

## The Finest Consumer Object: The Body

In the consumer package, there is one object finer, more precious and more dazzling than any other – and even more laden with connotations than the automobile, in spite of the fact that that encapsulates them all. That object is the *body*. Its ‘rediscovery’, in a spirit of physical and sexual liberation, after a millennial age of puritanism; its omnipresence (specifically the omnipresence of the female body, a fact we shall have to try to explain) in advertising, fashion and mass culture; the hygienic, dietetic, therapeutic cult which surrounds it, the obsession with youth, elegance, virility/femininity, treatments and regimes, and the sacrificial practices attaching to it all bear witness to the fact that the body has today become an *object of salvation*. It has literally taken over that moral and ideological function from the soul.

Unremitting propaganda reminds us that, in the words of the old hymn, we have only one body and it has to be saved.<sup>1</sup> For centuries, there was a relentless effort to convince people they had no bodies (though they were never really convinced); today, there is a relentless effort to *convince them of their bodies*. There is something strange about this. Is not the body the most obvious of things? It seems not. The body is a *cultural fact*. Now, in any culture whatsoever, the mode of organization of the relation to the body reflects the mode of organization of the relation to things and of social relations. In a capitalist society, the general status of private property applies also to the body, to the way we operate socially with it and the mental representation we have of it. In the traditional order – in the case of the peasant, for example – there was no narcissistic investment or spectacular perception of his body, but an instrumental/magical vision, induced by the labour process and the relation to nature.

What we want to show is that the current structures of production/consumption induce in the subject a dual practice, linked to a split (but profoundly interdependent) representation of his/her own body: the representation of the body as **capital** and as **fetish** (or consumer object). In both cases, it is important that, far from the body being denied or left out of account, there is deliberate *investment in it* (in the two senses, economic and psychical, of the term).

### The Secret Keys to Your Body

A fine example of this managed reappropriation of the body is provided by *Elle*, in an article entitled 'The secret keys to your body which unlock the door to complex-free living'.

'Your body is both your outer limit and your sixth sense,' the article begins, and it assumes a serious air by recounting the psycho-genesis of the appropriation of the body and its image: 'At around six months, you began to perceive, as yet very obscurely, that you had a distinct body.' After an allusion to the mirror-stage ('psychologists call this . . .') and a timid allusion to erogenous zones ('Freud says that . . .'), it comes to the central point: 'Are you at ease in your body?' Right away, in comes Brigitte Bardot (BB): she 'is at ease in her body'. 'Everything about her is beautiful: her neck, her back, particularly the small of the back . . . BB's secret? She really inhabits her body. She is like a little animal who precisely fills up her dress.' (Does she inhabit her body or her dress? Which of these, the body or the dress, is her second home? This is precisely the point: she wears her body like a dress, and this makes 'inhabiting' a fashion effect, a 'package' effect, and relates it to a ludic principle which is further reinforced by the 'little animal' reference.) If, in the past, it was 'the soul which clothed the body', today it is the skin which clothes it, though not the skin as irruption of nudity (and, hence, of desire), but as prestige garment and second home, as sign and as fashion reference (and therefore substitutable for the dress without change of meaning, as can be seen in the current exploitation of nudity in the theatre and elsewhere, where, in spite of the false sexual pathos, it appears as one more term in the fashion paradigm).

Let us return to our text. 'You have to be in touch with yourself, you have to learn to read your body' (if you don't, you are anti-BB).

Lie on the ground and stretch out your arms. Now run the middle finger of your right hand very slowly along that invisible line which runs from the ring finger right along the arm to the crook of the elbow and the armpit. You'll find the same line on your legs. These are lines of sensitivity. This is your *carte du tendre*.<sup>2</sup> There are other lines of *tendresse*: along the spinal column, on the nape of the neck, the stomach, the shoulders . . . If you do not know them, then repression occurs in your body, as it does in your psyche . . . The territories of the body which your sensitivity does not inhabit, which your thinking does not visit, are ill-favoured areas . . . The circulation there is poor; there is a lack of muscle tone. Or, alternatively, cellulite!! tends to settle there once and for all.

In other words: if you don't make your bodily devotions, if you sin by omission, you will be punished. Everything that ails you comes from being culpably irresponsible towards yourself (your own salvation). Quite apart from the atmosphere of singular moral terrorism which infuses this *carte du tendre* (and which equates with puritan terrorism, except that in this case it is no longer God punishing you, but your own body – a suddenly maleficent, repressive agency which takes its revenge

if you are not gentle with it), one can see how this discourse, under the guise of reconciling everyone with their own body, does in fact reintroduce, between the subject and the objectified body as threatening double, the same relations which are those of social life, the same determinations which are those of social relations: blackmail, repression, persecution syndrome, conjugal neurosis (the same women who read this will read a few pages further on that if they are not affectionate to their husbands, they will bear the responsibility for the failure of their marriages). Apart, then, from this latent terrorism, directed in *Elle* more particularly at women, what is interesting is the suggestion that one should revert back into one's own body and invest it narcissistically 'from the inside', not in any sense to get to know it in depth, but, by a wholly fetishistic and spectacular logic, to form it into a smoother, more perfect, more functional object for the outside world. This narcissistic relation – it is a *managed* narcissism, operating on the body as in colonized virgin 'territory', 'affectionately' [*tendrement*] exploring the body like a deposit to be mined in order to extract from it the visible signs of happiness, health, beauty, and the animality which triumphs in the marketplace of fashion – finds its mystical expression in the readers' confessions which follow: 'I was discovering my body. I could feel it in all its purity.' And, even better: 'It was as though I was being hugged by my body. I began to love it. And, loving it, I wanted to care for it with the same affection I felt for my children.' What is significant is this regressive involution of affectivity into the body-as-child, the body-as-trinket – inexhaustible metaphor of a penis cherished, cradled and . . . castrated. In this sense, the body, become the finest object of solicitude, monopolizes for itself all so-called normal affectivity (towards other real persons), without, however, taking on a value of its own, since, in this process of affective rerouting [*détournement*], any other object can, by the same fetishistic logic, play this role. The body is simply the finest of these psychically possessed, manipulated and consumed objects.

