

Introduction: What Is Feminist Philosophy?

1. Defining feminist philosophy

Feminist philosophy arose in the early 1970s and has developed most strongly in Western Europe, North America, and Australasia. In these regions, feminist philosophy has become a major subdiscipline within philosophy. There are three main aspects of feminist philosophy.

(1) It investigates how biases against women are embodied in past and present philosophy. Specifically, feminist philosophers study and criticise biases against women within:

- (i) writings from the history of philosophy, especially writings by canonical authors
 - Plato, Descartes, and others;
- (ii) areas of contemporary philosophy such as epistemology (the theory of knowledge) and ethics;
- (iii) patterns of imagery and symbolism that can be found in writings from both past and current philosophy (e.g. the image of woman as irrational).

Having criticised the male biases they have found in past and present philosophy, feminist philosophers have developed new theories – for instance, new moral theories or new theories of knowledge – which are intended to improve on the older, biased, theories. Thus, feminist philosophy both criticises male biases and develops new theories and concepts to correct these biases.¹

For example, some feminist moral philosophers – following Carol Gilligan (1982) – have argued that philosophical theories of ethics have traditionally focused on justice and on finding impartial rules for guiding action. Gilligan suggested that only men's reasoning about moral problems is typically based on this sort of concern

to be just and impartial. In contrast, when women engage in moral reasoning, they try to see how, in some specific situation, the needs of particular individuals can be met and their relationships maintained. To respect women's experience and ways of thinking, Gilligan thinks, philosophical ethics must recognise and say more about this 'care perspective' as well as about the male 'justice perspective'. Still, not all feminist philosophers accept Gilligan's view. Feminist philosophers disagree with one another on where the biases are to be found within past and present philosophy, and on the content of the new theories that are needed as correctives. A range of diverse, often conflicting, opinions exists in feminist philosophy, as in any other field of philosophy.

(2) The second main aspect of feminist philosophy is that it draws on philosophical concepts and theories to articulate different feminist claims and political positions, and it uses philosophical arguments to establish which of those claims and positions are strongest. For example, some feminist activists have claimed that pornography harms women – that 'pornography is the theory, rape is the practice'. Some feminist philosophers (such as Langton 1993) have tried to articulate these anti-pornography claims philosophically and to assess how coherent they are.

(3) Thirdly, feminist philosophy has introduced into philosophy a range of new concepts that no other fields of philosophy address. Some of the most prominent of these new concepts are the following:

(i) sex and (ii) gender. Central to much feminist thought is the distinction between biological sex – male or female – and social gender – social expectations about what counts as appropriate behaviour for men and women. Many feminists argue that it is social expectations, not biology, which are biased against and disadvantage women and that these expectations – unlike biology – can be changed.

(iii) sexuality. Feminists distinguish between a person's sex, gender, and sexuality, and they argue that the fact that someone is male (or female) does not mean that that person must act in a masculine (or feminine) way or that they must be sexually attracted towards women (or men).

(iv) sexual difference. Some feminist philosophers have introduced this concept to capture (what they see as) the fact that, for human beings, being male or female always acquires cultural meanings, meanings which are conveyed via language and which deeply shape how we experience our own bodies.

(v) essentialism. In feminist contexts, the problem of essentialism is the problem of whether there is anything that all women (or all men) have in common and, if women are too diverse to have anything in common, what makes them all members of the kind or group 'women'.

(vi) birth. Compared to death, philosophers have neglected birth. Feminists ask how women experience pregnancy and birth and what the fact that we are all born reveals about the nature of the self and of human life.²

Each of these concepts raises particular questions. How should sex and gender be understood? Should gender exist at all? That is, is there any good reason to have systematically different expectations about what men should be like and what women should be like? What are sexual feelings? Could male biases have crept into how we usually think about what sexual feelings are? What makes all women women? These and other related questions are unique to feminist philosophy.

To be sure, feminist philosophical concepts and questions often overlap with questions that arise elsewhere in philosophy. For example, philosophers of sex also ask what sexual acts are; and metaphysicians also ask what makes different things members of the same kind – e.g. what makes different blue patches all instances of

the colour blue. But feminist philosophers work with distinctive understandings of the concepts that organise their debates. Within feminist philosophy, the ‘essentialism’ debates concern whether *women*, in particular, have anything in common that makes them all women. And feminist philosophers take sexuality to be linked to *power* relations and to forms of social organisation that benefit men. So the key feminist philosophical concepts are either unexplored by non-feminist philosophers (e.g. sex, gender) or are understood by feminist philosophers in distinctive ways (sexuality, essentialism). As a result, feminist philosophical debates have developed in unique directions and have produced unique arguments not found elsewhere in philosophy.

This book will focus on some of the main concepts and questions – concerning sex, gender, sexuality, sexual difference, essentialism and birth – that are unique to feminist philosophy and that mark it out as a distinctive area within philosophy. In contrast, most other books on feminist philosophy either focus on

(i) feminist criticisms and reconstructions of male-biased philosophy (Jaggar and Young 1998) – including feminist criticisms and reconstructions of specific areas of philosophy such as epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, etc. (Fricker and Hornsby 2000, Garry and Pearsall 1996)

or on (ii) giving a philosophical articulation of different currents in feminist politics (Jaggar 1983a).

I aim instead to position feminist philosophy as a distinctive field of philosophy, alongside ethics, philosophy of mind, etc., and defined by its own problems and questions. As I see it, it is in asking these new questions (what is gender? What makes women women?) that feminist philosophy has been most original and creative and has most expanded the scope of philosophy as a whole.

2. Philosophy, feminism and reason

Unlike most other fields within philosophy, feminist philosophy remains controversial amongst philosophers. Some philosophers are suspicious of it or reject it altogether. Herta Nagl-Docekal (2004: xiv) suggests that some philosophers reject feminist philosophy because they reject feminism – that is, they oppose or see no need for a political movement for women’s equality. Yet philosophers might be – and sometimes are – sceptical about feminist philosophy without having to reject feminism as a political project. What they are sceptical about is whether feminist philosophy is *philosophy*.

Of course, it is very hard to give a satisfactory definition of what philosophy is. Still, many philosophers would agree that philosophical thinking is open-ended and involves following the logic of arguments wherever they lead. If one assumes, in advance of argument, that one particular conclusion is right and that one’s arguments must lead to this specific conclusion, then one is just not proceeding philosophically (on this view). Consider how in many Platonic dialogues, Socrates starts by showing his interlocutors that there are problems with their long-held convictions. Socrates believes that once these convictions have been shaken up, his interlocutors will then be able to start to think philosophically, i.e. open-mindedly.

