesion is built. A similar claim could be made about child-care. It involves a great deal more than feeding, clothing and cleaning children. It involves, as we noted, the mother's shaping the child's sense of self, the child's ideas of morally right conduct, its view of the world. And when the children begin to grow up, the task of monitoring and fostering the relationships among family members is another important function of her traditional role. In which case, a mother provides important social and emotional support to the family. However these and related functions of a wife and mother are usually omitted from the account. As a result the stereotypical roles that women perform are usually so devalued.

It is sometimes suggested that one explanation of why the value usually given to the husband's and wife's roles is different, is due to the fact that the former receives payment for his work. In the traditional division of labour there is, on the one hand, the waged work of the husband, and on the other, the unpaid work of his wife. But not getting paid for her work implies that her contribution to the domestic economy is not of equal value to her husband's. As a result he is regarded as the provider and she as his dependent. If, on the other hand, wives were paid a wage, by their husbands or by central government for doing housework and for mothering this could reflect some level of recognition of the equality between the contributions of both.²⁰ She would be financially rewarded for contributing to the domestic economy.²¹ Ideally, she would be treated no differently from the periods when she is earning a livelihood in the public sphere.²² A byproduct of this proposal might be that the value we attach to the woman's role will change.

Against the view that central government should pay women for their work in the home, it could be objected that this still implies that such work is a woman's job.

As Radcliffe Richards (1994:300) points out:

Except for making people financially independent, it would leave everything much the same as it is now.

However Radcliffe Richards (1994:317) thinks that if a woman prefers to do more of the childcare herself then the idea of the wages being paid by her husband 'need not be a bad thing'.

I do not see that this leads to an improvement in a wife's status or an improvement in the way that she is valued. In the first place, it overlooks the fact that in such circumstances her husband would have the additional power over her, of being her employer. In which case, presumably she would be less free than before since as her employer he could now be able to make decisions without her point of view being considered. This problem may seem somewhat exaggerated but the fact that a woman might be financially better off would not seem to be any more beneficial to her status in the family than under present circumstances. Besides this, if shopping, washing, preparing and serving family meals, is 'a jumble of mediocre stuff', even if a housewife were to be paid by her husband, this would not give her work status simply because it is so monotonous.

We noted earlier the claim that there is a more valuable component to many of the female-typed family tasks and because of this it could be argued that the housewife/mother ought to be given equal - some might say superior - status to her husband. (The phrase that is commonly used is 'equal but different'.) A wife/mother can provide important social and emotional support for her family. However, according to de Beauvoir (1988:391), what housework and motherhood cannot provide is the sense of self-fulfilment that results in 'transcendence' for the housewife/mother. This equally applies to househusbands (the few that there are).²³ I shall return to this point shortly.

Before this, the question still needs to be asked:

why should cooking and cleaning be the woman's role? Why ought a mother rather than a father rear their children? The links between the sex we happen to have and our different levels of ability at housework seem to be very tenuous. Once again the arguments we introduced earlier apply. Even when relevant physical and psychological differences between men and women are admitted, there is no evidence to suggest that any of these differences show that all women are generally better - more efficient - than all men at housework. If distinctions could be made in terms of 'better or worse at housework' surely these would depend on criteria applying to men and women alike. And even if most women are more efficient at such-and-such a task within the household, the admitted difference is out of all proportion to the degrees of the differences we find in the usual gender roles in the traditional marriage.

Parallel considerations apply to mothering. Knowing that someone is female (or male) does not enable us to draw conclusions about her (or his) acumen or depth of feeling as a parent or anything else that would entitle us to regard her (or him) as being more or less able as a parent. And if because only the woman can wean the baby requires that she should breast-feed it, this does not imply that only she should do the cleaning, washing, shopping for it. And certainly, such differences do not justify the sacrifice of the mother's other life-plans to the demands of her family.

I mentioned earlier that domestic arrangements have become more flexible and less formal in most homes nowadays, and it is now fashionable for some husbands to help with the housework - presumably they recognize that this domestic burden, carried out by women in previous generations, is quite irrelevant to the difference in function implied by the difference in sex. However as we noted the husband still only helps with the housework and the children, the wife still has the responsibility for

the majority of the household tasks. As Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1995:20) write:

Little or nothing has changed...especially where responsibilities for the household and children are concerned.

And if these differences in their roles are unwarranted, the best way to overcome them would be for them to genuinely share the responsibility for both the housework and mothering. If this were to happen, this would eliminate the need for the wife to be a full-time worker in the house. Ideally both spouses could pursue their careers, and housework and mothering would just become part of the inconsequential everyday tasks that have to be performed. We might find it useful here to make a distinction between being 'a mother' and 'mothering' (or maternal responsibility). We can understand the former in a narrow biological way, and let the latter refer to all of the chores involved in caring for and rearing a baby. Most aspects of mothering can be shared; or rather, in a good marriage most child-rearing duties can be and ought to be a joint responsibility of the couple.

It might be thought that there are problems with this proposal. One is that giving up control over child-rearing would mean the loss of a traditional area of power for women. To put the matter succinctly: in the face of their isolation in the home and their relative powerlessness outside of the home, a major source of power has been women's control over the child-rearing process. But to cling on to this (especially when it is not necessary) seems to have seriously interfered with a woman's autonomy. Often in the past, moreover, the one person who might have shared in child-care, her husband, has been turned away from it. We might add also the advantages to the woman in sharing child-care with her husband; she would have more time for herself and very likely access to more opportunities outside of the home.

Concern might be expressed also that if we do significantly change the traditional marital roles so

that husbands can readily become the primary caretakers of children - this would, as Wilson cautioned, lead to the 'significant loss of genetic fitness'. Traits which were in the past advantageous to the successful evolution of human beings could be lost. I can only respond that given the information at our disposal - given the very many influencing factors that determine genetic fitness - it seems to me very unlikely that sharing housework and mothering will result in such a cost.

Let me conclude this section by stressing two points: I think we have to accept that there are biologically based sex differences in a few significant domestic roles. However the range of activities and roles in marriage (and outside of it) need reflect nothing more than this, i.e. those differences due to biology. At the same time, we could stop assuming that in marriage every husband ought to adopt masculine roles (in the conventional sense). Nowadays there is no obvious reason to suppose that he should be primarily responsible for them, when he might prefer and be better able to clean the house, care for the children. For if gender roles are bad, they can be bad for men too. However this brings us to our next problem. No matter which one of them does it, according to de Beauvoir, housework and mothering are not activities which will lead them to transcendence.

Creativity and transcendence

We noted that according to de Beauvoir, a natural desire that all human beings have, is the desire for transcendence. This is the desire 'which compels individuals to project themselves into the world towards chosen possibilities'.²⁴ Or to put the point differently: to transcend him or herself (in the required way) a person needs to engage in creative projects in the world.²⁵ For it seems that one experiences transcendence through work which, de Beauvoir (1988:29) writes:

...defines goals beyond the present and tries to change the world in some lasting way.

We are told that we all need such 'a disinterested curiosity, a taste for adventure and for new experience';²⁶ or, at least, we all need in our lives as much personal growth of this kind as is possible.

We experience transcendence, then, through creative work and projects yet only 'work beyond the home and family offers the opportunity for transcendence'.²⁷ Activities, like housework and mothering destroy our creative capacities, for the former activities are so puerile yet so time-consuming and exhausting that they leave no room for anything else. Thus another reason why women should avoid marriage (housework, mothering) is that it undermines their opportunities for transcendence and with it *inter alia* the development of their creative potentialities or talents.

To see if this claim is plausible, we need firstly to be clear about what the notion of 'creative work' might involve. De Beauvoir is not overly helpful in this regard. Creative workers, she (1988:580) writes:

...transcend...themselves in the work they produce, go beyond the given...

One's work is creative (in the appropriate way) it seems, if by engaging in it one consciously pushes oneself forward or grows. So clearly, a first (trivial) condition is that a person must be engaged in some sort of work, project or activity to have the epithet 'creative work' correctly applied to it. This is obviously correct. One cannot be creative *simpliciter*. It goes without saying that a person who never puts pen to paper cannot count writing as one of her creative projects; a person who never puts brush to canvas is not a creative painter.

A second necessary condition, I would have thought is that the work or project must be one's own. Whatever it is one produces must be one's own way of looking at

things. A piece of writing or painting that is a copy of someone else's work, would not be creative. This does not mean that it must be entirely new - something that has never been done before - just that it is distinct and therefore can be differentiated from other similar works. The originality might lie in the choice of perspective, or in the way the materials are used. But no matter how little the difference, there has to be an element of originality for a piece of work to count as being creative.

Another necessary condition concerns the intentionality of the agent; one must intend the work or project for it to be a creative act. A person cannot be creative by accident. To see this, we might make a distinction between, on the one hand, someone being creative in a project and, on the other, a project that is said to be creative. While the latter might be accidentally brought about, a person must be conscious of what she is doing if she is to be described as 'being creative'. For example, it is said that given sufficient time, a computer (it used to be a monkey on a typewriter) might happen to produce, say, *Macbeth*. But for 'creative' to apply, we assume that Shakespeare intended to write *Macbeth*; he intended to write a play on this particular theme. Or to take another simple example, it is sometimes suggested that a painter is creative if she deliberately drips paint on to a canvas²⁸ whereas had she accidentally upset the cans, it seems improbable to think that she could count this act a creative project.²⁹

The idea of one's being creative then requires that there must be an activity or a piece of work, it must represent a person's own way of looking at things, i.e. it must be original and it must be intended. Given these conditions, however a woman who creates a home from an empty shell, or a mother who brings up her children in an intentional, original way, might regard her work as creative. But evidently de Beauvoir's idea of

transcendence requires more than this. It seems, firstly, that something needs to be said about the quality of the work.

If nothing about the good quality of the work is presupposed, a number of consequences would follow. Firstly, although I may know very little about painting or writing, the result of any mark I intend to produce on a canvass is original and by the criteria we have thus far, this would make me a creative painter, or the mere fact that I am writing a novel would mean that I am creative. But it is counter-intuitive to claim that anyone who merely puts brush to canvas or pen to paper is creative. Secondly, without the further condition - the good quality of the product - the concept of a creative project is redundant, since where they do not simply copy another work, everyone who writes, anyone who puts brush to canvas qualifies. In other words, if the idea of a 'creative project' has no reference to quality then we would seem to be able to apply it indiscriminately. Even the most inferior works would count. If this is the case, if any work no matter how poor is deemed to be creative, then de Beauvoir would not bemoan the lack of creative projects in a woman's married life. Certainly she would not condemn the lack of creativity in housework and motherhood without presupposing that the quality of one's work and life is, in some way, better by being creative.

Can we say that any creative work she engages upon is a good thing? It seems not. For the potentialities de Beauvoir picks out as meriting development are value-laden. She holds that only certain potentialities or projects should be developed, for only certain kinds of potentialities are appropriate to 'transcendence'.³⁰ De Beauvoir (1988:710-711) writes:

...women who seek through artistic expression to transcend their given characteristics; they are the actresses, dancers, and singers.

But it is not altogether clear why rather than aspiring

to play the part of Lady Macbeth, someone with a skill for acting, shouldn't realize this potential, not in the theatre, but as a confidence trickster. Why shouldn't a person with a skill at painting just as much develop this talent by regularly painting graffiti on walls? We need to know why there is more to acting Lady Macbeth than to being a confidence trickster. We need to know, this is to say, the grounds (if there are any) for saying that only certain forms of personal development qualify as appropriate for transcendence.

We might attempt to overcome this difficulty by considering the suggestion that some activities or projects in themselves are likely to give rise to transcendence. From de Beauvoir's account, it seems she thinks that this is the case. Furthermore it seems that we can know in advance just which activities these are. Otherwise we could spend years developing one or other capacity only to find we are tired and bored with it and would have been more creative developing a different one.

Perhaps the answer is that only certain activities are capable of holding a person's attention for a long span of time; they are rich enough to provide a constant source of satisfaction. Of course people get bored with, say, writing; by the same token people get bored with knitting, cooking or taking care of a child. So the comparison between different pursuits must be in terms of their potentiality for transcendence. It may be the case that a person engaged in such an activity is not experiencing it in the short-term but its potential for transcendence in the long-term is justification enough for engaging in it. Some activities or projects presumably can be defended in these terms; they provide endless opportunities for fresh discriminations, for the development of further skills and judgement. So that we might say that the objective of an activity like knitting can be attained in a relatively limited number of ways whereas to engage in writing a novel is to explore new

ideas, to develop themes, characters, and so on, all of which provide countless opportunities for individual growth and satisfaction for the individual involved.

But the objection might be pressed when the housewife creates a home for her family from an empty shell, she could be thought to be doing something of the same creative order as when the novelist writes a story or the artist paints a picture. This could be answered by pointing out that some activities give satisfaction in another way. Their wide-ranging content illuminates other areas of one's life. When writing a novel, one needs a broad body of knowledge which in turn could well throw light on other things in one's life. A person who systematically studies literature, or art, or philosophy, develops a conceptual outlook which could transform other things in her life. For such disciplines are intimately connected with the rest of one's experience. They inform one's outlook, one's everyday grasp of things (the means by which we understand ourselves and the world about us). On the other hand, skills such as knitting or homemaking do not have this wide-ranging content. Incidentally I suspect that this could be said of de Beauvoir's own examples of creative projects, singing and dancing. I can see nothing in the examples that suggest why they might be 'intrinsically creative'. If they are, I can see no reason why homemaking, knitting, gardening, should not be regarded as equally creative projects.

De Beauvoir also argues that a person's creative projects are found in the paid work they do.³¹ A reason why a woman *qua* housewife and mother fails to achieve transcendence, we noted, is that she lacks a career or profession; in contrast, for this reason a man can be the 'incarnation of transcendence'. Of course a small but significant number of women do have careers; they have made their way into medicine, law, politics, in scientific research, business management, etc. However, it is not clear that even when they do, their work is of

such a nature that it must offer them opportunities for transcendence. For many women claim to reach a glass ceiling in their careers that lets them see where they want to go but, due to male vested-interest and prejudice, will not allow them to get there. Furthermore, even when women do have a successful career, de Beauvoir (1988:711) warns:

We rarely encounter in the independent woman a taste for adventure and for experience for its own sake, or a disinterested curiosity; she seeks 'to have a career' as other women build a nest...

Even where women break through the glass ceiling and do have a career that might lead to transcendence, it appears they usually fail to find the latter. It seems that the universe of transcendent work is dominated by men.

But once again this all seems quite disingenuous of de Beauvoir. In the first place, we rarely encounter a working man with such a taste for adventure. There can be no doubt that like most women, most men like having a job and they like to prove to themselves that they are capable of doing it well. However few are passionately concerned with the content of their work. This is not to say that their work is not important to them. As we saw, the work they do is important in most people's lives; it plays a crucial role in shaping their idea of who they are. However unlike most other activities in which men engage that are freely chosen, work is something, as we noted, that most of them have to do to maintain themselves and their dependants. They may be fortunate to choose the type of work they do, but not whether or not to work. This is to say, most adult males cannot avoid the fact of work. However being important in their lives is not to be identified with transcendence. It is not to be confused with 'a taste for adventure' or of 'defining goals beyond the present and trying to change the world in some lasting way'.

For one thing, we cannot overlook the fact that there are very many men for whom work is an unavoidable drudgery. They find the work they do soul-destroying, not a source of transcendence. Marx makes this point when he (1978:74) writes:

...[the worker] in his work...does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy, but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work...

No doubt this is the plight of the majority of men today in the workforce. A man whose job it is to turn a screw on an assembly line or whose job involves shovelling coal is unlikely to view his work as a fulfilling or creative activity. But then men do not spend all of their time on the assembly line (or down a coalmine). But then neither does the housewife or mother need to spend all her time on domestic tasks. I will return to this point shortly.

Before this, we should notice one implication of Marx's argument. Most women today who go out to work, have jobs in the food and catering industries, the clothing trade, or as shop assistants, or they look after children in schools or playgroups, or whatever. Why is it supposed that this will be more satisfying or creative than housework and mothering? We could accept that paid employment outside the home (a pay packet) is deemed by many women to be an acknowledgement that their labour or skill is thought to be of some worth. And also that many housewives (or househusbands)³² find any work outside the home more satisfying than remaining in their home day after day; for many women, being a full-time housewife means that they will be socially isolated or at the least they will have no 'support network'. They are stuck in their homes with few opportunities for companionship or social interaction. In contrast to this, outside employment is considered by many women as an important source of companionship. However these are reasons why

housework is less satisfactory than outside work, not why it is less creative. And the point is: the work that most women do (like their husbands) is monotonous and can hardly be considered in terms of a creative project or transcendence.

Lastly, we might challenge de Beauvoir's major assumption that housework/mothering must hinder the development of all of our other creative capacities. Although she seems sometimes to regard this as an empirical fact, she also writes as if it is an *a priori* truth. The housewife's problem as de Beauvoir sees it, is that she has to stick to just the one thing. (De Beauvoir's housewife is not a well-rounded person.) But I see no reason why she should not develop some outside interests. As well as housework, for instance, why shouldn't she engage in other things - like intellectual activities or participate in sport, cultivate a range of different social interests - and then pursue those things in which she seems most likely to develop creatively?

De Beauvoir's answer seems to be that the traditional housewife/mother could not, for her work is too demanding and requires her to spend a disproportionate amount of time at the one thing. One obvious limitation on any thing she pursues (*à la de Beauvoir*) is that when she contemplates developing one or more creative aspects of her nature, the conscientious housewife must ask herself: 'Would this obstruct or interfere with my domestic duties?' Another way in which the housewife's choice may be limited is where her desire, say, to be an actress is no greater or less than her desire to be a novelist; but she would be advised to cultivate her talents for the latter, for the former is more likely to take more and more of her time, and no doubt will involve her in other pursuits incompatible with being a housewife. Nonetheless it could be argued against de Beauvoir that there is no reason in principle why a married woman/housewife should not develop an

interest in a whole range of potentially fulfilling projects.

