

concrete person, and nothing like a proposition suggests itself as what the subject is related to. Mental states are not relations to propositions or sentences.⁴

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MENDUS ON PHILOSOPHY AND PERVASIVENESS

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In ‘How Androcentric is Western Philosophy?’ (*The Philosophical Quarterly*, 46 (1996), pp. 48–59), I criticized five claims for the androcentrism of philosophy. In her ‘How Androcentric is Western Philosophy? A Reply’ (*ibid.*, pp. 60–6), Susan Mendus finds my arguments faulty in a number of ways. Much of her criticism has to do with the distinction introduced in my article between pervasive and non-pervasive androcentrism. Pervasive androcentrism in a philosophical theory calls for substantial reform, complete rejection or replacement by a feminist alternative. Non-pervasive androcentrism requires merely a renunciation of some androcentric themes from a philosophical theory. The difference is analogous to the one between a regime, law or idea we judge to be totally or mostly bad and would like to discard completely, and a regime, law or idea we think should be corrected here and there, but is generally worthwhile and after some amendments could be usefully maintained.

Mendus presents the distinction as if it ‘underpins’ my discussion (p. 63). However, it should be emphasized that notwithstanding its importance not all my criticism is based on it. My criticism of some arguments is not that they succeed in showing only a non-pervasive androcentrism, and fail to show a pervasive one, but that they fail to show androcentrism of any kind. For these cases the viability of the distinction between pervasive and non-pervasive is irrelevant.

To question this distinction, Mendus presents cases in which I claimed that the androcentrism is non-pervasive, and argues that they could also be claimed to be pervasive. Of course, even if Mendus is right, and what I took to be non-pervasively androcentric is in fact pervasively androcentric, the distinction itself may still be viable; even if the examples I offered were mistaken, the distinction may still hold.

The first example has to do with metaphors. Bacon and Feyerabend usually present their views literally. However, in some cases they also use metaphors. Some of these metaphors are sexist. The question is, then, whether this should lead us to treat all their views about science as sexist, and thus reject their whole philosophies of science, or whether after rejecting these metaphors as sexist we can still accept their teachings. Mendus challenges the distinction between pervasive and non-pervasive here. To be precise, however, I did not claim that Feyerabend's and Bacon's theories are non-pervasively androcentric, as Mendus understands me, but that they are not androcentric at all. I did not think that the *theories* themselves should be amended, only the way they are (in some cases) expressed (p. 50).

Mendus sides with Harding, who claims that the metaphors 'are not merely heuristic devices or literary embellishments that can be replaced by value-neutral referential terms' (p. 61). She also describes my response to Harding: 'Landau's *riposte* is simple denial: metaphors *just are* heuristic devices and could easily be replaced by others that carry respectful connotations. But this reply is no reply at all' (*ibid.*). However, Mendus distorts my reply. After quoting Harding, I proceed (pp. 49–50) to give specific examples of how Feyerabend's and Bacon's views can be expressed with a variety of non-sexist metaphors, or with no metaphors at all. Moreover, I claim (p. 49) that if the existence of androcentric metaphors is taken as a criterion for the androcentrism of a theory, then Bacon's and Feyerabend's use of non-androcentric metaphors, as well as of non-metaphors, should also be taken into account in order to evaluate the overall androcentrism in their theories. Mendus does not refer to these arguments and examples at all and does not attempt to show what is wrong in them.

The second example relates to Kant, who asserts in his political writings that women, who are more prone to inclination, cannot be citizens of the state. This is a clearly unacceptable and sexist view. Again the question arises whether because of it we should also reject Kant's ethics and metaphysics, and treat his whole philosophy as pervasively androcentric. Mendus (p. 62) believes there are good reasons for doing so:

A writer who in his political philosophy denies women the status of rational beings, and who in his moral philosophy emphasizes that morality applies to all and only rational beings, cannot so easily escape the charge of pervasive androcentrism. Or at least, he can do so only by making the rather implausible claim that moral philosophy and political philosophy hang completely free of one another.... We could of course, as Landau says, excise the androcentric passages from Kant's political philosophy and still 'make sense of' his ethics, but ... in so doing we would be revising rather than interpreting Kant.

