MATERIALS

ON THE CZECH TRANSLATION OF SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S *THE SECOND SEX*

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Abstract

Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex *was translated into Czech in 1966, the first translation of the book to be published in a socialist state. It was, like many other translations during this period, a compilation of selections and was edited by the phenomenologist Jan Patočka who, in his postscript, presented the work primarily within its philosophical context. The book, which was published in three editions within two years and reached a combined print run of almost one hundred thousand copies, reaped substantial acclaim both among the lay and the academic public. The main debate about the book unfolded in the magazines* Literární noviny *and* Vlasta, *in which the contributors aired their views on the book from various positions – as advocates of phenomenology, Marxism, and the women's press. In order to make the main arguments of the Czech debate on* The Second Sex *accessible to our readers, we are publishing here Ashley Davies's English translation of the contributions by Jan Patočka, Ivan Sviták, and Irena Dubská.*

Keywords

Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, debate, Czechoslovakia, feminism, state socialism

Introduction

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Seventy years after its original publication, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* continues to call for new interpretations and receptions, which nevertheless frequently say more about the context within which these interpretations originate than the original intention of the author herself.[1] The debate provoked by the publication of *The Second Sex* in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s provided a similar situation. Within the Czechoslovak context, this debate is interesting because it went beyond the classic discussions of the time, which largely addressed the woman question on the level of practice (the legal arrangement or configuration of the social security system relating to women, their role within the economy, and so forth) and instead ventured into the realm of gender theory. At the same time, it comprises a relatively strong component of reform communist ideas concerning the emancipation of women. For a broader international perspective, an element of the debate worthy of note is the formulation of themes later addressed by feminist theory in the West – the dispute between the promotion of gender equality on the basis of sameness versus difference, for instance, or the financial remuneration of the reproductive function.

Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* was originally published by the French publishing house Gallimard in 1949, and ten years later it became one of the main sources of inspiration of the second feminist wave in the West. Its first publication in a socialist state came in Czechoslovakia in 1966,[2] where Simone de Beauvoir was a well-known personality, linked with engaged writing,[3] the struggle for women's emancipation,[4] and where her literary work was also understood within the context of existentialism. In

[1] From recent interpretations it is possible to find a "new" reading of Beauvoir for example in the conservative feminists Gabrielle Cluzel and Eugénie Bastié. See Eva Gianoncelli, "We're not Beauvoirians, but... Conservative (anti)feminist intellectuals and the rejection and appropriation of Simone de Beauvoir, her thought, and her legacy," *Cahiers Sens public* 25–26 (2019), no. 3, pp. 251–271.

[2] The book was published in Slovak in 1967, in Hungarian in 1969, in Polish in 1972, in Serbo-Croat in 1982, in East Germany in 1989, in Bulgarian in 1996, in Russian in 1997, and in Romanian in 1998. See Ewa Kraskowska, "On the Circulation of Feminist Discourse via Translation (V. Woolf, S. de Beauvoir, J. Butler)," *Ruch Literacki* 51 (2010), no. 1, pp. 1–14.

[3] Vladimír Pozner, "Memento. Mučednice Džamila Boupachová," *Mladý svět* 49 (1961), no. 4, p. 4.

[4] For example, Beauvoir was one of the female artists to represent France at the international meeting of women on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of International Women's Day in Copenhagen in 1960, which was organised by the socialist Women's International Democratic Federation. See "Mezinárodní setkání žen v Kodani," *Vlasta* 14 (1960), no. 6, p. 12.

addition to *The Second Sex*, during the course of the 1960s her books *The Mandarins*, *A Very Easy Death*, *Les belles images*, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, and *The Woman Destroyed*[5] were translated into Czech, as well as fragments of her texts[6] and foreign reviews of her work[7] published in magazines.

Together with Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir also visited Czechoslovakia in the 1960s.[8] In November 1963 they came to the country upon the invitation of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union for the occasion of the premiere of Sartre's play *The Condemned of Altona*, performed in the Tyl Theatre in Prague,[9] and again in November 1968 for the premiere of Sartre's play *The Flies* in the Chamber Theatre (Komorní divadlo) and a reprise of *Dirty Hands* in the E. F. Burian Theatre. During both visits a number of debates, lectures, and meetings with the couple were held on various platforms, accompanied by substantial media interest. In 1968 a debate featuring the couple took place with students in the Chamber Theatre, as well as meetings with Czech playwrights and lit-

[5] Simone de Beauvoir, *Mandaríni* [*The Mandarins*], translated by Eva Musilová (Prague: Odeon 1967); Simone de Beauvoir, *Velice lehká smrt* [*A Very Easy Death*], trans. Eva Pilařová (Prague: Československý spisovatel 1967); Simone de Beauvoir, *Líbivé obrázky* [*Les Belles Images*], trans. Marie Veselá (Prague: Odeon 1969); Simone de Beauvoir, *Paměti spořádané dívky* [*Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*], trans. A. J. Liehm (Prague: Československý spisovatel 1969); Simone de Beauvoir, *Zlomená žena* [*The Woman Destroyed*], trans. Eva Janovcová and Eva Pilařová (Prague: Svoboda 1970). As early as in 1947 her novel *The Blood of Others* had been translated into Czech – *Krev těch druhých*, trans. Antonín Bartůšek (Prague: Nakladatelství družstvo Máje, 1947). The Melantrich publishing house planned to publish the author's novel *She Came to Stay* (*Pozvaná*) in 1971. It was eventually published in 1991 (Prague: Melantrich, 1991). Beauvoir's publications were also translated into Slovak. See Simone de Beauvoir, *Krv iných* [*The Blood of Others*], trans. Zora Jesenská (Turčiansky Sv. Martin: Živena, 1947); Simone de Beauvoir, *Neužitočné ústa: hra v dvoch dejstvách a ôsmich obrazoch* [*The Useless Mouths*], trans. Jozef Felix (Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1947); Simone de Beauvoir, *Mandaríni* [*The Mandarins*] (part 1), trans. Hana Ponická (Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1966); Simone de Beauvoir, *Mandaríni* [*The Mandarins*] (part 2), trans. Hana Ponická (Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1966).

[6] Simone de Beauvoir, "Síla věcí," trans. A. Šabatková, *Světová literatura* 9 (1964), no. 4, pp. 199–214; Simone de Beauvoir, "Sartre a Camus" (excerpt from the book Síla věcí), *Dějiny a současnost* 6 (1964), no. 5, pp. 46–47; Simone de Beauvoir, "Z mých pamětí (výňatky)," trans. V. Volan, *Literární noviny* 17 (1968), no. 2, pp. 6–7; Simone de Beauvoir, "Věk odříkání" (*Zlomená žena*), trans. Eva Janovcová, *Světová literatura* 13 (1968), no. 5, pp. 134–162; Simone de Beauvoir, "Zlomená žena," trans. Eva Pilařová, *Mona* 1 (1969), no. 1, pp. 9–31.

[7] Yvette Le Floc'h, "Být či nebýt – to je otázka Mandarínů Simony de Beauvoir," trans. Alena Hartmanová, *Světová literatura* 1 (1956), no. 3, pp. 226–233 (review with extracts); Henri Deluy, "Až bude odstraněno nekonečné otroctví žen...," trans. František Zvěřina, *Plamen* 8 (1966), no. 12, pp. 41–45.

[8] Of the other socialist states, Beauvoir visited Moscow in 1962, Estonia in 1964, Lithuania and Moldavia in 1965, and Yugoslavia (Dubrovnik) in 1968.

[9] Beauvoir's visit to Prague in 1963 is mentioned in her memoir *A Very Easy Death*, the postscript to which, in the Czech edition (*Velice lehká smrt,* Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1967), was written by Antonín J. Liehm.

erary figures organised by the Czechoslovak Writers' Union (the visit lasted three days, and the plan to accept an invitation to Brno and Bratislava was ultimately cancelled). During their two-week visit five years previously, they met together with Czech writers at the Union's chateau in Dobříš, as well as with Slovak intellectuals in Bratislava.[10] Sartre also lectured at the Philosophy Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, the Municipal Library, and the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague. According to the media reports from the time,[11] the attention was focused chiefly on Jean Paul Sartre, who commented in interviews on the current political situation and expounded the framework of his philosophical position and dramaturgical work.

In comparison with Sartre's popularity, Simone de Beauvoir, although she also received a certain amount of media attention,[12] remained somewhat in the background in 1963, and rather gave the impression of being his consort. At a reading in the main hall of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, filled with university students, Sartre's lecture was followed by her own paper. The journalist Antonín J. Liehm, who had been in contact with the couple for a longer period (since the second half of the 1950s, when he had translated Sartre's plays into Czech; he also arranged both of their visits to Czechoslovakia[13]), noted at the time that here she spoke on the status of woman in society, and that she took an interest also in a solution to the so-called "woman question" in Czechoslovakia.[14] The sociologist Jiřina Šiklová, who attended the lecture, claims that after Sartre's lecture (during which there were a number of conflicts, such as when students complained about the abilities of the interpreter from French, whom A. J. Liehm relieved of his duties and impulsively replaced with himself, or when objections were raised against Sartre's leftism), a large part of the students left the

[10] On the visit of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre, see Dana Musilová, *Na okraj jedné návštěvy: Simone de Beauvoir v Československu* (Hradec Králové: Oftis 2007); "Sartre a de Beauvoir v Bratislave (1963)," *Kritika & Kontext* 7 (2002), no. 1, pp. 8–21.

[11] See the photograph "Francouzský spisovatel a filosof Jean Paul Sartre a jeho žena spisovatelka Simone de Beauvoir...," *Mladý svět* 5 (1963), no. 47, p. 2; and the following articles – "J. P. Sartre v Československu," *Československý filmový týdeník* (1963), no. 49; "Rozhovory pokračujú. J. P. Sartre v Bratislave," *Kultúrny život* 18 (1963), no. 47, p. 4; "Sartre odpovídá," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 2, pp. 8–9; "J. P. Sartre v Praze," *Československý filmový týdeník* (1968), no. 49; "Sartre v Praze," *Výtvarná práce* 16 (1968), no. 24, p. 1; Josef Träger, "Ota Ornest: Sartre zblízka," *Divadelní noviny* 12 (1968–1969), no. 7, p. 2; Karel Bartošek, Petr Pujman, "Se Sartrem o dnešku. Podoby socialismu, spojenectví inteligence a dělníků," *Listy* 1 (1968), no. 6, p. 9; Marta Švagrová, "Neznám jediného...," *Svobodné slovo* (29. 11. 1968), p. 4; "Sartre v Praze," *Divadelní noviny* 12 (1968), no. 7, p. 1; Hana Běhounková, "Návštěva z Paříže," *Květy* 19 (1969), no. 3, pp. 22–23.