This does not mean that philosophical thinking requires one to have no initial convictions at all. When thinking one cannot avoid beginning with certain convictions, but one must be aware that these convictions can be questioned and need to be defended with argument. One must also be aware that one’s attempts to defend these convictions may fail, so that one may have to abandon or revise one’s convictions. Thinking in an open-ended way does not mean starting from nowhere, but it does mean being able to arrive wherever thought and argument lead.

Yet feminist philosophy, as Alison Jaggar and Iris Marion Young say, ‘presupposes a substantive ethical or political commitment to opposing women’s social subordination’ (Jaggar and Young 1998: 2). What worries some people here is that feminist philosophy *presupposes* this commitment to feminism instead of arguing that women’s subordination exists and should be opposed. The activity of making arguments for particular political positions such as liberalism or feminism is generally recognised to be a legitimate part of philosophy – namely, political philosophy. In line with this, philosophers often think that feminist philosophy is legitimate if it is a branch of political philosophy which defends feminism. However, as we saw in Section 1, feminist philosophy does not merely articulate feminist politics but also explores its own original concepts such as sex and gender, as well as criticising male biases in epistemology, ethics, etc. At this point some people worry that feminist philosophy has begun to assume, rather than question and argue for, the truth of feminist politics. Of course, nobody can question all their beliefs at once, and plausibly feminist philosophers cannot question male bias in the tradition and question their own feminism at exactly the same time. But the worry that some people have is that feminist philosophers have ceased ever to question or argue for feminism at all.

Readers who are already familiar with feminist philosophy may be shaking their heads in dismay. Is it not already clear from the abundance of good work in this area (these readers might say) that feminist philosophy is perfectly good philosophy? Those who doubt this fact (the same readers might add) usually know little about feminist philosophy, and since their doubts about feminist philosophy stem merely from ignorance of the area, I am wasting time by taking these doubts seriously. I believe, though, that these doubts about feminist philosophy raise important issues

about the nature of philosophical thought, the nature of (feminist) politics, and the relation between the two. So I think it worth devoting some time to these doubts and to the issues that they raise.

Against these doubts, many feminist philosophers have argued that philosophical thinking can never really *be* open-ended. Rational arguments, they point out, must always be constructed according to accepted standards for what counts as a valid argument. And different standards for what counts as valid reasoning or argument have existed at different times. Here some feminist philosophers have been influenced by the early work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault (1966) suggests that in different historical periods there are different ‘rules of formation’ or *epistemes* which specify what kind of claims count as knowledge in those periods, and what kinds of thinking count as rational or logically valid. Some feminist philosophers such as Genevieve Lloyd (1984) have added that these changing conceptions of reason, or standards of what counts as reason, all incorporate associations between reason and being male. According to Lloyd, philosophers from Plato to Sartre all – in varied ways – understand reasoning to require standing above, or ‘transcending’, one’s emotions and one’s body. These same philosophers also associate reason with maleness, believing that maleness is something that one must achieve by overcoming one’s ‘female’ – emotional, embodied – dimension. Arguably, then, ideas of reason have a history of being linked to ideals of maleness which degrade women.

If ideas of reason have a history, then what of the worry that feminist philosophy is not genuinely philosophical because it cannot allow open-ended reasoning? The fact that ideas of reason have a history suggests that reason and argument never really *are* open-ended, because any particular style of reasoning or argument presupposes a

specific set of assumptions about what reason and argument consist in and – at the same time – about what it is to be a man or a woman. Consider the ‘adversary paradigm’ that reigns in much contemporary philosophy (on which, see Moulton 1983). Under this paradigm, it is assumed that philosophers’ job is to find faults in and counter-examples to other philosophers’ arguments, and to argue for claims by trying to defend them against the strongest objections that can be imagined. This ‘adversary paradigm’ assumes that reasoning must be adversarial, and it associates adversarial reasoning with being male, assuming that males are aggressive.

It seems, then, that reason and argument have long been understood in ways that link them to maleness. Very few feminist philosophers conclude that reason and argument should be rejected outright. Many feminist philosophers try instead to argue for claims in ways that assume different conceptions of reason, according to which reason includes qualities that have traditionally been thought to be ‘female’. For instance, one might try to build constructively on sound parts of the work of other scholars, rather than setting out to expose the flaws in their arguments. In this case one is reasoning in a way that includes ‘female’ qualities of sympathy and openness to others.

Those who believe that philosophical thought must be open-ended might reply that these feminist criticisms and reworkings of standards of rationality are worthwhile because, actually, they are *models* of open-ended philosophical thought. They break out of entrenched (male-biased) horizons and question standards that are often taken for granted. So, it might be argued, feminist philosophical arguments against open-endedness actually still presuppose that philosophical thought should be open-ended. But then the problem remains of how this open-endedness is compatible

with feminist politics. At this point, we need to ask exactly what feminists, including feminist philosophers, are committed to politically.

3. Feminism and post-feminism

It is often assumed that feminism is the belief that women are equal to men and should be – but currently are not – treated accordingly. But this definition of feminism is far from adequate. Some feminists argue that what women really need is not equality with men, but to be recognised and valued in their difference(s) from men. Other feminists believe that women need neither equal treatment nor respect for their difference, but liberation from oppression. Still others deny that feminism aims to improve the lot of women at all. They think that what it *is* to be a woman is to have been made into an oppressed being, into someone who is inferior and secondary to men. The aim of feminism, then, must be to abolish womanhood. On this view, feminism seeks to improve the lot of those people who have been made into women, but it cannot rightly be said that feminism seeks to improve the condition of women – that would be an impossible, self-contradictory mission.

This brief survey hardly touches the huge variety of feminist views, but we can already see that there is considerable disagreement among feminists over what the goal of feminism is. As Rosalind Delmar says, ‘it makes more sense to speak of a plurality of feminisms than a single one’ (1986: 9). Yet one might think that there must be some underlying commitment which all feminist positions share, and which makes them all *feminist*. Valerie Bryson suggests that all feminists share ‘the belief that women are disadvantaged in comparison with men, and that this disadvantage is not a natural and inevitable result of biological difference but something that can and should be challenged and changed’ (Bryson 1993: 192). But some feminists would

reject even this, perhaps on the grounds that women's biology *does* disadvantage them but that recent technologies such as the contraceptive pill allow women to overcome their biological limitations (Firestone 1970).

