Identity, Sex, and the Metaphysics of Substance

Oh! what is an Identity?
And what can ground the certainty
Identities are actual
and all are self-identical
persisting, as though they’re the same—
coherent, single, with one name?
And even more importantly
does Gender have Identity?
We can’t discuss Identity
unless we make an inquiry
into something that comes prior
which of course is human Gender
since never are there human Persons
except as we are gendered constructs.
It seems to me now that the notion of Human Being as a Person (as one who has some agency) makes claims to an Ontology—an argument about the Being implicit in one’s social Meaning. And yet this takes elaboration and questioning of the assumption that actually the context social exists outside (as an external) with somehow a true Personhood either already understood as Consciousness or else as Reason or as moral deliberation. The question of Identity is (within most Philosophy) almost always one centered on some internal criterion presuming continuity to Self as one Identity (of just one Person throughout Time). But such conjectures are not mine.

Instead I ask to what degree do regulations that we see as Gender’s social formulation—constructing its dualist division—not constitute Identity creating in reality the mere coherence of Subjects
with their self-identical status? Is it not that Identity derives from Normativity assigned as if it comes from Nature when it’s a descriptive feature? In other words Identity when seen as Continuity is not a tick of Personhood (as is thus often understood) but it’s a trick made socially by norms constructed culturally of intelligibility dictating legibility.

In as much as Identity is linked to Sexuality as well as Sex and Gender norms then in the way the Person forms there is a problematic question which is open to a deconstruction. And now we track the emergence of beings whose supposed coherence appears to make them Persons, but their Gender makes us wonder what their essence is, which won’t conform to any culture’s Gender norm by which the Person is defined— so we are caught up in a bind.
Genders are intelligible and somehow they are integral to structures institutional—coherences relational—maintaining their continual Identities as Sexual as Gendered and Desirable. In other words there are Specters of discontinuous vectors produced and then prohibited by Laws which all have limited a Gender to perceived connection of linking Sex with its Expression.

And yet by now I’m sure you know that that’s the point made by Foucault. For as he ironically terms it Sex’s truth is made by the norms it itself makes as Identity in forming Sexuality. Well Heterosexualization always makes the instantiation of a discursive opposition between what’s seen as Feminine and what’s construed as Masculine (where these two terms are understood as attributes of Personhood). And yet the culture gives the Norms by which all gendered selves have forms and Norms require and insist
that selves can only then exist when Gender follows from its Sex as well when gender practices should follow normatively either the custom of their Sex or Gender: Identity’s relational to structures, which (political and made by the customs cultural) would shape our sexualities.

Since some Gender Identities must fail already to conform to suit the letter of the norm they seem impossibilities or as it were monstrosities. And yet these rare Identities provide us opportunities to open up the very terms of identitarian norms.

When Identity is legible and therefore it’s intelligible, that’s when the matrix singular creates it own peculiar deep link within compulsory Heterosexuality’s discursive regularities that make up Sex Identities. Identity’s made by the force of Power ruled through its Discourse.
Then is Gender Identity not made by regulatory and erstwhile a compulsory Heterosexuality?

Or would maybe that explanation actually be totalization where Heterosexuality just takes the place that logically was held by Phallocentrism as sole cause of all Sexism?

We learn from France whose Feminists as well as her Post-Structuralists make no agreement uniform that would define that “Power” term. Consider all the oppositions among the various positions. We have at first—I would not lie—the views of Luce Irigaray who says there is no Sex but One (the Masculine whose production opposes any other Gender which simply is the male one’s Other. And then as you are sure to know there is the point made by Foucault who sees both Masculinity as well as Femininity and even Sexuality as all one single entity
built up by discursivity
of science and modernity.
And then of course I’d not renege
the work of one Monique Wittig
who keys Sex as a category
to the regime regulatory
of the condition compulsory
of Heterosexuality
constructed as the Feminine
by universal Masculine.
But Wittig as you surely know
agrees in essence with Foucault
that Sex will end when finally we
o’erthrow what’s the Hegemony
of Heterosexuality.