But the main thing is that this narcissistic reinvestment, orchestrated as a mystique of liberation and accomplishment, is in fact always simultaneously an investment of an efficient, competitive, economic type. The body 'reappropriated' in this way is reappropriated first to meet 'capitalist' objectives: in other words, where it is invested, it is invested in order to produce a yield. The body is not reappropriated for the autonomous ends of the subject, but in terms of a *normative* principle of enjoyment and hedonistic profitability, in terms of an enforced instrumentality that is indexed to the code and the norms of a society of production and managed consumption. In other words, one manages one's body; one handles it as one might handle an inheritance; one manipulates it as one of the many *signifiers of social status*. The woman who said she 'wanted to care for it with the same affection [she] felt for [her] children' immediately adds: 'I began to visit beauticians . . . The people who saw me after that crisis found me happier, better look-

ing.' 'Recuperated' as an instrument of enjoyment and an indicator of prestige, the body is then subjected to a *labour of investment* (solicitude, obsession) which, once the myth of liberation that acts as cover is peeled away, doubtless represents a more profoundly alienated labour than the exploitation of the body as labour power.<sup>3</sup>

### Functional Beauty

In this long process of sacralization of the body as exponential value, of the *functional* body – that is to say, the body which is no longer 'flesh' as in the religious conception, or labour power as in industrial logic, but is taken up again in its materiality (or its 'visible' ideality) as narcissistic cult object or element of social ritual and tactics – beauty and eroticism are two major leitmotifs.

They are inseparable and the two together institute this *new ethics of the relation to the body*. Though valid for both men and women, they are, nevertheless, differentiated into feminine and masculine poles. The two opposing models – the basic elements of which are largely interchangeable – might be termed **phryneism**<sup>4</sup> and **athleticism**. Still, the feminine model has a kind of priority: it is this model which, to some extent, functions as the template of this new ethics. And it is not by chance that it is in *Elle* that we find the type of material we have analysed above.<sup>5</sup>

For women, beauty has become an absolute, religious imperative. Being beautiful is no longer an effect of nature or a supplement to moral qualities. It is **the** basic, imperative quality of those who take the same care of their faces and figures as they do of their souls. It is a sign, at the level of the body, that one is a member of the elect, just as success is such a sign in business. And, indeed, in their respective magazines, beauty and success are accorded *the same mystical foundation*: for women, it is *sensitivity*, exploring and evoking 'from the inside' all the parts of the body; for the entrepreneur, it is the adequate *intuition* of all the possibilities of the market. A sign of election and salvation: the Protestant ethic is not far away here. And it is true that beauty is such an absolute imperative only because it is a form of capital.

Let us take this same logic a little further. The ethics of beauty, which is the very ethics of fashion, may be defined as the reduction of all concrete values – the 'use-values' of the body (energetic, gestural, sexual) – to a single functional 'exchange-value', which itself alone, in its abstraction, encapsulates the *idea* of the glorious, fulfilled body, the *idea* of desire and pleasure [*jouissance*], and of course thereby also denies and forgets them in their reality and in the end simply peters out into an exchange of signs. For beauty is nothing more than sign material being exchanged. It *functions* as sign-value. That is why we can say that the beauty imperative is one of the modalities of the functional imperative, this being valid for objects as much as it is for women (and men), the

beautician every woman has become being the counterpart of the designer and stylist in the business sphere.

Moreover, if we look at the dominant principles of industrial aesthetics (functionalism), we can see that they apply generally to the charter for beauty: BB feeling 'at ease in her body' or 'precisely fill[ing] up her dress' is part of this same pattern of the 'harmonious marriage of function and form'.

### Functional Eroticism

Alongside beauty, as we have just defined it, sexuality everywhere orientates the 'rediscovery' and *consumption* of the body today. The beauty imperative, which is an imperative of **turning** the body to **advantage** by way of narcissistic reinvestment, involves *the erotic as sexual foil*. We have clearly to distinguish the erotic as a generalized dimension of exchange in our societies from sexuality properly so called. We have to distinguish the erotic body – substrate of the exchanged signs of desire – from the body as site of fantasy and abode of desire. In the drive/body, the fantasy/body, the individual structure of desire predominates. In the 'eroticized' body, it is the social function of exchange which predominates. In this sense, the erotic imperative – which, like courtesy or so many other social rituals, is mediated by an instrumental code of signs – is merely (like the aesthetic imperative in beauty) a variant or metaphor of the functional imperative.

The *Elle* woman is 'hot' with that same heat, that same warmth one finds in modern furniture: it is an 'atmospheric' heat. It no longer comes from intimacy and sensuality, but from calculated sexual signification. Sensuality is heat. This sexuality, for its part, is *hot and cold*, like the play of warm and cold colours in a 'functional' interior. It has the same 'whiteness' as the enveloping forms of 'stylized', 'dressed-up' modern objects. But it is also not a 'frigidity', as has been suggested, since frigidity still implies a sexual resonance of violation. The fashion model is not frigid: she is an *abstraction*.

The fashion model's body is no longer an object of desire, but a functional object, a forum of signs in which fashion and the erotic are mingled. It is no longer a synthesis of gestures, even if fashion photography puts all its artistry into *re-creating* gesture and naturalness by a process of simulation.<sup>6</sup> It is no longer, strictly speaking, a body, but a *shape*.

This is where all modern censors are misled (or are content to be misled): the fact is that in advertising and fashion naked bodies (both women's and men's) refuse the status of flesh, of sex, of finality of desire, instrumentalizing rather the fragmented parts of the body in a gigantic process of *sublimation*, of denying the body in its very evocation.<sup>7</sup>

Just as the erotic is never in desire but in signs, so the functional beauty of the fashion models is never in their expressions but in their

'figures'. Irregularity or ugliness would bring out a meaning again: they are excluded. For beauty here is wholly in abstraction, in emptiness, in ecstatic absence and transparency. This disembodiment is ultimately encapsulated in the *gaze*. These fascinating/fascinated, sunken eyes, this objectless gaze – both oversignification of desire and total absence of desire – are beautiful in their empty erection, in the exaltation of their censorship. That is their functionality. Medusa eyes, eyes themselves turned to stone, pure signs. Thus, all along the unveiled, exalted body, in these spectacular eyes, eyes ringed by fashion, not by pleasure, it is the very meaning of the body, the truth of the body which vanishes in a hypnotic process. It is to this extent that the body – particularly the female body and, most particularly, the body of that absolute model, the fashion mannequin – constitutes itself as an object that is the equivalent to the other sexless and functional objects purveyed in advertising.

### Pleasure Principle and Productive Force

Conversely, the least of objects, implicitly cathected on the pattern of the female body/object, is fetishized in this same way. Hence the generalized imbuing of the whole field of 'consumption' by eroticism. This is not a fashion in the lighter sense of the term; it is the specific, rigorous logic of *fashion*. Bodies and objects form a network of homogeneous signs which may, on the basis of the abstraction we have just discussed, exchange their significations (this is, properly speaking, their 'exchange-value') and 'show each other off [*se faire valoir*] mutually'.

