

the essential features of philosophy. In the remainder of this introduction, I will focus on the ~~presuppositions~~ I have met that complicate the intellectual encounter between feminism and philosophy.

In preparing this introduction, I read over notes I wrote after speaking on feminist epistemologies in a seminar on the foundations of knowledge sponsored by philosophy students at the University of Copenhagen in March 1998. The seminar was an unusually unpleasant experience for me. I had on several occasions offered courses related to feminist philosophy in the Philosophy Department, and students who chose these courses were enthusiastic. But this was an occasion where a large group of students, mostly men, were "forced" to read one article by a feminist theorist. (All four of the presenters at the seminar were asked to provide one article in advance as suggested reading.) The comments that followed my talk were markedly hostile. But in retrospect they were also fruitful, since they pointed to a number of prejudices and misunderstandings about feminist philosophy that I seek to debunk. And in revealing mistaken assumptions about feminist philosophy, the comments also revealed some common presuppositions about what "real philosophy" is taken to be. In what follows, I respond to the objections posed to me during the seminar.

Objection: Feminism posits a natural dualism between the sexes and therefore is not relevant to women today.

This objection posits an identification between feminism and the claim for sexual dualism. However, sexual dualism is not plausible, since the social changes of the last thirty years have proved that women can do everything that men can do. But feminism demands that women mark themselves out *as women*, even though sexual equality now exists. And women no longer want to mark themselves *as women*. (As one woman put it, she wanted to be characterized by what was between her ears, not between her legs.) Hence, the objection states that feminism is not relevant to women today.

Reply: To reply to the first part of the objection, one must first ask whether feminism does posit a natural dualism between the sexes. The question of sexual difference is a central issue in contemporary feminist discussions, and there are a range of views on this issue. On one end of the spectrum, the French philosopher Luce Irigaray has argued for the omnipresence of sexual dualism in Western culture. In the opening to

An *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, she writes: "Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age. . . . Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which could be our 'salvation' if we thought it through."⁷ Irigaray is one of the feminist philosophers who seek to affirm the existence of sexual dualism as an avenue for genuine recognition and ethical love between the sexes. On the other end of the spectrum, Judith Butler seeks to problematize sexual difference as itself an effect of norms. She is interested in exploring "how normative criteria form the matter of bodies."⁸ For Butler, the task is to analyze the process of materialization by which sexed bodies come to be and to refute any arguments for a natural sexual dualism. Her views have had enormous popular appeal, because she seems to show the possibility of subverting the normative process by which bodies become heterosexual male or female bodies. Thus, she articulates a space for ambiguously sexed bodies with desires that subvert these norms.

Therefore, although feminist philosophers do problematize sexual difference, there is no agreement about the constitution of sexual difference, the merits of its affirmation, or the possibility of its subversion.

To reply to the second part of the objection, why should women bother with feminism today? Although most feminists distance themselves from an essentialist view of sexual difference, they do point to the contemporary need for feminist theory and politics. Women may have proven that they can do everything that men can do, but does that make gender identity irrelevant? Life experiences show that Simone de Beauvoir was right in claiming that a woman is one who is in the situation of being a woman. The situation of being a woman includes seeing widespread pornography and advertisements that eroticize the female body to sell consumer goods. For many, being a woman also implies difficult choices regarding children and work.⁹

Recognizing that gender identity shapes people's lives does not mean that women's reason is different from men's reason. But it might mean that women are interested in raising different kinds of questions to philosophy than men typically have raised. For example, feminist philosophers draw from a number of different theoretical fields—including phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction—to

contribute sophisticated analyses of bodies and of materiality. Since phenomenologists like Maurice Merleau-Ponty have analyzed the bodily roots of awareness, why should the sexed/gendered aspects of human bodies be excluded from philosophical view?¹⁰ By including analyses of sex and gender in contemporary discussions of the human body, identity, and knowledge, feminists challenge the ways in which certain questions have dominated philosophical debates and other questions have been marginalized or excluded from philosophical view. For example, the Canadian philosopher Lorraine Code, in her article "Taking Subjectivities into Account," criticizes the assumption in mainstream epistemology that propositions in the form S-knows-that-p capture the essence of knowledge. This assumption excludes consideration of the role of subjectivity in epistemology: e.g., how subjectivities produce epistemologies, and how knowing other people (instead of observing objects) can be taken as an exemplary kind of knowing.¹¹