These models each explanatory
show Sex as a category
but understood in different terms
of Power in its many forms.
So what’s the possibility
that we can think complexity
of all these fields of power, or
how all them mash together; for
the theory of sexual difference
suggests that there’s no real existence
granted the Female as a Subject
because she’s totally the Object
within a representational
program or system conventional.
She’s always the Representation and hence without representation. Irigary’s Ontology then argues somewhat subtly a Woman’s what can’t simply be because she is the very Difference who’s baked already into Essence— she’s not just the Opposite Sex in contrast to manly Subjects nor’s she just the Opposite Gender opposed to the Masculine Other— she’s really the economy of Opposition’s binary (the secret, monologic plan who’s used constructing human Man).

Yet all agree despite difference that Language makes from Sex Substance or a self-identical Being as though not a way of seeing. Discourse conceals! We cannot be a Sex or Gender essentially. So now again I do not lie when I say that Irigaray would claim that Grammar’s no index of what is Gender or is Sex for Grammar privileges the model of Gender as the foundational and Binary in opposition between— within —representation.
Irigaray says that this Grammar (subtending to its take on Gender) assumes that Man and Masculine and Woman and the Feminine create a kind of Binary which masks a higher harmony—the singular Hegemony of one sole Masculinity that shuts up Femininity as site of Multiplicity against the Phallic Unity.

Also by now I’m sure you know that Sex’s Grammar for Foucault imposes the Gender Binary through a system regulatory shrinking the Multiplicity of any Sexuality that might disrupt Hegemony.

Yet nor would I ever renege on noting how Monique Wittig examines Sex’s Binary in terms of a compulsory Heterosexuality and aims to squash that tyranny—advancing a true Humanism that’s free from any rank sexism. And elsewhere she views the promotion, the profusion, indeed diffusion,
of all economies erotic
that are not strictly phallocentric
as ways that we might flatly free
Sex, Gender, and Identity.
And Wittig sees the Lesbian
as pushing back from restriction
of any Gender Binary
imposed by Sexuality.

But in her humanist assumption
the modes of all signification
as well as all representation
are not under interrogation.
But rather self-determination
affects the rehabilitation
of existential agency
granted to Lesbianity.
Therefore she won’t critique the Subject
who is Patriarchy’s Symbolic.
Effectively her argument
negotiates some replacement
of the universal Subject, Man
with a new one, the Lesbian.
So the Woman-Is-Sex equation
is just a Masculine conflation
encoding Femininity
as sexed Corporeality —
hence, a refusal to grant women
the freedom that’s granted men.
To break Sex as this property might phase out the misogyny which makes Sex a synecdoche for all of Femininity.

Gender Wittig sees as index for the old opposition, Sex, and claims there only is one Gender which is used always in singular where the Masculine is general as a non-gendered Universal. And Wittig calls for the destruction of Sex as made by this construction where Woman must assume the status of Subjecthood that is denied us. As we move toward that destruction the Woman still must somehow function as universal point of view and as particular one, too. So Wittig’s view of the Lesbian (replacing her in the Subject, Man) confirms the normative promise of Metaphysics of Substance (the ideals of Humanist ethics).

So Wittig does not quite comply with insights from Irigaray but she defends that the presumed Person who’s equated perhaps with Freedom assuming a status pre-social
for a freedom that’s universal, subscribing as well in essence to a Metaphysics of Substance responsible for the production of Sex as a hidden construction.

