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OBJECTIVITY AND THE DOUBLE STANDARD FOR FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGIES*

ABSTRACT. The emphasis on the limitations of objectivity, in specific guises and networks, has been a continuing theme of contemporary analytic philosophy for the past few decades. The popular sport of baiting feminist philosophers – into pointing to what's left out of objective knowledge, or into describing what methods, exactly, they would offer to replace the powerful "objective" methods grounding scientific knowledge – embodies a blatant double standard which has the effect of constantly putting feminist epistemologists on the defensive, on the fringes, on the run.

This strategy can only work if 'objectivity' is transparent, simple, stable, and clear in its meaning. It most certainly is not. In fact, taking 'objectivity' as a sort of beautiful primitive, self-evident in its value, and all-powerful in its revelatory power, requires careless philosophy, and the best workers in metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of science have made reworked definitions of 'objectivity' absolutely central to their own projects. In fact, classic feminist concerns with exploring the impact of sex and gender on knowledge, understanding, and other relations between human beings and the rest of the world fall squarely within the sort of human and social settings that *are already considered central* in most current analytic metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of science. I argue that the burden of proof is clearly on those who wish to *reject* the centrality and relevance of sex and gender to our most fundamental philosophical work on knowledge and reality.

On the face of it, feminism, as a political movement or ideology, is irrelevant to *truth*. Therefore, it is irrelevant to *objectivity*, which is about truth and how to get at it.

I believe that philosophical and scientific views regarding 'objectivity' are the source of the fiercest and most powerful intellectual and rhetorical weapons deployed against feminist critiques of epistemology and of the sciences. This is because philosophy of science and epistemology are, after all, concerned with analyzing cases of *good* reasoning. The philosophical challenges are to formulate and examine: how good scientific knowledge is produced; how and whether other forms of knowledge (e.g., moral knowledge) differ from scientific knowledge; and how to *explain why* science seems to be such a successful way to produce knowledge. The concepts of truth, objectivity, and evidence are at the heart of these investigations, and rightly so, I believe.

Many philosophers acknowledge – under the pressure of overwhelming evidence – that sex and gender issues may play roles in the social sciences,

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but never in the mathematical or natural sciences.[1] The fact is that detailed arguments from *within* the scientific community about the influence of sex and gender issues in the natural and mathematical sciences have been around for more than a decade.[2] Yet this evidence has been largely ignored. Instead, many philosophers assume that there *is no* evidence – and *could not* be such evidence – to support feminist analyses of the importance of sex and gender in every branch of knowledge. The vast majority of philosophers still believe that 'feminists' are playing 'out-of-bounds', in terms of mainstream understandings of the problems of epistemology and philosophy of science; feminist work can, therefore, be safely ignored, set aside, or characterized as of interest only in marginal cases.[3]

Given the recent outpouring of feminist writings that challenge, revise, and apply particular notions of *objectivity*, it is past time to place the *burden of proof* for the typical philosophical belief – that feminism is irrelevant to the study of the objectivity of knowledge – where it belongs.[4] Specifically, philosophers with views that acknowledge the importance of various human, social, or contextual elements in meaning, concepts, and knowledge-development, are obliged to justify their a priori exclusion of sex and gender as relevant factors. Contemporary social scientists, although they may agree about virtually nothing else, do agree that *among the most crucial distinctions* in all human societies and cultures are sex and gender.[5] As central organizing principles of all human social groups, sex and gender categories and roles provide the structural underpinning of virtually all *other* social roles, interactions, and complex human activities, such as communication, enforcement of social norms, and standards of behavior. Because sex and gender distinctions serve this foundational role upon which the rest of the social structure is dependent, philosophers who wish to take the interests, values, and goals of the relevant knowledge-communities into account – but who nevertheless exhibit an a priori dismissal of the relevance of the central sex and gender distinctions to epistemological and metaphysical problems – must be able to provide, on pain of irrationality, reasons supporting that dismissal.

The problem is that there *is* evidence that sex and gender do indeed play central roles in all forms of human knowledge. These groundbreaking and pivotal arguments have been reviewed elsewhere repeatedly – I will not do so here. This evidence can be resisted only under assumptions which have *explicitly* been repudiated by a wide variety of contemporary metaphysicians, epistemologists, and philosophers of science. In this paper, I review the positive views of several influential analytic philosophers, and show that they in fact *provide for* the relevance and legitimacy of considerations of sex and gender.

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I must assume that this will come as a shock to them, given the invisibility of such analyses in their own work. But such intellectual and philosophical irresponsibility ought not be tolerated or perpetuated. The burden of proof is on these authors – and those who agree with the basic assumptions they hold – to *address and argue against* both the specific positive claims made by feminist critics, and the general claim that sex and gender are *always* philosophically relevant.

On my analysis, much of the neglect and negative reaction among philosophers to discussions of the roles of sex and gender in knowledge has its source in a specific *philosophical folk story* about *objectivity* and its relation to scientific knowledge which is part of a philosophical tradition. One of my aims here is to argue that the anachronistic view of 'objectivity' embodied in this folk story has, in general, cast a shadow of confusion over philosophical discussions of reality, knowledge, and language; furthermore, it has been particularly important in obscuring the significance of sex and gender analyses in mainstream epistemology and metaphysics. I shall describe that folk story in a moment, and mention a few crucial problems with it. Then I shall review some of the ways that that philosophical folk story has been *resisted*, focusing on various twentieth century philosophers who have actively recast the meanings of 'objectivity', through their emphasis on contextual understandings of meaning, truth, and inquiry. But let us start with the basics, and take a look at some of the things that we think of when we consider the terms *objective* and *objectivity*.

1. THE MANY FACES OF OBJECTIVITY

1.1. *Four Basic Meanings*

I have identified four distinct meanings of 'objective' and 'objectivity' that are currently in broad use in contemporary philosophy. I focus on these views because they are often mixed and matched into specific hybrid notions of 'objectivity' that play central roles in current analytic epistemology, metaphysics, moral philosophy, and philosophy of mind.

Sometimes:

– *Objective* means *detached*, disinterested, unbiased, impersonal, invested in no particular point of view (or *not having* a point of view);

– *Objective* means *public*, publicly available, observable, or accessible (at least in principle);

– *Objective* means *existing independently* or separately from us;

– *Objective* means really existing, Really Real, the way things really are.

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Note that when 'objective' or 'objectivity' play these various roles, they *are predicated of different entities*, depending on their philosophical usage. For example: *detachment* is a property of a knower, and not a property of what is known; *ontological independence*, in contrast, is a *relation* between reality and a knower; *publicity* is also a relation between reality and knowers; and *Really Real* is the status of what *is*, regardless of its relation to any knower.

Consider a few examples that suggest that these four meanings are, indeed, distinct and separable: my consciousness is Really Real, but it's not an immediately accessible public phenomenon, I cannot be detached from it, but it does exist independently for everyone else; the optical illusions of the pools of water on a desert highway are Really Real – they exist in our experience – and they are also public, but they do not exist independently of us as knowers or perceivers; God, if such a being exists, is Really Real, it exists independently of us as knowers, and it is not always presumed to be public; the number three is public, and, in a sense, it is independent of each of us as knowers; still, whether it is Really Real, or whether it is independent of all of us, remains open to debate; finally, plants and flowers are public, they exist independently of us as knowers, and are Really Real.

What *kinds* of philosophical and/or scientific virtues are exemplified under each of the above four meanings?