This *homology between bodies and objects* takes us into the deep mechanisms of managed consumption. If the 'rediscovery of the body' is always the rediscovery of the body/object in the generalized context of other objects, one can see how easy, logical and necessary a transition there is from the functional appropriation of the body to the appropriation of goods and objects in shopping. And we know, indeed, to what extent the modern eroticism and aesthetics of the body are steeped in an environment teeming with products, gadgets and accessories in an atmosphere of total sophistication. From hygiene to make-up (not forgetting suntans, exercise and the many 'liberations' of fashion), the rediscovery of the body takes place initially through objects. It even seems that the only drive that is really liberated is the *drive to buy*. We may recall here the example of the woman who, having suddenly fallen madly in love with her body, dashes off to the beauty parlour. And there is also the more common, opposite case: all those women who go in for all the *caux de toilette*, massages and treatments in the hope of 'rediscovering their bodies'. The theoretical equivalence between bodies and objects as signs is what in fact makes possible the magical equation: 'Buy – and you will be at ease in your body.'

This is where all the psycho-functionality analysed above assumes its

full economic and ideological meaning. The body sells products. Beauty sells products. Eroticism sells products. And this is not the least of the reasons which, in the last instance, orientate the entire historical process of the 'liberation of the body'. It is the same with the body as it is with labour power. It *has to be* 'liberated, emancipated' to be able to be exploited rationally for productivist ends. Just as freedom to dispose of oneself and personal interest – the formal principles of the individual freedom of the worker – have to operate for labour power to be able to transform itself into the demand for wages and exchange-value, so the individual has to rediscover his body and invest it narcissistically – *the formal principle of pleasure* – for the force of desire to be able to transform itself into a demand for rationally manipulable objects/signs. *The individual has to take himself as object, as the finest of objects, as the most precious exchange material, for an economic process of profit generation to be established at the level of the deconstructed body, of deconstructed sexuality.*

### Modern Strategy of the Body

However, this productivist objective, this economic process of profit generation, by which the social structures of production are generalized at the level of the body, is doubtless still secondary to the goals of integration and social control set in place by the whole mythological and psychological apparatus centred around the body.

In the history of ideologies, those relating to the body long had an offensive, critical value against the ideologies of the spiritualist, puritan, moralizing type which were centred on the soul or some other non-material principle. Since the Middle Ages, all heresies have been to some extent claims of the flesh, the advance resurrection of bodies against the rigid dogma of the Churches (this is the 'Adamical' tendency, which reappeared repeatedly, always to be condemned by orthodoxy). Since the eighteenth century, sensualist, empiricist, materialist philosophy has demolished the traditional spiritualist dogmas. It would be interesting to make a detailed analysis of the very long process of historical disintegration of that fundamental value called the soul, around which the whole individual scheme of salvation was organized and also, of course, the whole process of social integration. This long desacralization and secularization in favour of the body has run through the whole of the Western era: the values of the body have been subversive values, sources of the most acute ideological contradiction. But how do matters stand today when these values are largely uncontested and have gained acceptance as a new ethic (there is much to be said on this subject: we are now, rather, in a phase in which the puritan and hedonist ideologies are concertinaed, their themes intermingling at every level)? We can see that the body today, apparently triumphant, instead of still constituting a living, contradictory force, a force for 'demystification', has quite simply

taken over from the soul as mythic instance, as dogma and as salvational scheme. Its 'discovery', which for many centuries represented a critique of the sacred, a call for greater freedom, truth and emancipation – in short a battling for humanity, against God – today occurs as an act of *resacralization*. The cult of the body no longer stands in contradiction to the cult of the soul: it is the successor to that cult and heir to its ideological function. As Norman O. Brown says in *Life against Death*: 'We must not be misled by the flat antinomy of the sacred and the secular, and interpret as "secularization" what is only a metamorphosis of the sacred.'<sup>8</sup>

The material evidence of the 'liberated' body (though, as we have seen, liberated as sign/object and censored in its subversive truth as desire, not only in athletic activity and hygiene, but also in eroticism) must not be allowed to deceive us here: it merely expresses the supplanting of an outdated ideology – that of the soul, which is inadequate for a developed productivist system and incapable now of ensuring ideological integration – by a more functional modern ideology which, in all essentials, preserves the individualistic value system and the social structures connected with it. And it even reinforces these, establishing them on an almost permanent basis, since it substitutes for the transcendence of the soul the total immanence, the spontaneous self-evidence of the body. Now, that self-evidence is false evidence. The body as instituted by modern mythology is no more material than the soul. Like the soul, it is an *idea* or, rather – since the term 'idea' does not mean much – it is a hypostasized part-object, a double privileged and invested as such. It has become, as the soul was in its time, the privileged substrate of objectivization – *the guiding myth of an ethic of consumption*. We can see how intimately the body is involved in the goals of production as (economic) support, as principle of the managed (psychological) integration of the individual, and as (political) strategy of social control.

### Is the Body Feminine?

Let us come back to the question we set aside at the beginning of this chapter: that of the role which falls to woman and the female body as privileged vehicle of Beauty, Sexuality and managed Narcissism. For if it is clear that this process of reduction of the body to aesthetic/erotic exchange-value affects both the male and the female (we have suggested two terms for this, athleticism and phryneism, phryneism being defined roughly as the woman of *Elle* and the fashion magazines, masculine athleticism finding its wider model in the athleticism of the executive, a model presented everywhere in advertising, films, mass literature: bright eyes, broad shoulders, lithe muscles and a sports car. This athletic model also encompasses sexual athleticism: the high-ranking executive of the *Le Monde* small ads is also *Playboy* man. But in the end, however much of a

part is played by the masculine model<sup>9</sup> or the transitional, hermaphroditic models, the 'young' forming a kind of third sex, the site of a 'polymorphous, perverse sexuality'),<sup>10</sup> it is woman who orchestrates or rather around whom is orchestrated this great Aesthetic/Erotic Myth. We have to find an explanation for this which is not simply of the archetypal sort along the lines: 'Sexuality is the sphere of Woman because she represents Nature, etc.' Admittedly, in the historical era we are dealing with here, woman has been confused with maleficent sexuality and condemned as such. But that moral/sexual condemnation is entirely underpinned by a *social* servitude: woman and the body have shared the same servitude, the same relegation, throughout Western history. The sexual definition of woman is *historical* in origin: the repression of the body and the exploitation of woman were carried out in the same spirit, every exploited (and therefore threatening) category having automatically to assume a sexual definition. Blacks are 'sexualized' for the same reason, not because they might be said to be 'closer to Nature', but because they are exploited and kept in serfdom. The repressed, sublimated sexuality of a whole civilization inevitably combines with the category whose social repression and subjection form the very basis of that culture.