[12] Antonín J. Liehm, "Páté přes deváté (rozhovor s J. P. Sartrem a Simone de Beauvoir)," *Literární noviny* 12 (1963), no. 47, pp. 6–7; "4 otázky Jeanovi Paulovi Sartrovi a jedna odpoveď Simone de Beauvoirovej," *Kultúrny život* 18 (1963), no. 47, pp. 1, 3; "Obdivujeme váš dnešní postoj. Televizní rozhovor se Simone Beauvoirovou a J. P. Sartrem," *Svobodné slovo* 24 (6. 12. 1968), p. 1.

[13] See Antonín J. Liehm, "Dopisy Sartre – Kosík," *Právo (Salon)* (28. 6. 2001), p. 3.

[14] A. J. Liehm, *Rozhovor* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966), p. 77.

hall.[15] At that time Simone de Beauvoir was not yet the familiar figure (the large scale publication of her texts did not begin until 1964) that she was later to become in Czechoslovakia after the publication of *The Second Sex*. As was already mentioned above, *The Second Sex* was published in 1966 by the Odeon publishing house as a part of their popular-science series Malá moderní encyklopedie.[16] Until that time the book had only been available to a narrow circle of Czechoslovak intellectuals in the French original or its English translation.[17] However, upon its first publication in Czechoslovakia it reached a wider audience, receiving an enthusiastic reception.[18] The amount of interest in the book is documented by its three editions in Czech and two editions published in Slovak[19] within the course of three years, with a combined print run of almost 120,000 copies: the Czech first edition (1966) numbered 40,000 copies, the second edition (1967) 15,000 copies, and the third edition (1967) again 40,000 copies; the Slovak first edition (1967) numbered 12,000 copies and the second edition (1968) 10,000 copies.[20] Although at that time large print runs were common, the number of copies of this book that were printed stands out in comparison with other socialist states; in Poland only 5,000 copies of the book were printed[21] and in Yugoslavia it sold 20,000 copies in the first years following its publication in 1982.[22] In Romania, it was available only in the French original, and even that to a limited circle of intellectuals in the library of the Romanian Academy of Sciences in Bucharest.[23] The only other country in which the book enjoyed a large

[15] Interview by Marianna Placáková with Jiřina Šiklová, July 2020.

[16] Simone de Beauvoir, *Druhé pohlaví*, trans. Josef Kostohryz and Hana Uhlířová (Prague: Orbis, 1966). In the same year an excerpt from the book was also published independently of the translation of the book in the journal *Plamen*. See the excerpt from the second volume of *The Second Sex* – Simone de Beauvoir, "Žena a manželství," trans. M. D., *Plamen* 8 (1966), no. 12, pp. 46–52.

[17] For example, the sociologist Irena Dubská mentioned *The Second Sex* in 1963 in an article entitled "Socialismus a žena" (*Kulturní tvorba* 1 (1963), no. 10, p. 1). The journalist Helena Klímová quoted the English translation in her book *Nechte maličkých přijíti* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966).

[18] Advertisements and synopses of the book were published across the spectrum of the literary public in the magazines *Vlasta*, *Kulturní tvorba*, *Obrana lidu*, *Dějiny a současnost*.

[19] Simone de Beauvoir, *Druhé pohlavie*, trans. Viera Millerová (Bratislava: Obzor, 1967).

[20] Additional printings of the book were necessary since it had sold out its print run. See "Simone de Beauvoire. Druhé pohlaví (výňatky, předmluva Jiřina Trojanová)," *Československý voják* 16 (1967), no. 4, pp. 36–37.

[21] Anna Bogić, "Becoming Woman: Simone de Beauvoir and *Drugi pol* in Socialist Yugoslavia," in Bonnie Mann and Martina Ferrari (eds.), *On ne naît pas femme: on le devient… The Life of a Sentence* (New York: Oxford, 2017), p. 318.

[22] Urszula Chowaniec, "Feminism Today: Reflections on Politics and Literature," in Urszula Chowaniec and Ursula Phillips (eds.), *Women's Voices and Feminism in Polish Cultural Memory* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge 2012), p. 9.

[23] Eric Leveél, "Simone de Beauvoir and Romania: A Distant Gaze (Circa 1965–1977)," *Colloquia. Journal of Central European History* 19 (2012), no. 1, p. 125.

print run was Hungary, where it was published in two editions (1969, 1971), the second of which numbered almost 30,000 copies.[24]

In contrast with reception of the Polish translation, which according to Urszula Chowaniec was an edition for a snobbish elite hungry for Western trends, in Czechoslovakia the book became a mainstream hit. In a poll in *Literární noviny* for the 1966 book of the year it was the most frequently mentioned title, and was voted for by the popular actresses Jana Brejchová and Jiřina Jirásková, and the television announcer Heda Čechová.[25] In the Miss Czechoslovakia 1968 competition it was even mentioned by the winner, Jarmila Teplanová, a student at the metallurgical faculty of the Technical University of Košice, who, to the question of what she was currently reading, answered *The Second Sex*.[26] In addition to the debate that unfolded concerning the content of the book in several periodicals, excerpts from the book were also published in the magazine *Československý voják* (Czechoslovak Soldier). With regard to the fact that this was a fortnightly issue published by the Central Political Administration of the Ministry of National Defence and was targeted predominantly at male readers, this was an enterprise rather of an educative character (the excerpts incorporated passages on marriage as a "union of two sovereign existences" and on women's sexuality).[27]

Similarly as with other translations, the Czech edition of *The Second Sex* had its own specific character, based on the form of the translation along with the graphic layout of the book. Unlike the Slovak (Bratislava: Obzor, 1967) and Polish (Kraków: Wydawnictvo Literackie, 1972) editions, in which the cover was conceived in an abstract form, the Czech translation presented a graphic depiction of the naked female body. A similar approach can be found also in the Hungarian translation (Budapest: Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1969), in which a photographic female nude is presented on the cover. In the Czech case, the cover was designed by Milan Hegar, a graphic artist at the publishing house. For the cover, he used a reproduction of the statue *Leda* by the French artist Aristide Maillol from the beginning of the 20th century, portraying the Greek myth of the Spartan queen Leda seduced in the form of a swan (in some interpretations raped) by the god Zeus (in this version the presence of Zeus is intimated only by a gesture of Leda's hand). At the time there was no discrepancy between the emancipation of women and the depiction of a naked female body in the fine arts (painting, sculpture) in Czechoslovakia, and together with the sexual revolution of the second half of the 1960s, reproductions of the naked female body increasingly became part of mainstream visual produc-

[24] Mária Joó, "*The Second Sex* in Hungary. Simone de Beauvoir and the (Post)-Socialist Condition," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 4 (2011), p. 118.

[25] "Anketa. Vánoce 66," *Literární noviny* 15 (1966), no. 52, pp. 3–4.

[26] "Miss Czechoslovakia," *Mladý svět* 10 (1968), no. 28, p. 18.

[27] "Simone de Beauvoir. Druhé pohlaví (excerpts, foreword by Jiřina Trojanová)," *Československý voják* 16 (1967), no. 4, pp. 36–37.

tion.[28] For example, in *Encyklopedie moderní ženy* (*Encyclopaedia of the Modern Woman*), quotes from Marx, Engels, and Lenin on the status of women in society were accompanied by a section of visual material entitled "The Woman in Art," full of reproductions of female nudes, including works by Aristide Maillol.[29]

Translations of *The Second Sex*, a two-volume book containing almost one thousand pages in the original version, were often criticised for their quality and abbreviated form.[30] In comparison with the first English translation (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), which contained several inaccuracies and misinterpretations, the Czech translation was, according to the philosopher Dagmar Pichová, of a better standard in its use of philosophical terminology.[31] A question remains regarding the role that may have been played in the translation by the philosopher Jan Patočka, who wrote the foreword and postscript, and above all chose which passages were to be translated into Czech. As with many other translations, the Czech version was also a compilation of selections. Unlike the Slovak edition, in which only a few passages were omitted, the Czech version was truncated by almost one half and was published in only one volume (415 pages). It is not clear as to whether Beauvoir authorised the Czech abbreviated version, as she did with its Hungarian counterpart, but in the case of both editions the publishers employed the same approach in their conception of the book – above all within its philosophical context. In Hungary, the chief editor was Zádor Tordai, the revisionist Marxist philosopher and expert on existentialism and the thought of Jean Paul Sartre, who also furnished the translation with a dictionary of philosophical and psychological terms.[32] In the Czech case it was Jan Patočka, a pupil of Husserl who also engaged in texts with Sartre's position[33] and who worked during that period as an academic employee in the editing department of the Philosophy Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The Czech version of the book was thus presented by a phenomenologist and editor of philosophical literature, who in the postscript "French existentialism and

[28] A reference to *The Second Sex* also appeared, for example, in one of several articles at the end of the 1960s that dealt with the theme of the naked female body (in this case "the erotological aesthetic"). See Jiří Zeman, "Žena a krása," *Věda a život* 16 (1969), no. 8, pp. 464–469.

[29] *Encyklopedie moderní ženy*, Prague: Nakladatelství politické literatury, 1966, pp. 29–34.

[30] See Margaret A. Simons, "The Silencing of Simone de Beauvoir: Guess What's Missing from *The Second Sex*" (1983), in *Beauvoir and The Second Sex. Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 1999), pp. 61–72; Toril Moi, "While We Wait: Notes on the English Translation of *The Second Sex*," Emily R. Grosholz (ed.), *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir* (New York: Oxford, 2004), pp. 37–68.

[31] Concerning the Czech translation, see Dagmar Pichová, "Simone de Beauvoir: *Druhé pohlaví* – a kletba překladu," *Filosofický časopis* 67 (2019), no. 2, pp. 241–250.

[32] Joó, "*The Second Sex*," p. 123.

[33] Patočka published an article based on the debate with Jean Paul Sartre at the Philosophy Institute in 1963. See Jan Patočka, "Jean Paul Sartre návštěvou ve Filosofickém ústavě ČSAV," *Filosofický časopis* 12 (1964), no. 2, pp. 185–200.