Feminists give critical attention to the process by which certain kinds of philosophical questions become legitimated and other kinds are refused legitimation. They ask, What is the relation between dominant and marginalized discourses? What is the nature of knowledge/power relations? What strategies are available for decentering dominant discourses? Hence, they often draw inspiration from theoretical work that analyzes questions of legitimation, authorization, power, and subversion, including texts by marxist and postmarxist authors, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida.

Hence, feminist theory is relevant both to contemporary women—and to philosophical debates that reach far beyond explicit discussions of gender and sex.

Objection: *Feminist philosophy is of interest only to women, not to men.* This objection builds on the first, that of a dualism between the sexes. Feminism is not only based on sexual dualism, but it addresses only the female pole of this dualism. Hence, it has no relevance to men.

Reply: In 1869, John Stuart Mill wrote in the *Subjection of Women*, "Women cannot be expected to devote themselves to the emancipation of women, until men in considerable number are prepared to join with them in the undertaking."¹² Mill argued for men's obligation to support women's emancipation in order to further the development of human-

ity. Women's emancipation would enhance their role as moral educators of children, provide conditions for a greater union of thoughts and inclinations in married life, and double the mental faculties available for serving humanity.¹³

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir shifted the focus from the benefits accrued to humanity by the emancipation of women to a critical interrogation of the concept of humanity itself. In *The Second Sex* she explicitly linked notions of humanity and rationality to norms of masculinity.

It amounts to this: just as for the ancients there was an absolute vertical with reference to which the oblique was defined, so there is an absolute human type, the masculine. Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. Man superbly ignores the fact that his anatomy also includes glands, such as the testicles, and that they secrete hormones. He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. . . . Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him. . . . He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other.¹⁴

This key passage in Beauvoir's text initiated a thoroughgoing analysis by later feminists of the ways in which the terms "humanity," "masculinity," and "femininity" are defined in relation to each other. For example, the Australian philosopher Elizabeth Grosz argues that the task of feminist philosophy is "to be able to recognize how the world is coded according to masculine or feminine attributes and associations, how knowledges, theories, discourses, functions by excluding, expelling, or neglecting the contributions of femininity and women, producing lacks, gaps, absences about femininity which are necessary for these theories to operate; and how these theories distribute value according to the privileging of one sex over the other." And she goes on to define the phallogocentrism that underlies much of the Western philosophical tradition as occurring "whenever the two sexes are represented by a singular—or 'human' (i.e., masculine)—model."¹⁵ In her book *Yielding Gender*, the

Australian philosopher Penelope Deutscher further analyzes how contradictory representations of women have the effect of sustaining the philosophical identification of maleness with rationality.¹⁶

Therefore, the concepts of humanity and rationality in the Western philosophical tradition have been embroiled in contradictory definitions of and alliances between masculinity and femininity. As such, feminist philosophy is relevant to all those working with the history of philosophy and its inherited presuppositions.

Objection: Feminist philosophy reduces philosophy to politics or sociology, etc., hence, it cannot be a legitimate philosophical project.

This objection argues that feminism is guilty of one or many forms of reductionism: feminism reduces philosophy to politics, to sociology, to anthropology, or to psychology. Since feminism takes as its starting point questions about men or women, it belongs in the realm of empirical studies and not in the realm of philosophy.