Now, just as women and bodies were bound together in servitude, the emancipation of woman and the emancipation of the body are logically and historically linked (for related reasons, the emancipation of the young is contemporaneous with them). But we can see that this simultaneous emancipation occurs *without the basic ideological confusion between woman and sexuality being removed* – the legacy of puritanism still bears down on us with all its force. Indeed, only now does it assume its full scope since women, once *subjugated* as a sex, are today '**liberated**' as a sex – to the extent that we see this almost irreversible confusion now deepening in all its forms, since *it is in so far as she 'liberates' herself that woman becomes more and more merged with her body*. But we have seen in what conditions this takes place: it is, in fact, the apparently liberated woman who merges with the apparently liberated body. We may say both of women and the body – as we may say of young people and all the categories whose emancipation constitutes the leitmotiv of modern democratic society – that all the things in whose name they are 'emancipated' (sexual freedom, eroticism, play, etc.) form themselves into systems of '*tutelary*' values, '*irresponsible*' values, simultaneously orientating consumer behaviour and behaviours of social *relegation*, with the very exaltation and excess of honour that surrounds them standing in the way of real economic and social responsibility.

Women, young people and the body – the emergence of all of which after thousands of years of servitude and forgetting in effect constitutes the most revolutionary potentiality – and, therefore, the most fundamental risk for any social order whatever – are integrated and recuperated as a '*myth of emancipation*'. Women are given Woman to

consume, the young are given the Young and, in this formal and narcissistic emancipation, their real liberation is successfully averted. Or alternatively, by assigning Revolt to the Young ('Young = revolt'), two birds are killed with one stone: the revolt diffusely present throughout society is conjured away by allotting it to a particular category and that category is neutralized by confining it to a particular role – revolt. An admirable vicious circle of managed 'emancipation', which we also find applied in the case of women: by confusing women and sexual liberation, each is neutralized by the other. Women 'consume themselves' through sexual liberation, and sexual liberation 'is consumed' through women. There is no play on words here. One of the basic mechanisms of consumption is this formal autonomization of groups, classes and castes (and the individual) by and through the formal autonomization of systems of signs or roles.

There is no question here of denying the 'real' development of the status of women and young people as social categories: they are in fact freer; they vote, have rights, work more and work earlier. Similarly, it would be pointless to deny the objective importance now accorded to the body, to the care of it and its pleasures, to the 'added element of body and sexuality' which the average individual enjoys today. We are far from the 'ideal release' Rimbaud spoke of, but let us accept, nonetheless, that there is in all this a greater freedom of manoeuvre for, and a greater positive integration of, women and young people, and bodily problems. What we are saying is that this relative, concrete emancipation, because it is merely the emancipation of women, young people and the body *as categories* immediately indexed to a functional practice, is accompanied by a mythical transcendence or, rather, itself divides to produce a mythical transcendence, an *objectivization as myth*. The emancipation of some women (and – why not? – the relative emancipation of all) is merely to some extent the secondary gain, the spin-off from – and the cover for – that immense strategic operation which consists in *containing in the idea of woman and her body the whole social peril of sexual liberation*, in confining the peril of women's liberation to the *idea* of sexual liberation (in eroticism), in calling down on to the Woman/Object all the perils of the social liberation of women.<sup>11</sup>

### The Medical Cult: 'Fitness'

The predominant relation to health is derived from the current way of relating to the body, which is not so much a relation to one's own body as to the functional, 'personalized' body. When it is mediated by an instrumental representation of the body, that relation can be defined as a general function of maintaining the body's equilibrium. When mediated by a representation of the body as prestige good, it becomes a functional status demand. It then enters into a competitive logic and expresses itself

in a virtually unlimited demand for medical, surgical and pharmaceutical services – a compulsive demand linked to the narcissistic investment of the body/(part) object and a status demand linked to the processes of personalization and social mobility; a demand which, at any event, bears only a distant relation to that 'right to health' which is a modernist extension of human rights, complementary to the rights to liberty and property. Health today is not so much a biological imperative linked to survival as a social imperative linked to status. It is not so much a basic 'value' as a form of prestige display. In the mystique of such display, fitness stands next to beauty. Their signs are exchanged within the framework of personalization, that anxious, perfectionist manipulation of the sign function of the body. This corporeal syndrome of display, which links narcissism and social prestige, can also be very clearly seen in inverted form in the current very widespread fact, which must be regarded as one of the essential elements of modern ethics, that any loss of prestige, any social or psychological reversal is immediately *somatized*.

It is, therefore, superficial to claim that the use of medicine (usage of doctors) has been 'desacralized' and that because people go more often and more freely to their doctors, because they use and abuse this democratized social provision in a complex-free way (which is not true), they are coming closer to an 'objective' practice of health and medicine. 'Democratically consumed' medicine has lost nothing of its sacredness and its magical functionality. But it is clearly not that traditional functionality which attached, through the person of the priest-healer, the sorcerer and the medicine-man, to operation on the *practical* body, on the instrumental body threatened by outside hazards, such as still figures in the 'uncultivated' peasant vision, in which the body is not interiorized as a personal, 'personalized' value. In that vision, one does not achieve one's salvation or mark one's status through one's body. It is, rather, a tool of one's labour and mana, that is to say, efficient force. If it gets out of sorts, the doctor restores the body's mana. This type of magic and the corresponding status of the doctor is tending to disappear. But it is not giving way, in the modern 'vision', to an objective representation of the body. It is giving way to two complementary modalities: narcissistic investment and prestige display: a 'psychical' dimension and a status dimension. It is in these two directions that the status of the doctor and of health is being reworked. And it is only now, through the 'rediscovery' and the *individual* sacralization of the body, that *medicinity is assuming its full scope* (just as it was only with the mythic crystallization of the 'individual soul' that clericality as a transcendent institution really took off).

Primitive 'religions' know no 'sacrament'; they are collective practices. It was with the *individualization* of the principles of salvation (mainly in Christian spirituality) that sacraments and the 'officiants' in charge of

them were established. It was with the even more thoroughgoing individualization of conscience that individual confession, the sacrament *par excellence*, was instituted. Making all due allowance and wholly aware of the dangers of the comparison, it seems to me to be the same with the body and medicine: it is with generalized individual 'somatization' (in the broadest, non-clinical sense of the term), with the body's becoming an object of prestige and salvation and a fundamental value, that the doctor becomes a 'confessor', a 'source of absolution' and an 'officiant', and the medical profession settles into the overprivileged social status which it currently enjoys.

