

Approaches to Feminism

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Feminist philosophy emerged in the US in the 1970s following only a decade behind the rise of the US women's movement in the 1960s. Although Simone de Beauvoir published her now highly influential *The Second Sex* in 1953, it would take at least a decade for women in the US to begin to organize around the injustices Beauvoir identified, and even longer for feminist philosophers in the US to turn to her work for inspiration.

Although I will focus in this introductory essay on the emergence of contemporary US feminist philosophies, it is important to stress that this is only one chapter in a larger history of feminist philosophy. Feminist philosophies have histories that date back historically at least to the early modern period, and have different genealogies in different geographical regions. Both the history of and particular character of feminist philosophy in other countries and in other time periods varies in important and interesting ways. It is crucial, therefore, to understand this essay only as an introduction to contemporary feminist philosophies in the U.S.

Understanding the emergence of feminist philosophy in the U.S. requires an overview of at least two contexts — the political context of what came to be called the “second wave of the woman's movement” and the nature of philosophy in U.S. academies.

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1. The Political Context: The Rise of the U.S. Feminist Movement

The 1950s are a complex decade in the U.S. The country is at the height of the McCarthy era, yet it is the same decade that witnesses the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1953 Barrows Dunham, chair of the philosophy department at Temple University is subpoenaed by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Although he is tried and acquitted for refusing to provide more than his name, address, and age, Temple University fires him. A number of philosophers are called upon to testify before the HUAC and others are fired from positions because of their membership in the Communist Party. In 1955 Rosa Parks is arrested for keeping her seat in the front of a bus in Montgomery Alabama just one year after the Supreme Court in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* bans segregation in public schools. In 1957 Martin Luther King is named president of the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference and begins his campaign to end race discrimination.

It is important to remember that 1950 is only five years into a campaign to encourage women to return to home and hearth, leaving the jobs they had taken on as part of the war effort.[1] As one telling example, consider Adlai Stevenson's 1955 address to the Smith College graduating class urging these educated women not to define themselves by a profession but to participate in politics through the role of wife and mother. While McCarthyism rooted out political subversion, science and the media worked to instill proper gender roles. A 1956 *Life* magazine published interviews with five male psychiatrists who argued that female ambition was the root of mental illness in wives, emotional upsets in husbands, and homosexuality in boys.

But the increasing involvement of women in freedom marches and, somewhat later, the protests of the Vietnam War give rise to a budding awareness of gender injustices. Looking back in the 1975 edition to her landmark study of the U.S. Women's Movement in 1959, Eleanor Flexner explains:

First in the South and eventually everywhere in this country, women were involved in these struggles. Some white women learned the degree to which black women were worse off than they were, or than black men. White and black women learned what the minority of women active in the organized labor movement had learned much earlier: that women were typically excluded from policy-making leadership roles of even the most radical movement, a lesson that would have to be relearned again and again in the political and peace campaigns of the late sixties (1975, xxix).

The National Organization for Women forms in 1966, petitioning to stop sex segregation of want ads and one year later to request federally funded childcare centers. By 1968 NOW begins to focus on legalizing abortion. In 1967 Eugene McCarthy introduces the Equal Rights Amendment in the Senate. In 1968 feminists in New York protest the Miss America pageant and crown a live sheep as Miss America and set up a 'freedom trashcan' in which to dispose of oppressive symbols, including bras, girdles, wigs, and false eyelashes. (Although there was no fire, it was this symbolic protest that the media transformed into the infamous 'bra burning' incident.) The Stonewall riot in 1969 marks the beginning of the gay and lesbian rights movement. In 1970 the San Francisco Women's Liberation Front invades a CBS stockholders meeting to demand changes in how the network portrays women, and a model affirmative action plan is published by NOW and submitted to the Labor Department. In this same year three key texts of the U.S. feminist movement are published: Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*; Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*; and Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful*. In 1970 a press conference headed by women's movement leaders Gloria Steinem, Ti-Grace Atkinson, Flo Kennedy, Sally Kempton, Susan Brownmiller, Ivy Bottini, and Dolores Alexander

expressed solidarity with the struggles of gays and lesbians to attain liberation in a sexist society. However, in 1971, at a Women's National Abortion conference, while adopting demands for repeal of all abortion laws, for no restrictions on contraceptives, and taking a stance against forced sterilization, the group votes down a demand for freedom of sexual expression, causing many in the audience to walk out in protest and seeding the development of a separatist movement within the feminist movement (See [What is Feminism?](#)).

It is out of this powerful social and political cauldron that feminist philosophy emerges in the U.S. While few would now dispute the claim that the development of ideas and theories in the sciences, as well as the social science and humanities, reflect and are influenced by their social, historical, and intellectual contexts, philosophers in the U.S. have, until recently, paid scant attention to the social contexts of twentieth century U.S. philosophy, particularly with how cultural and political factors have influenced the movements of philosophy within the academy (McCumber 2001). The emergence of feminist philosophy in the U.S. presents an excellent illustration of the close intersection between the development of philosophical positions and methods, and their social contexts.

2. The Rise of Feminist Philosophical Scholarship in the U.S.

Many of the early writings of U.S. feminist philosophers arose from attempts to grapple with issues that emerged from the women's movement: the identification of the nature of sexism and the underlying causes of the oppression of women, questions of how to best obtain emancipation for women — e.g., equal rights within the current political and social structure vs. revolutionary changes of that structure, the issue of 'woman's nature,' philosophical analyses of the morality of abortion, and so on. In this first decade of writing, feminist philosophers in the U.S. also turned their attention to the past to investigate how canonical philosophers dealt with the question of

women, both to determine if their views might provide resources for addressing contemporary issues or whether the sexism of their theories continued to pervade contemporary philosophical and, perhaps, even social and political practices.

A snapshot, albeit a limited image, of the emergence of feminist philosophical scholarship in the U.S. and beyond can be obtained by looking at numbers of journal articles catalogued in *The Philosophers Index*.^[2] The *Philosopher's Index* lists only three articles under the keyword 'feminism' until 1973 when the number leaps to eleven thanks in large part to a special issue of *The Philosophical Forum* edited by Carol Gould and Marx Wartofsky that became the basis for an important first anthology on feminist philosophy, *Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation*. From 1974 to 1980 these numbers increased to 109 entries for this seven year period, with the decade between 1981 to 1990 witnessing an explosion of work in the area of feminist philosophy with 718 entries listed in the *Philosopher's Index*. In the following 12 years 2,058 more articles are added to the *Index* under this heading.

Clearly there are a number of reasons for the startling expansion of feminist philosophical work in the U.S. Although I cannot trace all of them, I would like to identify a few that are particularly significant. First is the fact that many philosophers in the U.S. were involved in the social justice movements of the 60s. Most of the philosophers who contributed to the emergence of feminist philosophy in the 70s in the U.S. were active in or influenced by the women's movement. As a result of this participation, these philosophers were attentive to and concerned about the injustices caused by unfair practices emerging from the complex phenomena of sexism. Since their professional skills included the realm of philosophical scholarship and teaching, it comes as no surprise that they would turn the tools they knew best to feminist ends. Second, by the 1970s many women in traditionally male professions often experienced what Dorothy Smith called a 'fault-line' in which the expectations of the conventionally 'proper role of women' and their own professional experiences were in tension. As women

moved through the profession of philosophy in the U.S. in increasing numbers, they often found themselves personally confronted by the sexism of the profession. Sexual harassment and other sexist practices contributed to creating a chilly climate for women in philosophy. But thanks to the consciousness raising of their involvement in the women's movement, these women were less likely to internalize the message that women were, by nature, less capable of philosophical work or to give in to the sometimes unconscious efforts to exclude them from the profession.

In response to the sexism of the profession, U.S. feminist philosophers organized the Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP) in 1972.[3] The emergence of SWIP is a third component in the swift rise in contemporary feminist philosophical scholarship in the U.S. SWIP was founded to promote and support women in philosophy. This goal took two forms: 1) working to overcome sexist practices in the profession and 2) supporting feminist philosophical scholarship. While the efforts of SWIP to overcome sexism in the profession certainly contributed to the inclusion and retention of more women in philosophy, it was in the latter goal that SWIP made a significant impact on scholarship. SWIP divisions were formed in a fashion parallel to the American Philosophical Association, with three divisions — Pacific SWIP, Midwest SWIP, and Eastern SWIP (plus a Canadian SWIP) — each of which held yearly or bi-yearly meetings that focused on feminist philosophical scholarship. In addition, the International Association of Feminist Philosophers (IAPh) was founded in 1974 in order to support international exchange of feminist philosophies.

After a decade of meetings, U.S. SWIP members decided to launch an academic journal, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. *Hypatia* was set up “to provide a forum for dialogue on the philosophical issues raised by the women's liberation movement” and published feminist philosophical work committed “to understanding and ending the sexist oppression of women, and a sense of the relevance of philosophy to the task.”[4] While *Hypatia* was certainly not the only forum in which feminist philosophy was published, it contributed to the creation of a

sustained dialogue amongst feminist philosophers in the U.S. and beyond, and a forum for developing feminist philosophical methods and approaches.

3. The Inheritance from Philosophy

Those who drafted the first wave of contemporary feminist philosophical scholarship in the U.S. were influenced by another very important context, their philosophical training. Until very recently one could not go to graduate school to study ‘feminist philosophy.’ While students and scholars could turn to the writings of Simone de Beauvoir or look back historically to the writings of ‘first wave’ feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, most of the philosophers writing in the first decades of the emergence of feminist philosophical scholarship both in the U.S. and in other countries brought their particular training and expertise to bear on the development of this area of scholarship.

Although many of the writings of the first decade of feminist philosophical scholarship in the U.S. were devoted to analyzing issues raised by the women's liberation movement, such as abortion, affirmative action, equal opportunity, the institutions of marriage, sexuality, and love, feminist philosophical scholarship increasingly focused on the very same types of issues philosophers had been and were dealing with. And since these feminist philosophers employed the philosophical tools they both knew best and found the most promising, U.S. feminist philosophy began to emerge from all the traditions of philosophy prevalent within the U.S. at the end of the twentieth century including analytic, Continental, and classical American philosophy. It should come as no surprise, then that the thematic focus of their work was often influenced by the topics and questions highlighted by these traditions.

Feminist philosophical scholarship in the U.S. begins with attention to women, to their roles and locations. What are women doing? What social/political locations are they part of or excluded from? How do

their activities compare to those of men? Are the activities or exclusions of some groups of women different from those of other groups and why? What do the various roles and locations of women allow or preclude? How have their roles been valued or devalued? How do the complexities of a woman's situatedness, including her class, race, ability, and sexuality impact her locations? To this we add attention to the experiences and concerns of women. Have any of women's experiences or problems been ignored or undervalued? How might attention to these transform our current methods or values? And from here we move to the realm of the symbolic. How is the feminine instantiated and constructed within the texts of philosophy? What role does the feminine play in forming, either through its absence or its presence, the central concepts of philosophy? And so on.

The 'difference' of feminist philosophical scholarship as it has developed in the U.S. proceeds not from a unique method but from the premise that gender is an important lens for analysis. Feminist philosophers in the U.S. and beyond have shown that taking gender seriously provides new insights in all the areas of philosophical scholarship: history of philosophy, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of science, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, metaphysics, etc.

4. Approaches to Feminist Philosophy: Overview of the Encyclopedia Sub-Entries

Feminist philosophical scholarship is not homogeneous either in methods or in conclusions. Indeed, there has been significant debate within feminist philosophical circles concerning the effectiveness of particular methods within philosophy for feminist goals. Some, for example, have found the methods of analytic philosophy to provide clarity of both form and argumentation not found in some schools of Continental philosophy, while others have argued that such alleged clarity comes at the expense of rhetorical styles and methodological approaches that provide insights into affective, psychic, or embodied components of human experience. Other feminists find approaches

within American pragmatism to provide the clarity of form and argumentation sometimes missing in Continental approaches and the connection to real world concerns sometimes missing in analytic approaches.

While feminists have clearly embraced approaches from various traditions within philosophy, they have also argued for the reconfiguration of accepted structures and problematics of philosophy. For example, feminists have not only rejected the privileging of epistemological concerns over ethical concerns common to much of U.S. philosophy, they have argued that these two areas of concern are inextricably intertwined. This has often led to feminists using methods and approaches from more than one philosophical tradition.

The essays in this section provide overviews of the dominant approaches to feminist philosophy in the U.S. It is important to note that U.S. feminist philosophy has been influenced by feminist philosophical work in other countries. For example, analytic feminism in the U.S. has benefited from the work of feminist philosophers in the United Kingdom and Canada; U.S. Continental feminist scholarship has been richly influenced by the work of feminist philosophers in Europe and Australia. But it is also important to note that, with only a few exceptions, the work of feminist philosophers in Asia, South America, Africa, and Russia have not been the focus of attention of most U.S. feminist philosophers.

Analytic Feminism

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Analytic feminists are philosophers who believe that both philosophy and feminism are well served by using some of the concepts, theories and methods of analytic philosophy modified by feminist values and insights. By using ‘analytic feminist’ to characterize their style of feminist philosophizing, these philosophers acknowledge their dual

feminist and analytic roots and their intention to participate in the ongoing conversations within both traditions. In addition, the use of ‘analytic feminist’ attempts to rebut two frequently made presumptions: that feminist philosophy is entirely postmodern and that analytic philosophy is irredeemably male-biased.[1] Thus by naming themselves analytic feminists, these philosophers affirm the existence and political value of their work.

Readers with a strong desire to “cut to the chase” may jump to **Section 4** : Characteristics of Analytic Feminism. Sections 1-3 explain the relationships between analytic feminists and the various traditions they share, so are helpful in setting the context for analytic feminism.

- * 1. The tradition analytic feminists share with other analytic philosophers
- * 2. What analytic feminists share with other feminist philosophers
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1. The tradition analytic feminists share with other analytic philosophers

Contemporary analytic philosophers, feminist and nonfeminist, can be characterized roughly as follows: they consider (some of) Frege,

Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein and the Logical Positivists to be their ancestors; they tend to prize explicit argumentation and the literal, precise, and clear use of language; they often value the roles of philosophy of language, epistemology, and logic; and they typically view their stock of philosophical concepts, methods, and assumptions to be a) consistent with their Modern European heritage, and b) in contrast with methods originating in twentieth-century continental Europe, most recently those beginning with ‘post’: poststructuralism and postmodernism broadly conceived.

Of course, each strand of mid-twentieth-century, “classic” analytic philosophy has changed greatly. Many central dogmas have been undermined, and nonfeminists and feminists alike have “naturalized,” “socialized,” and otherwise modulated the earlier, more abstract and highly normative enterprises and doctrines. However, regardless of the extent of the evolution of “analytic philosophy,” the degree to which methodological boundaries are blurred today, and the fruitfulness of intersections among methods, a number of feminist and nonfeminist philosophers continue to think of themselves in the historical trajectory of analytic philosophy and find the tradition valuable. They claim the term ‘analytic philosopher’ for themselves, even if some others might find the term ‘post-analytic’ more appropriate.[2]

2. What analytic feminists share with other feminist philosophers

One way to encapsulate the agreement in positions and values among feminist philosophers, regardless of their methodological inclinations, is to say that for feminist philosophers, both philosophy and gender *matter* — both are important to the lives of human beings. Feminists recognize that philosophy and philosophers are part of the wider set of institutions of culture in which human beings live, understand themselves, and, only sometimes, flourish. Among the many functions of philosophy are the following: to help us to understand ourselves and our relations to each other, to our communities, and to the state; to

appreciate the extent to which we are counted as knowers and moral agents; to uncover the assumptions and methods of various bodies of knowledge, and so on. These kinds of philosophical insights — ones that concern our methods, assumptions, theories and concepts — can contribute to the oppression of human beings as well as to their liberation (see, for example, Langton 2000 and Vogler 1995). Given the current imbalances of power and privilege with which people live, philosophy has social effects when it “leaves everything as it is.” Feminists seek philosophy that can generically be called “engaged,” that is, philosophy that is potentially useful to empower human beings rather than contribute to the perpetuation of a status quo in which people are subordinated by gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and so on. This is not to say, of course, that feminist philosophers all agree over the appropriate ways to work this out, but they do agree that philosophy can influence lives and should influence them for the better.

A second area of agreement among feminist philosophers is that gender has effects not only on our lives, but also on philosophy itself. Feminists criticize the misogyny of philosophers and the overt and covert sexism, androcentrism, and related forms of male bias in philosophy. For example, philosophers have through the centuries made a variety of false and demeaning claims about “the nature of woman”; they have defined central concepts such as reason in ways that excluded women of their cultures; they have made allegedly universal claims about human nature, desire, or motivation that were, in fact, claims more likely to be true of men of their social class; and they have believed methods and positions to be “value-neutral” and “objective” that were instead promoting the interests of only the privileged groups. Once again, while feminist philosophers agree on the existence of such kinds of male bias, they differ over the best ways to criticize it, the extent to which various philosophical approaches can be reconstructed for feminist use, and so on. Some examples from analytic philosophy will be discussed in [Sections 5](#) and [6](#).

The kinds of male-biased claims just mentioned have negative

consequences not only for women, but also for philosophy. Feminist philosophers argue that on many levels — from individual concepts such as reason or autonomy to entire fields such as philosophy of mind — philosophy has been distorted or limited by the absence of feminist influence. The remedy for these distortions and limitations is not to substitute “female bias” for “male bias,” but to understand the variety of roles that gender plays in the construction of philosophy.

It is important to be clear that feminist philosophers maintain that gender is only one facet of a complex nexus of mutually influencing characteristics of human beings that includes race/ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and so on. While only one facet, gender is nevertheless an important facet with a wide variety of implications for the way we should do philosophy. As feminists continue to critique other philosophers as well as reconstruct philosophy that is not male-biased, most share some points in common. Let's briefly note a few of the points of agreement before moving on to the disagreements that comprise [Sections 5](#) and [6](#).

* Since many traditional philosophers believe that their own theories or methods have universal applicability, feminist philosophers find it appropriate to hold these philosophers' feet to the fire. Feminists explain that part of what it means for a moral theory or an epistemology to be universal is that it must be usable by a full range of human beings, not just by members of a dominant social group. For example, a moral theory should allow for moral agency for any person regardless of his or her social status. An epistemological theory should be able to analyze a full range of cognitive situations of a wide variety of human beings. A good philosophical theory or method would systematically disadvantage neither men nor women from any social group; it would not treat irrelevant social factors as meaningful. For example, it would disparage no one's experiences, no one's authority as a knower, and no one's goals as a moral or political agent. Such an approach postulates neither the “sameness” of everyone nor the existence of “group differences.” Instead, it asks that philosophers attend to the full range of human beings, including their wide variety of experiences, interests and

situations, when purporting to construct “universally applicable” theories.

* It is dangerous to stop paying attention to gender too soon. Even if a feminist philosopher has a long-term goal of minimizing the importance of gender, there is a risk of leaving too much unanalyzed if one leaps immediately from male-biased philosophy to gender-neutral philosophy. Attention to the influence of gender implies a recognition that philosophy is embedded in social structures and practices, so feminist philosophers tend to use “naturalized” or “socialized” methods to explain the “located” or “situated” character of the subject who does philosophy as well as the objects of philosophical reflection. Of course, the details here vary widely among feminists.

* Philosophy must be normative at the same time it includes a naturalized or socialized component. Feminist philosophers, like many nonfeminist philosophers, struggle to maintain the level of normativity that they require in order to serve their philosophical and political goals. Again, details will vary concerning what level or kind of normativity is necessary.

Although we return later to controversial aspects of these points, feminist consensus is that although philosophy is a discipline that purports to be about and for all humanity, it has not been. Philosophers have not appreciated the extent to which their theories and methods have underwritten and perpetuated cultures that have prevented the flourishing of at least half of their populations. Philosophy that reflects a feminist sensibility would promote the flourishing of every person.

3. Various ways to characterize differences among feminist philosophers

Although an essay on analytic feminism focuses our attention on differences among philosophical methods that feminists favor, these distinctions were not salient in the early days of contemporary feminist philosophy. Even today, the question whether a feminist philosopher

finds more valuable resources in analytic philosophy or in pragmatism, poststructuralism, existentialism, Marxism, critical theory, or hermeneutics is of more interest to certain academic feminist philosophers, than it is to the wider feminist scholarly or political communities. In fact, academic feminist philosophers in many parts of the world report taking less note of feminists' methodological distinctions than do feminist philosophers in North America.[3] In addition, feminist philosophers have more motivation for methodological cross-fertilization than do many nonfeminist philosophers. See [Feminist Approaches to the Intersection of Pragmatism and Continental Philosophy](#) and [Feminist Approaches to the Intersection of Analytic and Continental Philosophy](#).

The categories of feminist philosophies/theories most widely known outside academic philosophy since the 1970s are those developed by Alison Jaggar based on political values, goals, and assumptions. Jaggar distinguishes liberal, radical, classical Marxist, and socialist feminism. Each kind of feminism identifies the principal sources of women's oppression and encompasses an epistemology and a theory of human nature as well as political theory and strategies for social change (1983).[4] It is very important to note that some women of color have objected to the widespread and hegemonic use of these categories (see Sandoval 1991, 2000). In addition, because the categories are based in political theories, it is not surprising that they function better in social/political theorizing both in and outside of philosophy than for philosophers doing metaphysics, philosophy of science, aesthetics, and so on.

Sandra Harding developed a different widely used set of categories of feminist philosophies in the context of philosophy of science and epistemology (1986). Harding distinguishes feminist empiricists (practicing natural and social scientists who tended to rely on logical positivist theories), feminist standpoint theorists who drew from Marxist epistemology, and feminist postmodernists. Although Harding is distinguishing feminists by philosophical methodology, it is important to be clear that her category of “feminist empiricist” captures

a trend among pathbreaking women scientists who aimed to hold scientific practice to alleged standards of scientific objectivity and neutrality; however, the assumptions behind this trend are not what philosophers today have in mind when speaking of empiricism. Thus Harding's feminist empiricist scientists differ in a number of important ways from the analytic feminist philosophers who tend to be post-Wittgenstinian-Quinian-Davidsonian empiricists. See, for example, Longino (1990) and Nelson (1990).[5]

As we will see in more detail below, analytic feminists are among those who argue that they are not captured by either Jaggar's or Harding's widely acknowledged sets of categories. The analytic feminists who distinguish their method from their political values and assumptions would reject, for example, a necessary connection between being either an analytic philosopher or an empiricist and being a liberal.[6] Additionally, those who claim the label 'empiricist' would point out that contemporary philosophical feminist empiricism is not subject to all the objections that Harding raises against feminist empiricist scientists.

4. Characteristics of analytic feminism

Although there had been feminist philosophers using analytic methods since the late 1960s, as feminist philosophy developed in the areas of epistemology, philosophy of science and metaphysics there were clusters of controversies over the compatibility of feminist politics with a preference for analytic philosophical methods. Panels at American Philosophical Association meetings and discussions at the Society for Women in Philosophy generated essays that explored these matters. See, for example, issues of *The APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* (Tuana 1992, Meyers and Antony 1993).

The term 'analytic feminist' seems to have come into use in the early 1990s in North America. Virginia Klenk proposed a Society for Analytical Feminism in 1991; Ann Cudd, its first president, characterized analytic feminism on the organization's website (See

Other Internet Resources), in a special issue of *Hypatia* on Analytic Feminism (Cudd and Klenk 1995), and elsewhere (Cudd 1996). Cudd notes that there is at best a family resemblance among analytic feminists. Among the characteristics she cites are the following:

Analytic feminism holds that the best way to counter sexism and androcentrism is through forming a clear conception of and pursuing truth, logical consistency, objectivity, rationality, justice, and the good while recognizing that these notions have often been perverted by androcentrism throughout the history of philosophy.... Analytic feminism holds that many traditional philosophical notions are not only normatively compelling, but also in some ways empowering and liberating for women. While postmodern feminism rejects the universality of truth, justice and objectivity and the univocality of “women,” analytic feminism defends these notions (1996, 20).

As we flesh out the family resemblances among analytic feminists it is important to remember that these resemblances include not only substantive positions, but also styles of presentation and other practices. Further, as we have already noted in **Sections 1 and 2**, analytic feminists share resemblances with others in their even larger “family” that includes both nonanalytic feminists and nonfeminist analytic philosophers. A large and diverse family indeed!

Doctrines. Although Ann Cudd lists a few traditional concepts that analytic feminists want to retain, she makes clear that this is no manifesto. Many who consider themselves feminists in the analytic tradition hold that there are no doctrines required of analytical feminists; indeed, there is even a spirit of contrarianism about such matters. For example, some analytic feminists might well deny Cudd's claim above about the univocality of ‘women.’ Nevertheless, analytic feminists share something that we might call a *core desire* rather than a core doctrine, namely, the desire to retain enough of the central normative concepts of the modern European tradition to support the kind of normativity required by both feminist politics and philosophy. For example, they believe that feminist politics requires that claims

about oppression or denial of rights be true or false and able to be justified and that philosophy requires much the same thing.

This “core desire” finds its expression, for example, in the ways analytic feminists use some of what we might call the “core concepts” that Cudd mentions above: truth, logical consistency, objectivity, rationality and justice. Although, as noted in [Section 1](#), analytic feminists agree with other feminist philosophers that important facets of these concepts are male-biased, analytic feminists *defend* the concepts in ways that other feminists do not. At the same time analytic feminists disagree among themselves about a number of matters, for example, what kinds of accounts of truth or objectivity should prevail or whether scientific realism or anti-realism is a better strategy. We will spell out some of these details later as we discuss analytic feminists' defense of analytic philosophy in [Section 6](#).

Bridge building. Analytic feminists' use of these core concepts and their references to the work of traditional analytic philosophers allow them to converse with and build bridges among different groups of scholars, for example, traditional analytic philosophers, other feminist philosophers, and, in some cases, scientists or scholars in social studies of science. This is sometimes an explicit goal of their work, but is more often implied. Two analytic feminists philosophers of science for whom this is an explicit goal are Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Helen Longino. Nelson sees her work in feminist empiricism that builds upon Quine as a way to engage philosophers of science, scientists and feminists in constructive conversation (Nelson 1990 and subsequent essays, e.g., 1996). Longino, in *The Fate of Knowledge* (2002) takes bold steps to dissolve the rational-social dichotomy by untangling the assumptions made by social and cultural studies of science scholars, historians and philosophers of science, and scientists. Interestingly, Longino's most recent book is not cast in “feminist” terms, but builds on her overtly feminist work from the 1980s and 1990s and is informed by three decades of conversations of feminist philosophy.

Analytic feminists' styles of writing also have implications for bridge

building. As noted in [Section 2](#), analytic feminists value explicit argumentation and clear, literal, and precise uses of language. So this work “looks like philosophy” to nonfeminist analytic philosophers and makes them feel somewhat comfortable entering a feminist conversation. At the same time, feminist philosophers from various philosophical traditions often engage with each other's work outside their own “preferred method” because of feminists' shared values. Thus even nonanalytic feminists who find an analytic writing style tediously overqualified or otherwise confining can engage — along with nonfeminist analytic philosophers — in fruitful bridge-building conversations.[7]

Style and aggression. Although arguing explicitly is not to be equated with arguing aggressively or in an adversarial manner, analytic feminists have addressed the issue of stylistic aggressiveness. We must distinguish two related issues on this subject: first, an aggressive manner of arguing in general, and second, Janice Moulton's critique of the “adversary method” as a paradigm in philosophy—and specifically in analytic philosophy (1983). Moulton's point is not simply that the socially constructed belief that aggression is an unladylike/unfeminine characteristic puts women at a disadvantage (indeed, in a double bind) in careers such as philosophy that equate aggression with competence. She also focuses on the ways in which the use of the adversary method as a paradigm of philosophy limits and distorts the work of philosophers.