Well the Metaphysics of Substance is something that scholars would nuance in discussions contemporary of Nietzschean philosophy. And in setting out to teach me about works by Friedrich Nietzsche, says Harr: the methodology for building up Ontology is trapped in Illusions of Being—in fallacious, dumb ways of seeing—mistaking Grammar’s prerequisite of the Subject and the Predicate as though they were Reality of some one true Identity at levels of Ontology (of Substance and of Attribute)—Constructions Wittig would dispute because they serve to institute an Order and Simplicity in some one true Identity. They don’t present and can’t reveal an Order that is really Real.
This criticism Nietzschean explains the pickle we are in: psychological categories govern at last the theories of Gender and Identity and give to them Reality. For Haar and for other such critics this is a false Metaphysics and offers critique of the notion of Psychological Person who’s viewed as a substantive thing (or—if you prefer—like *das Ding*). Psychological categories derive from false preliminaries (assumptions of Identities) which is the belief in Language with all of its messy baggage.

Now Grammar made Descartes presume *ego cogito ergo sum*. But does “I” think? No! Certainly! The truth is that thoughts come to me. Really the Subject’s false conception merely arises from the fiction that any kind of Unity begins in words’ Reality.

And as Wittig has shown moreover there isn’t a Language sans Gender. Wittig analyzes the Grammar
of French as it pertains to Gender
and through this work in Wittig’s eyes
this Gender not only qualifies
but constitutes the Episteme
by which this Gender we would deem
as somehow universalized.
(Although of course Wittig realized
it’s not the same in French and English
this gendering grammatical-ish.)
Nevertheless the mark of Gender
is always just as Grammar’s rendered
with Person always as a bearer
linguistically as some one Gender—
a primitive Ontology
that is a built-in Binary.
Arising from Ontology
this Gender is Philosophy.
And Wittig’s views corroborated
by discourses so saturated
with implicit Ontology
in Sex and Sexuality.

The claim that one may simply be
a Sex or Sexuality
is clearly symptomatical
of Western metaphysical
assumptions about Substances
where Genders seem as Essences.
And in the case of men and women
this would subordinate the notion
of Gender to Identity
and furthermore the fallacy
that Person can a Gender be
presumes some state of prior Essence
that’s coupled with presumed existence
or sense of self-identity
that’s linked to Sexuality.

In a pre-feminist context
which would confuse Gender with Sex
Gender’s a mode of Unity
for embodied Identity
opposed to some Sex Opposite
whose structure’s a prerequisite
to build an oppositional
coherence individual
among Desire, Sex, and Gender,
inside a Self that they each render.

Assumption that one just can be
a given, sexed Anatomy
is undermined by observation
of gendered psychic disposition.
“I feel like a Woman” is true
because Aretha has sung “You
make me feel.” So always the Other
invoked is an opposite Gender—
a formulation that coerces
the Binary it thus imposes.
Gender can be a Unity of Sex and Sexuality only when Sex is understood as equal to what Gender would and only when Desires be Heteronormativity—performed in terms of a relation where Sex is made in opposition. Indeed for Gender’s Unity there always already needs must be Heterosexuality.

Heterosexuality produces uniformity of gendered terms that constitute a Binary we must refute.

Well there is a presupposition within this very Gender relation of a casual reproduction of Sex and Sexuality for Gender is Desire, or Desire’s Gender. Furthermore within this certain Unity constructed metaphysically Sex, Gender, Sexuality— with each one in this Trinity now all unlocked by just one key: Heterosexuality.
A naturalistic paradigm where Sex and Gender intertwine with these in continuity to lusting Sexuality as basis of Identity and for a paradigm expressive which sees the Self as successive to Sex and Gender and Desire and not to such expression prior— are both what Luce Irigary (I paraphrase but do not lie) sees as a wish to reify.

This sketch of Gender gives a clue for the substantializing view and its deeper Metaphysics as linked to Power Politics. The instutionality of the rank compulsory Heterosexuality requires Gender’s Binary with one term, Masculinity demarked from Femininity—a demarcation overall clearly Heterosexual.

And then this differentiation of two intertwined oppositions creates a strong consolidation or a presumptive Unity
both within Masculinity
and in Femininity
through terms of Sexuality.