Simone de Beauvoir"[34] focused primarily on Beauvoir's relationship to phenomenology, existentialism, and Marxism.

The abbreviation of the original took place by a dual method. Some parts of the book were completely omitted, others removed by means of reducing passages covering several pages to a single paragraph summarising its content in a brief synopsis. This was printed in italics so that the reader could differentiate it from the actual text. Among those omitted passages was Beauvoir's dispute with psychoanalysis and historical materialism, which ensued primarily from the problematic relationship, widely discussed in the 1960s, between Marxism and existentialism.[35] Beauvoir's position, anchored in existentialism and addressing issues on an individualist level, was defended by Patočka in the postscript in terms of her engaged political writing and inclination towards Marxism during the 1950s.[36] A further abbreviation of the book related to the sections "History" and "Myths," and the largest space was given to "Lived Experience" from the second volume of the original ("The Girl," "Sexual Initiation," "The Married Woman," "Woman's Situation and Character," "The Independent Woman") in which, for example, the chapter on childhood was missing and with it the celebrated sentence "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman," as well as the passage on homosexuality, about which no public discussion was conducted at that time.

In the foreword to the book, Patočka defended the format of the selections with reference to the large scale of the book and the lack of informedness on the part of Czech readers concerning the French cultural environment. Mária Joó interprets the complete omission of an analysis in the section "Myths" in the Hungarian edition as an indication of the book being conceived primarily as a sociological essay concerning the conditions of the status of women in society, in which literature played a subordinate role.[37] The same passage was absent also from the Czech edition, and although the philosophical context of the book was accentuated, the emphasis in the selection process on describing the experience of women within their social conditions could also have contributed to the fact that the book was later seen as a "sociological study on women."[38] Despite today's criticism of this radical "adaptation" of the book,[39] this practice was in no way exceptional at the time, and may indeed have been under-

[34] Jan Patočka, "Francouzský existencialismus a Simone de Beauvoirová (doslov)," in Beauvoir, *Druhé pohlaví*, pp. 389–403.

[35] Jean Paul Sartre's relationship to Marxism was one of the repeating themes during his visit in 1963. See Ota Klein, "Všichni se mění. Sartre v Praze," *Kulturní tvorba* 1 (1963), no. 48, p. 6; Vladimír Brett, "Je Sartre marxista?" *Kulturní tvorba* 4 (1966), no. 31, pp. 1, 4–5.

[36] Patočka, "Francouzský existencialismus," pp. 395, 400.

[37] Joó, "*The Second Sex*," p. 124.

[38] Beauvoir, *Líbivé obrázky*.

[39] On the criticism of the Czech edition from 1966, see Hana Havelková, "Druhé pohlaví – věc veřejná," *Aspekt* 2 (1994), no. 2, pp. 44–45; Pichová, "Druhé pohlaví."

stood positively as an endeavour to make its content accessible to the majority readership.

After the publication of *The Second Sex* in 1966, reviews of the book began to appear[40] as well as texts focusing on the status of women within socialist society that referred to the book.[41] These were altogether positive reactions, which in the case of reviews were emancipatory (Lamarová), laudatory (Korčáková), or explicatory (Kautman). Similarly as in Hungary, the only purely negative and misinterpreting mention of the book was from a doctor of medicine, the sexologist Vladimír Barták, published in the army magazine *Obrana lidu* [Defence of the people], in which he attacked Beauvoir for her allegedly negative relationship toward the family.[42] The main debate on the book unfolded in the spring of 1967 in *Literární noviny* between the philosophers Jan Patočka and Ivan Sviták, as well as the sociologist Irena Dubská and the journalist Helena Klímová.[43]

The first review of *The Second Sex* that appeared in *Literární noviny* was written by Ivan Sviták,[44] who criticised the work from a position of Marxist humanism. The book was based on a description of a woman's personal experience that, in his view, could not contribute to any solution of the woman question. He argued that the emancipation of women needed to be brought about above all on a systemic level, on the basis of a development of economic and social structures in which a contribution would be made by contemporary scientific knowledge and its progress. Of the human sciences which could contribute to the emancipation of women, Sviták in his modernist outlook acknowledged the field of synthetic anthropology, based on dialectical materialism,[45] or other empirically anchored disciplines (sociology, economics). He saw the main problem in the process of achieving gender equality as residing in the realm of politics, which was lagging behind the results of science and its implementation on a political level. Patočka responded to Sviták's criticism of Beauvoir's "ill-informed scholarly background"[46]

[40] Milena Lamarová, "My druhé, my s minulostí," *Kulturní tvorba* 5 (1967), no. 5, pp. 4–5; J. Korčáková, "O ženách jinak než obvykle," *Vlasta* 20 (1966), no. 9, p. 3; František Kautman, "Existencialistický pohled na ženu," *Filosofický časopis* 16 (1967), no. 2, pp. 306–310.

[41] Jaroslava Bauerová, "Jaká je žena?" *Vlasta* 20 (1966), no. 38, pp. 6–7; Jan Souček, "Jsou ženy rovnocenné s muži?" *Svět práce* 3 (1970), no. 9, p. 14.

[42] Vladimír Barták, "Děti a rodina," *Obrana lidu* 26 (1967), no. 19, p. 11. His Hungarian counterpart was the psychiatrist István Benedek, who in a review accused Beauvoir of misogyny. See Joó, "*The Second Sex*" (István Benedek, "Beauvoir against Women," *Nagyvilág* 15 /1970/, no. 5, pp. 753–67).

[43] For more on the debate, see Marianna Placáková, "Člověk, nebo sexus? Diskuze k českému vydání knihy Simone de Beauvoir *Druhé pohlaví*," *Filosofický časopis* 68 (2020), no. 6, pp. 865–886.

[44] Ivan Sviták, "Člověk nebo sexus?" *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 9, pp. 1, 6. Also see Ivan Sviták, "Odpověď Ivana Svitáka," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 48, p. 7.

[45] See Ivan Sviták, "Filosofie člověka nebo věda o člověku?" *Literární noviny* 12 (1963), no. 6, p. 6, 7; Ivan Sviták, "Modely člověka," *Filosofický časopis* 15 (1967), no. 2, pp. 258–273.

[46] Jan Patočka, "Je dobře vědět o čem je řeč," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 12, p. 3. See also Jan Patočka, "Simona Beauvoirová a *Druhé pohlaví*," *Nové knihy* 7 (1966), no. 48, p. 6.

by pointing out that Beauvoir was concerned with a historical view of women's situation and not with a guidebook for the current solution to the emancipation of women, which furthermore cannot be achieved only through scientific progress. As a result, he defended the description of the experience of women ("a discovery, after which she grasped the world differently") from a phenomenological position, and conceived the subjective testimony of the book as emancipatory literature (on a psychological level) for women within Czechoslovak society.

Another contributor to the discussion was the sociologist Irena Dubská,[47] who unlike Sviták appreciated the philosophical description of the character of "women's alienation," though she also understood *The Second Sex* to be a book corresponding to the time of its origin, the conclusions of which had now been surpassed. She above all adopted a critical stance with regard to Beauvoir's over-socialised conception, which in her view had been influenced by inter-war anthropological studies (for example, Margaret Mead). In opposition to the sociological conditionality of "femininity," Dubská preferred biological conditioning. With reference to the psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch and the psychologist Frederik Buytendijk, she analysed the specific nature of femininity, anchored in the physicality of the woman ("woman is born different from man"). She defined her position against Beauvoir, who through her critique of the description of women's role within society, to which she attributed the quality of immanence, thereby gave immanence a negative meaning (while transcendence, linked with the role of men, was presented as positive). In Dubská's opinion, Beauvoir thereby exalted the principle of action and performance, which was symptomatic of modern Western civilisation. In opposition to Beauvoir, Dubská conceived immanence in a positive sense, and associated it with values such as coexistence, repose, calm, fulfilment, which should also be a component of human existence.[48]

The main content of the debate, to which its title also referred ("Human Being or Sexus"[49]), was therefore a question concerning the character of promoting the emancipation of women. On one side were Patočka and Sviták (together with Beauvoir), who started out from a conception of achieving an equal, identical position for all, regardless of sex. For Patočka and Beauvoir, this concerned attaining freedom on the basis of transcendence on an individual level. Sviták wrote, in the spirit of the concept of the scientific-technological revolution, of a systemic transformation of social relations, which ideally would lead to a new type of socialist humanity ("a structural transformation of the human species"). On the other side was Irena Dubská, who promoted the equal status of men and women on the basis of different positions, based on their biological

[47] Irena Dubská, "Kdo je žena, která se stává člověkem," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 12, p. 3.

[48] See Irena Dubská, "Kdo je žena?" *Sociologický časopis* 3 (1967), no. 3, pp. 307–315; Irena Dubská, "Žena v mužském světě," *Host do domu* 14 (1967), no. 6, pp. 36–42.

[49] "Sexus" is a term used in that period to designate biological sex.

difference. This position was also adopted by Helena Klímová,[50] the editor of *Literární noviny*, who had been focusing on the issue of women and children in Czechoslovak society in the magazine since the beginning of the 1960s.

The positions held by Dubská and Klímová ensued among other factors from a critique of the official gender policy of Czechoslovakia in the 1950s, which had been based on a Marxist conception of women's emancipation brought about by the economic infrastructure, neglecting their biological difference.[51] For example, Dubská wrote of the "vulgarised Marxist economic historicism that confined humanity within social factors." Klímová had expressed her own stance for many years in her articles,[52] which had provoked indignant reactions from the outset. The basis of this criticism consisted in the argument that though it is necessary to criticise contemporary social practice and endeavour for its reform, this practice should not be entirely relativised. This was understood to be Klímová's position in her criticism of the shortcomings, extreme forms of collective child care, and the inappropriate working conditions of women.[53]

In July of 1967, a new women's organisation was officially established – the Czechoslovak Women's Union. In her address to its congress,[54] Helena Leflerová, the president of the

[50] Helena Klímová, "Naposledy: Člověk a sexus," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 24, pp. 6–7.