It seems to me unlikely that most women would want to do so. For to behave in this way would be like designing a dress in such a way as to include a little bit of every colour in the spectrum. No doubt there are many things we could do and many traits we could develop in this regard, if we had the time and wanted to take the trouble. However if we decide to develop some of them it must always be at the expense of others, so some selectivity will have to be exercised in the matter of which projects to work on. It is much better to concentrate on one thing in the time available, the thing most likely to lead to the greatest sense of fulfilment and then to build her housework, mothering and everything else around it. In this way, there could be something other than domestic tasks dominating her life. Her life could revolve around the satisfaction of her major interest; housework and mothering could be incidental to that.

Thus far only a part of this argument against de Beauvoir has been made. For while there are some creative projects which if developed will be hindered by housework and motherhood (e.g. acting, international exploration), some activities seem to be mutually compatible with housewifery or child-rearing. (In much the same way, as say, alcoholism interferes with study but eating healthy food does not.) At its most general for instance, the habits of self-discipline developed in the pursuit of efficient housework might reinforce her capacity for concentrating on other subjects; to observe specifically her children or housewife friends may be useful in her development as a novelist. Some housewives/mothers seem to develop both areas harmoniously, each reinforcing the other, whereas de Beauvoir suggests that housewives/mothers must find the simultaneous development of the two activities quite

incompatible. But there is no *a priori* reason why this should be so.

There are other difficulties I have with de Beauvoir's account. For instance, it has a rather egoistic ring to it. She talks about transcendence as though it can only occur at an individual level. You should engage in creative activities that will bring you transcendence or self-fulfilment. On the other hand, it might be argued, self-fulfilment is wrong if it is at the expense of other people. Or it could be argued that it is not self-fulfilment at all, if it is at the other's expense (i.e. that the complete self is social). It may not be possible for you to achieve the required level of self-fulfilment unless your endeavours are at least an ingredient in the personal growth of other people in your family or community. (This is especially the case in rural South Africa where it would be difficult - or very selfish - to blind oneself, in the pursuit of one's own projects, to the hand-to-mouth existence of most of the rural women around one.) Seen in this light, de Beauvoir's 'transcendent woman', this is to say, is morally acceptable only in a context in which she includes in an account of transcendence, some consideration of the self-fulfilment of other people. I do not want to go any further into the details of such arguments but de Beauvoir's opponents might argue in this way.

Against such views, de Beauvoir would maintain that when a woman marries and accepts a traditional housewife/mother role, by virtue of the type of work she does, she is consigned to immanence. This is a result of her being limited to performing duties of a service nature for her family.³³ If a married woman, on the other hand, is involved in creative work in the ways suggested above, she is no longer a housewife/mother in de Beauvoir's sense. Even if she were still to be mainly responsible for the smooth functioning of the home, the fact that she

sees herself as a creative worker means that 'housewife/mother' can no longer be an appropriate description. We can make this point more forcefully in another way: if a person defines herself as a housewife, she is involved in non-creative work and so is not fulfilling herself as a *pour-soi*. This is not to say that she cannot be happy and satisfied with her life but she cannot have a sense of transcendence. The same objection applies, of course, if a husband fills these roles. In which case, I think that de Beauvoir's criticism stands.

Lastly, it needs to be added that in a good marriage, the couple will help each other grow; the husband will want to encourage his wife to realize her potential for becoming an artist, author, or whatever, and she will encourage him in his creative projects. One difficulty is to be precise about the nature of the help and encouragement required. It is difficult to see how, say, a wife could help her husband to become an actor if she knows nothing of the skills involved. But, presumably, she is able to provide a secure basis for him within which he can develop his potentialities, whatever the latter are, and vice versa. So that, for instance, she ought not to place unreasonable restrictions on the time she tolerates being left on her own in order for her husband to work or study; or she ought not to make too many other demands on the time of her partner. Alternatively the support and encouragement she might give could be financial; or the required support may simply be in the form of praise and reassurance, rather than attempts to undermine the partner's confidence. The point, once again, is more obvious when the opposite is assumed. We would say that if one of them is perpetually placing unreasonable restrictions on the time or money they allowed the other in this regard, if one of them was always attempting to undermine their partner's confidence in their projects, by telling them (their spouse) what they should or should not be doing, what they (their

spouse) really thinks or feels, or what their motives really are, then this is unlikely to be conducive to their developing their talents or achieving their ambitions. Otherwise it is not clear to me why, as our ideas, projects and talents develop, we should not owe our biggest debts to the help, advice and support we receive from a spouse in a good marriage.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by considering de Beauvoir's claims that the stereotypical gender roles into which we are socialized within marriage, destroys a woman's autonomy. I have argued that while certain biologically based roles are inevitable, the usual domestic stereotypes go well beyond the few biologically or psychologically justified differences, and they are unfair to women and have no place in a good marriage. If housework and child rearing have to be done, this ought to be the responsibility of both husband and wife alike.

The second major issue discussed in this chapter is the claim that neither housework nor motherhood can meet the necessary conditions of transcendence or personal growth, which is a fundamental desideratum for human beings. Insofar as this is the case, I argued, the married woman is in no worse position than most other people in this regard. De Beauvoir's condemnation would be better directed at the mundane nature of work which results from the division of labour in a modern industrial economy, of which housework is just one instance. Moreover there is nothing in principle that prevents a married woman from having a creative project. And there are some cases in which married women (including mothers) are successful authors, artists, or engaged in professional and managerial careers. Although sometimes the pursuit of a career clashes with one's duties as a wife or mother, this is no more than the clashes that any married person experiences, for

instance, like those a husband or father has, when his work and family obligations conflict. However I agree with de Beauvoir that the possibility of a married woman enjoying a creative project depends upon her not regarding herself exclusively (or mainly) in the role of wife and mother. If she does the latter, then as de Beauvoir says, to the extent that she does this destroys the woman's possibilities for creativity.

Let us turn now to the problems she raises concerning sexuality in marriage.

Chapter Seven

Sex and marriage

De Beauvoir maintains that marriage is a source of a woman's sexual oppression. As we noted, firstly, it destroys the possibility of her having the kind of sexual satisfaction she naturally seeks, by changing what begins as an erotic relationship into a legal one. Sex becomes a duty; whereas, we are told, a satisfactory sexual intercourse has to be a 'spontaneous and thrilling urge'. At its most extreme, this seems to be a matter of two people falling spontaneously into each other's arms. (Clearly if this is the case, husbands lose out too in their sexual encounters in marriage.) But there is a harsher implication of the legal nature of the relationship than sexual dissatisfaction. A husband may think he is morally/legally entitled to intercourse and in pursuit of this, that he is entitled to sexually harass or even to rape his wife. Thirdly, de Beauvoir suggests that satisfactory sex can only be achieved with a series of different sexual partners. But if this is the case, the demand for fidelity in marriage must frustrate our natural desire for sexual satisfaction.

In this chapter I want to challenge some of de Beauvoir's arguments. I will begin by objecting to her claim that sexual intimacy in marriage cannot be 'a spontaneous urge'. What is wrong with regarding sex in this way? The main wrong seems to be that it would permit harassment and even rape. Clearly this is unacceptable - but what exactly is morally objectionable with harassment and rape in marriage? I will explore some of the problems which can result if sexual intercourse is regarded as a legal and moral duty in marriage. Finally, I will discuss some of the moral issues that are raised by de Beauvoir's treatment of fidelity.

Can there be good marital sex?

At the beginning of a relationship, lovers usually find their sexual intimacy to be exciting and intense. As we noted, this, in part, will be due to the lowering of emotional barriers, as secrets and hopes are shared. As this aspect of their relationship intensifies so usually does their level of sexual intimacy. The problem is that this intense excitement is by its nature short-lived; or at any rate, the experience of new-found intimacy tends to dull over a period of time. After the initial excitement has worn off there is no novelty of this kind to be gained from one's present partner. If this is so, it seems reasonable for each of them (in keeping with their natural inclinations) to choose to recapture the sexual thrill associated with the commencement of intimacy with someone else. If each of them chooses to have a sexual relationship with other partners then the whole exhilarating process can take place again. Once more it will be sexually exciting and emotionally intense. However again, in time the feelings of this kind that each has for the other must decrease and when it does, presumably, the lovers should choose to set off anew in search of other fresh conquests. In contrast with this, marriage - or any enduring long-term sexual relationship - is bound to be sexually lacklustre. This seems to be one way of interpreting de Beauvoir's misgivings about sex in marriage.

In response, I want to begin by pointing out that as well as it being an *a priori* truth - it goes without argument that sexual experience will vary from person to person - there is an abundance of empirical evidence which shows that sexual intimacy is not the same in every long-term relationship - whether married or non-married.¹ Neither will each partner experience it in the same way on every occasion in the same relationship. Some will have mostly satisfactory sexual experiences from the

beginning; others may negotiate mutually satisfying joint experiences as the relationship develops. For many others, sexual intimacy will at times be better or worse than at other times; and yet others will have quite awful sexual experiences from beginning to end. In other words, it does not make sense empirically to lump all marital experiences of sexual intimacy together and say, as de Beauvoir seems to, that they are all instances of 'bad sex'.

Secondly, the sexual expectations individuals bring to a relationship may be quite different. The source of our expectations no doubt involves an amalgam of all we have learned from others and from our own experience. Probably nothing is of more importance in this regard than the families in which we grow up. Some children are raised in safe, warm relationships; others have to be constantly alert lest they attract the anger of one or both parents. Some children are carefully instructed in sexual matters, whereas in other households the subject is never mentioned. There are, of course, very many other factors that help to form our expectations in this regard; books, television, films, sex education courses, religious beliefs, and previous sexual encounters, all play a part. It is not surprising then that the kind of expectations and experiences that individuals bring to an adult sexual relationship - married or otherwise - are different. De Beauvoir seems to suggest that all individuals start from the same baseline. Once again, regarded as an empirical claim, she is guilty of a weak induction.

A third point that needs to be made concerns the difference between individuals in their desire and frequency for sexual encounters. Generally speaking, in any relationship, married or single, one partner may be more demanding, or less interested, in sexual activity than the other.² If one of them desires sex less than the other, this might lead to the former being resentful

about the demands being made upon her (or him) or she might feel inadequate that her sexual appetite does not match her mate's. But no matter who has the greater need, it seems clear that frequent rejection or passive compliance will take its toll. It might make, for instance, the more needy partner doubt their own worth or perhaps their partner's emotional investment in the relationship. This problem can apply to any sexual relationship whether or not the couple are married.

Finally and surprisingly, de Beauvoir seems to overlook the fact that a large part of the pleasure involved, for both the male and female partner is derived from physiological changes during sexual intimacy.³ There are numerous books and magazine articles which claim that one needs knowledge of the appropriate techniques (and the ability to apply them) to bring about the desired changes. No techniques of this sort will always be successful, of course. What might arouse a person one day - a certain touch or word - may not do so on a subsequent occasion; what feels good today, might irritate the lover tomorrow. However, generally, the view is that good sex is something which requires at least that a largely mechanical skill has been mastered. We are advised that a lover (or spouse) who does not have an adequate knowledge of such techniques will not be 'a good lover'.

But this seems to be just what de Beauvoir says 'good sex' is not. It is not merely the joint attainment of physical pleasure, for this she (1988:465) insists is no more than 'joint masturbation' (which sounds as if it is unsatisfactory). What I take de Beauvoir to mean is that many of the pleasures we experience in sexual intercourse are not merely the result of the appropriate physical stimulation. Presumably some account must be taken also of the state-of-mind of the lovers. The (appropriate) pleasure must include the whole personalities of both partners, their emotions as well as physical feelings;

the awareness of each that it is *this* particular person - the one whom they love - that is doing the caressing, etc. It seems likely that this awareness will intensify the pleasure. Seen in this light, for example, the caress of a spouse (or a long-term lover) might be regarded as a gesture that is important to their partner because of what it conveys; often it will be taken to signify the love, say, a wife feels for her husband. In casual sex, on the other hand, it is likely to be interpreted as merely a prelude to the sexual activity that is about to take place.

We could couple with this, the point made earlier that the traditional view of sexual intimacy - I suspect de Beauvoir's view - is based around penetration and male orgasm. The (perhaps) different desires and needs of the woman are largely ignored. Feminists, since de Beauvoir, have argued for the need for sexual practices free from the primacy given to the above event and which include the equally important but different pleasures and excitement that can be experienced by women. Only then can we say that the sexual encounter meets the needs of both partners. If this is so, 'good sex' and the importance that we seem to attach to it, depends to a large extent on the nature of the relationship between the lovers.

But where this is the case, we may argue *contra* de Beauvoir, that in this latter respect marriage has advantages over a casual sexual relationship, like a 'one night stand' or a brief affair. For in the married relationship there are an indefinitely large number of opportunities for a couple to engage in sexual intimacy of the preferred kind. There is a related advantage worth our noting. As a result of the numerous opportunities, if on some occasions sex is unsatisfying or even boring for one (or both) of them, this need not be cause for concern. Indeed the degree of physical pleasure gained from the act of intimacy itself might not

matter so much as the way in which the act was conducted - the setting, the conversation beforehand, feelings of closeness afterwards, and so on. On the other hand, in a spontaneous decision to have sex with a friend or a stranger, if the act did not meet one's hedonistic expectations, then the experience would no doubt be regarded as a mistake. And if this were to occur too often, it is unlikely that the encounters would continue. For in a casual sexual encounter the object of sex, one's lover, is likely only to be desired during the short time of arousal and resolution. In other words, the sexual performance of one's partner is much more likely to be criticized in episodic sex than in a long-term or marital relationship.

Marriage, I am arguing, can provide the framework for this most intimate form of relationship. Indeed it might be argued *contra de Beauvoir*, that rather than destroying good sex, marriage can provide the best context for it.⁴ In this relationship, the wish for 'good sex' can father the act; the couple can work at trying to make sure that their initial exciting sexual activity does not fade. Ideally, such on-going sexual intimacies take the couple into greater depths of their relationship. As Plutarch (1973:3:96) wrote:

The physical union with one's wife is...like sharing a great mystery together.

In 'a good marriage', sexual intimacy is associated with a deep affection and commitment to the other person. This is an implication of the idea of 'a good marriage' as well as a generally conceded empirical claim. It is the level of affection and commitment which helps to differentiate this form of sexual experience from casual, erotic sexual experiences. In which case, just as the love a married couple have for one another is not likely to be the kind they feel for any other persons, so the sexual intimacy they experience with each other is not likely to be something they could share with anyone else.

A further difficulty I have with de Beauvoir's account concerns an implication of the claim that to be good, sexual intercourse needs to be 'spontaneous' and to achieve the latter we require a variety of sexual partners. Viewed in this light, de Beauvoir seems to be advocating that each partner ought to try to get the maximum thrill for themselves. Or to put the point differently: one's partner ought to be regarded as being no more than a means to an end - one's own pleasure. But this seems to contradict her view that 'good sex' needs to be more than physical excitement. On the other hand, it could be claimed that when sexual intercourse occurs in a good marital relationship - where there is love and commitment to each other and to the relationship - each is likely to consider their spouse's sexual needs and satisfaction to be as important as their own; each is likely to desire that their partner has the maximum thrill from the sexual encounter and will endeavour to see that this is achieved.

It might be countered that to suggest that good sex is a necessary condition of a good marriage runs counter to the fact that no doubt many couples, particularly older people, get along perfectly well in their marriage without their having a sexual relationship. It is not a matter of them counting this aspect of their relationship as not good, it is non-existent. But this misses the point. I have argued that intimacy (being a soulmate) is an important condition of a good marriage. And at any age, sexual intercourse is the most obvious manifestation of such intimacy.⁵ So my argument is that the marriage of a couple who do not have a sexual relationship would be more satisfactory if they do share intimacies of this kind.

It might be objected that I have overstated the kind of sexual activity that most people encounter in marriage. In the first place, given de Beauvoir's view that sex is always a transcendent act for a male (see

p.123), while a husband might begin and end by regarding his wife as the one he loves, in the heat of his desire, he too must see his wife merely as an object that will satisfy his desire. So during sexual intercourse, the attitudes of both husband and casual lover will be the same.⁶ Even if this is the case - what happens at the moment of self-absorbed climax is the same in marriage and in a casual affair - I can see no grounds for thinking that a loving spouse is less likely than a casual lover to remain sensitive to his partner's needs, even at the peak of sexual excitement. On the contrary, as Kant (1930:162) points out:

If one devotes one's person to another, one devotes not only sex, but the whole person...the two persons become a unity of will. Thus sexuality leads to a union of human beings.

Kant suggests that ideally in the married relationship, two persons can surrender their entire person to each other. In this way, sexual intimacy becomes a mutually altruistic union and not one in which each person uses the other for their own benefit. (Kant's view may seem unduly optimistic but it is no more extreme than de Beauvoir's pessimism about the marital sexual relationship.)

Nonetheless the objection that I have overstated the kind of sexual activity experienced in most marriages might well be pressed. De Beauvoir insists that after a number of encounters between husband and wife, the sense of adventure and erotic excitement must fade. It is logically absurd to think that a married couple will provide each other with the same intense excitement for the rest of their lives. In support of this, we might note that there is considerable empirical evidence which shows that frequency in intercourse is highest amongst newly married couples and then drops consistently throughout the ensuing marriage;⁷ in short, as a matter of fact, the marital sexual relationship has a strong

tendency to decrease over time.

