Chapter 12

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Feminist Philosophy and Sexual Ethics in *Mad Men*

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INTRODUCTION

Loosely following J. M. E. McTaggart's logical structure concerning the construction of time—A-concept and B-concept—we can suggest a similar logical structure concerning the experience of sexual intimacy. For McTaggart, an A-concept of time involves continuity—the past flows into present, and the present flows into the future. Although time remains a human construction under the A-concept, humans cannot divide up their experience of time into abstract periods or distinct moments. In contrast, the B-concept of time involves an atomistic approach to time where time gets defined by integrals or discrete moments.[1]

How does this theory of time apply to the experience of sexual intimacy between lovers, partners, or spouses of the opposite sex?[2] Sex can be

1. See McTaggart, "Unreality of Time."

2. In this chapter, I focus exclusively on heterosexual sexual activity within marriage in *Mad Men*; for the sake of clarity and brevity, I do not consider other types of sexual relationships.

defined as occurring at the moment of vaginal penetration and coming to an end after either ejaculation or orgasm (B-concept).[3] Or, sex can be described in terms of continuity—between partners—where being together in ordinary life contributes to the experience of sexual intimacy (A-concept). While some of the vagueness of the A-concept description of sex cannot be clarified, we tend to use the following phrases and words to help identify other aspects of sexual intimacy in addition to intercourse: compliments about appearance, cuddling, dancing, dirty talk, exercising together (especially yoga and other meditative routines), foreplay, frontal hugging, heavy petting, holding hands, oral sex, passionate kissing, playfulness and sexual teasing, provocative gesturing, and sexting.

In this chapter, I implement this distinction as a helpful tool for making sense of how sex and sexuality are represented on the AMC television series, *Mad Men*—a series that, while not explicitly pornographic, presents the storylines of several of its characters through their sexual behavior.[4] Oddly enough, scholarly treatments of *Mad Men* fail to attend to and reflect upon the presentation of sex and sexuality within *Mad Men*—an omission indicative of the tendency, identified by feminist philosophers, for philosophy to

3. Some examples of what I consider a B-concept understanding of sex can be summarized very briefly. Thomas Aquinas argues that the uniqueness of sex concerns its momentary nature where the extreme intensity of bodily pleasure—experienced through sexual intercourse—can be neither commanded by reason nor explained in terms of an act of the mind. For Thomas Aquinas, sexual intercourse can be considered "good" when and only when every sexual act comes with the intention of procreation. I interpret Lisa Sowle Cahill's surprising defense of Thomas Aquinas's sexual ethics as a shift from B-concept to A-concept in the sense that she tweaks his argument to say that the marriage must have a "public" and "social" intent for procreation, not each and every act of sexual intercourse (see Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*, 199–201). Rollo May claims that sex and sexual activity require a "key moment," and May defends the entrance of the penis into the vagina as the most important "key moment" for a proper psychological understanding of sex and sexuality (see May, *Love and Will*, 75). Gilbert Meilaender writes that penile penetration of the vagina supplies us with "an act in which human beings are present most fully and give themselves most completely to another" (Meilaender, *Limits of Love*, 47).

4. Brief examples include: the first season depicts Peggy struggling with her decision to have sex with Pete Campbell in his office; Roger Sterling has a heart attack while having sex with one of his mistresses; Betty Draper responds to her husband's promiscuity by going to a bar to enjoy random (B-concept) sex herself; Pete Campbell and his father-in-law find themselves at the same brothel, which leads to distrust on both sides; Joan engaged in coitus with a client and uses sex in order to become a partner in the advertising agency; and even Glen Bishop—the young boy played by Matthew Weiner's own son—develops and maintains a strong sexual attraction toward Betty Draper/Francis throughout the series.

refuse to consider the ways that sex and sexual pleasure remain an integral part of life.[5]

In the collection of essays, *Mad Men and Philosophy*, for instance, not a single chapter explores questions of sex and sexuality in *Mad Men*; beyond an entry for "sexism," neither sex nor sexuality appear in the index.[6] Given all of the ways in which sex defines and forms the identity, livelihood, and mistakes of the characters in *Mad Men*, accounting for the problems of sexuality—i.e., "sexism"—falls far short of the obligation scholars maintain in attending to the complexities, positivities, and surprises of sex and sexual relationships within *Mad Men*.

This chapter offers three philosophical lenses for interpreting and understanding the sexual aspects of Don Draper's marriages to Betty and Megan. Two of these lenses come from Immanuel Kant's sexual ethics and Catherine MacKinnon's theory of radical feminism; I demonstrate how both of their theories become helpful for interpreting and appreciating the details of Don's marital relationships. The third interpretive lens comes from

5. See Millett, *Sexual Politics*; Millett distinguishes between thinking philosophically about "sex" and thinking philosophically about "sexual politics," and she claims that Western philosophers tend to do the former but not the latter. Alan Soble makes a charge worse than neglect and accuses philosophers (and theologians) of ridiculousness and silliness when writing about sex: "I have over the years collected a number of apparently absurd or ridiculous claims made by intelligent people [but critiquing these] silly assertions may say more about my own biases and prejudices than about the thoughtfulness of their authors"; additionally, "reader[s] should take much of what is written about sexuality with a grain of salt . . .[because approaching] the philosophy of sex [requires] a light heart and a willingness to poke holes in bubbles" (Soble, "Introduction," xvii and xx). While I am quite aware of the risks of writing on sex and sexuality identified by Soble, I worry much more about the problems that come with Millett's urging for philosophers to write about sex and "sexual politics."

6. See Carveth and South, *Mad Men and Philosophy*. While this collection of essays is extremely accessible and proves helpful for reflecting philosophically on the television series *Mad Men*, its early publication date makes it extremely limited in terms of where the television show ended. *Mad Men and Philosophy* divides its chapters into four sections: section one offers reflections on *Mad Men* through the lenses of epistemology (theories of knowledge) and the metaphysics of morality (theories of freedom); section two offers existentialist reflections on *Mad Men*, and the title of the section uses the line from *Mad Men* also used as the title for this book "The universe is indifferent"; section three offers ethical reflections on *Mad Men*, which includes both business ethics and personal ethics; and section four offers reflections on *Mad Men* through the lenses of political philosophy and social philosophy. In my judgment, the two best chapters in the whole collection are found in section four: Abigail Myers' "'And Nobody Understands That, But You': The Aristotelian Ideal of Friendship among the *Mad Men* (and Women)" and Ashley Jihee Barkman's "Mad Women: Aristotle, Second-Wave Feminism, and the Women of *Mad Men*." While Barkman's chapter implements de Beauvoir's work for interpreting *Mad Men*, she never discusses the sexual experiences of the characters of *Mad Men* (see Chapter 14).

Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist-feminist theory of sex and sexuality—which provides the most useful approach for the particular task of thinking through how both Betty and Megan become *empowered* through the sexual components of being married to Don. I intend for all three theories to remain live options for interpreting *Mad Men*, and I leave it to the practical reasoning of viewers to work with the theory (or theories) that they find most compelling.