Moulton uses ‘the adversary method’ to refer to the view of philosophy in which the philosopher's task is to develop general claims, produce counterexamples to each other's general claims, and use only deductive reasoning (1983, 152-153). If this is the paradigm of philosophy rather than simply one strategy among many, then the discipline excludes many fruitful kinds of exploration and development, distorts the history of philosophy, and (because it works best in well-defined areas, even isolated arguments) greatly narrows the scope of philosophical concerns. Moulton also sees integrated into this paradigm several ideals of which she is critical, for example, “value-free” reasoning and

objectivity. Interestingly, she does not draw illustrations from the obvious examples in analytic philosophy such as Edmund Gettier's analysis of 'S knows that p' and the decades of responses to it. Instead she uses an early feminist essay, Judith Thomson's "A Defense of Abortion" (1971), to show ways in which important facets of a substantive issue can be set aside because of restrictions imposed by the adversary method.

I know of no feminist who has argued in print against Moulton's specific argument; however, some analytic feminists have pointed to the value of arguing aggressively in general. For example, Louise Antony values the gender transgression and feelings of empowerment and freedom that can stem from a woman's using an aggressive analytic style of writing and argument (Antony 2003, see also Baber 1993). However, this issue is not one that finds analytic feminists (or any others) in unanimity. It has been an undercurrent of discussions in meetings of the Society for Women in Philosophy over the decades. Some feminists prefer to eschew aggressiveness at the same time they retain clear, rational support for their positions. Underlying the disagreement over style is an important shared goal: to remain respectful of the other person while disagreeing. Feminist philosophers find this to be especially important, but peculiarly elusive, when they are disagreeing among themselves. The parameters of respectful disagreement have engendered interesting debate.[8]

Reconstructing philosophy. We noted in [Section 2](#) that feminist philosophers with a variety of methodological and political backgrounds would agree that *if* a philosopher claims universal applicability for a theory or method, it must be usable by both women and men from a variety of social situations. Many analytic feminists use a similar approach to the *construction of feminist philosophy*. They tend to be wary of creating specialized fields/types of philosophy that are relevant only to (some or all) women or feminists, for example, feminine ethics, gynocentric ethics, or lesbian ethics (for a variety of positions in feminine and feminist ethics see [Feminist Ethics](#)). Analytic feminists tend to propose that feminist ethics or feminist metaphysics

would instead establish new *criteria of adequacy* for ethics or metaphysics. The authors in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy* provide excellent examples of this approach (Fricker and Hornsby 2000). In fact, the volume's editors, Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby, aim to include feminist philosophy in the mainstream of the discipline (2000, 4-5). This approach can be spelled out in terms similar to some used in **Section 2**: An adequate philosophical theory, method or concept is one that “works” for women as well as men. “Works” is very inclusive here: it cannot be enmeshed in a philosophical system that has oppressive consequences large or small; its theories and concepts must reflect and be applicable to the full range of experiences, interests, and situations of all sorts of women and men. Note that this view requires no commitment to claims about feminist standpoints, nor does it treat women as a uniform class of any kind. It is obvious that experiences vary according to a number of different axes — not only along the commonly cited axes of social class, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity and gender — but also in terms of individual variation as well as other general factors. This approach leaves open many substantive questions about the long-term interests of different individuals and groups. It also permits one to point out the importance of having a variety of perspectives without maintaining that there is something “essential” about these perspectives.

5. Feminist criticism of analytic philosophy

Although all feminist philosophers agree that traditional philosophy, including analytic philosophy, has been male-biased in various respects, the disagreements between analytic feminists and other feminist philosophers become more apparent as they discuss critiques of analytic philosophy. In many ways “classic” analytic philosophy seems almost a paradigm case of “male-biased philosophy” — a kind of philosophy least hospitable to feminist values. Among the features that feminists have criticized are that it is committed to pure objectivity and value-neutrality, and uses an unlocated, disembodied, disinterested, autonomous individual reasoner, knower, and agent. Having stated it

this boldly, let us look briefly at what six feminist critics have argued against in particular. Then in [Section 6](#) we will turn to the responses of analytic feminists to try to understand why they nevertheless find valuable resources in the analytic tradition.

In some respects it is hard to disentangle feminist philosophers' critiques of analytic philosophy from their broader critiques of Western philosophy because sometimes their critique of analytic philosophy is supported by their critiques of either its antecedents in modern thought or its sister scientific disciplines. For example, when Alison Jaggar criticized abstract individualism and other concepts of modern liberal political theory her critique was also relevant to the disinterested, detached investigator prized by the logical positivists. Jaggar faults liberalism for (a) its normative dualism that arises when the mental capacity for rationality is “what is especially valuable about human beings” (1983, 40), (b) abstract individualism — “the assumption that the essential human characteristics are properties of individuals and are given independently of any particular social context”(1983, 42), and (c) its assumption that rationality is instrumental, value-neutral, and detached. Jaggar did not claim that her critique applied to analytic philosophy beyond positivism, but notes that neopositivist values are held in normative theories even in the late twentieth century. She is thinking, for example, of political or moral theorists' characterization of objectivity as impartiality and lack of bias (1983, 357).

Among Sandra Harding's analyses of the discourses upon which feminists draw, the most relevant to analytic philosophy is her account of empiricism as practiced by natural and social scientists. Although Harding is speaking about scientists rather than philosophers, her critique of the limitations of the empiricist view — especially its assumed account of “value-free” objectivity — is also applicable to philosophers who utilize this concept of objectivity. Harding advocates that feminists retain a notion of objectivity that incorporates appropriate values (her “strong objectivity”) and criticizes the empiricists' alleged “value-free” objectivity by the use of the arguments below.

- i. It perpetuates the values of the researchers, and is, in differing ways, both too narrow and too broad. It is too narrow because it can detect only values that differ between researchers and “competent” critics, and too broad because it purports to eliminate all social values, when it may well be that some values benefit science while others undermine it (Harding 1991, 143-4).
- ii. It is politically and morally regressive; for example, it constructs science in a way that permits scientists to be “fast guns for hire” rather than individuals who attend to the moral and political values that support and are implied by their actions. (Harding 1991, 158-9)
- iii. It is linked to other implausible views. Examples include, first, that only false beliefs have social causes while true beliefs have natural ones, and, second, that the ideal agent requires “a self whose mind would perfectly reflect the world must create and constantly police the borders of a gulf, a no-man's-land, between himself as the subject and the object of his research, knowledge, or action” (1991, 158). Harding utilizes Nancy Hartsock's term “abstract masculinity” for this last idea (Harding 1991, 158).

Other feminist philosophers, for example, Nancy Holland, utilize the overlapping critiques of Harding and Jaggar, particularly that of abstract individualism, and take them to be telling of Anglo-American philosophy in general. Holland takes Locke and Hume as well as contemporary analytic philosophers to exemplify Anglo-American philosophy (1990). Holland focuses on the metaphysical assumptions of empiricism that exclude women from philosophy. She writes that contemporary analytic philosophy, “by remaining within the Empiricist tradition, inherits not only the problems of that tradition, but also a self-definition that identifies it as necessarily men's philosophy....[Men's] philosophy defines itself throughout its history in such a way as to exclude what our culture defines as women's experience from what is considered to be properly philosophical” (1990, 3).

Jane Duran is both a practitioner and a critic of analytic philosophy. Although she values the rigor of analytic philosophy and wants to

incorporate it into feminist epistemology, she sees analytic epistemology (“pure epistemology”) as a recent incarnation of “a masculinist, androcentric tradition that yields a hypernormative, idealized, and stylistically aggressive mode of thought” (1990, 8). Duran's criticism here runs along the lines of the philosophers just discussed. She appeals not only to Harding, but also to Evelyn Fox Keller (1985), Susan Bordo (1987), and Janice Moulton's critique of the adversary paradigm discussed above in [Section 4](#) (1983). Duran's examples of traits that have been seen as androcentric include, “analysis in terms of logically necessary and sufficient conditions, lack of allusion to descriptively adequate models, the importance of counterexamplification, putative universalization of the conditions, and so forth” (1990, 44).

Naomi Scheman refers to herself as an “analytic philosopher semi-manqué” — one who has left the analytic neighborhood of her philosophical training. She has made several kinds of arguments that bear on the adequacy of analytic philosophy: the impact of individualism in philosophy of mind, the nature of the self, and the nature of the normative philosophical subject (see her papers collected in 1993). For example, Scheman argues that it is the ideology of liberal individualism rather than sound argument that underlies the widespread belief that psychological objects such as “emotions, beliefs, intentions, virtues, and vices” are properties of individuals (1993, 37). In fact, part of Alison Jaggar's argument against abstract individualism relies on Scheman's conceptual point that questions of identifying and interpreting psychological states must be answered in a social context, not in abstraction from it. Scheman acknowledges her debt to Wittgenstein in making this point, but goes beyond his views by arguing that women's experiences and psychosexual development do not bear out this kind of individualistic assumption.

In other essays Scheman argues that the philosophical “we” — the subject who has philosophical problems — is a *normative* subject, one that bears the markings of various kinds of privilege. Her examples of normative subjects are the ideally rational scientist or the citizen of a

liberal state (1993, 7). In this way she shifts her argument away from the experiences and developmental differences between actual men and women (or between white people/people of color, or other actual differences of privilege/marginality) in order to focus on the connection between privilege and normativity. If one were to take a Freudian-tinted view that philosophical problems are “intellectual sublimations of the neuroses of privilege,” then their resolution would come, a la Wittgenstein, through changes in our forms of life.[9]

Lorraine Code is among those who have criticized analytic philosophy for use of a moral-epistemic individual who is “abstract, ‘generalized,’ and disengaged” and a tradition that is more concerned with what an ideal agent or knower would do than with a real one. (1995, xi). Code uses the example of an “*S* knows that *p*” epistemology to focus one of her most widely known critiques. The knowing subject *S*, in what Code hyphenates as the “positivist-empiricist” epistemology, is an individual — a detached, neutral, interchangeable spectator whose knowledge is most reliable when his or her sensory observations occur in ideal conditions, not real, everyday ones. Code argues that “*S* knows that *p*” models of knowledge work only in a prescribed area; indeed, they favor a narrow kind of scientific knowledge. A more adequate characterization of knowing must be applicable to a broad range of examples in the lives of real people. In order to do so, it cannot use the interchangeable subject, *S*, but must include subjective features of *S* such as the person's identity, interests or circumstances. For without these features we cannot explain complex, relational knowing, for example, knowing a person. In addition, an adequate account of knowledge should uncover ways in which political interests are used to determine who is allowed to be a standard knower, that is, an *S* (Code 1991, 1995, 1998). This is only one of Code's lines of argument against analytic philosophy. In [Section 7](#) we will discuss arguments that point to the limitations of naturalized epistemology in the analytic style as well.

As we close our discussion of some of the important feminist critiques of analytic philosophy, recall that another criticism was discussed in

Section 4: Janice Moulton's critique of the adversary method as a paradigm of philosophy. Although use of the adversary method need not be limited to analytic philosophers, Moulton's critique was developed during a period in which aggressively argued analytic philosophy dominated Anglo-American philosophical discourse. Her critique is clearly applicable to widespread practices in analytic philosophy.

6. Analytic feminists' responses to critiques

The most frequent kinds of responses by analytic feminists to feminist critiques of analytic philosophy are variations of the following arguments and claims:

- a. Feminist critiques may have been legitimate for some kinds of analytic philosophy, especially logical positivism, but because analytic philosophy has changed, the objections do not hold for most contemporary work. The analytic feminist then develops a strand of analytic philosophy that is not subject to a particular kind of objection, for example, that knowers are unlocated.
- b. There were errors of interpretation in feminists' critiques, for example, concerning the extent to which analytic philosophy incorporated empiricism. After correction, analytic philosophy will not be vulnerable to this particular kind of criticism.
- c. Critics have gone too far in undermining fields of philosophy such as metaphysics and central concepts such as rationality. Such fields and concepts are needed both on philosophical and feminist grounds.

All three kinds of responses allow analytic feminists to engage in activities on which they thrive — disentangling strands of argument from each other, making distinctions among concepts, searching for kernels of truth among points with which they disagree, and so on.

(a) Regardless of the precise characterization of contemporary analytic

philosophy, it clearly cannot to be equated with logical positivism. So to the degree that feminist critiques focus on logical positivism rather than current analytic work, they will likely be off the mark. As analytic feminists respond to other feminists' critiques, they try to decipher which strands of analytic philosophy might be most useful and the degree to which old assumptions and concepts that are male-biased still linger. It should come as no surprise that analytic feminists often find resources in philosophers who themselves reject central dogmas and methods of classical analytic philosophy, e.g., Quine, J. L. Austin, Wittgenstein and others.[10]

Let's take as examples of argument (a) feminists who believe that useful strands of analytic philosophy will be *naturalized* in some way. We need to cast a wide, permissive net here for what counts as “naturalized” and to acknowledge some controversies over its relation to analytic philosophy and to feminism. As used here, ‘naturalized philosophy’ includes philosophy that is explicitly *informed by*, rather than replaced by, empirical information about knowers, agents and social structures from psychology/cognitive science, sociology, anthropology and elsewhere. Although most analytic feminists favor “naturalizing” philosophy, they are critical of many nonfeminist ways of doing it. For example, the traditional focus on “individual” rather than “social” sciences neglects the “situatedness” of our thinking.[11] A final caveat here: since there is disagreement over the proper scope of both ‘naturalized’ and ‘analytic,’ some will object that naturalized philosophy is not a “strand” of analytic philosophy at all. For example, Quine, who might be considered the father of naturalized epistemology, fits squarely into our characterization of analytic philosophy; however, Lynn Hankinson Nelson considers him post-analytic (2003). And, of course, there is no necessary link between naturalized philosophy and analytic philosophy in any case; one need only think of Foucault or Dewey to sever that connection.

Keeping in mind all these caveats and controversies, let's turn to the example of naturalized epistemology to consider what “naturalizing” can do to help feminists overcome difficulties with analytic philosophy.

Feminists criticize analytic philosophy for its concepts of a knower (and an agent), for example, that it is an *individual* who is abstract, idealized, interchangeable, unlocated, disconnected, disembodied, disinterested, etc. The first thing that naturalized epistemology can do is to shift the focus from the abstract or idealized knower to the concrete facets of the person who has beliefs and knowledge. Although this move is not in itself feminist, Jane Duran finds it a positive step toward what she calls “gynocentric,” i.e., woman-centered, epistemology. She believes that naturalized epistemology — by its descriptive character and its concern with the context and details of knowing — is capable of including features valued by feminist standpoint epistemology, for example, the relational aspects of knowing and the grounding that knowledge has in the body and in activities of daily life (1991, 112, 246). Duran is one of the few feminists who explicitly combines feminist standpoint theory with analytically oriented naturalized epistemology, and is an exception to the widespread tendency of analytic feminists to stay clear of gynocentrism.

Of course, one need not agree with the specifics of Duran's analysis to appreciate the importance of naturalized epistemology's descriptive attention to context and concrete details: this descriptive attention *allows gender into epistemology* as facets of the knower and the context become relevant. One can then debate what kinds of social structures, individual variations, and their interactions are fruitful avenues of exploration.

A second naturalized approach is Louise Antony's argument concerning a different aspect of the knower — neutrality. Antony maintains that naturalized epistemology resolves the “paradox of bias” (how one can consistently critique male bias and at the same time object to the notion of unbiased, neutral, objective, or impartial knowledge). Naturalized epistemology rejects the ideal of neutrality and instead gives us empirical norms by which to differentiate good from bad biases, that is, biases that lead us toward rather than away from truth (1993, 113-116, 134-144).[12] Antony also engages in many other facets of the debate between analytic and nonanalytic feminists to

which we will return later.

A third strategy, still within the context of a naturalized epistemology/philosophy of science, is to change the relationship between empiricism and the individual. Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Helen Longino are empiricists not in the style of Locke or Hume, but in their positions that *evidence* comes from the senses, from experience (Nelson 1990, 21; Longino 1990, 215). This is encapsulated by saying that empiricism is a theory of evidence. Using different lines of argument, they both shift the focus from the individual to communities. Nelson argues that communities rather than individuals “‘acquire’ and possess knowledge” (Nelson 1990, 14). She wants to use the resources of Quine as well as feminists to forge an empiricism sufficiently rich and sophisticated to overcome critiques of earlier feminist empiricism offered, for example, by Sandra Harding and to avoid feminist objections to individualism (whether to Jaggar's “abstract individualism” or the other forms discussed above). Nelson maintains that Quine — while remaining an empiricist — had already undermined or abandoned many of the postpositivist characteristics to which Jaggar and Harding object. Thus empiricism, tempered by Nelson's focus on communities as knowers, can adequately take into account the social identities of knowers and the complex dependencies of individuals on epistemological communities.

Helen Longino's approach in *Science as Social Knowledge* (1990) is to argue that among the many ways in which science is social is that epistemological *norms* apply to practices of communities, not just to individuals. In *The Fate of Knowledge* (2002), she further develops her contextual empiricist argument along lines that break down the dichotomy between the rational and the social (and many other dichotomies along the way). Although her argument has a wide scope, we are now concerned only with the ways in which her view breaks the connection between individualism and empiricism. Longino distinguishes between individualism as a philosophical position (that, among other things, tends to consider knowers interchangeable) and whether individuals, in fact, have knowledge (2002, 145-148). She

does not deny that epistemic norms apply to the practices of individuals or that Einstein had an “extraordinary intellect, but what made [Einstein's] brilliant ideas knowledge were the processes of critical reception” (2002, 122). Knowledge requires social interaction, not a dichotomy between the rational and the social; it also integrates values — some of them social — at both the constitutive and contextual levels.

The responses of Longino, Nelson, Antony, and Duran to feminist critiques of earlier stages of analytic philosophy all illustrate variations on theme (a): they agree with certain facets of the feminist critique, but draw on resources within particular strands of analytic philosophy (in their cases naturalized epistemology/philosophy of science) as well as other feminist resources to produce epistemologies that overcome the objections to analytic epistemology. Their strategies vary: Longino and Nelson de-emphasize the individual in favor of communities; Antony and Duran keep the focus on individuals, but make them more concrete; in addition, Antony tries to resolve the paradox of bias.

Let us turn much more briefly to strategies (b) and (c). The claim in (b) is that there were errors of interpretation in the feminist analyses of analytic philosophy and its antecedents that weaken the feminist critiques. In (c) it is that critics have gone too far in undermining fields of philosophy such as metaphysics or central notions such as rationality that we need to retain. Examples of both approaches (sometimes even in one paper) can be found in Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt's, *A Mind of One's Own*, a collection of papers that focused on reason and objectivity in both the history of Western philosophy and various fields of contemporary philosophy (1993, 1st ed., 2002, 2nd ed.). Those who propound claim (b) include Margaret Atherton and Louise Antony. Atherton criticizes both Genevieve Lloyd (1984) and Susan Bordo (1987) for their interpretations of Descartes (1993). Although Atherton's piece is purely historical, it is relevant to our discussion here because feminists of all persuasions who debate the merit of analytic philosophy acknowledge historical analyses, especially Lloyd's extensive work on “the man of reason.” Louise Antony argues that

Alison Jaggar (1983) and Jane Flax (1987) mischaracterize the rationalist or empiricist traditions, and so miss the extent to which analytic philosophers have already rejected aspects of them. This leads feminists to misidentify analytic epistemology with empiricism and overlook more rationalistic possibilities (Antony 1993).

(c) When analytic feminists defend a field or a concept from critiques of other feminists who have “gone too far,” they might be fending off postmodern critics who do not want to do traditional metaphysics at all or they might be arguing about which aspects of the field are male-biased (for example, foundationalist styles of metaphysics or the tendency to see selected categories as natural). Both Charlotte Witt and Sally Haslanger argue that there is no specifically feminist reason for rejecting metaphysics in general. Witt considers the particular case of “what it is to be human.” She argues that feminists, in fact, need assumptions and theories about what it is to be human even in order to criticize traditional metaphysical theories (1993). Haslanger discusses a range of issues concerning social construction, realism, and natural and social kinds. In the course of her discussion of feminists such as Catharine MacKinnon and Judith Butler, Haslanger makes many distinctions among kinds and functions of social constructions, sorts out ways in which metaphysics and politics are related, and, in general, provides an example of feminist metaphysical debate that distinguishes between male-biased facets of metaphysics from facets useful for feminists (1995b, 1996, 2000). One way of characterizing this approach is that it goes for the “kernels of truth” within larger, more problematic (or at least more polemical) discussions, and thereby performs a service for readers who might be sympathetic with some aspects of the views of MacKinnon or Butler, but who are not willing to accept the body of work that encompasses them.

A more controversial analytic feminist response that fits into (c) is Martha Nussbaum's defense of concepts and standards of objectivity and reason. In the context of a laudatory review of the first edition of Antony and Witt's *A Mind of One's Own*, Nussbaum argues forcefully that it is in feminists' interests, both theoretically and practically, to

retain fairly traditional ideals of objectivity and rationality while acknowledging their abusive use. This position, in itself, would not have generated great controversy, even if not universally accepted. However, because Nussbaum sees certain critics of the male-biased aspects of objectivity and reason as part a “feminist assault on reason” (1994, 59), her essay and her interpretation of other feminists' views generated wide and heated discussion among feminist philosophers.[13]

As we close the discussion of analytic feminists' responses to critiques of analytic philosophy, it is important to restate the obvious: not every analytic feminist would agree with the responses articulated in the few examples chosen here. Indeed, in spite of the desire that analytic feminist philosophy be sufficiently normative, there is ongoing disagreement over issues such as the attitude to take toward concepts that have typically embodied that normativity. Consider traditional ideals of objectivity: views range from the claim that although the ideals of rationality and objectivity are “both unattainable and undesirable,” we nevertheless ought to embrace them as “regulative norms” or “heuristics” (Antony 1995, 87) to a number of different understandings of objectivity that would make them not so subject to distortion or misuse (for example, E. Lloyd 1995a, 1995b, Haslanger 1993, Scheman 2001a, Heldke 2001).

Finally, we need to remember that what a feminist expects of a philosophical method — her own preferred method(s) or others — will influence her critique of it.[14] It is important to be realistic in considering what any particular method might offer a feminist. For example, an analytic method is likely to provide a feminist with much more assistance in clarifying concepts, making distinctions, and evaluating arguments than with creating her “vision” or defining the goals of her work (see Garry 1995).

7. Analytic feminism: limitations and challenges

As noted previously, traditional analytic philosophy seemed to many to

be the least hospitable philosophical method to feminists. Although analytic feminists have clearly increased the method's hospitality, we need to consider limitations and challenges that remain.

The strengths and limitations of various kinds of feminist philosophies can grow from the same sources — if a feminist is close to a mainstream tradition, she is subject to at least some of its limitations although she stands a better chance of influencing it and “building bridges” than does someone who critiques the tradition more deeply. In a 1979 conference talk Audre Lorde pointed to one risk quite powerfully by saying, “The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house” (Lorde 1984, 112). Although over the decades Lorde's claim sent chills down the spines of academic feminists across the disciplines, the very existence of feminist philosophy requires that the “tools” of the philosophical trade are not solely the property of the “master.” Feminist philosophers, analytic or not, build on the work not only of other feminists, but also of *some* traditional philosopher *sometime*. Because of the need to utilize as well as modify traditional philosophy, a feminist must always be alert for deeper levels of male bias that may become apparent as she continues her work. Some of the possibilities particularly relevant to analytic feminists are below.

a. Naomi Scheman and Linda Alcoff, for example, point out ways in which analytic feminists may not fully appreciate all the political, metaphysical and epistemological “baggage” that has already been packed into their theories and concepts. Scheman thinks that Martha Nussbaum stops listening too soon to attacks on rationality and fails to appreciate that openness to reasonable argument (advocated by Nussbaum) implies that we recognize when our own conception of reasonableness is being questioned (Scheman 2001b). Alcoff, maintaining that we need *some* concept of reason, makes a similar argument against Nussbaum and points out the dogmatic character of claiming that some *particular* concept of reason is *the* concept that cannot be given up (Alcoff 1995)

b. Closely related is another possible objection, namely, that it may not be as easy to detach one's method from one's politics as one might think. Because analytic feminists have been sometimes rightly associated with liberalism, other analytic feminists take pains to separate their method from their politics. Louise Antony argues that her own socialist politics are compatible with an analytic method (2003). At a certain level, of course, she is right. But if an analytic feminist is articulating a socialist *feminism*, rather than an inclination toward some kind of socialism or other, then the facets of her position derived ultimately from Marx, from Quine, and from feminism need to be hammered out carefully in order to settle down together well.

c. Clusters of separate objections focus around subjectivity and standpoints. Traditional analytic philosophy has been rightly criticized for its inability to handle subjectivity. In thinking about whether this criticism applies to analytic feminists as well, let's consider it in the context of knowledge. Elizabeth Anderson calls the position that knowledge is “situated” the fundamental point of feminist epistemology (see [Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science](#)). Can “situated” knowledge as developed by analytic feminists capture both the individual subjectivity of human beings and the ways in which material conditions and complex social institutions structure the standpoints of women and others in marginalized groups? There are obviously two separate questions here — asked together because they focus on whether analytic feminism has the resources to capture what is very important to other competing feminist traditions: standpoint theory and postmodernism.

Consider Helen Longino as an example: she is dealing with situated knowledge in the context of the sciences. Her contextual empiricism, and most recently, her argument to dissolve completely the rational/social dichotomy and the dichotomies that underlie it allows her to delve into the right areas. Of course, science is not all of life or knowledge, so her argument would need to be extended into areas of everyday life that Lorraine Code, among others, has discussed.

Contextual empiricism is probably better at analyzing the structural and material features that construct subjectivity than it is at illuminating individual subjectivity. It is in the latter area that postmodern and psychoanalytic approaches flourish (see, for example, Butler 1990, Butler and Salih 2003, Irigaray 1991, Irigaray and Whitford 1993, Kristeva and Oliver 2002). Their focus on the opaque, fragmented, or unfinished character of human subjectivity may be a bit untidy for many analytic feminists. But given the importance of this topic for feminist philosophy, there is a need for fruitful dialogue about it.

d. There is another insight from feminist standpoint theory that has not been considered: community wide biases and assumptions. Sandra Harding has articulated the importance of starting research from the lives of marginalized people (1991). By doing so we are more likely to be able to uncover community-wide biases and assumptions of the privileged. For without “essentializing” anyone, we can still say that outsiders to a group's issues/projects are more likely to notice assumptions than are insiders already invested in them. Analytic feminists believe that their versions of naturalized empiricism can attend to these features as well as a standpoint theory can — especially the kinds of standpoint theories believed plausible today, e.g., Harding's minimalist and pluralist approach. Elizabeth Anderson even contends that because standpoint theory is based in the material world, it is compatible with feminist empiricism (Anderson 2001). Obviously there will always be a horizon for any community beyond which its members, even including its marginalized critics, cannot see. But one can't ask the impossible of a theory or a method.

e. Related objections arise concerning naturalized epistemology. Phyllis Rooney and Lorraine Code have both argued that there is tension between typical naturalized epistemology and feminist epistemology; Rooney calls it an “uneasy alliance” (Rooney 2003). Rooney, Code, and Addelson all propose alternatives to the individualistic orientation of naturalized epistemology. Addelson favors

sociologists and philosophers working together (1991). Code offers an ecological model that she maintains is preferable to analytically and individualistically oriented naturalism (1996, forthcoming). Rooney appeals to psychological studies of gender and cognition to provide evidence for her critique of assumptions of empirical studies (and of the epistemology that structures and then uses the empirical results). For example, Rooney wants to critique the assumption of the stability of the individual/social distinction, the stability of gender — or even that gender is either stable or situational, for there might be more choices (Rooney 2003). Analytic feminist naturalized epistemologists might well agree with much of Rooney's critique (Code's new ecological model would be a much longer stretch for them; see Code forthcoming). However, in any case, analytic feminists must be very careful as they choose their own models to reflect upon the kinds of assumptions to which they acquiesce, whether those just mentioned or others that might go under the label “scientism.”

f. The final cluster of challenges concerns language, images, and “rhetorical space.” These challenges are meant to call attention to other kinds of “baggage” of which analytic feminists need to be aware. Although both feminist and nonfeminist analytic philosophers are thought to favor literal uses of language, they also rely on metaphors, analogies, images and the like in the course of making their philosophical cases (think of the frequency of Neurath's ship via Quine). Analytic feminists need to give attention to the assumptions and implications of their literal uses of language, their images and how they relate to what Lorraine Code calls the “rhetorical spaces” in which they function (or, in other cases, fail to function). In using ‘rhetorical spaces’ Code is thinking of the ways in which our discourses are structured to limit what can count as meaningful, be taken seriously, yield insight, expectuptake, and so on (1995, ix-x).