Alison Jaggar offers a more inclusive definition of feminism. For her 'feminism' 'refer[s] to all those who seek, no matter on what grounds, to end women's subordination' (Jaggar 1983a: 5). What is '**subordination**'? According to the Concise Oxford dictionary, a person or group is subordinated if they are made to be of inferior importance or rank, or are made secondary, or are placed in a subservient relation, to another person or group. So to say that women are 'subordinated' is to say that women are seen as secondary to, less important than, or subservient to men. This does not have to imply that men do the subordinating. But the claim that women are subordinated does imply that women are *made*, not born, subordinate and that this situation can and should be changed.

Different feminists interpret women's subordinated condition in different ways. Some understand this condition as one where women are not treated equally. Others think that women are subordinated in that their distinctive traits are not valued. For others, women are subordinated just by being made into women in the first place. But all feminists agree that women are, in some sense, subordinated and that this should be changed.

The idea that women are subordinated may be vague and admit of many different interpretations, but it is not so vague that absolutely everyone accepts it. Many people – perhaps some readers of this book – are not convinced that women, or at least women in western industrial societies, can rightly be described as subordinated. Most people accept that western women were subordinated in the past – when they could not vote or own property, and when it was not a crime for a husband

to rape or batter his wife. (Although we should recall that marital rape was recognised as a crime only very recently – in 1991 in the UK, and in 1993 in the U.S.). Still, many people not unreasonably believe that women's position has now improved significantly. Those who believe this are sometimes called **post-feminists**: they accept that women should not be subordinated, but they think this goal has basically been achieved, so that no special feminist campaign against subordination is needed any more.

Firstly, here, it is helpful to remember some ways in which women's situation still leaves much to be desired. In the UK in 2005, full-time women workers still only earned 82% of what full-time male workers earned, and only 20% of MPs and 14% of professors were women. In these (and other) respects, women have still not achieved equality with men. It could be replied, though, that the *basic* battles for women's equality have been won. After all, equal rights and anti-discrimination laws have been passed in the UK and many other countries. One might think that over time the effects of this legislation will inevitably trickle through society and change people's attitudes and expectations. We just have to let this process work itself out.

Yet even if women did gain equality with men in pay, politics, and professional standing, this would leave untouched many other things that are wrong with women's position in western (as well as non-western) societies. Consider that women are vulnerable to rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence which, in the vast majority of cases, are inflicted by men.³ Consider too that much of contemporary culture depicts women as sex objects. Most of us find ourselves endlessly surrounded by images of alluring, more-or-less naked, women – from paintings of female nudes in galleries to pop videos to tabloid newspapers. And consider, too, that in most

households women still do the bulk of housework and childcare (between 66% and 80% of it on recent estimates; Saul 2003: 8).

One might think that I am painting an overly pessimistic picture and casting women as helpless victims. Certainly, on almost all fronts women's position has improved over the last 40 years, and women themselves have fought for many of these improvements (for instance, campaigning for marital rape to be recognised as a crime). Moreover, not all the aspects of women's situation considered above are *wholly* negative. For instance, having the main responsibility for childcare is not merely a burden. It usually results in deeply rewarding and valuable relationships with one's children.

Being a woman, then, has positive as well as negative aspects. So, after all, is nothing ultimately wrong with women's social position because its positive features balance out its negative ones? Generally, feminists view the negative features as more fundamental and as connected together to constitute the basic context in which women (and men) live. On this view, the positive aspects of being a woman arise from (i) women's (and sometimes men's) resistance to this negative context and from (ii) women's efforts to lead worthwhile lives despite the constraints imposed by this context.

These claims might still sound implausibly pessimistic. But feminists have arguments for *why* the negative features of women's situation should be considered basic. They argue that these features are basic because almost all societies are organised or structured in ways that continually produce and reproduce these negative features. The negative features are therefore *systematic*: societies' basic institutions, legal arrangements, and cultures continually produce them. And therefore these societies can be said to *subordinate* women: they subject women to harms and

disadvantages (e.g. sexual objectification) to which these societies do not subject men, at least not to the same extent. As such women are effectively treated as less important than, or as secondary to, men.

In saying this, though, we must bear in mind that the same societies do inflict many harms on men. Historically, in most European societies men have been more at risk than women of being injured or killed during wars or in industrial accidents. But generally men suffer these harms because they are encouraged into social roles (e.g. as army combatants) that privilege them over women or, at least, over specific groups of women (e.g. manual workers *versus* their wives at home). So the fact that societies cause men, *as men*, to suffer many harms is consistent with those same societies systematically subordinating women to men.⁴

Taking it, then, that (almost all) societies systematically subordinate women, how exactly do societies do this? Different feminist positions answer this question differently. Each gives a different account of the basic character of society, the kind of systematic wrongs it inflicts on women, and the kind of social changes that are required to end these wrongs. So we now need to get an initial understanding of some of the main feminist political views. This will also reveal how feminist political views begin to introduce the concepts such as sex, gender, and sexuality which are unique to feminist philosophy.

4. Feminist political positions

Liberal feminism arose in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries when feminist thinkers such as Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft, accepting the Enlightenment belief in innate human reason, argued that women are equally as capable of reason as men. They argued that women therefore deserve an equal education and, for

Wollstonecraft (1792), equal rights to own property, be economically independent, and have careers. Wollstonecraft admitted that many women in her day were irrational, frivolous and helpless. But she argued that this was due to their upbringing and circumstances, not their nature. Here Wollstonecraft's argument anticipates the sex/gender distinction, since she is saying that women's helplessness is not caused by their female biology but is something into which they have been socialised – that is, it is a matter of gender not sex.

Campaigns for women's equal rights gathered pace throughout the 19th century in most industrialising countries and culminated in the struggle for the vote. Women gained equal voting rights in, for example, New Zealand in 1894, in the US in 1920, in the UK in 1928 and in France in 1944. After the suffrage campaigns liberal feminist struggles abated somewhat, but they were rekindled in the 1960s. This rebirth of liberal feminism was driven by the recognition that, alongside formally equal rights, there persisted (1) inequalities in pay and (2) informal barriers and prejudices which were blocking women's access to the public sphere and forcing women to pass unfulfilled lives confined to the home. Partly in response to liberal feminism, equal pay and anti-discrimination laws were passed in countries such as the U.S. and UK in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet real inequalities persist, partly because of the widespread assumption that women must take the main responsibility for childcare. This responsibility restricts many women to part-time work, which tends to be poorly paid. Many liberal feminists have inferred that far-reaching changes – such as a restructuring of work patterns, and large-scale provision of funded childcare – are necessary conditions of genuine equality.