[51] Hana Havelková, in an article on the gender policy of the 1960s, differentiates between two main groups that influenced the gender discourse of the time – experts (The State Population Commission and other experts from the fields of sociology, economics, psychology, law, and other disciplines) and the political opposition, whose ranks included also the contributors to the debate on *The Second Sex* – Jan Patočka and Ivan Sviták. See Hana Havelková, "Dreifache Enteignung und eine unterbrochene Chance: Der 'Prager Frühling' und die Frauen- und Geschlechterdiskussion in der Tschechoslowakei," *L'Homme* 20 (2009), no. 2, pp. 31–49. Nevertheless, to understand these figures as actors of the political opposition is a considerable oversimplification, based on their perception of themselves after 1968. Similarly as in the case of Patočka and Sviták, it is possible to view the critical positions of Dubská and Klímová as an element of the reform communist thought and politics of the 1960s.

[52] See Helena Klímová, "Jednou jsem nechtěl být na světě," *Literární noviny* 10 (1961), no. 5, pp. 6–8; Helena Klímová, "Ještě k nervózním dětem," *Literární noviny* 10 (1961), no. 12, p. 7; Helena Klímová, "Kdo je bude vychovávat?" *Literární noviny* 10 (1961), no. 50, p. 6; Helena Klímová, "Vy nechcete děti?" *Literární noviny* 11 (1962), no. 6, pp. 6–7; Helena Klímová, "Ještě jednou. Rozvedení a děti," *Literární noviny* 11 (1962), no. 16, p. 6; Jiří Prokopec and Helena Klímová, "Žena v množném čísle a v mnoha číslech," *Literární noviny* 11 (1962), no. 40, pp. 6–7; Klímová "...jako míšeňské jablíčko, jako z růže květ...," *Literární noviny* 12 (1963), no. 7, pp. 1, 6; Helena Klímová, "Plavat v řece zakázáno," *Literární noviny* 14 (1965), no. 18, pp. 6–7; Helena Klímová, "Být, či nebýt zaměstnaná," *Literární noviny* 14 (1965), no. 22, pp. 6–7; Helena Klímová, "Boje o děti," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 14, p. 7.

[53] "O čem by dnes psala Jožka Jabůrková?" *Vlasta* 15 (1961), no. 17, p. 5; "Ještě k otázkám zaměstnaných matek," *Vlasta* 15 (1961), no. 25, pp. 2–3; Milan Petr, "Míšeňská jablíčka," *Vlasta* 17 (1963), no. 10, p. 11; Věra Petrová, "To je, oč tu běží," *Vlasta* 19 (1965), no. 24, pp. 2–3.

[54] Helena Leflerová, "Všestranné uplatnění žen přispívá k rozvoji společnosti," *Vlasta* 21 (1967), no. 29, pp. 4–5.

union, spoke of a dangerous trend in society, one that would lead to a gradual restriction of women's employment. In her view, a model of women was being promoted that placed them exclusively within their roles of wives, mothers, and housekeepers based on a petty-bourgeois view of women, which was in conflict with the Marxist conception of emancipation. This critique was continued a few days later by Soňa Koželková, the long-term editor of *Vlasta* magazine (who in the inter-war period had written for the communist magazine *Rozsévačka*[55]), in which she took a critical stance against Helena Klímová's contribution in *Literární noviny* entitled "For the Last Time: Human Being and Sexus."[56]

Following on from Beauvoir, Klímová in her article wrote about two types of transcendence, which in her view were conditioned by gender (men attained transcendence in their creative production and women in the human being/child). Although she did not exclude the possibility of transcendence in creative production for women, in their case she placed emphasis on the role of motherhood and child care. She also criticised the socialist system for its promotion of the values of efficiency, rationality, and economic remuneration only for institutionalised labour (likening this situation to capitalism), and advocated an economic reward also for individual care of children. In her criticism in *Vlasta* magazine, Soňa Koželková attacked Klímová's position as a promotion of a return to traditional gender roles – a view that was then appearing in society (one of the ideas, for example, was to increase wages for men so that women had no economic reason to work, or the notion that when socialist society reached a higher degree of development, the need for female labour would be abolished). Koželková, by contrast, defended female labour outside of the household, not only for reasons of the economic independence of women – the condition, from a Marxist position, for their emancipation – but also for reasons of self-fulfilment. For her, the solution was to create conditions that would enable women to perform both a public and a private home-centred role without excessive accentuation of the maternal and domestic position of women.

By contrast, Klímová viewed the promotion of the maternal role, which had been negated in the 1950s, as a progressive development. Within the logic of Marxist dialectics, she asserted that this would lead to a synthesis of the roles of women (the traditional "female" role and the one "masculinised" through emancipation). Their position would thus no longer be masculinised and evaluated according to the same criteria as for men, but rather respected on the basis of equality of difference. Klímová's approach (similarly to that of Irena Dubská) corresponded to the feminism of difference that later emerged in the West.[57] At the same time, Klímová based her conclusions on psychological and sociological studies from the time, in which she selected those that supported

[55] "Ve středu 4. května se konalo," *Vlasta* 20 (1966), no. 20, p. 2.

[56] Soňa Koželková, "Líbivé, ale nebezpečné," *Vlasta* 21 (1967), no. 30, p. 5.

[57] After 1989, Klímová referred to texts from the realm of the feminism of difference – e.g., Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard

her argument and which had significant essentialising conclusions (for example, the hypothesis concerning "intellectual women" who, in comparison with manually employed women, are proportionally less fertile, have more frequent miscarriages and problems producing mother's milk[58]). Similarly, as in her text in the debate on *The Second Sex* (in the mention of the suppression of the "Marian ideal of woman" by the feminist movement), her inclination toward later interpretations bound to a biblical basis emerged, linked with both the Christian and Jewish tradition.

In the debate on *The Second Sex* that played out in *Literární noviny*, a range of views emerged regarding both the book and the future of the emancipation of women in socialist Czechoslovakia. The positions of the individual contributors were not bound to gender (in the sense that all the criticisms were from men or vice versa), and the book gained an unequivocally positive reception only from the phenomenologist Jan Patočka, who was the only contributor never to identify himself with Marxism.[59] In their critique of Beauvoir the others (Sviták, Dubská, Klímová) also defined themselves against Western feminism and the position of women in liberal democracies, and claimed that for a number of reasons women enjoyed a better status in socialist Czechoslovak society in comparison with the capitalist West. A similar approach was also echoed in published letters from readers of *Literární noviny*, in which women frequently inclined toward Sviták's side of the argument, criticising Beauvoir from Marxist positions – for her perspective, for example, which was formulated on the basis of a single race and class. Beauvoir's work was conceived as antiquated not only within the context of its publication in 1949, when for example the Kinsey report on female sexual behaviour had not yet published, but also in its manner of formulating problems with which the Czech feminist movement had already been engaging in the 19th century.

The negative reception of *The Second Sex* on the part of female readers interpreting the book on the basis of personal experience also attested to their position, which they regarded as more progressive in comparison with Beauvoir's description of the status of women – for example, in the field of sexuality. However, on a general scale the book gained a positive reception in Czechoslovakia, which ensued also from the ongoing debate revising the gender policy and the status of women hitherto within Czechoslovak society. After the publication of *The Second Sex* there followed a wave of translations of Beauvoir and publication of texts about the author[60] that did not abate

University Press, 1982). See Helena Klímová, "Feminismus a naše středoevropská zkušenost," *Souvislosti. Revue pro křesťanství a kulturu* 3 (1992), no. 4, pp. 27–38.

[58] Helena Klímová, "Být, či nebýt zaměstnaná," p. 7.

[59] See Havelková, "Dreifache Enteignung," p. 45.

[60] In addition to the aforementioned: e.g., Madeleine Gobeil, "Jean Paul Sartre o Simone Beauvoirové," trans. A. J. Liehm, *Československý voják* 16 (1967), no. 4, p. 38; Simone de Beauvoir, "V mém světě není temno (Le Monde)," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 8, p. 9; Simone de Beauvoir, "Poslechněte si tuto ženu... Rozhovor Simone de Beauvoirové s Clair Etcherelliovou," *Vlasta* 22

until the beginning of the 1970s. Although the debate on *The Second Sex* did not develop further and also did not influence the direction in which Czechoslovak gender policy proceeded, the book (also thanks to its wide circulation) may have inspired readers on a personal level[61] and continued to be quoted in academic literature of a predominantly psychological character.[62]

In an attempt to mediate the main arguments of the Czech debate on *The Second Sex* for our readers, we have decided to publish an English translation of the contributions from Jan Patočka, Ivan Sviták, and Irena Dubská.

(1968), no. 1, pp. 6–7. This was an interview printed in the journal *Le Nouvel Observateur* (15. 11. 1967) about Etcherelli's novel, portraying the experience of a working class woman and the problem of xenophobia in France in the 1950s. See Claire Etcherelli, *Elisa anebo opravdový život* (Prague: Svoboda, 1972), originally published as Claire Etchererlli, *Élise ou la Vrai Vie* (Paris: Denoël, 1967).

[61] For example, *Květy* magazine in 1971 responded to one female reader who had recently read *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* and wondered whether Simone de Beauvoir had children. See "Dopisy čtenářů," *Květy* 21 (1971), no. 21, p. 21.

[62] Drahoslava Fukalová, *Žena a práce v naší společnosti* (Prague: Horizont, 1969); Jiřina Máchová, *Spor o rodinu* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1970); Václav Příhoda, *Ontogeneze lidské psychiky. Vývoj člověka v druhé polovině života* (Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1974); Alexander Fazik, *O lidském štěstí bez iluzí* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1974); Nina Matulová (Jiřina Šiklová) and Helena Jarošová, *Žena v dnešní rodině* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1976); Eduard Bakalář, Vladimír Jiránek, *Umění odpočívat* (Prague: Práce 1978).

Human Being or Sexus?*

Ivan Sviták

Women are not altogether in the wrong when they refuse
the rules of life that have been introduced into the world,
inasmuch as it is the men who have made these without them.

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*[1]

Women are the slaves of myths created about them by men. They are the victims of the social relations forced upon them by men, and are tools of nature launched into operation by men. However, this biological, social, and psychological reality of the civilisation of the last six millennia is neither an eternal destiny, the irreversible inheritance of the present, nor the prospective future of women. The horizons of the future are open to all human beings, both men and women, just as they are closed to all those who would wish to impinge upon the future of freedom with the shackles of sexual, social, and interpersonal relations that were formed in the pre-industrial conditions of material poverty and violence. However, if the feminine mystique was previously the subject of attention of men – either misogynists or erotomaniacs – today it appears that women shall create their own myths, as attested to by two remarkable books of the last twenty years, namely *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir (*Le Deuxième Sexe*, 1949, published in Czech in 1966) and *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (1963, published in Czech in 1980[2]).