I construct a selective chronological account of Draper's sexual experiences within his two marriages.[7] I attend to the scenes depicting the sexual intercourse that led to the conception of his third child with Betty, Megan's display of her sexuality through dancing for Don during his fortieth birthday party, and Don and Megan's final sexual encounter—which also includes Megan's friend, Amy. I interpret each scene in terms of the A-concept/B-concept distinction. I also demonstrate what it means to watch these episodes through de Beauvoir's, Kant's, and MacKinnon's theoretical frameworks. Before attending to the scenes, however, I outline what the basic arguments involved with these three theoretical frameworks.

THREE THEORIES OF SEX AND SEXUALITY

This chapter utilizes three theories of sex and sexuality. The modern philosopher Immanuel Kant (1704–1824) constructs a theory of sexuality that pays close attention to the role of actions, desires, and volition within sexuality.[8] Kant reasons that sex necessarily objectifies the other and, thus, violates the version of the categorical imperative often called the dignity test—never treat persons merely as a means but always as an end in themselves.[9] Kant's solution to the problem of the immorality of sex and the objectification that occurs during sex is quite simple: marriage. Marriage requires partners to treat the other in terms of their *whole* self, transforming sex into an act respectful of their personhood. Sex outside of marriage remains an action that necessarily reduces the other to one of their parts—specifically, sexual

7. Approaching marriage through the trope of ordinary life proves extremely illuminating—as Chapter 13, in this volume, illustrates; the A-concept of sex and sexuality ought to be tied to the significance of ordinary life and some of its particular features.

8. Kant's most thorough treatment of sex and sexuality can be found in *Lecture on Ethics*, 155–62; he also writes about sex within the context of marriage in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 61–64.

9. The precise wording of this version of the categorical imperative reads: "For, all rational beings stand under the *law* that of each of them is to treat himself and all others *never merely as means* but always *at the same time as ends in themselves*" (Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 41).

organs. Kant thinks that sex always objectifies the other: the male partner objectifies the female partner, and the female partner objectifies the male partner. The *only* solution to this problem of objectification can be marriage. Marriage provides an institutional context where the parts, the sexual organs, of one's partner are not prioritized over the whole person. The fact that marriage demands the constant fulfillment of obligations toward the other—and those obligations remain directed toward the other as a whole person—allows for sexual activity to become moral because it includes the fulfillment of a duty toward the other person. Marriage provides a context that transforms sexual activity from the objectifying fulfillment of your own desire to the fulfillment of a duty toward your sexual partner.

In her radical feminism, the legal philosopher Catharine MacKinnon (1946–) makes a similar distinction to my structure of A-concept vs. B-concept for understanding sex and sexuality. MacKinnon claims that men tend toward a B-concept understanding of sexual intimacy that emphasizes penetration and ejaculation as the definitive bookends of sex; on the contrary, women's A-concept experience of sexual intimacy includes both "private" and "public" ways of women and men relating to one another. MacKinnon offers this gendered distinction as a way to critique the emphasis on "privacy" in the wording of *Roe vs. Wade*—demonstrating that the Supreme Court justified abortion through the logic of a male-centered understanding of sex and sexuality (B-concept).[10]

Notably, MacKinnon arrives at the same conclusions about sex as Kant does—albeit taking a different path to get there. For MacKinnon, sexual activity remains immoral within a patriarchal society because the male sexual partner brings his patriarchal power with him into the bedroom. In Western society, MacKinnon thinks that men *always* and *necessarily* objectify their female sexual partners.[11] Kant and MacKinnon agree that sex invites immorality. MacKinnon reasons that heterosexual sex always involves the man exercising power over the woman and, thus, renders impossible a genuinely consensual sexual relationship.[12] Other than her exhaustive and invigorating work on how law and policy ought to be written to overcome patriarchy, MacKinnon offers neither concrete nor on-the-ground solutions for individuals within their own lives. The disagreement that arises between Kant's and MacKinnon's diagnoses of sexual activity concerns the possibility for reciprocal objectification: Kant believes that both partners objectify one

10. See MacKinnon, "Privacy v. Equality," in *Feminism Unmodified*, 93–102.

11. For MacKinnon's understanding of objectification, see "Desire and Power," 46–62.

12. This connection between Kant's and MacKinnon's work receives full consideration in Barbara Herman's "Could It be Worth Thinking," 53–72.

another while MacKinnon locates objectification only from male to female. Another disagreement that arises between these two thinkers concerns the solution to the problem of objectification brought about through sex: MacKinnon thinks that marriage simply institutionalizes patriarchal power, within the bedroom, while Kant believes that marriage provides the only solution to the problem of sexual objectification.

The French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) provides a phenomenological account of sex—which means that she does not claim to know *a priori* if sex is moral or immoral, consensual or rape,[13] objectifying fulfillment of pleasure for one partner or moral fulfillment of a duty toward the other.[14] For de Beauvoir, patriarchy brings its problems to the bedroom; however, the bedroom also holds the promise for genuine gender equality that can overcome the problems of patriarchy. Toward the end of her important and massive work, *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir details two kinds of sexual intercourse. Both of these, she claims, lead to equality between individual men and women—and demonstrate how equality in the bedroom leads to equality in society. The first kind of sexual intercourse that promotes gender equality, somewhat counter-intuitively, involves shared domination: the male partner becomes passive so as to be dominated by his female partner, and the female partner becomes passive so as to be dominated by her male partner. The key ingredient here seems to be that one of them *voluntarily* becomes passive for the sake of allowing the other to fight "their own self."[15] The second kind of sexual intercourse that promotes gender equality includes a shared sense of intimacy, pleasure, and vulnerability.[16] Sex ought to serve as an opportunity for the intense experience of being "stalked by death" *together*,[17] having a lustful and uncontrollable "*need of the other*,"[18] and *mutually* savoring orgasmic moments—moments that feel

13. This part of the list refers to MacKinnon's thinking about sex and sexuality; for MacKinnon, most heterosexual sex is a form of rape within Western society: "Men define women as sexual beings; feminism comprehends that femininity 'is' sexual. Men see rape as intercourse; feminists say much intercourse 'is' rape. Men say women desire degradation; feminists see female masochism as the ultimate success of male supremacy and marvel at its failures" (MacKinnon, "Desire and Power," 59).

14. "The truth is that physical love can be treated neither as an absolute end in itself nor as a simple means; it cannot justify an existence: but it can receive no outside justification. It means it must play an episodic and autonomous role in all human life. This means it must above all be free" (de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 468).