Another reason why it might be thought that I have overstated the case against the general dissatisfaction towards sexual activity experienced in marriage (that de Beauvoir says must occur) concerns her worry about the legal right to sexual intercourse in marriage. In the traditional marriage, many husbands appear to think that they have a right to regular sexual intercourse and that it is a duty of their wife to comply irrespective of her own wishes. De Beauvoir maintains that partly as a result of this legal right, the husband thinks that 'the woman's body is something he buys',⁸ he expects his wife's sexuality to be at his disposal, he expects an 'obedience to male domination'.⁹ If he regards her in this light, it seems very likely - as de Beauvoir suggests - that in their sexual relationship, the husband will be overbearing towards his wife. Clearly de Beauvoir thinks that this is morally unacceptable. But (as far as I can discover) she does not tell us why. Perhaps we can see what is wrong with it, if we consider two of the most severe forms of oppression in this context, harassment and rape. Until recent times the impression was given that since the wife's sexuality is thought to be at her husband's disposal, such acts were not only very likely to occur but that they are morally permissible.¹⁰ And, as we noted, many writers since de Beauvoir see this as a fundamental weakness of marriage.

Sexual harassment

In a marriage in which a sexual relationship is firmly established, there seems to be a thin line between acceptable sexual behaviour and harassing behaviour. What the husband (or wife) calls 'friendly behaviour', the wife (or husband) may find offensive. One obvious question that arises is: how exactly is the offending spouse supposed to know this?¹¹

Only the most prurient would claim that any touch

between them is a form of harassment. Clearly an important component for such behaviour counting as 'sexual harassment' is that the physical or verbal attention is unwanted. Harassment occurs in cases where despite being rejected, the man, say, continues with the advances or unwelcome conduct. But how is her husband supposed to know that his advances are unwelcome? Couldn't he always (sincerely) claim that he did not realize that his attentions were regarded in this way? Furthermore in a marital or other long-term sexual relationship, there are occasions in which initially unwelcome advances become welcome. His wife can become a willing partner in the sexual intimacy. So how is a husband to know when his sexual advances are not welcome? There are two problems that this question poses: the first concerns the recipient, the second concerns the perpetrator.

Consider first how we would answer this type of question in a quite different and much simpler case. Let us suppose a man is sitting in a dentist's waiting room, when he sees a woman holding her jaw and grimacing, and hears her groaning, etc. Although he cannot directly experience her mental state, it seems reasonable for him to conclude that she is in pain. For one important criterion for the ascription of a mental state to another person is the circumstances in which the ascription occurs. They are both at the dentist. A second condition concerns behaviour; our more obvious mental states are accompanied by typical forms of behaviour. In the example, he observes the woman holding her jaw, her grimaces, or other kinds of pain behaviour. Thirdly, the utterances we make play a significant role; a type of utterance is typically associated with such-and-such a mental state. In our example, he hears her groan or her making other noises we associate with pain. In other words, the circumstances, the behaviour, and the utterances, are criteria we normally use for the

application of an appropriate mental state to another person.¹²

Let us apply these criteria to sexual harassment. How does a husband know that his wife finds his sexual advances unwelcome? First of all, if the incident takes place when she is talking with a neighbour, or in the company of strangers, it seems reasonable to believe that the predicate '...is unwanted' applies because the circumstances are inappropriate. Secondly, there is her behaviour; she pushes him away. More obvious than this, there are her utterances; if she says 'please do not do that' or 'No', this too is clear evidence that the advance is unwanted. Just on the criteria above, I would have thought that a husband with a reasonable level of interpersonal sensitivity would pick up clues as to the mental state of his wife. She does not welcome his sexual advances.¹³

Let us turn to the second question: how does his wife know his intentions? How does she recognize the friendly touch on the shoulder from the same touch with sexual connotations? Can't he claim that he did not mean anything of a sexual nature by his action? Once again, it seems reasonable to suggest that circumstances, behaviour and utterances, are the criteria we use. Obviously if he has cornered his wife, he is touching her shoulder, and he is making a lewd comment about her physical appearance, his behaviour, his utterances and the circumstances, are the grounds for her assumption that he intends a sexual advance. (I need to emphasize that parallel arguments apply to a wife sexually harassing her husband; by the same criteria, a wife should realize that her husband does not want a sexual encounter and that she intends a sexual advance.)

Something needs to be said now about why we think that sexual harassment of this kind is morally wrong. De Beauvoir would argue that a person's sense of him or herself as a *pour-soi* - a self-determining agent - is

violated when he or she is subject to persistent unwelcome sexual attention.¹⁴ The act in question is not an expression of their own freely made choice (in such an important matter); they are not being allowed to make their own decision about how they will behave. But we need to ask: why exactly is this morally wrong?

I think that the primary wrong is that by his unwanted attentions (and let us for the time being stay with the husband's unwanted attention upon his wife) the husband is not showing respect for his wife as a person. If this is the case, among the many questions we need to ask is: firstly, if we say 'a husband morally ought to show respect to his wife' what exactly is he supposed to respect? Secondly, why morally should he show respect? Thirdly, why is him sexually harassing her evidence of his disrespect?

Sexual harassment as a form of disrespect for persons

I think the correct way to answer the questions above is along the lines suggested by Kant. In a nutshell the husband should respect his wife (and vice versa) because this is how he would want to be treated himself. Kant (1948:91) puts the matter in the following way:

Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.¹⁵

Kant claims that the rule above follows from the (purely) rational idea that 'I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law.'¹⁶ We should note that this is not intended to be a moral principle about which we may legitimately argue. It is put forward as a rational principle which Kant suggests is universally conceded. So we need to see, briefly, why it is thought to be a rational principle.

We may justify the principle - in roughly the way

Kant justified it - by arguing firstly that this is a form of the principle of consistency. For our purposes this means that if a husband considers his sexual conduct to be morally acceptable (right, obligatory) for whatever reason, to be consistent he must also think that any relevantly similar act is morally acceptable (right, obligatory) for the same reason. To put the point differently: whatever the husband considers to be a good reason for him acting in a particular way towards his spouse, he must be willing and able to accept it is a good reason for anyone else acting in the same way, in similar circumstances; including his wife so acting towards him in similar circumstances.

In addition to consistency, we need also to add something about impartiality; otherwise, merely by the condition of consistency, the errant husband might believe that any eccentric preference or idiosyncratic form of behaviour that he would find acceptable if done to him, is morally acceptable. The (fairly weak) version of the principle of impartiality we require is that for a judgement, action, or item of behaviour, to be regarded as morally acceptable, it must not depend merely upon idiosyncrasies or peculiarities of the person making it. So that the reasonableness of any practical judgement or action of the husband, for example, cannot depend merely upon the fact that he thinks it to be reasonable. It must be thought to be so from other points of view; particularly by the person on the receiving end of the action. Again while this applies to moral beliefs and actions, it is not intended as a moral requirement but rather as a requirement of rationality.

These two conditions - consistency and impartiality - taken together, seem to me to be the basis for a justification of why a husband should show respect to his wife (and vice versa) and apply especially to the question of why he morally ought not harass her. Speaking very generally, he should respect her because

this is how he would want to be treated in similar circumstances and, by the requirement of impartiality, even if *per impossibile* he would not mind her acts of disrespect towards him - which seems a very strange thing to suppose - his wife and most other people would want respect to be shown to them in the appropriate circumstances.

One of the many problems with the claim 'He should respect his wife because this is how he (and everyone else) would want to be treated' is that even if we were to succeed in establishing it as a rational requirement, it seems to be a very general one. Apart from a few artificial cases, the rule would seem to be pretty useless when it comes to the practical problem of deciding how the husband ought to behave, or why certain kinds of actions are *prima facie* evidence of gross disrespect. On the argument above, for instance, what exactly is he supposed to do to show respect to his wife? To answer this question, I will argue that there are certain beliefs, items of knowledge, abilities, that a husband will need if he is to effectively use the criteria above in his conduct with his wife.¹⁷ But they are not only the skills and abilities necessary if we are to show respect to another person, more to the point, when the conditions are absent, as they are in cases of sexual harassment, this shows clearly why the latter is a form of disrespect.

The kinds of beliefs, knowledge, abilities that we need for the practical application of the Kantian rule include, firstly, the husband's need to believe that the desires and interests of his spouse are of equal importance to his own, especially when he does something that affects her. This point is more obvious when the opposite is assumed. If he does not believe this (that his wife's and his own desires and interests are of equal importance) and at the same time, he would not readily accept that his desires or interests need not be taken

equally into account when she decides to do something which directly affects him, then he has double standards - he is inconsistent.

To overcome the case of the husband who genuinely would find his wife's disrespect to be acceptable, we said that if we are to regard our behaviour towards others as reasonable, we need at least to see it from other points of view as well as from our own. But to be able to see a given action from his wife's view as well as his own, involves more than merely imagining himself in her shoes but still with his own feelings, desires, beliefs, and attitudes. For the same event can make different people upset, hurt, troubled, pleased, thrilled, and so forth. So he will need to understand her feelings, emotional states and attitudes as well as his own. Once again, this point is more obvious when the opposite is assumed. If the husband has no idea about what sort of things pleased or displeased his wife, or what made her feel upset, furious, jealous, how could he say that he is putting himself in her shoes, or of seeing what the situation looks like from her point of view? However this is more difficult than it appears. In order to recognize what another person is feeling, we need to have an assortment of skills and knowledge. It involves, for instance, noticing her facial expressions or gestures, being aware of the circumstances when she usually has a particular emotional state, and so on. We shall see shortly that knowledge of this kind is required if he is going to respect her as a person, when behaving in ways which affect them both.

Another practical implication of the Kantian rule concerns the knowledge of the facts we need, if we are to respect each other. A husband could be trying to show respect to his wife in their sexual encounters, but he could ruin this, for instance, by his being unaware of certain biological facts concerning her anatomy, or the more usual expectations of a woman generally *vis-à-*

vis sexual relationships in marriage. To show respect, in other words, he needs to be adequately informed. Another related practical ability he needs is the ability to communicate his thoughts and feelings to his wife in an appropriate or sensitive manner. If he has trouble in communicating with his spouse, the husband's ability - as someone who intends to show respect - is reduced. Although he may respect her, this is to say, he could spoil things simply by boorishness or by an uncouth action, or lack of social graces. He needs, that is, to have *savoir-faire* in order to effectively show her respect.

One more item he will need is to have thought through what 'respecting her' requires in practical situations, like their intimate encounters. The husband needs, for instance, to have thought out possible ways of dealing with conflicts in sexual contexts before these situations occur. So that before such a situation occurs say, where his wife is unhappy about his action, the husband knows what type of behaviour (or action) which is in accordance with showing his wife respect. To show respect for others, this is to say, sometimes requires that one has thought about the different ways one could deal with a situation before it actually happens, especially those calling for a difficult response. He needs, lastly, to develop the ability to decisively act on the principle of 'showing respect'. What this means is that he needs to have reasons for behaving in a way that corresponds to the idea of showing respect, even when his passions might be aroused, or even if she is irksome, unresponsive or disrespectful towards him.

I am claiming that taken together, the knowledge, skills and abilities above are a positive practical element implied by the Kantian notion of respect for persons. The list of conditions could no doubt be extended. But the important point for us to notice is that the beliefs, skills, abilities adumbrated are

qualities one would expect to find in the conduct of a husband who is concerned to show respect for his wife.

Let us now see how the requirements apply to sexual harassment, where I maintain one or more of the conditions will be missing. In other words, we can see what is wrong with sexual harassment by considering the deficiencies in the character of the man who is prepared to act in that way. We might ask, for instance: does the man who sexually harasses his wife not think that she has wants and wishes in their sexual encounters? Or is it that he realizes that she has, but he thinks that these are unimportant when compared with his own? He does not need to consider them. If he does not believe that her wants and wishes are on an equal standing with his own, he has double standards and this is the basis of the disrespect he shows her. Or is it that his failure is due to his not understanding the emotional state of his wife when she is on the receiving end of this kind of abuse? He does not have the ability to 'read' her emotional state. Is he unable to imagine himself in her shoes in such a way to recognize that an action which he may regard as say, fun, can make his wife feel embarrassed, hurt, angry, or humiliated? If he really has no idea about what sort of things pleased or displeased her, what hurt or humiliated her, how could he possibly claim to be putting himself in her shoes? We need to be cautious here. He does not understand her point of view, we noted, if he tries to justify his act because 'he likes this kind of thing' and if he were in her shoes, he would not mind what he was doing. To know what emotional state she is experiencing - to be aware that his wife is frightened, embarrassed, or humiliated by his unwanted conduct - involves his being able to identify the characteristic symptoms which accompany such emotions or feelings. As we noted earlier, a person who has any sensitivity to the emotional states of other people will be aware, for instance, that an embarrassed

woman 'goes red' or fidgets, or is likely to tense her muscles and grimace. Many of the relevant emotional states are typically expressed by certain actions; the frightened woman cowers or flinches or tries to move away from the source of the threatening behaviour. And there are many typical circumstances or objects which give rise to certain types of emotion; a lascivious object often causes mortification; brutish conduct causes fear; an inappropriate context for a display of strong emotional feelings can cause the recipient great embarrassment. In most cases of harassment, however, I doubt that a husband lacks the ability to see the action from her point of view as well as from his own.

Perhaps there is an empirical fact of which the abusive husband is ignorant. Has he no clear idea of the kind of conduct that is expected in a male/female relationship? Is he unaware of the relevant social norms, the typical expectations of women in sexual encounters? Perhaps it is that he cannot communicate with his wife sexually in any other way than by harassing her. He acts in such a coarse manner due to a lack of social graces. Is it that he does not stop to think about what he is doing, but acts on impulse? In other words, has he not thought about the unacceptability of what he is doing in advance of situation? Or is it that he knows such behaviour is wrong but due to his selfish sexual desire, he lacks the resolution to act in the way he morally ought, i.e. in a way that respects her wishes? In other words, he has thought about such things and realizes that he ought not to do them but he does not have the ability to translate his beliefs into action. I hope the argument above fills in some of the gaps in the discussion when de Beauvoir and others object to sexual harassment in marriage.

It might be objected that the discussion should be more even-handed between the sexes. But, of course, it follows from my account that if a wife sexually harasses

her husband this shows - for just the same reasons - a disrespect for him as a person. To respect him, is to recognize that a man is not an object to be used; he has feelings and emotions that are just as important as the woman's. Different as these may be from hers, given the argument above, they (rationally) should nevertheless weigh equally with her. For a woman to sexually harass her husband, in other words, is to treat him as a means to her own ends - the gratification of her own desires; but this is not to treat him as she regards herself, as a self-determining agent in such contexts.

We need now to consider briefly another gross form of sexual oppression in marriage that often is the result of the belief that it is a wife's legal and moral duty to engage in sexual intercourse even though she does not want to do so; i.e. rape.

Rape in marriage

When a wife is not willing to have sexual intercourse, her husband may seize by force what is not offered willingly. His justification for this (if he should try and justify it) might well be that the law appears to state that on marrying, a wife gives permanent and irrevocable consent to any and all sexual approaches by her husband.¹⁸

An essential constituent of any form of rape is the fact that the woman is forced or coerced to have sexual intercourse; she has to submit to intercourse when she does not want this. The coercion in question is usually by brute force or threat of such force. However some writers claim that rape can occur when the form of coercion is psychological.¹⁹ This (psychological coercion) might be based upon his having the economic upperhand; the wife submits to intercourse under threat of some financial hardship that will result if she does not. Or the intimidation employed might be a form of social coercion: 'It is your duty as a wife.' However I

think there is a price to be paid if we adopt this proposal (that rape occurs where the coercion is psychological). For one reason, the class of cases to which 'rape' applies has become so attenuated that the unequivocal moral condemnation that applies to cases where we normally use it (for the use of physical force) loses some of its strength.

Secondly, sometimes we do want to make the contrast between psychological and physical coercion. While we would severely censure a husband who ought to be in no doubt that his sexual advances are unwanted yet by using psychological coercion he continues with them, usually the condemnation would not be of the same kind as someone who physically forced himself upon his wife. I think we would normally describe the former (morally abhorrent) case in terms of 'extreme harassment' or 'excessive, unfair pressure' and the latter as rape. I suspect that most cases in which women in marriage submit to intercourse when they do not want it, are the result of the former kind of pressure. However some cases of unwanted sexual intercourse in marriage are accompanied by brute physical force by the husband upon his wife. For our purpose it will suffice to refer to these as 'rape' - a sufficient condition for an act of rape on our account, is the fact that sexual access to the woman is gained by force or by threats of the use of physical force against her.

Rape by definition is not a sexually acceptable experience for a woman.²⁰ She experiences rape as a violent act - a violation of her body. No doubt she will feel helpless, frightened, tearful, to say nothing of her sense of humiliation and degradation at this act.²¹ For most women expect sexual intercourse to be accompanied by feelings of love, shared intimacy, or mutual pleasure and excitement, not a battleground for demonstrating male physical supremacy or as merely an outlet for his unbridled sexual cravings.

Implicit in any rape is the treatment of the woman as an object.²² It uses the woman, without her consent, to carry out an act of exceptional intimacy, not merely irrespective of her wishes but against her wishes.²³ In marriage, moreover, there is a further emotional component to be taken into account, namely, a violation of trust. Being forced to have intercourse is not an impersonal act for a woman, in the way that, say, being stabbed by a stranger is impersonal. In the marriage relationship, a woman's emotional and physical security depends importantly upon the trust she has of her husband. By raping his wife, he violates this trust.