However, it is necessary to state, with a kind of bizarre dialectics, that these books merely reproduce male illusions about women, render them more palatable, explain

* "Člověk nebo sexus," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 9, pp. 1 and 6, published 4. 3. 1967.

[1] Quote from Montaigne, mentioned by Simone de Beauvoir in the introduction to her book. If not indicated otherwise, all citations from *The Second Sex* are adopted from the newly translated and first unabridged English edition. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage, 2011).

[2] The first Czech translation was not published in 1980, as Sviták here seemed to be predicting, but in fact twenty-two years later: Betty Friedan, *Feminine mystique*, trans. Jaroslava Kočová (Prague: Pragma, 2002). Two reviews of the book were published by Hilda Lass, an American translator living in Czechoslovakia, in the 1960s. See Hilda Lass, "Betty Friedan: Mýtus ženství," *Sociologický časopis* 2 (1966), no. 5, pp. 719–722; Hilda Lass, "Mýtus ženství," *Vlasta* 21 (1967), no. 7, pp. 6, 7. In 1967, Betty Friedan visited Czechoslovakia, and during her stay was interviewed by the journalist Anna Tučková, during which they compared the situation of women in the USA and Czechoslovakia. See "O mýtu ženství. Hovoříme s Betty Friedanovou," *Kulturní tvorba* 5 (1967),

the origin of the mystique of eternal womanhood, but nowhere do they transcend the limits – either notional or actual – of tradition for the simple reason that the mystique of womanhood – whether shared or demystified – cannot be transcended whatsoever. Man and woman shall transcend both notional and real obstacles always only both together, as human beings. They will liberate one another mutually as they themselves are freer to play a deeper human role and as they better comprehend and manage their social and personal determinations. The mystique of women is equally as sterile as the mystique of men, regardless of which sex writes about it. By contrast, the recognition of a person as an aggregate of biological-sexual determinations, of a social inheritance of human roles and as individual personalities is always productive because it creates the conditions for an understanding of the entire structure of human existence. As a result, synthetic anthropology cannot restrict itself to the phenomenon of human sexual dimorphism – that is, the specific difference of the sexes – because a person is thereby understood a priori as a biologised being while social and psychological determinations then appear as secondary, although it is precisely these that are decisive for humanity. Women will not emancipate themselves from the mystique of womanhood by themselves, either by endorsing this mystique or rejecting it. How are they then to achieve emancipation? How should they, and how do they, understand themselves?

The Metaphysics of the Female Sex

The first typical stance is taken by Simone de Beauvoir, who in an elegant and entertaining literary form elevates the prejudices of readers of women's magazines to a norm of womanhood and combines her ill-informed scientific background with affected waffling on a hackneyed theme. In doing so, she somewhat rips up the plush coverings of the solidly bourgeois salon of her grandfathers, while nonetheless taking good care to ensure that the scandal equates to no more than damage to a worn-out couch, trampled upon by the heels of a cute little imp in a fit of fateful ecstasy. She concocts this mixture in a very marketable stunt, within the very environment against which it was purported to be aimed.

This twenty-year old work is now altogether threadbare, even if to the Czech mind it may yet possess the enticing whiff of licensed perversity. It has now found its way to Central Europe, and what is more, it reaches the banks of the Vltava river as progress, as an indisputable uprising against the times when sexuality was wholly taboo, which

no. 41, p. 7. The book was also addressed in connection with the American feminist movement ("Co chtějí Američanky?" *Vlasta* 24 (1970), no. 40, pp. 4, 5) and was quoted in books on the status of women and American society. See Irena Dubská, *Americký rok* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966), p. 56; Blanka Svoreňová-Királyová, *Žena 20. století ve světě práce. Pohled na zaměstnanou ženu v moderním světě* (Prague: Práce, 1966), p. 96; Nina Matulová (Jiřina Šiklová), Helena Jarošová, *Žena v dnešní rodině* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1976), p. 49.

we must concede through gritted teeth. And thus we even reproduce petty-bourgeois illusions and suburban mediocrity as progress! Simone de Beauvoir operates with questionable literary grace within the limited horizons of the most commonplace convention, and if she ever surpasses these limits she does so only in order to rapidly incorporate crumbs of the philosophy of existentialism and scientific knowledge into her world of bourgeois solidity, because with its plush salon in one's mind it is possible to protest only from a languid position. Naturally, with her penchant for averageness she could take nothing from Hegel other than the master-slave dialectic. She then identified man with the master, woman with the slave – (what an original notion) – only she used a more refined philosophical hue, and spoke of male transcendence and female immanence. This impresses every woman currently slaving over the Sunday roast, just as it impresses Jiří Danda when he realises that he has been speaking in prose all his life without knowing it. To feel oneself to be immanent while preparing the family meal sounds imperious, especially if we don't know exactly what it means. A popular melange of historical, biological, sociological, psychological, and anthropological observations is dextrously amalgamated into a whole in which "science" is accessible to everyone thanks to the fact that it is not science at all. Although we therefore acknowledge with regret the positive role this book has played in Czech culture, we nevertheless must state that in all fundamental respects Simone de Beauvoir's compilation is nothing but a rationalisation of the bourgeois illusions of a well brought up Catholic girl. The book does not reach the level of modern science, let alone the revolutionary spirit of dialectical materialism. Why?

Simply speaking, one is determined by one's body, one's society, and one's mind. We may express the same sentiment in more academic terms if we say that the code for the behaviour of the human body is encrypted in its deoxyribonucleic acid as a kind of "master tape," that society, the family, and environment form the social roles of a human being, and that the individual ultimately has a certain amount of freedom – limited by the degree of his or her capacity for comprehension and education – to form his or her own personality. This triple biological, sociological, and psychological determination then creates a certain structure of behaviour of the concrete individual. Synthetic anthropology attempts nothing less than to understand how these – different for science, but combined in life – biological, social, and personality functions are mutually interconnected. Simone de Beauvoir makes no contribution whatsoever to an understanding of these real and very complex problems of modern empirical science, but without any prerequisites or methodology posits a metaphysics of woman that is merely a continuation of the metaphysics of man applied to the weaker sex.

As a result, real problems – not female, but human in general – do not trouble her horizons whatsoever, and so after reading her book nothing is left to us other than merely to lament that "women are women." This would be a remarkable feat of thought if we took seriously myths about the illogical "female mind" that all kinds of dullards

are happy to share, but which it has taken Simone de Beauvoir to elevate to the status of the very philosophy of womanhood. Nowhere did she come to the conclusion, even less to the starting point, that a woman is above all a human being and thus first and foremost the same as a man – a social being and personality – and only afterwards a specific sexual being. Specifically speaking: both her general starting point and her fundamental stances are unsustainable, today even more so than in the time when the book was written, although they were not sustainable even then. The Kinsey Reports, which have so far been successfully suppressed in this country despite the fact that they contain the most important sexual observations to date, have demonstrated (especially in the conclusions concerning the female orgasm) that Beauvoir's biological standpoints are extremely naive and that the entire metaphysics of master and slave can be and are in fact replaced by a more democratic model of sexual partnership.[3] The sociological component of the view of a woman's place in society continues to be determined entirely by the place of the author herself. As a result, under the heading of the general issue of women, it is in fact problems of a certain class, age, and nationality that are reproduced and are then passed off with extreme naivety as a universally cogent model of womanhood. The scientific conception of a human being as a temporalised and concretely situated sequence of social roles and transformations of one's own self-consciousness renders the social component of Simone de Beauvoir's opinions completely archaic. Her psychological aphorisms may be wonderful, very often pertinent and amusing reading, spiced up with an appetising dose of Freud, but her neoanalytic works manifest a naivety also in this area, as can be appreciated by anyone who, after reading the four hundred pages of the abbreviated version of *The Second Sex*, then reads a few dozen pages of Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*.[4] The synthesis of these errors is then a fine

[3] Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956), the American zoologist and sexologist, was one of the authors of publications about sexual behaviour (*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953)) known as the "Kinsey Reports," which were based on a long-term, extensive study of American society by means of the interview. In Czechoslovakia, references to the Kinsey Reports appeared during the 1960s: e.g., Naďa Janoušková, "Sexualita jako droga," *Obrana lidu* 24 (1965), no. 33, p. 13; Hanuš Rezek and Helena Klímová, "O lásce i o tom druhém," *Literární noviny* 15 (1966), no. 8, p. 8; Vladimír Barták, "Studenti a sex u nás," *Vlasta* 23 (1969), no. 30, pp. 6, 7. During the period of "normalisation" the reports were quoted in sexological and psychological reference books, e.g., Antonín Vaněk, *Příznaky krize manželské rodiny* (Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1971); Jiřina Máchová, *Spor o rodinu* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1970); Ivo Pondělníček and Jaroslava Pondělníčková-Mašlová, *Lidská sexualita jako projev přirozenosti a kultury* (Prague: Avicenum, 1971); Jan Raboch, *Očima sexuologa* (Prague: Avicenum, 1977); Jaroslava Pondělníčková-Mašlová, *Manželská sexualita* (Prague: Avicenum, 1986).

[4] The book was published in the same year and the same series (in two versions) as *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir. In her postscript, Eva Lišková focused primarily on Fromm's relationship to Marxism. See Erich Fromm, *Umění milovat*, trans. Jan Vinař (Prague: Orbis, 1966); Jiřina Korčáková, "Ars amatoria – umění milovat," *Vlasta* 20 (1966), no. 34, p. 12; Miloš Bondy, "Aktivnost lásky a láska aktivnosti," *Literární noviny* 15 (1966), no. 25, p. 6; Eva Lišková, "Erich Fromm a

example of the futility of any attempt to cope with real problems via the speculative route of a philosophy of humanity.