Reply: This objection presupposes a sharp distinction between empirical and theoretical sciences. It considers philosophy to be a meta-reflection that may provide the foundation for empirical sciences but that must be sharply distinguished from these other disciplines. It argues that rationality is not reducible to the social context or interests that may affect scientific development. This position acknowledges that one may uncover interests or errors in the scientific enterprise. But the rational dimension of science remains untouched by these specific empirical factors. In other words, this objection presupposes a hard border that separates inquiries into truth and inquiries into power. Although this view of the protected status of rationality is certainly a powerful strain within Western philosophy, it is hardly the only philosophical conception of reason that has been influential. A wide range of prominent philosophers, such as G. W. H. Hegel, Karl Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Merleau-Ponty, focus on aspects of rationality that reveal it to be less than fully independent of context and historical development. They argue that reasoning is itself a temporal process that is embodied in subjective and social struggles. One does not destroy reason or science by pointing to the complex dynamics of what Foucault calls the power/knowledge tension. One destroys only the myth that there is an essential core of reason or science that is fully self-sufficient.

Many, though certainly not all, feminist philosophers are sympathetic to the enlarged conception of rationality inspired by these philosophers in the Continental tradition. Their project is not to destroy rationality, but to revise conceptions of reason in relation to context, embodiment, subjectivity, and social identity. Exploring the philosophical significance of the existence of both men and women (instead of focusing on “human beings”) is not a reduction of philosophy to nonphilosophical concerns. Rather, it is an argument for a conception of philosophy that is self-reflective about its history, conversational partners, and effects. It does not close down but opens up avenues for philosophical inquiry. It poses the following kinds of questions: What is the subject of philosophy? Is this subject humanity? Does humanity have a universal nature? Does universality implicitly carry with it certain exclusions? Does the sexual differentiation of human beings have implications for philosophical inquiry? Feminist philosophers problematize the term “humanity” in relation to all areas of philosophy—e.g., aesthetics, epistemology, ethics, history of philosophy, metaphysics, philosophy of language, and political philosophy.

Thus, feminism does not reduce philosophy to politics. But it does criticize the reduced version of the type of academic philosophy that seeks to legitimize itself by imposing hard borders to separate “real philosophy” from other fields of inquiry. Feminist philosophy, instead, can be viewed as a project that is loyal to the ordinary conception of philosophy as a quest to deepen self-reflection in all human inquiries.

Objection: Feminists’ focus on sexual difference undermines the concept of universality and thus undermines the possibility of philosophy.

This objection argues that because feminists pose questions relating to the existence of men and women, they cannot develop universal concepts about humanity. Such universals, it is argued, are necessary for philosophy in general and moral philosophy in particular. Furthermore, this objection condemns feminists by the following argument: If one difference (like sexual difference) is allowed to be philosophically legitimate, then any difference (like hair color) must also be philosophically significant. But if any difference is philosophically significant, then philosophy is concerned with trivial, accidental features of human existence and no longer focuses on what is essential to humanity. Since philosophy is not concerned with trivial, accidental features of human

existence, then differences (e.g., sexual difference) cannot be philosophically significant. Hence, feminism's attempt to analyze difference ends in trivialization and undermines its own stated goals.

Reply: To reply to the first part of the objection about the status of universals in philosophy: The concept of universality has been debated throughout the history of philosophy, and it remains contentious today. On the one hand, philosophers inspired by Immanuel Kant, for example, argue that universal rational concepts are necessary to have knowledge or morality at all. On the other hand, philosophers inspired by Marx or Nietzsche or their twentieth-century heirs point out that abstract concepts like universality are themselves historically mutable. The shift in the position and function of universality within a philosophical system gives an indication of broader historical changes.¹⁷ These theorists point to contradictions that are immanent in theories about universality. For example, although Kant claimed that all human beings are rational ends-in-themselves, he excluded women, Jews, and servants from possessing full rational agency. Thus, the concept of universality is itself no guarantee that all human beings will be included within its normative reach, and the argument for the practical necessity of universal norms is weakened.