The basic liberal feminist idea, then, is that women are naturally equal to men in reason, and therefore deserve equal access to education and to the public sphere – but

that entrenched barriers, formal or informal, block this access. Here liberal feminists seem to assume that a fulfilling life requires both the exercise of one's reason and participation in the public sphere. But other kinds of feminist (e.g. Pateman 1988) have objected that reason and the public sphere have a history of being interpreted and organised in ways that exclude and devalue whatever is seen as female. (We saw this earlier in the case of conceptions of reason.) Thus, liberal feminism seems to take for granted the superior value of just those features of human and social life that have been identified as male.

Radical feminism arose in the late 1960s and 1970s, most prominently in North America. Its central claim is that the domination of women is the most fundamental and widespread of all forms of domination. Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists stress that women, as a group, are dominated by *men* as a group. Individual men may live up more or less well to the role of dominator that they are expected, as men, to perform.

A classic radical feminist statement is the Redstockings Manifesto:

Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. ... We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. ... All other forms of exploitation and oppression ... are extensions of male supremacy. ... Men have controlled all political, economic and cultural institutions. ... *All men* receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male supremacy.

All men have oppressed women. (Redstockings in Morgan 1970: 533-34)

Many radical feminists call male domination **patriarchy** – to mean rule by males (not rule by fathers as the term might suggest). Because radical feminists think that men dominate women as a group, they argue that women have a shared interest in

opposing patriarchy and that women need an independent, women-led and perhaps women-only, feminist movement.

According to radical feminism, patriarchy pervades all aspects of life. In particular, patriarchy pervades sexuality – women’s sexuality has been controlled and channelled in directions that serve men. So for radical feminists, sexuality is not merely natural and innate but is something that is shaped by power relations and is currently defined in male-centred ways. Radical feminists hold, too, that men have seized control of culture, religion, belief systems, and even language. Consider how the word ‘man’ refers to both males and humanity as a whole, and how in monotheistic religious cultures gods and religious leaders are almost all male.

Why have men dominated? Some radical feminists believe that male biology compels men to dominate. But, more often, radical feminists see male dominance as the effect of a patriarchal social system – a set of linked institutions, beliefs and expectations – which educates men to behave in dominating ways while it trains women to be subservient. This system persists because it schools all of us to act in ways that keep it going. Again, then, these radical feminists distinguish between sex and gender and they see patriarchy as a result not of biology but of social expectations about how men and women should act.

Radical feminists have disagreements about femininity. Some think that femininity should be rejected because it has tended to be defined in ways that serve men. (For instance, many people think that it is ‘feminine’ to be polite, helpful, and somewhat deferential towards others.) But other radical feminists (e.g. Griffin 1984) think that female biology gives women nurturing, co-operative qualities which are a valuable contrast to the patriarchal focus on power over others. On this latter view, these feminine qualities should become the basis of a new female culture. Some

radical feminists (e.g. Daly 1978) therefore advocate **separatism**: creating women-only spaces and institutions in which female/feminine culture can germinate.

Radical feminists have been criticised for their view that all men as men are in a position of dominance. Arguably, race and class inequalities give some women more power than some men – for instance, women managers have power over their male employees. The problem with radical feminism here is that it is *essentialist*. That is, radical feminists claim that all women have something in common – they all suffer domination by men as a group. But this claim seems to be implausibly simplified, as some women actually have power over some men.

Socialist feminism arose in the late 1960s and 1970s. It tries to combine insights from radical feminism and from **Marxism**. According to Marx, the most basic human activity is the activity of producing things to satisfy our needs. The social relationships within which people carry out this activity make up the ‘economic structure’ or ‘economic base’ of a society, from which other institutions – such as law and the state – arise. Throughout most of history, these ‘social relations of production’ have been class relations in which some people control and exploit the productive activity of others. In capitalist societies, those who own the ‘means of production’ – machinery, buildings, materials, and assets – exploit the work of those who are forced to sell their labour to make a living. Based on this Marxist framework, some 1960s and 1970s feminists argued that capitalism requires male supremacy in the home, because capitalism requires women to perform the ‘reproductive’ labour of generating, maintaining, and tending the workforce. Women are thus exploited by having to perform unpaid ‘domestic labour’ in the home.

Socialist feminists (such as Barrett 1988) criticised this argument, arguing that the reason why *women* in particular are expected to do this ‘domestic labour’ is not

simply because of capitalism. Rather it is because of (1) pre-capitalist ideas about women's proper role and (2) men's struggles to keep women in the home, especially working-class men's struggle in the early 19th century for a 'family wage'. Men's aim in this – largely successful struggle – was to be recognised as breadwinners and paid accordingly. Men wanted this outcome, according to socialist feminists, not only for financial reasons but also because it benefited them to have power over their financially dependent wives.

Some socialist feminists (e.g. Hartmann 1979) concluded from historical analyses of this kind that patriarchy and capitalism are two distinct social systems that have become intertwined. Others (e.g. Young 1981) argued that capitalism is a unified system which has patriarchal aspects built into it. According to Young, capitalism has developed so that it segregates men and women into different jobs and activities – doctors *versus* nurses and midwives, plumbers *versus* secretaries – where men's activities are almost always rated as more highly skilled and are better paid. Young calls this system 'gender-divided capitalism' (1981: 61, 63).

A problem with socialist feminism is that, following Marx, it focuses on productive activities. Hence socialist feminists treat child-bearing and child-rearing as specific forms of productive activity. But since production has traditionally been seen as a quintessentially 'male' activity, socialist feminists seem to be approaching birth and childcare through a male-biased framework. Perhaps feminists need instead to rediscover how women themselves experience birth and to develop new categories that reflect women's experience – something that existing, male-biased, frameworks of thought arguably cannot do.

Socialist feminists try to conceive male domination and class exploitation as equally basic dimensions of society. But they have tended to give less centrality to

racial inequality. For this, socialist feminists – along with radical and liberal feminists – have been criticised by **black feminists**. Black feminism has developed most fully from the 1970s onwards, although it dates back at least to 19th century anti-slavery campaigns. Describing black feminism is complicated by the fact that the meaning of ‘black’ is ‘radically unstable’, as Katiadu Kanneh puts it (1998: 86). ‘Black’ has different meanings in different social contexts, and these meanings have changed over time and are argued over. In the US, ‘black’ usually refers to African-Americans while Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans are defined as ‘people of colour’. However, sometimes ‘people of colour’ is used to include African-Americans too. In the UK, ‘black’ has sometimes served as a common label for people from various ethnic groups all of whom have been taken to deviate from the white norm (Mirza 1997: 3). Claiming the common title ‘black’ allowed people from these groups to stress their shared experience of being treated as deviant and to form political alliances to oppose it.