All kinds of sacrificial behaviours of auto-solicitude and malign exorcism, of gratification and repression, converge more than ever on the privatized, personalized body – a whole host of secondary, 'irrational' purchases to no practical, therapeutic end. Much of this is consumption which even transgresses economic imperatives (half of the money spent on medicines is on non-prescription items, and this goes even for those covered by the welfare system). What prompts such behaviour other than the deep-seated belief that it has to cost you something (and it is enough that it costs you something) for health to be yours *in exchange*? This is ritual, sacrificial consumption rather than medication. Thus we see a compulsive demand for medicines among the 'lower' classes and a demand for the doctor among the better-off, but whether the doctor is seen by the former as a dispenser of material signs and goods or by the latter more as the 'psychoanalyst of the body', medicine and doctors have a cultural *virtue* rather than a therapeutic function, and they are consumed as 'virtual' mana. And that consumption takes place according to a thoroughly modern ethics which, by contrast with the traditional form, which demanded that *the body should serve*, enjoins all individuals to *put themselves in the service of their own bodies* (cf. the *Elle* article). One has a duty to take care of oneself as one has to cultivate one's mind: it is, in a sense, a mark of respectability. The modern woman is both the vestal and the manager of her own body; she takes care to keep it beautiful and competitive. The functional and the sacred are inextricably intermingled here. And the doctor receives both the respect due to the expert and the reverence due to the priest.

### The Obsession with Slimness: The 'Figure'

The obsession with looking after one's figure can be understood in terms of the same categorical imperative. There is in no sense, of course, any natural affinity between beauty and slimness (one only has to glance at other cultures to see this). Fat and obesity have also been regarded as beautiful in other places and at other times. But *this* imperative, universal, democratic beauty inscribed as a right and a duty on the pediment of consumer society, is *indissociable from slimness*. Beauty cannot

be fat or slim, heavy-limbed or slender as it could in a traditional definition based on the *harmony* of forms. It can only be slim and slender, according to its current definition as a combinatorial logic of signs, governed by the same algebraic economy as the functionality of objects or the elegance of a diagram. It even tends, somewhat, towards the scrawny and emaciated, on the lines of the models and mannequins that are simultaneously the negation of the flesh and the exaltation of fashion.

This may seem a strange state of affairs, for if we take as one definition of consumption that it is a generalization of the combinatorial processes of fashion, we know that fashion can play on anything, on opposite terms: it can play without distinction on the old and the new, the 'beautiful' and the 'ugly' (in their classical definitions), the moral and the immoral. *But it cannot play on the fat and the thin*. There is something akin to an absolute limit here. Might it be that in a society of overconsumption (of food), slenderness becomes a distinctive sign in itself? Even if slimness acts as such a sign in relation to all previous cultures and generations and to the peasant and 'lower' classes, we know there are no signs which are distinctive *in themselves*, but only opposing formal signs (old and new, long and short (skirts), etc.) which *follow one upon the other* as distinctive signs, and alternate in such a way as to bring fresh grist to the mill, without any one of these definitively squeezing out the other. Now, paradoxically, in the area of the 'figure', an area which is *par excellence* that of fashion, the fashion cycle no longer operates. There has to be something more fundamental than distinction. Something which *must* be linked to the very mode of complicity with our own bodies which we have seen being established in the contemporary era.

The 'liberation' of the body has the effect of constituting it as an object of solicitude. Now that solicitude, like everything which has to do with the body and the relation to the body, is *ambivalent*. It is never solely positive and overall, indeed, it is negative. The body is always 'liberated' as simultaneous object of this *dual solicitude*.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, the immense process of solicitude of the 'gratifying' kind, a process we have described as the instituting of the body in its modern form, is accompanied by an equal and equally substantial investment of *repressive solicitude*.

It is this repressive solicitude which is expressed in all the modern collective obsessions relating to the body. Hygiene, in all its forms, with its fantasies of sterility, asepsis, prophylaxis or, by contrast, of promiscuity, contamination, pollution – tending to conjure away the 'organic' body and, in particular, the functions of excretion and secretion – aims at a negative definition of the body, by elimination, as though it were a smooth, faultless, sexless object, cut off from all external aggression and thereby protected from itself. The obsession with hygiene is not, however, the direct heir to puritan morality. That morality denied, repressed and repressed the body. In a more subtle way, contemporary ethics

sanctifies it in its hygienic abstraction, in all its purity as a disincarnated signifier. But a signifier of what? Of forgotten, censored desire. This is why the (phobic, obsessional) hygienic compulsion is never far away. Overall, however, the preoccupation with hygiene founds a morality based not on pathos, but on play: it 'eludes' deep fantasies in favour of a superficial, cutaneous religion of the body. Taking care of, being 'loving' towards the body, that morality prevents any collusion between the body and desire. It is closer, all in all, to the sacrificial techniques of 'preparation' of the body, to the ludic techniques of control – not repression – of primitive societies, than it is to the repressive ethics of the puritan era.

Much more than in hygiene, it is in the ascetic practice of 'dieting' that the aggressive drive against the body is to be seen, a drive 'liberated' at the same time as the body itself. Ancient societies had their ritual fasting practices. As collective practices linked to the celebration of festivals (before or after – fasting before Communion – fasting in Advent – Lent after Mardi Gras), it was their function to siphon off all this diffuse aggressive drive against the body (the whole ambivalence of the relation to food and 'consumption') and channel it into collective observance. Now, these various institutions of fasting and mortification have fallen into disuse as so many archaisms incompatible with the total, democratic liberation of the body. Clearly, our consumer society can no longer bear any restrictive norm and even excludes such a norm on principle. However, in liberating the body in all its potentialities for satisfaction, it thought it was liberating a naturally pre-existing harmonious relationship between man and his body. It turns out that this was a *fantastic mistake*. The whole antagonistic aggressive drive liberated at the same time, now no longer canalized by social institutions, surges back today into the very heart of the universal solicitude for the body. It is that drive which fuels the veritable enterprise of self-repression now affecting one-third of the adult populations of the overdeveloped countries (and 50 per cent of women; an American study has shown that 300 adolescent girls out of 446 are on a diet). It is this drive which, above and beyond the (once again undeniable) determinations of fashion, is stoking up this irrepressible, irrational self-destructive frenzy in which beauty and elegance, which were the original goals, are now merely alibis for a daily, obsessive disciplinary exercise. In a total turnabout, the body becomes that menacing object which has to be watched over, reduced and mortified for 'aesthetic' ends, while one's eyes are kept riveted throughout on the skirny, emaciated models of *Vogue*, in whom one can decipher all the inverted aggressiveness of an affluent society towards its own body triumphalism, all the vehement denial of its own principles.