Feminist philosophers can be found on both sides of the debate about universality. For example, Martha Nussbaum, who has become engaged with problems of international development, has developed an analysis of human capabilities that is based on a "universalist account of central human functions, closely allied to a form of political liberalism." Nussbaum argues that only a universalist account of human functions—e.g., of bodily health and integrity—can provide an adequate account of each and every person's capabilities and a basis of constitutional principles that should be implemented by the governments of all nations.¹⁸ Seyla Benhabib, who critically develops Habermas's philosophy, also seeks to defend the tradition of universalism. She argues that one can develop a defense of universalism without the metaphysical props that so many feminists have criticized. She argues for a universalism that is "interactive, not legislative, cognizant of gender difference not gender blind, contextually sensitive and not situation indifferent."¹⁹

Feminists inspired by French poststructuralism, on the other hand, are generally skeptical about claims for universality. They point out

that universality always brings about certain exclusions, e.g., the exclusion of women from the category of humanity, the exclusion of lesbian women from the category of women, and the exclusion of women of color from the category of feminist. Universality may have strategic significance in debates about human rights. But the history of human rights declarations seems to prove either the weak claim, that universals are inadequate in their reach, or the strong claim, that the structure of universality is exclusionary. The United Nations deemed it necessary to draw up subsequent declarations and conventions for the rights of the child and to protect women against discrimination and violence, as a supplement to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted in 1948. Thus, feminists are interested in moral and political projects of emancipation and resistance, but there is no consensus among feminists about the contribution of universality to these projects.

To the second part of the objection dealing with the status of difference: This objection asserts that any specificities that qualify the subject humanity lead down the slippery slope of trivialization: if one analyzes the significance of sex, why not analyze eye color or hairstyle? But feminists do not assert that any difference will do as an object of inquiry; they are interested in differences that count—which include a wide range of differences, such as gender, sexual preference, race, class, ethnicity, nationality, and religion. These differences count not because they lay a natural claim to our attention but because the social world makes them count. If the social world made eye color decisive for an individual's opportunities to thrive (as in the famous case of the elementary school teacher who taught her students a lesson about racism by showing preferences on succeeding days to students with blue or brown eyes), then that would be a significant difference. And despite their disclaimers, philosophers have generally treated sexual difference as a difference that counts.²⁰ Thus, feminists have shown that it is productive, not self-defeating, to analyze philosophically concrete differences of identities.

Objection: *Feminists are explicitly interested in how features of existence (e.g., gender) or knowledge are socially and historically constructed. Thus, either (a) they are indifferent to the fundamental questions of philosophy about the underlying nature of the world and of truth, or (b) they reject the*

view that there is such an underlying nature. If feminists argue for the first position, then they demonstrate their inability to grasp the truly philosophical questions. If feminists argue for the second position, then they have aligned themselves with a poor philosophical position—namely, relativism. Thus, feminists either are not philosophers at all or they are poor philosophers.

Reply: This objection is structured by the metaphor of surface vs. depth. It claims that since feminists are interested in questions of construction, then by implication they overlook questions about what is underneath that which is constructed. This position is viewed as tantamount to denying that there are any facts at all. As one student said to me, surely feminists want some facts that are rock solid, like that the Holocaust really occurred.

Feminists in the 1980s would have responded to this objection as follows: It is true that feminist research focuses on the difference between what is constructed (e.g., gender) and what lies underneath this construction (e.g., the biological, sexed body). But it is mistaken to claim that social construction is mere surface, whereas reality is found underneath this surface. What is decisive for human beings is how they live their bodies in the world, since one can never experience presocial bodies. Extending this position to other areas of intellectual research does not deny historical facts. Rather, social constructionism helps one examine how historical phenomena such as the Holocaust are socially created, rather than viewing such phenomena as natural or inevitable.