Setting these definitional questions aside, much 1970s and 1980s writing by black women and women of colour criticised radical, liberal, and socialist feminism. Radical feminists, especially, were criticised for their essentialist claim that all women are in the same social position (the position of being dominated by men). This claim overlooks differences of power between women, especially the greater power and confidence of white women.

More generally, black feminists argue that modern societies are not simply patriarchal or patriarchal-capitalist, but rest on *several* ‘major systems of oppression’, including racial oppression (Combahee River Collective 1979: 362). These systems reinforce and shape one another to form a ‘matrix of domination’ (Hill Collins 1990: 225). While black women are oppressed under several systems simultaneously, white

women are oppressed in terms of gender but benefit from the racial system. Black feminists stress that feminists must recognise the equal importance of all these systems, and must understand how they interrelate.

When black feminists speak of a system of racial domination, they see this system as social. The vast majority of scientists and scholars now agree that there is no biological basis for racial classifications. Traditionally, the belief in race was the belief that there are a few distinct human types (black, white, Asian, Native American) each with a unique set of inherited physical traits – a certain skin colour, hair texture, facial structure, etc. In fact, there is a whole continuum of human skin colours, hair textures, etc., and decisions about where one ‘type’ begins and another ends are arbitrary. (For further problems with the belief in race, see Taylor 2004: 49-52.)

Racial categories may have no biological basis, but they have been and remain very important in shaping society. Individuals are treated very differently depending on what racial category they are assigned to (on the basis of visible features such as skin colour). Because people are treated differently – and unequally – depending on their supposed race, racial classifications shape people’s lives and experiences and so people do identify with, and understand themselves by means of, racial categories. Because racial categories shape our experience, the experience of being a woman is always related to and affected by the lived experience of being of a particular ‘race’. This is just as true for white as it is for black women – but white women (and men) are less likely to notice how their ‘race’ impacts on their experience. This is partly because their classification as white tends to benefit rather than disadvantage these women, and partly because they are likely to live in cultures that treat being white as

the norm. Black feminists have stressed, though, that feminists must pay attention to the ‘racialised’ aspects of *all* women’s lived experience.

We have now reviewed some of the main positions in feminist politics. These positions have begun to open up some of the problems that are unique to feminist philosophy – problems about the nature of sex, gender, sexuality, birth, and essentialism. However, we should note that many individual feminist thinkers combine elements of several different positions – few thinkers endorse any single feminist position in its pure form. Moreover, our review of feminist political views has been far from exhaustive. For one thing, the views we have looked at have been developed very largely within western countries, so there is debate about how far their claims apply to non-western societies. (On this debate, see Chapter 7.)

Each position gives an account of what the basic social institutions and arrangements are like such that women’s condition is one of subordination. According to liberal feminists, most societies build in either legal inequalities or informal prejudices and barriers which tend to confine women to the home or to poorly paid work, and which generally prevent women from enjoying lives as fulfilling as those of men. For radical feminists, almost all societies are patriarchal. Their cultures, belief systems, institutions, and norms push men to pursue dominance and push women towards submission. For socialist feminists, the economic structure of modern societies is capitalist. But capitalism has interacted with earlier patriarchal ideas to become ‘gender-biased’: its institutions push women and men into different kinds of work and reward men’s work more highly. For black feminists, the basic arrangements of modern societies realise a web of systems of oppression within which all women are ‘penalized by their gender but [some] are privileged by their race’ (Hill Collins 1990: 225).

All this confirms that feminists share a commitment to the general view that women are subordinated and that this can and should be changed. But feminists never hold this view in its general form. Each feminist holds a specific *interpretation* of what women's subordination consists in, and so of what kind of change is needed. For liberal feminists, women are subordinated in that they are treated unequally; equal treatment is needed. For some feminists influenced by Marx, women are subordinated in that their domestic work is exploited; a fair distribution of productive activity is required. For radical feminists, women are subordinated in that men dominate them; women need to achieve autonomy. That is, women need to be able to create and live by their own values and goals. For socialist feminists, women are subordinated in that they are streamed into undervalued kinds of work and activity. The solution is what Nancy Fraser calls a 'deep restructuring [both] of the relations of production' and of cultural assumptions about women's inferiority (Fraser 1997: 27). Black feminists agree, but argue that a deep restructuring of racial assumptions is needed too.

Feminist claims about women's subordination, then, are always interpretive: they figure in overall theories of the nature of society. As such, feminists can rarely avoid – and, if they are philosophers, certainly cannot avoid – being aware of these different and conflicting interpretations. As a feminist philosopher, one cannot inflexibly hold a particular form of feminism. One must honestly consider the merits of the form of feminism to which one inclines, and must listen as open-mindedly as possible to the arguments others make on behalf of other feminisms.

So holding the feminist conviction that women are subordinated is compatible with engaging in open-ended – philosophical – argument about what this subordination consists in and about what kind of social change is possible and desirable. Sceptics might still say that feminist philosophers cannot open-endedly

debate whether women are subordinated *at all*. It is true that one cannot deny that women are subordinated if one is to be a feminist philosopher. But this does not prevent feminist philosophers from arguing open-endedly about the merits of different interpretations of what women's subordination is.

Moreover, feminist philosophers not only argue about the merits of pre-existing forms of feminism. In articulating these forms of feminism and in drawing out the concepts that they invoke such as gender and sexuality, feminist philosophers define these concepts in varying ways. Other feminist philosophers then identify problems with these definitions and propose alternative definitions. For example, suppose we unpack the radical feminist claim that men dominate women sexually by saying that men use heterosexual intercourse to dominate women. If men do indeed do this, then, in the resulting social climate, the prevailing view of sexual activity will probably be that it consists in acts of male-dominated heterosexual intercourse. And if so, then perhaps feminists need to give an alternative definition of sexuality – for instance, by defining loving, intimate feelings and relationships as 'sexual'. This new definition may be too broad. But as feminist philosophers argue about how best to define sexuality, their different conclusions will lead them to different views of how exactly sexuality is connected to power relations. In this way, articulations of and arguments about concepts such as sexuality or gender give rise to *philosophical* forms of feminism which differ from any pre-existing feminist political views. These philosophical forms of feminism, structured by particular interpretations of the concepts unique to feminist philosophy, are the focus of this book.