Rape is not just a rare or bizarre occurrence in marriage.²⁴ There is evidence which suggests that it is a fairly common form of marital abuse.²⁵ It seems to be an integral part of so-called 'violent marriages' in which sexual violence occurs as just another aspect of a generally violent and abusive relationship.²⁶ Groth distinguishes between 'anger rape' and 'power rape' in such marriages.²⁷ The former, we are told, are committed to express hostility toward women, to punish them, to retaliate against them or to humiliate them; the latter are committed in order to assert male dominance or control. (This is not to say the two sets of motives do not overlap.²⁸) For whatever motive it is committed, there is not only a violent act in such cases, there is also a sexual component. The act which is usually kept for loving, secure relationships is turned into an impersonal brutish act.²⁹

If an act of sexual harassment is morally wrong because by his unwanted attentions the husband is not showing respect for his wife as a person, the disrespect he shows her is multiplied considerably in an act of rape. Following our Kantian argument above we may add briefly that the rapist husband rides roughshod over his wife's wants, feelings, her sense of autonomy and worth as a person, and over the trust that the relationship

depends upon. Treating her as a means to his own ends in this particularly intimate act, adds to her humiliation and sense of degradation. I will conclude this part of the discussion by observing the fact that where a husband behaves as if he has a right to sexually force his wife to have intercourse with him (or to harass her) this is most people's idea not merely of a bad sexual relationship but of a bad marriage.

There is a problem however that cannot be overlooked. One cannot simply assume that because rape and sexual harassment are wrong, there are no duties at all concerning sex in marriage.³⁰ Or to put the point more cautiously, even if it may not be exacted by force, the question of whether or not there is such a duty remains. We have noted that a loving wife may decide it is her duty to have sexual intercourse with her husband when her behaviour is an expression of her love, not a matter of her sexual feelings for him. This would fall prey to de Beauvoir's claim that sex in marriage is bad. Or it may be that she no longer loves her spouse yet she believes that she should - as a matter of duty - act as if she has sexual feelings for him. This would detach the appropriate emotions from the sex act; she would be feigning the emotions that she displays in her behaviour. This too would fall prey to de Beauvoir's claim. Good sex requires at least that the appropriate feelings and desires are present. Or a wife may decide she no longer wishes to engage in sexual intimacy, even though she believes that she is not doing her duty. After all, it was part of the undertaking she made when they married. In some cases like this, the couple can continue untroubled by the absence of sex in their relationship. However if the husband or wife is seriously upset by the prolonged absence of sex then - if as I have argued sexual intimacy is a necessary condition for a good marriage, and one of them cannot accept this - the appropriate thing to do is to end their marriage.

Let us turn now to an implication of de Beauvoir's claim that good sex must be a spontaneous act; namely, her view that good sex can only be achieved with a series of different sexual partners. This means that to experience good sex, a married partner will need to be unfaithful.

Infidelity

De Beauvoir condemns marriage as forcing us into compromising and hypocritical behaviour. This applies particularly to acts of infidelity. She (1988:566) contends:

What makes adultery degrading is the compromise of character made necessary by hypocrisy and caution...

Sexual activity outside of one's marriage requires a network of lies and cheating. However restricting one's sexual activities to the marriage is equally upsetting. It is absurd to think that a married couple will provide each other with sexual satisfaction for the rest of their lives. No two people, she suggests, are able to meet all of each other's sexual needs in perpetuity. In the first flush of love, the lovers will no doubt promise fidelity to each other for all time. But once the passion cools, the strength of the commitment they have to one another must subside, and temptations arise. And even if they remain committed to each other, it seems unreasonable to think that at some point in their marital relationship a normal adult will not have sexual feelings about some other person. De Beauvoir (1988:568) claims:

...adultery...can be of help in bearing [the] constraints [of marriage]

So why shouldn't one or both of a married couple have an extra-marital affair? The extra-marital relationship might even be a way of bolstering the marriage.³¹

Let us suppose that following de Beauvoir, an unfaithful husband says, 'In order to recapture the spontaneous thrill of the sex act, I need to have a

number of extra-marital affairs.' Following our earlier Kantian considerations we might point out that if he is to be consistent, he must be able to say that it ought to be equally reasonable for any married person, including his wife, to behave in the same way. He must be able to say: 'For the same reason everyone, including my wife, ought to have affairs.' But I doubt that this view could be consistently advocated.

First of all, it is unlikely that the adulterous husband would advocate this if his wife's affairs threatened his own interest, for example, by a diminution of her love for him, or if, say, his wife falls in love with her paramour and decides to go off with him. For one reason, given this course of action he might no longer have a wife and thereby he would not be in a position to have affairs of this kind. In which case, to preserve his own interest he would need to say 'I accept that a general policy of extra-marital affairs is a good thing but think that if by having an affair this conflicts with my interests, my wife should not have one.' The trouble is that this justification is put forward as a paradigm of rationality. He suggests that it is reasonable for any married person to have an affair and at the same time, he suggests that where this threatens his own interests, his wife ought to act to the contrary. But if he thinks that she ought not have an affair (if this conflicts with his interests) then presumably, he is suggesting that she should act in an irrational way. In other words, someone cannot consistently advocate extra-marital affairs as a general policy and at the same time resist the policy when this endangers his own self-interest. So the unfaithful spouse would need to keep his own counsel. And if this is the case then the proposal is inadequate as a moral justification of infidelity, for it cannot be consistently advocated.

The thrust of this argument might be denied. It might be countered that the unfaithful partner does not

have to go to the length of positively wanting his spouse to have an affair. All that he is required to do is to concede that if she does, this would be morally unobjectionable, (no matter that he may intensely dislike it).³² In other words, to justify his own adultery, he can consistently maintain that his wife ought to have extra-marital affairs without encouraging her to do so. We can strengthen the argument by drawing an analogy with a competitive game. I may see how by moving his knight, my chess opponent can take my queen. This is how he rationally ought to move. However believing that he ought to move his knight and take my queen, does not commit me to showing him the move, or to wanting him to make it. What I rationally ought to do is to sit quietly, keeping my own counsel, hoping that he does not move as he ought. A chess player, or for that matter a player of any competitive game, can recognize that her opponent ought to pursue his own interests, without trying to persuade them to do so, or by showing them what to do.

The analogy, however, appears to be false. In any game we grant our opponent the right to make appropriate moves without taking certain preventative actions ourselves, like distracting him and then changing the position of the pieces on the board (while the opponent is distracted). By refraining from such actions, of course, we may lose the game. If the analogy were sound, the unfaithful husband would be committed to refrain from doing certain preventive acts in order to advance his own interests, like encouraging his wife not to leave him for her lover, a course which may not be in her best interest. In other words, by whatever manner or means, he would be rational (it is in his best interests) to try to get her to refrain from doing what might be in her best interests, i.e. if her interests conflict with his, he should persuade her to behave irrationally. It is logically possible of course that their interests will

never conflict. However in everyday life, conflict of this sort happens all of the time.

What is the rationally self-interested husband going to say if his wife's and his own interests do conflict? Couldn't the unfaithful husband keep his own counsel? He can pretend to be faithful, for instance, while having sexual affairs on the side. If his adultery is discovered this could jeopardise his marriage.³³ If he wants to have an affair, why should he not simply do whatever is required to get his wife to believe that he is being faithful?³⁴

By engaging in such an affair, however, he will inevitably be deceiving his partner - and deception of this kind is generally thought to be morally wrong. Furthermore, most people who are involved in extra-marital relationships believe that deception like this is wrong; yet few of them would be honest about their infidelity, particularly to their spouses. Why is it wrong? The deception might involve his telling lies. The husband may mislead his wife into believing something that is untrue: 'I am working late at the office tonight' he may tell her, when really he is having an affair with his secretary. This seems to be wrong for at least two reasons: it could well undermine his wife's current or future projects and it is contrary to the openness and trust which is expected to accompany the marital relationship.

In defence of the husband, it might be argued that although telling lies is wrong, his telling the truth would be a greater wrong because of the bad consequences that could result - the innocent spouse would feel hurt and betrayed if she was made aware of her husband's infidelity.³⁵ Thus he may justify the lie by saying 'I didn't tell her because I didn't want to hurt her.' Some of us might agree that as a general rule some lies are morally justified for such reasons; the deception is justified as being the lesser of two evils. Thus a

benevolent lie, say, to one's host whose cooking is dreadful - 'The dinner is delicious' - may be preferable to hurting the host's feelings. But the case of marital infidelity is quite unlike this. The aggrieved spouse's feelings are not spared due to something she has done (badly) but something about which she is (very likely to be) quite innocent. Furthermore, she believes something that is untrue - that her husband is faithful to her - and so she may well act in a way which is quite different from how she is likely to behave if she had been told the truth.

Of course it might be the case that no specific lies have to be told for the faithful spouse to remain ignorant of the affair. If adultery is wrong because it usually involves lying then might we say that when no lies are involved, no immorality occurs? I think the answer is that there is, nonetheless, deception of a different kind. Even if everyone but those having the affair are ignorant of it, the deceit will probably result in his wife suffering in a small way by a decrease in his attentions to her, or by his not wishing to engage in sexual intimacy with her. If his liaison develops into a more regular affair, presumably he has to make sure that it is conducted well away from his wife and family, or their joint friends. This requires a considerable degree of deception, as well as planning and precision in its execution. (Incidentally, this seems to make the extra-marital affair something more than 'a spontaneous thrilling event'; perhaps the 'spontaneity' to which de Beauvoir refers only occurs at the start of the affair.)

This brings us to a different, more elusive kind of deception. We saw in Chapter Three how there is an important connection between sexual intimacy and love. It is generally thought that one of the main ways that we demonstrate our love for another person is by having sexual intercourse with them. Since in western culture

there is this correlation (between sexual intimacy and love), the person with whom the unfaithful spouse is having an affair (his 'mistress') may be deceived into thinking that he has deep feelings for her, and perhaps that their relationship will become a permanent one. On the other hand, if the unfaithful spouse does have such feelings for his mistress but not for his wife, then the latter will be deceived if she assumes that he has these feelings for her. Either way, someone is deceived!

It might be countered that an unfaithful spouse can have one or two relationships outside of the marriage without this affecting the quality of his feelings for his wife. We have established that we can sexually desire more than one person at a time (see p.27). Thus the unfaithful spouse does not have to deceive either his spouse or his mistress about his sexual feelings - he can desire them both. To put the point differently: as we have asked before, why shouldn't sex be treated like any other activity? It is possible to want to have sex with someone you do not even like very much. Why should we consider it moral to, say, talk or play tennis with someone to whom we are not married but immoral to have sex with them? What is so different about sex that it requires special rules? Alternatively, it might be that sex is an expression of love only with his spouse and not with his mistress.

Against this view it could be insisted acts of infidelity are *prima facie* immoral for quite different reasons. In the first place, they entail one or other of the spouses breaking the marital vow they made - the promise of sexual exclusivity. It is a binding promise they wittingly made to one another; the expectation is that both of them will always abide by that promise. In virtue of this, a mutual trust builds between them, based on the belief that each is keeping the vow. If one or other of them then breaks it, it usually results in a deep hurt for the innocent partner; more so than other

promises that one or other may make and then break. Added to this is the fact that keeping promises of this kind is a matter of self-fidelity. Even if it does not harm any other person, it harms oneself. We normally feel a sense of guilt or unworthiness when we fail to keep an important promise of this sort. Keeping one's vows is a matter of personal integrity.³⁶

In addition to the above, there is the *prima facie* wrong due to the hurt caused to the innocent spouse. Because of the correlation between sexual intimacy and love, (no matter if he says he loves her as much as before) the aggrieved spouse usually regards the breaking of the promise as a sign of indifference, a lack of love and affection by the unfaithful spouse. When they married they publicly acknowledged each other as the unique individual with whom they stood in a special loving relationship. By her mate committing an act of infidelity, she may see this as evidence that her spouse no longer views her in this way or that he no longer regards their relationship as unique. In other words, the faithful spouse might be hurt because she regards her husband's infidelity as a sign that he has grown indifferent to her or that the affection she feels for him is not reciprocated in such a complete way as her love for him.

Further as we noted, breaking this promise usually involves a web of deception, lying, and the infliction of other kinds of hurt on the faithful partner. This suggests that the unfaithful partner does not take the feelings of his spouse sufficiently into account. Or the hurt experienced might be simply a matter of resentment, due to the fact she has kept her side of the bargain. The innocent partner may have been tempted to have an affair but she determined to keep her promise (of fidelity) out of duty or love for her spouse. She might think (quite reasonably) that there is an injustice in having refrained from such behaviour herself only to find

out that the restraint was not reciprocal. Lastly, the admixture of hurt feelings she experiences may include also uncertainty or worry. The illicit affair has placed the faithful spouse in a sexually competitive situation with another woman. Her errant husband has formed a liaison with someone else who has the potential to replace her altogether and who is likely to have already done so sexually. The hurt she feels might be coupled with her anxiety that her husband might leave her.

A further reason why the innocent party may be hurt is that if and when it is discovered, infidelity usually has a harmful effect on the couple's marriage. It destabilises most marriages.³⁷ However even if we were able to show it destabilises all marriages it is not clear that this alone entails that infidelity is immoral. By a parallel argument, if it were to be shown that the financial independence of women destabilises marriage, we would not seriously countenance the claim that it is immoral for women to work (in order to be financially independent). This point can be seen in another way. We noted earlier that when we choose to marry we usually do so in the strong hope that our partner will be our close friend. Presumably we would all agree that each of the couple also can have other close friends. Yet a close friend could be equally threatening to a marriage. It might be that in such a friendship there is, say, a developing sense of joint identity; this feature can occur in a relationship without there being a sexual component. But if this should occur, such an emotional interdependence could be more threatening to the marriage than a passing sexual interlude. Are we to say that it is wrong for a married person to have other close friends just in case this threatens their marriage? Or is it not more reasonable to argue that the close friendship we seek in marriage needs to be seen in terms of having the primary role, but not an exclusive one?

In keeping with de Beauvoir's views of sexual

permissiveness, we might try to infer from this that sexual fidelity, like closeness in friendship in marriage, could be understood in terms of the relationship's primacy, rather than its exclusivity. In other words, if we relate the spirit of her proposal to marriage, the promise 'to forsake all others' could be interpreted to mean only that each spouse has the primary right to sexual intercourse with the other. In the envisaged relationship there should be no prohibition on extra-marital relationships as long as they do not threaten the primary relationship. The former could be marked by a fairly low level of commitment and would be expected to be transitory. As long as one loves, cherishes and comforts one's spouse, one is being faithful to the marriage vow. In response to the above, however, it might be countered that it is difficult to see how such an affair would not threaten the marriage or impinge upon the best interests of the faithful partner. In the traditional marriage an extra-marital relationship usually deprives the faithful spouse emotionally, sexually, financially, and so on.

But all of the above arguments are predicated on the assumption that the non-adulterous partner will be hurt. What if she does not suffer at all? Let us suppose that the husband is put under considerable sexual pressure by trying to keep the vow, so much so that his wife releases him from it. She tells him: 'Don't worry. Forget about the wedding vow. Have an affair.' Although their wedding vows involved the pledge of fidelity, husbands and wives are free, surely, to release each other from this vow, just as we are free to release each other from any other promise. Or the couple might agree at some stage after they have married, that the vows they made of exclusivity are no longer binding on them; or they might decide to have the phrase 'to forsake all others' deleted from their wedding vows. If they agree that one or both partners would be happier if they could have extra-

marital affairs then - provided they do not keep their marriage a secret from their new sexual partners, who may not wish to have affairs with a married person - why should it be morally wrong for them to do so? If in the adulterous act neither of them is looking for any more than a satisfying sexual experience, and if neither holds back any important information to their new sex partner and if neither resorts to any coercion, deceit, or breaks any promise, then why is the extra-marital affair morally wrong?

It could be added that in these circumstances the decision to have an affair is a private matter - it has nothing to do with anyone but the consenting parties. To paraphrase Mill (1975:94) they should be free from the constraints of moral censure (or laws) with respect to such actions, where these do not harm others. Mill supports this claim by recognizing that each person is the best judge of his or her own interests in this regard. So long as their behaviour does not harm others, just because traditionally it has been regarded as wrong to behave in this way, this is not a compelling reason for thinking that in the circumstances outlined, they morally ought not nowadays.

One problem to the proposal above is that it needs to be stressed that infidelity is seldom a private matter. There are usually other family members affected by such a decision (particularly if the extra-marital affair is with another married person). What other people think about a couple's extra-marital sexual conduct usually does matter; if their interests are harmed by it, it certainly matters to them. For instance, the couple may have dependents that rely on them. And Mill too admits to having reservations when he (1975:100) observes:

If, for example, a man...having undertaken the moral responsibility of a family, becomes from the same cause incapable of supporting them or educating them, he is deservedly reprobated, and might be justly punished...

So it seems that certain roles or responsibilities carry with them other-regarding responsibilities.

This brings me to a last point that needs to be considered. If extra-marital sex is freely available and without moral stigma, if sexual variety and adventure are prized at least as much as monogamy - or if commitment and love are no longer the usual accompaniments of sex - then no doubt de Beauvoir's hopes will be met and marital ties inevitably weaken. For once marital fidelity goes, an important bond between a husband and wife is lost. And even if some kind of bond remains, how can their relationship stand up to the constant temptations the couple will face, or the constant jealousies or insecurities they will experience? However a couple might think that all of this would be a risk worth running.