1.2. *Epistemological and Methodological Meanings*

'Objective' often involves a particular type of *relation* between the knower and reality-*as*-independently-existing. The phrase 'existing independently from us' can be interpreted in a number of ways; the most common philosophical meaning involves us as human *knowers* and/or *experiencers*; often, the *knower*, and even *experiencer*, are depicted as minds (as distinct from bodies, in a Cartesian sense, e.g., Nagel 1993, p. 37). Sometimes the emphasis is placed on independence from human *will* and *wishes* – that is, on things or events over which we have no individual or human control. In all cases, though, this relation is taken to necessitate some sort of *detachment* of the knower as a methodological virtue;[6] if one is personally invested in a particular belief or attached to a point of view, such inflexibilities could impede the free acquisition of knowledge and correct representation of (independent) reality – otherwise, we cannot distinguish things-as-they-are from things-as-they-appear-to-us as human or as particular observers. Keep in mind that this positive value placed on detachment is *derived from* a *particular* epistemological picture, in which 'objective

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knowledge' is defined as public, and as involving existences independent of us.[7]

'Objective' sometimes means that a phenomenon is *public* or in principle publicly accessible.[8] Publicity of a phenomenon may be interpreted in a *weak sense*, in which the average-equipped human being will have typical experiences when exposed to a particular stimulus. Publicity of a phenomenon is sometimes distinguished from its accessibility to individuals, through the stronger requirement of "third-person accessibility"; to qualify as *third-person accessible*, it is not enough that there be a relationship between a knower and a phenomenon – another person must be able to experience directly that phenomenon, as well.[9] The point of this requirement is to exclude "first-person" or "private" experiences as potentially *objective*, by definition. For example, it may be true that each of us has particular, personal experiences while swimming in the ocean, but the qualities of that experience, what-it's-like-for-me-to-swim-in-the-ocean, are not third-person accessible; in that sense, the contents of the experience are not public.[10] The philosophical weight put on third-person accessibility is probably associated with the scientific requirements of repeatability of experiments and observations;[11] even if one goes swimming in the ocean, it is difficult to compare directly that what-it's-like with any *other* person's what-its-like-to-swim-in-the-ocean. Of course, publicity of a phenomenon is insufficient to establish that it exists independently of us – optical illusions are notoriously both public and ontologically dependent – but publicity is often taken to support, under certain conditions, the independent existence of whatever is public. Hence, it is epistemically invaluable.[12]

It is vital to distinguish the publicity of the *phenomena themselves* – whether on an individual or third-personal basis – and the publicity of *standards* that are embodied in a community, i.e., publicity of community standards and practices and the shared standards of judgment.[13] Emphasizing the publicity of standards allows personal (i.e., non-third-personal) things to count as 'public'.

1.3. *Ontological Meanings*

There are several distinct and relevant ontological meanings of 'objective', as well:

'Objective' phenomena are those *existing independently and separately from us as knowers*. 'Subjective' phenomena, including 'subjectivity' itself, are understood as those phenomena which do *not* – and in some cases, *cannot* – exist independently and separately from us and/or our experience.

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'Objective' also means *Really Real*, concerning *the way things really are*.[14] The relevant contrast to *Really Real* is to something that *isn't Really Real*, considered completely independently from our epistemic position about it. We can get a sense of what it is *not* to be Really Real by considering an historical example from the natural sciences. Take the ontological status, *simpliciter*, of spontaneous generation. While we once assigned this process the status of being *Really Real*, we no longer do so. Of course, it's only our assignment that's changed, but the status of *being Really Real* can be *understood* independently of any given judgment (*pace* Wittgenstein, Davidson, Putnam and other cryptoverificationists).[15]

2. THE ONTOLOGICAL TYRANNY

Let us now examine the strong claim that 'objective' reality – the reality converged upon through the *application of objective methods – equals all of the Really Real*.[16] Such an equation seems to be a judgment that the Really Real can, in its *totality*, be reached or known through its being publicly accessible in the proper way, combined with the right sort of detachment of the inquirers. I call this position the *ontological tyranny*.

2.1. *The Mutual Support of Methods and Ontology*

The *ontological tyranny* – the position that 'objective methods,' as sketched above, provide our *only* legitimate access to the ontology of the Real – can only work if the Really Real is also *completely* independent of us. And *this* only makes sense if we have *prior* commitments to a particular sort of ontology. If we seek objective knowledge, and 'objective' reality is defined as that which exists completely independently from us, then an effective epistemology will involve the *removal* of any attachments or points of view that might interfere with our *independence from* the reality we wish to know. This gives rise to the epistemological *requirements* of: (1) the public accessibility of objects of knowledge; and (2) our detachment as knowers.[17] *Publicity*, as an epistemological requirement, involves two ontological *facts* – that 'objective reality' exists independently from us, and is *publicly* knowable, if it is knowable at all (e.g., Mackie 1976, pp. 20–23).

An ontological aspect of *detachment* is also involved in this method. Once objective knowledge of reality is identified *as* knowledge of independent existences, and knowledge of independent existences requires the *knower's independence from* those existences, *detachment* becomes a methodological virtue. That is, the ontological assumption that reality is

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that-which-is-independent-from-us, serves as the rationale for a *method* of detachment.[18]

Historically, one ontology which identified the Really Real with complete independence from knowers, consisted in the claim that Primary Qualities are real in matter (*res extensa*) in a way that Secondary Qualities are not. The *physical* corollary was that *there is nothing but matter in motion*; a modern equivalent might refer to *energy/matter* or *fields*, etc., but would still deny equal ontological status to properties that emerge only in the context of *our interactions* with the physical *stuff*.

Hence, not only does the *ontological tyranny* dictate *only* one method as adequate, it also identifies only one set of objects as possible objects of *objective* knowledge.

2.2. *Problems with the Ontological Tyranny*

This particular set of connections among meanings of 'objectivity' – in which the meaning of 'objective reality' is interpreted as 'the way things are independently of us and our beliefs' – serves as the justification and motivation for an 'objective method', where this includes: *detachment*, in the sense of removal or abnegation of our internal lives, the 'subjective content' of our experiences; and *publicity*, in the sense of the direct public observability of the phenomena in question. This web of interdependent meanings – the ones that tie an epistemological to an ontological meaning, which together justify a method – was itself, as a *cluster*, born and defended – like any other idea – in a specific historical context.

The *ontological tyranny* played a central role in seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophy in characterizing the differences between Primary and Secondary Qualities. These philosophical doctrines were born in the pursuit of the physical sciences; they soon, however, took on a life of their own, and were embalmed, especially in the context of eighteenth century philosophy of mind, into a *standard for knowledge itself*, which I call the 'philosophical folk view of objective knowledge'.[19] This folk story involves particular views about Primary and Secondary Qualities.[20]

Primary Qualities are absolute, constant, and mathematical; they make up the *true* material objects – the *Real* – and the domain of *knowledge*, both human and Divine. The Primary Qualities – extension, number, figure, magnitude, position, and motion – have two crucial properties: they *cannot* be separated from bodies; and they *can* be represented wholly mathematically.

Secondary Qualities are, in contrast, fluctuating, confused, relative, and untrustworthy; they arise *from* the senses. They are merely the *effects* on our senses of the Primary Qualities, which are alone the qualities of *real*

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nature.[21] Secondary Qualities aren't as *real* as Primary Qualities, precisely because they depend for their very existence on some sensing being.[22]

Of course, historically, it was not epistemological independence itself that *motivated* the separation into Primary and Secondary Qualities; the motivation was, instead, clearly ontological: The Reality of the physical universe is geometrical.[23] Primary Qualities were promoted ontologically to first place *because* they were unchanging and constant, and therefore, subject to mathematical representation.[24]

To make this very clear: part of the view embodied in the web of interlocked meanings of philosophical folk-objectivity originally grew out of particular historical individuals and communities with particular projects involving physics. Most importantly, each of the original historical individuals and communities involved had *prior ontological commitments* that served as the rationale and justification for their adoption of the specific methods deemed appropriate for investigating nature.