15. Ibid., 763.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid; emphasis added.

like they represent the climax and purpose of our whole existence as human beings.[19]

De Beauvoir concludes with her radical claim: if these experiences can be had together in the bedroom, then there would be no temptation "to contend for false" power and privileges—"and fraternity could then be born between them [men and women]."[20] For de Beauvoir, equality between men and women comes about through healthy sexual encounters. Good sex leads to "the good life" between men and women. De Beauvoir emphasizes (in my terms) how the A-concept of sexual intimacy requires the B-concept—the moment involving vaginal penetration, ejaculation, and orgasm—to be dynamic, free, healthy, playful, and well balanced.[21]

Significantly, de Beauvoir thinks that marriage does not guarantee a proper and secure context for sex to achieve gender equality. While not anti-marriage, de Beauvoir's phenomenological method leads her to conclude that marriage tends to serve as protector and sustainer of patriarchy: "the principle of marriage is obscene because it transforms an exchange that should be founded on a spontaneous impulse into rights and duties; it gives bodies an instrumental, thus degrading, side by dooming them to grasp themselves in their generality."[22] Whereas Kant champions the fact that spouses treat each other as whole persons and "grasp themselves in their generality," de Beauvoir finds this same aspect of marriage problematic because viewing one's spouse in "their generality" means limiting the spontaneity required for a healthy relationship.[23] She specifies problems with the dual roles of "husband" and "wife": "the husband is often frozen by the idea that he is accomplishing [his masculine] duty, and the wife is ashamed to feel delivered to someone who exercises a right over her."[24] Marriage sustains patriarchy in the sense that husbands view the livelihood of their wives through the so-called manly or masculine duties that husbands allegedly have, and wives tend to view themselves as passively waiting for

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Interestingly, the difference between de Beauvoir's and Kant's theories of sex and sexuality relates to and resembles the differences between Kant's formulaic moral theory and G. W. F. Hegel's creative and freedom-centered moral theory. The best and most thorough analysis of how de Beauvoir borrows from, yet tweaks, Hegel's moral philosophy can be found in Nancy Bauer's *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism*, especially chapters 3–6.

22. De Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 465.

23. For de Beauvoir's arguments on the problems of viewing other persons in terms of generality, static notions of identity, and universal categories, see *Ethics of Ambiguity*.

24. De Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 465.

their husbands to exercise his rights over her. In troubling ways, marriage makes it a *duty* for a wife to allow her husband to exercise his rights over her.

Given this line of reasoning, how can I defend the judgment that de Beauvoir does not come out as anti-marriage? Because the very next sentence, found in the same paragraph of *The Second Sex*, reads: "Of course, relations can become individualized [in] married life; sexual apprenticeship is sometimes accomplished in slow gradations; as of the first night, a happy physical attraction can be discovered between the spouses."[25] In the honeymoon stage of marriage, and if and only if they both find "a happy physical attraction" with one another, husband and wife become sexual *for each other*—which encourages and leads to gender equality within their life together. Even after the honeymoon stage of a marriage, de Beauvoir reasons that marriage can remain "good" because it "facilitates the wife's abandon by suppressing the notion of sin still so often attached to the flesh; regular and frequent cohabitation engenders carnal intimacy that is favorable to sexual maturity."[26] De Beauvoir regrets the lasting influence of Christianity on how we understand "the notion of sin still so often attached to the flesh,"[27] but for phenomenological reasons this "notion of sin" remains part of her observations—and her observations guide her judgments.

Sex tends to be better and healthier outside of marriage because the role of otherness contributes to the eroticism required for sexuality: "Eroticism is a movement toward the *Other*, and this is its essential character; but, within the couple, spouses become, for each other, the *Same*; no exchange is possible, between them any more, no giving, no conquest."[28] Because married couples tend to become too similar *to* one another,[29] and hence lose their sense of otherness *with* one another, sex within the context of marriage tends to be non-erotic sex—which, for de Beauvoir, lacks the ingredient sex needs for sex to be good, healthy, and well balanced. De Beauvoir continues her train of thought: "If they remain lovers [within marriage], it is often in embarrassment: they feel the sexual act is no longer an intersubjective experience where each one goes beyond himself, but rather a kind of mutual masturbation."[30] On the one hand, the risk taken by entering into marriage

25. Ibid., 466.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 185–86, 765–66 (de Beauvoir commits some of her final thoughts, in *The Second Sex*, to thinking through how the category of sex negatively impacts women's sexuality).

28. Ibid., 467.

29. De Beauvoir's reasoning here problematizes any notion of "soul-mates" within marriage.

30. De Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 467.

concerns how sex within marriage becomes more like "mutual masturbation" rather than dynamic, free, healthy, playful, and well balanced. On the other hand, while marriage does not make sex good—or moral—sex can become good, in the sense of achieving gender equality, within the institution of marriage as long as otherness refuses its reduction to sameness.[31]

Catherine MacKinnon's theory of sex and sexuality remains much less theoretical than either de Beauvoir's or Kant's positions are: MacKinnon's brilliance appears in her detailed analysis of law and policy—what we might call a feminist hermeneutic of legal texts, neither a phenomenological study of actual sexual encounters (as de Beauvoir offers) nor a deontological account of practical reasoning in regards to one's own sex life (as Kant provides).[32] MacKinnon shies away from constructing moral positions, and she refuses to commit her reasoning to either an ethical theory (deontology) or a philosophical movement (existentialism). While MacKinnon's and Kant's philosophical arguments about sex and sexuality offer helpful and interesting lenses for making sense of Draper's sex life, the primary claim of this chapter concerns how Simone de Beauvoir's feminist *defense* of sex provides the best philosophical lens for properly understanding Draper's sexuality and the two primary women in his life: Betty and Megan.

DON DRAPER'S SEX LIFE

In what follows, I consider three episodes presented in terms of the sexual components of Don Draper's two marriages. The episodes—and the particular scenes in those episodes—under consideration are the following: (1) Don and Betty have sex to "save" their marriage,[33] and their third child gets conceived as a result of this sexual act;[34] (2) Don's second wife, Megan,

31. For more of my thoughts on the problem of reducing otherness to sameness, within feminist philosophy, see my "'The Woman Question': William James's Negotiations with Natural Law Theory and Utilitarianism," in *Feminist Interpretations of William James*, ed. Shannon Sullivan & Erin Tarver, (University Park, PA: Penn St. University Press, 2015), chapter 2.

32. Even her essay, "Not by Law Alone," concludes with the argument that freedom established *through the law* ought to be the goal of feminism (see MacKinnon, "Not by Law Alone," 21–31).

33. See "The Inheritance," S2/E10.

34. I recognize the difference between conception taking place *within* the sexual act vs. *resulting* from the sexual act. In agreement with Kant's theory of sexuality, I think it more defensible to say that conception *results* from the sexual act than to say that it occurs within the sexual act: sex is for pleasure, and it happens to make babies. If the Kantian terms disappoint, then in Aristotelian terms: pleasure remains an internal good of sex; procreation ought to be considered an external good of coitus/sexual intercourse.

performs a dance for Don at his fortieth birthday;[35] and (3) Megan brings a friend to the bedroom for a ménage à trois,[36] which becomes the last time that Megan and Don have sexual intercourse together.

Betty Tries to Save Her Marriage ("The Inheritance," S2/E10)

Betty and Don have separated because Betty has gained knowledge of Don's infidelities. Betty learns that her father has become ill. Without their two children, Betty and Don drive to her father's house. After several awkward familial moments throughout the day, Betty seems to genuinely appreciate Don's presence with her and her family. As night falls, Betty lays down in the guest bed while Don sleeps on the floor beside it. Betty has a difficult time falling asleep. Betty comes down to him, puts her hand on his chest, and waits for his attention. He wakes up, stares into her eyes for a few seconds, and shifts his body in order to be receptive to Betty's advance. Betty lies on top of him and starts to kiss him. Don caresses her hair. They are very receptive toward one another, and this scene depicts deep intimacy and reciprocal vulnerability between the two of them. Surprisingly, though, Don wakes up alone.