Feminists in the 1990s, having drawn inspiration from French post-structuralist debates, would have replied to this objection somewhat differently: The metaphor of surface–depth, which implies that there is a subject that shapes a pre-given object, is simply wrong. Instead, as in the account offered by Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter*, construction of reality is a process by which both subjects and their acts become visible.²¹ Butler argues that “there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body.”²² Hence, interrogations about “reality” must be themselves critically interrogated for the manner in which they produce the phenomenon that they propose to examine. This reformulation of the notion of construction has, according to Butler, the following implications

about sex: “The category of ‘sex’ is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a ‘regulatory ideal.’”²³ Butler’s analysis is not only a theory of sex, but also a theory about the nature of materiality. As such, it is a significant contribution to an understanding of the relation between norms, actions, and historical reality and not a dismissal of these concerns.

Feminist philosophers also have addressed explicitly metaphysical and ontological concerns, as Christine Battersby does in her book *The Phenomenal Woman*. “Philosophers have notably failed to address the ontological significance of the fact that selves are born. . . . This book . . . explores an ontology in which ‘self’ and ‘other’ intertwine in ways that allow us to think identity alongside radical novelty, power-dependencies, singularity and birth.”²⁴ Battersby’s concerns reflect the interest of many British feminist philosophers in using feminist perspectives for altering metaphysical and ontological categories. Her approach seeks to enlarge our picture of the fundamental nature of reality, and she explicitly distances herself from debates about constructionism that have been so important for feminists in the United States.

Thus, part (a) of the objection is a false description of all feminist philosophers, and part (b) is a false description of many feminists. There still remains the objection against relativism, i.e., that feminists are relativists and that relativism is not a viable philosophical position. I will defer the response to this objection to the chapter on epistemology. At this point I will just note that Linda Martin Alcoff, in her book *Real Knowing*, seeks to develop an ontology of truth that views truth as historically relative, but not as subjective or ideological.²⁵

Objection: If feminist philosophers are interested in contributing to discussions that have general philosophical significance, they should not define their work as feminist. This label marginalizes their scholarship, creates an adversarial relationship with other members of the philosophical community, and detracts from the substantive philosophical contributions that they may make.

This objection argues that feminist philosophy is not substantively different from other kinds of philosophical investigations. Therefore, feminists should just carry out the work of philosophy. Feminist philosophers use the term “feminist” because of its strategic, not

substantive significance. But this is a poor strategy, since it generates aggression and hostility.

Reply: People who raise this objection often have some familiarity and sympathy for feminist philosophical discussions, such as the debates about an ethic of care. These people may have read feminist texts because of their interest in other philosophical texts about love, rather than because of their interest in feminism.

Let me reply to the second part of the objection first. Is the term “feminist” used for *strategic* significance? Here I would agree with my critics that the term does have strategic significance. It points to a body of work that began with the interrogation of the significance of gender in philosophy—e.g., in history of philosophy, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics. In the last two decades, feminist work has developed as an inquiry into other aspects of identity, such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexual choice, and the implications of these features for reinterpreting traditional philosophical problems. As Linda Martin Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter write, feminists both treat traditional philosophical issues in new ways and introduce new problems for philosophy, such as the politics of knowledge and the impact of the sexed body of the knower on the production of knowledge.²⁶

As such, maintaining the term “feminist” has strategic significance because it enables people to track the historical development and breadth of this heterogeneous international debate. The term “feminist” is given a positive value from the vantage point of those interested in questions about gender and about the relation between perspective, context, and theory. But from the vantage point of non-sympathizers, the term “feminist” is given a negative value precisely because of its interrogation of perspective and context and because of its challenge to the view that the substantive work of philosophy is free of issues of power.