5. Male bias and its criticism

Feminist thinking about sex, gender and other new concepts has emerged not only out of articulations of feminist political views but also out of feminist criticisms of male bias in philosophy. These criticisms did not result from the mechanical application to philosophy of any pre-existing forms of feminist political analysis. Rather, some women philosophers who became involved in feminist politics became sensitised to occurrences of male bias, which they then began to notice in philosophy.

Political philosophy was the first area of philosophy in which feminist philosophers noticed male bias. This bias was manifest in that contemporary political philosophers focused on the state, the law and distributive justice (i.e. how economic resources should be distributed). These political philosophers were almost wholly silent about the family and sexual relationships, which they did not see as part of the subject matter of political philosophy at all. It seemed that contemporary political philosophers were uncritically accepting the division that exists in modern societies between the ‘public’ sphere – politics, economic life, and work – and the ‘private’ sphere – the family. And these philosophers seemed to take for granted that the public sphere is more important or more truly human. In contrast, political philosophers from the past, such as Locke, Rousseau and Hegel, had dealt with the family. But, as feminists soon found, their views on the family usually involved the claim that wives should be confined to the domestic realm and should be governed by their husbands. John Locke, for example, claimed that there is a ‘foundation in nature’ for wives being ‘subject’ to their husbands (Locke 1698: 174).

These initial feminist engagements with political philosophy raised issues that pointed beyond political philosophy as such.

- (1) Had the focus of philosophers on the public sphere skewed the whole way in which core values of moral and political philosophy had been conceived?

(2) Might the sexist views on women and the family which traditional philosophers held bear on their philosophies more broadly? Could these sexist views reflect more general male biases which are also manifested, in less explicit ways, in other areas of philosophers' thought?

(3) What, anyway, is the relationship between bias and knowledge? Does bias necessarily obstruct knowledge, or can it sometimes be enabling?

Questions (1), (2), and (3) respectively set the agendas for feminist ethics, feminist history of philosophy, and feminist epistemology, all of which flourished in the 1980s.

(1) Feminist ethics emerged out of a recognition that women tend to have different experiences from men because, historically, women's lives have centred on the 'private' realm of the family. Feminists usually deny that biology is what makes (most) women family-focused and makes (most) men work-focused. Rather, women and men have these different orientations because social expectations have channelled them into the private and public spheres respectively. But, feminist ethicists argued, women's family-focused experiences have been neglected in (pre-feminist) moral theory, and new moral theories are needed which 'take adequate account of the experience of women' (Held 1993: 89).

Probably the single most important text for feminist ethics is Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982), mentioned earlier. Gilligan argues that moral philosophy has focused on justice, rights, impartiality, and moral rules, but that this focus really reflects only men's experience. Because women have a special responsibility to care for their family members (Gilligan 1982: 7), women have different values and a different 'moral voice' from men. Women approach moral problems (e.g. whether to steal an unaffordable drug if one's spouse is ill) from the perspective of an **ethic of**

care. Women ask how the unique needs of the particular individuals who are involved in a problem-situation can be met. Women also ask how the networks of relationships in which each of these individuals is involved can best be maintained. The care perspective is thus (i) focused on particular situations and is (ii) concerned with meeting the needs and (iii) maintaining the relationships of (iv) the particular individuals involved. Moreover, the care perspective (v) takes emotions to be very important in moral thinking. The judgement that a certain person is in need can never be dispassionate. It is always embodied in a certain kind of emotional response towards that person – a feeling of care.

Gilligan aims to correct the bias of traditional ethics towards male experience by producing a theory that reflects female experience. But other feminist philosophers have found a number of problems in her theory, including these:

(i) The ‘ethic of care’ reinforces the traditional view that women should care for their children, husbands and relatives even at the expense of their own needs.

Diemut Bubeck (1995) argues that women who are the main carers in families suffer injustice because these women give others more care than they receive themselves. Their caring responsibilities in turn disadvantage these women in respect of work by obliging them to work part-time for less pay. Yet if these women adopt the ethic of care (as their caring role inclines them to), then this ethic directs them to attend *only* to considerations of care – how to meet others’ needs and protect others from harm. The care perspective thus leads these women to neglect considerations of justice, including the injustice they are suffering. This suggests that the ethic of care should not replace but must be combined with an ethic of justice which calls for a fairer distribution of caring work.

(ii) Not all women's lives are focused on the private realm – many women have always had to work outside the home for a living. Although Gilligan aims to correct the male bias of traditional ethics, her own theory seems biased too – biased towards the experience of white middle-class women, whose economic circumstances have not obliged them to work outside the home. This is the problem of essentialism again – the problem of whether women really do have a shared focus on family-focused caring as Gilligan suggests they do.

(iii) Rosemarie Tong (2003) asks whether approaches like Gilligan's are feminist. Certainly such approaches are *feminine* – they express women's experience. But if these approaches reinforce rather than challenge women's subservient role in the family, then how can they be called *feminist*? My answer is this. We have defined 'feminist' as one who thinks that women are subordinated and that this can and should be changed. Gilligan fits in with this: she believes that women's distinctive perspective and virtues are persistently misrecognised and undervalued, and that women are constantly judged by male standards and found wanting. This is her interpretation of *how* women are subordinated. Gilligan wants women's voice to be heard and respected, and her work aims to help bring about this change.

Turning to (2) feminist history of philosophy, this has

(i) criticised how women philosophers have been left out of the canon – so much so that people sometimes think there have never been any women philosophers. Some women philosophers have been almost entirely forgotten, like the metaphysicians Margaret Cavendish (1624-1674) and Anne Conway (1631-1679). Others have been wrongly classified not as philosophers but as 'mere' writers, like Simone de Beauvoir, or 'merely' political thinkers, like Hannah Arendt.

(ii) As well as rediscovering the ideas of these neglected women, feminist historians of philosophy have also rediscovered the sexist statements made by many canonical philosophers. Kant remarked that ‘the scholarly woman ... uses her *books* in the same way as her *watch* ... so that people will see that she has one, though it is usually not running’ (Kant 1798: 171). Still, it might be thought that such statements are marginal to philosophers’ main theories and can be ignored. But feminist historians of philosophy have denied that these sexist statements are merely marginal. They believe that these statements manifest deeper-lying **masculinist** biases which run through the philosophical theories in question. In order to identify these masculinist biases that they sensed to be present, feminist philosophers have come up with some innovative methods of interpreting historical texts.