Marguerite La Caze, using methodology developed by Michele LeDoeuff, argues that feminists as well as nonfeminist analytic philosophers use images, for example, mythical social contracts in

political philosophy and visual and spatial metaphors in knowledge, that can unwittingly perpetuate images that exclude women (La Caze 2002, LeDoeuff 1989; see also Gatens 1991). Analytic feminists are being called upon to widen the rhetorical spaces in analytic philosophy as well as to recognize and scrutinize the images that they, in fact, use in the course of their allegedly literal speech.

Most analytic feminists welcome challenges to their positions from other feminists. For, after all, there is no easier way to be kept honest and to recognize one's own collusion with male-biased philosophy than to have one's feminist colleagues point it out. It is part of any reasonable feminism to want to remain open to the ongoing possibility of collusion and self-deception. Candid, fair-minded conversation benefits all forms of feminism.

8. Other issues and directions

Obviously, it has not been possible to discuss the entire range of analytic feminism. Many of the examples in previous sections came from epistemology, metaphysics and their subfields. In this concluding section, we will touch very briefly on some of the omissions: other areas of philosophy such as moral, social and political philosophy, and history of philosophy as well as a few “core” analytic fields not yet discussed.

Moral, Social and Political Philosophy. Our focus has been on metaphysics/epistemology and their subfields not simply because of the usual constraints of time and energy, but for two other reasons as well: first, fields such as epistemology are often deemed to be at the core of analytic philosophy, and second, feminist controversies in these fields often divide along methodological lines in a way that they do not divide so cleanly in ethics, social/political philosophy, or history of philosophy. Although feminist philosophers in the latter areas still have differences in philosophical training, in writing styles, and in

preferences for contemporary male figures with whom to converse, the “sides” in the controversies rarely fall neatly into divisions among analytic and nonanalytic feminists. For example, typical feminist controversies in moral theory have concerned whether one should favor an ethics of justice over an ethics of care or a virtue ethics, or whether one should prefer Kant over Hume or Aristotle as a starting point for moral thinking (see, for example, Herman 1993, Baier 1994, Held 1993, Homiak 1993, Larrabee 1993). Interestingly, the degree to which moral philosophers (analytic or not) rely upon and integrate historical figures into their work seems to be greater than among analytic philosophers doing epistemology and metaphysics.

Similarly, among feminists writing in social and political philosophy the focus is more often on whether one is liberal, socialist, radical, or postmodernist than the degree to which one is analytic. For example, Martha Nussbaum defends her liberal “capabilities” approach against anti-liberal opponents (2000a, 2000b). Marilyn Friedman may choose to write about autonomy in a certain fashion because she works within a liberal tradition in political and moral philosophy (2003). Although both can rightly be called analytic feminists, few philosophers thinking about Nussbaum or Friedman would make method a salient feature of their work in this area or focus on whether they respond to Rawls or to Habermas.

At other times it is more important in moral and political philosophy to be writing as both a lesbian and a feminist than to be analytic or not. For example, what is most distinctive about Cheshire Calhoun's *Feminism, The Family, and the Politics of the Closet* is her exploration of the structure of gay and lesbian subordination and its relation to feminism (2000). Of course, Marilyn Frye and Claudia Card have provided decades of examples of thinking outside any number of “boxes” — analytic or otherwise (Frye 1983, 1992, Card 1995, 1996, 2002).

What might underlie some of the differences just noted are the various roles that normativity plays in moral, social and political philosophy on

the one hand and in metaphysics and epistemology on the other. Recall in **Section 4** the discussion of analytic feminists' "core desire" for normativity; what this normativity amounts to in their discussions of metaphysics and epistemology is that concepts and arguments carry enough "weight" to justify their positions for philosophical and feminist purposes. In moral, social and political philosophy normativity is much more pervasive. Except for the "meta-issues," the very subject matter and sets of concepts in moral and political philosophy *are themselves normative*: What moral theory should one adopt? What position on justice? What analysis of rape?

Regardless of the points just noted, many feminists writing on topics in moral, social and political philosophy, both theoretical and practical, could well identify themselves as analytic feminists (and sometimes do). On topics such as sexual harassment, abortion, or pornography there would be little in common among analytic feminists other than writing style and a tendency to make many distinctions and cite from a range of analytic figures. Of course, these are factors they would share with analytic feminists in other fields of philosophy. One does not want to overemphasize the contrast drawn here between moral/political philosophy and metaphysics/epistemology — it is a difference of degree. See, for example, Rae Langton's work on pornography drawing on J. L. Austin as well as Catharine MacKinnon (1993, and Hornsby and Langton 1998, West and Langton 1999), Anita Superson on sexual harassment (1993), or Elizabeth Anderson (2002) and Ann Cudd (2002) on feminism and rational choice theory.

History of Philosophy. In the heyday of analytic philosophy, it was thought appropriate in some Anglo-American philosophy departments to write about historical figures as if they were disembodied voices entering into contemporary debates in analytic philosophy. Given that this tendency has receded and that feminists tend not to favor the use of disembodied voices in any case, feminist historians of philosophy are not likely to identify their historical work as analytic. It is controversial enough to identify it as feminist! The series *Re-Reading the Canon*, edited by Nancy Tuana, provides more than twenty volumes of

feminist interpretation of major figures.[15] Nevertheless when some of the same philosophers treat contemporary topics in their work, it is appropriate to think of them as analytic, for example, Charlotte Witt's work on anti-essentialism (1995) and metaphysics (1993).

Other Areas of Analytic Philosophy. Even in the “core” of analytic philosophy, there are some other areas that should be mentioned briefly. A few feminists work on logic and philosophy of language, and even an occasional logical positivist (Okhrulik 2004). Analytic feminist work in philosophy of language is not as extensive as it is among French feminists or in other disciplines. After articles in early anthologies (Vetterling-Braggin *et al.* 1977, 1981), analytic work seemed to taper off. For example, the *Hypatia* special issue on Philosophy and Language (Bauer and Oliver 1992) contained only one article on an analytic philosopher, Frege, and it was very critical (Nye 1992). Sally Haslanger's special issue of *Philosophical Topics* (1995a) contains some analytic philosophy of language essays (Mercier 1995, Hornsby 1995). In addition to Langton and her colleagues' work on pornography that uses philosophy of language mentioned above, other analytic work on language can be found, for example, in Hintikka and Hintikka (1983), Nye (1998), Tanesini (1994), Hornsby (2000), and Clough (2003).

Logic. A collection of essays, *Representing Reason: Feminist Theory and Formal Logic* (Falmagne & Hass 2002), brings together feminist philosophers with various methodological preferences as well as two psychologists. Several papers take off from the only sustained feminist reading of the history of logic, Andrea Nye's *Words of Power* (1990). A number of the authors in this collection, regardless of their methodological background, tend to try to salvage what they consider important from formal logic and to reframe their own favorite logical “kernels of truth” in ways that can be useful for feminists — or at a minimum avoid feminist objections.

Wittgenstein. As someone cited by both analytic philosophers and postmodernists, Wittgenstein embodies the intersection of their interests,

or at least that possibility. The authors in Naomi Scheman and Peg O'Connor's *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (2002) explore and employ aspects of Wittgenstein's work that range from engendering the *Tractatus* to applying his *Remarks on Colour* to racism — though many essays center around remarks in his later work in epistemology and philosophy of language. Although Wittgenstein would surely not have imagined his work to be fruitful for feminists, the editors and authors find it very rich. For example, Scheman considers it important for feminists to acknowledge that Wittgenstein provides a way out of debates about objectivist epistemologies and realist metaphysics by reminding us that both sides are still held captive by the picture that “only something that transcended our practices could make notions such as truth and reality genuinely, fully, robustly meaningful” (Scheman and O'Connor 2002, 17). See also other Wittgensteinian-influenced works such as O'Connor 2004 and Heyes 2000 and 2003.

9. Concluding thoughts

Although methodology is the focus in this essay, it is nevertheless important to ask whether there is value in identifying one's feminist philosophy by method. In some respects, there is. Recall the point with which this essay began: by naming themselves ‘analytic feminists’ these philosophers declare that feminism need not be postmodern and that analytic philosophy is not irredeemably male-biased. Beyond this, there is a mixture of advantages and disadvantages to identifying oneself by method. It may help to make apparent a feminist philosopher's assumptions and probable toolbox if she identifies her feminism as analytic (or postmodern or pragmatist). At the same time, we need to keep in mind that every feminist discourse undermines its “paternal” method to some degree (see Harding 1991). Thus even if a feminist identifies herself as analytic, she still takes pains to differentiate her views in some respects from her “paternal” discourse. Indeed, part of the meaning of a feminist's claiming a discourse is to say, “It is this discourse against which I struggle.” Such a claim can enable her

audience to understand her views better. However, her use of ‘analytic’ might also unnecessarily limit her appeal — particularly if she is trying to communicate in interdisciplinary or international feminist contexts.

There can also be rhetorical advantages for feminists to claim their analytic heritage, especially in locations in which analytic philosophy remains “dominant.”^[16] A feminist who is willing to claim an analytic tradition might be able to more meaningfully critique it in certain ways — after all she has given it her best effort. At the very least, her critiques, revisions, and insights might seem more acceptable to nonfeminist analytic philosophers because she is “one of their own.”^[17]

It is a disadvantage to call oneself an analytic feminist if, by doing so, one were to encourage others to subsume feminism under a patrilineal identity. In the context of discussing the importance of constructing a feminist genealogy of feminist thought by claiming and engaging with other feminist thinkers, Marilyn Frye notes ironically how much “better placed in history” it seems to be when one is seen “in that august Oxbridge lineage [of Austin and Wittgenstein, rather] than in a lineage featuring dozens of mimeographed feminist pamphlets authored by collectives, ... Kate Millett, Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin, ... [feminist philosophers such as] Claudia Card, Naomi Scheman, Maria Lugones, Sarah Hoagland, and troubadours like Alix Dobkin and Willie Tyson” (Frye 2001, 86-87). In order to resist the comfort/erasure of the patrilineal heritage, analytic feminists need to do as Frye says: to claim and engage other feminist thinkers. Many, including Frye, already do so. This will not only help to sustain a feminist tradition, it will also increase the richness of feminist work and decrease the odds of feminists being held captive by male-biased philosophical methods, theories, concepts and images.

Continental Feminism

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Continental feminists ground their explorations of sex, gender, and the inequalities related to both in the European philosophical traditions that emerged after Kant and throughout the twentieth century, particularly phenomenology, existentialism, deconstructionism, and psychoanalytic theory. Although such feminists are acutely aware of the male bias that runs strongly through these traditions, they also find them useful tools for articulating the depth and structure of women's lived experiences within a patriarchal society.

1. The Continental Tradition

Continental feminism finds its roots in the various philosophical movements and schools that emerged from France and Germany in the decades and centuries following the work of Immanuel Kant. From the dialectic materialism of Hegel to the deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida, these traditions distinguished themselves from the Anglo-American schools of analytic thought in both their content and their methodologies. In many ways, the emergence of the continental tradition was the result of an attempt to recover from Kant's fundamental challenge to philosophy: that logic and reason were limited tools, incapable of answering definitively some of the metaphysical questions that had dominated philosophical inquiries for centuries (for example, the existence of God and the true nature of beings). Rather than remaining wedded to the dictates of logic as traditionally understood, these French and German theorists problematized reason itself. Hegel, in his development of dialectical reasoning, undermined the very assumptions of Aristotelian logic, and posited contradictions not as roadblocks to philosophy, but rather as the very engines of both thought and history. Oppositions now became fuel for progress, and while few continental thinkers subsequent to Hegel (with the exception of the Marxist tradition) adopted his linear view of history with its persistent and apparently value-laden teleology, nevertheless his success in breaking free from the limitations of Kant's

theories inspired other thinkers to do likewise.

The continental tradition is, unsurprisingly, not monolithic. It comprises a variety of schools of thought, which will only briefly be discussed here but which are discussed at length in other entries in this encyclopedia. Phenomenology, whose early proponents included Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, attempted to articulate basic structures of lived human experience. Phenomenology overlapped significantly with existentialism, both in its philosophical interests and in the individual thinkers who came to personify one or both movements (for example, Jean-Paul Sartre, most strongly identified with existentialism, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who is often claimed by both camps). Although phenomenology at times represented a method that was in some ways more akin to scientific reasoning (Husserl's eidetic reduction, for example, attempted to distill universal structures of human experience from individual experiences) while existentialism explicitly eschewed any thinking comparable to that of the sciences, nevertheless both were concerned with the human being as a living, subjective, dynamic entity, one whose experiences of being in the world could not be reduced to biology or physical forces.

Psychoanalytic theory, another influential school of thought within Continental philosophy, also adopted as its subject the human being, this time through the lens of the psyche. Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Jacques Lacan, among others, sought to unlock the workings of the unconscious mind in order both to explain human behavior and to ameliorate psychological suffering. Philosophically, psychoanalytic theory challenged the notion of the human being as defined by self-conscious, rational thought, and celebrated the powers of inductive thought in its attempt to unearth the psychic events, beliefs, and structures inaccessible to the conscious mind. Compared to phenomenology, psychoanalysis was in many ways even closer to the realm of science, despite the scientific community's persistent reluctance to recognize it as a viable field; nevertheless, many philosophers have found it a rich source of insight into the human condition.

In the twentieth century, two French philosophers, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, dominated continental philosophy with their controversial and at times diverging theories, both of which are often combined under the term “postmodernism” (a term that is at least as confusing as it is helpful, especially because the traditions described above could just as accurately be described as postmodern). Although there are certainly other twentieth-century postmodern figures with enormous influence, such as Merleau-Ponty and Jean Baudrillard, Foucault and Derrida remain among the most well-known and cited philosophers of this tradition, particularly among feminist writers.

Derrida is most often associated with his method and theory of deconstructionism. At its most basic level, deconstructionism is an approach to texts, one that criticizes and undermines crucial and common assumptions about the way in which language works. Derrida insisted that the very way in which language functions, that is, signification, necessitates an unbridgeable gap between the signifier and the signified. Language, in other words, is a form of pointing, a gesture by which one thing stands for or points to another. Words and their meanings are not entirely commensurable: that is, between a word and that to which it refers exists a nontranscendable difference, an abyss that a user of language must cross. Nor can the relationship between words and meaning be controlled by an author or speaker. To approach texts (and Derrida understood the category of “texts” broadly, so that they came to include not only the written word, but also visual art, cultural symbolism, etc.) in the deconstructive mode is to understand language and meaning not as fixed and static, but rather as dynamic relations between and among differentiated beings. A sense of otherness—that is, the way that entities differ from each other, in the sense that they cannot be reduced to other entities, or otherwise be rendered as essentially similar or identical—pervades deconstructionism, not only in the distinction between the signifier and the signified, but also between those individuals who encounter, use, and inhabit language. With this otherness comes an acknowledgement of the limits of reason and objectivity: in terms of written texts, for

example, one cannot speak of an “authoritative” or “correct” interpretation, nor does the author know what the work “really” means. Elsebet Jegstrup writes, “Deconstruction is existential. It respects singularity, and, most profoundly, it recognizes otherness and the fact that we may not always be able to say what constitutes otherness. It realizes that although much experience can be shared, there will always be areas of experience, understood in physical as well as metaphysical terms, that cannot be shared” (2004, 2).

If texts do not exist as objectively knowable objects, if the very use of language presupposes not identity but difference (that is, the difference between the signifier and the signified, as well as the difference that exists irreducibly between and among speaking/listening agents), then the unspoken is surely just as significant as the spoken. To deconstruct a text from this perspective is to attempt to articulate some of its underlying, unspoken, and necessary, contradictions, the ways in which what is unsaid contradicts, or is in tension with, the explicitly expressed. The deconstructive strategy is not inherently a criticism of a text: Derrida is in no way implying that texts should be logically consistent. To the contrary, in their inherent openness to interpretation, in their refusal to be trapped by logical principles, in their very infinite nature, texts show themselves to be alive and lively.

This exceedingly brief overview of deconstructionism belies its cultural impact. Derrida's theories have been attacked particularly in the context of the so-called US “culture wars” in their alleged valorization of relativism. Whether such attacks are warranted is a matter not within the purview of this entry, however; our only concern here is the absolutely crucial role that Derrida and his theories play within the field of continental philosophy, a point that is itself hardly controversial.

Let us turn now, similarly briefly, to the work of Michel Foucault, who is known primarily for his theories of power and sexuality, explored in works such as *Discipline and Punish*, *History of Sexuality*, and others. Central to his work is the claim that power should be understood not only as repressive—as limiting the behavior or possibilities of the

subject—but also, perhaps even primarily, as productive. Dynamics and discourses of power produce certain kinds of subjects, with certain kinds of capacities, desires, and functions. The time-honored example of such a dynamic is that of the soldier, for whom military training is not only about eradicating certain elements of one's personhood, but is also concerned with instilling specific habits and aptitudes. Military training, then, manufactures soldiers, and the depth of the effect of such manufacturing on the subject, Foucault indicates, is profound. Similarly, modern political discourses produce certain types of subjects, with distinct characteristics. Power, then, creates possibility, although it does so always with its own motivations. Moreover, the workings of power cannot be reduced to specific individuals or locations. Power works diffusely, utilizing the very subjects that are constructed within its context to perpetuate its goals. The feudal model of power, with its distinct roles and top-down hierarchy, and its emphasis on punishment, makes way for disciplinary power, targeted distinctly towards the subject's body, dependent upon constant surveillance, and intended to normalize the subject's being and actions—that is, to create a subject according to the norms demanded by the overall power structure.

Within this understanding of power, there is little about the subject that is untouched by it. Sexuality in particular is viewed by Foucault not as an inherently biological drive, but rather as a set of desires and dynamics that are deeply shaped by the modern cultural context. Indeed, in analyzing the shift to modern disciplinary power, Foucault notes a near obsession with control of sexuality. Whether by science or religion or other forces, the subject's sexuality suddenly came under close scrutiny, and the normalization of sexuality became of paramount concern. Indeed, the discourses of power served to shape sexual desires themselves; that subjects experience them as innate or central to their individual personalities only demonstrates the scope of those networks of power.

The question of resistance is one that permeates much of the philosophical discussions surrounding Foucauldian theories, including feminist discussions. If the subject is so utterly constituted by the

discourses of power, what sorts of tools are available for the undermining of that power? With regard to sexuality, Foucault is not seeking to liberate sexuality entirely, to return it, for example, to a politically neutral, perhaps natural state. The existence of such a state is, for Foucault, dubious. Rather, he (controversially) suggests the desexualization of pleasure, by which subjects attempt to undermine certain aspects of the constructed form of sexuality (for example, the reduction of sexuality to the genitals) demanded by the discourses of power. He urges that by transgressing the boundaries of pleasure and sexuality that are demanded by discursive powers, subjects can individually and collectively create new modes of being (for example, a radical undermining of compulsory heterosexuality would cast human sexuality and pleasure in entirely new ways, and would significantly affect social and political institutions). These new modes are no more natural, and no less constructed, than the modes demanded by disciplinary power, but they would be an attempt to exist explicitly in tension with those systems of power, thus rendering those systems more visible and (perhaps) somewhat more vulnerable.

This scanty overview of continental philosophy is by definition incomplete; other central figures not mentioned here, who are nevertheless crucial to the tradition, include Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Soren Kierkegaard, and many others. Nevertheless, such an overview is valuable for demonstrating the philosophical legacies from which continental feminism derives. Vital among such legacies are a critical approach to logic and rationality; an emphasis on understanding the lived experience of the human being; and an abiding interest in the deeply embedded assumptions and structures of social and political life. Continental feminists take these concepts, and the methodologies particular to continental thought, and explore both in the light of gender and sexual inequality. They do not do so uncritically, however, and are quick to point out that many of these theories make the same mistakes that feminists have diagnosed in philosophies of all stripes: a persistent devaluing of the feminine, an implicit acceptance that the male human can stand in for all humans, and a failure to

recognize the social, political, and philosophical relevance of sexism. In the burgeoning field of continental feminism, two concerns, then, seem to be paramount: on the one hand, thinkers are concerned with rectifying the gaps in the previous theories, with a particular eye toward the gendered nature of those gaps; on the other, they work with (and expand upon) the concepts and methodologies of continental philosophy to deepen our philosophical understandings of human beings as gendered beings and the continual inequalities that exist among the genders.

2. Main Topics of Continental Feminism

2.1 Theories of the Self and Society

Continental feminist thinkers are strongly interested in the ontology of the self, the structure of society, and the connections and disruptions between the two. Central among their philosophical interests here are sexual difference, embodiment, and intersubjectivity.

2.1.1 Sexual Difference

Few of the traditional figures in continental philosophy (even Foucault, with his explicit attention to sexuality) directly addressed the issue of sexual difference. For continental feminists, by contrast, it remains one of the most controversial and central topics of discussion. There are two main schools of thought within continental feminism concerning the issue. The first, best represented by Luce Irigaray, approaches sexual difference as a more or less ontological reality, and asserts that rather than attempting to transcend or deny differences between men and women, feminism should embrace the fact of difference and take it as the very foundation of both theory and practice. The second, best represented by Judith Butler, questions the very reality of any sort of sexual difference, and views such a difference as part and parcel of a system of inequality. Undermining that system entails denying the reality of the difference, and questioning at the most basic level those

fields of knowledge (for example, biology) that assume it as given.

Before we explore the concept of sexual difference, it is worth pointing out that it is not the only difference with which continental feminist philosophers concern themselves. Differences that occur among women, such as those regarding class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, are also explored. Gayatri Spivak, for example, explores issues regarding cultural difference and globalism, Seyla Benhabib's work investigates the possibilities surrounding democracy in a diverse and pluralistic world, and Teresa de Lauretis discusses lesbianism from a psychoanalytic perspective. More generally, continental feminist thinkers persistently criticize their own and others' theories on the basis of whether they misrepresent or exclude experiences of non-white, non-heterosexual, non-Western women (the work of Simone de Beauvoir, for example, fares poorly on these points). Clearly, then, difference itself, and not merely sexual difference, is of primary importance to these thinkers. Nevertheless, no one difference has received as much theoretical attention as sexual difference, and as such it is worthy of extended discussion here.

Let us explore each of these perspectives in more detail. Irigaray's central critique of Western philosophy rests upon her diagnosis of its inherent sexual indifference, that is, a failure on the part of those theories to recognize that the human species is always internally differentiated, certainly by sex, and most likely by other relevant differences as well. When such theories have allowed “male” to stand in for “human”—whether by defining the human in terms of characteristics associated specifically with men, or constructing the male as the paradigm of the species, or by simply conflating the two linguistically by use of the male generic—they have necessarily rendered women as lesser humans. More to the point, they have rendered women as lesser men, as men manqué, as beings who simply have less, in comparison to men, of the attributes necessary to human subjects. By considering the human species as essentially one, and then allowing the male to stand in for that “one,” such a philosophical tradition has defined women out of the specificity of their own

existence, and has only allowed women to be seen in relation to men, their desires, and their needs.

When we construct women in this way, when we deny their ontological independence and instead view them as beings who differ only quantitatively from men—such that their being can essentially be reduced to that of men's, that there is nothing about women, particularly, that cannot already be found in the male figure—then it is easy to restrict their roles to those most convenient and useful to men. Women are defined, then, as wives or mothers, and as a culture we are conceptually incapable of understanding them on any basis other than male interests. Moreover, Irigaray emphasizes, relations between men and women become so fundamentally male-centered that real dialogue, real interactions, real exchanges are impossible: with women being understood (and understanding themselves) as nothing more than reflections of male being, what looks like dialogue is actually monologue. Men are conversing only with projections of their own being, and women are not speaking subjects at all. “Yet isn't it time for us to become communicating subjects? Have we not exhausted our other possibilities, indeed, our other desires? Isn't it time for us to become capable not only of speech but also of speaking to *one another*?” (Irigaray 1996, 45).

Irigaray claims that, for both philosophical and political reasons, Western culture must recognize that difference lies at the very foundation of the human species and experience. Sexual difference is at the very least the most obvious kind of difference among humans, and Irigaray is (at times) careful to indicate that sexual differentiation may not be limited to the two sexes currently recognized by Western culture. The human species, she says, is “at least” two (1996, 37). Her point here is that, trapped as Western culture and thought is within a male-centered metaphysics, both sexes (and those that may remain unrecognized) have been constructed contrary to their ontological distinction. Therefore, we do not really know who men are; their sexual specificity has been veiled utterly by their status as paradigmatic, sex-neutral humans. And we certainly do not know who women are, as

their sexual specificity has been utterly denied in the construction of their inferior status.

In order to rectify both our philosophical understandings of human beings and our sexual politics, Irigaray elevates the philosophical virtue of wonder. The sexes must approach each other with a sense of humility, an awareness of the unknown, a recognition that no one person or subset of persons can represent the human species in its totality, and that therefore the other has something to teach, and something to say. To approach the other as different is not (as some other philosophical traditions would have it) to construct it as inferior. Difference can be separated from hierarchy, and can in fact be understood as the very condition of possibility of connection, of coalition, of being-together. Rather than aspiring to those ways of being that have been characteristically male, women need to “become who they are”: to discover their own particular modalities of being and free themselves from social, legal, and political institutions that relegate them to faint reflections of masculinity.

Other thinkers that have taken up the concept of sexual difference include Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, and Moira Gatens. Like Irigaray, however, these thinkers have not described this difference in terms of content. That is, they tend not to make substantial claims concerning femininity (they do not, for example, describe women as distinctly nurturing, or empathic, or anything of the sort). The philosophical relevance of this difference is not its content, not the particular ways in which men and women are or may be different (according to Irigaray, of course, we are incapable at least at the moment of perceiving or articulating these particular differences), but rather the fact of alterity itself. Difference then becomes constructed not as a goal—the point is not to discover precisely how the sexes are different—but rather as a shifting foundation, a fluid starting point from which to begin the process of being together as a community.

Criticisms of this emphasis on sexual difference are in some ways philosophically predictable, and they emanate not only from feminists

not associated with the continental tradition, but also from those who subscribe to it. Generally speaking, the criticisms question the foundational nature of sexual difference. They argue that what may appear as a given, natural distinction may in fact be nothing more than a political construct, and that to ground either a politics or a philosophy on such a distinction is to doom women to a second-class existence (see, for example, the work of Michèle Le Doeuff). A primary critic of this philosophical embracing of sexual difference is Judith Butler, to whom we now turn our attention.

In her highly influential book *Gender Trouble* (1989) and the follow-up book *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler radically undermines both feminist and non-feminist understandings of sex and gender. *Gender Trouble* presented her theory of gender as essentially performative. Gender roles, and indeed gender itself, Butler argues, come into being as they are performed by subjects. There is no gender identity prior to these performances; indeed, there is no gender prior to or beyond those experiences. We are wrong, then, to imagine that women are women before they are taught the behaviors, roles, and scripts that are assigned to them. Moreover, because gender is performative, it demands to be iterated: without the repetition of performance, gender would literally cease to exist. Within this theory is articulated both the persistence of gender—it appears to be so natural, so given, because our very identities have been steeped in it—and the possibility of resistance, for once we are aware of the scripts, we become capable of speaking otherwise. Indeed, because every iteration necessarily includes the possibility of disloyalty, gender demonstrates itself to be paradoxically vulnerable to new and disobedient incarnations.

At this point, Butler's theory may appear to have a striking similarity to the sex/gender distinction that marked so much of the influential work that emanated from the Second Wave of U.S. feminism. This distinction drew a sharp difference between biological characteristics of the different sexes and the social roles and behaviors that were associated with them. The first category, sex, was understood as generally immutable, universal across cultures, and independent of

political realities. The second category, gender, was understood as politically constructed, and therefore capable of being transformed. Second Wave feminists claimed that patriarchal society had conflated the two, and had thus wrongly considered women to be naturally, biologically incapable of certain sorts of social roles, when in fact such a limitation was arbitrary and open to transformation. While of enormous political and philosophical use to U.S. feminism, the sex/gender distinction essentially left uncriticized the biological reality of sex.