The Feminine Mystique

The American Betty Friedan's book was the most widely discussed bestseller of 1963, and although she also fails to incorporate the feminine mystique into a broader framework, it is nonetheless agreeable that she penetratingly demystifies this mystique, repudiates it, and understands it very well. She does not offer us any solution, but her a priori position that women are human beings first and foremost and women only second is still impressive. Within this spectrum she analyses the situation of American women, who as a rule live wholly for the family, in which the high consumer standard of living eases the burden of child care, and the American traditions of family life render the status of housewife not only acceptable but even desirable. Even Friedan is however unable to unshackle herself from the mistaken notion that an understanding of the status of women can be inferred from the specificity of women, yet her book has at least three fundamental advantages which compensate for this general deficiency. Friedan trenchantly demonstrates that the entire so-called feminine mystique is merely an unnamed problem of the living situation of the ordinary American woman, it is an expression of a specific female form of human alienation in industrial society and thus a crisis of feminine identity. This alienation that ensues from overabundance is perhaps even more acutely onerous for women than it is for men. As a result, women may be more frustrated in their leisure time and transform themselves into willing heroines of the household. They then, in their suburban homes, establish something of a "comfortable concentration camp" in which permanent dehumanisation gradually corrodes first their personality and then their family. American sexual education, based on Freud and Mead,[5] instils sexual solipsism in women from childhood, overvaluing the sexual role of women and intentionally condemning to ruin any female aspirations to independence and freedom. American women have to devise a new plan for life which would support their personality and reinforce their sense of self. Friedan is not able to offer any advice other than to take up amateur painting or play the violin in the evening because she herself does not link the prospects of women with the social relations and

jeho poslední práce," *Sociologický časopis* 2 (1966), no. 3, pp. 369–382; Ivan Sviták, "Prolegomena to Love," in *The Windmills of Humanity: On Culture and Surrealism in the Manipulated World*, trans. and ed. Joseph Grim Feinberg (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., 2014), pp. 80–89.

[5] Margaret Mead (1901–1978), the American anthropologist who in her research focused, among other things, on sexuality and gender roles of traditional cultures of South East Asia. Her books were well known in Czechoslovakia. For example, in a review of *The Second Sex* in the journal *Host do domu*, Irena Dubská quoted a German translation of her book *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* from 1935. See Irena Dubská, "Žena v mužském světě," *Host do domu* 14 (1967), no. 6, pp. 36–42.

the transformation process of modern industrial society. If Beauvoir spoke for the older generation – and we may consider Friedan a spokeswoman for the middle aged – there remains here an open question:

How are young women to understand themselves in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, where they are burdened neither by the plush salon of bourgeois conventions and the need to rebel against it, nor by the problems of alienation resulting from an excess of leisure time and consumer goods?

Anthropological transformation, a comprehensive metamorphosis of social relations and the human species, affects everything around us, including the family, marriage, and women. However, counter to the real social processes that radically alter previous institutions, customs, and conventions, certain notions from the 19th century, including monogamous marriage as a model for human relations between men and women, are maintained and transmitted to future generations by tradition. This model, which remains the destiny for the majority of women, is marked by the structure of pre-industrial societies and, above all, by the fact that it overvalues the erotic-sexual aspect of women while neglecting their other functions. It attributes the household to women a priori and robs them of the male privilege of life as a development of one's own personality in economic essentials. The overcoming of mystique and the advancement of women as free beings, *genuinely* equal to men, consists above all in the overall development of socioeconomic structures whose objective motion liberates or constricts women far more than the well-meaning father figures who on the occasion of International Women's Day mouth progressive platitudes on the female question instead of managing the economy effectively.

At the same time, in Czechoslovakia the economic issues of the average family with children are fairly urgent, not only with regard to women but also with regard to population policy, which is in a state of breakdown. Let us leave aside the problem of the woman as mother, because ceremonial orators like to wax lyrical on this theme. However, can we overlook the abnormal situation of our population? Anthropological studies have demonstrated that during the first three years of life, child rearing by the mother is an irreplaceable human value, and that the first year in particular is critical. The specificity of the human offspring consists in the fact that it is in fact born "prematurely," in that the first year of its life is an existence that in other mammals takes place within the mother's womb. The role of day nurseries is therefore problematic (especially if compelled by economic necessity). Problems affect women as much as men, or rather more, because they relate to them in their irreplaceable role as mothers. And here the problems of women – just like those of men – await the skills of the politicians who can manage scientific observations and transform them into practical solutions for the greater freedom of women, politicians who can achieve more than the father figures who bleat every year over the bouquet of snowdrops for International Women's Day.

The solution to the female question does not lie in the sphere of sexual problems and in biological destiny, neither does it consist in old-fashioned notions of emancipation in which the social roles of men and women are to be balanced, nor in the feminine mystique, which seeks psychological drugs only for the female half of alienated humanity. The solution to the female question shall arrive only with a structural transformation of the human species, on which contemporary history is working with hectic intensity in order, via the apparent masculinisation of women and feminisation of men, to create such a scenario of modern humanity as would be commensurate to the reality in which people are capable of flying to the cosmos and mastering nature outside of themselves. However, the nature within them continues to displace to cosmic distances any meeting of mature personalities.

What Is the Issue Here?*

Jan Patočka

Because Ivan Sviták's article "Human Being or Sexus" from issue 9 of *LN* has so far received no fundamental response, I feel compelled to submit my own contribution.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is not one of those books that easily reaps universal acclaim, but one of those that provokes and outrages. Is it mere sensationalism? Beauvoir claims that it contains an experience, a discovery after which she "grasped the world differently." If we are unable to grasp society and history differently together with her, then we will truly be left only with a set of propositions that fly in the face of accepted sexual and marital morality, observations that go against our way of thinking, having disregard for the given institutions, all in an extremely brazen, even cynical form – so the reader who does not have a penchant for sensation could easily conclude that it is no more than a literary attraction.

However, loyalty demands that we take on the author's perspective for a while and use her arguments. Woman is not "second," that is dependent, related always to the man as to the primary and absolute core of humanity, because of the inner nature of her being, but on the basis of historical circumstances. In her essence, she is a free

* These responses to Sviták by Jan Patočka and Irena Dubská were printed together under the shared heading "Human Being or Sexus?": "Člověk či sexus," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 12, p. 3, published 25. 3. 1967.

being just like a man, that "transcendence" which wishes to be realised in something higher, as yet unattained, which wishes to open itself up to the future and not to dwell only in the given and already available – she is this transcendence just as frequently or infrequently as a man; but on her journey to herself her organic function, that of giving life, yields her into the hands of man; supported by his privilege of risking and taking life, man then for a long time claims as his privilege all that is supra-biological, all that is not "immanent," which reaches beyond the domain of corporeality, domesticity, including the repeated procurement of physical needs; and if woman, after a period of centuries, is to an extent economically emancipated by labour, when she acquires also political rights, she continues to abide within the realm of male values in a world built by men for men, full of male institutions, traditions, prejudices, and myths.

It is therefore truly necessary for one to take an excursion through the *entire world of womanhood* in both the distant and recent past, bordering on the present, in order to describe the life of woman in an environment that is favourable to what is "natural" within her, often comfortable for her, in fact frequently explicitly possible in a world where, though she may be assigned a value, a function, a mission, this is not the Highest, which alone is what makes one a human being. And it is then no surprise to us that in the name of this Highest, the author, having undertaken this review, protests against the accepted values, when she even goes so afar as to reject them, sensing in them the pitfalls (perhaps sometimes exaggerated) that are intended to rob woman of the Highest. Is such a problem, the articulation of which on behalf of the thousands of those who only painfully, passively, and without ultimate clarity experience it, something worthless, is it such a small discovery? We may disagree with Beauvoir as regards the solution; but if we do not perceive her problem, we know nothing of the female question of our time.

It is simply not true that this is resolved anywhere, and it is also not true that this can be resolved in the future by means of a few scientific-technical adjustments unless we behold this entire historically determined situation before our eyes. Can we not see that this virtually unbearable burden imposed upon women by their desire to assert themselves as social human beings, coupled with the necessity of living as traditional women, consists in the fact that although today's society simply cannot fail to acknowledge the pressure of the female transcendence of which Beauvoir speaks, at the same time it is not willing to distribute all the burdens in a fundamentally equitable manner, but rather to this day self-evidently favours men? Even under socialism, are we not witnesses to the fact that as soon as even a hint of a shrinkage of job opportunities emerges, hundreds of people react with the clamour to send women back to a life of domestic drudgery? Do we not see, in the light of Beauvoir's reflections, that the common phenomenon of women who desire to return to their role as homemakers ensues from fatigue born out of an unsustainable situation, which nonetheless does not represent a defeat of women's deepest endeavours but rather of a society that boastfully claims it has liberated women? Do we not see the unhappiness of talented women, their unpopularity among men,

and do we not see that society wholly endorses this situation? Even many problems of young intellectual couples, in which the woman struggles between the urge to conform and the endeavour to be absolutely sovereign or even supreme, also have their origin in this situation. In addition, a man always appears who believes that he has satisfied his wife's demands and upheld his obligations by regularly bringing home a wage; and if he moreover has a large family he may, without in any way curtailing his own demands for "transcendence," deliver lectures full of pathos on the role of the woman within the family and on motherhood as her ultimate vocation, and may rest assured that he will be praised for doing so. Is this fair and obvious? Or must we acknowledge that today's woman, in her struggles with the dominant morality, will often find in Beauvoir the key to understanding herself, to reinforcing her own self-esteem, in order to see for herself, from the perspective of a free being, what constitutes victory, and what constitutes stagnation and capitulation?

It must be clear to anyone who is capable of perceiving the world around them that such a book has not aged in 20 years. Naturally, we cannot wish it to be anything other than what it is. It is not a recipe book for the future solution to the woman question, as Ivan Sviták appears to believe. Such a work is not merely a mass of printed paper, but itself part and parcel of modern reality. One who recommends to the book's author that she contemplate the profound insight that a person is determined by one's body, by society, and by one's mind - one who in the concepts of transcendence and immanence, which have an entirely concrete descriptive content, can see nothing but nebulous metaphysics and a "new feminine mystique" – is guilty of the most outrageous naivety! Sviták's failure to understand that this is such a serious issue is also manifest in his vilification of the author, which produces such an embarrassing effect in his article. Is he not aware of what he is contributing to? An important problem is to be branded as academic lampooning and ribaldry. A genuine scholar's response to Beauvoir can be seen in the example of Buytendijk's *polemical* treatise on Woman (1953), in which he states that her book is the best work so far on this issue.[1] We most certainly did not introduce Beauvoir to our own environment in order for her to be uncritically accepted, but to be contemplated. Nevertheless, for criticism to be grounded, it must know what the issue is that is at stake.