(a) A first method argues that conceptual frameworks are masculinist if they reflect, express, or articulate patterns of thought and evaluation which men typically hold. But what thought-patterns *are* typical of men? The influential psychoanalytic feminist Nancy Chodorow (1978) answers that, almost everywhere, women do childcare at home while men go out to work, which causes mothers to treat their male and female children differently. According to Chodorow, mothers encourage boys to become properly masculine by breaking away from their mothers and from the early infantile world of dependency and of strong bodily sensations and emotions. Boys’ and men’s personalities and ways of thinking become structured around oppositions between mind and body, reason and emotion, self and relationships with others.

Based on these claims by Chodorow, Jane Flax (1984) argues that many major philosophical theories are structured in the same way as masculine personalities. These theories, too, are organised around hierarchical oppositions between mind and body, reason and emotion, self and relationship. Flax concludes that the philosophical

tradition has arisen as an expression of men's experience, which is why this tradition involves a series of hierarchical oppositions. Others have made similar points without relying on Chodorow. Nancy Hartsock argues that men tend not to be responsible for the concrete work of caring for other people's subsistence needs. As a result men come to see 'masculinity [as] an abstract ideal to be achieved over the opposition of daily life' (Hartsock 1983: 241). Again, the claim is that men's experience becomes structured around oppositions, and that this finds expression in philosophy.

(b) A second method of identifying masculinist bias argues that philosophical concepts and theories are masculinist if they are understood in terms of symbolism (or metaphor) which favours the male over the female. We saw earlier how Genevieve Lloyd – who adopts this second approach – argues that throughout western philosophy reason has been symbolised as male. Reason has been thought to require the overcoming of the passions and embodiment, which are symbolised as female. Lloyd denies that these patterns of symbolism could be removed from our ideas of reason (Lloyd 1993: 82). The metaphors go deep: they shape how philosophers describe and understand reason in the first place. We could not have the concepts of reason we do without the attached imagery.

(iii) Recently, feminist historians of philosophy have moved beyond simply criticising the tradition. They have started to look for elements in traditional texts which avoid or challenge masculinism (and on which feminists can build). For instance, earlier feminist philosophers (e.g. Bordo 1986) often saw Descartes as masculinist because he opposes mind and body, arguing that they are separate substances. But recently there has been more recognition that Descartes also studied how the mind and body interact and that he believed that many mental states, including perception and emotion, involve an indissoluble mixture of mind and body.

The works of individual philosophers, and the history of philosophy as a whole, are more complex and contain more ambiguities than earlier pictures of an unbroken history of sexism had suggested (Lloyd 2000).

Feminist criticisms of male bias or masculinism suggested that less biased theories are needed. Yet it also seemed that one must hold feminist views before one could begin to detect these long unnoticed biases. It seemed, then, that some biases – feminist biases – advance rather than retard knowledge. (3) Some feminist epistemologists tackled this ‘paradox of bias’ by developing the concept of ‘standpoints’. Hartsock (1983), for example, argues that because men and women occupy different social locations they tend to develop different ways of seeing the world. Women tend to do concrete, physical work meeting subsistence needs and so they tend to see material, life-preserving, work as the most basic social activity. Men tend not to be responsible for this work and so they tend to develop the – distorted – view that ‘transcending’ the body is what is really human. Usually, though, women are unable to articulate their standpoint fully because, as men have more power, their standpoint prevails and women internalise it. Women only really achieve their own standpoint if they struggle against the male-dominated character of society. The *feminine* standpoint can only be realised in the form of a *feminist* standpoint. So political interests – interests in removing male domination – enable women (and men, if they join feminist campaigns and learn from women) to increase their knowledge by attaining an undistorted standpoint. In general, the standpoint feminist idea is that those whom a society oppresses have more potential to see the real – oppressive – nature of that society than those whom it favours.

A problem with these **feminist standpoint epistemologies** is that they suggest that those people who are most oppressed, or who bear the greatest burden of

subsistence work, must – potentially at least – have the least distorted standpoint. But, it could be argued, the vast majority of us act oppressively in some ways while being oppressed in others. Once again here, we encounter the question of ‘essentialism’: of whether all women really do share a common position of oppression and a common standpoint.

Postmodern feminist epistemologists, such as Donna Haraway, hold that there are indeed many overlapping forms of oppression and so, too, there are many ‘partial perspectives’. Each is insightful with respect to some dimensions of reality but distorted with respect to others. Haraway’s metaphor for this is that each of us has eyes crafted from the blood of others (Haraway 1991: 192). The ability to see some features of the world always depends on being privileged over certain others in ways of which one is unaware.

Other feminist epistemologists have returned to the initial puzzle about how some biases can be enabling and others unhelpful. **Feminist empiricists** argue – with particular reference to science – that biases are bad if they lead would-be knowers to neglect relevant evidence, to draw invalid inferences from the evidence they have, or to explain or describe their findings in question-begging ways while ignoring alternative explanations and descriptions. Many scientific studies of reproductive biology commit several of these errors: they describe sperm as active and ova as passively waiting to receive them, despite evidence that ova actively select and clasp particular sperm (Biology and Gender Study Group 1988: 177. This raises a question about whether our standard views of male and female biology are themselves male-biased. Perhaps feminist philosophers need to rethink the nature of biological sex and cannot simply rely on standard scientific views.)

Biases, then, can – but do not always – lead to errors; when they do, biases are a problem. In other cases biases may be revealing. Thus, engaging in inquiry, including scientific inquiry, *as* a feminist is not as such a problem. Helen Longino (1990) proposes that science should be organised democratically so that no one set of biases becomes dominant and unquestioned. For Longino, researchers with different biases must all have voices within science so that they can critically examine one another's biases and root out the ones that cause errors.⁵

This brief survey has not covered the whole range of approaches that feminist philosophers have developed in political philosophy, ethics, history of philosophy or epistemology. Nor has it covered the approaches feminist philosophers have developed in other major areas of the discipline: philosophy of mind, language, religion, aesthetics, etc. (For good reviews of feminist work in these areas, see the 'Feminism' entries in the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.)

One thing we have seen is that feminist criticisms and reconstructions of male-biased philosophy regularly circle back to the concepts that are distinctive of feminist philosophy. For example, the ethic of care and standpoint epistemology both have problems with essentialism, while the work of feminist epistemologists raises questions about how reliable our scientific knowledge about biological sex is.