Butler's theory, however, does not leave the alleged biological reality of sex uncriticized, as she makes clear in *Bodies that Matter*. Whereas the sex/gender distinction allows the biological fact of sex to precede the cultural fact of gender, Butler argues that even the way that we understand materiality itself, as well as the bodies that are included in the category of materiality, is culturally and politically defined. It matters, in other words, that matter is understood as prior to experience: that definition is part of a politically and philosophically specific way of approaching the world. Once that definition is questioned, materiality itself is shown to be a conceptual construction, one that perpetuates the belief that sex is a natural given. Butler's point is that materiality itself must be rethought as a far more fluid, dynamic, and philosophically contentious notion, and that its role in the construction (at this point in her work, Butler prefers the term "materialization") of the subject must be recognized. The body here becomes an active element of the materialization of the subject rather than a passive, finite entity.

For Butler, then, Irigaray's claim of a sexual difference that is ontologically fundamental to human existence is untenable. Sexual difference for Butler shows up as an inherent part of a conceptual system that creates and perpetuates unequal power relations. Although, like Foucault, Butler is wary of the claim that subjects (whether individually or collectively) can undermine the totality of such a system, nevertheless she finds some possibility for resistance in the opportunities for rebellious iterations of gender norms, roles, and scripts. In performing such iterations, subjects may literally bring new

ways of being gendered (or possibly not being gendered?) into being.

These two approaches to sexual difference, while profoundly dissimilar, nevertheless demonstrate that the lived human experience as currently constructed inevitably locates gender as central to identity. Butler is not, for example, arguing that men and women experience the world in a fundamentally similar way: she would point out that men and women, as beings who have always already been gendered, perform radically different scripts and therefore have radically different experiences and perceptions. Thus for both schools of thought, any discussion of gender inequality must take difference—whether ontologically fundamental or fundamentally constructed—into account.

2.1.2 Embodiment

A strong strand of continental thought includes a reevaluation of the role of the body with regard to subjectivity. Part of continental's philosophy persistent critique of modern, Enlightenment thought was the latter's insistence upon defining the human being primarily in terms of intellectual or cognitive capacities. Especially with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, continental philosophy sought to understand the body not as peripheral (or worse, opposed) to subjectivity, but rather as crucial to the lived experience of the human subject.

Continental feminists have also demonstrated a lasting interest in the body and its relation to agency, ethics, and politics. They have also pointed out, unlike many other continental thinkers, that when modern philosophy ignored or marginalized the body, it simultaneously ignored or marginalized women. That is, by understanding the human being in terms that were allegedly gender-neutral, and by forsaking those aspects of human existence that were clearly gendered/sexed—intellectual moves that denied the relevance of bodily differences among humans—modern thought successfully wrote women out of its project. (There were exceptions, of course, most notably John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft, but contemporary continental feminists

would find in these theories too a distinctly disembodied philosophical approach). Thus, continental feminism has continually articulated a connection between the ways in which women and the body have been conceptualized.

For the vast majority of continental feminists, to approach the human subject as embodied is crucial. Emphasizing the material aspects of the lived human experience allows thinkers to articulate some (perhaps universal) elements of that experience while also remaining focused on the differences that embodiment necessarily entails. For while all human beings are incarnate, each incarnation is by definition distinct. Nor, it must be emphasized, are the differences that occur among bodies to be reduced to biological differences. The lived body that continental feminists are concerned with is distinct from the body as studied by biology and the other sciences: it is a dynamic, fluid, contentious entity, constantly affected by and affecting its own environment. Bodies, from this philosophical perspective, are deeply social and political organisms, marked inherently by history, geography, and a host of other factors.

Of course, one of the main differences that marks bodies in contemporary culture is gender, and the fact that many continental theories of the body fail to recognize the profound effects of gender on the human lived experience is one of the main imminent critiques to be found in continental feminism. The lived human body is always already sexed, regardless of whether one views such sexing as entirely cultural or as grounded in some sort of deep ontology. To understand the human experience, then, is to recognize that there is no one human experience; thus sex (and other differences as well) should be central to any philosophical theory of either the body or the subject. Continental feminism here serves as a crucial corrective to the general continental theory, which has too often paid insufficient attention to the philosophical relevance of sex/gender.

Perhaps no better example of this corrective function of continental feminism can be found than in the fairly extensive literature concerning

Foucault and gender. Here, thinkers such as Sandra Bartky (1990), Ladelle McWhorter (1999), Lois McNay (1992), and Susan Bordo (1993) have both adopted and criticized Foucauldian concepts in order to, on the one hand, indicate where his own theories failed to take up sufficiently the question of sexual difference, and, on the other, to bring new insight to bear on the ways in which feminine bodies and sexualities are constructed. Bartky, for example, uses Foucault's notions of disciplinary power to describe the feminine body as constructed for particular purposes, and to emphasize that the details of this construction extend to minute details in the way women relate to their bodies. Bordo reads Foucault's "docile body" in a sexually specific way in order to better understand how femininity is reproduced in particular incarnations. Foucault, in other words, is a crucial interlocutor for continental feminists in their discussions concerning embodiment and the self.

The embodied subject is, as mentioned above, profoundly marked by its environment, including its interactions with other human (and other-than-human) beings. However, many continental feminists are careful not to portray the material body as a wholly passive tabula rasa upon which political discourses etch their values. Rather, the body is understood as an active, dynamic site, one that always contains the possibility of resistance, and one that takes up the elements of its surroundings in sometimes surprising ways. In contemporary Western society, for example, the female body is expected to engage in significant, and time-consuming, beautification practices. While virtually every woman experiences this pressure, different women may react to it in different ways, and those different ways can affect both their actual bodies (in their appearance, in decisions made concerning the possibilities of cosmetic surgery, etc.) and their perceptions of their bodies. The result is therefore a wide-ranging variety of bodies, from those that undergo extensive beautification to those that eschew it entirely; and, perhaps even more importantly, extending to those that inhabit different places on the continuum at different points in their lives.

If bodies are capable of resisting power dynamics, they are also capable of perpetuating them: embodied subjects, then, are deeply enmeshed in social and political forces. As such, they serve as concrete reminders that such familiar philosophical dichotomies as self/society and mind/body are not as hard and fast as most of Western philosophy would have us believe.

2.1.3 Intersubjectivity

Modern philosophy not only defined the self as primarily rational and intellectual; it also defined the self as autonomous and profoundly alone. Social contract theory posited that individuals came together, out of necessity, to form societies that protected their health and well being, albeit at a somewhat regrettable cost in the form of reduced personal freedom. Most modern political thought is concerned with the delicate balance of individual freedoms and social necessity, but underlying all such questions is the assumption that human beings begin in solitude, and that one of their most precious attributes is their autonomy.

Feminists, of course, have long been concerned with the autonomy of women, having witnessed the failure of so many political systems (including those inspired by Enlightenment thought) to extend full independence to the allegedly fair sex. Philosophically, however, continental feminism takes issue with the centrality of autonomy to theories of subjectivity and ethics. More precisely, continental feminism tends to approach the subject not as essentially separate from other human (and in some cases other-than-human) beings, but rather as inextricably intertwined with these beings. In large part, then, continental feminism tends to speak not of subjectivity, with its overtones of independent, autonomous action, but rather of intersubjectivity, which implies that being with others is a necessary condition to any action whatsoever.

In fact, many continental feminists view the privileging of autonomy as a deeply male-centered model of existence. To understand the self as first and foremost alone and free is, after all, to deny the lived

experience of dependency that is central to any human existence. More to the point, the person to whom we are most likely to be dependent upon at distinctly vulnerable points in our life experience is often a woman. Rousseau's allegedly natural (if “savage”) man, who is found walking through the forest, gathering his own food, did not spring *ex nihilo* from his own environment. Someone, most likely a woman, nurtured him in his early infancy and created the conditions for his admired freedom. To take independence as the starting point is thus to ignore once again the work that is most closely associated with women.

If the human being is profoundly intersubjective, if the identity and continued existence of any particular individual depends upon the presence and actions of others, then to highlight autonomy as the hallmark of the ideal human existence is deeply misguided. This is not to say that continental feminists abandon all notions of freedom and autonomy; they do, however, contextualize autonomy within a network of relationships and understand it as emanating from social discourses, rather than as existing as an innate characteristic of the human being. The self, for continental feminists, remains always marked by the other, always entwined by the other, always deeply enmeshed with the other, so much so that to understand it as outside of any social interactions is to misunderstand it completely.

2.2 Theories of Sexual Injustice

Given the approaches that continental feminism takes to the self and its surroundings, it is not surprising to find that its understandings of sexual injustice vary somewhat from those of other forms of feminist thought. In their criticism of liberalism as an insufficient response to sexual inequality, continental feminists are fairly unified; in their diagnosis of what a sexually just society would entail, significant differences remain.

2.2.1 Critique of Liberalism

Continental feminist thought understands liberalism essentially as a

political theory whose main tenets are incapable of rooting out the deep causes of sexual inequality. By and large, liberalism claims that the main injustice that patriarchal Western society has imposed upon women has been one of exclusion: women have been denied entrance to those institutions and roles that house most social and political power. To rectify this injustice, society as a whole must seek to introduce women to these institutions and roles, to increase their social and political influence, and (to a certain extent) to ensure that gender does not serve to disadvantage women economically or politically. Indeed, understood in this fashion, it is crucial to note the significant successes that liberalism has achieved in the history of the United States, most notably the achievement of women's suffrage and the significant increase of women in such formerly male-dominated fields as law and medicine.

From the continental perspective, however, liberalism and its goals do not extend nearly far enough. First, generally speaking, liberalism assumes that the basic structure of social and political institutions is both ungendered and acceptable. Marriage, then, remains a viable institution: its elements need only to be tweaked to ensure that both men and women are represented equally within it, and its benefits need only be extended to heretofore excluded groups, such as gays and lesbians, to ensure that it does not constitute the privileging of one form of sexuality over another. The fields of business and politics, too, are not problematic in their structure, but only in their membership, and while some liberal feminists hold out hopes that the inclusion of women will inspire structural change, such structural change is not at the heart of the liberal mission.

Continental feminism argues that the relevance of sex and gender goes far deeper than liberalism assumes. The promises of the Enlightenment are not merely unfulfilled with relation to women (as, for example, the imminent critique of Mary Wollstonecraft holds); rather, the very promises themselves rest upon a foundation of gender inequality. As mentioned above, the centrality of autonomy depends upon a denial of dependence, and a refusal to acknowledge the social necessity of work

traditionally known as women's (we can only believe that we are autonomous when we ignore how much of our activities and achievements depend on the fact that we have been cared for, are most likely still cared for, often in invisible ways, and will most likely be cared for more explicitly as we age—and that most of this caring will be done by women). Likewise, the social construction of work in Western society is profoundly, not superficially, gendered. The demands of professional achievement (long work days and weeks and extensive education, for example) still presume an employee who has a partner caring for his and his children's material needs. Yet few women have such a wife. Nor are such institutions developed with the assumption that workers will at some point bear children, or care for aging or ill relatives, with all the physical and emotional demands that such an experience includes. Simply adding women to institutions whose configurations are opposed to their physical and social realities is a recipe for failure, if not on the part of all individual women (some, after all, have succeeded), then certainly on the part of the societal attempt to construct equality between the sexes.

Audre Lorde once famously claimed that “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house,” (1984, 112) and with regard to sexual inequality, continental feminism finds the philosophical tools of liberalism—the emphasis upon the individual, autonomy, and personal achievement—not up to the task of dismantling patriarchy. Inclusion of women in institutions previously barred to them is certainly not sufficient, perhaps not necessary, and for some continental feminists, may even be contrary to the overall goal of sexual equality, insofar as those women may find themselves co-opted into and perpetuating a system from which they may benefit individually but which disadvantages women as a class. Models of sexual justice for continental feminists, then, tend to represent a far deeper, more substantial critique of modern Western culture. On the whole, the models tend to represent the differing approaches to sexual difference to be found within continental feminism as a field.

2.2.2 The Deconstruction of Sex

For those continental feminists who hold sex to be an entirely constructed category, upon which sexual injustice rests and depends, forming a sexually just society and politics demands the radical deconstruction of sex and sexuality. Perhaps nowhere else in the field of continental feminism is the dependence upon the work of Simone de Beauvoir as evident as in relation to this point. Virtually all continental feminists who explore the ways in which femininity and the sexes themselves are constructed refer, explicitly or implicitly, to the famous claim in *The Second Sex* (1952) that “one is not born a woman.” Indeed, *The Second Sex* could fairly be termed the very first work within the tradition of continental feminism, insofar as it applied the insights of existentialism to the social and political status of women, claiming that women's existence and experience is framed by a patriarchal order that defines them as inferior, as incapable of the transcendence that is necessary to create meaning. Women, in de Beauvoir's view, are forced by a male-centric society to remain mired in immanence, attached irrevocably to the body and to bodily needs (particularly the needs of men), and in this way are profoundly unfree. Yet this lack of freedom, this construction of sex roles along hierarchical lines, is neither necessary nor invulnerable. Women are capable of escaping the roles that bind them: in other words, femininity is constructed, and must be deconstructed if women are to find liberation (for two excellent treatments of de Beauvoir, her life, and her relevance to feminist thought, see Moi 1994 and Bauer 2001).

The work of Monique Wittig (1992) is an excellent example of the legacy that de Beauvoir bequeathed to feminist thought. In Wittig's vision, society must recognize that the categories of “man” and “women” structurally parallel the categories of “master” and “slave”. Not only do the terms, despite their apparent opposition to each other, in fact define each other mutually (one cannot be a master without a slave, and vice versa), but the very categories and identities they reflect only make sense within a context of hierarchy. Slavery as an institution could not survive without the unexamined belief that certain persons are masters and certain persons are slaves, and as long as those

identities remain cogent, the institution is perpetuated. Similarly, the structure of patriarchy depends upon the common belief that some people are male and some are female (for Wittig, like so many continental feminists, the sex/gender distinction does not hold; see also the work of Christine Delphy and Colette Guillaumin, who also rely heavily on the theories of Simone de Beauvoir, even as they push them somewhat beyond their original scope), and the cogency of that distinction is itself part of the continuation of the inequality. To do away with slavery is to destroy all masters and all slaves, and likewise, to do away with patriarchy demands the destruction of sex as a functioning, coherent category of persons.

This dismantling of sex at first appears to be an appeal to androgyny, and while Wittig would take issue with the etymology of the word (what she is seeking is not a combination of the male and the female, but the eradication of the very categories), nevertheless, her ideal is one of persons who are not gendered. This is not the case for all continental feminists who adopt similar models of sexual justice. For some, however, what needs to be dismantled is not necessarily all sexual identities, but rather the tyranny of a system that demands and permits only two. From this perspective, sexual justice would entail the nurturing of a wide diversity of sexual identities and behaviors, none of which could be contained fully with the constraining categories currently in play. Feminists adopting this line of thought consistently point out that all definitions of 'sex', particularly those based in biology, are inevitably found to be wanting, in that there are always examples of individuals that contradict them. Yet it is important to remember that this model of sexual justice is not at its core liberal: the philosophical assumption is not that there are some innate, inherent sexualities that are being denied, that need simply to be allowed to flower. What these continental feminists seek to do is not to bring to light something that already exists, but rather to allow that which does not currently exist to come into being. Such a proliferation of sexual identities and behaviors would undo the oppressive dichotomies that hierarchically structure the sexes.

2.2.3 Embracing of Sexual Difference

For those feminists who ground their theories in a recognition of sexual difference, justice takes on a decisively different shape than that described above. Rather than seeking to transcend or undermine the notion of sexual difference, these philosophers claim that ethics must start with an acknowledgment of the fundamental nature of sexual difference, however unclear we may currently be on its other qualities. Rather than founding our sense of ethics and justice on notions of equality and sameness, as do modern political theories, we must start with the understanding that the Other is different from us, unknown and wondrous, and that to attempt to veil or transcend such difference is to do violence to that Other.

With regard to sexual justice in particular, theorists such as Irigaray point out that women have been forced to play roles that are nothing but reflections of men's needs and desires. They have, in other words, been denied their own, independent being, and this denial has resulted in the theft of their particular voice. Political structures have reflected this failure to recognize difference in their insistence that individuals be perceived independently of their sex; yet this very gender-neutrality has masked an insistent, implicit male bias that has treated the male as the norm. If sexual justice is to be achieved, women must be freed from their derivative status. Their particularity must be seen not as a sign of inferiority (after all, theories of sexual difference insist that masculinity is just as particular, just as specific, as femininity), but as the foundation of dialogue and of interaction.

More than any other theorist, Irigaray has applied this notion of sexual difference directly to political and legal systems. In her later work, she has insisted that legal codes, for example, must adopt the notion of "sexed rights," that is, rights that are specific to each sex. Issues such as reproductive freedom and sexual violence, she claims, cannot be understood in a gender-neutral fashion. The particularity of women's bodies, and the distinct role they play in reproduction, demand an articulation of these rights *as* women's rights. From Irigaray's

perspective, “human rights” is a contradiction in terms: for rights to have any lived meaning, for them to be relevant to the real experiences of individual citizens, they must be infused with a respect for the differentiation that is at the heart of human existence.

As mentioned earlier, sexual difference, while often described as the most fundamental of differences among human beings, is not the only one. Many theorists, such as Elizabeth Grosz, argue that other differences that occur among bodies (race, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, just to name a few) must also be recognized and articulated in order to construct a just society. In order for society to confront racial injustice, for example, society must first admit that a person's race positions them socially, politically, and economically in distinct ways. To insist that social and political systems ignore a person's race is to contradict this lived experience. If, for example, as legislation sponsored by the Racial Privacy Initiative would demand (www.racialprivacy.org), government agencies stop listing race on various important documents, it will become virtually impossible to track racial inequalities. More generally, theories of difference would insist that racial difference is not merely superficial, and would claim that many well-meaning theorists and activists from the dominant group have made the mistake of assuming that members of the subordinate group are “just like me.” The ethical imperative of wonder would demand an acknowledgement that even the dominant group is raced and that the race of the dominant group has significantly affected that group's perceptions and reality.

In this model of justice, difference becomes not a problem to be transcended, but in fact a means of contradicting and undermining the unjust systems that today pervade our world. With regard to sexual injustice in particular, theorists of sexual difference (including Rosi Braidotti, Moira Gatens, and Elizabeth Grosz) seek not to liberate women so that they can be men, or man-like, in their status, possibilities, and desires. Rather, they seek to construct a world where women are allowed to be women—whatever form(s) such femininity may take once it is decoupled from the dominant force of masculinity.

And what of sexuality under this model? In the model discussed in the previous section, sexual justice took the form of an explosion of sexualities, unhampered by the demands of sexual dualism. Some critics of the sexual difference model claim that it is inherently heterosexist in its emphasis on masculinity and femininity and its persistent interest in male-female dialogue and interaction. Indeed, some of these critiques seem well founded. While Irigaray occasionally remembers, for example, to refer to “at least” two sexes, nevertheless her theory seems to remain focused on how the two most commonly known sexes, men and women, can relate to each other. Little if any attention is paid to how women may relate to each other sexually, or, if there are more than two sexes, how this increased multiplicity may reframe our understanding of sexuality beyond the demands of heterosexuality.

Yet implicit in the theory of sexual difference is a critique of compulsory heterosexuality. If femininity is to be truly decoupled from masculinity, if its ontological distinctness is truly to be recognized, then it cannot be said that femininity and masculinity complement each other. Both are limited, it is true, but not in such a way that they reflect each other's lacks. Given this non-complementarity, heterosexual couples cannot represent, in miniature, the completeness of human existence. The sexes, in other words, do not function as each other's destiny, and if we are to allow feminine sexuality to appear as something other than a projection of masculine desire, then we must not assume that it has any particular orientation. In this sense, a recognition of sexual difference entails a recognition of a diversity of sexual orientations.

2.3 Gender and the Psyche [Authored by Jennifer Hansen]

For many feminists, psychoanalysis, or the work of Sigmund Freud, represents powerful attempts by patriarchy to control women's sexuality. Psychoanalysis as practiced in the 50's and 60's in the United States often blamed mothers as well as feminism as the source of social

unrest. Moreover, many scholars have exposed Freud's decision to ignore the accounts of rape and sexual violence that his female patients were giving in therapy, choosing instead to interpret them as mere "fantasies." Given the problematic relationship between feminism and psychoanalysis, many feminists are bewildered by the growing literature among continental feminists (including such thinkers as Teresa Brennan, Jane Gallop, Drucilla Cornell, and Teresa de Lauretis) on both Freud and Jacques Lacan's work.

In the early seventies, Juliet Mitchell published *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), which challenged feminist scholars to look seriously at Freud in order to better understand how patriarchy works. Appearing in France the same year as Mitchell's book, Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) puts Freud on the couch. Irigaray reads Freud very closely, not in order to better master his teachings, but rather to uncover his own unconscious fantasies and fears of the other sex. *Speculum* has become one type of model for many continental feminists for strategically engaging with the texts of both Freud and Lacan; what these texts reveal is precisely how notions of pathological femininity, penis envy, or castration anxiety emerge in Western thought as expression of deeply entrenched patriarchal fears. Rather than confronting these entrenched ideas about the wickedness of female sexuality, Freud and Lacan naturalize them and use them as explanations for many psychiatric disorders. Irigaray pokes fun at this move by mimicking the very notions of femininity they espouse in order to unearth their blind spots. She identifies how their failure to rethink their fundamental notions of normal and abnormal sexuality (read: male and female sexuality) unconsciously operate in the background of their conceptual edifice.

Another way in which Continental feminists have taken up psychoanalysis coincides with how both the later Freud and Lacan mine the individual's psyche in order to unearth cultural forces at work. Lacan, for example, argues that our very sanity depends on our adherence to both the imaginary and symbolic realm of culture; we rely on these realms to make sense of the world. The imaginary realm

provides us with fictitious images of ourselves as whole and self-mastering, while the symbolic realm provides us with the conceptual categories of our shared world. Lacan describes the mirror stage as a turning point in our psychic development because during this phase we come to identify with a stable and coherent image of ourselves—our mirror reflection—that supplants our experience of our body as uncoordinated and fragmented. The image of ourselves as whole, one of the many images that constitute the imaginary realm, gives us a fixed point; identifying with a singular, stable body, in turn allows us to take up speech and thereby enter into the symbolic realm. Lacan points out that our image of ourselves—the *moi*—(similar to Freud's notion of an ego) lays the groundwork for our ability to becoming speaking subjects—a *je*—and thereby social subjects. Similarly, we inherit other images from the imaginary realm, such as the representation of the female body as unruly or threatening. Likewise, when we learn how to speak (i.e., enter into the symbolic realm) we learn a particular set of concepts by which to view the world. Many of these concepts are binaries—such as man/woman—that both oppose their constituent parts and rank them in a hierarchy. For Lacan, both the images and the symbols we inherit, through the imaginary and symbolic respectively, are fixed; they are not revised as culture transforms.

Many feminists criticize Lacan's notions of both the imaginary and symbolic realms, precisely because he posits them as fixed, and therefore, immune to cultural revolutions such as feminism. The images he describes of mothers, i.e., beings whom male children must escape or else be devoured by, have much in common with stereotypes imposed on women to maintain their inferiority. Teresa Brennan argues, for example, that the foundational fantasies (which is another way of describing images such as the “mirror stage”) are really drawn from the concrete, historical practices of Lacan and Freud's own culture, rather than pre-historical symbols (Brennan 1992). Irigaray and Jane Gallop, among others, argue for a more fluid notion of the imaginary, one that produces more humane images of women as our cultural ideas shift (Gallop 1982, Irigaray 1985; see also Hansen 2000).

Freud, on the other hand, understood the psyche as a conflict of forces: the id, the super ego, and the ego. The super ego contained the “law of the father,” the cultural norms of behavior. Lacan incorporated Freud's notion of the “law of the father” into his notion of the symbolic realm, which not only names things and sets up power relations between them, but it also teaches us our moral codes. Freud also posited the id, which he argues is a dissident aspect of the self, rebelling against all of the cultural constraints enforced upon us both externally and internally by the super ego. Our egos, lastly, are compromises that grow out of conflict between what society asks of us, and our deepest counter-cultural wishes. Some Continental feminists map either the metapsychology of Freud or Lacan onto the culture itself, studying social systems as the competing forces of normalization and dissidence (see Zakin 2000). In this light, feminism can represent an unruly and dissident attempt—like the id's actions—to bring down the “law of the father” (super ego), which can explain why a patriarchal culture so violently opposes female empowerment: it threatens its very foundation.

In particular, thinkers like Judith Butler have reconceptualized Freud's notion of melancholia (depression) as an indication of a culture that tells certain subjects that they matter, and other that they are failures. Lesbians, for example, are threats to the conservative forces in culture; therefore, there is no pervasive set of images or concepts that embrace this identity. When the ego fails to reach the ideals of the super-ego, according to Freud, the super-ego punishes it, sending the subject into a severe depression. Depressed subjects mourn, often, something they are not allowed to be. Butler shows that this logic works well to explain the very process of all gendered subject formation; all of us, even heterosexuals, must give up parts of ourselves that fail to fit within the rigid symbolic order, wherein only the heterosexual couple (as imagined by patriarchy) is permitted. We “give up” the unruly parts of our sexuality by repressing it or proscribing it, psychic acts that infect all gender formation, for Butler, as a melancholic process (Butler 1997).

Patriarchy deploys a very narrow and restricting view of sexuality; it restrains our ability to imagine and thereby create alternative experiences of sexuality beyond the rigid images of heterosexism. Drucilla Cornell, in response to a punitive and restrictive imaginary, argues for legal protection of the “imaginary domain”—a free psychic space—which, she argues, is compatible with John Rawls' notion of self-respect (Cornell 1995). We should be allowed to imagine and represent to ourselves our sexual nature free from the shameful fantasies or stereotypes imposed on them by a heterosexist culture.

Lastly, continental feminists such as Julia Kristeva appropriate psychoanalysis for feminist ends. Kristeva rethinks the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis in order to show the profound importance of the mother-child relationship on subject formation. Kelly Oliver has extended many of Kristeva's insights to show how the mother-child relationship, even *in utero*, can serve as a new metaphor for intersubjectivity as opposed to more common cultural images of individuals pitted against each other, competing over precious resources. The mother—child relationship, contrary to patriarchal thought, is not an animal relationship; rather, it is the precursor for all social relationships. Our first relationship is one of dependence on a caring being who nurtures us to become more autonomous. This autonomy is the product of loving relationships. This view of autonomy differs dramatically from classical liberalism, wherein autonomy is invoked to protect us from paternalism. The legacy of classical liberal thought is for us to be suspicious of dependency, rather than celebrate how early attachment and dependency on the mother lays the foundation of our adult self. Kristeva also argues that the psychoanalytic session, especially when the analyst is invested in the process of self-creation of the analysand, provides a needed space for women to begin to articulate their identity. The analyst provides a space in which a subject is allowed to become herself; this is yet another way in which psychoanalysis can be framed as friendly to feminist concerns and aims.

3. Methodologies of Continental Feminism

Rooted as it is within the philosophical traditions of existentialism, phenomenology, psychoanalytic theory, and postmodernism, continental feminism reflects a diversity of methodologies and writing styles. Nevertheless, there are some continuities that are noticeable.

3.1 Recognition of Depth of Male Bias in Philosophy

A persistent move within continental feminism is the discussion of the depth of male bias within the field of philosophy (and within the subfield of continental philosophy). This bias is perceived as neither superficial nor easily rectified.

Some examples of male bias in philosophy, continental and otherwise, are so extreme and explicit as to barely warrant further analysis. Freud, for example, has been persistently criticized for his claims that women suffer from penis envy, and Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* include images of women as weak and lacking in intellectual capacity. Continental feminists note these blatant examples, but also seek to explore the more subtle ways in which theory has taken the male for the standard of human existence, or has simply ignored those aspects of human existence that have been associated with women. Merleau-Ponty's theory of the body, for example, which understands the body as an openness to experience, a way of being-with the world and a means of organizing the world according to one's projects, seems to be based more on the privileged male body (which faces relatively few social or political barriers) as opposed to the constrained, limited female body (see, for example, Sullivan 1997; for a criticism of Sullivan's analysis, see Stoller 2000). Likewise, as mentioned above, Foucault's theories of sexuality, while philosophically productive, are often described as lacking in that they do not directly address the ways in which sexuality is organized hierarchically according to sexual categories.