[1] Frederik Buytendijk (1887–1974), Dutch psychologist and anthropologist. Here Patočka was referring to the German edition of the book published in Dutch two years previously. See Frederik Buytendijk, *De vrouw. Haar natuur, verschijning en bestaan* (Utrecht: Spectrum Utrecht, 1951); Frederik Buytendijk, *Die Frau. Natur, Erscheinung, Dasein. Eine existential-psychologische Untersuchung*, translated by A. Schorn (Köln am Rhein: J. P. Bachem Verlag, 1953).

Who Is the Woman Who Becomes a Person?*

Irena Dubská

The author does not perceive the "mystique" of human physicality.
For her, the polar opposition of man and woman is secondary, because it is socially conditioned.
In the view of the author, the female ideal is Homo faber.

These are a few of the serious objections raised by F. J. J. Buytendijk with regard to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, the quality of which he explicitly appreciates. Any reader who was familiar only with Ivan Sviták's article "Human Being or Sexus?" will quite rightly be surprised: surely, according to Sviták's reference, Beauvoir holds precisely the opposite position?

The reality is in fact entirely different from the scenario portrayed by Sviták.

Sviták writes that Simone de Beauvoir never came "to the conclusion, even less to the starting point, that a woman is above all a human being and thus first and foremost the same as a man – a social being and personality – and only afterwards a specific sexual being," and from this position he goes on to launch both a diatribe against Beauvoir's book and a declaration of his own faith. However, this assertion is in fundamental conflict with the sense and proposition of the work. The author is concerned precisely with an overall diagnosis of *humanity, deformed in women by history hitherto*, with the structure of female being disrupted in its human nature and designation by the pressure of social situation. The conviction that a woman, just like a man, is above all a person full of humanity, who must be emancipated, is the alpha and omega of *The Second Sex*: Beauvoir, in respective analyses and documents of this proposition, proceeds so far and so consistently as to conclude that "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman."[1]

Sviták also asserts that Beauvoir endorses the feminine mystique. But in *The Second Sex* this mystique is, for the first time, so fully and convincingly uncovered, while the work also perceives the historical transformation of its individual forms and social causes. According to Beauvoir, all forms of feminine mystique are unequivocally the consequence of the historical oppression of humanity within women, they have exclusively social causes and are therefore transitory. In the conclusion to her work, the author once again summarises: "To explain her [woman's] limits we must refer to her

* "Kdo je žena, která se stává člověkem?" *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 12, p. 3, published 25. 3. 1967
[1] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 293.

situation and not to a mysterious essence."[2] It is precisely in analyses of deformed female being, and in analyses of the rationalisations and ideologisations that accompany its forms, that Beauvoir emphatically goes beyond the issue of feminist and socially emancipatory literature: to concede, as Sviták does "through gritted teeth," that the book makes a certain contribution even for today's reader, if only in terms of progress as "against the times when sexuality was wholly taboo," means to fail to understand whatsoever the subordinate position and the sense of the passages relating to eroticism and sex within the theoretical structure of the work.

Thus far, then, we have only the briefest summary of what, in contrast with Sviták's allegations, Beauvoir's books actually contain. Somewhat different and more debatable is the question concerning the stance toward the actual propositions of *The Second Sex*, which Sviták denied the author and proclaimed as his own critical stance.

The *Second Sex* arrives in our country after a delay of almost twenty years; this interval alone is enough to demand that this work by an internationally renowned author, which ranks among the essential studies in its field, is awarded its proper historical place. In the midst of a precipitous familiarisation with ideas which have long been neglected, it is difficult to attain an organic balance; however, neither naive, unquestioning acceptance nor falsifications and unjustified denunciations contribute anything at all to our understanding. In opposition to Beauvoir's work Sviták stands Betty Friedan's rather journalistic bestseller *The Feminine Mystique*, and in particular he endorses its "impressive a priori position" that "women are human beings *first and foremost* and women only second." But it is precisely on this issue that Beauvoir and Friedan hold an identical position. There nevertheless remains the question of the limits of its sustainability. The sociologising conception of female existence asserted itself strongly in the inter-war period, supported by the practical advance of emancipation, reaction to previous notions of the total, absolute, physiologically determined difference between man and woman, as well as some conclusions of the sciences. Certain sociologists and cultural anthropologists indeed insisted that what is understood to be male and female differs from society to society to such a degree that it appears to be determined almost arbitrarily. Social psychology inclined toward a conviction of the virtually unlimited malleability of humanity, vulgarised Marxist economic historicism confined humanity within social factors, and female being, once uncritically extrapolated only from physicality, began to contemplate itself entirely outside of the physical substrate. In my view, in addition to the limits of the existentialist conception of human being, it is precisely this extreme sociologisation that is the most contentious aspect of *The Second Sex*. Woman as a person is characterised by both *humanity* and the specificity of a *female* human being; the traditional idea of a female person from literature is something other than "a human being first and foremost and a woman only second."

[2] *Ibid*., p. 767.

In opposition to Beauvoir and Friedan, and therefore also in opposition to Sviták, I am of the opinion that woman is *born* different from man, and that this fact is of fundamental significance for the *human* existence of both woman and man, and for their mutual relationship. I believe that this circumstance has been rightly noted by serious philosophical criticisms of *The Second Sex*, starting out from different positions, and that certain studies from psychology, more recent cultural anthropology, and social psychology point in the same direction. In my view, this is the sense also of Marx's observations on the relationship between man and woman from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. Finally also, the genuine process of emancipation, which is ever more audible, and from various perspectives – in this also from the blunders of our own practice, which frequently drowns out the specificity of the female human being in human equality and equivalence – elevates into a positive formulation precisely this question, which transcends Beauvoir's conception: Who is the woman who becomes a human being? In what does the specificity of her human being consist? Insofar as Beauvoir overlooks this aspect she remains, for me, captive to outmoded feminist and socially emancipatory literature, and I consider that which appears to be a one-sided view of the situation of woman, and the relationship between man and woman, to be primarily the consequence of methodological reduction. In this light, Sviták's position, despite all its outward and sweeping references to science and the revolutionary spirit of dialectical materialism, belongs for me among the common variants of the myths that palpably lag behind the motion of our practice, however ambivalent it may be, and which within their content do not go beyond the level of feminist conceptions, right up to their symptomatic blend of asexuality and situational frivolity.

Ultimately, I cannot refrain from commenting that a *published* article is a matter of both the author and the editorial board. It is the right of the reviewer to take a personal stance, but we have the right to expect more than distorted, let alone downright inverted information about the content of the work in question, and to expect a dispassionate argumentation, especially in the case of an academic publication. The apparently revolutionary form and expression might perhaps obscure the essence of the issue for one who has never engaged with the given subject matter, but even with regard to domestic authors, such a gross distortion of the work under scrutiny, not to mention coarse invectives personally insulting the author, are such an exception in our country in recent years that as a rule in civilised circles they are rather a matter for a lawyer.

Response from Ivan Sviták*

Ivan Sviták

[Woman] is the inessential in front of the essential [...]. [S]he will excel at producing "best sellers," but she cannot be counted on to blaze new trails.
Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex[1]

What is the issue here? I did not review the French edition from 1949 in order to award the book its place in the history of philosophy, as Jan Patočka did dispassionately in the postscript to the Czech edition. I adopted a stance toward this Czech bestseller of 1967, which appears on the open horizon of the theoretical prospects of sex precisely because the other horizons are so foreboding. Abandonment of serious questions, as well as rebellion on our knees against petty-bourgeois views of sexuality, are connected issues of contemporary Czech culture, which for ten years has been relentlessly rejecting Freud, Husserl, Jaspers, Heidegger, Kinsey, Kierkegaard, and many others, but endorsing Françoise Sagan,[2] Simone de Beauvoir, and Irena Dubská. The decisive criteria of [today's] publishing policy consist in the very possibility of a certain author to publish, and not in mere partial instalments that will not pay off old debts. They thereby merely enable one to create an *impression* of a liberal stance towards Western culture. In conflict with this policy it is necessary to publish important sources and to occupy a whole range of diverse positions. To cross *inadmissible* sources with Marxism is just as original as crossing Sagan with Vrchlický.[3] It confers a *foreign* kudos upon those who are the first to introduce unfamiliar ideas to our culture.

When no sexological compendia have been published in Czech for years, then this unsatisfied hunger can be exploited by any book, however poor, that occupies the ter-

* This text was printed in *Literární noviny* under the title "Člověk nebo sexus?" [Human being or sexus?], *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 18, p. 7, published 6. 5. 1967. The text was preceded by the following lead paragraph:
"Ivan Sviták's reviews of two books (*The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir and *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan) in the 9th issue of *Literární noviny* provoked a polemical response from Irena Dubská and Jan Patočka (*Literární noviny* 12). We now give Ivan Sviták the chance to reply. We shall not return to the discussion of the book, but in an upcoming issue we shall publish reflections on the underlying topic, about which we have received several letters from readers."

[1] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, pp. 6 (first part of the quote ending with "the essential") and 762 (remainder of quote).

[2] Françoise Sagan (1935–2004), French writer and playwright. Several of her texts were published in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 60s – *A Certain Smile*, *Aimez-vous Brahms...*, *Château in Sweden*, *Wonderful Clouds*, *Le Cheval Évanoui*, *Escape from Sagan*, and *Three Novels about Love*.

[3] Jaroslav Vrchlický, famous Czech poet, writer, playwright and translator (1853–1912).

rain. This applies to existentialism, phenomenology, sexology, sociology, anthropology, and other trendy intellectual brands. A hunger for information by itself creates certain laws of prosperity. If, for example, a land existed where there were no reports in the native tongue about the Soviet Union (or the United States) even within the range of vocabulary of a decent encyclopaedia, then every book that is the first to be published in the native language about the Soviet Union (or the United States), and capitalises upon *foreign knowledge* on this theme, will assuredly enjoy considerable success regardless of whether or not it is original. As soon as the sources upon which the bestseller is based are published, its lustre is lost. Original existentialism, phenomenology, or sociology provide more satisfaction than local derivatives, ideologically diluted by a native outlook on the world, rendering Western intellectual opiates equivalent to home cooking. This makes as much sense as boiling up a little champagne before serving it with pork and cabbage.[4]

Beauvoir's book is an ideological work par excellence, mainly in its use of the traditional method of pre-Marxist (but also pre-Comte) philosophers. Her method is an incessant conflation of banal experience with shallow speculation, encrypted in inaccessible terminology so that even a reader not educated in philosophy trembles at sequences full of the absolute.