They were very explicit about this. Here's Galileo:

> Philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes – I mean the universe – but we cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols, in which it is written. This book is written in the mathematical language, and the symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it, without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth. . . . (Burtt 1932, p. 75)

Galileo's commitment to a mathematical science was based, in turn, on a religious view, namely, the idea that God made the world an immutable mathematical system, which permits an absolute certainty of scientific knowledge by human use of the mathematical method: "As to the truth, of which mathematical demonstrations give us the knowledge, it is the same which the Divine Wisdom knoweth. . . ."[25]

In other words, Galileo and Descartes, having committed themselves to an ontology that was fundamentally religious, then 'discovered' that Secondary Qualities are dependent on us, and reasoned, from their ontology, that they must therefore not be Really Real in the physical realm. Hence, I agree in part with Colin McGinn's claim that the fact that Primary Qualities are *independent* from us is a *philosophical discovery* – rather than being a *scientific* one – although I am hesitant to call a religious dogma a "discovery" (McGinn 1983).

In summary, the configuration of ontological and methodological commitments that constitute the standards of 'objectivity' for early modern physical sciences explicitly relies on religious beliefs.

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2.3. *Update: Type/Law Convergent Realism*

We can imagine many components of the ontological tyranny appearing in philosophical discussions of objective knowledge, truth, and reality, stripped of any overtly religious content. In fact, the assumption that *real* objectivity will result in a convergence on One True Description seems to be widespread.[26] In the words of the popular grisly philosophical metaphor, real knowledge 'carves Nature at its joints'. Obviously, this view of knowledge presupposes that Nature *has* joints, i.e., 'natural' objects and/or events, and kinds, and laws, which could serve (ideally) to guide inquirers, in a converging fashion, towards the discovery of these natural divisions. Under this view, which I call *type/law convergent realism*, the criterion of success for real knowledge is rather strict: it is not enough that Reality never has or never will *resist* our use of certain sets of categories of objects, events, kinds, or laws – if these sets don't conform to *nature's* categories, individuals, and laws, then we do not have *true* descriptions of reality. This is really just an updated version of the *ontological tyranny.* Let us now explore the views of two philosophers who might be thought, *prima facie*, to adhere to the above position.

2.3.1. *Bernard Williams' Absolute Conception*

One current picture of 'scientific objectivity' that is especially influential among moral theorists is presented by Bernard Williams. For him, what is distinctive about *scientific* inquiry is that scientific objectivity can lead – in principle – to a *convergence* on "the absolute conception" of Reality. The absolute conception is, he writes, "a conception of reality as it is independently of our thought, and to which all representations of reality can be related" (1978, p. 211). The independent existence of the relevant part of reality is central to Williams' claims about scientific objectivity and its relation to the absolute conception: "If knowledge is what it claims to be, then it is knowledge of a reality which exists independently of that knowledge, and ... independently of any thought or experience" (1978, p. 64).[27] For Williams, the goal embodied in scientific inquiry is to reflect "on the world that there is *anyway*, independent of our own experience" (1985, p. 138).[28]

According to Williams, scientific inquiry is supposed to go something like this: ideally, scientific knowledge of reality, that is, 'the absolute conception,' is nonperspectival, and completely detached. As we increase 'objectivity,' which is understood here as a *method of detachment from any localized perspective combined with third-personal public access* to phenomena,[29] we are promised (in principle), to converge on greater and

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greater portions of the absolute conception. That is, we will have converging access to more and more of the Really Real.

In sum, the application of 'objectivity' – as method, a set of standards of inquiry – will lead to 'objective' knowledge, where 'objective' knowledge is knowledge of the Really Real "*sub specie aeternitatis*," i.e., *part of* the ontology of the (objectively) Real (1985, pp. 111, 132, 136; cf. Smart 1963, p. 84).[30] Hence, under Williams' view, several types of objectivity are *necessary for and characteristic of* scientific inquiry. And Williams is not idiosyncratic.[31]

In spite of Putnam, Rorty, and others casting Williams' position as an updated version of the ontological tyranny, this is not correct.[32] Williams is talking only about *scientific knowledge*; he's simply arguing that only third-person accessible and ontologically independent aspects of reality are ultimately going to be successful objects of *scientific* inquiry, and only *they* can be expected to appear in the absolute conception. In fact, he explicitly excludes our knowledge of "common perceptual experience" and "social science" from the absolute conception. The claim is that the absolute conception can "make sense of how natural science can be absolute knowledge of reality," even though it is not complete – it does not include *everything* that is real (1978, p. 302; 1985, pp. 111, 135–140, 148).[33]

By excluding everything peculiar to us as human beings, or as individuals, or as social beings, Williams very deliberately opens the door to *different sorts of investigations* which do take these aspects of reality into account; in fact, he advocates more local and contextual analyses and evaluations of the sorts of things – which presuppose interests and practices of a "social world" – that do not figure directly in the absolute conception (1985). Hence, Williams' views do not have the capacity to *eliminate* certain contextual factors – such as sex and gender – as relevant, without argument.

Perhaps Williams would say that the important thing is that sex and gender are irrelevant *to the absolute conception*, although they're not irrelevant categories for social sciences, anthropology, history, and psychology. Still, Williams admits that the areas in which *he* works involve social, anthropological, and psychological factors and descriptions, yet he has ignored a central one without a peep.

2.3.2. *Charles Peirce's Realism*

Charles S. Peirce is often characterized as an archetypal convergent realist; he is cast as presenting a modernized, secular version of the ontological tyranny. Wiggins, for example, describes a "Peircean view of Science ... as discovering that which, the world being what it is, is destined to be ulti-

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mately agreed to by all who investigate" (1976, p. 361). In support, Wiggins quotes from Peirce's 1878 paper, 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear': "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real" (1878a, p. 139).[34] Wiggins' misunderstanding of Peirce's view is revealed in his interpretation of the "all" in the above sentence; Wiggins writes, "Let 'all' mean 'all actual or possible intelligent beings competent, whatever their conceptual scheme, to look for the fundamentally explanatory principles of the world" (Wiggins 1976, p. 361). As it stands, Wiggins' claim is ambiguous about whether the ultimate conceptual scheme is *necessary*, but he subsequently attributes to Peirce the view that "there is a *reality which dictates* the way a scientific theory has to be in order that what happens in the world be explained by the theory" (1976, p. 362; my emphasis).

Wiggins claims further that Peirce's "fundamentally explanatory principles" will include: "the real properties of the world, the properties which inhere in the world *however it is viewed*, [which] are the primary qualities" (1976, p. 362). Ultimately, Wiggins characterizes Peirce's view as "the 'external' perspective", to which it is absurd to try to add on some component of 'human commitment'. Wiggins concludes: "This Peircean conceptual scheme *articulates* nothing which it is humanly possible to care about" (1976, p. 363).

As we shall see below, Peirce's scheme actually includes nothing that human beings *do not* care about. I would now like to emphasize several aspects of Peirce's thought that clearly disqualify him as a *type/law convergent realist*, despite the repeated attribution to him of this view.

Independence and Reality:

The quotes selected by Wiggins and others, such as Shimony, Rorty, Murphy, and Nagel, with their appeal to 'fated' ends, may appear to commit Peirce to a 'Truth-will-out' view of knowledge and reality, in which Real things eventually *force* inquirers into True understandings of them.[35] But this is the exact opposite of Peirce's view. *Immediately* following the widely-quoted passage regarding the "opinion ... fated to be ultimately agreed to ...," Peirce insists that his view "makes the characters of the real" depend on "what is ultimately thought about them" (1878a, p. 139). Peirce argues that his view of Reality is *therefore incompatible* with what he calls an a priori or 'abstract' definition of reality (which is fundamentally equivalent to the ontological tyranny), according to which "we ... define the real as that whose characters are independent of what anybody may think them to be" (1878a, p. 137). Even more damaging, he concludes

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that Reality – what anything really is – "depends on the ultimate decision of the community" (1868, p. 54).

This dependence of the Real on our thoughts about it is clarified by Peirce in the next section; Reality is not to be understood as *independent of thought in general*, but as independent "only of what you or I or any finite number of men think about it" (1878a, p. 139). And the "opinion which would finally result from investigation does not depend on how anybody may actually think. . . . But the reality of that which is real *does depend* on the real fact that investigation is destined to lead, at last, if continued long enough, to a belief in it" (1878a, p. 139; my emphasis; cf. Putnam 1975, p. 272). Hence, in spite of this genuine dependence on community-mediated cognitions, the outcome of such investigation "is the real, as it really is" (Peirce 1868, p. 52; *see* Hacking 1983, p. 58). Given Peirce's views regarding the essentially social nature of inquiry, his commitment to the dependence of the Real on inquirers packs a real punch; it is extremely difficult to reconcile with any interpretation of *type/law convergent realism*.