On the basis of several passages in his political theory, Mendus suggests that Kant's ethics is not meant for women. A similar suggestion is made about women and his metaphysics. This is a possible way of interpreting Kant, but not the only one. Since there are a number of indications that he did take his moral theory to apply to women and men equally, it is at least as plausible to interpret him as contradicting himself on this point. This would not be the first contradiction in

Kant, nor the last. But let us assume that we are not interpreting Kant but, as Mendus claims, revising him. Why should this be problematic? The distinction between pervasive and non-pervasive androcentrism is operative: is a theory so imbued with androcentric themes that we have to discard it, or can we still use most of it if we reject its androcentric themes? Mendus wants to emphasize another issue: not what we can or cannot do with almost all of the Kantian philosophy, but what ‘Kant ... did in fact believe’ (*ibid.*). This seems to me, however, the less relevant question. Furthermore, Mendus again misrepresents me as ‘preferring simply to assert that ... androcentrism in political philosophy has no consequences for ethics or metaphysics’ (p. 63). However, I nowhere argue for such an absurd claim, and *a fortiori* do not ‘simply assert’ it. I make the much more limited claim that we can usefully employ Kant’s ethics and metaphysics even if we reject androcentric passages in his political theory.

To cast doubt on the distinction between pervasive and non-pervasive androcentrism Mendus also questions the possibility, assumed in the notion of non-pervasiveness, of using some parts of philosophical systems while rejecting others. ‘Philosophical systems are *systems* precisely because their various parts fit together, and for that reason it may well be difficult to isolate individual themes and declare them superfluous to the system as a whole’ (p. 63). However, whereas some theses are connected with many others, and discarding or changing them may affect much in the system, others are not. In Kant, for example, dismissing the distinction between phenomena and noumena would affect his whole ontology, epistemology and ethics, while discarding the view on the value of practice for efficient learning, expressed in his pedagogical writings, would not.¹

Another argument of Mendus against the distinction between pervasive and non-pervasive androcentrism (p. 66) again attributes to me a more radical view than I actually hold:

[Feminists] may wonder whether the distinction between pervasive and non-pervasive androcentrism is as clear as [Landau] assumes, and they may also wonder how many accretions of non-pervasive androcentrism are needed before a theory must be deemed to be pervasively androcentric in the relevant sense. Feminist arguments imply that there may be no clear and definitive answer to these questions. The chief difficulty in Landau’s account is that he insists on supposing that there is, and thus in asking what is, from a feminist perspective, a misguided question.

However, I nowhere ‘insist on supposing’ that there is a clear and definitive demarcation line between pervasive and non-pervasive androcentrism. Nor do I need to hold such a problematic supposition in order to maintain that there is such a distinction. I see the distinction between pervasive and non-pervasive androcentrism as one of degree; at one pole there are some clear cases of pervasive, at the other some clear cases of non-pervasive androcentrism, and there are also some borderline cases which are difficult to typify. But this does not mean that the distinction cannot be maintained. Many other distinctions are of the same type, including those Mendus

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Pädagogik*, ed. F.T. Rink, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Prussian Academy edition (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1924), Vol. IX, p. 477.

would like to retain (e.g., between feminism and anti-feminism, androcentrism and non-androcentrism, or care ethics and justice ethics). In the distinction between feminism and anti-feminism, for example, we shall also have clear cases of feminism, clear cases of anti-feminism, and a number of borderline cases which we would hesitate how to typify. But this would not make the distinction 'misguided'.

A further issue concerns my discussion of Gilligan. Mendus argues (p. 63) that

Gilligan herself is not clearly committed to showing that theories of justice, including Rawls' own theory, are pervasively androcentric in Landau's sense ... care is not meant to replace or substitute for justice theory. Rather, care should be a supplement to justice. In her words, what we need is a 'marriage' of the old male and the newly articulated female insights.

However, pervasive androcentrism in my sense calls for 'substantial reform, complete rejection or replacement by a feminist alternative' (as Mendus herself quotes me on p. 64). But in calling for the convergence of justice ethics and care ethics in both men and women (as Mendus quotes Gilligan on p. 63) Gilligan is calling for the first of these alternatives, i.e., for a substantial reform in ethics. Thus Gilligan does see ethics as pervasively androcentric.