But what would the situation be like if every married couple were to commit acts of adultery, which is presumably what is being advocated? Let us suppose, for instance, that there was an 'epidemic' of infidelity throughout British society. The stability of the institution of marriage would be threatened (see pp.66-67). Now if something threatens the stability of a particular marriage this may not be a reason to pronounce the thing to be morally undesirable or wrong. However if adultery became the general practice - if it were generally thought to be acceptable - not only would the marital relationship need to be very different from the traditional one that we know, but society itself would need to change. Seen from this light, if adultery concerned only the individuals involved in a particular sex act, then we might treat sex as a private matter. But if we advocate infidelity as the general practice - it is not.

I want to conclude this part of the discussion by saying something more about the advantages of the value of sexual exclusivity which should not be overlooked.

Firstly, in a good marriage, sexual intercourse is a mutual intersubjective experience, involving the couple in a reciprocal generosity in their bodily actions, their emotions, and in the consideration they show towards each other. Secondly, as a result of the vow of sexual exclusivity, the couple are forced into providing an important source of pleasure for each other which they have agreed will be unavailable to them elsewhere. If sexual intimacy is limited to marriage, then the love that is expressed in the sexual act between the spouses remains limited to each other. This is likely to strengthen the bonds between them. A third reason why the vow of fidelity is helpful to marriage is that, as we saw, it keeps the partners together through hard times. As Midgley (1979:303) says:

We want deep and lasting relationships. And because these are often difficult, we 'bind ourselves'...to go through with whatever we have started...

Because of the importance of the promise to be faithful, even in difficult patches in their relationship, where each partner is determined to behave in conformity with it, their mutual fidelity may serve to strengthen the bond between them. Regarded in this way, sexual fidelity provides a cornerstone for 'a good marriage'.

Conclusion

We began this chapter by questioning de Beauvoir's claim that good sex must be a 'spontaneous and thrilling urge'. We then explored the implications of the legal entitlement to sex in marriage, i.e. harassment and rape. Finally we examined a case that could be made for infidelity. It was argued that in a good marriage, the sex act is a means by which the couple confirm that they have special feelings only for one another; feelings of friendship, intimacy, the sharing of a joint identity, love, and the like. To put the point in a different way: sex with love means something more than mere pleasure.

In a good marriage, a husband and wife will provide each other with sexual satisfaction for the rest of their lives. But what exactly is 'a good marriage'? It is to this question that we now turn.

Chapter Eight

The idea of a good marriage

At first blush, there seems to be a contradiction in some of the fundamental things which it is claimed that human beings need. As part of our nature we need to form a long-term pair bond not only to satisfy our natural drive to transmit our genes but to meet our need for a loving relationship with a close friend and soulmate. We believe further that we can best satisfy these different needs by the kind of commitment to be found in a legal relationship like marriage. At the same time, however, we naturally desire autonomy, transcendence and a good sexual relationship. We have discussed the claim of de Beauvoir and many others that these latter important desiderata cannot be met within marriage. However I have argued that there is no contradiction - although there may be a tension - between the needs for a long-term pair bond, soulmate, etc., within the framework of a good marriage and those of autonomy, transcendence and good sex. I will begin this chapter by recapping these results.

But I will argue also that a good marriage requires something more. The relationship should make a difference to the lives that both of the partners lead, the way they understand and organize their everyday concerns. This is not merely a matter of them both freeing themselves from other ties that would prevent them from devoting their time and energy to the marriage, or of renouncing sex with others. It requires a transformation of many other aspects of their lives. I will go on to argue that provided this and all of the other conditions are met, 'getting married' and 'remaining married' are perfectly rational and moral choices for a person to make. However I will also point out that on my account of the matter many people do not have a good marriage. For some, their marriage will be good enough all-things-considered. But for many others,

their marriage is bad and the rational thing for them to do is to discontinue with it.

The idea of a good marriage

I argued earlier that normally when a couple get married, it is thought that they have done something that is good and worthwhile and it is generally believed that as a result of it, their lives should be changed for the better. Similarly we think that those who have a long and happy marriage have something really worth having. We have also seen some of the necessary conditions which might be cited to justify the worthwhile nature of a good marriage; the kind of conditions that we hope our marriage will satisfy when we decide to marry. In Chapter Three I suggested that for a marriage to be good, the couple must love each other; they must have strong affectional bonds, where by this we mean they must regard each other as best friends, uniquely valuable individuals with whom they are open, intimate and supporting and with whom they want to share important segments of their lives. To secure these ends, they will want to make a commitment to each other and to demonstrate their commitment publicly in legally binding vows which they make when marrying.

We have seen that these conditions are not sufficient to determine whether a marriage is good or not, since there are other basic conditions that need to be met if a person's life is to be thought to be satisfactory - whether or not they are married - and they are conditions which have important ramifications for our views on marriage. One such condition is autonomy: a person - whether or not he or she is married - needs to make his or her own decisions and feel responsible for the decisions they make especially in the important areas of their lives. They must be able to decide for themselves among alternative lifestyles, policies, beliefs, actions. Thus a woman must make her own decisions concerning the career she follows, the creative projects she undertakes, her political

allegiances or religious viewpoint, and whether or not to satisfy her very many more mundane preferences. A corollary of this is she is not a fully responsible human being (*pour-soi*) unless she is self-determining.

We then discussed de Beauvoir's contention that an irremediable defect of marriage is that married women forfeit their autonomy on most important matters in their life. This will happen (power relationships between persons being what they are) when their husband assumes the role of head of the house. For in this role, he can override his wife's choices or interests. However I suggested that if a woman cannot be self-determining due to her husband's dominating her, this is a strong reason for thinking that their marriage is not a good one. By a parallel argument, if she dominates him, we would regard this also as a serious defect in their relationship. More importantly, I argued also that while as a matter of fact 'having a head of the household' is a contingent feature of many marriages, it is not a necessary one. In a democratically run relationship there is nothing in principle which prevents each of the partners retaining their own - and respecting the other's - autonomy. Furthermore in a good marriage one's commitment to one's spouse and children is so deep-rooted that when one devotes one's time and energy to them, one's overriding experience is not of sacrificing one's autonomy but of fulfilling it; there is unlikely to be a feeling of having sacrificed oneself if one chooses to commit oneself to this relationship.

We noted that another condition necessary for any life to be regarded as satisfactory (whether or not the individual is married) is that of transcendence or personal growth. I argued that the possibility of a married woman experiencing transcendence depends upon her not regarding herself exclusively (or mainly) in the role of housewife and mother (or a married man regarding himself exclusively as a househusband). If she thinks or behaves in this way,

this undermines her possibilities for transcendence. At the same time, I argued that while certain of the biologically based roles of a mother are inevitable, the usual domestic stereotypes we find in the traditional marriage go well beyond the few biologically or psychologically justified differences. They are unfair to women (*vis-à-vis* their personal growth) and have no place in a good marriage. Where housework and mothering have to be done, they ought to be the responsibility of both husband and wife alike. I suggested also that in a good marriage, the couple will help each other grow. In such a relationship, a husband will want to encourage his wife to realize her potential for becoming an artist, author, or whatever, and she will encourage him in his creative projects.

Good sexual experiences for both partners are also a necessary condition of a good marriage. Sexual intimacy in this context we associated with a deep affection and commitment to the other person; just as the love a married couple have for one another is not supposed to be of the kind they feel for any other persons, so the sexual intimacy they experience with each other is supposed to be something they could share with no one else. The level of affection especially differentiates this from merely casual, erotic sexual experiences. Concerning the alleged heightened sexual excitement associated with the latter, I suggested that a long-term marital sexual relationship need not mean that sex is lacklustre or boring; a married couple can work at making sure that their initial exciting sexual activity does not fade. Life-long fidelity is also an important factor in the idea of a good marriage. The couple's exclusive sex life is supposed to provide the glue for their marital relationship as well as forming a base for the complex familial relationships that grow around it. I argued that one harmful factor to the marital relationship is the damage done to it, if it is discovered that one's partner has been unfaithful. This is usually

very painful to the innocent spouse and in turn, it can be disruptive to the marriage. On the other hand, I argued that exclusive sex is likely to strengthen a marriage by restricting yet providing an outlet for each of the partner's sexual desire.

Let us grant that I have established that a sense of autonomy, growth and agreeable sex for both partners are necessary conditions for a good marriage. I mentioned earlier (p.106) that we need to say something more at this point about the idea of commitment. In a good marriage both partners will want to secure their relationship, fully understanding what this commitment involves. However I want to argue now that a further necessary condition of 'a good marriage' is that the commitment marriage requires demands a transformation in the outlook of the couple involved.

We need to be transformed

It is not enough that married persons possess the sorts of attitudes and engage in the sorts of activities that I have outlined so far, their outlook is expected to be transformed by the fact that they are married. The necessary conditions outlined above are expected to transform their view so that each of them comes to see things from 'a married perspective'. By this I mean that they not only need to understand such conditions, the kind of understanding they have must be active in the sense that it informs and changes their everyday outlook and their everyday way of going-on. In particular, it must change the way each relates to other people. Let me make the point in a different way. An important difference between a close friendship (even if this is with someone with whom one cohabits) and marriage is that in the latter case, our outlook is supposed to change from, so to speak, that of a single person to that of 'a couple'. This new viewpoint is supposed to make a difference to our lives and the way in which we lead them. Many of our everyday actions and other

relationships are supposed to conform with this changed perspective.

The expected transformation is due to a number of reasons. It is due, firstly, to the kind of commitments we give in marriage. When we marry, we noted, we publicly commit ourselves to an exclusive, permanent and legally binding relationship with our partner. This kind of commitment is one way in which our relationship to our spouse is different to others that we might have with friends. Although friends may have an exclusive and permanent bond, this is not a publicly declared legal bond. I argued earlier that if public promises of this sort were made between non-married friends, I think we would take it as a sign that the friends lacked confidence in the permanence of their friendship. We can see the general point in another way. In our earlier discussion of 'merging' I argued that lovers typically want important segments of their lives to be shared and as a result they hope to develop a shared identity. To 'transform their outlook' in the required way entails that both of them endorse this shared identity through the institution of marriage (in a way that merely merging does not).

A second related reason for the expected transformation is due to the nature of the relationship itself. Marriage (itself) is an instrument in the development of this outlook; the act of getting married and the fact that one has the status of 'a married person' is expected to transform each of the couple's outlook.¹ This is not surprising when we realize that when we marry, we publicly resolve to want to be with one another, to unburden intimacies to each other, to be willing to reciprocate services, to show a high level of care and concern, to recognize and respect their worth as a person, and so on. But there is more to the matter than this. We are expected to take on the perspective that comes from being on the inside of this institution. And a person does not do this - or understand what this involves - unless

they care about the institution, or at least they care about their own particular instance of it, i.e. their own marriage. The continuance and flourishing of their own relationship is expected to matter to them. In other words, marriage is instrumental in the change of outlook due to the desire we have for our own marriage to be successful. This in turn requires that our behaviour and outlook is transformed in the appropriate ways.

A third way marriage is supposed to transform one's outlook is due to the sense of unity, or overall shape, that it should give to the lives of each partner. It is a fact of human nature, Midgley (1979:303) claims (I think correctly) that we need

...a continuous central life that lasts through genuine, but passing, changes of mood...

If Midgley is correct, this need for unity can be found (to an important extent) in one's relationship with one's spouse. If it gives a unity or shape to one's life, it is not surprising that a transformed outlook results from it. This claim might be supported also by observing how devastated people can be when their spouse dies or unexpectedly leaves them. When this happens, they typically complain that their life has become meaningless, or that it lacks any point, or that the point of doing any one thing rather than another at this juncture in their lives, seems to have been lost.

In response to the above, let us suppose somebody says: 'When my spouse died I did not feel devastated by this. I carried on with my life in much the same way as before.' I must emphasize that the relevant sense of unity applies to a good marriage (i.e. a relationship with someone whom one desires to be with, with whom one shares intimacies, etc.). Bearing this in mind, to say 'she was not devastated' does seem logically odd; for it suggests that someone she really cared about, she did not really care about! Of course, she might add 'My suffering was short-lived. I am now remarried. On balance, my life was

not really devastated.' However the fact that she is remarried does not rebut the claim that her former marriage gave a unity to her life; if anything it strengthens this claim.

A fourth reason why a transformation is expected is due to the change marriage brings to one's sense of one's own identity. As Bradley (1927:172) writes, the concept of 'my self'

...the object of (one's) self-consciousness, is penetrated, infected, characterized by the existence of others.

To understand who one is as an individual, one needs to understand the relationships in which one stands to other people; the role one occupies within a family (as well as in one's work, or in one's community) and the commitments that this relationship carries with it. If this is correct, my husband, my children and the rest of my family, contribute in varying degrees to my sense of who I am. My marriage commitments are (and are expected to be) an important component in my sense of my own identity. Through our marriage relationships we are expected, at least partly, to define ourselves. However this is not merely an empirical point but also a conceptual one. I am my husband's wife, my children's mother, his parent's daughter-in-law, and so on. I stand in a special relationship to these particular persons. And the nature of my relationships with them is the reason for them weighing importantly in my sense of who I am. Once again, it is not surprising that a transformed outlook - of one's sense of who one is - normally results from being married.

A fifth aspect of the expected transformation concerns the change in moral outlook. The justification of many of our moral beliefs depends upon individuals being looked upon not as asocial beings but as persons having real ties that in fact bind them in relationships with others. We will find, this is to say, that some of our moral beliefs and many of our value-attitudes can be justified only by reference to the fact that we are married. Let me give

just one example. A wife's unshaken loyalty for her husband who has behaved badly may not be a response to any merit of the husband (he may have none), or to any of his qualities (he may be loathsome). 'He is my husband after all' might be said to explain to others a moral stand that might otherwise seem wholly unintelligible. This does not state the ground for her loyalty so much as indicate that it is otherwise groundless (but not that it is irrational or mysterious); being married to him is her ultimate justification for her loyalty. We are generally not puzzled by the fact that a wife can be loyal to her husband in a groundless way, because we assume that normal human beings are equipped by their marriage with the dispositions to react in just that way.² We think that spouses just should be loyal to one another. Thus if a husband repeats confidences that his wife has shared with him to other people, we would morally censure him since (on the face of things) he is lacking in loyalty; or if a wife allowed others to say unpleasant things about her husband without defending him, this too would indicate disloyalty and call for moral disapproval. We think also that each must be constant in their loyalty to each other. When the husband is in difficult circumstances we expect his wife to remain steadfast in their relationship, and vice versa. This is one of the many values that are expected to become part of a married person's ethical outlook.

It may be objected that we expect best friends to be loyal to each other in much the same ways. But the expectation in the case of married couples is based upon slightly different (firmer) ground. Such loyalty is underscored by the public commitment they made to one another when they made their wedding vows; the commitment is formally declared as well as tacitly expected. It is expected that their moral outlook will be transformed by the appropriate values and obligations towards each other within marriage.

The conditions above combine to yield another aspect

of the transformed outlook expected in marriage, namely an abiding commitment to this relationship through changing moods and circumstances. We noted how long-term relationships are difficult to maintain. Each partner may have a different set of expectations about how married people behave; they may have quite different desires about their future within the marriage. As a result, there may be major discrepancies in a couple's notion of how their marriage is going. One may be dissatisfied with it, or aspects of it, while the other is not. The point is: when two people decide to live together there is bound to be discord from time to time. At the same time, by choosing to marry, we choose a long and lasting relationship. Marriage is supposed to transform our outlook in such a way that in times of conflict one does not walk out on one's spouse. It acts as a sort of brake; it stops one leaving the other on a whim, or because of short-term misunderstandings or even over long-term unimportant differences. One sees oneself, so to speak, connected in a permanent way to the other.

I am claiming that a transformation is expected in many of the cognitive states and behaviour of a married person and that this is due to such things as the couple caring that their marriage flourishes, the new sense of unity and of identity that marriage is expected to give to their lives, to the type of moral commitments they undertake in marriage, and so on. But the difference in the way we are expected to look at things and how we are supposed to conduct our lives is due, most obviously, to the public pledge we make to have an exclusive relationship with our spouse. Non-married best friends do not publicly commit themselves in this way. If the latter relationships becomes strained or tedious, we do not think they need to go on with it and (usually) there is nothing legally to prevent this. And if the relationship does breakdown, the effects (legal or social) are not of the same consequence.

It might be objected that the required transformation

must result once again in a diminution of a married person's autonomy. How can they be autonomous if, due to marriage, they are required to transform their moral outlook and adopt the perspective of a married person? How can an autonomous agent devolve her responsibilities for choice to an institutional provider of moral principles? However, there is an ambiguity in the claim that an autonomous person cannot devolve her responsibilities for moral choice. It rules out, for instance, the unquestioning acceptance of the conventional marital code of behaviour. We would fault such a woman for being morally complaisant or of merely conforming to the marital mores. If one conforms with a general moral practice *qua* autonomous agent, this is because one sees the reasonableness of it and chooses to conform, not simply because it is 'the done thing'. This points to a sense in which an autonomous person can choose to follow a received code of behaviour or moral practice. She can (autonomously) choose to adopt some or all of the prevailing marital values yet remain autonomous to the extent that she is the judge of what she will do and think. She accepts the prevailing values because she understands them and accepts that we have them for good reasons. (And if and when she thinks that good reasons require her to change, she does just that.) Her choices include the decision to appropriately transform her outlook and behaviour from a single to a married woman. If she did not choose to do this in marriage, it could, as de Beauvoir argues, involve the surrender of herself as an autonomous agent.

I argued earlier that there is a related way in which this need not be regarded as sacrificing one's autonomy. Someone who is committed to this kind of life may, when making decisions, regard her marriage (and what is best for the relationship) as the best reason for her autonomous choices; she can want to choose in such a way that this commitment overrides her own different preferences and

interests. Moreover, it should be stressed that her commitment to her relationship may be such that when she decides in favour of her marriage, her overriding experience is not of sacrificing her autonomy but rather of fulfilling it.