Perhaps Peirce's decisive break with *type-law convergent realism* is made most clearly in his views about Types and Laws of Nature themselves. Briefly, he thinks that Laws of Nature are those among an infinity of regularities in the universe, distinguished only by the fact that *we* are interested in them; there is nothing 'inevitable' about them, or about *their appearance* in the final results of inquiry. Here is Peirce describing his own views on regularities of nature from his 1878 paper, 'The Order of Nature': "I remarked there that the degree to which nature seems to present a general regularity depends upon the fact that the regularities in it are of interest and importance to us, while the irregularities are without practical use or significance" (1900–1901 (1958, p. 114)). He also rejects the assumption or belief "that every single fact in the universe is precisely determined by law" (1892, p. 298).

Although Peirce calls himself a 'realist' about Types, his is not the sort of realism in which Types correspond to some sort of 'Natural Kinds' or natural divisions in Nature – and this lack of correspondence results not simply because of the fallibility inherent in any stage of inquiry; it also holds for the Types upon which the ideal community of inquirers would ultimately agree.

On the status of Laws and Types in Nature, Peirce starts from the logical point that "any plurality or lot of objects whatever have some character in common (no matter how insignificant) which is peculiar to them and not shared by anything else" (1878b, p. 174). This means that there are infinitely many ways of dividing the universe up into Types, or of grouping

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things together by *similarity*. He further argued that we ought to consider the characters of things "as relative to the perceptions and active powers of living beings" (1878b, p. 175). He concludes from this that if we *do not* rank characters by relative importance, there would be no greater or lesser degree of uniformity in the world (1878b, p. 175); hence, we have to decide which characters to focus on, in order to make any inductive generalizations or Laws of Nature at all (1878b, p. 176).

Peirce does claim that "the real is that which is such as it is regardless of how it is, at any time, thought to be" (1905b (1955, p. 301)). This could be interpreted as a commitment to the sort of a priori realism that Peirce claimed to oppose; but Peirce insists on a very specific interpretation of what 'real objects and their characters' *means*, here: "And in what does [the behaviour of different possible kinds of material substance] consist except that if a substance of a certain kind should be exposed to an agency of a certain kind, a certain kind of sensible result *would* ensue, according to our experiences hitherto. As for the pragmaticist, it is precisely his position that nothing else than this can be so much as *meant* by saying that an object possesses a character" (1905b (1955, p. 301); his emphasis).

Hence, we must interpret the following widely-cited claim of Peirce's very carefully: "That whose characters are independent of how you or I think is an external reality" (1878a, p. 136). He clarifies the fact that he does *not identify reality with independence from us*, in his discussion of phenomena "within our own minds, dependent upon our thought, which are at the same time *real* in the sense that we really think them" (1878a, p. 136; my emphasis). Even though the characters of these phenomena in the mind depend on how we think, "they do not depend on what we think those *characters* to be"; hence, Peirce concludes that "a dream has a real existence as a mental phenomenon", but the contents of the dream don't depend on what anybody thinks was dreamt – the contents are "independent of all opinion on the subject" (1878a, p. 137). Peirce then defines as *the real*: "that whose characters are independent of what anybody may think them to be" (1878a, p. 137). The crux of Peirce's view is that he separates the dependence of the *existence and properties* of certain phenomena from the issue of *what we believe* about those properties and phenomena.

Peirce's view is further clarified by his attack on the "assumption" that "what is relative to thought cannot be real." Peirce asks: "But why not, exactly? *Red* is relative to sight, but the fact that this or that is in that relation to vision that we call being red is not *itself* relative to sight; it is a real fact" (1905a (1955, p. 264)). Note that Peirce's position on 'subjective' things – including, in this case, secondary qualities – is precisely the opposite of Wiggins' ascription, quoted above.

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Peirce's views about individuation and categorization of Types are also essential to his views about our inductive grasp of Laws of Nature. Peirce insists, *vs.* John Stuart Mill, on the dependence of Laws of Nature on *our* picking out of characters that are important *to us* (1878b, p. 179).[36]

Furthermore, Peirce thinks that certain conditions are "essential to the validity of inductions" – which, after all, relies on determination of *similarities* in conditions, causes, and effects (1878b, p. 179):

> When we take all the characters into account, any pair of objects resemble one another in just as many particulars as any other pair. If we limit ourselves to such characters as have for us any importance, interest, or obviousness, then a synthetic conclusion may be drawn (1878b, p. 179).

That is, the similarities which are essential to any sort of induction depend on our interests. As Peirce himself said, reflecting late in his career: "the most striking feature of [pragmatism] was its recognition of an inseparable connection between *rational cognition and rational purpose*" (1905a (1955, p. 253); my emphasis).

In sum, the popular representations of Peirce's views on the inevitability of convergence on one Truth are essentially incomplete, because they fail to address the deep contingency and interest and value-dependence involved in his understanding of that Truth; in other words, Peirce's views stand in direct opposition to the *ontological tyranny*. Peirce insisted on the irreducible and necessary dependence of Types and Laws of Nature on the *interests of scientific communities*; I conclude that Peirce's views cannot be used to rule out, a priori, any examination or critique of those interests on the basis of sex and gender.

2.4. *Conclusions*

In summary so far, I have emphasized, in discussing the *ontological tyranny*, the historical context and motivations of the original distinction between Primary and Secondary Qualities, because it is extremely important that this configuration of ontological and methodological views constituted a *particular formulation of standards of 'objectivity' for the physical sciences* that was, in turn, dependent on religious beliefs. Next, I examined the views of two philosophers prominently cited as holding non-religious and very strict standards of objectivity and knowledge. I argued that neither Williams nor Peirce can, within their own systems, rule out the potential relevance of a variety of social considerations – including those of sex and gender – even in our most strict, scientific, and respected inquiry. Indeed, Williams' limiting of potential objects of objective convergent knowledge, and Peirce's explicit and radical insistence on the roles of human interests pervading all aspects of inquiry, seem to *invite* the

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inclusion of biological, psychological, and social factors into our philosophical analyses of knowledge, truth, objectivity, and reality. This may be somewhat surprising, because Williams and Peirce have so often been set up as opponents by those currently advocating the indispensability of the social, lived human context in our philosophical understanding of language, meaning, truth, and objectivity. We turn now to a sample of these thinkers.

3. VARIANTS OF OBJECTIVITY

There are many ways of redefining and connecting meanings of *objectivity* that reject the *ontological tyranny*.[37] Such revisions usually involve refinements of 'objective methods' and/or limitations on the *applicability* of objective methodology for knowledge of all aspects of Reality. I would like to summarize, briefly, which parts of the *ontological tyranny* are dropped or transformed in the refinements of the notion of *objectivity* offered by four diverse authors: Rudolf Carnap, John McDowell, Thomas Nagel, and John Searle. I will argue that none of these authors, or those with similar positions, are in a position to *exclude* the potential relevance of analyses of sex and gender from their understandings of knowledge, meaning, and truth, *without argument*. In fact, according to their own arguments and standards, such analyses ought to be taken as central.

3.1. *Rudolf Carnap*

Carnap's many discussions concerning how to make choices among different languages are sometimes spurned on account of their dismissal of 'real' philosophical problems as 'pseudo-problems'. This quibble aside, I would like to illustrate briefly how Carnap's views about the essential sociality of science and its relations to our community's purposes and goals, invite the examination and discussion of sex and gender, among many other facets of social life.