In practice this ideological method fails on every page, because nothing can be discovered through a combination of banalities and speculations. It is possible only to pretend a depth of complexity of diction, or to present ordinary observation in a more readable form than they would be rendered by a proper encyclopaedia, which has been lacking in our advanced culture since the times of our forefather Otto.[5] The a priori shortcomings of this ostentatiously unscientific method (as is always the case with existentialists) is then further compounded by the author's endeavour to identify general problems that should be valid universally, for all women, for woman *an sich*. However, as early as in the last century, representatives of the social sciences recognised that it makes no sense to speak generally of women or men, because the more generally an object is conceived, the more ambivalent and logically inconsistent judgements we may express about it. After all, people are stupid and clever, large and small, fat and thin, so if we ascribe any single characteristic to "humanity" it may apply, but it is worthless. In Beauvoir's work feminine diversity has a broad register, and for sure she always says something true about the "woman in herself." Here the silent martyr devotedly endures, here the frigid neurotic lives within the hell of marriage, here the gates of hell exercise their demonic womanhood, here again the naïve wanton assiduously pursues her orgasm, here the enchanting imp of the marital bed admires the poetry of the rising dough. But what does this actually say about the specifics of women

[4] Traditional Czech meal served with dumplings and beer.

[5] This refers to *Ottův slovník naučný* [Otto's encyclopedia], the largest Czech encyclopaedia, which was published at the turn of the 20th Century.

other than generalities, which are described far better, and far more concretely and comprehensively, in literature or psychoanalytical case records? Dorothy Parker quite justifiably wrote that she could not "be fair to books that treat women as women,"[6] because she rightly suspected their a priori banality. Beauvoir most probably describes the emotional problems of deflowered wives – and to a distastefully disproportionate extent – on the basis of *literary* models (mostly from the nineteenth century), but how on earth are we to believe in her knowledge of female emotions when she has already assured us in her introduction that, in accordance with the existential method, it is not possible to determine when and how people are happy? An analytical stance is the conditio sine qua non of science. Whoever wishes to discover the generality of womanhood, discovers banalities.

It is not possible to work with the speculative method other than according to the same old cliché: a banal problem in connection with the situation of women, a projection of responsibility onto men, a reflection spiced up with occasional Hegelianisms and onward and upward toward a new pseudo-problem. In this we shall again see a documentation of how men deform humanity in women, according to the logic with which a woman derides her husband for the shortcomings of *her own* hairstyle because she has spent the money for her haircut on a jacket for her lover. Everything that Beauvoir says about women circles endlessly around the bed and the sexual act, deflowering, marriage, adultery etc., in which the author constantly refuses this female role and reproaches men for causing it. Beauvoir constantly sees a sexual problem in women, and therefore views them precisely as they are viewed by man. This is the great MAN, who the author declares to be not only the sole Subject, but in fact even the Absolute. And at this point I must warn my male colleagues against the spiteful philosophical castration that this book will subject them to, since if they identify with the opinions of the author they shall become the Absolute of transcendence and lose their empirical being. Through the eyes of the author you shall see your own penis as a philosophical symbol, a "symbol of transcendence and power."[7] You may even do so with enthusiasm. On the other hand, however, this will present no obstacle to you, in trepidation of a chance twist of fate, in seeking in a woman's "face, breasts and legs a precise and strict form of an idea."[8] And do you know why? "[Woman] is not only physis but just as much anti-physis; and not only in civilisation of electric permanents...!"[9] Behold what

[6] Quote from the American poet Dorothy Parker, from her statement about the book *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* by Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham (1947). The author is mentioned several times by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*.

[7] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 185.

[8] Sviták took this citation from the Czech edition (Beauvoir, *Druhé pohlaví*, p. 90). The English edition (2011) differs from it as follows: "[man looks for] the idea's exactitude on woman's face, body, and legs" (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 183).

[9] *Ibid*. Emphasised with exclamation mark by Ivan Sviták.

the philosophical method can achieve; it shoves transcendence down the trousers of the unsuspecting man, while commensurately attributing philosophical content to a woman's breasts and legs (excusable imprecision), and we are to subject this anti-physical being, adorned with a perm, to an entirely unsymbolic transcendence. Up to now I had believed that a human being thinks (transcends) with the brain and makes love with the sexual organs. I thank our comrades Beauvoir and Dubská for showing me the error of my ways. The organ of transcendence is not the male brain, and we now know where we are next to gather thoughts of a strict and precise form.

The specifically sexual functions of woman are incessantly rehashed in the book, the passages on the wedding night and defloration are repeatedly garbled at length as if they were an instruction manual, endless exasperating banalities about marriage are spiced up with amusing titillations plundered from second-rate psychoanalysts and then sweetened with abstraction over the first and second sex, which tells us no more than that the author can count to two. In the chapter on marriage there is not a single original idea other than the immortal banality that marriage extinguishes love, which is an "idea as worn out as an old rag," as our professor of Latin used to say. Entirely lacking from her description are any mention of children or the positive aspects of the human couple, and over everything there hangs boredom and disgust for life, which Beauvoir (the "Sagan without charm") wished to impose also upon us (to paraphrase a critic of her last novel), resulting only in our disgust at reading her work. The author starts out from a fictional equality which was always reclaimed by the bluestockings, convinced that "the two sexes have never divided the world up equally,"[10] and even (hearken!) "the worst curse on woman is her exclusion from warrior expeditions."[11]

The key to the problems of the female world is not analyses of the notional world of women, but real relationships, a synthetic anthropology that generalises observations from concrete social sciences and human experience, which creates a space for a broader freedom. Men did not write a book on the first sex, not because they sensed their predominance, but simply because generality is not a productive terrain of modern science. It is merely a space for metaphysics of (bad) philosophers in a dark room, searching for a black cat that isn't there. If it were, we would not be able to miss its sparkling eyes, shining out of the darkness, no matter how stupefied we were by this bestseller. Poets and philosophers are receptive to the essence of life in both the cat and in woman. Without symbolism or transcendence they understand that precious femininity, from which Ms. Beauvoir and Ms. Dubská have, for a change, unshackled us, even though we are having a beautiful spring.[12]

[10] *Ibid*., p. 9.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 76.

[12] Here, Sviták deliberately refers to spring as a time that, according to him, evokes lust and invites us to celebrate women's bodies and femininity.

Human Being and Sexus Revisited*

Jan Patočka

A line has now been drawn under the discussion, and it is possible to state with satisfaction that Helena Klímová,[1] in the role of referee, has taken on a tone of measured debate and accepted the seriousness of the subject matter, as was noted in Irena Dubská's contribution and in my own. The topic does not concern some kind of pseudo-problem, nor is that maligned transcendence a concept that could have no practical use (with this "transcendence in the other" the situation is unfortunately different, but that would be a long philosophical digression, with which I do not intend to tire the reader here). The editor [Klímová] also accepts Beauvoir's conception of the history of the relationships between man and woman, and to it only adds its prospects for the future, where we might and need not go with it. Thus in the essential conception of the problem, even if not in all its results, Helena Klímová agrees with Beauvoir (though the same applies also to Irena Dubská and other defenders of the quality of Beauvoir's book): if we take into consideration the fact that Sviták's article was published in order to pursue an original intention which was to a substantial degree antagonistic, namely to demonstrate that Beauvoir's work is nebulous metaphysics, a feminine pseudo-myth, that it is intended to fudge genuine problems, weaken scientific thought about the issue, then the author of these lines can be fully satisfied with the overall result.

However, in another aspect he cannot be so satisfied. He cannot fail to point out the manner by which Ivan Sviták proceeded in his petulant response. If in his first article he borrowed from Beauvoir her main idea – human being or sexus? – in order to position himself putatively against the author by belittling her, in his response he entirely evades the questions once posited, and instead takes refuge in a tactic which I shall leave to the reader to judge as to whether this is worthy of such a man of letters: he resorts to pointing the finger and proclaiming that this is merely transparent pornography. We are familiar with the domain to which such proclamations belong – to that of those who would like to muzzle literature. The claim that all Beauvoir says about women revolves around the bed and the sexual act, that Man is declared the only Subject,

* Despite of the editors' insistence that they would not return to the debate over *The Second Sex*, in the 24th issue of *Literární noviny* they printed another response, this time by Helena Klímová, entitled "Naposledy: Člověk a sexus" [For the last time: Human being and sexus], which we have not translated here. Klímová's text in turn provoked this response together with another by Irena Dubská, which were published together as "Člověk a sexus ještě jednou" [Human being and sexus revisited], *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 29, p. 3, published 22. 7. 1967. They were introduced by the words: "We have received two more postscripts on the article by Helena Klímová, which we consider it necessary to publish."

[1] See Helena Klímová, "Naposledy: človek a sexus," *Literární noviny* 16 (1967), no. 24, pp. 6–7.

can be asserted only by a polemically aggravated and emotionally biased author; one who was evidently ultimately unable to convince even those who may have originally been inclined to believe him. The author could have spared himself these elementary methodological formulas if he had been clearly aware of the sense of Beauvoir's book, which aims to be a philosophical-sociological *essay*, presenting the history of the problem and an overview of the female world of today. In his response, Sviták did not answer a single objection, a single issue, or a single misgiving of his opponents; such a response can be considered a repetition of the same methodological banalities that were abundantly employed in his first article. And this is indeed a fact which merits emphasis: the author, who wishes to be taken seriously as a thinker, once again merely abuses where he could and should have dispassionately discussed.

Irena Dubská

The discussion on Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex was finished before it had even started: although Ivan Sviták was granted the right to reply, he did not answer a single one of the objections formulated in the contributions either by Jan Patočka or by myself. It is not possible to conduct a meaningful discussion in the face of such a distraction of attention from the problem, however adept, and the same applies to personal diatribes, mystifications of the author's position, and also mystifications of a more general nature – as if Beauvoir had published her work in our country today at the expense of the publication of more essential authors. If the editorial board has published a response of this kind, it is possible to rely only upon the sound judgement of readers, who furthermore may consult the original text and the corresponding reviews published elsewhere, for example in *Filosofický časopis*.[2]

[2] František Kautman, "Existencialistický pohled na ženu" [The existentialist view of woman], *Filosofický časopis* 16 (1967), no. 2, pp. 306–310.