Of course married men and women very often do sacrifice themselves in unfulfilling ways. They often act in opposition to their own autonomous inclinations and interests simply because they have been socialized into thinking that it is their marital duty to do so. We have seen, following de Beauvoir, how this subordinate and alienating outlook can come into being and we have found it can be an irrational response. But this sort of attitude, I have argued, is not present in a good marriage.

A good marriage requires that the couple have strong affectional supportive and cooperative relations, that they have a sense of their own autonomy, they grow within the marriage, etc., while at the same time both are transformed by their relationship. I have claimed also that the conditions are necessary. What grounds are there for claiming the latter? A plausible empirical basis for doing so - in the spirit of de Beauvoir's earlier claims - is that each individual (psychologically) needs such conditions to be met, in order to live with another person without experiencing debilitating mental conflicts. But this is a bare minimum. More importantly, someone who did not understand this (i.e. the above conditions to be necessary) would have failed to understand what 'a good marriage' involves. If such conditions are not understood as necessary then neither is the idea of a good marriage.

I am not claiming of course that when any of us do get married or remain married this is because our marriage meets the conditions in the way suggested. People are different and the differences between them makes them relate to one another in different ways, and lead quite different kinds of married lives. What I have tried to identify is a core of conditions that need to be met for a

marriage to be described as worthwhile; in order to be a good marriage some of these conditions - and a substantial set of them at that - need to be realized. Let me make this point in another way: in Chapter Two we noted, 'When a couple get married they think that they are doing something worthwhile'; to argue why (rationally) it is worthwhile, is to argue for a relationship of the kind we have discussed. But it does not follow from a good marriage being worthwhile, of course, that simply being married is; saying that a good marriage is thought to be worth having is not the same as saying marriage in general is.³

I have three further points to make. They concern certain limitations to the analysis above. Firstly, the notion of 'a good marriage' may still be somewhat vague. Clearly, no account that is given will have the force of an *a priori* demonstration. There are some general conditions - distinctive emotional and affective ties, distinctive attitudes and behaviour - which everyone who thinks about the relationship would accept as important and necessary. I am sure they are not the only features of a good marriage; however they are, I believe, some of the more important ones. Of course someone might say that they have a good marriage although one, some, or all of the conditions - which I have argued are necessary - are lacking. But I do not think that they could cogently argue for this.

It should be noted, secondly, that since a good marriage is, so to speak, an integrated whole of different feelings, attitudes, states, the conditions that I have identified are obviously connected and combined with each other. The way in which I have divided them up and categorized them is somewhat arbitrary. Since our idea of 'a good marriage' admits of degrees, other accounts of this notion might put a lot of weight on one condition and less on others, hence we should allow that the dividing line between those marriages which we regard as good and those

which do not, will be quite a vague one.

Thirdly, on my account, the standards for what constitutes a good marriage are demanding and given that this is so, most couples do not have a good marriage. A few might be fortunate and meet all of the conditions all of the time. But it seems likely that many more couples at different stages of their married lives, sometimes satisfy the conditions, sometimes do not; they move in and out (so to speak) of a good marriage. Sometimes over a period of time, a marriage will be good in one way but bad in another. No doubt couples survive well enough even where they are fully aware that something important in their relationship is missing. Some people are willing to continue with their marriage even when this means forgoing their career, even though sex is never agreeable, and so on. Perhaps one or both of them get along in the belief that their marriage is, if not good, good enough. But many marriages on my account are obviously a mistake. They are not satisfactory because the couple do not have the necessary affectional bonds, or any vestige of autonomy, transcendence or good sex. If the rational course of action is the best to follow, the couple ought not to remain married. I will now consider this implication in more detail.

A less than good marriage

We noted above that reasons of one kind can support the claim that a relationship is good - or good enough - and that reasons of another kind will lead us to conclude that it is not. For example, some people may have autonomy within their marriage but no affectional bonds. Thus their marriage could be based simply on pragmatic bonds they have with each other; for example, a shared home, a shared division of labour, shared finances, housekeeping, insurance or other economic concerns. As their marriage continues their pragmatic bonds (unlike affectional bonds) will almost certainly multiply. Santayana (1980:156)

captures the substance of this view when he suggests that in such a relationship

...man and wife are bound together by a common dwelling, common friends, common affection for children, and, what is of great importance, common financial interests.

Even when there is no love for each other, these bonds could (and do) often make for a lasting relationship. It seems a reasonably accurate description of many enduring marriages; the couple rub along happily even though they do not love one another.

It might be asked: without love between the two, what would be the point of their being married? The answer might be that they may choose this kind of marriage because they do not know how to survive on their own (see p.64). And even if both partners feel competent to deal with every domestic aspect of living alone, the prospect of dealing with them all may seem overwhelming. Alternatively, a man or a woman might opt for this kind of marriage simply if they regard the alternatives as less attractive. Such a marriage we are told (*ibid*):

...may give a fair promise of happiness since...
[such a marriage]...can produce the sympathies it requires.

Ex hypothesi in such a relationship the partners will not love each other. It is simply a contract in which each partner will gain important advantages. For such reasons, this kind of marriage may seem to be 'a good bet' if a couple are contented with a 'rubbing along' kind of relationship.

I suggested that a reason for sustaining such a marriage might include the rearing of children. A marriage of this kind, for example, might be entered into under the pressures of pregnancy. From time immemorial, pregnancy has played a role in tying some couples in a loveless marriage. And as we noted, in the past there were good reasons to support this approach to marriage where the latter was seen as an institution for the protection of

children. It established a legal obligation concerning the financial support of the children; it enabled the children to know (on paper at least) who their parents were.

However it could be maintained that irrespective of children, there are more advantages to both partners in having a marital relationship of this kind than in their remaining single. For such a marriage gives each of the partners residential and economic advantages as well as serving as a kind of guarantee that both will adhere to their mutual duties and financial responsibilities. It is perfectly rational to remain married in order to meet these goals. The choice need not have anything to do with love. On the other hand, while the hope may be that some or many of the conditions we have discussed will be met, the decision to marry (or remain married) may be based on less ambitious expectations than that of meeting all of our conditions.

For most of us, however, either of the above will be quite unappealing. A long-term marital relationship based upon *quid pro quo* kind of bookkeeping, in the first place would seem to be dull. It would lack the passionate sex and romantic colour of *eros*. Also the bookkeeping arrangement *ex hypothesi* would lack 'companionate love' which usually grows and becomes more satisfying as ordinary difficulties and duties are shared by the partners, or as each other's qualities of character become more apparent or appreciated. And it would lack the mutual valuing and wish to benefit each other's welfare. I have said their mutual love, in one or more of its forms, is the reason why most couples get married. If it begins to dim in the day-to-day stress of marital life then, for most of us, this is a good reason to think the relationship is failing and the couple need to do something about it. If it should cease altogether then many couples think that they should terminate their relationship.

Furthermore although nowadays we do not have many actual examples of individuals marrying for bookkeeping

reasons, there is a lot of empirical evidence to show that a couple in a married relationship which lacks love entirely have a less than happy married life.⁴ Clearly (lest the arguments below appear too tendentious) there are couples whose relationship is held together merely by pragmatic bonds. They can be loyal to their partner and they can regard the relationship as 'comfortable', despite their lack of mutual love. They might even claim that they consider their relationship to be a happy one. And there are no *a priori* reasons that I can give for thinking this must be incorrect. But it seems reasonable to maintain that in such cases they would not have **chosen** to marry for such reasons. It seems reasonable to suppose, this is to say, that they would have decided to marry because they loved each other and they desired - more than any other thing - that, once married, their love would bring them happiness. Or more cautiously, it is reasonable to suppose that a loving marriage would have originally figured very high on the list of things that they believed would result in their being happy within their marriage.

In less extreme cases, where merely pragmatic bonds hold a married couple together, the communication between them is perfunctory. Their marriage seems to be (for want of a better word) 'devitalised'. Often each finds support in relationships elsewhere; in their children, their job, friends, or more often, a lover. Usually each partner remembers a time when they had a good loving relationship but it has somehow soured and, as a result, often one or both of them may feel resentment or cheated by their marriage. This is no doubt the fate of a marriage based merely on residential or economic bonds.

In the most extreme cases, where love is lacking in a marriage, the couple are constantly quarrelling and bickering, there is no positive interaction between them - except perhaps for the sake of appearances - resentment and mistrust seem to be at the core of the relationship and only pragmatic considerations keep the husband and wife

together. Not all loveless marriages function like this, (as I have said) though many do. No doubt couples would be far happier if their marriage were to be based upon strong affectional bonds, (close friendship, soulmates) and the other conditions we have discussed.

This brings us to an important question that needs to be asked. I have argued that a good marriage requires that each of the partners enjoy a significant level of autonomy, they encourage and support each other's intellectual growth and creative development and that good sexual experience are possible for them both. If to have a good marriage we need to satisfy these and other such formidable conditions, why would anyone choose to get married?

Morality, rationality and marriage

Our lives are shaped by many forces over which we have little or no control. We did not choose and cannot modify our genetic make-up (our size, sex) and basic drives. Most of us seem to be naturally constituted to pair; we are genetically determined to form long-term heterosexual pair bonds.

We do not choose the place or time in which we are born; we are born and raised in a city or the countryside, in war or peace, boom or depression, without any say in the matter. We are born also into a society with practices, norms, traditions - for example, monogamous marriage - which are beyond our choosing. Monogamous marriage is the most common setting for the man-woman relationship in our society. It is the kind of relationship in which most of us were raised and which we enter into as adults. As a result, it plays an enormously important role in our lives.

Nevertheless I do not share the view that we are passive products of these genetic and environmental factors. Each of us is able to shape important sectors of our own lives; resisting this, embracing that, or choosing to pursue still other elements. We can choose, particularly, our sexual partners, whether to marry them or

not, to save or end a marriage, to remarry, to have children or not, and so on. It is within our power also to sustain the marital relationship or to neglect it; to grow in the relationship or to smother it with expectations and demands; to regard it as a kind of battleground of conflicting wills with our partner, or as an autonomous yet worthwhile joint venture. I have suggested also that if a good marriage is generally regarded as worthwhile, this is because it is thought to contribute significantly to the overall happiness of our lives.

However we saw de Beauvoir - and many others - claim that marriage does not and cannot lead to happiness but must bring grief. For in a traditional marriage a married woman's freedom is thwarted, it frustrates the development of her talents and intellectual growth, and her sexual needs. Rather than face their inevitable adversity and unhappiness in this relationship, simply as a matter of prudence women should reject marriage. Furthermore the institution - and those who participate in it - are immoral. Women as a class remain exploited because they lack the economic and political power necessary to escape their oppression and this, to a large extent, is due to their choosing to marry; as long as they choose, particularly, to be housewives and mothers, they will remain oppressed. The moral significance of marriage, we saw de Beauvoir claim, depends on our viewing it in this social dimension; this is where the putative immorality applies. No doubt it is possible for a few women to be autonomous and transcendent and so to avoid the oppressions of marriage. Nevertheless when they do get married, such women reinforce an institution in which most women (in whom autonomy and transcendence are not well-developed) are bound to be oppressed and unhappy. Seen in this light, marriage is an immoral institution and the choice to marry is immoral.

In contrast with the claims above I have identified some of the conditions that presumably we have in mind (if

our choice is rational) when we think that getting married or remaining married is worthwhile. Some of them rebut de Beauvoir's criticisms. A good marriage provides the framework for a couple who are best friends to be together, to share intimacies and to do things together, it allows them to care for, encourage, value and respect each other. Their relationship must include also the required commitment to their marriage and the relevant transformation to their outlook. As a result of the former, events and routines within the relationship may be found to be more rewarding; as a result of the latter, the couple's view of other things outside of their marriage may be illuminated. Perhaps it is some or all of these features that people have in mind when they claim that being in a good marriage is so worthwhile.

By suggesting that an objective basis for claims to worth might be found within the framework of a good marriage, I am not suggesting that no one will believe they lead a worthwhile life unless they are married and stretched in these ways. I have no doubt - given the genetic, social and other factors we have considered - that for some of us this is correct. But obviously, as we noted, there are many other things that are central in their lives, that different people regard as worthwhile. Similarly some married people regard particular activities which have priority in their relationship as being very worthwhile, like collecting antiques or giving tupperware parties, that others would regard as quite pointless and mundane. Nonetheless, for all of their differences, I am arguing that a couple need strong affectional bonds, to respect each other's autonomy and to grow and develop within their relationship, if they are to have a good marriage. Furthermore I have argued that being in such a marriage can and usually does bring a couple happiness.

One thing that seems odd with de Beauvoir's claims is the implication that most of us would choose to do something which we know will give rise to mainly

unhappiness in our lives. If we believed this, it would rob most of us of the major reason for getting married and of remaining married. Nonetheless people commonly choose to marry. And one reason they do so, I maintain, is because they believe it is possible that theirs will make a good marriage and (perhaps more than anything else) a good marriage will give them happiness. By the same token, those who claim to have led happy lives often say that this was due to their having a good marriage. In other words, a relevant fact of experience is that a shared life in a monogamous marriage - not a life self-enclosed for the sake of preserving one's autonomy or one's sense of transcendence - but a life that develops and extends outwards, with new interests in shared activities with one other person, where there is mutual value, recognition and support, is thought to be to that extent, richer and happier.

There are other ways in which we might show de Beauvoir's position to be false. Firstly, on the matter of whether or not they are genuinely happy, no one is better equipped than the person him or herself to know if he or she is happy. Discernment of this kind is part of every person's rational equipment. And the fact is that many married people claim that this relationship has brought them happiness.⁵ We might attempt to show our opponent, secondly, that marriage does offer many opportunities for happiness. To be desired and valued for one's own sake, to have someone wanting to spend their time in one's company, to be cared for and respected, etc., seems to provide *prima facie* sources for happiness. Another general reason can be found in the fact that on most views of marriage, we are thought to have a duty to promote the happiness of our partners; we think that we should behave in such a way as to promote their happiness. This would be an absurd injunction if marriage unavoidably resulted in unhappiness. However there is one other more interesting reason for equating a good marriage with happiness.

I suggested earlier that the conditions which have to be satisfied for us to be able to say that a marriage is good are the same conditions whose fuller satisfaction makes for a happy life. The satisfaction of them up to a certain level enables each of the partners to cope; for them to regard their marriage, if not as being good, as being 'good enough'. Yet it seems that the more our conditions are satisfied, the more likely they are to be happy. As I have said, as far as I can see there is no *a priori* reason why this is so. It could have been otherwise. However, it does seem to be a brute fact of human experience that a good marriage and happiness are directly linked. Most of us would claim that the richest enjoyments and satisfactions are to be found in a marital relationship that meets our conditions.

I have said that there are no *a priori* reasons why there should be a continuity between fulfilling the conditions of a good marriage and happiness. I have nonetheless provided a plausible sociobiological explanation of why this might be so which is worth my recapping. Marriages do not occur in a vacuum. Marital practices, styles, and the institution itself, changes over time. However they are part of a wider evolutionary history in which the happiness or pleasures that results from them, is an important motivation for the changes in question. As we noted earlier, human beings are keen to engage in activities and practices because of the pleasure to be obtained from doing so. A relationship that meets our sexual drives, our need for a soulmate, as well as nowadays our desire for autonomy and the full use of our creative capacities, etc., is more likely to be positively enjoyable than one that does not. It is not too surprising then that we (human beings) are developing the marital relationship in such a way that the two coincide.

There is one qualification that needs to be made. To be 'happy in their marriage' of course is not a property that describes a relationship but more accurately it refers

to the state-of-mind of one or both of the individuals concerned. Marriages may be good or bad but only individuals can be happy or unhappy, satisfied or dissatisfied with them. Once this is clear, it becomes obvious that in any marriage, the husband might be happy and the wife unhappy with it (or vice versa). If our conditions for a good marriage are met, this would be difficult for me to comprehend. However in a less than good marriage, the husband could be perfectly content, say, with working long hours each day and then coming home to a hot meal and to watch television for the rest of the evening whereas his wife might be bored by this and resentful at how little attention he gives her or how little effort he seems to invest in their relationship. Thus he may be happy enough with their marriage but she is not.

So we now have an answer to our original question: is marriage an institution in which a rational person might choose to participate? I have argued that it is rational to choose in favour of a certain state-of-affairs rather than others because we believe it is more likely to bring the chooser happiness than the alternatives. The fact that something is likely to make us happy is a good reason for a decision or choice of that thing. Similarly we often judge that certain activities within a relationship ought to be tried, like making a home, having children, because they are more likely to bring greater happiness than others. This is not to suggest that happiness is the only end in itself for our choices or judgements in this context. A person may choose to get married or to do things within marriage which are quite remote from this end. She may choose, for instance, to sacrifice what she believes is a particular route to her own happiness for the sake of her husband or children. Nevertheless we normally think that the happiness it brings, if not in the short run in the long run, is justification enough for engaging in an activity or a practice. Thus as a matter of practical

rationality 'if X believes that by getting married she will have a good marriage and thereby this will make her happy' or 'if having a good marriage (realizing the ideal) makes Y happy' these are good practical reasons for saying 'X ought to get married' and 'Y ought to remain married.' The point is: if a couple have reasons to believe that their marriage will be/is a good one and therefore they will have/have found happiness within it, it is rational for them to choose to marry and to remain married. Although this is not an invariable reason for choosing marriage, it is the reason why many of us believe that a good marriage is worth having and with this end in mind, we choose to marry and to remain married.