As Carnap describes himself in 1963, "I put now more emphasis than previously upon the social factor in both the acquisition and application of knowledge, be it common sense knowledge or science; furthermore, upon points where the development of a conceptual system or of a theory involves practical decisions; and upon the fact that all knowledge begins with and serves the relations between a living organism and its environment. It is certainly important to keep these aspects in view in order to fully understand such social phenomena as language and science" (1963, p. 861).[38] And Carnap, in a passage remarkably prescient of Longino's argument nearly thirty years later, emphasizes the philosophical centrality

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of problems concerning choices "among conceptual frameworks ... both of theoretical investigations and of practical deliberations and decisions with respect to an acceptance or a change of frameworks, especially of the most general frameworks containing categorial concepts which are fundamental for the representation of all knowledge" (1963, p. 862).

Fundamentally, Carnap thought that reasoned discussion, in terms of the purposes and goals set by the parties in question, was possible and desirable, when considering different or untranslatable languages concerning a particular topic. Carnap gives an example of how such a negotiation about languages could work: "They proceed to communicate to each other their preferences and practical decisions concerning the acceptance of the two languages and their reasons for the decisions" (1963, p. 868, cf. pp. 862–869).

In sum, the irreducible presence of preferences and practical decisions, made within communities of inquirers in a reasoned fashion, clearly allows for concerns about all sorts of issues, including the sex and/or gender structures or coding of languages or conceptual schemes, to count as legitimate topics. This position has deep similarities to Peirce's, which Carnap himself acknowledged; the basic move was to transfer discussion from a priori intuition-bashing to interactive and concrete discussions of the consequences, goals, and reasons involved in seeing things one way rather than another.

3.2. *John McDowell*

John McDowell also rejects the ontological tyranny, and offers a reworked definition of *objectivity*. He rejects the requirement of *detachment* for objectivity, and focuses on discussion of the *publicity* – not of the phenomena in question – but of the standards of judgment accepted and embodied in community practices (1979, pp. 339–341).

McDowell's abandonment of the requirement of detachment is founded on his rejection of the specific connection, assumed in the *ontological tyranny*, between the independent existence of the phenomena being investigated – most especially, on their independence *from us* – and the methodological value of *detachment*. McDowell explicitly bases his rejection of the utility and desirability of detachment on Wittgenstein's conclusions that even mathematical truths are not independent from us and our practices (McDowell 1979, p. 341; 1988, p. 170).

The alternative McDowell offers for detachment is best illuminated in his discussion of our "immersion" in forms of life, and the role of human communities and standards of judgment in knowledge, truth, and meaning. Ultimately, McDowell defends what he identifies as a Wittgensteinian

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view, that we do not have to postulate a psychological mechanism (or rule) underlying behavior in order to *understand* someone doing something correctly (1979, p. 337). The question immediately arises as to the ground and nature of our "confident expectation" that someone will perform appropriately. Here, McDowell turns to Stanley Cavell's discussion about "the competent use of words" as a model:

> ... we learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts.... That on the whole we do [this] is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humour and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation – all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life'. Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this (Cavell 1969, p. 52).

McDowell takes from Cavell the lesson that "it is only because of our own involvement in our 'whirl of organism' that we can understand the words we produce as conferring that special compellingness on the judgment explained" (McDowell 1979, p. 339). In fact, McDowell claims, even the paradigm cases of rationality all have "*dependence* on our partially shared 'whirl of organism' " (1979, p. 341). Hence, we cannot recognize *reason* itself from *outside* the practices of a given community; and this conclusion applies to all cases of reasoning, including deductive argument, and not merely to reasoning about morality or virtue (1979, pp. 345–346).

In the end, McDowell rejects the idea that scientific method gives us a more external or more objective viewpoint; he locates *objectivity* solely *within* a given conceptual framework, and concludes that we should "*give up the idea* that philosophical thought, about the sorts of practice in question, should be undertaken at some external standpoint, *outside our immersion in our familiar forms of life*" (1979, p. 341; my emphasis). McDowell favors a very lean version of 'objectivity' that amounts, essentially, to a willingness to submit one's practices to public, accepted community standards of concepts and frameworks. In rejecting the legitimacy of a "neutral external standpoint," McDowell maintains that what is publicly shared is the "conceptual equipment which forms the framework" within which we conceive the world, and that 'objectivity' is properly conceived only *within* this conceptual framework (1979, pp. 345, 347).

I would like to offer two observations at this point. First, note the strong resemblance between McDowell's views and Carnap's – they both see certain fundamental evaluations – of truth, or of objectivity – as legitimate only *within* certain languages, conceptual schemes or social contexts. Carnap, though, explicitly addresses the issue of how to *choose among* var-

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ious possible languages or frameworks, and he believes that these choices are properly made within community discussions of goals, purposes, and reasons. Carnap's vision of cooperative and rational engagement within a community regarding the *ends*, as well as the reasonableness of the *means*, of conceptual schemas or languages brings the picture of objectivity and rationality up to a meta-level that is comparatively neglected by other authors. One important recent exception is Helen Longino's detailed examination of *how and why* critical discussions of the goals, frameworks, and standards of scientific inquiry are possible and desirable. Longino's analysis focuses on explicitly *feminist* critiques of scientific inquiry, practices, and standards – but her analysis bears strong similarities to the views of Peirce and of Dewey, and it extends effectively to any set of community goals and standards.

The second point is that this continuity between pragmatic and explicitly 'feminist' approaches to scientific knowledge is extremely revealing; it implies that those authors who commit themselves to taking the interests, values and goals of the relevant communities into account are obliged, on the face of it, to attend to the influences within those communities of the categories of sex and gender. One might respond: listen, we can't take *everything* about the community's values and standards into account – and this is, of course, exactly right. But given that there is virtual unanimity among anthropologists that sex and gender roles lay the *foundations* of every human society's other social practices – including communication, lines of authority, distribution of physical, emotional, and intellectual goods, and the very *general* social structures of who decides what – the burden of proof seems to rest squarely on those who want to *include* these more superficial social practices as vital to *philosophical* understandings of meaning, truth, language, and knowledge-acquisition, (e.g., McDowell and Wiggins[39]), while they *exclude* the bedrock social roles of male and female, masculine and feminine – upon which these other social practices are overlaid and constructed.

In the particular case we've just examined, I find it highly peculiar that we have McDowell and Cavell including everything but the kitchen sink as relevant to this 'whirl of organism' and our conceptions of objectivity, truth, knowledge, and meaning – but not sex and gender.

3.3. *Thomas Nagel*

Thomas Nagel departs from the *ontological tyranny* in two crucial ways: (1) he abandons the demand for the third-person accessibility of the phenomena; and (2) the requirement that the phenomena be independently existing from us as knowers – from which we are 'detached' – is remod-

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eled to allow us *as valuers* to be a distinct subset of the subjective part of reality.

The situation is this: our experiences, in their irreducible "what it's like"-ness, do not fulfill the 'objective' methodological requirements of the *ontological tyranny*. And the reason that *this* aspect of our experiences doesn't fulfill the methodological requirements is *ontological* – it has to do with the very nature of those experiences. The crucial trait here is that they are attached, from a particular point of view. The fact is that we don't seem to be able to *separate out* this trait of attachment from our experience, without destroying it in some way.

My reading of Nagel (and also of John Searle) is that they are in the business of arguing that things that don't exist independently from us are *not any less real* in virtue of that dependence; I think that these are *clearly intended* as ontological claims. Searle, whose views I discuss in the next subsection, consistently keeps his focus on this defect of the ontological tyranny.