Although hurt by Don's promiscuous behavior, Betty reaches out to Don—through sexual intimacy—as a way to show her appreciation for him being present with her through a difficult time in her family and to see if their marriage is salvageable. When they return to their home, Betty makes the decision that they ought to remain separated. This decision confuses Don, but he obliges her request. Don's past infidelities remain too much for her to overcome.[37]

Later in Season 2, however, we learn that they conceived their third child as a result of the sexual intercourse they enjoyed on the floor together at Betty's father's house. They name the baby "Gene," also Betty's father's name, to honor Betty's father and to memorialize his place of conception.

35. "A Little Kiss," S5/E1.

36. "The Runaways," S7/E5.

37. Kirsten Guidero disagrees with my interpretation and offers a counter-argument: "I think Betty realizes that, as Don has treated her poorly, she can genuinely care for him and express her care for him sexually without her sexual expression of care implying any sense of a permanent relationship" (Guidero, correspondence with the author [Feb. 22, 2016]).

Betty and Don from a Kantian Perspective

What happens if we watch this episode with Kant's sexual ethics in mind? Betty seems to be completely justified in both having sex with Don while at her father's house, and making her decision to divorce him—even with the expectation of their third child.

Don's infidelities remain inexcusable from Kant's deontological perspective. Kant writes,

> The second *crimen carnis secundum naturum* is *adulterium*, which occurs only in marriage, when the marriage-vow is broken. . . . all betrayals and breaches of faith, *adulterium*, is the greatest [immoral act], since there is no promise more important than this. Hence *adulterium* is . . . a cause for divorce.[38]

Given Kant's words here, there ought to be no negative judgment on Betty that Don's infidelities lead to their divorce.[39]

However, Betty initiating sex with Don should surprise us. She has no obligations to Don because he has broken the most important promise that a rational person makes to another rational person in the marriage vows. We should deem this sexual act between Betty and Don absolutely *moral* for three reasons. First, they are married; marriage remains the only proper context for sex. Second, Betty initiates sex and refuses to reduce Don to the single part of his sexual organ; they care for each other, as whole persons, in their sexual intimacy. Third, *consequences do not matter* within deontological reasoning—which means that neither the later (positive) consequence of Gene's birth nor the (negative) consequence of their divorce bears on this sexual act.

Betty and Don within MacKinnon's Framework

According to MacKinnon, Betty ought not try to save her marriage through sex but should seek a divorce from Don. Patriarchal society, however, makes it hard for women to seek divorce and be divorced. MacKinnon laments that both "aging" and divorce "devalue a woman economically."[40] While we should not place moral blame on Betty for initiating and having sex with her husband, we ought to recognize that Betty betters herself by divorcing Don

38. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 160.

39. Kant lists two justifications for divorce: adultery committed by either party, or the impotence of the husband.

40. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory*, 35.

and escaping the particulars of his patriarchal power—yet simultaneously recognizing that Betty will not escape general patriarchal power. Betty's character does not meet the standards of radical feminism.

Betty and Don within de Beauvoir's Framework

The sexual intimacy between Betty and Don seems to be healthy and well-balanced: Betty initiates, and Don responds; Betty maintains control over how their erotic experience will go; Don does not manipulate the situation to favor himself in any way, and Betty possesses the power and volition to enjoy sex with her adulterous husband. Of course, the adultery matters; at this point in the television series, Betty also has had an affair in the form of a random sexual encounter at a local bar. What would Simone de Beauvoir say if she watched this episode with us?

De Beauvoir reflects upon the differences between adultery committed by a husband and adultery committed by a wife. When a wife commits adultery, she has brought shame on both her marriage and their community; when a husband commits adultery, he demonstrates the freedom given to him by nature.[41] What is the solution to these imbalanced and unfair judgments about "the second sex"? For de Beauvoir, fidelity within marriage is not the answer. De Beauvoir uses the "fact" of adultery as one of her reasons for why marriage remains problematic: "Marriage, by frustrating women's erotic satisfaction, denies them the freedom and individuality of their feelings, drives them to adultery by way of a necessary and ironic dialectic."[42] The solution to adultery, for the wife, becomes either more adulterous affairs or the dissolution of the marriage—Betty tries the first solution and settles for the second solution, especially after she falls in love with Henry.[43] Surprisingly, however, de Beauvoir concludes that—for women—adultery, at its best, provides "only [an] artificial escape . . . that in no way authentically allows the woman to take her destiny into her own hands."[44] Other artificial escapes from marriage include superficial friendships and an active social life for the sake of appearances. De Beauvoir's conclusion about adultery

41. See de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 206–8.

42. Ibid., 592.

43. De Beauvoir's case for more adulterous affairs as a solution to adultery can be found here: "If she has no singular attachment to her husband, but he has succeeded in awakening her sexuality, she will want to taste the pleasures she has discovered through him with others" (593).

44. De Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 598.

strikes me as a reigning endorsement of multiple affairs, even if those sexual encounters tend toward a B-concept understanding of sex.

Within de Beauvoir's framework, does having sex with one's adulterous husband provide any type of redemption within the marriage? Yes, it does. For de Beauvoir, one of the (few) benefits of marriage concerns how marriage makes available erotic experiences and sexual pleasure for women. De Beauvoir seemingly offers three reasons for why a wife should continue to have sex with her adulterous husband.[45] First, given that the husband's mistresses represent a type of "power" and "prestige" for him, de Beauvoir argues that marital sex focused upon the experience and pleasure of the wife removes the vicious types of "power" and "prestige" within sex for her husband. He might seek to manifest his vicious understanding of the role of "power" and "prestige" when he enjoys sexual intercourse with his mistresses, but marriage provides a context where this vicious type of "power" and "prestige" gets challenged and controlled. In this case, sex between a husband and wife brings down the "prestige" of the husband—not because his wife makes him less prestigious but because the "power" and "prestige" can be reconciled and shared on the wife's terms.[46]

Second, when the wife initiates sex—even, perhaps especially, with the knowledge that her husband has wandered from her—means that they have sex on her terms. Post-adultery sexual encounters between husband and wife keep the marriage focused on *her* erotic experiences and sexual pleasure, and it means that *she* refuses to let his infidelity and other vices (intemperance might be as much as a vice than infidelity is) control the terms of their marriage.[47] Third, sex within marriage remains the best way to achieve equality within marriage; moreover, wives should feel the same amount of freedom—as husbands feel—to enjoy sex outside of marriage too.[48] Betty having sex with Don at her father's house achieves the point of all three of these reasons for why having sex with one's adulterous husband provides a type of redemption within marriage. This episode shows Betty in control: she has sex with Don on her terms, and she chooses to divorce him as well. Betty might not be the ideal woman on the standards

45. I say "seemingly" because de Beauvoir does not address this question directly. Rather, I use arguments and reflections found from three different chapters—"The Married Woman," "Social Life," and "The Independent Woman"—to offer the best possible answer to the stated question. These reasons are based upon my interpretations of de Beauvoir's arguments about and reflections upon the role of sex within marriage.