One might speculate about the time horizon in which using the label feminism will be productive. The question, “Will feminist philosophy still exist at the end of the 21st century?” was posed in the *Newsletter Women Philosophers*, published in Amsterdam in January 2000. All but one of the respondents answered in the affirmative. The exception, Veronica Vasterling, wrote that she hopes “that at the end of the 21st century ‘feminist philosophy’ does not exist anymore, ei-

ther because there is no need anymore, or because its concerns have become part of philosophy as a whole.”²⁷ In other words, speculating about the supersession of feminist philosophy is possible either (1) if all traces of gender hierarchies and differences in language, culture, and thought were abolished, or (2) if mainstream philosophy were transformed to incorporate feminist questions. But without these radical changes, the term “feminism” remains a positive and important strategic choice.

To return to the first part of the objection: is there a *substantive* change marked by doing feminist philosophy that is distinct from just doing philosophy? The strategic difference named by feminism also marks a difference in philosophical views. Despite the radically different ways of approaching philosophy with feminist concerns, there is one minimal commonality shared by these approaches: the thematization of sexed bodies. Although feminist philosophers draw inspiration from a wide variety of sources, they nonetheless relate these debates to questions about the existence of bodies marked by sex, and feminist philosophers have increasingly contributed to an analysis of the complex relations between sex, race, and ethnicity.

For example, Susan Neiman is a nonfeminist philosopher who makes a brilliant contribution to interpreting the role of the Unconditioned in Kant’s philosophy. In her reading, the Unconditioned becomes linked to themes such as the incompleteness of knowledge, the problem of radical uncertainty, the process of knowledge, and the public and communal nature of thought.²⁸ As such, her work can contribute significantly to discussions of reason and knowledge taken up by feminists by posing questions such as: What motivates inquiry and assures its inevitable incompleteness? How can one view reason as realizing ethical and political goals, instead of treating these goals as extrinsic to the interests of reason? Furthermore, one can draw on Neiman’s work to go beyond it by thematizing the existence of sexed and raced bodies as a question for reason, ethics, and politics. One could ask, what are the conditions that condition the existence of sexed and raced bodies and their mutual relations? How can one seek the ends that would transform actual relations between the sexes and races according to ideals of possible relations?²⁹ Thus, feminist work does overlap with and draw inspiration from work that is not characterized as feminist. But it relates

these inquiries to feminist concerns, which are then brought to bear on philosophy generally.

Objection: Feminists claim that their theories are better than nonfeminist theories because they have an emancipatory interest. But they cannot clarify their notion of emancipation. If feminists locate an emancipatory interest in one group, such as women, then how can they resolve the problem of conflicting emancipatory interests between groups? If feminists locate an emancipatory interest in every individual, then they are presupposing a concept of emancipation inherited from the Enlightenment that at least some feminists have criticized. And if feminists reject both of these claims, then how can they claim to be emancipatory at all?

Reply: The first part of the objection addresses the question of collective emancipation. How can one justify that a particular group becomes privileged as a bearer of emancipatory values? How can one adjudicate conflicts between groups? When this objection was raised to me during the seminar in 1998, the example of conflicting emancipatory interests was the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Presumably, one could refer to the conflict between men's and women's interests in relation to affirmative action policies in the United States as well.

The notion of an emancipatory interest invested in the proletariat as a collective subject was developed by Karl Marx and later by Georg Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*.³⁰ Some American feminist theorists, notably Nancy Hartssock and Sandra Harding, have adapted the notion of emancipatory interest to the "standpoint of women" in present society. I have no intention of defending such a theory—although I will return to this theme in my discussion of feminist epistemologies. However, I will note that theorists who criticize standpoint theory nonetheless maintain an emancipatory goal for theory. Alcoff and Potter write, "For feminists, the purpose of epistemology is not only to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but also to contribute to an emancipatory goal: the expansion of democracy in the production of knowledge."³¹

The issue at stake in the objection relates to the question of normativity. If competing groups are inspired by conflicting emancipatory interests, how can these claims be adjudicated? The question is structurally the same as the question about how to judge conflicts between

individuals. Is the criterion for judgment transcendent—i.e., external to the group or individual relations—or is it immanent—i.e., situated within the context of these relations? This is a perennial debate in philosophy, with advocates on both sides. I myself have been most interested in exploring how normativity is immanent. In the example of conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, one can focus on how diverse each of these groups are and how strategies for reconciliation have been generated from within each group.