Nagel, in contrast, goes on about 'the view from nowhere', which embodies a specific methodological program. In his book, *The View From Nowhere*, Nagel argues that we *can* separate out our *attachment* from our experience. Nagel calls the process of progressive detachment – of surgically removing parts of our experience that are peculiar to our own point of view – the "ascent to an objective view."[40] He offers a modified form of 'objectivity', which expands a method of detachment into the subjective realm of reality, where it enables us to construct an "objective self."[41] While he acknowledges that increased objectivity – in the sense of detachment – cannot provide a *complete* picture of the world, he also states that objectivity (as method) is *the only* path to knowledge of reality.[42]

Hence, while Nagel emphasizes the methodological value of detachment, he also insists that there are still parts of reality unreachable even by his revised 'objective' method; he urges that, pragmatically, we must recognize and deal with its limitations (1986, p. 7; 1979, p. 213). It is ironic that Nagel has argued forcefully for the *reality* of the subjective, yet he insists here that we can have little knowledge of it. Among the things that will be *left out* by application of his methodological objectivity to the conception of mind will be: "the exact character of each of the experiential and intentional perspectives with which it deals," which "can be understood only from within or by subjective imagination."[43]

The fact that Nagel ultimately requires some form of detachment for 'objectivity', while he does *not* require third-personal publicity of the phenomena in question, is problematic. One question arises immediately: without publicly accessible phenomena – either in the weak sense of

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humanly obtainable experience, or in the strong sense of third-person cross-checking – how does his 'reflective process' of the 'ascent to objectivity' amount to more than "mere intersubjectivity"?

Nagel responds by insisting that "even subjective concepts" are characterized by a certain, limited *objectivity*: "Just as adrenalin would exist even if no one had ever thought about it, so conscious mental states and persisting selves could exist even if the concepts didn't ... [but] what *are* these things, apart from the concepts which enable us to refer to them?" (1986, pp. 35). Nagel concludes that "there must be a notion of objectivity which applies to the self, to phenomenological qualities, and to other mental categories," *because* the idea of making a *mistake* about these things *makes sense*; i.e., "there is a distinction between appearance and reality in this domain" (1986, p. 36).

The way that we 'make sense' of the appearance/reality distinction, even with the most subjective or 'private' phenomena, is *through community-wide practices or conventions that are acquired and committed to.* Nagel bases this conclusion on his interpretation of Wittgenstein. According to Nagel, "even our most subjective phenomenological concepts are public in a sense ... since a kind of intersubjective agreement characterizes even what is most subjective [as Wittgenstein showed], the transition to a more objective viewpoint is not accomplished merely through intersubjective agreement."[44] That is, the intersubjective adoption of community standards doesn't necessarily get us 'outside' of the world of subjective experience. What, then, is the argument for the claim that the "idea of objectivity always points *beyond* mere intersubjective agreement even though such agreement, criticism, and justification are essential methods of reaching an objective view" (Nagel 1986, p. 108; my emphasis)? Nagel's answer is that the whole *point* of objectivity is "to talk about the world itself" (1986, p. 108), and he rejects that there are grounds for drawing Wittgenstein's distinction between legitimate and illegitimate extensions, *beyond* the range of actual agreement in judgments; the external world "is not dependent on our view of it, or any other view: the direction of dependence is the reverse" (1986, pp. 108–109). I take it that Nagel is emphasizing that, while social and contextual interrelations are *necessarily* involved in meaning, truth, and knowledge, they are not determinative.[45] Still, Nagel's acknowledgement that these factors play the central roles they do, obliges him to *explain* why sex and gender categories are not among the social and contextual factors that count.

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3.4. *John Searle*

Nagel's position looks weak and confused in comparison to John Searle's rejection of anachronistic standards for science and knowledge. Searle makes the genuinely interesting move: he rejects the ontological tyranny *as appropriate to scientific knowledge* – especially of the mind/brain – and thereby undermines the legitimacy of excluding subjective and attached phenomena from our ontology at the start (1984, 1992).[46]

More specifically, by rejecting the appropriateness of an ontologically loaded requirement of *detachment* – with its assumptions of the complete independence of the Really Real – Searle undermines the traditional *ontological tyranny* in a fundamental way. Since we *do* have every reason to ascribe full-fledged Reality to our subjective or attached aspects of experience, there must be something wrong with the *specific standard of science itself* which requires detachment. "If," Searle writes, "the fact of subjectivity runs counter to a certain definition of 'science,' then it is the definition and not the fact which we will have to abandon" (1984, p. 25). Not surprisingly, his vision of a science of the mind/brain is in danger of being branded as 'unscientific' by many philosophers and scientists who are already committed to the linkages among the ontological tyranny, 'objectivity,' and science itself. Even Nagel, who holds similar interests in subjective states, allows his unexamined assumption of the legitimacy of the ontological tyranny to prompt doubts concerning Searle's entire project; Nagel steadfastly denies that any change of the character Searle requires could take place *within science*.[47] Nagel's pessimism is very revealing: it shows his unwillingness to challenge the central ties binding together the ontological tyranny, and it also demonstrates that he has a very specific and anachronistic picture of science itself; at the same time, it highlights the radical nature of Searle's ontological views.

Having dispensed with the *ontological tyranny*, Searle's ontology includes both subjective and objective realities (1992, p. 99). But he still needs to address how these realities relate, and Searle does so through his descriptions of intentional content, or how we get the meanings we do. His basic claim is that our meanings rely on what he calls *the Background*, which includes a broad range of human practices: "... each sentence is interpreted against a Background of human capacities (abilities to engage in certain practices, know-how, ways of doing things, etc.), and those capacities will fix different interpretations, even [when] the literal meaning of the expression remains constant" (1992, p. 179). In other words, "Sentence meaning *radically* underdetermines the content of what is said" (1992, p. 181).

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The dependence of our meanings and directed states of awareness on this essential Background runs very deep, according to Searle:

> ... the Background concerns not merely such relatively sophisticated problems as the interpretation of sentences but such fundamental features as those that constitute the formal basis of all language. ... The syntactical unit [in some cases] ... is not a word in the traditional sense, but a sequence of token inscriptions. Similarly with the systems of opposition that the structuralists were so fond of: The apparatus of hot as opposed to cold, North to South, *male to female*, life to death, East to West, up to down, etc., are all Background based. *There is nothing inevitable about accepting these oppositions* (1992, pp. 185–186; my emphasis).

The fact that Searle explicitly acknowledges the contingency of certain features of the Background here, including sex differences, leads to a serious problem with his dismissal of the intellectual relevance of feminist thought. The problem is related to a deep problem with Searle's notion of Background itself. Sometimes, it seems that he thinks of the Background as a lump, i.e., as undifferentiated and diffuse; other times, he individuates parts of the Background, in order to discuss their relevance to specific cases. This ambiguity in the concept of Background plays an important role in Searle's attitudes about the potential relevance of Background assumptions of intentional states involved in scientific knowledge, beliefs, and judgements. In particular, Searle's argumentative strategies and standards for discussing the status of undifferentiated versus individuated Background are not applied consistently.

Searle begins with the claim (1) that the Background underlies all intentional states. In discussing how the Background relates to specific intentional states, Searle also claims (2) that some parts of the Background are irrelevant to some specific intentional states. In order to demonstrate claim (2), Searle offers the example of the role of Background skills involved in being able to order a hamburger, and the intentional states involved in solving a math problem; his claim is that the hamburger-ordering part of the Background is irrelevant to the specific intentional states of doing the math. This is very plausible; but the crucial point is that Searle, in defending his general claim (2), of the irrelevance of some parts of the Background to some intentional states, offers case-by-case arguments involving particular examples.

Now, consider Searle's claim (3) (quoted above) that sex difference – or the polarity between male and female[48] – are a ubiquitous part of the Background. Nevertheless, Searle also claims (4) that they are irrelevant to most intentional states involved in real science. Searle claims: "the objective truth or falsity of [knowledge] claims made is totally independent of the motives, the morality, or even the gender, the race, or the ethnicity of the maker" (1993, p. 66). This is in spite of his claim, two pages later,

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that "even objectivity only functions relative to a shared 'background' of cognitive capacities and hence is, in a sense, a form of intersubjectivity" (1993, p. 68).[49]

Here is the problem: Searle has set a standard, in his own exposition, of providing cases and examples in order to demonstrate the irrelevance of certain parts of the Background to particular intentional states. Yet he offers none to support his conclusions about the irrelevance of Background assumptions of sex or gender differences to intentional states involving scientific reasoning; in fact, he *dismisses* the potential relevance of these parts of the Background out of hand, without argument. Worse yet, he *cannot* claim that it is *illegitimate* to question, challenge, or examine the presence of the male/female dichotomy in the Background, because he *explicitly claims that such a distinction is eliminable.*

Hence, Searle has not only failed to eliminate the potential relevance of sex differences for understanding our meanings, scientific knowledge, and intentional states, he has actually given an argument *supporting* the *prima facie* centrality of questions about sex and gender for these understandings.