Let me say again that I am not claiming that 'a good marriage' is a necessary condition for happiness. It would be possible for a couple to meet all of the conditions we have discussed but still suffer from a dissatisfaction sufficiently grave for them not to be happy. Perhaps they are penniless, or crave for children they cannot have, or the misery might stem from ill health, or failure in work. What this shows is that while the conditions we have identified are necessary and important for a good marriage they are not sufficient conditions for being happy. This in turn suggests that 'a good marriage' is one thing and that being happy is another and that one cannot always have them both.

Clearly there are a great many gaps in the arguments above. Something could be said, for instance, about the connection between a good marriage and the general happiness. It might be maintained that, say, if having such a relationship makes the couple happy, then this is likely to make them happy in their dealings with other people; thus a good marriage might foster the general happiness. But to expand on this point will lead us too far away from the point with which I want to conclude this essay.

From the account given above, the idea of good

marriage appears formidable; and it is not any easier in practice. So I might be asked: 'When deciding whether or not to marry a particular person, can we be sure that our marriage to them will be a good one?' And 'Is it rational to marry on the grounds that marriage will bring happiness, if happiness is only one of the possible outcomes?'

In answer to the second question, I want to point out that perhaps in no other area of our lives are we so potently the creators of our own happiness. As I have argued, it is within our power to sustain or to neglect the relationship, to grow in it or to choke it by placing unreasonable demands on our partners, to regard it as a worthwhile venture or an ordeal. Admittedly a good marriage is the work of two. But since each of us chooses our partner in this matter, the results are also largely within our own control. Choosing well makes all the difference. And whether we choose well is not merely a matter of luck. It is partly a matter of how well-informed we are about ourselves and this other person, how well we understand our own and their needs and preferences, how accurately we gauge the reasons for and against marrying them. To a great extent, as we choose, so our married lives will unfold. So the brief answer to our second question is a qualified 'yes'. By our choices, together with hard work and good will on both sides, a couple can make their marriage a happy one.

Also this gives us a quick answer to the first question. We can take a lot of positive steps to make sure that our marriage is a good one. And then hard work and a good will on both sides can make just about any relationship work in the required ways; i.e. by making sure that strong affectional bonds remain alive, that sex is as good as possible, that communication between oneself and one's partner is intimate and supportive, that we respect each other's autonomy, that each of us is allowed to grow, and so on.

But it needs also to be noted that very many people do

not have a good marriage in terms of the conditions above. We are now in a position to provide a plausible explanation for the disenchantment with their marriage which too many people experience. One of the most unpalatable but best established facts about marital relationships is that affectional bonds have a strong tendency to decrease in vitality and warmth. After a period of time, for instance, the lives of the couple are usually quite complicated as a result of the relationship; children, career issues, financial problems may reduce the companionable activity, which in turn may reduce the satisfaction each partner feels in the relationship.⁷ The affectional bonds may decrease or may be lacking completely. There is no *a priori* reason why this should be so. But as a matter of fact this does happen and when this happens then not surprisingly it is often accompanied by a gradual disenchantment with the marriage.⁸

It might be asked: when this is so, if the necessary conditions we have discussed are lacking completely, should one get out of it for the sake of trying to get into another good marriage? I have argued also that marriage is an economic, social and residential relationship as well as loving one. A good reason for remaining in a marriage might be the mutual dependence that has grown between the two; or the reason might be based upon the mutual satisfaction with the domestic arrangements that has developed over the years. As long as they respect each other's autonomy and they each allow the other to develop their own talents, pursue their own interests, then on my argument this seems still to be a rational, albeit less attractive, reason for remaining married.

Finally, many marriages are not only no longer built upon an affectional bond, the couple find themselves caught in a vicious trap of quarrelling and bickering, contests of wills, resentment, mistrust, and sometimes of hatred. Their marriage does not bring one or either of them (or look like bringing them) happiness. Getting married does

not seem to them to have been a rational thing to do. Verbal abuse or violence at the hands of the other may be a major problem for one of them. Or one or other may suffer a complete lack of autonomy or growth within the relationship. If a couple are intensely unhappy with each other, if the woman (or man) regularly suffers physical abuse from their spouse, if their sense of autonomy is forfeit due to their domineering spouse, or if their personality is completely stunted by the relationship, although they may stay married - perhaps because no acceptable alternatives seem to be open to them - remaining married does not seem to be a rational thing to do. For they know that an alternative exists. This has some value. The idea that marriage can be good or worthwhile throws light on their situation for them. It shows them that remaining in a bad marriage is a choice which they are making.

Notes - Introduction

1. By marriages within 'western culture' I mean non-arranged marriages. It has been pointed out to me that my discussion 'would not make sense to anyone where arranged marriages were the norm.'
2. See, for instance, Evans (1995:49); Hochschild (1990:270-271).

Notes - Chapter One

1. See, for instance, Midgley (1979); Ruse (1985); Singer (1981).
2. See Wilson (1978:18-19).
3. See van der Berghe (1978:20).
4. See, for instance, Barash (1982); Boyd & Richardson (1985); Lumsden & Wilson (1981); Wilson (1975), (1978).
5. See also Midgley (1979:195).
6. See Barash (1982:151).
7. See Wilson (1978:34); Ridley (1994:9).
8. I owe this way of putting the point to E. Telfer.
9. See Barash (1982:146).
10. See Singer (1981:129).
11. See Midgley (1979:95); Trigg (1982:63).
12. See also Midgley (1979:286).
13. See Wilson (1978:139-140).
14. See Wilson (1975:554).
15. Wilson (1978:37-38).
16. This is thought to explain the universality of the taboo of incest; see Barash (1982:257); Wilson (1978:37).
17. See Barash (1982:274).
18. See Ridley (1994:13).
19. The term 'strategy' here refers 'to a blind unconscious behavior program'; see Dawkins (1978:162).
20. See Dawkins (1978:169-175).
21. Dawkins (1978:161).
22. See Mellen (1981:106-136).
23. See Hamburg (1978:378); Wilson (1978:84).

24. I owe this point to E. Telfer.
25. No doubt after child-bearing, the female will also have lost the qualities that attracted the male to her in the first place.
26. See Fromm (1985:9).
27. See *Chic* (July/August 1994:30-31).
28. See *Cosmopolitan* (March 1993:47).
29. See Ridley (1994:284).
30. See Barash (1982:239).
31. See Ridley (1994:229).
32. See Barash (1982:229); Wilson (1978:125).
33. See Ridley (1994:186).
34. For instance, the Hausa of Nigeria, the Temne of Sierra Leone; see Barash (1982:277).
35. See Wilson (1978:139).
36. See Ridley (1994:240).
37. As we shall see, the sociobiologist explains how it is reproductively useful that women, rather than men, have an urge to look after children.
38. Wilson (1978:76) tries to account for all forms of moral agency mechanistically, in terms of 'sympiotic feedback loops' in the brain.
39. See, for instance, Singer (1981:72-83).
40. See Broderick (1988:124).
41. See Broderick (1988:133-134).
42. See, for instance, Byrne et al (1971:157-165).
43. See also Wilson (1978:61).
44. We might note here that the studies of many psychoanalysts also confirm that a lack of contact between mother and infant causes problems in making successful adult love relationships; see, for instance, Fine (1985:218-220).
45. Harlow (1974:2) points out that these love systems are not discrete but overlap.

46. For more on this distinction, see Fromm (1985:49-50).
47. Jung (1986:33) writes: 'Sexuality is...purely animal and recognizes no psychological distinctions.'
48. See Brown (1987:77).
49. It is not just the pleasant side of life that intensifies, the dark side of our emotional life can also be heightened.
50. See Singer (1987:287) for philosophical support for this claim.
51. As Singer (1987:6) puts it: '...each lover discovers the hidden reality which is himself'.
52. Stendhal (1991:135) calls this process 'crystallization'.
53. Psychologists call endowing others with exaggerated character traits 'projection'; see Troupp (1994:10).
54. See Troupp (1994:10).
55. See Lewis (1977:62).
56. Lewis (1977:122).
57. See Lewis (1977:122).
58. See Lewis (1977:63).
59. I owe this way of putting the point to E. Telfer.
60. See Brown (1987:30).
61. I owe this way of putting the point to E. Telfer.
62. See, for instance, Kierkegaard (1940:49).

Chapter Two - Notes

1. See Fletcher (1988:27).
2. See Fletcher (1988:3).
3. See Fletcher (1988:3).
4. For an empirical discussion of the data, see, for example, Macfarlane (1986); Murdock (1949); Stone (1979); Westermack (1921).
5. See Midgley (1979:296).
6. See Oakshott (Benn & Peters 1959:312-313) on this point in political contexts.
7. See *Social Trends* (1993:27, Table 2.4).
8. See Fletcher (1973:41-43); Fletcher (1988:26-37, 102); Goldthorpe (1987:6); Lawton (1975:23).
9. See Abercrombie, Warde, et al (1994:294-295).
10. See Abercrombie, Warde, et al (1994:296).
11. It is estimated that two thirds of divorced people remarry; see Abercrombie, Warde et al (1994:297).
12. See Abercrombie, Warde, et al (1994:276); Souhami (1986:71).
13. See Haste (1994:226).
14. See Fletcher (1988:47-64).
15. See Ryle (1949:149-153).
16. See Abercrombie, Warde, et al (1994:297).
17. See Fletcher (1988:235) for a full account.
18. This provision is also part of Catholic canon law.
19. See Broderick (1988:173-174); Fine (1985:181); Fox (1967:54-76).
20. See Fletcher (1973:37).
21. See Fletcher (1988:235). Bigamy did not become a civil offence until 1603; see Macfarlane (1986:22); Stone (1979:519).
22. See Broderick (1988:174).

23. 'Bigamy', BBC Radio 4 programme, 12 January, 1995.
24. See also Aquinas' (Cahill 1985:113) and Hume's (1985:184-185) general objections to polygamy.
25. There is a wide range of legislation relating to marriage in the British Isles; e.g. *Family Provisions Act* (1966); *Matrimonial Homes Act* (1967); *Maintenance Orders Act* (1968); *Family Reform Act* (1969); *Divorce Reform Act* (1969); *Children and Young Persons Act* (1969); *Matrimonial and Family Proceeds Act* (1984); *Child Support Act* (1991).
26. See *Guardianship of Minors Act* (1976).
27. See Fletcher (1988:237).
28. See Ruth (1980:254).
29. There are numerous magazines which still exhort women to be a good homemaker.
30. The papal encyclical *Casti Connubii* (1930) expresses this traditional view; see Jones (1984:122).
31. See Haste (1994:287).
32. He maintains (pace Aristotle) that we ought to educate our children to develop virtuous dispositions, so that they can subject their desires to scrutiny and only desire what is reasonable.
33. See Fletcher (1973:243-244).
34. See the *Divorce Reform Act* (1969). Yet a sexual relationship between spouses is not regarded as a necessary condition within the marriage contract.
35. See Broderick (1988:184).
36. See Fletcher (1973:46).
37. This is just what the *Matrimonial and Family Proceeds Act* (1984); *Child Support Act* (1991) attempt to do.
38. Many men (it appears) need to know that it is their own offspring to whom they are bequeathing their wealth; see Engels (1986:106) on this point.
39. It is not surprising that Westermarck (1921:72) writes: '...among many peoples true married life does not begin...until a child is born or there are signs of pregnancy...'

40. See Broderick (1988:181).
41. See Broderick (1988:182).
42. See O'Neil & O'Neil (1974:54-67).
43. See Haste (1994:145-146).
44. See Fletcher (1988:37).
45. See Fletcher (1988:29).
46. See also Fletcher (1988:34).
47. See Rawls (1972:490-494); see also Fletcher (1973:42) on this point.
48. See Rawls (1972:Ch.6).
49. See Goldthorpe (1987:9-16); *Social Trends* (1994:141, Table 11.1). Seven out of ten first marriages in Britain involve a religious ceremony; see Porter (1991:61).
50. There are differences between the two of course.
51. I owe this point to E. Telfer.
52. A similar view is expressed in *An Anglican Prayer Book* (1989:458).

Notes - Chapter Three

1. This point was suggested to me by E. Telfer.
2. It has been pointed out to me that a good marriage can be based on, say, a mutual sexual attraction without the couple valuing each other, or having shared interests. But, of course a mutual sexual attraction implies a shared interest.
3. See Lewis (1977:7).
4. This claim is supported by many other psychological studies; see, for instance, Bowlby (1992:130); Wilson & Nias (1976:128).
5. It is, as B. Russell (1961:83) writes '...the chief means by which human beings escape from loneliness.'
6. For more on this point, see MacIntyre (1967:79-80).
7. See also Telfer (1971:227).
8. See Telfer (1971:226).
9. See Telfer (1971:225).
10. See Telfer (1971:222).
11. See Sartre (1966:476).
12. See Gilbert (1991:96).
13. There is a problem. The couple can never be certain that their friendship will last; and if it does end, that it will not end in acrimony, resentment and a desire to cause hurt; see Emerson (1991:225-226); Kant (1991:217).
14. See Fried (1970:142).
15. In Chapter One we discussed the elements of love which are often found in a pair bond, whereas in this chapter they are what are desirable in a pair bond whether or not they are found. I owe this way of putting the point to E. Telfer.
16. See Lewis (1977:117).
17. See Sartre (1966:491) who writes; '...love as a fundamental mode of being-for-others holds in its being-for-others the seed of its own destruction.'
18. In the traditional courtship process, the man was expected to push for ever greater levels of sexual

intimacy which the woman was expected to counter by telling him that he had not committed himself enough to deserve the level of intimacy requested; see Broderick (1988:70).

19. See Troupp (1994:56-57) for psychological support on this point.
20. See Midgley (1979:303).
21. See *An Anglican Prayer Book* (1989:463).
22. See *Newsweek* (20 January, 1997:40-46).
23. See Fletcher (1988:233).
24. When three out of four marriages end in divorce, it seems rationally odd to continue to make vows to the effect that nothing will cause us to break them.
25. See also Sidgwick (1907:239).
26. See Mendus (1984:247).
27. See Mendus (1984:246).
28. I owe this way of putting the point to E. Telfer.
29. This view would be opposed by someone who thought that these vows had a kind of sacredness which applied whether or not they made anyone happy. This would often be a religious view. I owe this point to E. Telfer.
30. See Broderick (1988:334).
31. See Telfer (1980:2).
32. To paraphrase G. Warnock's (1971:90-92) account of this point.
33. I owe this point to E. Telfer.
34. A *prima facie* good reason is not, however, like 'a *prima facie* case' - one that on further inspection, may be shown not to exist at all or that is inadequately grounded. 'A *prima facie* good reason' is perfectly well-grounded but it may be overridden or defeated by some weightier reason.

Notes - Chapter Four

1. *The Second Sex* (1988).
2. This may be why de Beauvoir treats 'woman' as if this is a single category. She does not take account of differences due to race, ethnicity, class, nationality, age, individual psychology, etc., or the fact that each woman might be thought to have multiple identities over time.
3. See, for instance, Daly (1978); Dworkin (1992); Firestone (1970); Friedan (1965); Greer (1971); Jagger (1983); Millett (1972); Mitchell (1973); Radcliffe Richards (1994); Rich (1977).
4. See Sartre (1966:60).
5. See Sartre (1966:583).
6. See Abercrombie, Warde, et al (1994:220 Figure 4.2) which shows that women are grossly underrepresented in management positions; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1995:21).
7. This helps to confirm the sociobiological claim that women naturally seek a mate who is best able to provide for her and to protect her. De Beauvoir (1988:451-453) argues that marriages are not generally based on love.
8. Sartre defines transcendence in terms of 'throwing forward'; the transcendent project 'hurls itself forward into time and space until it strikes home' (Moi 1994:130).
9. See de Beauvoir (1988:143).
10. See de Beauvoir (1988:711-712).
11. Another reason (that de Beauvoir does not mention) might be due to the fact that work takes up a large part of the lives of most adults.
12. Delphy (1992:90).
13. See also de Beauvoir (1988:445).
14. While de Beauvoir (1988:74) is critical of the Freudian tradition, she says that she accepts the importance of the innate sexual desire.
15. See Watkins, Rueda and Rodriguez (1992:134).
16. Moi (1994:166).

17. See Watkins, Rueda, Rodriguez (1992:135).
18. See also Firestone (1970:234); Greer (1971:233-234); Morgan (1970:xxxvii).
19. In a similar vein Dworkin (1992:121) claims '...no honest woman can live in marriage: no woman honest in her will to be free.'
20. See de Beauvoir (1988:28).
21. De Beauvoir follows Marx (1978:487) when he claims that bourgeois marriage is based 'on capital, on private gain'.
22. In many societies, his dominance over her also includes (de Beauvoir 1988:449) the surrender of her property to her husband and the suspension of her legal status.
23. Millett (1972:26).
24. See Greer (1971:125).
25. See also Friedan (1965:297) who writes: '...[women] must unequivocally say "no" to [this aspect of] the housewife image.'
26. See de Beauvoir (1988:451).
27. See Ruth (1980:255).
28. Added to this, de Beauvoir (1988:482) maintains that the man is usually older, which means that he has more life experience and status, and he more often than not has enjoyed a superior education.
29. Firestone thinks that this is part of a more general male conspiracy. She (1970:166) claims that this episode is nothing other than the 'tool of male power to keep women from knowing their condition'.
30. Millett (1972:38).
31. Firestone (1970:156); see also Morgan (1970:xxx).
32. Numerous childhood fairy tales like 'Cinderella' or films like 'Pretty Woman' reinforce the myth.
33. Firestone (1970:163); see also Greer (1971:19).
34. See de Beauvoir (1988:449-451).
35. Greer (1971:20).