Beyond these questions of philosophical content, continental feminists also explore the even more implicit ways in which philosophical methodology may be gendered. Husserl's assumption that the individuality of any experience can be filtered out to arrive at a universal, shared structure, is based on the philosophical assumption that gender, among other categories, is essentially an accidental or superficial element of personhood. Yet this turn to gender neutrality masks the ways in which gender powerfully shapes not only the details of one's experiences, but indeed the very ways in which one experiences anything.

Insofar as continental feminists seek to unveil the hidden genderedness of the philosophical theories they use and criticize, they are in common cause with other forms of feminist theory. The shared goal here is to articulate the sometimes insidious ways in which assumptions concerning persons and theory come together to construct philosophies that often perpetuate rather than undermine sexual inequality. However, the depth of these criticisms does not inspire most continental feminist theorists to shun philosophy or theory in its entirety; rather, they seek to develop theories that ameliorate sexual inequality, both in terms of their content and their methodology.

3.2 Historicity of Reason

Like much of continental philosophy, feminist continental philosophy adopts a critical position with regard to reason. In general, the field rejects its status as culturally or historically universal, and while it is recognized as an important and valuable tool, its limits are recognized as well. Thinkers such as Linda Nicholson (1999) and Genevieve Lloyd (1993) point out that the predominance of reason in philosophical circles is deeply, and not accidentally, linked to the exclusion of women from the public realm (for example, one major reason that women were denied the right to vote for so long was the assumption that they were not sufficiently reasonable to make wise political choices). The history of reason, then, has a compellingly gendered nature to it. This point in and of itself, of course, is not

sufficient to undermine rationality in toto, but it inspires continental feminist theorists to consider reason and rationality as existing not outside of culture or history, but rather as cultural products that have strengths and weaknesses. When it comes to understanding relations of dependence, for example, reason may have relatively little to tell us; here we must delve into the affective realm of emotion, a realm that has long been considered anathema to philosophical work.

It must be emphasized here that continental feminism does not entirely eschew reason, rationality, or even some fairly traditional understandings of argumentative strength. Such concepts are utilized frequently in the works of the thinkers discussed in this entry. However, those same thinkers refuse to approach those concepts as givens, as overarching structures that can be applied neutrally to any and all topics. Such an approach, continental feminists claim, overstates the relevance, capability, and universality of rationality. Thus, even as they wield reason as a valuable, perhaps even necessary, tool, these thinkers deny that it is the only one to which they have access.

3.3 Writing Styles

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of continental feminism is the density of the writing that tends to mark its central works. This criticism is launched against much of continental philosophy as a whole, although in some cases it seems even more acute when targeted against feminist thinkers, who are expected to make clear contributions to the understanding and undermining of sexual inequality. To the extent that the writing of many continental feminists is complex and, to many readers, impossibly obscure, such thinkers are charged with failing their responsibilities as feminists.

Indeed, continental feminist theory can be challenging. Its mode is distinct from that of analytic philosophy, with its linear argumentation and constant definition of terms. Continental feminists are more likely to coin entire words and phrases, weave together disparate sources, and integrate personal experience with rigorous philosophical

argumentation. Allusions are rife, and the language can approach the poetic in its evocative sensibility.

Continental feminists would argue that such an approach to language is central to its philosophical and feminist missions. Language for these philosophers is not a transparent window into a universal, objective reality. Words and grammar reflect the values and political structure of a culture, and as such, must themselves be deconstructed in order to get at the central ideas of an unjust society. Mary Daly is a paradigmatic example of such an approach to language. Works such as *Gyn/Ecology* (1990) and *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language* (1994) explore assumptions hidden in common words and grammatical structure, and her creative dismantling and reshaping of the English language constitutes a profound critique of sexual inequality. Judith Butler, often criticized for the difficulty of her language, wrote a defense that many continental feminist philosophers would agree with:

No doubt, scholars in the humanities should be able to clarify how their work informs and illuminates everyday life. Equally, however, such scholars are obliged to question common sense, interrogate its tacit presumptions and provoke new ways of looking at a familiar world. Many quite nefarious ideologies pass for common sense. For decades of American history, it was “common sense” in some quarters for white people to own slaves and for women not to vote. Common sense, moreover, is not always “common”—the idea that lesbians and gay men should be protected against discrimination and violence strikes some people as common-sensical, but for others it threatens the foundations of ordinary life. If common sense sometimes preserves the social status quo, and that status quo sometimes treats unjust social hierarchies as natural, it makes good sense on such occasions to find ways of challenging common sense. Language that takes up this challenge can help point the way to a more socially just world. (Butler 1999, 15)

Virtually all continental feminists, then, view language as both

philosophically problematic and potentially transformative.

For some feminist theorists and writers, language is so deeply intertwined with gender and sexual inequality, both politically and structurally, that women must develop new ways of speaking and writing. Helene Cixous coined the term *l'écriture féminine* in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) to refer to an ongoing body of work by women that attempts to speak from, to, and about women's sexual specificity (it is interesting to note that the term conflates "woman" and "feminine," a conflation that is difficult to render in translation). It is no surprise, then, to find Luce Irigaray often included in the *l'écriture féminine* camp, as well Monique Wittig, both of whom tend to write in such a way as to call attention to the significance of the female body and its possibilities. *L'écriture féminine* often comprises some of the most challenging of feminist texts. Works such as Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (1985) challenge the reader to encounter language beyond the demands of phallogentric logic (a logic that falsely promises clarity and self-evidence, but that in fact veils deeply masculine biases) particularly by engaging in a style that is highly evocative and allusive. Yet, as is the case for much of the feminist theory with which it is related, this style is central to the meanings of the work; for if language is as deeply marked by sexual inequality as these theorists suggest, then any language that attempts to exist outside of conventional meanings, or at least in an openly antagonistic relationship to those meanings, is bound to appear at first glance to be nonsensical.

4. Criticisms of Continental Feminism

Like any other school of thought, continental feminism is not without its critics. The most common complaints are as follows: the body of work, as varied as it is, is on the whole insufficiently political; the emphasis on difference poses significant political and philosophical risks; and (related to the first point) its complexity renders it inaccessible to all but a very few readers. Let us take each in turn.

4.1 The Apolitical Nature of Continental Feminism

Some critics of continental feminism have claimed that as a school of thought, continental feminism fails to speak directly to women's lives and to sufficiently articulate political solutions to the gender inequalities that continue to mark Western society. With its dependence upon a philosophical field that is notoriously esoteric and difficult to navigate, continental feminism, from this perspective, seems both hopelessly elitist and relentlessly impractical. Nowhere in its central works can be found specific political goals or strategies, and its relevance to the lived experience of actual women (or men, as equally gendered beings) seems tenuous at best. On this basis, critics such as Martha Nussbaum (1990) have claimed that the work of thinkers such as Judith Butler fail the crucial test of feminist thought, namely, to eradicate sexual inequality.

One central claim of this branch of criticism is that continental feminism is overly wedded to theory rather than practice. Feminist philosophy, after all, while committed to developing strong theoretical underpinnings, nevertheless cannot divorce itself from activism. If continental feminism cannot, or will not, develop a distinctly political approach to current gender inequalities, then, its critics say, it will remain a sterilely academic enterprise, and as such, it represents a waste of time and energy that would be better served engaging in concrete, specific political tasks. To be apolitical, in short, is to fail feminism.

4.2 The Risks of Emphasizing Difference

The second main criticism of continental feminist theory relates to its persistent interest in difference as a hallmark of human existence and as a theoretical basis for sexual ethics and politics. There are (at least) two pitfalls to this interest: one, it erodes the basis of feminist political action; and two, it implicitly risks making the mistake of essentialism, that is, of assuming that all women share an essential trait or set of traits that define them as such.

If, as many continental feminist theorists claim, difference is not limited to sexual difference, but marks human beings in a variety of ways, then it is reasonable to assume that women of different races, for example, may have different political interests, different relationships to their own gender identities, and strikingly different experiences with sexism. Other differences are not far behind: class, sexual orientation, physical ability, ethnic identity, geographic location, etc., all serve to undermine the notion that “woman” is a coherent, unified category. Yet such a category, it would seem, is a necessary condition to the development of a women's movement. If continental feminism undermines our ability to join together as women, if it serves to fragment women rather than bring them together, if in fact there is virtually nothing about being women that all women hold in common, then it is difficult to imagine how large-scale political action is possible. The emphasis on difference, then, manifests itself as problematically divisive.

Given this risk of fragmentation, it would seem contradictory to be concerned about the risks of essentialism inherent in the emphasis on difference. Does not continental feminism, after all, undermine the possibility of any essentialist approach to women as a group? Indeed, it does—yet continental feminism at other points emphasizes difference not among women, but between women and men, and while it does not generally describe sexual difference as having a particular content or character (in other words, continental feminism does not articulate an essential similarity that exists within all women and is universally absent in men), nevertheless in insisting that men and women are different, it creates the very category that in other cases it seems committed to deconstructing. Moreover, in terms of differences among women, the problem of essentialism is not in fact transcended, but is merely moved to other levels. There is assumed to be something essentially similar among a certain category of women (say, European-American bisexual women) that distinguishes them from women of other categories, but such an assumption still constitutes essentialism.

It is interesting to note at this juncture that these two criticisms concerning difference at least appear to be in tension. Without a

coherent theory of the unity of the category of woman, continental feminism cannot account for or support a feminist movement; yet the reliance upon sexual difference and other differences as fundamental aspects of human beings risks essentialism.

4.3 The Complexity of the Theories

Finally, and perhaps most common, continental feminist philosophy is criticized for being overly esoteric. This criticism is related conceptually to that concerning its apolitical nature, as described above. However, on its own, this criticism speaks to the fact that comprehending and working within continental feminist theory demands extremely specialized knowledge, and is therefore limited to a very few individuals. Moreover, those individuals are almost inevitably situated within economically and racially privileged groups, since the academic and intellectual background assumed by this body of work is rarely attained without access to extremely high levels of education.

In being dense, intellectually challenging, and, frankly, couched in writing that is highly saturated with jargon and technical language, continental feminist theory presents some very real barriers to those who do not have access to high levels of post-graduate education. To be complex in this way is to be exclusive in a way that is distinctly problematic for feminist thought and activism.

5. Responses to Criticisms

Continental feminists respond to the above criticisms in a variety of ways, which will only be summarized briefly here. To the charge that this body of philosophy is apolitical, these philosophers argue that although the political implications of their work are not always obvious, the very depth of their criticism itself constitutes political action. Butler's point in the defense quoted above is not only that challenging the most basic and often implicit social beliefs is always political, but also that to do so necessarily entails the adopting of

language and concepts that are at first glance both foreign and difficult. Thus, the defenses against the two charges of apoliticism and unnecessary esotericism are often quite similar: continental feminist theory is committed to questioning such deeply held, deeply embedded concepts that it must of necessity adopt new kinds of language, new kinds of models, that are by definition counterintuitive.

With regard to the concerns about the emphasis on difference, these theorists make at least two points. One, they stress that adopting difference as a basis for ethics does not preclude forming coalitions among different kinds of groups. In fact, following the work of Irigaray, many theorists point out that to assume that identity or similarity is the only basis for interaction or discourse is simply inaccurate. Difference is that which gives discourse its value, that which creates the space for true interaction. If “women” as a category does not hold entirely, if difference sprouts up again and again, this merely means that we have the opportunity for further understanding, for more kinds of interaction. Finally, some continental theorists (for example, Braidotti 1994) have argued that feminists should stop being so wary of essentialism in any and all forms. While philosophically problematic, essentialism as a political strategy—i.e., women sometimes, and carefully, acting “as if” they were a coherent category—may have significant value.

As mentioned above, this is an extraordinarily scanty representation of the responses on behalf of continental feminists to some of the charges made against their work. There is no doubt that feminist approaches to continental philosophy are as controversial as they are intriguing. This is, after all, a fairly young field in philosophy, both in relation to the discipline as a whole and to the subdiscipline that is feminist theory, and there is every reason to suspect that it will continue to grow in surprising and challenging ways.

Pragmatist Feminism

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American Pragmatist philosophy, and part of the energy of that resurgence may be due to feminist interest in pragmatism. Before discussing how feminists have transformed pragmatist discussion, it is necessary to briefly look at some of the basic themes in pragmatism. What is now called "classical" American pragmatism is a grouping of philosophies that were developed from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century, and were largely influential in the Progressive Era (1890-1915) and up until the Second World War. Pragmatists, such as John Dewey, William James and Jane Addams, were interested in the intersection of theory and practice, bringing philosophic thinking into relationship with the social and political environment. For these thinkers, philosophizing was an active process, both as a way to change social realities and to use experience to modify the philosophies themselves. Early pragmatists were often humanists; they saw the social environment as malleable, capable of improvement through human action and philosophic thought. Because of this, many of the classical pragmatists were engaged in social action, often participating in experiments in education and working for egalitarian social reforms. Both early and contemporary pragmatists reject the idea of a certain Truth that can be discovered through logical analysis or revelation, and are more interested in knowledge gained through experiences of all sorts, while emphasizing the social context of all epistemological claims. Because of this understanding of knowledge as shaped by multiple experiences, pluralism has been a central value in pragmatism.

Contemporary studies in pragmatism and feminism generally combine a historical and a theoretical/methodological approach. Feminist pragmatists are working to recover the history and ideas of women philosophers who were influential in the development and articulation of classical American pragmatism. This approach brings into view the lives and philosophies of thinkers and activists such as Jane Addams, Jessie Taft, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emily Greene Balch, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Whiton Caulkins, and Ella Flagg Young. These women bring added dimensions to pragmatism and remind us of the issues that were subsequently left behind as

American philosophy became more exclusively technical and academic. In the pragmatist tradition, it is particularly significant to understand the cultural and philosophic context of ideas, since pragmatists understand theorizing as part of one's interaction with environment. It then becomes essential to recover the voices of the women who were involved in the early pragmatist dialogue. For the women of this era, their pragmatism was a philosophic practice used to accommodate their new academic and political engagement with the world, as well as a method of reforming politics and culture. The pragmatist approach to philosophy that brought theory and practice together helped these women trust and learn from their own experiences and to be intellectually engaged with their social reform movement.

Current feminist philosophers are also demonstrating the theoretical and methodological similarities between feminism and pragmatism, bringing feminist perspectives to pragmatist issues. Feminist pragmatists use pragmatist thought as a base for feminist theory, particularly in epistemology, education and in thinking about justice and democratic communities. Both the recovery of early women in the pragmatist tradition and the contemporary use of pragmatism in feminist theory clarify the connections between feminism and pragmatism as activist-orientated philosophies, dealing with problems of embodied living in a social organism. This essay will first consider the influence of particular women of the classical pragmatist era, and the second part will consider the contemporary intersections between feminism and pragmatist philosophies.

1. Early Feminist Influences on American Pragmatism

The historical recovery of female voices in the history of philosophy in the last few decades is an ongoing project that helps us become aware of women's influence on the history of philosophy and helps us gain an understanding of the process of the marginalization of women's voices.

(See the entry [feminist history of philosophy](#).) Recovering these women thinkers also allows us to hear new or excluded voices in the philosophic conversation, in some cases resulting in opening up the definition of philosophy itself. Because of the gender-based discrimination against women as rational thinkers and their exclusion from the academy, history has rarely carried the names and texts of these women into our philosophy textbooks. (See for example Eileen O'Neill's essay "Disappearing Ink") The history of pragmatism is recent enough that we can more easily recover and recognize the women who participated in forming this uniquely American school of thought, formerly considered only through the work of such male thinkers as William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, George Herbert Mead, George Santayana, and John Dewey. The work of the women who were in philosophic and activist relationships with these philosophers, and were original philosophers in their own right, had until recently disappeared. Charlene Haddock Seigfried's work, particularly her 1996 book *Pragmatism and Feminism*, has been central in the effort to bring these invisible women back into the philosophical discussion, as well as to bring feminist perspectives to the field of pragmatism.

1.1 Educators and Social Reformers

Pragmatism originated in the era when the first generation of American women were going to college and were beginning to enter academic discussions in all fields of study. Many of the women whose work has been brought into the feminist-pragmatist discussion were college-educated activists rather than professional academic philosophers, but their work had an enormous effect on the development of pragmatist thought. Taking John Dewey as an example, we can discover many women who were in dialogue with him and were influential in the formation of his philosophies. Through his correspondence, and through the writing of his female colleagues, we can get a glimpse not only of the interactive and relational nature of his philosophizing, but also of its development in relation to these women.

Jane Addams's (1860-1935) was a central figure in the development of pragmatist thought. In her lifetime Addams was revered as one of America's most famous social reformers, the founder of Hull House and the recipient of the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize. She developed her pragmatist philosophies through her experiences working in the poverty-stricken immigrant neighborhoods in Chicago, working and thinking cooperatively with the talented women who lived at Hull House, as well through reflection on texts and direct dialogue with philosophers of her time such as John Dewey, William James, Leo Tolstoy and W.E.B. DuBois. Addams published eleven books and hundreds of essays, writing on ethics, social philosophy, and pacifism, in addition to analyzing social issues concerning women, industrialization, immigration, urban youth, and international mediation. Addams's understanding of the relationship between action and truth contributed to her choice of a career in the public world of social activism. For her, a motivation to understand truth would compel her to seek it out in the world of action. Addams was a close friend of John Dewey: he was often at Hull House and she lectured in his classes at the University of Chicago. They worked and thought together on issues of democracy, education, and ethics, and they continued a lifelong collegial relationship.

Education was an area where the pragmatist feminists of the Progressive Era were very influential. Addams' educational philosophy provides a model for the interaction between thinking and action. For her, as well as for other educators like Lucy Sprague Mitchell, education is not seen as standing apart from life, but rather blending seamlessly into the fabric of experiences and providing a meaning-making function. Addams understood that while education informs experience (providing historical context as well as skills), education must also interact with and change in response to current social needs. In understanding the culture that students come from as well as the values of their lives, Addams argued for an educational approach that uses students' own experiences (personal as well as cultural) as starting points for learning.

A distrust of the divorce of theoretical ideals from experience in educational theory is evident in the work of early pragmatist-feminist writing. In *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Addams talks about how the professor's lack of interest in matters of the "welfare of mankind" leaves behind the messy and chaotic experiential realm of student relationships for the more pure intellectual realm, which then left the students open to the influence of "charlatans" (1990 [1910], 247). Addams's vision of education, even in the early days of Hull House, brought together the intellectual culture of a liberal arts education, with the practical aspects of urban industrial life, bringing life and thought together.

As several of his biographers have noted, one of the major personal and philosophic influences in John Dewey's life was his wife, Alice Chipman Dewey. Alice had been raised in Michigan by her pioneering grandfather and had attended a Baptist seminary after completing high school. Her interest in education and in the women's rights movement led her to study at the University of Michigan where she met Dewey, who was a young professor of philosophy. Alice is generally credited with bringing Dewey's philosophic Hegelian thinking into contact with real social issues. Their daughter Jane described Alice's influence on John this way:

Awakened by her (Alice's) grandparents to a critical attitude towards social conditions, she was undoubtedly largely responsible for the early widening of Dewey's philosophic interests from the commentative and classical to the field of contemporary life. Above all, things which previously had been matters of theory acquired through his contact with her a vital and direct human significance. (Jane Dewey quoted in Rockefeller 150)

Alice Chipman Dewey had taught school before attending the University of Michigan. She continued her interest in education while working with Dewey in his educational projects at the Lab School at the University of Chicago.

In addition to his wife Alice and Jane Addams, three other female pragmatist educators, Ella Flagg Young, Elsie Ripley Clapp, and Lucy Sprague Mitchell, had an influence on Dewey's educational philosophy. Joan K. Smith investigates Young's relationship with Dewey in her article "The Influence of Ella Flagg Young on John Dewey's Educational Thought" (1977). According to Smith, Ella Flagg Young began taking classes from John Dewey at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1895. Young was then 50 years old, with 33 years experience in all aspects of the Chicago Public School System. At the time that they met she was District Superintendent; she went on to become the first female superintendent of the Chicago Public School System after Dewey left Chicago. Young had already had an innovative career before she met Dewey, as she moved from being a classroom teacher to being the first woman to pass the certifying exams to become a school principal.

Dewey had not published in philosophy of education, or worked on educational issues, before he came to Chicago where he experienced Jane Addams's Hull House, and worked with individuals like Ella Flagg Young.^[1] Smith notes that he benefited from Young's experience as much as she benefited from his philosophy. After her graduation from the University of Chicago, Young worked with Alice and John Dewey in the innovative University of Chicago Laboratory School. In a letter to John McManis, Dewey wrote of the many ways that Young influenced his work, saying "it is hard for me to be specific, because they were so continuous and so detailed that the influence resulting from them was largely insensible. I was constantly getting ideas from her." In this same letter Dewey refers to Young's pragmatism:

She had by temperament and training the gist of a concrete empirical pragmatism with reference to philosophical conceptions before the doctrine was ever formulated. (Quoted in Smith 1977, 152)

Seigfried also discusses Ella Flagg Young's influence on Dewey in *Feminism and Pragmatism*. Citing the McManis biography, Seigfried

lists three examples which Dewey gave of instances when Young's "original interpretations and applications of his theories went beyond his own understanding." These were: (1) "the extent to which freedom meant ... a respect for the inquiring or reflective process of individuals"; (2) an understanding of "the way that the interactions of persons with one another influences their mental habits"; and, (3) "how all psychology that was not simply physiological was social" (1996, 80).

Two other pragmatist educators, Elsie Ripley Clapp and Lucy Sprague Mitchell, were associated with Dewey. Both of these women were born in the generation after Jane Addams, and were students of the classical pragmatists. Elsie Ripley Clapp (1882-1965) took fourteen courses from Dewey at Columbia, was his graduate assistant, and collaborated on research projects with him for years.^[2] Clapp commented on drafts of Dewey's work, and contributed original ideas, as Seigfried shows by quoting a portion of a letter from Dewey to Clapp in 1911:

So great is my indebtedness, that it makes me apprehensive — not, I hope that I am so mean as to be reluctant to being under obligation, but that such a generous exploitation of your ideas as is likely to result if and when I publish the outcome, seems to go beyond the limit. (Quoted in Seigfried 1996, 92)

Dewey publicly acknowledged Clapp for her contributions to *Democracy and Education*, but only in the introduction, not attributing to her any particular ideas in the body of the text. Seigfried said that "it is also clear from letters that Clapp helped Dewey with the content of the courses in which she assisted" pointing out that Clapp would meet with Dewey before his lecture periods to discuss the content of the class. At his retirement in 1927, Dewey suggested that Clapp should be appointed to teach his courses at the Teachers College, but she was not offered the position by the college. She went on to do important work with rural education in a project with Eleanor Roosevelt.

Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1878-1967) was another feminist educator

who both defined and reflected the progressive era philosophies of reform and social change through educational progress. In 1903, Mitchell became the first dean of women at the University of California at Berkeley where she encountered the sexism that was pervasive in the academy in that era. After moving back to New York, she began a 60 year career in child-centered education, combining educational scholarship in both research and practice, with founding and administering innovative programs. Although Sprague Mitchell knew Dewey in Chicago, they developed a mutually influential relationship when she took classes from him at Teachers College, and she and her husband Wesley Clair Mitchell became close personal friends with the Deweys. In her lifetime, Lucy Sprague Mitchell was also seen as an example for other women who were interested in professional lives while marrying and raising children, something that was rarely available to the women of Jane Addams's generation. Sprague Mitchell's Bank Street School demonstrated the effectiveness of pragmatist child-centered education and continues to influence childhood development specialists and educators.

Other important women thinkers and activists peopled the Progressive scene, influencing directly or indirectly the formation of pragmatist thought, as well as the intellectual culture of the time. Jane Upin in "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Instrumentalism beyond Dewey" (1993) compares the philosophies of John Dewey and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gilman and Dewey were contemporaries, born in the same year, and both were friends with Jane Addams. Gilman stayed at Hull House for about a month in 1895 where she lectured and explored the settlement culture. Both Dewey and Gilman were interested in philosophy as a useful factor in social and political problem-solving. Dewey wanted to reconstruct philosophy to be a force of social reform and was personally involved in projects designed to bring about concrete changes in society. Gilman, not trained in philosophy, was interested in the philosophy of "find(ing) out what ailed society and how most easily to improve it" (1993, 42). Both thinkers were interested in industrial issues, but Gilman's interests were primarily concerned with the industrial and economic conditions of women, both

in the home and in the workplace.

Gilman, Addams, and Dewey were influenced by Darwinian thought, but all three rejected the harsh position of Social Darwinism that pits humans in a competitive fight for individual survival. Instead, they used the concepts of evolution to theorize the possibilities of social progress, affirming a social ethic that mandates that humans have the ability and the responsibility to improve their environment. Gilman concentrated much of her writing on social issues of women's environment, working towards radical changes in the home environment to make it more democratic and egalitarian. Gilman's writing recommended some Hull House innovations as examples of some of the social changes she recommended, such as having professional cooks making healthy family meals in a public kitchen, instituting day care centers, and abolishing industrial child labor. In his work on ethics, John Dewey used the home as model for social ethics in a democracy, yet Upin points out that the family model that Dewey used was a defective one, since women had very little freedom or autonomy in their homes at that time. Addams was more perceptive about the perplexities of home life for women, and in her book *Democracy and Social Ethics*, she advocated many changes that made private home life more consistent with a public social good.

It is important to note that we often have to look beyond academic philosophy to find the women who were influential social philosophers. In an attempt to expand our methods of philosophy, and to think in new ways, understanding these reformers as philosophers can be useful in seeing ways that those *outside* of modern, professional, academic setting have held and expressed ideas, helping us, as Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich would said, opening a "new space for thinking" in philosophy. In the Progressive Era, many of the college-educated social reformers in the Chicago area lived at Hull House or were associated with the University of Chicago, such as Julia Lathrop and Florence Kelly. Some of the Hull-House reformers, such as Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith and Grace Abbott, did have academic positions, but did most of their academic and activist work in

the realm of social reform.

1.2 Peace Activists

Peace activism was an important political arena for the many of the women involved in social reform in the first decades of the twentieth century. During the Spanish American War of 1899 and in the decades prior to World War I, these women worked on anti-imperialist campaigns and fought militarist influences in society. After the beginnings of the war in Europe, political activism in opposition to war and working for alternatives to war became, for some women, their primary occupation. Primary among these women were Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch, both of whom received the Nobel Peace Prize (Addams in 1931, Balch in 1946). Addams and Balch were founding members of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, an organization which continues to be internationally influential. Balch was trained as a sociologist and an economist, but we see in her work the foundations of pragmatist philosophy, particularly in her support of a social democracy and in her fundamental faith that the social environment was capable of transformation through philosophical reflection and action. Pragmatist peace work has significant implications for understanding feminist causes; the early pragmatist women saw peace activism growing out of the same reform movement that led to women's suffrage. For these women, the movement toward social justice, toward egalitarian economic structures, and away from competitive hierarchies necessitated a social structure based in cooperation and peace, not on war. Such belief in the possibility of substantially changing social and political realities is at the heart of both pragmatism and feminism. It is evident from reading the works of these early pragmatist reformers that the feminist reform movements of the early 20th century were effectively squelched by the militarist fervor of the first world war.

2. Contemporary Feminist Pragmatist Philosophies

In addition to recovering the writings of women in the pragmatist tradition, contemporary feminists use and modify pragmatist philosophies as a foundation for feminist theory. These feminist philosophers who work in the pragmatist tradition point out that pragmatism offers a valuable, although often unrecognized, resource for feminist thinkers, especially as we come to see it developed in the work of women pragmatists and activists.