46. See de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 439–523.

47. Ibid., 571–98.

48. Ibid., 721–52.

of "second-wave feminism,"[49] but she demonstrates that she manages their marriage on her terms in this episode.[50]

Megan Dances for Don ("A Little Kiss," S5/E1)

The fifth season opens with a ninety-minute episode that feels more like a film about the 1960s than a single episode of an ongoing television series. The first episode of the fifth season begins with a display of Don's and Megan's sexuality. Don's daughter, Sally, observes Megan's nakedness; her facial expressions display that she knows her father recently had intercourse with her beautiful and naked step-mother. Sally sees Megan lying naked in bed, and Don comes to talk to Sally wearing only his towel.

Megan plans a surprise party for Don's fortieth birthday and invites colleagues from their office. Already intoxicated before the party even begins, Don and Megan make out in the hallway of their apartment building. Roger Sterling ruins the "surprise," because he is also in the hallway, but once inside Don claims to the anxious crowd: "I am surprised!" While she sits on the couch talking with a gay man (the dialogue in the show labels him a "homosexual"), Don stares at Megan's legs as he converses with Harry and Roger—publicly displaying his desire for her. Megan interrupts the party to announce, "Okay everyone, my friends, first of all I wanted to thank you all for coming and second of all. . . . I think I've had just enough to drink that I am ready to give my own present to the birthday boy." Don looks deeply worried, and says, "Thank you, thank you all for coming. . . . I think we should call it a night." Megan quickly responds, "Absolutely not!" She continues but directs her speech only toward Don while she sits him down, "Don, you stay there."

"Did you buy him a pony?" asks Cooper. Megan walks up to the stage to join the band, grabs a microphone, counts off in French, and sings the French version of "*Zou Bisou Bisou*"[51]—a song intended as a public proclamation of one's love and translates into English as either "Oh! Kiss, Kiss" or "Oh, you ought to kiss me!" During Megan's provocative performance, Harry cheers Megan on by shouting inappropriate phrases. After the song

49. For a feminist critique of Betty Draper's character, see Ashley Jihee Barkman's "Mad Women: Aristotle, Second-Wave Feminism, and the Women of *Mad Men*," in *Mad Men and Philosophy*, Chapter 14.

50. For a contrarian, but not contradictory, interpretation of Betty's character through de Beauvoir's existentialist-feminist theory, see Chapter 4 in this volume.

51. "*Zou Bisou Bisou*," written by Bill Shepherd, Alan Tew, & Michel Rivgauche; originally recorded by Gillian Hills (Summer 1960).

ends: she sits on Don's lap, gives him a kiss, and tells him "happy birthday." After Megan's performance, Roger offers a toast: "If I may raise a glass. . . . To Megan, for letting us see the Don Draper smile usually reserved for clients. And to Don, you lucky so-and-so. As a wise man once said, 'The only thing worse than not getting what you want, is someone else getting it.'" Roger's words demonstrate his lust for Megan and envy toward Don for being the object of Megan's desire.

Megan's performance is not a striptease but, more accurately, a provocative performance of an intentionally sexy song. She lifts her skirt up and shows off her legs, but neither her undergarments nor even her clothing comes off during her performance. Toward the end of her performance, Megan takes her hand and slides it down from her breasts to her abdomen. She happily celebrates their marriage and their healthy sex life, and she remains comfortable and confident in utilizing her beauty and sexuality to give Don what (she thinks) only she can give to him.

After the party, Don falls into bed and tries to convince Megan not to clean the house. Megan agrees and tells Don that she wants to talk and have sexual intercourse. Don remarks that he has interest in neither talking nor having sexual intercourse because he needs to sleep. But then he does talk; he condemns her, "Don't waste money like that." Megan responds, "It was *my* money, and you don't get to decide what I do with it." Rolling his eyes, Don makes a request driven toward bringing guilt and humiliation onto Megan: "Well, could you please not use it to embarrass me again?" She deflects, "I know why you're upset . . . you're forty," and she puts her lower lip out. Megan tells him that she threw him a party because she loves him, and he informs her that he will go to sleep while she does whatever she wants—which, he knows, sounds contradictory because "she wants" to have sexual intercourse with him yet he continues to refuse her advances. She goes to the balcony, displaying confusion and defeat. The next morning, Don wakes up alone but with the news playing on the radio. He looks at himself in the mirror, while shaving, and this scene hints at the possibility of his feelings of regret.

Towards the end of this ninety-minute episode, Megan cleans the apartment wearing only her undergarments. Don asks her to put clothes on, and Megan tells him not to look at her. "You don't deserve to look at this," she says and then adds: "You're too old. I don't need an old person. You probably couldn't do it anyway." After an aggressive—almost violent—argument, where Don tells her that she wants him, and she tells him to get off her and to sit down, Megan shouts: "You can watch me from over there." He grabs her and kisses her, and they have aggressive coitus on the living room floor.

Afterwards, Megan says that no one at the office likes her. "I didn't want them in our home," Don tells Megan—*finally* offering a reason for why he did not want his own birthday party. This is the first scene where Megan begins to hint at leaving her job with the advertising agency; she works there only because he does, and she wants to be around him all day. Don tells her that he simply wants her to have what she wants, and she again initiates sexual intercourse. The camera allows viewers to see above them: viewers are offered a glance at a portion of her breast and Don's hairy stomach.

Megan's Dance from a Kantian Perspective

If a rational person wants to perform a provocative dance, then performing that dance *for their spouse* becomes the only way to render it a moral—and, therefore, rational—action. In her essay, "Kant and Kinky Sex," Jordan Pascoe rightly claims that Kant's theory of sex and sexuality surprisingly allows for the kinkiest of sexual actions and relationships—*if and only if* these actions take place within the bounds of the marital relationship.[52] For Kant, marriage offers the space and time for rational persons to explore "kinky" urges.[53] Megan's marriage, therefore, creates this space and gives her the

52. Jordan Pascoe writes: "[In] one way . . . Kant was rather radical about sex. Unlike many other philosophers and religious figures of his day, he rejected the idea that sex was about procreation and that sex was permissible only if it was procreative. Kant understood that sex was about pleasure and pleasure alone. . . . Kant thought that sex was about the heedless pursuit of pleasure at the expense of one's humanity and the humanity of one's lover. He thought it was the desire to objectify and be objectified, to debase and be debased, and an appetite so consuming as to be cannabilistic. Kant thought sex was unimaginably kinky. And, given that he knew very little about sex [empirically], this is not surprising. He's wrong to think that sex is inherently kinky. . . . Lots of sex is loving and respectful and even (imagine!) motivated by an appreciation for the humanity of yourself and your lover. . . . But we can think about this in another way: some sex *is* unimaginably kinky. Some sex is about hunger and debasement and objectification. So Kant is right, in a sense: sex is about pleasure, and some pleasure is kinky. And the trouble with kinky sex is that . . . it's awesome and consuming and highly pleasurable—and totally morally dangerous. Often, it means seeking out scenarios in which we are debased and dehumanized just because this is pleasurable. Sometimes, what we want is precisely to be used, to be dominated and devoured, and to take a break from all that [comes with the demands of] respect and dignity. So . . . we *can* take Kant's thoughts on sex seriously, as long as we understand that he's taking on the moral perils of unimaginably kinky sex. And if we read Kant's concerns about sex in this way, his claim that kinky sex can't be *transformed*, but only *quarantined*, seems more reasonable. . . . A relationship that's consistent with kinky sex isn't one that transforms our kinky urges, but one that creates a space in which we can explore them" (Pascoe, "Kant and Kinky Sex," 32–33).