The second part of the objection refers to debates amongst feminists about their relation to the Enlightenment inheritance. Some feminists argue that the Enlightenment notion of autonomy—of individual self-determination—is a precondition for the discourse of women's liberation and for the political gains that women have won. Other writers, inspired by poststructuralist theory, argue that the Enlightenment notions about the nature of reason, freedom, and the subject are antithetical to feminist politics and theory. These thinkers are committed to showing that reason is not divorced from contingent existence, that the self is embedded in social relations, that the self is embodied and thus is historically specific and partial. The second part of the objection is directed against this latter group. How can feminists argue for an emancipatory interest if they reject the view that each individual has a disembodied, rational, free will? This objection ultimately refers to the question of whether norms are context independent or context dependent. Poststructuralist theorists do not renounce the concepts of norms or emancipation as such, but they do renounce the attempt to provide transcendent justifications of these concepts.

These seven objections certainly do not constitute all of the objections that I have heard raised against feminist philosophy. But they do point to crucial misconceptions about the nature of feminist philosophy, as well as to presuppositions about philosophy's nature and scope that have made the philosophical encounter with feminism so difficult in Denmark. One must address the affective implications of this encounter as well. Professional philosophers in Denmark have been known to behave in distinctly nonprofessional ways when this theme is mentioned. And yet the students in the seminar in 1998 asked, why are feminists so aggressive? One could reasonably ask instead, why are

these philosophers so aggressively opposed to this field, instead of being curious or merely indifferent? The affective response reminds one that what is at stake is not just an intellectual challenge, but a challenge to how academic power is reproduced. As Pierre Bourdieu notes in *Homo Academicus*, academic power is wielded through teachers' capacities to affect their students' expectations and objective possibilities for getting stipends and academic appointments.³² The consequences of this power is seen in students' choices of advisor and research themes, even though many of these choices are made through what Bourdieu calls an unconscious adaptation to one's habitus. One might speculate that feminist philosophy is perceived as a potential threat to the current patterns by which academic philosophy is reproduced—a perception that is connected with the rejection of any procedure to increase the numbers of women with positions in the field.

Postindustrial societies exhibit a confusing mix of views about the situation of women and of feminism. Most people believe that women's equality has already been achieved, and all that remains are some small nuances of difference that can be easily leveled out. Yet women and men still do not receive equal wages for equal work. And poverty, discrimination, inadequate health care, and violence are a depressing reality for women around the world. To cite a few examples, five hundred thousand women die and eight million are disabled each year during pregnancy or childbirth; of these, sixty thousand are adolescent girls who die each year from complications in pregnancy or childbirth; girls compose nearly two-thirds of the 130 million children in developing countries not in school; and domestic violence continues unchallenged in many parts of the world. For example, one in five women in Hong Kong is beaten by their husbands.³³ Neither in the United States nor in an international context are the issues of feminism passé, though occasionally they may be viewed as more or less fashionable.

In such a world—in our world—it is as compelling as ever to struggle to understand the impact of the two sexes of the human species on human culture and thought. When my son Emil was nine, he announced at the dinner table his conviction that one's body and one's world view are inseparably linked: his body was made like Daddy's and his sister Maya's body was like Mommy's. So he could understand

Daddy better and Maya could understand Mommy better. And wouldn't he look funny with underpants that had flowers on them? I might not share all of my son's convictions, but after having listed the arguments of academic philosophers who deny any connection between (1) the existence of men and women and (2) the shape of philosophical theories, it is refreshing to have a child once again notice when the emperor is wearing no clothes.