3.5. *Conclusions*

My conclusions for this section are as follows. Notice, first, that a *consensus* about the appropriate way to redefine 'objectivity' – once the ontological tyranny is rejected – is glaring in its absence.

Furthermore, the take-home message of all of the above variants of 'objectivity' (except Searle's) is that the concept is community-based or socially-grounded in its significance to knowledge and truth. And Searle explicitly claims that the social conventions and practices, including those, involving sex and gender, criss-cross the entire background – the keystone of his theory of intentionality. Hence, according to their own standards, all of these authors ought to allow sex and gender as potentially relevant dimensions of the complex contexts that *they* see as necessary to understanding *objectivity* and *objective knowledge*.[50]

4. TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

In this section, I argue that once *type/law convergent realism* is abandoned, sociocultural issues arise immediately; in addition to resistances by reality, values and interests, broadly speaking, are necessarily involved in the development of knowledge and concept-formation. One relevant set of interests is freely acknowledged: part of why we are interested in the phenomena we are, is because we are a specific kind of animal – this

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big, with these senses, needing these things, with these brains, living in these communities, with these aims, with this "whirl of organism," etc., as reviewed in Section 3.

Take the belief that there really is some universe, some reality, independent of each and all human existences. Add the belief that we, as groups of human beings, families, nations, or specific kinds of animals, have ways of understanding this universe, this reality, ways that can vary across individuals, groups, time, or distance. Specifically, we may divide up the world into different types of things – different categories; and we may attend to different regularities of the universe, depending on our needs, interests, or values – that is, we may arrive at various laws of nature (as Peirce argued in his 1878b (1992, p. 15)).

At this point, most philosophers (and some scientists) will ask: Can we compare the relative merits of these different ways of dividing Reality up? Aren't some more 'true to Reality' than others? Suppose that two groups have the customs of using very different sets of categories, and that the two groups seem to believe opposite truths about the same thing?

While I acknowledge that these are pressing questions, I wish to set them aside in this context. The important claim, for our purposes, is that – *absent* a commitment to type/law convergent realism – *it is possible* that there are different categories and laws that are good and *true* descriptions of the universe; some will want to limit their variation in such a fashion that they are all compatible, or intertranslatable, or explainable by some third point of view, or logically consistent. Nevertheless, the pivotal point here is the acknowledgment that Reality doesn't *force* ideal knowledge into a single, unique form, without some *prior* commitment to *type/law convergent realism*. The reason this acknowledgment is crucial is that any view of knowledge and reality that does *not* envision a unique and determinate knowledge of reality as its end, is subject – *legitimately and according to its own terms* – to feminist and other challenges that focus on the irreducible importance of social life, practices, and standards of judgement.

5. THE DOUBLE STANDARD

The belief that 'feminist epistemology' is an oxymoron – because real knowledge of reality involves 'objectivity', and 'objectivity' *just means* 'neutral', 'non-ideological', and 'distanced from any personal interests or idiosyncrasies' – collapses under scrutiny.

It is 'pure epistemology', 'value-free inquiry', and 'disinterested knowledge' that are the oxymorons. Mainstream contemporary epistemologists

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and metaphysicians acknowledge this in their own work, so why do they implicitly hold feminist philosophers to a different standard?[51] The emphasis on the limitations of objectivity, in specific guises and networks, has been a continuing theme of contemporary analytic philosophy for the past few decades. The popular sport of baiting feminist philosophers – into pointing to what's left out of objective knowledge, or into describing what methods, exactly, they would offer to replace the powerful 'objective' methods grounding scientific knowledge – embodies a blatant double standard which has the effect of constantly putting feminist epistemologists on the defensive, on the fringes, and on the run.

This strategy can only work if 'objectivity' is transparent, simple, stable, and clear in its meaning. It most certainly is not. In fact, taking 'objectivity' as a sort of beautiful primitive, self-evident in its value, and all-powerful in its revelatory power, requires careless philosophy, and the best workers in metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of science have made reworked definitions of 'objectivity' absolutely central to their own projects. Nevertheless, these redefinitions of objectivity and their relations to various sorts of knowledge often remain in the background, while the very visible set of views embodied in the ontological tyranny often serves as the *default definition* of 'objectivity' that is rolled out when something authoritative and solid is sought – for example, when feminist critiques arise. Any appeal to a rejected but still default position on 'objectivity' amounts to the strategy of 'bait and switch', which is considered dishonest even in business, much less in philosophy.

In conclusion, there ought to be no such 'ghetto' as 'feminist epistemology'.[52] Classic feminist concerns with exploring the impact of sex and gender on knowledge, understanding, and other relations between human beings and the rest of the world fall squarely within the sort of human and social settings that *are already considered central* in most current analytic metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of science.

Somehow, though, a unified front is implicitly presented against feminist epistemologists: 'objectivity' is of utmost clarity and importance to everyone except the feminists, who are caricatured as disregarding it in order to further their political agendas.[53] This is absurd. Current metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of science, take no such view of 'objectivity' as granted. Feminist epistemologists are challenging themselves and other philosophers to clarify and defend specific concerns about objectivity, truth, and knowledge. Given the problems raised in this paper – i.e., the anachronistic ontology of the *ontological tyranny*, the vulnerability of even those who are taken as paradigmatic defenders – Williams and Peirce – of an alternative model that could legitimately resist the rele-

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vance of feminist categories and challenges, and the abundant and explicit recognition of certain aspects of 'the social' by authors who rarely or never cite or address feminist concerns – the burden of proof is clearly on those who wish to reject the centrality and relevance of sex and gender to our most fundamental philosophical work on knowledge and reality.

NOTES

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[1] The distinction between sex and gender can be understood for our purposes as follows: *sex* (male/female) refers to biological categories, based on external and internal anatomy, and hormonal and chromosomal combinations: *gender* (masculine/feminine) refers to variable traits and behaviors associated with male or female persons. Even if we make the assumption that sex is not socially constructed and enforced (*contra* Fausto-Sterling 1993), we cannot say the same for gender; this shows in the variability of the actual contents of gender roles across cultures, and in the frequent mismatch of sex and gender. Basically, the social construction and enforcement of gender roles amounts to the fact that biologically female bodies are perceived as, and socially constructed to have, a culture's "feminine" traits and social roles, while biologically male bodies are similarly constructed to be "masculine."

[2] E.g., Bleier 1984; Conkey 1991; Fausto-Sterling 1985, 1993; Harding 1986b, 1991, 1992, 1993b; Hubbard 1990; Keller 1985; Lewontin 1990; Longino 1979, 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Longino & Doell 1983: Potter 1993; Rouse 1987; Traweek 1988; and Wylie 1988, 1989.

[3] This latter conclusion is freely drawn in the context of professional conversations and seminars, but it appears rarely in print (but *see* Searle 1993). Searle claims that social reformers such as feminists have been "blocked" in analytic philosophy "by a solid and self-confident professorial establishment committed to traditional intellectual values" (1993, p. 71); I argue that Searle and other philosophers have themselves been *blocked*, through their own "self-confidence", from *fulfilling* their commitment to these same traditional intellectual values – much to the disappointment of the feminists in question. In addition to anecdotal evidence, though, I would like to emphasize the abundance of public, printed evidence for the existence of philosophical segregation of feminist views, such as citation analysis, lack of response to relevant problems raised by feminist authors, as well as more overt marking and marginalization of 'feminist' topics in APA and PSA programs. Make no mistake: I am *not* making a psychological or motivational claim about my colleagues, but rather, challenging our philosophical communities' acceptance (perhaps unconscious) of documentable, quantifiable social facts.