53. See Pascoe, "Kant and Kinky Sex," 33.

time to publicize her sexuality and her sexual desire for Don. The context of marriage allows Megan to get her kink on!

Although Megan chooses a public setting to display her sexuality and sexual desire for Don, that choice does not authorize characters like Harry and Roger to make known their envious (Roger) and lustful (Harry) feelings. Harry's behavior, the next Monday at the office, only worsens in terms of the inappropriateness of his comments about Megan. Much later in the television series, after Megan and Don divorce in the seventh season, Harry meets with Megan over lunch—allegedly for professional reasons—and asks her to have sex with him. Harry lacks moral permission to make his lustful desires known to Megan, both during her provocative performance at Don's birthday party and when they dine together over a professional lunch meeting. Harry's character ought to be judged with harsh criticism on deontological standards.

The problem with this episode does not concern Megan's provocative dancing. Rather, the problem concerns how Don fails to fulfill his obligation toward his wife. Don ought to display gratitude for his wife's provocative performance,[54] and he ought to respond in kind to the sexual advances made by Megan. This is what marriage is for, and Don's failure to have sex with her should be considered a moral failure on his part.

Megan's Dance within MacKinnon's Framework

Interpreting Megan's dance as an emphasis on the "public" nature of Megan's sexuality allows us to connect this scene with MacKinnon's argument that the public nature of sex remains a necessary aspect of female sexuality. The public display of sexuality, in a variety of forms, serves as the pivotal problem of *Roe v. Wade*—which defines sexuality in terms of "privacy,"[55] as well as what I have developed as a B-concept understanding of sexuality. Megan does not define her sexuality strictly in terms of when Don's penis finds its way into her vagina (B-concept), and MacKinnon argues that law and policy ought to cease defining sex in the masculine-centered and reductive terms of vaginal penetration.[56]

54. Instead, he displays disappointment and embarrassment; he attempts to guilt and shame her about it as well. For a review that centers on Don's character in this episode, especially his response to Megan's dance, see Perpetua, "'Mad Men' Version."

55. See MacKinnon, "Privacy v. Equality," in *Feminism Unmodified*, 93–102.

56. I firmly concur with MacKinnon on this particular point: law and policy ought to shift from a B-concept to an A-concept understanding of sexuality. For a consciousness-raising example of the cruelty of the law concerning how a B-concept understanding of sex determines American policy about rape, see the meme

Megan's Dance within de Beauvoir's Framework

David Haglund, of *Slate* magazine, offers an interpretation of this scene closest to de Beauvoir's interests and purposes when he asks, "Could [Matthew] Weiner have found a more perfect and surprising song with which to convey the sexual liberation of Megan and her generational cohort? I doubt it."[57] Within de Beauvoir's framework, Megan's dance exhibits her *freedom* and promotes sexuality on her terms. In my judgment, this whole episode depicts Don's discomfort with the equality occurring within his marriage to Megan; simultaneously, Megan begins to come out of her shell and find her comfort and confidence through her sexual relationship with Don. After they have aggressive sexual intercourse on the living room floor, toward the end of the episode, Megan finally feels the *freedom* to inform Don that she wants to leave her job—the sequence here, how sex leads to freedom in other aspects of life, represents exactly what de Beauvoir has in mind when she discusses (in the "Conclusion" of *The Second Sex*) the equality achieved and freedom gained through heterosexual sexual relationships. Season 5 opens with Megan beginning to experience both this equality and freedom, and she refuses to back down from Don because she possesses the comfort and confidence to enjoy their sexual relationship on her terms.

Megan, Don, and Megan's Friend ("The Runaways," S7/E5)

Although I will not go as far as one commentator by calling it "rape,"[58] the final sexual encounter with Megan involves a ménage à trois where Draper's body language—despite his eventual complicity—can be interpreted as either a lack of desire or an unwillingness (a lack of volition) to participate. Draper's body language in that particular scene begs for a philosophical examination about the power dynamics at play in Megan's bedroom. I describe the pertinent details of this episode and then address the question: how does it help us to make sense of this *ménage à trios* if we view it with de Beauvoir's, Kant's, and MacKinnon's understanding of power in their theories of sex and sexuality?

Toward the end of "The Runaways," Don comes home from the bar and sees Amy and Megan acting very flirtatiously. Amy and Megan became

"If Mugging Were Treated the Same as Rape" (http://www.buzzfeed.com/derekj/if-mugging-were-treated-the-same-way-as-rape-r76).

57. Haglund, "What Was That French Song on *Mad Men*?"

58. See Evonne, "Don Draper Is a Rape Survivor."

friends in Los Angeles, and Don asked Megan to not have Amy around when he arrives to see Megan in Los Angeles. Megan throws a Hollywood party, and Amy attends this party. Don leaves the party to go to a bar with Harry and returns to find only Amy and Megan in their home. Amy offers Don marijuana, but Don refuses. He tells them that he feels tired, and he wants to go to sleep. Amy says to Megan: "There goes the fun." Don goes into the bedroom to get undressed. After knocking on the bedroom door, Amy walks into the bedroom to find Don without his shirt. She says, very sexy-like, "I'm supposed to tuck you in." Don looks confused and asks, "And what does your friend say?" Megan enters and says to Don, "I don't want you to be in a bad mood." Megan lies on the bed while Don remains in an upright position, still with no shirt. Don makes a request of Megan, "Stop playing around. . . . you're stoned." Megan smiles at him, tries to kiss him, and asks, "Don't you like Amy?" Amy giggles and becomes shy, "Leave him alone." Megan pats the bed, a gesture suggesting to Amy to sit next to Don. Megan rubs Don's chest and shoulder, and Don watches Amy sit down next to him. Now that Don finds himself between two younger women, Megan tries to persuade him: "This is the best place to be right now." Amy confirms, "Right here." Megan instructs Don to kiss Amy and tells him, "You know you want to." Don clearly states, "I don't want anything right now." Still wearing his pants, Megan takes her hand and grabs Don's groin area. Don's hands remain on the bed and on his own leg, and Megan says to him: "Don't lie." Megan kisses Don, her hand remaining on his covered genitals. Megan nods to Amy, seemingly granting her permission, and Amy leans over to kiss Don. Don's eyes are closed while Amy kisses him, and he seems to reciprocate this kiss. Megan continues to rub Don's chest, and Amy and Megan lean over to kiss one another in front of Don. Don looks even more confused now, and Megan pulls up from Amy to kiss Don again. Megan gently pushes Don onto the bed. Amy and Megan undress one another, and Don gazes upon them—mostly staring at Megan's body. Don tries to stand up, but Megan puts her legs on top of him—placing her own genitals, although still wearing her undergarments, over his groin area. Megan takes Don's hand and puts his fingers around the area of Amy's vagina, and viewers assume that Don touches Amy's clitoris. Amy leans down to kiss Don while he touches her, and Megan remains on top of Don although their clothing prevents penetration at this point. The scene stops here.