A historical examination of pragmatism shows a reverse ordering of the theory-action method sometimes assumed in philosophic thought, and often critiqued by feminist thinkers. In its privileging of theoretical thinking, some traditional philosophic texts leave us with the impression that ideas normally originate from theoretical, often solitary, thinkers and are diffused into the general culture. However, in the case of many women activists, like Jane Addams, it is evident that public and political activism shaped the character of the philosophy. Such a method is consistent with pragmatism; as 20th century pragmatist Sidney Hook said, "social action is the mother of inspiration and not, as is usually imagined, its offspring" (1991 [1940], 3). Feminist theory also has grown out of the activism of the women's movement, and incorporates the understandings that have resulted from social activism. Pragmatist philosophers have often made these same points in their critiques of positivism. Both pragmatists and feminists have advocated for the practical use of philosophy in the realm of personal and public experience; pragmatism and feminism generally also share a social and/or political focus and advocate specific cultural changes. As Seigfried says, both pragmatism and feminism "reject philosophizing as an intellectual game that takes purely logical analysis as its special task. For both, philosophical techniques are means, not ends" (1996, 37).

Although pragmatism originated in a time when our culture was in the midst of enormous change in women's roles, classical early century male pragmatists did not analyze the gender biases in knowledge and culture in the ways that some early pragmatist feminist reformers did or in the way contemporary feminists have. Currently feminists and pragmatists share an effort to radically change oppressive political and

social structures, an effort that finds resonance with the early feminist-pragmatists. Jane Addams and other feminist reformers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman were continuously involved in fighting oppression, especially of women, children and minorities. Pragmatism's continued insistence that philosophy address the problems of the current social situation supports the consideration of problems of gender, race and class oppression, even though the majority of the male founders of pragmatism seemed unconscious of cultural gender-related oppression.[3]

Described below are four areas addressed by contemporary feminist pragmatists: epistemology, education, the active process of philosophizing, and the importance of pluralistic communities. Contemporary feminist epistemologists have pointed out how traditional philosophy's emphasis on rational, logical absolutes has devalued the ambiguities of the embodied life. For feminist pragmatists, pluralistic communities have epistemological value and provide the base for an inclusive problem-solving approach to social problems. The pragmatist understanding of education as a social and political force, as a major aspect of how society and individuals are shaped, has been echoed by contemporary feminists who analyze our educational curriculum and methods of teaching. Both pragmatism and feminisms are more likely to bring social context to the forefront of philosophy, allowing for realities that are in flux and that are always being shaped and reconstructed by their context. Pragmatists emphasize that we must include particular and individual experiences in a pluralistic discussion of multiple realities, and that all parties involved in the issue be involved in any creation of a solution.[4]

2.1 Epistemology

Feminists and pragmatists share an interest in an epistemology that is based in experience and relationality. In *Pragmatism and Feminism*, Seigfried lists some particular aspects of pragmatism that make it useful to feminist thinkers. Seigfried's first comparison between feminism and pragmatism concerns their mutual critique of dualism. She notes four

dualistic aspects of rationalistic philosophy that Dewey critiques, and that some feminisms have also found oppressive in their support of invidious social/economic hierarchies:

(a) The depreciation of doing and making and the over-evaluation of pure thinking and reflection; (b) the contempt for bodies and matter and praise of spirit and immateriality, (c) the sharp division of practice and theory, and (d) the inferiority of changing things and events and the superiority of a fixed reality. (1996, 113)

Jane Duran, in "The Intersection of Pragmatism and Feminism" (1993), points out that feminist theorists have critiqued the preoccupation with universals "that seem to pervade much of analytic philosophy (indeed philosophy as a whole)," a desire for universals, she says, which leads all the way back to Plato. Plato's idealism carries with it a rejection or a devaluation of the changing realm of the physical world. Duran points out that feminists, as well as pragmatists, are often less interested in universal generalities and notes that an emphasis on particulars as well as "relations and connections become almost more important than particulars themselves" (1993, 166). This pluralistic sense of refusing to constrict reality to that which is defined by logic or language, or to human conceptions, helps feminists as philosophers propose an alternative vision of philosophy.

Feminist pragmatists have relied on John Dewey's concept of experience as philosophical support for a position that holds together the subject and object in a nondualistic epistemology. Jane Duran finds similarities in this to feminist thought: "The epistemic spirit of feminist theorizing has its metaphysical counterpart in the feminist concern for construction of an ontology that is not detached from the "objects" it encounters" (1993, 165). Although Duran demonstrates that pragmatism and feminism are both primarily interested in "the notion of consequences as of paramount importance," (1993, 169) she only hints at the world-changing melioristic emphasis of both feminism and pragmatism. It almost goes without saying that for most feminists, feminist theory is inherently about changing the world. Addams

embodied this intersection of pragmatism and feminism in her efforts to reconstruct the social order to increase justice for women and the underprivileged.

Feminist social analysis often produces the conditions for philosophic reflection, creating what Addams called "perplexities" that are the starting-points for philosophical and political change. In "Feminist-Pragmatist Revisioning of Reason, Knowledge, and Philosophy," Phyllis Rooney notes that the classical pragmatists would have welcomed the challenges that contemporary feminisms have brought to philosophy. She compares these rifts to what Peirce called the "irritations of doubt"[5] which open the door to inquiry and signal possibilities for recreation and rediscovery (1993, 21). Dewey called this irritation "an unsettlement" which "aims at overcoming a disturbance" or the "uncertainties of life" (1985 [1916], 336-337), which he says, are the motivations for beginning to do philosophy. In *Democracy and Social Ethics*, Addams calls these events "perplexities," and uses them as a way and a place to begin rethinking social values and epistemological claims. Pragmatism and feminism then share a movement toward active philosophizing about those "irritations," "uncertainties," and "perplexities."

Shannon Sullivan in *Living Across and Through Skins* (2001) brings the pragmatist tradition of transactional knowing through embodied and relational lived experience to the feminist epistemology of standpoint theory, describing what she calls a "pragmatist-feminist standpoint theory." This pragmatist-feminist perspective considers knowing through those relationships that are enacted through physical embodiment and also the social environment, incorporating "multiple marginalized perspectives." Using Dewey's standard of truth as that which results in "transactional flourishing" Sullivan considers "questions about which standpoints can help promote flourishing transactions" (146-47). In doing so, she corrects the privileging of women's experiences that is found in Sandra Harding's feminist standpoint theory, and locates knowing as transactions among diverse others, possibly even non-humans. Sullivan's work is particularly

significant in the ways she investigates feminist issues of embodiment drawing on both Continental and American Pragmatist perspectives.

2.2 Education

Many contemporary feminist philosophers of education have drawn on the pragmatist tradition, and specifically on the work of early pragmatist women, in their conceptualization of education as political and emancipatory practice. Possibly because of its interest in the relationship between theory and action, philosophy of education has always occupied a privileged place in pragmatist philosophy, and feminist pragmatist writing reflects this.

Feminist philosophers, such as Elizabeth Minnich and Jane Roland Martin, have critiqued the content of college curriculum as well as the methods of education. Both have critiqued the traditional canon, pointing out the way that the canon perpetuates the traditional power structures by excluding the works of women and minorities. Minnich points out that the administrative structures of colleges and universities often place programs like women's studies or African-American studies on the periphery of the college hierarchies. Minnich's 1990 book, *Transforming Knowledge*, draws on both a feminist critique and pragmatist practices to advocate for a rethinking of the patriarchal assumptions at the base of our academic traditions. This means reconstructing what it means to do philosophy, opening our definitions of philosophy to voices that may have been previously excluded or marginalized. Minnich and other feminist thinkers have shown us how many traditional theorists have been blinded by their inability to conceive of ideas outside of the dominant hegemonic traditions. Minnich points out that pragmatism can share with feminism the vitality that arises from an opening of philosophy to newness, to otherness, to diversity.

Maxine Greene, a philosopher of education who draws on multiple philosophic traditions, has inspired a generation of educators and philosophers to think of education in terms of a practice of freedom, to

provide "an opening of spaces" for new ways of thinking and being. In *The Dialectic of Freedom*, Greene relies on John Dewey, the example of Jane Addams, as well as feminist novels, to describe the ways that women have told the truths about their private and public lives. Greene wants an educational system that allows radical difference, that leaves open a space for diverse others to appear in the public world, to "tear aside the conventional masks...that hide women's being in the world" (57).

2.3 Philosophizing as Active Process

Pragmatism is a process-oriented philosophy, valuing and thinking about how ideas arise from social interactions within society. As Dewey said, pragmatism is a philosophy that "forswears inquiry after absolute origins and absolute finalities in order to explore specific values the specific conditions that generate them" (1977 [1909], 10). Many pragmatist philosophers, past and current, have welcomed the tension and social changes that result from reconstructing the ways we think and act, especially in relationship to philosophy. Rather than a philosophic retreat from the impermanent and adapting nature of everyday life, pragmatists have chosen to do philosophy in an interactive and public mode. Dewey criticizes philosophy's tendency for "flight" from the messy world of experience:

(N)o one knows how many of the evils and deficiencies that are pointed to as reasons for flight from experience are themselves due to the disregard of experience shown by those peculiarly reflective. (1982 [1925], 41)

Dewey's critique of the "flight from experience" is in some ways reminiscent of what Susan Bordo describes as the Cartesian "flight to objectivity" in her book *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (1987). Feminist-pragmatists point out that the search for universalized ideals bankrupts ordinary experience and robs from philosophic thought the creativity of thinking with and through complex networks of experience and interaction.

Pragmatist philosophy can provide rich support for feminist attempts to reconstruct the ways that we think about reality. Pragmatists suggest an understanding of the "vague" nature of our social world, which involves the continual reconstructing of our conceptions as our social and intellectual environment changes. William James in *A Pluralistic Universe* refuses to constrict reality to that which is defined by logic or language, or to human conceptions. This type of thinking helps feminists as philosophers propose an "other" vision of philosophy. Similarly contemporary feminist thinkers have changed the academy and the larger culture by re-analyzing and reconstructing the ways that we think, the hierarchies of knowing, as well as the social conventions that have defined gender. Erin McKenna in *The Task of Utopia: Pragmatist and Feminist Perspective* uses this process-orientation to create a social/political philosophy that is always open to change, rather than one with finished "ends" in view. With both feminism and pragmatism we can consider philosophizing contextually as a creative force, reacting to as well as reconstructing our multiple environments.

2.4 The Values of Pluralistic Communities

For the early pragmatist-feminists, as well as for John Dewey, pluralistic community was an important theoretical and practical ideal. Addams's social ethics and Dewey's emphasis on self as connected to community is a powerful critique of the ideal of liberal individualism which positions individuals as autonomous beings who are often in competition with each other for their freedoms. Dewey's political philosophy emphasizes social relationships, not as individual to individual but as individual to the larger community. As he says, individuals "have always been associated together in living, and association in conjoint behavior has affected their relationships to one another as individuals" (1984 [1927], 295). Feminists working in the pragmatist tradition rely on this prioritizing of community to rethink what it means to live in a democracy,[6] to provide a feminist communitarian philosophy,[7] or to re-conceive alternative ways of structuring societies. The "social ethics" advocated by Dewey and

Addams embraces equality and multiplicity in community in ways particularly pragmatist. Addams claimed that these conditions of interdependence held the promise of civilization, cooperation, and coexistence, and she worked to build communities that fostered these joint associations. Scott Pratt has noted that these pluralistic values in American philosophy may have deeper roots than James, Dewey and Addams. In *Native Pragmatism* he finds some of the origins for the gender and cultural pluralistic values of American philosophy in the early 19th century writings of Lydia Marie Child, writing about indigenous North Americans. These early pragmatist writers join with contemporary feminists in a critique of the hierarchical systems of power that limit multiple perspectives. For feminist-pragmatists, the reliance on diverse experiences for developing truths and the importance of understanding pluralistic perspectives means that we are dependent on relationships with others for meaningful public life. Several contemporary pragmatist-feminists have built upon these foundations to develop pragmatist-feminist political philosophies, including Judith Greene in *Deep Democracy: Community, Diversity, Transformation*, Beth Singer in *Pragmatism, Rights and Democracy*, and Erin McKenna in *The Task of Utopia*. Through education in critical thinking and social responsibility, along with changes in social structure. These feminist pragmatists believe that we could imagine a participatory democracy in which all members of the society are involved in creating the community.

Many contemporary feminists have criticized recent communitarian philosophies as potentially harmful to feminist issues, when the call for a "return" to community values means a return to values that restrict gender roles or limit diversity. Jane Addams's work can be seen as a basis for a feminist progressive communitarianism that critiques isolated individualism and understands personal identity as necessarily embedded in social and political community. Her first book, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, posits a democratic "social ethic" of caring for and being involved with the larger community. This is a social ethic that results from "mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of

one another's burdens" (2002 [1902], 7). She took this sense of empathic understanding to larger and larger communities, as she moved from local to national to international work.

Pragmatists and feminists share this concern for relational community, as well as an interest in pluralistic thinking. Yet, as Seigfried points out, given the pragmatist emphasis on difference and diversity, feminists and pragmatists may differ on how they construct the Other.

Pragmatists, she says, "are more likely to emphasize that everyone is a significantly and valuably Other ... and tend to celebrate otherness by seeking out and welcoming difference as an expression of creative subjectivity" (1996, 267). As Francis Hackett, an early resident of Hull House, said about Addams, "one feels in her presence that to be an 'other' is itself a title to her recognition" (1969, 76). Feminists, on the other hand, having experienced the position of marginalized otherness as women, are more inclined to "expose the controlling force exercised by those who have the power to construct the Other as a subject of domination" (Seigfried 1996, 267). In either embracing the diversity of the other, or in critiquing a system that makes persons into object-others, both feminists and pragmatists critique and actively fight against the unjust hierarchies created by racism, classism, and sexism.

Pragmatists envision the world and philosophy as unfinished, in a state of continuing development with open possibilities. Consistent with such a theme, feminist-pragmatist philosophy is also continually being developed. As we diversify our understanding of who can be counted as philosophers, more women who worked in the pragmatist tradition are being recovered, and their voices incorporated back into pragmatist history. And as contemporary feminist philosophers become conversant with pragmatist philosophies, the implications of feminist work change the ways that we think about pragmatist theory. Feminists and pragmatists will also continue to identify mutually beneficial ways of restructuring ways of knowing and of radically changing unjust social hierarchies. The combined force of pragmatism and contemporary feminism leads to a deeper understanding of contemporary progressive feminist goals that bring action and theory together in egalitarian

practice.

Intersections Between Pragmatist and Continental Feminism

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Given the occasional confusion of the colloquial and the philosophical senses of the term “pragmatism” and the slipperiness of the term “continental” (or “postmodern”) philosophy, a word about the two fields is in order before turning to feminist approaches to their intersections. The so-called classical period of American philosophy, best known for its creation of American pragmatism, was developed in the United States from the late nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century by figures such as Jane Addams, W.E.B. Du Bois, John Dewey, William James, Alain Locke, George Herbert Mead, Charles Sanders Peirce, Josiah Royce, and Alfred North Whitehead.[1] Waning in popularity after the Second World War, American pragmatist philosophy experienced a revival in the 1970s, often credited to the “neo-pragmatist” work of Richard Rorty (see especially Rorty 1979), that continues today. Far from being an anti-theoretical position that champions level-headed practicality as is sometimes thought, pragmatist philosophy stresses the dynamic relationship between theory and practice and especially the value of each for transforming the other. It seeks to undermine other sharp dichotomies as well, including those between body and mind, subject and object, ends and means, and nature and culture. Viewing knowledge as a tool for enriching experience, pragmatism tends to be pluralistic, experimental, fallibilist, and naturalistic. Rejecting the quest for absolute certainty, it takes a meliorist attitude that human action sometimes can improve the world.

Pragmatism's emphasis on experience, developed in the wake of Darwin's evolutionary theory, perhaps best distinguishes it from other philosophical fields. Pragmatism demands that philosophy grow out of and test its merits in the “soil” of lived experience. This is not to abjure

abstraction, but rather to insist that philosophy deal with the genuine problems of living organisms, not the artificial problems of an academic discipline. It is important to realize, however, that pragmatists understand the concept of experience as “double-barrelled,” in James's words (James quoted in Dewey 2000, 463). Experience refers not only to the so-called "subjective" experience of a living being, but also to the "objective" world that is experienced by it. Biology and evolutionary theory teach that plants and non-human animals cannot live apart from the environments that feed and sustain them. Pragmatist philosophy incorporates this lesson by insisting that all of experience, including human experience, needs to be understood as an interaction between organism and environment. Functional distinctions can be made between the two, but for pragmatism, no sharp dichotomy between them exists.

Somewhat ironically, the concept of continental philosophy is a creation of philosophers in the United States who focus on the work of post-Enlightenment European thinkers, especially those in France and Germany. While the range of European figures studied by continental philosophers is too large and varied to list comprehensively here, one could say that it begins with nineteenth century theorists such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche; continues with twentieth century thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Louis Althusser, Walter Benjamin, Simone de Beauvoir, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Jacques Lacan, Jean-François Lyotard, Herbert Marcuse, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre; and extends into the twenty-first century with contemporary writers such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray.

Since the specific fields represented by these theorists range from genealogical philosophy, phenomenology, existentialism, and critical theory to deconstruction, hermeneutics, post-structuralism, and psychoanalytic philosophy, the label “continental” must be understood more as an umbrella concept than a precise term. Nevertheless,

contemporary continental philosophies can be seen as sharing a suspicion of what Lyotard (1984) has called “grand narratives,” which are accounts of the world and human existence that (attempt to) legitimate and provide them with meaning from a position external to them. Some examples of grand narratives under attack by continental philosophers include the idea that facts and values are sharply opposed to one another, the assumption that the self is essentially unified, and the belief that the pursuit of knowledge is for its own sake rather than driven by particular human interests. A rejection of grand narratives does not entail the inability to make distinctions, such as those between fact and value, knowledge and politics, insider and outside, and thing and process. It instead means understanding those distinctions as made from a particular perspective and within a particular context, and remaining open to the criticism and possible rejection of them if they fail to serve the purposes for which they were selected. Uncovering the failings and internal inconsistencies of the grand narratives of the Western world, continental philosophy thus attempts to construct a way of doing philosophy that resists appeal to absolute and unquestionable starting points, methods, or concepts. Its outlook tends to be historical and perspectival, emphasizing the co-constitutive relationship of power and social-political location, on the one hand, and knowledge and truth, on the other.

In its perspectival, historical, and contextual approaches to philosophy, continental theory finds significant points of contact not only with American pragmatism, but also with much of contemporary feminist philosophy. In general and especially when influenced by continental and pragmatist philosophy, feminist philosophy can be seen as targeting the grand narratives of patriarchy and male privilege, arguing that many of the so-called objective and universal truths of philosophy are instead pronouncements made from a particular — that is, male-biased — point of view. Above all, as this essay will reveal, the dual impact of continental and pragmatist philosophy contributes to a feminism that challenges the philosophical construction of sharp dichotomies and opposed binaries. Such a challenge is feminist because even when dualisms do not explicitly refer to women, gender, or

sexuality, they tend to be implicated in and to produce male privilege.

In spite of many affinities between pragmatist, continental, and feminist philosophy, there currently are very few feminists whose work is recognized as explicitly incorporating both of the other traditions. Instead, what one generally finds is a handful of feminists well known for working out of a continental tradition who also, but in a less recognized fashion, draw from pragmatist themes and figures. In what follows, I discuss five themes that emerge in the work of feminists customarily associated with continental philosophy to illuminate the particular way that each combines pragmatist and continental thought. I then close with suggestions of additional resources for feminists interested in the intersection of pragmatist and continental philosophy and suggestions of possible future directions that the young field might take.

1. The Quests for Certainty and Purity

One of philosophy's responses to the presence of flux and change in the world has been to seek stability in the fixed and unchanging. Another has been to try to rigidly order and compartmentalize that which is ambiguous or indeterminate. These quests for certainty and purity have been the concern of pragmatist and continental feminists because of their endorsement of traits seen as masculine and their corresponding rejection of those viewed as feminine. Given western culture's association of women with the impure, ambiguous, and disorderly, the quest to free philosophy from those characteristics has been a simultaneous attempt to flee from everything associated with the feminine.

In *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*, Susan Bordo criticizes the “flight from the feminine” that has resulted from philosophy's quests for certainty and purity (1987, 118). She argues that in the wake of work by Richard Rorty, Michel Foucault,

and feminist historians and philosophers of science such as Evelyn Fox Keller and Sandra Harding, philosophy cannot easily sustain its anti-cultural and non-historical accounts of the world. Adopting Rorty's metaphor of "the mirror of nature" (1979) to criticize philosophy's self-conception as a neutral reflection of what is given in the world,[2] Bordo provides a psychocultural analysis of the development of that mirror in the work of René Descartes. Rorty's Nietzschean and Deweyan approach to philosophy understands it as a form of cultural therapy, that is, as a way to improve or "cure" the "illnesses" of contemporary society. Similarly, *The Flight to Objectivity* brings together feminist concerns and psychoanalytic tools to identify western culture's Cartesian "disease." Bordo's diagnosis is that Cartesian anxiety in the face of epistemological doubt is in fact an anxiety due to separation from an organic universe conceived of as female.

Taking seriously the experiential bases of Descartes's skepticism, Bordo identifies the epistemological problem over which Descartes obsessed to be that of psychological corruption, which threatens to make it impossible to know how and when to trust one's felt sense of conviction when one believes something to be true. Drawing on Dewey's analysis in *The Quest for Certainty* (1988) and the anthropological work of Mary Douglas, Bordo argues that an absolutist quest for purity is a common response to anxiety over the messiness and ambiguity of the world. Moreover, she explains that the quest for purity during times of high cultural anxiety is correlated with an increase in male social domination. As anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday's cross-cultural findings demonstrate, male domination within a culture tends to be at its most extreme when that culture experiences itself as being in too much flux (Bordo 1987, 111). For Bordo, Descartes's response to historical changes such as the cultural and scientific revolutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Martin Luther's reformation movement and Copernicus's heliocentrism, was to attempt to establish a firm division between confusion and order, the impure and the pure, the ambiguous and the certain, the body and the mind, and the "dirty" from the "clean." Descartes thus can be thought of as the quintessential "dirt-rejecter" of

Western philosophy (1987, 82). As Bordo argues, the mark of Cartesianism is not so much its claims to neutral objectivity as it is its “passion for intellectual separation, demarcation, and *order*” (1987, 77, emphasis in original). Given western culture's long-standing association between reason, the orderly mind, and masculinity, on the one hand, and emotions, the messy body, and femininity, on the other, Descartes' rejection of flux for order was at the same time a privileging of the (culturally constituted) masculine over the (culturally constituted) feminine.

Dewey once claimed that a felt sense of “insecurity generates the quest for certainty” (Dewey 1988, 203). Following up on that claim, Bordo argues that the problematic genius of Descartes was to find a way to convert his anxiety in the face of the impure and ambiguous into the confidence and certitude of objectivity. As Bordo explains, “Where there is anxiety, there will almost certainly be found a mechanism against that anxiety” (Bordo 1987, 75). Descartes took that which produced dread — the perceived barrenness of a mechanistic world — and turned it into an advantage, into that which makes objectivity, and thus also certainty, possible. In defense against the painful anxiety he felt about the process of separating from the organic whole of the universe, Descartes effectively declared that he willed and welcomed such a separation. His defense, in other words, can be seen as a reaction-formation to a painful loss. Tracing the historical and cultural masculinization of thought and the corresponding reconception of nature as dead and mechanical rather than organic and alive, Bordo demonstrates how what was lost was the previous cultural conception of a “female cosmos and ‘feminine’ orientation towards the world” (1987, 100). Descartes's method of achieving absolute certainty thus is as much a “flight from the feminine” historically and culturally associated with the organic and fluid, as it is the creation of a new epistemological criterion of and method for objectivity.

2. The Evolutionary Becoming of Spatiality and Materiality

Space is often thought of as relatively static in comparison with the dynamism of time. Time moves forward, we often say, while space is commonly conceived as merely an empty gap that passively rests between, for example, the walls of a house or the beams of a bridge. What would it mean, however, to question this dualistic opposition of space and time? What if space were also thought of as dynamic and moving? And what impact would this revised conception of space have on philosophical ideas about the bodies that inhabit space? As some feminists have argued, rethinking spatiality as becoming, rather than as static being, can help philosophy rethink bodily life and materiality in dynamic ways as well. Given the long-association of women with bodies and materiality, moreover, the reconceptualization of the latter has important implications for women and feminism.

In *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (2001), Elizabeth Grosz explores these conceptual questions about space, time, and materiality by working in the intersections of architecture and philosophy. Engaging in “conceptual or philosophical [rather than concretely architectural] experiments,” she forces architecture to examine the importance of temporality and sexuality for practices of building and making and attempts to render both architecture's and philosophy's concepts of space more dynamic and fluid (2001, xviii). Grosz argues that architecture is problematic from a feminist perspective because it largely has ignored questions of sexual and racial differences. Not putting enough women's bathrooms, relative to men's, in concert halls, auditoriums, and other public buildings that draw large numbers of people is one simple example of this neglect. Yet it also can be seen in the more complex ways that spaces are gendered and raced. How, for example, does architecture contribute to raced and racist urban spaces by aiding the gentrified rebuilding of inner cities, a process that tends to displace poor, non-white populations for the benefit of middle class white people? Architecture's neglect of questions such as these is a serious matter for Grosz. Nonetheless, she argues that as a kind of liminal point between culture and nature, the field of architecture also presents an ideal opportunity

for feminists to trouble many of the absolutized binary categories that often plague philosophy: inside and outside, self and other, and subject and object, to name just a few. It might also help philosophy “think of itself more humbly as a mode of producing rather than as a mode of knowing or intellectually grasping or mastering concepts, moving [philosophy] closer to everyday life and its concerns, which would be good for [it]” (2001, 6). As a self-proclaimed “outsider” to architecture — a term used playfully given that she will smudge the lines between inside and outside — Grosz thus traverses the boundaries between architecture and philosophy to address questions of materiality and becoming that might produce changes in the lived experience of spatiality.

Grosz is interested in a philosophy that would integrate dynamic and productive notions of change and time into that of space. On her view, such integration would help both architects and philosophers think of space in dynamic and creative, rather than static and worn-out ways. According to Grosz, such a philosophy requires above all “pragmatic models” (2001, 120). With the term “pragmatic,” Grosz includes thinkers in both the traditions of American and continental philosophy who operate with a “self-consciously evolutionary orientation” (2001, 169). This “philosophical pragmatism meanders from Darwin, through Nietzsche, to the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Henri Bergson, and eventually through various lines of descent, into the diverging positions of Richard Rorty, on the one hand, and Gilles Deleuze on the other” (2001, 169). Positioning herself within this lineage, Grosz affirms “pragmatist philosophers who put the questions of action, practice, and movement at the center of ontology” (2001, 169). Doing so allows them, for example, to “understand[d] the [inorganic] *thing as question*, as provocation” for organic life (2001, 169; emphasis in original). This would be to take becoming and an evolutionary openness to the future seriously for it would dare to think of the so-called inanimate, static thing as continuous with animate, dynamic, organic — including human — life. Doing so would operate with the distinction between animate and inanimate in order to show their interactions. It would acknowledge that the animate and the

inanimate exist as poles on a continuum, where differences shade into one another rather than stand starkly apart.

In questioning conventional boundaries between thing and non-thing, Grosz's goal is not to completely collapse all distinctions between binary categories, but rather to complicate their relationships so that new possibilities might open up. Likewise, the purpose of her work is not to urge the attempt to live in a world of total flux — as if such a thing were possible. Following James, Grosz instead insists that the “teeming flux of the real” must be rendered into discrete objects and that human beings are not able to choose not to do so (2001, 179). What she adds, however, is that philosophy and architecture need to recognize that categories for objectifying the world do not fully capture it in all its complex multiplicity and that there is a residue that remains. This residual excess is not in rigid opposition to objects and categories; rather it and the world of flux are continuous with the world of discrete objects, in dialogue and movement with them. To think the relationship between flux and object as Grosz would have philosophers do is to think the thing as she has described it: as a fluid “point of crossing” rather than as a static fixity (2001, 171).