Mendus further believes that Rawls' theory of justice can serve as an example of a pervasively androcentric theory. She argues (p. 65) that 'to avoid the charge of pervasive androcentrism Rawls would have to revise his claim that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions"; he would have to reconsider his distinction between public and private; and he would have to revoke his requirement that heads of households are appropriate representatives in the original position'. However, (a) it would be redundant to repeat here the arguments presented in my article against linking women with care and men with justice. Mendus does not bring them up or attempt to argue against them. (b) The conservative, stereotypical, association of men with the public sphere and women with the private should not lead to a feminist rejection of theories which deal with the public sphere, thus reinforcing the stereotype, but rather to rejecting this androcentric identification. Mendus here is like a person claiming in the United States of 1900 that since some laws and forms of acculturation had prevented women from participating in the democratic process, and moreover had frequently influenced them to see themselves as not fit to participate in it, democracy itself should be rejected, rather than these laws and forms of acculturation. (c) Applying the 'original position' to the family and modifying the requirement that representatives in the original position should be heads of households can be appended to the theory without changing most of its other theses.

In my criticism of Gilligan I claim that a number of moral theories with the characteristics of care ethics (e.g., Christ, Buber), and others with the characteristics of both care and justice ethics (e.g., Rawls), have already been suggested in the history of ethics. Hence ethics has not been 'justice ethics' as Gilligan represents it, and there is no need to introduce what she takes to be the new care ethics into moral theory. Mendus argues that the characteristics of Rawls' theory as she presents it above show it to be much closer to justice than care ethics. My reading of Rawls

here largely follows that of Susan Moller Okin,² which it would be redundant to repeat. While recognizing the points Mendus and others have made, Okin (p. 238) argues for an 'alternative reading [which] suggests that Rawls is far from being a moral rationalist, and that feelings such as empathy and benevolence are at the very foundation of his principles of justice'. Mendus (p. 65) mentions Okin as a feminist who 'expresses the hope that Rawls' theory can be revised in a way consonant with feminist concerns'. But while this is not a false characterization of Okin, I think it deeply understates her view. It is also surprising to read later how Mendus characterizes her own argument: 'the point of feminism is ... to draw attention to the artificially stark distinctions invoked by much of Western philosophy, and to suggest that those distinctions may be less clear and uncontroversial than is normally supposed.... I have considered here the application of that feminist strategy to the specific case of John Rawls' liberalism' (*ibid.*). However, in fact Mendus does precisely the opposite of what she claims she is doing. It is Okin and I who doubt the distinction between care and justice ethics and claim that Rawls' theory incorporates both, and it is Mendus who maintains the distinction between care and justice ethics and claims that Rawls' theory strongly leans towards the latter. Mendus also claims that in suggesting that Rawls incorporates elements of both justice ethics and care ethics, 'Landau betrays his own androcentric leanings' (p. 63). I do not see why this should be true of Susan Moller Okin or myself.

One of Mendus' final points takes up my criticism of the view that philosophy is androcentric since it incorporates dualist distinctions in which one term is preferred to another. Mendus points out (p. 65) that 'feminists ... challenge the clarity and stability of those dichotomies on which much Western philosophy depends'. Indeed, many do, but my criticism (pp. 55–6) refers not to the challenge to specific dichotomies, but to the claim that hierarchical dualism *itself* is a mark of androcentrism. Further, according to Mendus (p. 65) I acknowledge that 'feminists ... challenge the clarity and stability of those dichotomies on which much Western philosophy depends', but she claims that I do so in 'ambivalent and sometimes contradictory terms'. Unfortunately, she does not make it clear precisely how I am ambivalent, or in what ways I contradict myself.

Mendus also makes some general claims about my discussion. She writes that 'feminists may ask what is implicit in the distinction on which [Landau] bases his objections to feminism' (p. 66). However, I nowhere object to feminism; I consider myself a liberal feminist, and as such object only to certain views in feminism, just as, had I objected to rational choice theory, I would not thereby have objected to the whole of political science. She also asserts (p. 65) that I assume 'not only that feminists speak with a single voice, but that that voice is one which demands the replacement of specific theories by feminist alternatives'. However, I nowhere make this assumption.

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² Susan Moller Okin, 'Reason and Feeling in Thinking about Justice', *Ethics*, 99 (1989), pp. 229–49.