Viewers see Megan and Don, the next morning, asleep together—with Megan's hand on Don's shoulder. Don slowly wakes up and still seems confused. The camera broadens out, and Don's confusion intensifies as both Don and the viewers simultaneously see Amy also in the bed asleep. Don gets out of bed, gets dressed, and makes himself breakfast. Megan greets

Don, and Don complains that he cannot locate the coffee. Megan tells him that she will get it, and she looks at him seductively and says "good morning." He replies with a masculine-sounding "good morning," and they embrace to kiss. Amy comes out of the bedroom and says that she needs to go. None of them discuss the night before. While Don and Megan have no way to know this at the time, this ménage à trios turns out to be the final time that Megan and Don have sexual intercourse together.[59]

Amy, Megan, and Don from a Kantian Perspective

What would Kant say if he witnessed this scene with Amy, Megan, and Don? Although Kant fails to consider the moral status of a ménage à trios, his argument against polygamy actually applies to this particular scenario. Kant writes,

> So the sexual impulse creates a union among persons, and only within this union is the use of it possible. This condition upon utilizing the sexual impulse, which is possible only in marriage, is a moral one. . . . [It also follows] that nobody, even in *matrimonium*, can have two wives; for otherwise each wife would have half a husband, since she has given herself totally to him, and thus has a total right to this person as well. There are therefore moral grounds that tell against *vagae libidines*; grounds that tell against concubinage; and grounds that tell polygamy in *matrimoniu*; so in the latter we only have monogamy.[60]

In the sexual encounter depicted in this scene, Don gets only "half a wife" (Megan) because he gives himself totally to her but—by bringing a friend into their marital bed—she splits herself in two from the perspective of Don's sexual obligations. Don must attend to the sexual organs of Amy and his wife, Megan. Therefore, Megan acts immorally toward Don in this scene.

59. Viewers are led to assume that Megan and Don had sexual intercourse because Megan placed herself on top of Don; another reasonable assumption concerns Don and Amy *not* having penile-vaginal intercourse but only the vaginal penetration of Don's fingers into Amy.

60. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 159.

De Beauvoir, MacKinnon, and the Ménage à Trios as a Philosophical Problem

In order to understand how de Beuavoir and MacKinnon might view this scene, I begin with Sarah Evonne's interesting claim that Don Draper was raped in this scene. Evonne begins her review of "The Runaways" with the proclamation: "We need to talk about the rape of Don Draper."[61] Evonne makes two claims to defend her argument that Megan raped Don. First, her definitional claim:

> When we are confronted with a narrative such as Don's, the question of rape is simply not present. We don't understand, and write it off as a steamy threesome, without mentioning that there was no consent given. The definition of consent varies, and in this case, it is best to turn to the definitions that some colleges employ. The definition used by Antioch College sets the foundation for consent as "the act of willingly and verbally agreeing to engage in specific sexual conduct." Reed College goes more in depth, demanding the standard of effective consent as "informed; freely and actively given; mutually understandable words or actions; which indicate a willingness to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way, with each other." The second definition illustrates a standard sometimes described as "enthusiastic consent." If at the very least we use consent as prescribed by Antioch College, the encounter between Don, Megan, and Amy does not pass.

By these definitions of consent, provided by Antioch College and Reed College, Don did not consent to participate in the *ménage à trios*.

Evonne's second claim involves what she calls the "gender reversal test": "What if Megan was in Don's position, and Don and Harry . . . were in the positions of Megan and Amy? Would it . . . be seen as a sex scene? Would Megan's assertion, 'I don't want anything right now', be brushed over?" Evonne's second claim remains simple: if Megan had been the one wanting to go to sleep and refusing the advances of two men, this scene would be considered a rape—without delay, doubt, or hesitation from the television audience. *Questioning it,* as legitimate sexual intercourse, would be controversial.

Although quite interesting as a claim, there are two logical problems with Evonne's argument. First, the definitional claim remains inadmissible because the intent of these two definitions of consent directs itself at

61. Evonne, "Don Draper Is a Rape Survivor."

college-aged citizens in the twenty-first century. Neither definition takes into account what is required of consent in the context of marriage—or the 1960s/1970s. Although not quite a logical fallacy, this anachronistic argument comes close to fallaciousness.[62] Even putting this logical judgment aside, the second definition emphasizes both "words and actions"; we determined that Don's words refused the ménage à trios, but his actions participated in it—returning Amy's kiss, touching Amy's clitoris, and staying under Megan's straddling position.

Secondly, the narrative of *Mad Men* does not lend itself to the "gender reversal test." We cannot make a proper moral judgment on a hypothetical but only on what actually happened—or, better stated, what occurs within the narrative context of the world of *Mad Men*. The "gender reversal test" involves too much of an unrealistic hypothetical. It also ignores the nuanced character of Don Draper, who would never *share* his lover with another man. Perhaps he does not wish to share his lover with another women—*that* is the question here. Introducing an alternative hypothetical does not allow us to address *that* question but deflects us away from the characters to an abstract hypothetical scenario that ought to be considered non-sensical in relation to the narrative world of *Mad Men*.

For Catharine MacKinnon, men cannot be raped by women in the current context of Western society because power dynamics always favor the male partner.[63] We cannot and should not consider Don to be raped in this scenario because men cannot be raped by women. Rape requires power, and Don goes into the bedroom with patriarchal power. Yes, we can talk about "the rape of Don Draper"; we will conclude, however, that no rape occurred here: only a powerful man put in an uncomfortable situation.

MacKinnon offers no *feminist* definition of consent. She deconstructs several legal definitions of consent.[64] She concludes her chapter, "Rape: On Coercion and Consent," with these words:

> [W]hen an accused wrongly but sincerely believes that a woman he sexually forced consented, he may have a defense of mistaken belief in consent or fail to satisfy the mental requirement of knowingly proceeding against her will. Sometimes his knowing disregard is measured by what a reasonable would disregard. This is considered an objective test. Sometimes the disregard need not be reasonable so long as it is sincere. This is considered

62. Some historians, but usually not logicians, call it a fallacy of *nunc pro tunc* (now-for-then or the-now-applies-to-then).

63. See MacKinnon, "Desire and Power," in *Feminism Unmodified*, 46–62.

64. See MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory*, 172–83.

> a subjective test. A feminist inquiry into the distinction between rape and intercourse, by contrast, would inquire into the meaning of the act from a women's point of view. . . . What is wrong with rape in this view is that it is an act of subordination of women to men. It expresses and reinforces women's inequality to men. Rape with legal impunity makes women second-class citizens.[65]

A "feminist inquiry into the distinction between rape and intercourse," in the context of a consideration of Don Draper with two women, would lead us away from the B-concept emphasis on this particular ménage à trios and toward A-concept considerations of Don's and Megan's marriage. How many times did Don's actions and words make Megan feel "subordinate" to him? In what ways does Don's sheer presence, in Megan's life, reinforce her "inequality" in relation to him? Does he make decisions, in his life, that pave the way for her to become a first-class citizen; or, do most of his decisions sustain her status as a "second-class citizen"?