My task in the following chapters is to explore the threads that connect these two themes (1) in feminist interpretations of the history of philosophy, (2) in feminist debates about theories of knowledge, and (3) in feminist contributions to ethics. I hope by this effort to bring some measure of information to counter the misinformation that is rampant on the corridors of philosophy and to provide a resource to students who are interested in feminist theories that have gained recognition in the international arena of philosophy.

Notes

1. Now that the University of Copenhagen has its first woman rector, one can hope that the university leadership will seek to change this situation.
2. There has been much debate about whether the increase from six to twelve months of maternity leave is in fact women-friendly or whether it will significantly interfere with women's employment opportunities and lifetime earnings. Sweden has a more progressive family-leave policy, which requires fathers to use part of the leave allotted to the family.
3. "Report: U.S. Maternity Plans Pale in Comparison to Other Nations," *Washington Post*, www.chron.com/content/chronicle/nation/98/02/16/maternity-leave-2-0.html, 15 February 1998 [accessed 23 August 2002].
4. Anette Borchost, ed. *Kønsmagt under forandring*. (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels, 2002). Reviewed by Jens Andersen, "Mænd fortrækker stadig mænd," in *Berlingske Tidende*, 8 March 2002, section 2, 2.
5. Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen introduced the phrase "missing women" in the late 1980s, to refer to the 100 million women who were not there because of unusually high mortality rates in certain parts of the world. Here I use the phrase to refer to women who never became philosophers, for lack of educational opportunities and cultural and institutional support.
6. Two books published in the 1980s are especially relevant to this discussion: Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing* (New York:

Basic Books, 1986) and Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). Note that these books discuss gender differences on the basis of psychological theories of human development (e.g., Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978]), and on the basis of how familial and institutional contexts reproduce gender differences.

7. Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: Athlone Press, 1993), 5.

8. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 22.

9. An article entitled "Et hundeliv" [A Dog's Life] in *Forsker Forum* Nr. 129, November 1999, 10, about "løse ansættelser" (part-time positions) stated: "Der er flere kvinder end mænd, som er villige til at afbryde en forskerkarriere og finde et andet arbejde. . . . Kvinder føler et familieansvar og er mere optagede af at få arbejdsliv og privatliv til at fungere." [There are more women than men who are willing to interrupt a research career and find alternative work. . . . Women feel a family responsibility and are more concerned to make work life function together with private life.] My translation.

10. Maurice Merleau-Ponty emphasized that my concrete existence is always sexual being in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 156, 182.

11. Lorraine Code, "Taking Subjectivity into Account," in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Elizabeth Porter and Linda Martin Alcoff (New York: Routledge, 1993), 18–19, 39.

12. John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women," in John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *Essays on Sex Equality*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 215.

13. Mill, 221–35.

14. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), xviii.

15. Elizabeth Grosz, "Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity," in *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct*, ed. Sneja Gunew (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 60.

16. Penelope Deutscher, *Yielding Gender: Feminism, Deconstruction, and the History of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 165–66. I will discuss strategies for reading the "feminine" in the history of philosophy in the next chapter.

17. For example, see Herbert Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence," in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 43–87.

18. Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5, 74, 78.

19. Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 2–3.

20. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which philosophers have associated the concepts woman, irrationality, body, and sexuality.

21. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 9.

22. Butler, *Bodies*, 10.

23. Butler, *Bodies*, 1.

24. Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), 3.

25. Linda Martin Alcoff, *Real Knowing* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 229.

26. Alcoff and Porter, *Feminist Epistemologies*, 3.

27. *Newsletter Women Philosophers*, no. 3, 8.

28. Susan Neiman, *The Unity of Reason* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

29. These questions echo Luce Irigaray's concerns, although Irigaray argues that sexual, not racial, difference is the primary question of the present.

30. See Karl Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1978), 469–500. Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 83–222.

31. Alcoff and Porter, *Feminist Epistemologies*, 13.

32. Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 84–90.

33. UN Wire, www.unfoundation.org/unwire [accessed 9 March 2000] and UN Wire, "Women and Population" [accessed 13 March 2000].