Now the displacement strategy
of relational Binary
form of its ontological stance
(the Metaphysics of Substance)
claims Gender’s dueling categories
are made within its binaries.
And then I’m sure that you will know
that that’s implicit in Foucault:
Sex, he says, as category
is product of an inventory
produced within Modernity
by modes of Sexuality.
And the strange, tactical production
of that old, discursive construction
of our Sex within a Binary
conceals of course the primary
aims of the secret apparatus
which postulates that both the Sexes
are cause of Sexuality.
Here’s a conclusion that he draws:
“It is an effect that seems the cause.”
Regimes of Sexuality
by functioning discursively
instate the Gender Binary
and thus make Sex a category.
In an intro Foucault would write to notes by a hermaphrodite (a certain Herculine Barbin whose journals—in Foucault’s jargon—show “practices” that would critique Modernity and its technique). Heterosexuality—which cannot grasp an Identity that thwarts its Sexuality.

From norms this Herculine departs having both male and female parts. Moreso the system just has shelves for filing certain gendered Selves. And those conventions that produce a Self in terms of Sex, reduce the Self to either He or She—a frame that Herculine’d exceed since Herculine deploys the terms of Gender using “both” its forms and thus exceeds the finery set up by Gender’s Binary. Conversing disconcertingly, Heterosexuality and Homosexuality are advanced anatomically in a discontinuity of Heterogeneity that’s cut off paradoxically. by “Hetero”—sexuality
(undermining subversively
that Metaphysics of Substance
once seen as the very Essence
of identitarian Sex).

Foucault sees Herculine’s ex-
perience as some Pleasures that
are like the “grin” without the “cat!”
And Pleasures thus are figured here
as qualities that don’t adhere
to any abiding Substance
which thus suggests the happenstance
of all gendered experience
not apprehended as Substance
or the hierarchical Grammar
of a Noun and Modifier.

Through this reading of Herculine
our Foucault claims that he has seen
exposure ontological
of attributes accidental
and postulates Identity
as restricted culturally
in principles of hierarchy.
And this insight wholly dispenses
with Genders any Substances
so it’s no longer possible
to hold the gendered Subject whole
subsuming Gender dissonance
into a prior essence, as
if men might act quite Feminine yet with some manly underpin (a “man” who is Ontology or figure of Biology). But the notion of this Substance is just a fictitious essence produced through the compulsory construction of coherency which orders neatly Attributes into the Gender Absolutes.

And so it seems this dissonance must undermine the Substance stance. Appearance of a Self that’s gendered is by a Regulation rendered which marshals forced coherences into some fictive Substances. The exposure of this production as made by Regulation by resisting assimilation with attributes, or any quirk transgressing the same old framework as certain dissonant Adjectives would redefine the Substances (the Nouns that they would modify). And so we may hypothesi that this explodes as forgeries all of Gender’s categories since they include what they exclude (as we quite rightly must conclude).
But if supposed Substances are nothing but coherences of contingently made construction, of attribute in regulation, then the very Ontology is formed quite artificially and so a superfluity.

So as this now is broken down we see that Gender’s not a Noun. But neither is it made from sets of some free-floating sobriquets. We can’t deny that its effect is made within the old Subject (mainly when performatively it is imposed coercively when Power wants coherency).

In Metaphysics of Substance a Gender’s merely Performance which makes up that Identity that Gender would presume to be.

In the terms that I’m construing Gender simply is a Doing and not the doing of a Subject who before the Deed could exist. In the project liberatory of thinking the category— outside Metaphysics of Substance—
there is certainly relevance for what some critics would teach me about words by Friedrich Nietzsche. “There is no Being just the Deed.”

Now Nietzsche might not have agreed but let me state a corollary: There is no Gender category and no Gender Identity behind Performativity and this makes the very expression that’s presumed to have been their Essence.