Grosz does not often provide explicit details about how such a “philosophical pragmatism” might benefit feminism. Indeed, as she says of herself in an interview that composes chapter one of the book, “I feel sure that in order to keep my feminist work alive I have to keep it at bay, at a bit of a distance” (2001, 26). In the context of the entire book, however, one can understand her distanced feminism as another functional “outsider” to both philosophy and architecture that, like all outsiders, forces those positioned within the inside to really “*think*” (2001, 64; emphasis in original). In the example of her own work, Grosz claims that she had to move away from her earlier work on the body (Grosz 1994) because she had “worked to death” the topic. Moving to the field of architecture has allowed her to approach the question of materiality in a fresh way (2001, 26). Making that move, Grosz offers feminists an example of how to get some distance from and thus gain a new perspective on familiar feminist concepts so that

fresh insight into them is possible. Grosz thus provisionally preserves the distinctions between continental and pragmatist philosophy, architecture, and feminism in order to enable the “infection by one side of the border of the other [and] a becoming otherwise of each of the terms thus bounded” (2001, 65).

3. Technoscientific Hybridity and Fetishism

Technology and science have had and continue to have an enormous impact on the contemporary world. The weapons, medicines, automobiles, electronics, and other goods they produce have been both beneficial to and problematic for human and non-human animal life. Important to understanding the particular impact of technology and science is to focus not just on their products, however, but also on the processes by which those products come into existence — and, moreover, not only the mechanical, but also the social processes as well. The products of contemporary technoscience are hybrid compilations of material goods, human labor, and social relations that often are oppressive. As such, they cannot be understood if they are conceived of as mere things, abstracted away from their social contexts. Doing so interferes with the ability to ask questions about whom technoscience benefits and whom it exploits or otherwise harms.

Much of Donna Haraway's work stresses the importance of asking these questions. In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), Donna Haraway introduces the figure of the cyborg, an “impure” creature who scrambles orderly divisions between the natural and artificial/technical, and the human and the non-human/animal. Continuing her exploration of “ontological confusing bodies” in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse TM: Feminism and Technoscience* (1997, 186), Haraway speaks as a cyborgian “modest witness” to contemporary technoscience, at once both implicated in and suspicious of its processes and products. Extending her earlier insights into how humans “polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves” (1991, 22), Haraway criticizes the way

that science takes nature as a static given, congealing and obscuring social relations such that they can be taken as decontextualized things-in-themselves.

For Haraway, Western culture is extremely fetishistic, mistaking “a fixed thing for the doings of power-differentiated lively beings” (1997, 135). To analyze the web of economic, psychological, and philosophical threads that compose this fetishism, Haraway appeals to the work of Marx, Freud, and Whitehead. Economically, socio-technological relations often are taken to be commodities whose value is intrinsic rather than the product of the labor and practices of organic life. Hand-in-hand with this politico-economic fetishism goes a psychological denial of this substitution that makes the “mistake” of taking things for processes very difficult to recognize. Finally, wound up with these two strands is the philosophical error that misunderstands concrete, relational processes as fixed, simple abstractions (1997, 147). All three threads of this fetishism are bound up in, for example, the computer chip, which is incredibly valuable and necessary to late capitalist, technological society. Locating its value in pieces of metal and plastic and electronic codes, however, we lose sight of the historical and labor processes that produce and sustain the computer's existence. A product of World War II, the computer was developed to help calculate artillery trajectories so that bombs would be more effective (read: destroy more property and kill more people). Today, computer chips and mother boards often are produced by Asian women in the U.S. and various third-world countries, who are seen as especially appropriate for such jobs because of their “Oriental” nimble finger work and attentiveness to small details (1991, 154, 177). When we fetishize the chip, we are incapable of seeing this “final appropriation of women's bodies in a masculinist orgy of war” (1991, 154). That is to say, we render ourselves incapable of understanding how the materials, processes, and concerns of a highly militarized, technoscientific culture shape the world and our very selves.

The process philosophy of Whitehead subtly provides crucial support for Haraway's analysis of fetishism and, indeed, much of her critique of

technoscience. As Haraway explains in a footnote to *Modest_Witness* (1997, 297n21), Whitehead has been important to her work since at least her days as a graduate student, and she believes that the general thrust of his ideas can be discerned in a great deal of feminist science studies and philosophy of science. For Whitehead, everything in the world is a “concrecence of prehensions,” prehensions being the grasping or feeling of one thing by another in their on-going relations of becoming (1997, 47). A concrecence of prehensions, then, is a growing together of processes of becoming that allows some relations to function as a unified, distinct thing, or “actual entity.” What Whitehead calls the fallacy of misplaced concreteness occurs when abstract logical constructions — such as the notion of a thing's primary qualities or of its simple location in space-time — are (mis)taken for the concreteness of processual, actual entities. The effect of this mistake, in Haraway's terms, is the fetishization of things. Allying herself with Whitehead, Haraway emphasizes the prehensional “reachings into each other in the tissues of the world” (1997, 147) — for example, genes, computer chips, fetuses, OncoMouse™ — that are the concrete, actual materials of Western technoscience.

Although she argues against fetishism, it would be misleading to conclude that Haraway is thus also arguing “for” the ontologically messy hybridity that results when one gives fetishism up. Neither, however, is Haraway “against” hybridity. Both of these positions are too categorical for the issue at hand. In Haraway's view, hybridity presents possible dangers and potential benefits alike and thus must be examined in its various particularities. Haraway's task, thus, is to pragmatically ask, “for whom and how [do] these hybrids work?” (1997, 280 n1) Who benefits, for example, from OncoMouse™, the mouse with human genes for developing breast cancer that has been developed and trademarked by DuPont? This question not only points to the issue of human beings' taking “noninnocent responsibility” for the use of non-human animals as research tools (1997, 82). It also points to questions about environmental toxins, environmental racism, and the availability and affordability of health care for African American women in light of their increasing death rates from cancer

while those of white women remain the same (1997, 113). Asking questions such as these would help enable contemporary technoscience to engage in practices of “witnessing,” that is to “stan[d] publically accountable for, and psychically vulnerable to [its] visions and representations” (1997, 267). For Haraway, such accountability would open up the possibility that technosciences “knowledge products” might at the same time be “freedom projects” as well (1997, 269).

4. The Semiotic Construction of Sexual Subjects

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir famously claimed that “[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 1989, 267). Contemporary pragmatist feminist and continental feminist philosophers generally agree with this claim, rejecting the notion that the category of woman (and man) and the conception of femininity (and masculinity) are simply given in nature. As a result, some have explored the role of social institutions — such as the media, the work place, and education — in creating the particular type of gendered, sexual subject called “woman.” Others have focused on the inner mechanisms of this process, so to speak, asking how the unconscious desires of women are constituted such that their psychical lives contribute to their gender and sexuality. These two approaches need not be seen as antithetical, however. An understanding of how women are constituted as sexual subjects is perhaps best achieved by exploring the intersection of the social “outside” and the psychical “inside” in the formation of subjectivity.

Teresa De Lauretis's work takes this intersectional approach, allying feminism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, and film criticism to explore the formation of women's subjectivity and desire in relation to social and material reality. In *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984), de Lauretis develops the concept of experience as a process by which the subject is semiotically and historically constructed, arguing that one becomes a woman in and through the practice of signs in which women live. In *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse*

Desire (1994), she continues her exploration of these issues by focusing specifically on “perverse” formations of sexuality, by which she means forms of sexuality that challenge normative heterosexuality and especially lesbian sexuality. In each of these books, de Lauretis draws on the pragmatist semiosis of Peirce to explore the dynamic juncture between “inner” and “outer” worlds, private and public fantasies, and individual experience and social meaning, especially as they construct sexual subjects.

Semiotics is a term created by Peirce to “designate[s] the process by which a culture produces signs and/or attributes meanings of signs” (de Lauretis 1984, 167). Semiotics thus is a theory of how meaning is created through processes of interpretation. These processes are so important to Peirce that he goes so far as to claim, “my language is the sum total of myself; for the man [sic] is the thought” (Peirce 2000a, 67). This is not a reduction of the human to a narrowly construed language, however. Rather, the claim is that to understand who or what a person is, one must understand the processes of interpretation in which she and her various communities are engaged. This last point helps bring out the particularly pragmatist aspect of Peirce's semiotics. For Peirce, the semiotic processes that constitute the individual are always grounded in community, history, and materiality. To understand the interpretative constitution of the self, one must understand the various “external” environments that contribute to it.

According to de Lauretis, an important reason to turn to Peirce is precisely that his theory returns body and history to the subject of semiosis.^[3] For Peirce, semiosis is an unlimited process, but that does not mean that it is an infinite regression of signs merely circulating back on themselves. Rather, as de Lauretis explains, in their address to someone — and for Peirce, because they are inherently communal, signs always address someone — signs create other signs that are the “significate effects” of the first signs. Peirce calls these sign-effects “interpretants,” and the particular type of interpretant that interests de Lauretis is the one that Peirce calls “logical” because it takes up or makes sense of the emotion and energy of the other type of

interpretants. The logical interpretant is a modification of a person's habits, "habit" used pragmatically by Peirce to mean a tendency or disposition to a certain manner or style of acting. Thus for Peirce, although unlimited, semiosis nevertheless always results in the temporary "resting places" of one's habits of acting and thinking — "temporary" because a person's modified habits will contribute to the production of new signs, which will then feed into the on-going process of meaning-creation that will yet again modify subjects by producing additional habit changes. Thus on Peirce's account — and this is of utmost importance to de Lauretis — signs have their effect in historical, bodily matter and are not narrowly linguistic.

De Lauretis faults Julia Kristeva for operating with just such a narrow (mis)understanding of the semiotic subject (1984, 171).[4] Representing one trend of poststructuralist semiotic theory for de Lauretis, Kristeva's approach is at once valuable because of its psychoanalytic appreciation of the body and the unconscious, and problematic because of its narrow understanding of linguistics and thus its neglect of the social aspects of meaning-creation. The other trend of poststructuralist semiotic theory, represented by Umberto Eco, appreciates the social side of semiosis but omits exactly what psychoanalysis includes: the non-conscious elements of human existence. A similar division, and thus a similar set of problems, can be found between the work of Freud and Foucault, according to de Lauretis. In his focus on sexuality, Freud offers a "privatized view of the internal world of the psyche" while Foucault's account of sexuality is "eminently social" (1994, xix-xx). Thus, for de Lauretis, feminists who seek to understand the semiotic creation of sexual subjects are presented with a problematic choice built on an exclusive binary: either the sexual subject is socially constituted but lacks a psychic interior (Eco and Foucault) or the sexual subject has psychic depth but lacks rich connections with the world external to it (Kristeva and Freud).

Peirce's advantage is that he attends to both sides of the internal-external divide, furnishing "the link between semiosis and reality, between signification and concrete action" (1984, 175). And yet, for de

Lauretis, Peirce's work is not sufficient by itself because it lacks a well-developed notion of the unconscious. Thus de Lauretis's self-appointed task is to negotiate the problems and promises of all these approaches by means of a pragmatist semiotics, creating a “theoretical overlap” (1984, 168) between Kristeva's internalist and Eco's externalist semiotics, as well as between Freud's privatized and Foucault's social sexual subject. Put another way, de Lauretis joins Freud with Peirce — admittedly “even stranger bedfellows than Marx and Freud” (1984, 215 n31) — to explore how the semiotic junction between psychic interior and social exterior produces the unconscious habits that create sexual subjects.

In some of her most recent work (2000), de Lauretis makes clear that although semiosis is ongoing and although the habits it produces are always open to future changes, habit-change is not necessarily or always for the better nor can it easily (if at all) be controlled. In dialogue with Vincent Colapietro (2000) on how to understand Peirce's logical interpretant, de Lauretis argues that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to deliberately direct the significant effects of semiosis. In her view here — which appears to diverge somewhat from her earlier emphasis on Foucault's concepts of self-analysis and self-exercise as Peircean “deliberately formed, self-analyzing habit[s]” (Peirce quoted in de Lauretis 1994, 312) — the juncture of psyche and social that takes root in unconscious habits is not amenable to conscious efforts to transform it. Rather than being deliberate and reflective, changes to habit tend to be random (at least from the point of rational consciousness) and are relentlessly subject to all sorts of deformations, compulsions, and other neurotic symptoms (2000, 172-73). The semiotic construction of sexual subjects thus can be seen as perverse not only in that it can defy heterosexual conventions but also in that it resists the efforts self-knowledge and self-directed transformation.

5. The Reality of Racial Identities

Like gender and sexuality, race is a social-material category that is not

simply given in nature. Scholars continue to debate precisely when modern notions of race were created, but since at least the late eighteenth century, general patterns of white privilege and supremacy and the domination of non-white people have existed. Given the oppressive origins of the concept of race and of whiteness in particular, it might seem that racial identity should be eliminated in the name of eliminating racism. And given that no definitive biological or genetic basis for dividing the human population into discreet racial groups exists, it might seem easy to eliminate racial identity since it is not real in the ways that it popularly is thought to be. But racial identities have a lived reality to them that is not dependent on scientific categorizations. Their lived reality not only can make it difficult to eliminate racial identities. It also can make it problematic to unequivocally call for their abolition since their elimination could mean the loss of an important source of meaning in one's life.

Linda Martín Alcoff warns feminists and others of this potential loss, arguing that the reasons for eliminating class and status differences do not necessarily apply to racial and other social identities. In *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (2006), she examines race and gender as historical-material formations that are fundamental, rather than peripheral to the self. Analyzing philosophical and political critiques of identity politics, Alcoff explains how identity claims have become suspect because they are seen as necessarily divisive, exclusionary, and alienating. Appeals to racial and/or gender identities by Latinas, for example, allegedly are politically problematic because they intensify conflict between groups and thus are destructive to larger communities or nations (2006, 36). And they allegedly are philosophically problematic because they alienate a person from herself by means of an oppressive and artificially imposed category or set of categories (2006, 80). Genuine freedom and authenticity thus would seem to require the abandonment of social identities.

According to Alcoff, however, hidden behind these attacks on identity is a closet individualism that mistrusts any form of sociality or community and fears any influence of the Other on the self. “Why

assume that if I am culturally, ethnically, sexually identifiable that this is a process akin to Kafka's nightmarish torture machines in the penal colony?" asks Alcoff (2006, 81). The answer is that "identity in any form [is seen by its critics as] foisted on the self from the outside by the Other" (2006, 81). For the individual who insists on his or her absolute independence, social identities represent a loss of control and power through ontological dependency upon someone other than oneself. This loss of power is to be feared, and so too then are racial and other social identities to be resisted.

Alcoff's responds to this fear by situating it as a very particular, rather than universal need to deflect the Other, one felt by colonizers and other dominant groups who do not want to see themselves reflected in their victims' eyes (2006, 81). Antagonism and resistance are not the only forms that relationships between self and other can take. The interdependency of self and other can be recognized in such a way that "the Other's view of me—that is, my identity in the Other's presence—is internalized and thus is constitutive of my self" (2006, 82). Drawing on the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and the pragmatism of George Herbert Mead, Alcoff develops a concept of social identity that constitutively situates the individual in a communal world. Social identities are not forced onto atomistic individuals who then necessarily become alien to themselves. Racial and other identities are, borrowing from Gadamer, "hermeneutic horizons comprised of experiences, basic beliefs, and communal values, all of which influence our orientation toward and responses to future experiences" (2006, 287). Or in Mead's terms, the self is formed in and through the context of the "generalized other," which is a communal perspective by and through which an individual develops self-consciousness and thereby learns to perceive both herself and others (2006, 117). The hermeneutic notion of horizon allows feminists and others to appreciate how race and gender are real in that they are lived positions in which individual meaning is created in relationship to history and experience. An individual always operates within specific horizons, but because horizons open out to indeterminacy, a range of interpretative meaning is available from within those horizons (2006, 43). And Mead's account of the social self

enhances the notion of horizon by emphasizing its social dimensions (2006, 121). The horizon in and through which individual meaning is created is always a world of shared meaning that helps constitute an individual's self-consciousness and experience.

For Alcoff, raced, gendered, and other social identities can be oppressive, but they are not inherently or necessarily so. The ultimate question, in her view, “is not how to overcome identity, but how to transform our current interpretations and understandings of [it]” (Alcoff 2006, 287). Shannon Sullivan asks a similar question about whiteness in *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (2006). According to Sullivan, white privilege increasingly operates in the form of unconscious habit, able to thrive in a world that generally frowns on overt racism because that racism seems non-existent. With pragmatists W.E.B. Du Bois and John Dewey, Sullivan develops an account of whiteness as a raced and racist habit that is constitutive of the self and formed through transaction with a raced and racist world. Habit as such is not a problem to be solved although some habits, such as white privilege and domination, can be very harmful. For Sullivan, as a style or predisposition for engaging with/in the world, habit is simultaneously malleable and durable, which means that habits can be transformed but that such transformation tends to take a long time.

This especially true in the case of habits of white privilege, given their increasingly unconscious operations. Developing a pragmatized notion of the unconscious—one that is sympathetic to de Lauretis's work on Peirce and Freud—Sullivan explains the unconscious as formed through transaction with its various social, political, material and other environments (2006, 47). Drawing on the psychoanalytic theory of Jean Laplanche, Sullivan also modifies the pragmatist concept of habit to account for the ways that habits of whiteness “often are deviously obstructionist, actively blocking the self's attempts to transform itself for the better” (2006, 44). Racist habits of whiteness can be changed, but only indirectly, through changes to the environments that help constitute those habits. As Sullivan (2006, 10) argues, “relocating out of geographical, literary, political, and other environments that

encourage the white solipsism of living as if only white people existed or mattered can be a powerful way of disrupting and transforming unconscious habits of white privilege.” And yet even here a word of warning is in order, according to Sullivan. Habits of white privilege can and often continue to operate in the midst of the best intentions to undermine them through control of one's environments. Since habits of white privilege tend to be characterized by “ontological expansiveness,” in which white people treat all spaces as rightfully inhabited by them, attempts to master one's environment in the name of anti-racist struggle simultaneously can be a reinforcement of that privilege (2006, 144). Sullivan thus cautions that although struggles to eliminate white privilege must continue, habits of racial privilege will not quickly or easily be eliminated.

6. Additional Resources and Future Directions

Compared to continental feminism, pragmatist feminism is a small field.^[5] It is growing, however, and as it does so, the chances that more work on the intersections of feminism, pragmatism, and continental philosophy will be produced also increase. To date, the common thread that loosely unites feminist cross-fertilizations of continental and pragmatist philosophy is its criticism of oppositional, exclusionary binaries. In this closing section, I outline other possible threads for future work that draw on additional resources available in pragmatist feminist and feminist continental philosophies.

6.1 Bodies and Embodiment

For over a decade, understanding the relationship between embodiment and gender, race, and sexuality has been an important topic for continental feminists, especially Susan Bordo (1993), Judith Butler (1990 and 1994), Elizabeth Grosz (1994), and Gail Weiss (1999). In *Living Across and Through Skins: Transactional Bodies, Pragmatism and Feminism* (2001), Shannon Sullivan engages Butler's and (to a lesser degree) Bordo's work, along with that of Merleau-Ponty,

Nietzsche, and Dewey, to argue for a feminist conception of bodily life as transactional. Sullivan presents bodies as dynamically constituted in and through relationships with their political, social, material, and other environments, and she does so for the purpose of exploring which bodies transactional processes benefit and harm and thus whether those processes should be embraced or transformed by feminists and others.

Ladelle McWhorter's recent book *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (1999) does not explicitly appeal to pragmatist philosophy, but its affinities with pragmatist methods and concerns can be drawn out. McWhorter argues that the value of Foucault's philosophy should not be judged by the truth (or falsity) of what it says, a method of evaluation that relies upon what Rorty (1979) calls "the mirror of nature." In its place, McWhorter asks feminist and other readers of Foucault to pragmatically judge his work on what it does, that is, on the transformative impact that it has on their lives. Using her own life as a text, McWhorter "takes an experience of reading Foucault's works as [her] point of analysis" (1999, xix) and demonstrates the feminist-friendly effects of Foucault's particular account of bodies, pleasures, and the formation of sexual subjects.

6.2 The Concept of the Other

The concept of the Other offers a potential site for productive discussion and disagreement between feminist, pragmatist, and continental philosophers. As Charlene Haddock Seigfried notes, "[p]ragmatists tend to celebrate otherness by seeking out and welcoming difference as an expression of creative subjectivity" (1996, 267). The optimistic tone that pragmatism often takes toward alterity is markedly different from that of Julia Kristeva's claim that one is always other to oneself: "Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself" (1991, 1). Contemporary pragmatist feminists have tended to be more skeptical than most canonical pragmatists of the category of the Other because they recognize it as a means of domination. Yet, influenced by pragmatism, those feminists tend not to

construe the Other in as alienating and foreboding way as Kristeva does. Pragmatist and continental philosophy thus presents feminists with a variety of resources for thinking through the benefits and dangers of different conceptions of the Other, including the role of the Other in the constitution of both self and community.

6.3 Refiguring the Future: The Unconscious Imaginary

In psychoanalytic terms, the imaginary is the collection of (largely) unconscious fantasies and images that shapes both individual subjects and their worlds. In different ways, the work of both Donna Haraway and Luce Irigaray seeks to reveal the male privilege and domination contained within the current imaginary so that a space for a different sort of imaginary might be opened for the future. Although Irigaray is the better known for it, both she and Haraway appropriate the image of the speculum in this process, appealing to the gynecological mirror as an “instrument for rendering a part accessible to observation” (Haraway 1997, 197) and revealing how the feminine instrument is not itself reflected in its work of mirroring others (Irigaray 1985). While Haraway “excavate[s] something like a technoscientific unconscious” (1997, 151), Irigaray investigates the psychoanalytic “science that still cannot make up its mind” about “woman, science's unknown” (1985, 15, 13). Their work thus offers interesting resources for uncovering a patriarchal culture's blind spots and transforming its unconscious imaginary, as well as raises important questions about the role that science can or should play in feminist theorizing of the future.[6]

6.4 Freedom and Slavery: Expanding the Canon

The expansion of the canon of “classical” American philosophy to include more than white men opens up new possibilities for feminist intersections of continental and pragmatist philosophy. Cynthia Willett's *The Soul of Justice: Social Bonds and Racial Hubris* (2001) is a good example of one such possibility. In her latest book, Willett critically intersects G.W.F. Hegel and Luce Irigaray (among others) with the “visionary pragmatism” (2001, 175) of African-American

thinkers such as Toni Morrison and Patricia Hill Collins to present an account of freedom based in social bonds. Rejecting modernity's and psychoanalysis's account of separation as crucial to the formation of subjectivity, Willett draws on accounts of slavery to show how the destruction of erotic connections through the violence of separation results in social death. With this account, Willett suggests how an expanded understanding of American pragmatism that includes black women can combine with continental philosophy to produce a feminist and anti-racist liberatory theory that appreciates the constitutive role that desire plays in social relationships.

6.5 The Limits of Feminist Intersections of Pragmatist and Continental Philosophy

One of the effects of Nancy Fraser's work in social and political philosophy and critical theory has been to raise questions about the benefit to feminists of drawing upon certain strands of continental philosophy. For example, Fraser finds value in the theories of thinkers such as Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas (among others) because their notions of discourse include a rich array of historically embedded social practices (1997, 151-152). By contrast, Fraser claims that “feminists should have no truck with the versions of discourse theory that they attribute to [Jacques] Lacan [and] only the most minimal truck with related theories attributed to Julia Kristeva” (1997, 151). This is because Fraser views Lacan and Kristeva as reducing the variety of forms of human communication to language narrowly understood as a symbolic system. Given the variety of continental theories that feminists might engage, Fraser argues that what is needed is a “pragmatics model” (1997, 155). Also called “neo-pragmatism” by Fraser (in Benhabib, et al. 1995, 167), such a model would allow feminists to separate the wheat from the chaff in continental philosophy and incorporate the best it has to offer into feminist theory (1997, 208). Fraser thus uses pragmatism as a method by which to discriminate between different continental theories, and in so doing, raises the broader question of the relative advantages and disadvantages for feminism of intersecting pragmatist and continental philosophy.

This list of possible topics in the area of feminist intersections of pragmatist and continental philosophy certainly is not comprehensive, nor are the possibilities contained within it fully fleshed out. That work awaits others interested in this new field. The forms that it will take remain to be seen and are eagerly awaited.

Intersections Between Analytic and Continental Feminism

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Analytic and continental approaches to feminism intersect at three points at least. Both approaches are concerned with the status of the categories of sex and gender in general and of women in particular; both are concerned with issues of justice; and both are interested in the possible contribution of psychoanalytic perspectives to feminist interests.

1. Ideas of Sex and Gender: The Analytic Tradition

Analytic philosophy focuses on the status of categories of sex and gender. Following a line of thought in the philosophy of race, some feminists question whether these categories are coherent. K. Anthony Appiah (1996) argues that racial ascriptions are problematic whether one adopts an ideational or a referential theory of language. According to an ideational theory, we learn what a word like 'race' means when we learn the rules for applying it. The theory supposes that, while different people can possess some different beliefs about race, they share certain criterial beliefs and these serve to define the concept. A strict ideational theory requires that all the criterial beliefs be satisfied in

the correct application of the concept. The beliefs, in other words, must be individually necessary and jointly sufficient. Yet, as Appiah insists, there is no set of criterial beliefs that satisfies this condition in the case of race. Suppose the set is comprised by the beliefs (1) that people with very different skin colors are always of different races and (2) that one's race is determined by the race of one's parents. Neither of these beliefs is necessary to a particular racial ascription since (not-1) the so-called black race includes individuals of strikingly different colors and (not-2) one's parents may themselves belong to different so-called races. Nor are the two beliefs sufficient together to define race since they can conflict: one may be of a different color than one's parents even if they themselves are of the same color; and one can be the same color as one's parents although they are defined as belonging to different races.

Suppose we loosen the theory so that race has only to satisfy a good number of our criterial beliefs. In this case, we shall be able to retain the concept of race only by allowing for a vagueness and even confusion in what we mean by it. In order to retain a concept of race despite this problem, Lucius Outlaw (1995) has suggested that we view race as a cluster concept. On this definition, we can divide the elements of race into heritable physical characteristics, shared practices, linked histories and traditions and, finally “a common site of origin which accounts, in significant part, for the shared physical features.” If individuals share these groups of features in “a limited number of patterned combinations,” then what is required for the constitution of a race is “necessarily one feature,” for example, heritable physical characteristics “plus several others,” for example, linked histories and a common site or origin (p. 101, note 29). Yet, suppose, for example, that a South African of mostly Dutch ancestry and a South African of mostly Xhosa ancestry share certain heritable physical characteristics. They are both large, possess curly hair and share certain other morphological features. Further they share a history, although at least some their ancestors hold different places in that history and they share a common origin in the region of South Africa. Are they then members of the same race? Suppose a pinkish individual shares practices, traditions, and a common site of origin with people whose skin is

tawny. Is he or she of the same race as they? Even if we can answer these questions, the definition still runs into the problem of conflicting beliefs. Sometimes in applying the term we will give priority to ancestry in spite of color (as in the one-drop rule) and sometimes we will give priority to color in spite of a mixed ancestry.

Similar consequences follow from a referential theory of language. On this view, race is whatever in the world corresponds to or causes our talk of race. But, here, scientists have come up either completely empty handed, with regard to racial genes for example (Appiah 1996, 72-74) or with very little: recent research correlates certain short segments of DNA known as markers with broad geographical groups that sometimes but not always correspond with the groups that count socially as races. Furthermore, the long history of population mixing between people from different continents (for both conquest and other reasons) means that we need to select a necessarily arbitrary date for linking markers with groups; the date currently in use is 1492.