This meeting of beauty and repression in the cult of the figure (in which the body, in its materiality and sexuality, basically has no part any more, simply functioning now as the physical medium for two logics wholly removed from the logic of satisfaction: the *fashion imperative*, a principle of social organization, and the *death imperative*, a principle of

psychical organization) is one of the great paradoxes of our 'civilization'. The mystique of the 'figure' and the fascination with slimness have such a profound impact only because they are forms of **violence**, because in them the body is literally *sacrificed* – both fixed in its perfection and violently vitalized as in sacrifice. All the contradictions of this society are encapsulated here, at the level of the body. 'With its remarkable action', Scandi-Sauna will bring you a slimmer waistline – better hips, thighs and ankles – a flat stomach – regenerated tissues – firmed-up flesh – smooth skin – a new figure. 'After three months of using Scandi-Sauna . . . I lost those extra pounds and, at the same time, acquired remarkable physical fitness and mental harmony.' In the USA, 'low-calorie foods', artificial sweeteners, fat-free butters and diets launched with great advertising campaigns make fortunes for their backers and manufacturers. It is estimated that 30 million Americans either are, or believe themselves to be, obese.

### The Sex-Exchange Standard

Automatic sexualization of everyday essentials: 'Whether the article to be pitched out into commercial space is a brand of tyres or a new model of coffin, the aim is always to hit the potential client in the same spot: below the belt. Eroticism for the elite; pornography for the masses' (Jacques Sternberg, *Toi ma nuit*, Losfeld).

Naked theatre (Broadway: *Oh Calcutta!*): the authorities licensed the performances on condition that there were neither erections nor penetration on stage.

First pornography fair at Copenhagen – 'Sex 69': this was a 'fair' and not a festival, as the newspapers had reported. In other words, it was essentially a commercial event, designed to enable the manufacturers of pornographic material to conquer new markets. It seems that the Christiansborg leaders,<sup>13</sup> generously concerned to remove all mystery from this field – and, hence, much of its attraction – by bringing down the barriers, had underestimated the financial side of the business. A number of smart people, on the lookout for profitable investments, were not slow to grasp what an opportunity the intensive exploitation of this sector could represent for them, now that it was part of the open market. Having rapidly organized themselves, they are now, as a consequence, developing pornography into one of Denmark's most profitable industries (source: the press).

Not a millimetre of erogenous zone has been left unexploited (J.-F. Held). The talk everywhere is of 'sexual explosion', of the 'escalation of eroticism'. Sexuality is 'at the forefront' of consumer society, spectacularly overdetermining the entire signifying field of mass communications. All that is presented there has about it a conspicuous sexual vibrato.

Everything offered for consumption has a sexual coefficient. At the same time, of course, *it is sexuality itself which is offered for consumption*. Here again we have the same operation as we adverted to with regard to youth and revolt, women and sexuality: by indexing sexuality in an increasingly systematic way to commercialized and industrialized objects and messages, these latter are diverted from their objective rationality, while sexuality itself is diverted from its explosive finality. Social and sexual change thus tread well-beaten paths which have already been carefully explored by 'cultural' and promotional eroticism.

Admittedly, this explosion, this proliferation is contemporaneous with deep changes in the relations between the sexes and in individual relations to the body and sex. It is, even more, an expression of the real – and in many respects new-found – urgency of sexual problems. But it is not certain either that this sexual 'display' of modern society is not a gigantic cover for these very problems, or that, by giving them systematic 'official status', it does not lend them a deceptive appearance of 'freedom', which masks the profound contradictions involved.

We can sense that this eroticization is excessive and that there is meaning in the excessiveness. Is it merely the expression of a crisis of desublimation, of a relaxation of traditional taboos? In that case, we might imagine that once a certain saturation level had been reached, once the cravings of the heirs of puritanism had been satisfied, liberated sexuality would recover its equilibrium, having now detached itself, and achieved its independence, from the productivist, industrial spiral. One might also take the view that the escalation, once begun, will continue like that of GNP, the conquest of space or innovation in fashion and objects, *and for the same reasons* (J.-F. Held). In this perspective, sexuality is *once and for all part of the unlimited process of production and marginal differentiation*, because it is the very logic of that system which has 'liberated' it as *erotic system* and individual and collective consumption function.

Let us distance ourselves here from any kind of moral censorship: we are not speaking of 'corruption' and we know, in any case, that the worst sexual 'corruption' may be a sign of vitality, richness, emancipation: it is, in that case, revolutionary and marks the historical flowering of a new class conscious of its triumph. The Italian Renaissance was an age of this kind. Such sexuality is a mark of rejoicing. However, it is not this sexuality, but its spectre which resurfaces – as a sign of death – when a society is in decline. The decomposition of a class or a society always ends in the individual dispersal of its members and (among other things) in a veritable contagion of sexuality, both as individual motive and as social ambience. The end of the *ancien régime* was one such period. It seems that a seriously splintered collectivity, because it is cut off from its past and lacks any imagining of a future, re-enters an almost pure world of drives, mingling in the same feverish dissatisfaction the immediate determinations of profit and sex. The disturbance of social relations, and

the precarious collusion and ferocious competition which create the ambience of the economic world, affect the nerves and the senses. Sexuality, ceasing to be a factor of cohesion and shared elation, becomes an individual frenzy for profit. Everyone is obsessed with it and thereby isolated. And, in a characteristic feature, as it is exacerbated, it also becomes *anxious* about itself. It is no longer shame, modesty or guilt, those marks of the centuries of puritanism, which weigh upon it: indeed, these gradually vanish as the official norms and prohibitions disappear. It is the individual agency of repression, internalized *ensorship*, which penalizes this sexual liberation. Censorship is no longer socially instituted (religiously, morally, juridically) in formal opposition to sexuality; it now plunges deep into the individual unconscious and feeds on the same sources as sexuality. All the sexual gratifications which surround one now bear within them their own continual censorship. There is no longer any repression (or there is less); but censorship has become a function of everyday life.