36. Greer (1971:35); see also Bartky (1982:131-132); Jagger (1983:308); Moi (1994:192) and Firestone (1970:171) who thinks this is why women are 'forcing and mutilating their bodies with diets and beauty programs'.
37. Millett (1972:54).
38. See de Beauvoir (1988:660-661).
39. See de Beauvoir (1972:37).
40. According to Young this applies just as much today. She (1990:154) writes: 'Insofar as we [women] live out our existence in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns to us, we are physically inhibited, confined, positioned and objectified.'
41. de Beauvoir (1988:169).
42. de Beauvoir (1988:487).
43. Greer (1971:19).
44. de Beauvoir (1988:168).
45. See Abercrombie et al (1994:213 Table 4.1).
46. See Burgoyne (1990:637).
47. See Friedan (1965:300).
48. See Broderick (1988:5).
49. See Ruth (1980:256).
50. Evans (1995:49).
51. See Firestone (1970:156-157); Greer (1971:120).
52. See, for instance, Burgoyne (1990:642-643); Vogler & Pahl (1994:268-270).
53. See Vogler & Pahl (1994:275-277; 284).
54. See Vogler & Pahl (1994:285).
55. See Radcliffe Richards (1994:381-383).
56. See Hochschild (1990:270-271) for a full account.
57. Friedan (1965:297) makes this assumption. She writes that a woman '...does not have to choose between marriage and a career that was the mistaken choice of the feminine mystique.' She holds that women can

do both.

58. Added to this, Evans (1995:49) writes: '...if we think of the time it takes to "be a woman", and the propaganda on appropriate clothes for career women, "in the office", at leisure, at home...we begin to see a 'triple shift'.
59. See Hunt and Hunt (1982:499-518).
60. See Friedan (1983:93-94).
61. See Jagger (1983:264).
62. See, for instance, de Beauvoir (1965:61-62) where she informs us that she experienced the desire for dependence during her first two years with Sartre.
63. Moi (1994:219).
64. See Moi (1994:130).
65. See Sartre (1966:584).
66. de Beauvoir (1988:483).
67. See de Beauvoir (1988:391).
68. See also Friedan (1965:264).
69. As Greer (1971:278) writes, housework delivers 'no results: it simply has to be done again'.
70. Mitchell (1973:162).
71. See Mitchell (*ibid*).
72. This is underscored by the sociobiological thesis in which we were told that having children satisfies her most basic natural desire.
73. Jagger (1983:257).
74. Firestone (1970:65).
75. Greer (1971:234).
76. Jagger (1983:257); see also Millett (1972:109).
77. Firestone (1970:65).
78. de Beauvoir (1988:514).
79. Millett (1972:26).
80. de Beauvoir (1988:513).

81. Millett (1972:109).
82. See Oakley (1980:280).
83. See Ruth (1980:254).
84. Jackson et al (1993:182); see also Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1995:22).
85. See de Beauvoir (1988:596).
86. See Sartre (1966:300). A housewife and mother is in bad faith, firstly, by unquestioningly accepting her status within the marriage, she has accepted her subordinate position to her husband and children. Secondly, if a woman thinks of herself as 'a housewife; she underscores her facticity, she avoids having to face her future possibilities as a creative person. She has closed off the possibility of her being self-determining. Thirdly, such a woman is in bad faith because by assuming a social role - that of housewife/mother - and not questioning it, she fails to recognize that she is a freely choosing individual.
87. See Chesler (1978:271).
88. See, for example, Bernard (1973:17); Durkheim (1951:271); Green (1984:27); Whyte (1956:258-263).
89. This does not apply to third-world countries where most women have little or no control over their biological functions, and (despite what is believed to be the case in first-world countries) have no access to contraception.
90. See de Beauvoir (1988:416-418); Rich (1980:631-660).
91. Firestone (1970:255); see also Dworkin (1992:118-119).
92. See, for instance, Rich (1977:15).
93. de Beauvoir (1988:454).
94. See Watkins, Rueda, Rodriguez (1992:136-137).
95. Mitchell (1973:151); see also de Beauvoir (1988:450).
96. Dworkin (1992:127) calls this 'privatized male ownership'.
97. See Watkins, Rueda, Rodriguez (1992:135).
98. See de Beauvoir (1988:475-476).

99. See de Beauvoir (1988:515).
100. Bartlett (1994:450).
101. de Beauvoir (1988:444).
102. Firestone (1970:255).
103. de Beauvoir (*ibid*).
104. de Beauvoir (*ibid*).
105. Sartre (1957:29-30) makes a similar claim.
106. de Beauvoir (1988:29).

Notes - Chapter Five

1. This applies, if at all, to the two parent nuclear family. Nowadays 11% of families with dependent children are headed by women; see *Annual Abstract of Statistics* (1994:22-23).
2. See also Genesis (3:16-17); Corinthians 1 (14:34-40); Ephesians (5:22-23); Timothy 1 (2:11-12).
3. See Hannon (1967:53).
4. See, for instance, Corinthians 1 (7:3-4); Ephesians (5:21).
5. For instance, John Chrysostom (Keane 1988:8) maintained '...the female sex is weak and vain'; and Jerome (*ibid*) declared 'wretched woman, burdened with sins carried about by every wind of doctrine, always learning and never reaching knowledge of the truth'.
6. It has been suggested to me that God is good in general and because of this we have to trust Him on this matter. However the kind of discrimination that is expressed in passages like the above suggests that we should doubt His goodness in general. Evidence of His alleged goodness in general would be found in things like His fairness of treatment between the genders.
7. Montesquieu (1977:108) writes: 'It is contrary to reason and nature that women should reign in families...the state of their natural weakness does not permit them to have the pre-eminence...'
8. Schopenhauer (1951:62) writes: 'You need only to look at the way in which she is formed to see that a woman is not meant to undergo great labour...'
9. Comte (1974:504) claims that a fundamental principle of marriage is 'the natural subordination of the woman'.
10. See also Fichte (1970:419). He (1970:402) thinks that a wife naturally must surrender all of her rights to her husband, otherwise she is acting immorally.
11. Ridley (1994); Wilson (1978); see Midgley (1979:337) who claims that 'Gender nearly always makes a difference.'
12. For instance, Broderick (1988:24/25) claims that the male hormone suppresses the development of the left

hemisphere of the brain, which is the main centre for speech and language. As a result, little girls tend to be more fluent speakers and to have better verbal memories

13. See Broderick (1988:25): '...at most ages boys are larger than girls of their own age...and at every age they are more active physiologically...'
14. In contrast, Plato (to his credit) holds (*Republic*:209) 'natural abilities are similarly distributed in each sex.' Thus Socrates argues that girls ought to have the same nurture (education) as boys.
15. See Archer and Lloyd (1982:32-33); see also Maccoby & Jacklin (1974:65 Table 3.1)
16. Although one recent study showed that men are much more likely than women to interrupt and otherwise dominate conversation involving both sexes; see Kollock, Blumstein & Schwartz (1985:34-46).
17. See Archer and Lloyd (1982:37); see also Maccoby & Jacklin (1974:349-355) who summarize most of the research findings of (relevant) sex differences.
18. See Archer and Lloyd (1982:34); Maccoby & Jacklin (1974:351-352).
19. See Archer and Lloyd (1982:103-4); Maccoby & Jacklin (1974:352).
20. See Maccoby & Jacklin (1974:352-353).
21. This tendency is also reflected in the fact that throughout the world, almost all violent criminals in prisons are male; see Archer and Lloyd (1982:31); *Annual Abstract of Statistics* (1994:73,84).
22. See Goldberg (1974:103-114) for a full account of the biological basis of male domination.
23. See Morgan (1985:165).
24. See Maccoby & Jacklin (1974:243-247).
25. See Barash (1982:238).
26. See Archer & Lloyd (1982:140-142); Jagger (1983:110).
27. See Archer & Lloyd (1982:112-117); see also *BMA Family Health Encyclopedia* (1992:73-74); Maccoby & Jacklin (1974:245).

28. See Scanzoni (1972:69) who points out that since it is husbands who have access to these sources, those in the middle-class, have more power than working class husbands.
29. See Ferree (1990:870).
30. See Maccoby (1967:336).
31. She can put up a shelf or change a plug just as well as her brother; see *Social Trends* (1994:118).
32. See *Annual Abstract of Statistics* (1994:193).
33. Why isn't there a corresponding female dominance of professions requiring high verbal ability? For instance, though it is true that there are more women journalists than there are women engineers, female journalists are heavily outnumbered by males in Scotland; see *Scottish Abstract of Statistics* (1992:109-112).
34. See Radcliffe Richards (1986:191).
35. See Benn & Peters (1959:117-118).
36. If you are a woman you ought to be non-rational (intuitive), empty-headed and concerned with trivia (e.g. enjoy adorning yourself, be interested in clothes, make-up, hairstyles); if you are a man you ought to be rational, interested in ideas and concerned with the world; you ought to enjoy discussing politics, have a view of the world, etc.
37. Similarly, Aristotle, Rousseau, et al, switch from claims about 'what naturally is the case' to claims about 'what ought to be the case' in the belief presumably that the latter can be derived directly from the former.
38. See Hare (1963:51-56); Mackie (1977:64-73); Moore (1930:Ch.1).
39. For more on this view - a man really wants a wife who is dependent - see Mill (1975:444).
40. I suspect these claims reflect the preferences of people like Nietzsche (and incidentally Kierkegaard 1975:577) and their own limited relationships with women.
41. We need to make the distinction between 'female' and 'femininity'. The former refers to having the appropriate biological and physiological make-up; the latter traditionally refers to the associated attitude and behaviour, for instance, wearing

clothes that enhance the female figure, being gentle, non-aggressive, emotional.

42. Radcliffe Richards (1986:200).
43. See Radcliffe Richards (1986:205-206).
44. See Hare (1981:16-17).
45. See Aaker (1988:113).
46. See also Held (1986:270).
47. De Beauvoir neglects to mention the loss of freedom that men as well as women suffer in the traditional marriage.

Notes - Chapter Six

1. See Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1995:21).
2. Beliefs about the tasks in question change somewhat in different class settings. For instance, in working-class settings, the husband ought to go out to work to earn the wage with which to support his family; whereas in middle-class households the emphasis is likely to be put on his career. In both cases, whether or not she works, the wife ought to run the house; see Broderick (1988:190-193).
3. As a result, the average housewife with young children works a 77 hour week; see Souhami (1986:89).
4. See Fletcher (1988:Table 37).
5. In 1992, the number of working mothers with children over 5 years old in England and Wales was 27% full-time and 47% part-time; see *General Household Survey 1992* (1994:19).
6. See Jackson et al (1993:182).
7. See Rich (1977:42) for more on this point. Some feminists - like Collard with Contrucci (1988); Daly (1978); Gilligan (1982); Rich (1977) - emphasize 'what it is to be a woman'; they say women possess qualities that are superior to those possessed by men. This has led to their associating women with an 'ethics of care', Gilligan (1982:173).
8. See Davies & Welch (1986:412).
9. See Rossi (1977:4).
10. See Goldberg (1974:135-137).
11. Only 12% of mothers with pre-school children in England and Wales work full-time; see *General Household Survey 1992* (1994:19).
12. See Radcliffe Richards (1986:212).
13. See de Beauvoir (1988:428-429).
14. We will let the phrase 'gender role' apply to what is involved in being male or female which cannot be attributed to innate physical or psychological differences - the socially constructed male/female role.
15. See Souhami (1986:116).

16. See Abercrombie et al (1994:226).
17. See Shafer (1987:314-351).
18. See de Beauvoir (1988:29); Firestone (1970:8-11); Friedan (1965:38).
19. See Firestone (1970:65); Millett (1972:26, 109); Mitchell (1973:162).
20. This could be accomplished by a state allowance or a considerable increase in child benefit, to non-working housewives. Then a wife would not be economically dependent on her husband; see Tong (1989:54-57) for a full discussion of this point.
21. Souhami (1986:89) tells us that if measured in economic terms, housework would represent 39% of the Gross National Product.
22. At the moment, governments provide little in the way of economic support, free childcare facilities, child benefits, or maternity payments.
23. See Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1995:21).
24. Fullbrook & Fullbrook (1994:108).
25. See Oakley (1986:57).
26. de Beauvoir (1988:711).
27. Oakley (1986:61).
28. Jackson Pollock (and other Abstract Expressionists) of course, viewed their art as amounting to more than this.
29. Unless one is committed to a view of creativity like the postmodernists, e.g. Duchamp (Appignanesi & Garratt 1995:35) who seems to think that just by exhibiting something in a gallery, one is creative.
30. Peters (1966:56) writes that self-realization is 'limited to the development of the self in activities and modes of conduct that are regarded as desirable.'
31. A variant of this view is fully elaborated, of course, by Marx (1978:76-78).
32. See Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1995:21) who find that househusbands suffer from the 'housewife syndrome, invisible achievements, lack of recognition...'
33. See Watkins, Rueda & Rodriguez (1992:145).

Notes - Chapter Seven

1. See, for instance, Bayer (1977:29-40); Sack (1984:168-185); Singh (1980:387-393).
2. Most empirical studies find the husband's interest in sexual intimacy greater than their wives; see for instance, Bell and Bell (1972:136-144); see also Radcliffe Richards (1986:206-207) who offers this as a philosophical claim.
3. Given de Beauvoir's (and Sartre's) 'obsession with sex'; see Moi (1994:153).
4. Most empirical research seems to support this view. See Tavis & Sade (1977) for empirical support in USA. Further, there is a substantial empirical correlation between sexual satisfaction and overall marital satisfaction; see Bell & Bell (1972:136-144); Edwards & Edwards (1977:187-188).
5. See Broderick (1988:384).
6. I am not convinced that a similar case could not be made against the wife, but de Beauvoir (1988:394-395, 658) thinks that sex is not a transcendent act for a woman.
7. See Westoff (1976:54-57).
8. de Beauvoir (1988:450).
9. Rich (1977:182); see also Gatens (1991:129).
10. Many feminists see sexual oppression also in terms of enforced motherhood (unwanted children) due to a lack of reliable contraception, coupled with the legal prohibition of abortion; see de Beauvoir (1988:510-511). Firestone (1970:10-12) maintains that women will only be free from oppression when reproductive technology is sufficiently advanced to avoid biological motherhood completely. Nowadays in first-world countries at least, enforced motherhood is not so much the problem; see Stanworth (1994:228-229).
11. Sexually harassing behaviour can also be verbal. This may consist of sexist jokes, or his making sexual remarks about his wife's body, or other sexual innuendoes, etc. If he displays sexually suggestive posters or if he deliberately leaves 'girlie' magazines (or other sexually suggestive objects) about the house these too may constitute a form of pestering - when seeing them cannot be avoided - and thus could be regarded as a form of

harassment for the wife.

12. See Malcolm (1962:157).
13. However if she does not meet any of our criteria but, say, stiffens and remains motionless, this does not entitle him to interpret this as a positive response to his advances. It is more likely to reflect the unequal power relations between them.
14. See Moi (1994:166).
15. It is alright, for instance, to use an accountant as a means to my ends because this is something he chooses to do; he is not being used merely to serve my ends but is serving his own ends as well - he is earning his salary. On the other hand, to use someone as a mere means is not to give any consideration to that person's ends.
16. See Kant (1948:67).
17. I adapt here the approach given by J. Wilson and his team, in their various publications on Moral Education when Wilson was Director of the Farmington Trust Research unit at Oxford; see Wilson (1970); Wilson, Williams & Sugarman (1968).
18. At present, a husband cannot normally be legally prosecuted for rape if he forces his wife to have sexual intercourse (unless they have a separation order); see Haste (1994:300).
19. See, for instance, Finkelhor & Yllo (1982:462).
20. See Sichtermann (1994:272); Finkelhor & Yllo (1982:477).
21. See Hunter College Women's Studies Collective (1983:467).
22. See Midgley & Hughes (1983:129-130).
23. See Frye & Shafer (1977:337).
24. Gelles (1979:Ch.7) finds that most wives do not define themselves as having been raped when their husbands force them to have sex even if the rape has been accompanied by physical violence. They seem to view rape as something that happens between strangers.
25. See Finkelhor & Yllo (1982:461).
26. Sichtermann (1994:273) writes, rape is '...first and foremost a demonstration of power of a will to

assert authority and dominate, an attempt to establish male dominance.'

27. Cited in Finkelhor & Yllo (1982:460).
28. See Gelles & Straus (1979:549-580).
29. See Scully (1993:234).
30. I owe this consideration to E. Telfer.
31. See Broderick (1988:306).
32. This argument is due to G. Warnock (1971:45-46).
33. The most common reason by far for the irretrievable breakdown of marriage is infidelity; see Haste (1994:294).
34. Of course, an unfaithful spouse may not think that he is behaving in a morally acceptable manner. If confronted about his affair, he may well acknowledge that what he is doing is wrong. This would count more as a case of backsliding rather than his moral support of infidelity.
35. There is evidence to show that what constitutes damage to a marriage is not the extra-marital affair itself, but the spouse gaining knowledge of it; see, for instance, Kinsey et al (1953:433).
36. See Downie (1985:269).
37. See Haste (1994:294).

Notes - Chapter Eight

1. See Graham (1989:209).
2. Perhaps this is why in the legal system a wife is not allowed to be a hostile witness against her husband; Broderick (1988:183).
3. I owe this point to E. Telfer.
4. See Broderick (1988:233).
5. See Glenn (1975:594-600).
6. I owe this point to E. Telfer.
7. See Munro & Adams (1978:215).
8. See Pineo (1961:3-11).

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