What if we transfer this analysis to categories of sex and gender? We can begin by looking at sex. On a strict ideational theory, when we speak of different sexes we should have a definitive set of criterial beliefs that define the concept and its application. But what are the beliefs that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the ascription of sex? State courts have sometimes held that the criterion for belonging to a specific sex is the possession of either XX or XY chromosomes. Thus, courts in Texas (*Littleton v. Prange* (9 S.W. 3d.223 (1999)) and Kansas (*In re Estate of Marshall G. Gardiner* (273 Kan. 191 (2002))) denied the validity of marriages between men and male-to-female transsexuals on the grounds that these marriages violate the states' prohibition against same-sex marriages. Nevertheless, courts in other states and countries have defined sex differently, either in terms of anatomy or as a combination of anatomy and "psychological sex," by which courts mean the sex one thinks one is. (See *M.T v J.t.* (140 NJ Super. 77 (1976))) The surgical practice of many hospitals also seems to disagree with the Kansas and Texas courts since they sometimes allow surgeries on infants with intersex conditions that

shape their anatomies to accord with standard male and female forms but may not accord with the chromosomal data. (See, for example, Kessler (2000), 27). Indeed, in its 2006 revision of its guidelines, the American Academy of Pediatrics, while recognizing some problems with surgeries on intersexed infants, still cautions that the complexity of creating penises may well justify bringing an XY infant up as a girl. It is unclear, then, which belief about sex is individually necessary. Is it the one that equates sex with chromosomes or the one that equates it with anatomy? Nor are the two criteria sufficient together since they can conflict. To take just one example: individuals with XY chromosomes and a condition called androgen insensitivity syndrome, which makes their bodies insensitive to testosterone have the anatomies of women and, moreover, are often what Natalie Angier calls “*mama mia* women,” because of their tall stature, large busts, thick hair and luminous complexions. (Angier 2000, 34).

A similar problem seems to hold for gender. Suppose that we define gender as a set of stereotypical behaviors and roles and claim (1) that people with very different sets of behaviors are of different genders and (2) that one's gender is determined by one's role in the bearing and rearing of children. A strict ideational theory will require beliefs about gender that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient. Yet, if neither of the beliefs just stated is individually necessary since (not-1) the so-called feminine gender includes individuals of strikingly different behaviors and (not-2) one's role in bearing and rearing children can be quite complex: one may bear but not raise the children; not bear but raise them, do neither or both. Nor, then, will the ideas be jointly sufficient: one may be socially defined as a woman although one engages in “masculine” behaviors and has no role in the raising of one's children. Similar ambiguities will arise for any set of beliefs thought to be individually necessary and jointly sufficient for gender. Defining women in terms of a set of attitudes toward marriage, careers, and child rearing will inevitably exclude some so-called women while including some so-called men.

At issue here are what Sally Haslanger calls commonality and

normativity problems (2000, 37). Take the latter first. Kimberle Crenshaw notes that both feminists and African-American civil rights groups often overlook the concerns and issues of African-American women. African-American civil rights groups often down-play statistics about domestic violence in African-American neighborhoods because they do not want to feed stereotypes about the violence of African-American men. Likewise, feminists often downplay the statistics because they do not want domestic violence to appear to be simply a minority crime. To this extent, African-American men are the norm for civil rights advocates and white women are the norm for women's rights advocates. Women of color, in turn, simply disappear from view. As Crenshaw explains, this result is dispiriting:

Among the most troubling political consequences of the failure of antiracist and feminist discourses to address the intersections of race and gender is the fact that, to the extent they can forward the interests of “people of color” and “women,” respectively, one analysis often implicitly denies the validity of the other. The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women. (Crenshaw 1991, 1252).

What women are meant to have in common is also a question. If we look to a referential theory of language, we shall have to maintain that the meaning of “women” is whatever it is that the members of the extension have in common. In examining the ideational theory, we have already raised some problems with an attempt to refer gender back to a set of common behaviors or roles. If the referential account maintains that the meaning of gender is whatever it is that the members of the extension have in common, there seems to be no social commonality given the differences in race, class, individuality and so on. There also seems to be no way to get from the biological level of chromosomes, hormones or brain functions to the characteristics we associate with gender. *Mama mia* women and other intersexuals

indicate the difficulty in correlating gender with sex chromosomes and feminists such as Anne Fausto-Sterling have raised problems with attempts to correlate ambition or aggressiveness with “male” hormones or math ability with the shape of the corpus callosum.

Take the latter apparent correlation. In the first place, the corpus callosum is a part of the brain that is very difficult to isolate, divide or measure in ways that could lead to meaningful comparisons between brains. In the second place, meta-analyses that pool the data from a large number of smaller studies find “no gender difference in either absolute or relative size or shape of the CC as a whole or of the splenium” (Fausto-Sterling 2000, 131–135). Finally, whatever differences are found or thought to be part of the corpus callosums of men and women seem to turn up in adults and older children, rather than in young children. Hence, it remains unclear how we ought to measure the relative effects of biology and environmental causes. Since we know that the brain continues to develop through a human life, there are at least two alternatives to the claim that differences in the brain cause differences in gender: first, the lived experiences of men and women could help shape their brains and do so in societies already differentiated by gender or, second, brain structure and culturally specific gender differences might interrelate in some as yet unraveled way. In either case, a referential theory of language that claims that we know what a gender is when we know what in the world corresponds to or causes our talk of gender would seem to be in trouble. Not only do we not know what corresponds to or causes our talk of gender; it may well be that our talk of gender causes differences in the world.

Not all analytic feminists agree with all parts of this sort of analysis. Naomi Zack explicitly rejects the analogy between race and gender: “While there are genes for morphology perceived or judged to be racial, such as hair texture and skin color, there are no chromosomal markers for black race or white race (or any other race) no genes for race per se, and, indeed, nothing which is analogous to XY, XX, or to any of the borderline sexual-type combinations of X and Y, for instances of mixed race” (1997, 37). Others hold open the possibility of

providing a definition of gender that can be sensitive to commonality and normativity problems. Haslanger, for example, suggests that although the unity that is meant to encompass women as part of the same definition may be overly generalized or badly characterized, it may nonetheless mark a real unity. Taking what she calls a materialist position, she argues that if gender cannot be defined in terms of intrinsic or psychological characteristics common to members of a particular gender, it can nonetheless be defined “in terms of how one is socially positioned, where this is a function of, e.g., how one is viewed, how one is treated, and how one's life is structured socially, legally, and economically.” On this account, gender categories represent hierarchical relations in which one group maintains a subordinate relation to another and the difference between the two groups is marked by “sexual difference.” Thus:

S is a woman iff *S* is systematically subordinated along some dimension (economic, legal, political, social, etc.) and *S* is “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction.

Correspondingly:

S is a man iff *S* is systematically privileged along some dimension (economic, legal, political, social, etc.) and *S* is “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a male's biological role in reproduction (Haslanger 2000, 38).

The merit of these definitions, Haslanger thinks, is that they allow for differences in the sorts of subordination different women can suffer in different cultures, historical periods, classes and races at the same time that they allow for the visibility or imagined visibility of sex and gender. If, in contrast, we were to employ difficulties in the category of women to deny any unity in observed or imagined bodily features, it would be unclear how or who might continue feminist struggles against gender oppression. The key, then, according to Haslanger, is to define

women in such a way that the definition can be sensitive to differences between women while allowing them to work towards common goals.

2. Ideas of Sex and Gender: The Continental Tradition

Feminists who appeal to the resources of the Continental tradition are also concerned with the status of the category of women. Ever since Simone de Beauvoir (1953), defined women as the “Other”, feminists in the Continental tradition have pursued a complex train of thought with regard to what this characterization involves. Beauvoir insists that “No group ever sets itself up as the One without setting up the Other against itself...Jews are ‘different’ for the anti-Semite, Negroes are ‘inferior’ for American racists, aborigines are ‘natives’ for colonists, proletarians are the ‘lower class’ for the privileged.” (Beauvoir 1953, xvii) Jews, “Negroes,” aborigines and the proletariat are Other in the sense that the One dominates them and turns them into the Other for extended periods of time. Nevertheless, these groups were not always the “Other” and, moreover, they struggle for a time when they will no longer be “Other.” What distinguishes women, according to Beauvoir is that there is no “before” or “after” to their Otherness. Men are always the One and women are always the Other. As the Other, they live only in relation to the One and have no free human existence or subjectivity on their own. They occupy space in a man's world only as relative and inessential aspects of it.

Yet, as Luce Irigaray (1985) points out, Beauvoir's definition raises a problem. On the one hand, since women are the Other to men they cannot be defined independently of a definition of men. On the other hand, if they cannot be independently of men, how are they Other from men? To define women as the Other of men is to articulate their identity within a vocabulary that takes men as its norm. Men provide the standard and women are other than that. Yet, if women can be articulated only within a male-normed language, then language cannot get at their otherness at all. They are always, instead, part of a language system expressing the One. The “exclusion” of women, Irigaray

writes, “is internal to an order from which nothing escapes: the order of (man's) discourse. To the objection that this discourse is perhaps not all there is, the response will be that it is women who are ‘not-all’”(Irigaray 1985, 88). Julia Kristeva agrees. “A woman cannot be,” she writes. “It is something which does not even belong in the order of being” (Kristeva 1981, 137).

Judith Butler (1990) goes a step beyond Irigaray and Kristeva arguing that their insights into the closed nature of a gendered linguistic system raise issues about a substance-accident metaphysics as a whole. According to this metaphysics, both sex and gender are meant to be accidental attributes attached to a substantial subject. One is essentially a subject and only accidentally a male or female, masculine or feminine one. Yet, if women can be defined only in terms of men, as the Other of men, then sex and gender are not as much accidents as they are relations — not attributes a subject possesses but oppositions between linguistic terms: male versus female and masculine versus feminine. Furthermore, if sex and gender are not attributes, perhaps we should rethink the subject or substance to which they are meant to attach. Perhaps there is only language which, in articulating a relation between male and female, masculine and feminine, posits a substance on which to erect those terms. Butler quotes Michel Haar's commentary on Nietzsche:

All psychological categories (the ego, the individual, the person) derive from the illusion of substantial identity. But this illusion goes back basically to a superstition that deceives not only common sense but also philosophers — namely, the belief in language and, more precisely, in the truth of grammatical categories.

In other words, language inspires us to add substantial identities to actions because verbs need subjects. Turning from Nietzsche to J.L. Austin, Butler (1988) conceives of women (and men) as “performatives.” Performative speech acts for Austin are utterances such as “the meeting is now open” or “I now pronounce you husband and wife” in which, uttered under appropriate circumstances, the

speech act does something by saying something. The speech act thus brings a state of affairs into existence. Likewise, according to Butler, the language of sex and gender, appropriately institutionalized, creates men and women.

What is meant by “appropriately institutionalized.” Here Butler and others combine their considerations of Beauvoir with Michel Foucault's analysis of power. For Foucault(1978,1990) the most important site of power does not lie in the state or economy but, instead, in everyday social practices such as social work, medicine and psychiatry, in scientific and social scientific disciplines that type individuals and create categories of identity, and in institutions such as prisons, schools and hospitals. Such power is productive: social institutions and practices create modern identities such as homosexuals, “blacks,” and manic-depressives. Thus, Foucault famously argues that homosexuals are the result of the Victorian age, in particular, of the power of legal, medical and psychiatric authorities. Before 1870, he argues, acts of sodomy possessed no special distinction. What mattered about any sexual practice was whether it occurred inside or outside of marriage. In the course of the 19th century, however, sodomy between men became the subject of psychological histories, legal discipline and moral character. the act of sodomy was no longer a simply act but the disclosure of identity. As Foucault writes, “The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality.” (1978, 1990 43) For Butler and others, the construction of men and women takes a similar path, as the result of a compulsory heterosexuality. As a form of power, compulsory heterosexuality imposes a set of norms about how and who we should desire and establishes a set of sanctions from this set. By doing so, it divides human populations into two genders that are in turn supposed to be connected to two sexes with two directions of sexual desire. Thus, one is a man with a male body and a desire for women or one is a woman with a female body and a desire for men. No other match-ups constitute intelligible identities. “The heterosexualization of desire,” Butler writes, “requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine,’

where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female.’”(1990, 17).

3. Possibilities for Social Justice: The Continental Tradition

Feminists who take a Foucaultian approach to questions of power and inequality are skeptical of our capacities for critical agency and rational reflection to which Marxists and other social critics have traditionally appealed. If the subject, as a homosexual or woman for example, is an effect of power, the structure of oppression is already built into the identity. How can women or homosexuals be agents for the emancipation of, or equal justice for, women or homosexuals if their identity is itself an effect of unequal power relations? Indeed, if we become subjects at all only within everyday disciplinary practices, then subjects are always already effects of power. To emancipate ourselves from power would be to emancipate ourselves from ourselves. How then do feminists in this tradition consider issues of power, justice and equality?

Many look to genealogical inquiries that try to retrace the path by which a particular identity is created. Here the question they attempt to answer is why and how particular forms of power coalesce at a particular time to create particular subjects? Joan Wallach Scott (1988) looks, for example, at the way a dispute in the French garment trades in the 1840s constructs women in terms of unskilled work and the home. At the time, increasing numbers of garments were being sold as ready-to-wear clothes. These could be cut and sewn in standard sizes and therefore made at a lower cost to the employer outside of a custom tailoring shop and at home. While employers sought to move ever more work to domestic settings, tailors agitated for laws that would require all garment work to be done in shops. To support their position, they emphasized the artisan tradition of tailoring and contrasted it to mere seamstressing. Tailors were skilled professionals while seamstresses were unskilled. Seamstressing was done at home in

between or after domestic duties. Tailoring was done in shops. Tailors were men; seamstresses were women. Through these associations, skilled work and out-of-the-home professionalism became masculine while unskilled and home-based work became feminine. By showing how these associations result from a dispute over the tailors' livelihoods, Scott shows their contingency. The dispute might have gone a different way and, if so, the construction of women as part of the domestic, unskilled world might have been otherwise.

Butler suggests that, while we cannot undo the past or entirely dispense with the identities we already are, the social construction of these identities is not a one-time affair. We are not only produced and produce ourselves as women, homosexuals and so on but are also reproduced and reproduce ourselves as such subjects. This constant production and reproduction of ourselves serves as the opening for resignification. While we cannot free ourselves of the identities we are, we can engage in “resignification, redeployment, subversive citation from within, and interruption and inadvertent convergences with other [power/discourse] networks” (1995, 135).

Other Continental feminists are less certain about the viability of a Foucaultian approach. Seyla Benhabib (1995 20), for one, distinguishes between a stronger and a weaker version of the claim that identities such as women and homosexuals are constructions of power. The stronger version insists that subjects are entirely the effects of power, particularly of a compulsory heterosexuality, and that as effects they can only accept their mode of being a subject or try to subvert it from within. A weaker version of the claim, however, would simply emphasize that infants are born into a world of existing gendered relations, hierarchies and distributions of power and are acculturated into this world by parents, teachers and the like. To say that infants are born into prevailing structures of power, however, is not to say that they are already entirely constituted by them. Hence, Benhabib claims, there remain capacities for reflection and accountability that are not simply themselves effects of power. For her part, Nancy Fraser finds the positive connotations that Butler associates with resignification

“puzzling.” “Why,” she asks, “is resignification good? Can’t there be bad (oppressive, reactionary) resignifications?” (1995 67-8). If all subjectivity is a construction of power/discourse networks, why should we not simply be content with the subjects that our current disciplinary practices enforce? Or, if some resignifications are good, which ones? How do we determine which sort we should endorse?

Fraser suggests that in order to respond to objections of this general kind, a feminism inspired by Foucault might integrate its emphasis on social construction with an analysis that allows for both social criticism and “utopian hope”. (1995 71) Here she gestures toward a Habermasian account, one that looks to procedures for rationally justifying norms to which we can all agree and that uses such universal norms as footholds for social criticism. Fraser also calls for articulating a vision of the future that is “sufficiently compelling to persuade other women – and men – to reinterpret their interests.” (1997, 218). Part of this model involves overcoming constructed gender oppositions between breadwinning and care giving work and, moreover, easing the strain of both. “The trick,” Fraser contends, “is to imagine a social world in which citizens’ lives integrate wage earning, care giving, community activism, political participations, and involvement in the associational life of civil society – while also leaving time for some fun Unless we are guided by this vision now, we will never get any closer to achieving it.”

It is worth pointing out that, at times, Butler seems to be moving in just the direction that Fraser indicates. That is, despite her Foucaultian sympathies, she sometimes appeals to recognizably Habermasian ideas about rationality and consensus. Thus, she refers to the need for “grounds for action” and to the “collective contexts” in which “we try to find modes of deliberation and reflection about which we can agree.” (Butler 2004, 222) Yet, she also pulls back from such ideas, warning that we should regard any agreement on norms with suspicion. “Do we need to know,” she writes, “that, despite our differences, we are all oriented toward the same conception of rational deliberation and justification? Or do we need precisely to know that the ‘common’ is no

longer there for us, if it ever was.” (2004, 221)

4. Possibilities for Social Justice: The Analytic Tradition

Working from an Anglo-american tradition, Martha Nussbaum has raised questions similar to those that Benhabib and Fraser raise about a Foucaultian-inspired feminism. Indeed, she thinks the latter is irretrievably self-involved and needs to be rejected in favor of the kind of theoretical and practical work that can change laws, feed the hungry, and oppose oppressive practices and institutions. To this end, she looks to Amartya Sen's development of Rawlsian liberalism into what she calls the human capabilities approach. Following Rawls, this approach focuses on the distribution of resources and opportunities within a country or political entity. It adds to Rawls' view, first, the question of what individuals' needs for resources are and, second, the question of how they are able to convert these resources into human functioning (Nussbaum 1999, 34). By human functioning, Nussbaum means both the basic functioning without which we would not regard a life as human or fully human and the less basic functioning without which we would not regard a human life as flourishing. The “we” here is not meant to be ethnocentric. The idea is, rather, that a just society provides individuals with the capabilities for human functioning where the idea of a basic and flourishing functioning is one to which people from different traditions with different conceptions of the good could agree as necessary to the pursuit of their conception.

This idea provides a checklist against which to measure forms of oppression and discrimination in particular countries. Thus, inequalities based on gender hierarchies as well as practices such as female genital mutilation will be precluded and a defense of such practices as part of the cultural tradition will not work. If cultural tradition confines women to the house, even if widowed and without means of support, then such practices are to be condemned as violating capabilities for even basic functioning. Indeed, if egregious practices such as female genital

mutilation and female confinement violate capabilities for life, nutrition and bodily integrity, all inequalities based on gender hierarchies, in Nussbaum's view, undermine capabilities for self-respect and emotional development that are part of human functioning.

To look to human capabilities is not to look to actual functioning. Nussbaum does not deny that one might choose a life of celibacy, for instance. The human capabilities approach argues, instead, that justice requires the capability for sexual pleasure so that if one chooses celibacy, this choice is really a choice. As Nussbaum writes, "A person who has opportunities for play can always choose a workaholic life — there is a great difference between that chosen life and a life constrained by insufficient maximum hour protections and/or the 'double day' that makes women in many parts of the world unable to play." (1999, 44). Ultimately, then, her concerns are the same as Fraser's: that a postmodern focus on genealogy and resignification cannot do the work of undoing the social, political and economic discrimination that women suffer in far too many cultures and countries.

5. The Appropriation of Psychoanalytic Theory: The Analytic Tradition

A third intersection between analytic and continental approaches in feminism occurs with their joint appropriation of Freudian psychoanalysis. While English-speaking feminists and those that are associated with them have drawn on work that revises Freud in the direction of object-relations theory, French-speaking feminists and the English-speaking feminists who follow them have by and large focused on revising Freud in terms of Lacan. Some analytic feminists have looked to the work of psychologist, Nancy Chodorow who follows object-relations theory in seeing the breast, and by extension, the mother, as the most important object for the infant. In addition, the circumstance that it is women that typically do the work of mothering leads to importantly different consequences for little boys and little

girls. Mothers experience their daughters as identical to themselves and stress these similarities in their nurturing activities. Hence, their daughters grow up in the context of an identifying relationship with their primary caregiver. In contrast, mothers experience their sons as different from themselves and emphasize these differences in their care giving. Boys therefore grow into their gender identity by accepting their differences from their primary caregiver and by associating themselves with a largely absent father. As Chodorow writes, “Because they are parented by a person of the same gender . . . girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object world, and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well.” (Chodorow 1999, 167). These differences in their relation to their primary care giver have other implications as well. As schoolchildren, girls excel in literature while schoolboys excel in mathematics and science; girls are more likely to rely on adults to settle disputes and to take relationships more seriously than competition while boys focus on more complex, competitive and rule-governed games. College-age boys fear attachment and a loss of autonomy while college-age girls fear success and a loss of connection. As adults, women tend to value relationships over independence and to devote themselves to the care of others; in contrast, men tend to value their autonomy and to focus on questions of rights and duties over emotions and sensitivity to others.

Following this line of thought, “difference feminism” emphasizes women's concern with issues of relationship, their sensitivity to the particulars of individual circumstances, and their interest in the narrative of concrete individual lives. It thus stresses women's orientation to what Carol Gilligan calls an ethics of care as opposed to an ethics of justice (Gilligan 1982). An ethics of justice concerns itself with guaranteeing individual rights and with adjudications of conflicts between rights based on general principles of liberty and equality. In contrast, an ethics of care is sensitive to the particular case and circumstances, to the specificity of people's lives and life-stories, and to the needs of concrete rather than generalized others (Benhabib 1987). In addition it focuses on the interdependence of people rather than on

their individual rights, on possibilities for empathy rather than those of autonomous decision-making (Held 1995), and, as Nell Noddings (1995) stresses, on the our capacity for fulfillment in our commitment to others rather than on our need to justify our actions.

Difference feminists also urge a form of the politics that understands women's gender identity as a source of strength. Thus, Patricia Hill Collins delineates the way community activism can issue from Black women's and especially Black mothers' experiences of caring. She criticizes the image of super-strong African-American mothers insofar as it obscures the costs of caring for Black women. Yet she also sees Black motherhood as an important model for “a more generalized ethic of caring and personal accountability.” (Collins 1995, 133). Black communities typically emphasize not only the responsibility of “bloodmothers” for their own children but also of what Collins calls othermothers — grandmothers, sisters, aunts, neighbors and “fictive mothers” who view the children of the community as “our” children (1995, 131). Out of these networks of community childcare develop community organizations, advocacy groups and the like. Other feminists use the value of caring to demand pregnancy and maternity leaves, childcare facilities on workplace grounds, flexible schedules, classroom attention to the needs of girls, including single-sex education if necessary, and career guidance for girls.

6. The Appropriation of Psychoanalytic Theory: The Continental Tradition

What about Continental approaches to psychoanalytic theory? Feminists such as Jacqueline Rose, Juliet Mitchell, Elizabeth Grosz and Jeanne L. Schroeder begin with Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud and go in a different direction. Crucial here is the division of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic. The real is that world that we feel we have lost when we begin to mediate our experience through imagery or language; it is the world of unity with the other or the mother figure (which Continentally oriented feminists often write as (M)Other to

emphasize that it is a position of the other from the point of view of the child; typically this position is taken by women.) The imaginary signals the stage of mirror images when the child recognizes itself by seeing itself reflected in the mother. At this stage the infant does not recognize itself as a subject but simply as not-Mother. Only with the transition to the symbolic that corresponds to Freud's Oedipal phase does the child understand itself as a subject.

Schroeder explains the symbolic order by way of Lacan's delineation of three categories of longing that correspond to the three orders of real, imaginary and symbolic: these are, respectively, need, demand, and desire (Schroeder 1998, 73). In the first stage the infant experiences only need whereas in the second stage, it recognizes that it sometimes lacks what it needs and therefore demands it. This demand is part of the retrospective idea in the imaginary that one was once in unity with the (M)Other and is now not so. Demand is not yet conscious language but rather a call to the Other who has what it demands. At the same time, demand signals insecurity: each time that a demand is not immediately gratified, the question arises as to whether the mother loves the infant (1998, 75). Desire is what emerges: "The baby's need can be met, its demand responded to, but its desire only exists because of the initial failure of satisfaction. Desire persists as an effect of a primordial absence and it therefore indicates that, in this area, there is something fundamentally impossible about satisfaction itself" (Mitchell 1985, 6). What the infant desires, according to Grosz's account of Lacan, is to be desired: "Desire is a fundamental lack, a hole in being that can satisfied only by one "thing" – another('s) desire. Each self-conscious subject desires the desire of the other as its object. Its desire is to be desired by the other, its counterpart" (Grosz 1990, 64).

The symbolic order is reached in desire. Lacanian feminists note that Lacan reconstructs this process from the point of view of the son. The child realizes that he is not the object of the mother's desire, that the mother desires the father or whatever person fulfills the role of the father. Moreover, if the mother desires the father, she must desire something he has; this object of desire, Lacan calls the phallus. Having

the phallus is the signifier of being a subject. As part of the symbolic order, however, the phallus cannot be seen; instead, the child looks at anatomical fathers and marks how they differ from anatomical mothers, conflating the phallus with the penis. The conflation here is two-fold. First, the child conflates the symbolic phallus with the order of the real he both desires and fears in the imaginary order as a return to unity and, as he sees it, a swallowing up of himself in the mother. Second, the child conflates the real phallus with the physical penis. The father is a subject because of the mother's desire and this desire depends upon his having a penis.

The price the father extracts for the son's becoming a subject is castration. Schroeder explains:

Since the Child imagines that he once had the *Phallus* (i.e., wholeness, union with the Mother) prior to the mirror stage, he must retroactively explain its loss, but in a way that can deny his loss. He tells himself that the Father threatened to take away the Phallus which the male child conflates with his penis. The Father and son reached an agreement that if the son submitted to castration (the Law of the Father) the Name of the Father will recompense him by allowing him to adopt the Father's name and marry another woman. The son would then be recognized as a speaking subject, a member of the symbolic community, and thereby regain his wholeness. (Schroeder, 1998, 83)

What about the daughter? Women enter this pact between father and son as objects of exchange: the son exchanges his mother for another woman. Grosz writes, "The girl has quickly learned that she does not have the phallus, nor the power it signifies. She comes to accept, not without resistance, her socially designated role as subordinate to the possessor of the phallus, and through her acceptance, she comes to occupy the passive, dependent position expected of women in patriarchy" (1990, 69). Moreover, if men have the phallus, women are the phallus, the object of desire. Men become speaking subjects through the threat of their symbolic castration while women become the objects of exchange. Consequently, any move by women to

overturn the terms of their objectification threatens the entire symbolic order. By the same logic, when women speak they do so only by taking up the masculine position (Cornell 1992, 175).

Critics of difference feminism in the English speaking world have argued that it simply reinforces stereotypes about women and their presumed special needs, restricting women to traditional roles and increasing the difficulty of escaping them. As working mothers, women are expected to put their families first in a way that men are not and to give up on high-paying but demanding jobs for the sake of their children. Indeed, as college students they are often motivated to train in the first place for the sort of career that allows them to take time off to bear and rear children. Such actions mean that they typically have less power within the family to make decisions about either their own lives or the lives of their families. Moreover, these circumstances can put them at a disadvantage in no-fault divorce settlements where their contributions to the family cannot be easily measured in monetary terms (Okin 1989, Chapter 7). Indeed, to the extent that stressing gender difference leads to policies that increase the costs of hiring women, trap them at the lower end of the wage scale, and abandon them in divorce settlements, difference feminism arguably renders women more rather than less vulnerable.

A similar stasis seems to arise from Lacanian feminism at least to the extent that it can make solutions to sexism seem overwhelmingly difficult. Lacanian feminists try to stress the space that Lacan opens up for overturning sexual categories. Irigaray is even notable as the representative of a French difference feminism insofar as she is interested in the concept of the feminine that is excluded by a discourse in which women are the other of men. Yet, what seems to be required is nothing less than an overturning of the symbolic order, of language itself.

For this reason, we might rather trace a line of resistance that runs from the challenge to an uncritical conception of sex and gender to the contributions to feminism by liberalism and critical theory. Arguments

by analytic philosophers of language and Continental Foucaultians show us that we should not take up the categories of sex and gender uncritically. Even if we ultimately justify their employment, our use of them remains critically informed by recognition of the limits of the terms and the overgeneralizations and exclusions they can foster. Arguments by liberals and critical theorists demand that we not become so involved in the complexities of language that we ignore the poverty and oppression that those identified as women suffer in too many countries. We therefore need action on two fronts: a constant questioning of the gender divisions we have made and constant efforts to right the wrongs to which those positioned as women remain subject.