'Nous implanterons une débauche inouïe' said Rimbaud in his 'Villes'.<sup>14</sup> But sexual liberation and the escalation of eroticism have nothing to do with the 'derangement of all the senses' [*dérèglement de tous les sens*].<sup>15</sup> The orchestrated derangement and muted anxiety with which it is imbued, far from 'changing life', merely make up a collective ambience in which sexuality in fact becomes a *private* affair, that is to say, one that is fiercely self-conscious, narcissistic and tired of itself – the very ideology of a system which it crowns in terms of mores and in which it is a *political* cog. For, above and beyond the advertisers, who 'play' the sexuality 'card' so as to sell more products, there is the existing social order, which 'plays the card of' sexual liberation (even if it condemns it morally) against the threatening dialectic of the totality.

### Symbols and Fantasies in Advertising

This generalized censorship which defines *consumed* sexuality must not, above all, be confused with *moral* censorship. It does not penalize conscious sexual behaviours in the name of conscious imperatives. This is, indeed, a field in which apparent permissiveness is *de rigueur*; everything conspires towards it and even the perversions can be freely engaged in (these things are all relative, of course, but this is the general trend). The censorship which our society, in its sexual hyperaesthesia, sets in place is more subtle: *it operates at the level of fantasies themselves and the symbolic function*. This kind of censorship is unaffected by the campaigning measures used against traditional censorship: to use those today is to fight an enemy that is past and gone. And the weapons of the (still virulent) puritan forces, with their censorship and morality, are outdated too. The basic process is going on elsewhere, not at the conscious and manifest level of the seductive artifices – for good or ill –

of sex. There is a terrible naïvety about this, among both the decriers of sexual liberty and its defenders, on the right and on the left.

Let us take an example from an advertisement for Henriot champagne (J.-F. Held).

A bottle and a rose. The rose flushes with colour, begins to open, approaches the screen, swells, becomes tumescent. The amplified sound of a beating heart fills the cinema, accelerates, grows fevered, wild. The cork begins to rise from the bottle slowly, inexorably. It grows in size, moves towards the camera, its brass binding wires breaking one after another. The heart beats and beats, the rose swells, the cork again – ah, and suddenly the heart stops, the cork flies off and the foaming champagne bubbles out over the neck of the bottle, the rose grows pale and closes, the tension subsides.

Let us recall also that advertisement for bathroom installations in which, with a great many contortions – and in ever greater close-up – a vamp simulates a mounting orgasm with taps and pipes and a whole battery of phallic, spermatic devices. And the thousands of similar examples in which there is all-out ‘hidden persuasion’ – so-called – that persuasion which ‘so dangerously’ manipulates our ‘drives and fantasies’ and no doubt has more impact in intellectual circles than on the imagination of consumers. Erotic advertising, so obsessive and guilt-inducing, stirs up such profound emotions in us. A naked blonde with black braces appears and, hey presto, the braces manufacturer is rich. And even though he points out that ‘you only have to raise the most harmless umbrella towards the sky to turn it into a phallic symbol’, Held does not question either the fact of its being a symbol, or the effectiveness of that symbol as such on effective demand. Further on, he compares two advertising projects for Weber lingerie: the manufacturers chose the first of these and they were right, he says, because, in the other, the

swooning young man looks almost as though he has been slain. For women, the temptation to be dominant is great. . . but it is also a frightening temptation. . . If the sphinx-woman and her victim had become Weber’s brand image, the ambiguous guilt of their possible clients would have been so great that they would have chosen less compromising brassières.

And so the analysts, all deliciously a-quiver, will turn their learned attentions to the fantasies in advertising, to the devouring orality in them, the anality or the phallic symbols – all these things directly plumbed into the consumer’s unconscious, which was simply ready and waiting to be manipulated (that unconscious is, of course, assumed to be already there and given in advance, since Freud said so – a hidden essence, whose preferred fare is the symbol or the fantasy). There is the same vicious circularity between the unconscious and fantasies as there once was between subject and object at the level of consciousness. An unconscious stereotyped as an individual function and fantasies delivered as finished products by advertising agencies are indexed one to the other, defined one by the other. This is to elude all the real problems posed by the logic of the unconscious and the symbolic function by spectacularly materializing them in a mechanical process of

signification and the efficacy of signs: ‘There is the unconscious and then there are the fantasies which lock into it, and this miraculous combination sells products.’ There is the same naïvety here as among the ethnologists who believed the myths related to them by native peoples and took them literally, along with the superstitious belief of those peoples in the magical efficacy of their myths and rites – all of which was done to maintain the ethnologists’ own rationalist myth of the ‘primitive mentality’. There are beginning to be doubts about the direct impact of advertising on sales. It is perhaps also time to cast equally radical doubt on this naïve fantasmic mechanics – which serves as an alibi for both advertisers and analysts.

Crudely put, the question is this: is there really any libido in all this? What is there that is sexual, libidinal in the eroticism deployed? Is advertising (and are the other mass-media systems) a genuine ‘scene’ of fantasy? Is this *manifest* symbolic, fantasy content ultimately to be taken any more literally than the manifest content of dreams? And is the erotic injunction ultimately any more valid or symbolically effective than the direct commercial injunction is in the marketplace? What is really going on here?

In reality, one is faced with a mythology at one remove, which strives to pass off as *fantasy* what is merely *fantasmagoria*, to entrap individuals, by way of a rigged symbolics, with the *myth* of their individual unconscious, to make them invest it as a consumer function. People have to believe that they ‘have’ an unconscious, that that unconscious is there, projected into and objectivized in the ‘erotic’ symbolism of advertising, which serves as a proof that it exists, that they are right to believe in it and therefore to wish to come to terms with it, first at the level of the ‘reading’ of symbols, then by the acquisition of the goods designated by those symbols and supporting those ‘fantasies’.

There are, in fact, neither symbols nor fantasies in this whole erotic shebang, and it is tilting at windmills to describe all this as a ‘strategy of desire’. Even when there is not irony in the phallic or other messages, when they are not conveyed in an openly playful way, ‘with a nod and a wink’, we may safely take it that all the erotic material surrounding us is entirely *culturalized*. It is neither fantasmic nor symbolic material, but simply *atmospheric*. It is neither Desire nor the Unconscious speaking, but the psychoanalytic culture, or rather subculture, which has become banal and commonplace, has passed into ordinary commercial parlance. It is second-level affabulation; strictly speaking, it is *allegory*. Id (the Unconscious) does not speak there; what does speak merely refers on to psychoanalysis as it is established, integrated and ‘recuperated’ today in the cultural system. And it certainly does not refer to psychoanalysis as analytic practice, but to the sign function of psychoanalysis, as something culturalized, aestheticized, mass-mediatized. At any event, one should not confuse a formal and allegorical combinatory of mythologized themes with the discourse of the Unconscious, any more than the

artificial log fire should be confused with the symbol of fire. There is no relation between that 'signified' fire and the poetic substance of fire analysed by Bachelard. That log fire is a cultural sign and nothing more; it has value merely as a cultural *reference*. Thus, the whole of advertising and modern erotics are made up of signs, not of meaning.