To analyze this *ménage à trois* properly, we ought to consider de Beauvoir's words on the necessity of alterity and asymmetry within a healthy and well-balanced sexual experience:

> [I]n love, tenderness, and sensuality woman succeeds in overcoming her passivity and establishing a relationship of reciprocity with her partner. The asymmetry of male and female eroticism creates insoluble problems as long as there is a battle of the sexes; they can easily be settled when a women feels both desire and respect in a man; if he covets her in the flesh while recognizing her freedom, she recovers her essentialness at the moment she becomes an object, she remains free in the submission to which she consents. Thus, the lovers can experience shared pleasure in their own way; each partner feels pleasure as being his own while at the same time having its source in the other. The words "give" and "receive" exchange meanings, joy [becomes] gratitude, pleasure [turns into] tenderness. In a concrete and sexual form the reciprocal recognition of the self and the other is accomplished in the keenest consciousness of the other and the self. Some women say they feel the masculine sex organ in themselves as part of their own body; some men think they *are* the woman they penetrate; these expressions are obviously inaccurate [because] the dimension of the *other* [needs to] remain . . .; but the fact is that alterity no longer has a hostile character; this consciousness of the union of the bodies

65. Ibid., 181–82.

> in their separation is what makes the sexual act moving; it is all the more overwhelming that the two beings who together passionately negate and affirm their limits are fellow creatures and yet are different.[66]

This passage beautifully and wonderfully captures the dynamics of a healthy sexual relationship, and (in my terms) it comes across as an A-concept understanding of sexuality. There are three important points, from this passage, for considering the philosophical problems of the ménage à trios between Amy, Don, and Megan.

First, while Don may not have verbally consented to the *ménage à trios*, we could interpret Megan's persistence as her attempt to "negate and affirm [Don's] limits"—to take him out of his comfort zone of control and power and to show him another illuminating sexual experience where "This is the best place to be right now." Philosophically, this makes the *ménage à trios* an *epistemological* problem—not a *moral* one. How does Megan know where Don's limits are, and does Don communicate well enough to his wife about his boundaries? Boundaries can be honored only when they are articulated.

Second, the *moral* problem does not seem to involve his consent; rather, the *moral* problem concerns the role of asymmetry within a *ménage à trios*. How does shared *otherness* occur between three people? Is it possible to achieve "a relationship of reciprocity" when three people are involved? Can a "union of bodies" be accomplished between three people? Granted, de Beauvoir does not defend a traditional notion of complementarianism in her theory of sexuality. However, she consistently emphasizes the significance of the male partner giving himself fully to the female partner—while maintaining his masculinity—and the female partner finding true freedom with her male partner. In the context of a ménage à trios, this reciprocity seems to get lost because of the addition of another sexual partner.

Third, while Don may not want this to happen, a *ménage à trios* might be what Megan needs. As de Beauvoir says, "the lovers can experience shared pleasure in their own way; each partner feels pleasure as being his own while at the same time having its source in the other."[67] Megan's attempt at achieving pleasure, in her own way, might require another partner—especially if Megan wants *both* to be with a woman *and* to remain faithful to Don.

66. De Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 415.

67. Ibid.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have utilized three different theories of sex and sexuality to make sense of Don Draper's sexuality and sexual relationships. For my conclusion, I enter into the record my own judgments about the edification and usefulness of these three theories in relation to watching *Mad Men* and reflecting upon the questions that *Mad Men* poses to its viewers.

MacKinnon leads us, not necessarily to a radical feminist hermeneutic for interpreting the characters and plots of *Mad Men*, but to a despairing and pessimistic stance toward the characters and plots of *Mad Men*. If MacKinnon's arguments and theories are accurate, the male characters remain vicious human beings with no way out of their viciousness except for absolute and disciplined solitude. If her arguments and theories are accurate, the female characters remain trapped in a patriarchal world with little-to-no agency and no way to maneuver based upon their ambition, hopes, and dreams. Perhaps this describes the way that we ought to interpret the characters and plots of *Mad Men*, but we need to identify it as despairing and pessimistic.

Simone de Beauvoir's theory of sex and sexuality gives us a very hopeful and optimistic interpretive lens for making sense of the characters and plots of *Mad Men*. For the female characters, de Beauvoir provides terms sufficient for showing how some of their sexual encounters ought to be judged as edifying and freeing. When attending to her sex life, Betty's character comes out better than other feminist treatments of her character allow. Don may not be completely power mongering in the bedroom, and de Beauvoir offers us the tools to clearly distinguish between and identify Don as a good lover and a terrible one. Through their sexual relationships, some of the female characters achieve equality and freedom—at least on the terms de Beauvoir sets out in the conclusion of *The Second Sex*. Of the three theories of sex and sexuality, I find de Beauvoir's the most helpful and useful for interpreting the characters and plots of *Mad Men*.

While de Beauvoir's existentialist-feminist theory of sex and sexuality proves to be the most helpful and useful, Kant's deontological theory of sex and sexuality provides surprising nuggets for interpreting the sexual aspects of Don's marital relationships. Perhaps the most surprising Kantian interpretation of *Mad Men* involves how Megan's provocative performance becomes justified through a deontological lens while Don's refusal to engage in coitus with her—after she dances for him—violates the marital obligation Don maintains to Megan. Also, Kant's defense of divorce (in *Lectures on Ethics*) helps us see clearly Betty's moral justification for divorcing Don.

Finally, Kant's problem with polygamy surprisingly applies to the *ménage à trios* between Don, Megan, and Amy.

Mad Men certainly teaches us the severe limitations of a B-concept understanding of sex and sexuality. Sex and sexuality cannot and should not be defined in terms of the bookends of vaginal penetration and ejaculation/orgasm. Instead, sex and sexuality ought to be understood in more A-concept ways—which includes the small gestures that lovers give to one another, raising children together, and sharing in one's hopes and dreams. The characters on *Mad Men* present themselves at their best when they perform these everyday tasks with the people they love and when they act intentional about being attentive lovers, playful parents, and sensitive spouses.[68] Through these intentional actions,[69] the characters ensure that their vulnerability during sexual intercourse will not be used to bring them harm but, rather, will contribute to their true end or *telos*—happiness.[70]

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68. Several chapters in this volume hit on these themes: see Chapters 4 and 15 on questions concerning parenthood; see Chapters 13 and 14 on the question of sensitive vs. insensitive spouses.

69. I use this phrase in line with Elizabeth Anscombe's development of "intentional actions" in her *Intention*, 1, 9–11, 30–33, 37–41, 84–94.

70. Thank you to Ann Duncan for her patient and prudent editorial work on this chapter; she encouraged me to write on the subject matter and helped shape the chapter every step of the way. Lindsey Graber played a pivotal role as the research assistant for this chapter, and she helped me achieve a significant amount of clarity on arguments about Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist-feminist theory of sex and sexuality; she also provided helpful editorial insights once the chapter was written. Jessica Boylan, Morgan Elbot, Kirsten Guidero, Kari Nilsen, and Phil Kuehnert greatly improved the chapter with their editorial comments and corrections. Angela McWilliams Goodson watched every episode of *Mad Men* with me, and she gave her approval of the content of this chapter; I remain deeply grateful for our life together.

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