It also emerges from our brief review that much feminist philosophical work is interdisciplinary. This work is often informed by social-scientific studies of women's (and men's) position in society, as well as by literary and cultural studies of the definitions that exist in various cultures of what it means to be a woman (or a man). Many of the questions that feminist philosophers explore have been prompted by research carried out within other disciplines. For example, Gilligan's work is in part empirical psychology involving interviews with individual men and women. The

interdisciplinarity of feminist philosophy does not damage its status as philosophy. On the contrary, often it is *because* feminist philosophers cross disciplinary boundaries that they can challenge existing horizons of thought and so can think in a truly philosophical way. Moreover, much of the social scientific and humanities research from which feminist philosophers learn is itself philosophical to varying degrees: often it challenges familiar horizons of thought and is informed by and engages with philosophy. So when I have argued that feminist philosophy is philosophical, I have not meant to imply that it cannot or should not be interdisciplinary. Rather, it may be that genuinely philosophical thought *requires* interdisciplinarity.⁶

6. Review and conclusion

Near the start of this Introduction we saw that some people think that feminist philosophy cannot be philosophical because it presumes a political commitment to feminism. Yet it proved hard to identify a single political commitment which all feminists, as feminists, share: there are many different versions of feminism. Even the very general conviction that women are subordinated is one that feminists only ever hold under particular interpretations. So although feminist philosophers do (as feminists) have political commitments, there is no single commitment that all feminist philosophers must share, and thus the particular commitments that they have are always open to (philosophical) debate. Moreover, philosophical considerations often lead feminist philosophers to rethink these political commitments and to introduce new forms of feminism.

These philosophical considerations are of two kinds. Firstly, philosophical thinking and rethinking of new concepts such as sex, gender, and sexual difference can lead feminist philosophers to produce new forms of feminism. For instance, the

French philosopher Luce Irigaray looks at the history of philosophy and concludes, like Lloyd, that it contains entrenched patterns of imagery and symbolism concerning maleness and femaleness. Irigaray also argues that this imagery shapes how we experience our bodies, in a deep way that the sex/gender distinction fails to capture. Irigaray infers that liberal feminist attempts to open social institutions up to women are superficial. These attempts leave in place the patterns of imagery that affect us so deeply. So she proposes that feminists should aim, instead, to change our patterns of cultural symbolism. In this way Irigaray produces a new version of feminism – known as ‘sexual difference feminism’ – based on her philosophical thought about sex, gender, and sexual difference.

Secondly, feminist criticisms of male bias often imply that feminist political views need to be rethought. For instance, recall that radical feminists think that male domination prevents women from living autonomously, that is, from living by values that women have chosen or created for themselves. But now suppose that traditional notions of autonomy have proved to be masculinist because they imagine the self to be separate from others. Suppose also that a non-masculinist view of autonomy must see it as consistent with dependence on others. In that case the radical feminist picture of autonomy needs to be rethought.⁷ This will lead to a revised understanding of the nature of women’s subordination – of what it means for women’s autonomy to be blocked – and of how this subordination should be ended.

So feminist philosophers do not unquestioningly assume the truth of (some versions of) feminism when they examine the philosophical tradition. Rather, feminist philosophers constantly re-examine their feminist politics and their approaches to the tradition in relation to one another. As such, the fact that feminist philosophers have political commitments is consistent with them engaging in genuinely philosophical

thought. Feminist philosophers also constantly re-examine their politics in relation to their thinking about new concepts such as sex and gender. These concepts have arisen out of the various forms of feminist politics, but this does not prevent feminist philosophers from articulating, redefining and arguing over these concepts in an open-ended way. The relation between politics and philosophy has not prevented feminist philosophers from doing philosophy, but has enabled them to carve out a distinctive area *of* philosophy defined by a unique range of problems.

Each of the next six chapters of this book focuses on one of the concepts that, I have suggested, are original to feminist philosophy: sex, gender, sexuality, sexual difference, essentialism, and birth. Chapter 7 returns to the question of what feminism is. This Introduction has provisionally argued that all feminists believe that women are subordinated and that this can and should be changed. But we will need to ask whether this answer still stands up after we have examined some of the new, philosophical forms of feminism that feminist philosophers have developed. This confirms yet again that feminist philosophy is philosophical: rather than taking feminism for granted, it inquires into what feminism itself is.

Further reading

The 'maleness' of reason Lloyd 1984 (pp. 38-50, on Descartes, has been especially influential). Grimshaw 1986: ch. 2 is a useful critical account.

Feminism, its diversity and its definition Haslanger and Tuana 2006.

Feminist political theories Bryson 1992; Jaggar 1983a.

Feminist ethics Tong 2003 succinctly introduces this huge area.

Feminist history of philosophy Lloyd 2000; Nye 2003 looks in detail at feminism and modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant.

Feminist epistemology Harding 1986: ch. 6 is now quite old but remains hugely influential; Tanesini 1999 is a good book-length introduction to the area.

¹ Feminist philosophers understand what a ‘male bias’ is in varying ways. I will take a **bias** to be a background belief or assumption which some person or group of people holds, often without realising it, and which organises and pervades how that person or group thinks about a whole range of topics. A **male bias** is a background belief of this kind according to which men, or whatever is associated with men or maleness, have more worth or importance than women, or than whatever is associated with women or femaleness.

² Arguably other concepts too are unique to feminist philosophy, for instance care. My list is indicative, not exhaustive.

³ As Jackman (1999) notes, it is hard to measure levels of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault accurately. But consider this revealing example: a 1992 survey found that 22% of U.S. women had suffered forced sex at least once (virtually always inflicted by men), whereas only 4% of men had ever suffered it (and half their assailants were men). See Jackman 1999.

⁴ There is now a good deal of sociological work on masculinity. Following this work, Chapters 2, 3 and 5 will argue that

- (1) societies tend to expect different forms of masculinity from different groups of men (e.g. from working- and middle-class men)
- (2) some forms of masculinity are privileged, giving those men power over other men (e.g. middle- over working-class men)
- (3) each form of masculinity gives the relevant group of men power over a particular group of women (e.g. working-class men over working-class women).

⁵ The distinction between standpoint, postmodern and empiricist feminist epistemologies comes from Harding (1986).

⁶ Here I disagree with Judith Butler when she argues (2004: ch. 11) that worrying about whether feminist philosophy is ‘really philosophy’ merely reinforces an artificial boundary between professional philosophy and the theoretical work that is done in other areas of the humanities.

⁷ One radical feminist who rethinks autonomy as autonomy-in-community is Hoagland 1988: 12, 237-41.