One must not be taken in by the escalation of the erotic in advertising (any more than by the escalation of 'irony', the play, the distancing and the 'counter-advertising' which, significantly, go along with it): all these contents are merely juxtaposed signs, all of which culminate in the super-sign that is the **brand name**, which is the only real message. Nowhere is there language – and certainly not the language of the Unconscious. This is why the 50 female bottoms priggishly arrayed by Airborne in its recent advert ('Ah, yes. They're all there . . . this is where we do all our initial research, examining every angle . . . for we believe, with Mme de Sévigné . . .', etc.) can be shown – and many others too. They don't offend against anything, nor do they awaken anything 'deep within us'. They are merely cultural connotations, a metalanguage of connotations: they speak the sexualist myth of a culture that is 'with-it'; they have nothing to do with real anality, which is precisely why they are inoffensive, and immediately consumable as images.

The real fantasy is not representable. If it *could* be represented, it would be unbearable. The advertisement for Gillette razor-blades showing two velvety female lips framed by a razor blade can only be viewed because it does not really express the – unbearable – fantasy of the castrating vagina to which it 'alludes', and because it is content simply to combine together signs emptied of their syntax, isolated signs, itemized signs, which trigger no unconscious associations (and which indeed systematically evade these), only 'cultural' ones. This is the Madame Tussaud's of symbols, a petrified forest of fantasies/signs which no longer have in them anything of the *work* of the drives.

All in all, then, to denounce advertising for its manipulation of the emotions is to pay it too great a compliment. But this gigantic mystification, in which both censors and defenders willingly collude, doubtless has a very precise function, which is to deflect attention from the real process, that is to say from the radical analysis of the processes of censorship which 'operate' very effectively underneath all this fantasmagoria. The real conditioning we are subjected to by the machinery of erotic advertising is not some 'deep-level' persuasion or unconscious suggestion, but *rather* the censorship of the deep meaning, the symbolic function, the fantasmic expression in an articulated syntax – in short, the censorship of the living emanation of sexual signifiers. All this is blotted out, censored, abolished in a codified play of sexual signs, in the opaque obviousness of the sexual that is deployed on all sides, in which the subtle destructuring of syntax leaves place only for a closed, tautological manipulation. It is in this systematic terrorism, which operates at the level of signification itself, that all sexuality empties itself of its substance

and becomes material for consumption. It is here that the 'process' of consumption takes place, and this is of quite a different order of seriousness from naïve exhibitionism, fairground phallicism and knock-about Freudianism.

### The Sexed Doll

The sexed doll is a new toy. But the toys directed at children on the basis of adult fantasies implicate the whole of a civilization. This new doll attests to the general nature of our relation to sex in consumer society which, like our relation to everything else, is governed by a *process of simulation and restoration*. The driving principle of this is an artificial mad desire [*vertige*] for realism: sexuality is confused, in this case, with the 'objective' reality of the sexual organs.

If we look closely, it is the same with colour in television, with nudity in advertising or elsewhere, as it is in participation in the factories or the 'organic and active' participation of spectators in the 'total' spectacle of avant-garde theatre: everywhere we find an effort artificially to restore a 'truth' or a 'totality', *systematically* to restore a totality on the basis of the prior division of labour or functions.

In the case of the sexed doll (the equivalent of sex as *toy*, as infantile manipulation), we must first have split off sexuality as totality, in its symbolic total exchange function, in order to be able to contain it in *sexual signs* (genitals, nudity, secondary sexual characteristics, the generalized erotic signification of all objects) and to *assign these to the individual* as private property or as attributes.

The 'traditional' doll fully performed its symbolic (and thus *also* sexual) function. To deck it out with a specific sexual sign is, in a sense, to strike out that symbolic function and to confine the object to a spectacular function. This is not a special case: this sex *added to* the doll as secondary attribute, as sexual affabulation and, in fact, as *censorship* of the symbolic function is the equivalent, at the level of the child, of the nudist and erotic affabulation, of that glorification of the signs of the body which surrounds us on all sides.

Sexuality is a total, symbolic structure of exchange:

- 1 *It is deposed from its symbolic function* by substituting for it the realistic, manifest, spectacular significations of sex and 'sexual needs'.
- 2 *It is deposed from its exchange function* (this is fundamental) by individualizing Eros, by assigning the sex to the individual and the individual to the sex. This is the culmination of the technical and social division of labour. Sex becomes a fragmented function and, in the same process, is allotted to the individual as 'private' property (as also occurs with the Unconscious).

We can see that one thing is going on here and one alone: the denial of sexuality as symbolic exchange or, in other words, as total process

beyond *functional* division (that is to say, the denial of sexuality as *subversive*).

Once its total, symbolic exchange function has been deconstructed and lost, sexuality collapses into the dual use-value/exchange-value schema (which two aspects are together characteristic of the notion of *object*). It is objectivized as a separate function, both:

- 1 use-value for the individual (by way of his/her own sex, 'sexual technique' and 'sexual needs', for in this case, it is a matter of technique and needs, not of desire);
- 2 exchange-value (though this is no longer symbolic, but either economic and commodity-based – prostitution in all its forms – or, as is much more significant today, conspicuous sign-value – 'sexual status').

It is this whole story which is told by the sexed doll in its guise as 'progressive' toy. Like the naked female rump thrown in as a bonus in an advert for record players or Air India, this dollish sex is a *logical* aberration. It is as grotesque as a brassière on a pre-pubescent girl (a thing you can see on beaches). And, though in appearance opposite to that, it has the same meaning. The one veils, the other 'unveils', but the two are equally affected, and equally puritanical. In each case, there is a *censorship* operating through the artifact, through the conspicuous *simulation* which is always based on a *metaphysics of realism* – the real here being the reified and the opposite of the true.

The more signs/attributes of the real are added and the more the artifact is perfected, the more is truth censored by diverting the symbolic charge towards the cultural metaphysics of reified sex. Everything will now be artificially sexualized in this way (not just dolls), the better to exorcise the libidinal dimension and the symbolic function. But this particular case is an admirable one, for here it is the parents who, in good faith(?) and on the pretext of sexual education, carry out a veritable *castration* on the child by the over-exhibition of sexual signs where they have no place at all.