[4] For feminist discussion of 'objectivity', *see* Dupre 1993; Duran 1991; Haraway 1989, 1991a; Harding 1986b, 1991, 1992, 1993b; Haslanger 1993; Keller 1985; Longino 1979, 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Longino & Doell 1983; L. H. Nelson 1990, 1993a; Rouse 1987; Tuana 1989; Wylie 1989. The collections of Alcoff & Potter 1993 and Antony & Witt 1993 are especially useful.

[5] Conkey 1984, 1991; Leacock 1977b, 1978a,b, 1981; Leacock & Nash 1977; Leacock & Safa 1986; Levi-Strauss 1956, 1969; Reid 1970; Reiter 1975. While Leacock acknowledges that "institutionalized specialization by sex must have been critical somewhere along the line of human emergence," she notes that the specifics of these sex role divisions of labor vary considerably from culture to culture (1981, p. 229; cf. Siskind 1978). *See also* Frieze

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et al., who note that "all cultures use sex as one [criterion] for assigning roles," although "in all known cultures," "no matter what specific activities men and women engage in, the roles played by men are valued more by society than the roles played by women" (1978, pp. 79, 83).

[6] E.g., Bennett 1965, pp. 6–12; Haskell 1990, p. 133; Johnson 1987, pp. xxiii ff., 200–202; Mackie 1976, pp. 20, 33–34; Nagel 1986, pp. 4, 7, 13–15, 1993, p. 41; Putnam 1981, p. 54; Rescher 1992, p. 188; Searle 1992; Shapere 1981, pp. 38, 47; Wiggins 1976, p. 336; Williams 1985, pp. 111, 136, 138–139, 149; and Wright 1992, pp. 1–3.

[7] Authors who endorse various methods of detachment on epistemological grounds include: Haskell 1990, p. 134; Johnson 1987, pp. xxx ff; Longino 1993a, p. 261; Nagel 1986, pp. 4, 5, 14, 17, 35–37; Novick 1988; Rescher 1992, p. 190; Scheffler 1967, pp. 1, 8–10; Shapere 1981, p. 45; Williams 1985, pp. 111, 138–140; and Wright 1992, p. 6.

[8] *See* Dennett 1978a, 1991; Hacking 1983, p. 133; Haskell 1990, p. 133; Johnson 1987, pp. xxvii, 173–174, 190–195; Kuhn 1992, pp. 4, 11; Longino 1993a, p. 264; Quine 1981, pp. 71, 177, 184; Rescher 1992, p. 188; Scheffler 1967, pp. 8, 10; Williams 1978, p. 245, 1985, pp. 139–140; and Wright 1992, pp. 6, 10–11.

[9] Some authors require publicity of the most robust sort for any "real" entity (e.g., Mackie 1976, pp. 18–19; Quine 1981, pp. 2–3, 18–19, 35, 87, 177, 184; Williams 1978, p. 247). Dennett is a particularly fierce advocate of the necessity of third-person accessibility for scientific phenomena (1978a, pp. 151, 154; 1988, pp. 47–49, 1991, pp. 71–74).

[10] Cf. Searle 1992, pp. 94–100.

[11] This public process could result in a *kind of detachment*, in the sense of the neutralization of personal idiosyncrasy, in some cases. Daston 1992 places the concern about neutralizing personal idiosyncrasy in science firmly in the mid-nineteenth century, and associates it with the scientific division of labor and demands on public communication that developed during that period (see, for example, Peirce 1868, 1877; Daston 1992; Daston & Galison 1992; Longino 1993a,b).

[12] E.g. Quine 1974, pp. 36–39; and Williams 1985, p. 139. Historically, see Boyle 1744; Hobbes 1651; and Shapin & Schaffer 1985.

[13] *See* Hacking 1988, pp. 149–151; Johnson 1987, p. 212; Kuhn 1977a, 1992; Longino 1990, 1993a, pp. 259–264, 1993b; McDowell 1979, pp. 339, 341; Putnam 1981, 1988, Ch. 7, 1992, pp. 84, 102–103, 214; Quine 1974, pp. 36–39; Rorty 1986, 1988, 1989; Scheffler 1967, pp. 1, 3; Wiggins 1976, pp. 343, 353–360; and Williams 1985, pp. 97–98, 218.

[14] Examples can be found in: Longino 1993a, p. 261; Mackie 1974, pp. 103, 109–112, 223, 285, 1976, pp. 18, 20; McDowell 1979, p. 347, 1988 p. 170; Putnam 1992, pp. 93, 100, 102; Quine 1981, pp. 35, 82, 177; Rescher 1992, p. 189; Rorty 1988, pp. 49, 59–62; Scheffler 1967, p. 10; Williams 1985, pp. 111, 132, 135, 139, 152; and Wright 1992, pp. 1–6. John Searle is an exception; he distinguishes between 'ontologically objective' and 'ontologically subjective', both of which are real (1992, pp. 94–100).

[15] Those who offer some version of the argument that we cannot really "grasp" or make sense of such a concept include: Davidson 1967, 1974; Hacking 1983, pp. 55, 110–111, 1988, p. 151; Putnam 1981, esp. pp. 51–55, 1992, pp. 101–103, 108; Quine 1981, pp. 21, 97; Rorty 1979, pp. 344–345, 1982, 1986, 1987, pp. 36–45, 1988, pp. 54–56, 62–63, 68, 1989; Scheffler 1967, pp. 34–35; Strawson 1959, p. 128; Wiggins 1976, esp. pp. 350–353, 1980; and Wittgenstein 1953 (under some interpretations). Arguments against such a conclusion are offered by Williams (1981, 1985, pp. 138–140), Stroud (1984), and Nagel (1986, pp. 37, 105–109).

[16] *See* P. M. Churchland 1989; P. S. Churchland 1986, 1993; Haskell 1990, p. 134; Mackie 1976, pp. 18–20; Nagel 1986, pp. 7, 26, 77; Novick 1988; Quine 1969, 1981; Rescher

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1992 p. 189; Smart 1963, pp. 84, 92–95; Stich 1983; Teller 1992. Dennett (1978a, pp. 255–256, 1988, 1991) insists that a 'proper' ontology of mind and morals will include only ontologically independent and publicly accessible things (*see also* Quine 1969, 1981, pp. 10–21, 90; Sellars 1968, pp. 133–134, 150).

[17] *See* Haskell 1990, p. 134; Johnson 1987, pp. xxx ff.; Longino 1993a, p. 261; Nagel 1986, pp. 4, 5, 14, 17, 35–37; Novick 1988; Rescher 1992, p. 190; Scheffler 1967, pp. 1, 8–10; Shapere 1981, p. 45; Wiggins 1976, p. 340, 343; Williams 1985, pp. 111, 138–140; and Wright 1992, p. 6.

[18] We may ask what, exactly, is meant by a method of 'detachment,' and what its role is in being able to know things independent from us as knowers; there is some question whether a coherent understanding of 'complete detachment' is possible. One solution lies in conceiving detachment as having degrees; the relevant claim here is that the greater degree of detachment will give us greater knowledge of things independent of us, other things being equal.

[19] This afterlife in philosophy arose *in spite of* the early death of the doctrine of Primary/Secondary Qualities in the physical sciences themselves (Hesse 1974, p. 286; McMullin 1988b, p. 233; Stein 1993). In fact, there was no univocal view, among seventeenth and eighteenth century investigators, about Primary and Secondary Qualities; the historical record certainly shows a wide range of views. *Compare* Boyle 1744; Hobbes 1651, 1839; Locke 1694; Berkeley 1871; and Newton 1726, 1972; or see commentaries by Curley 1972, 1978; Garber 1978, 1992; Grene 1985, 1991; Stein 1993; Stroud 1980; Williams 1978, pp. 237–239; and Wilson 1978, 1979, 1982, 1993.

[20] This is, of course, only one of the available interpretations of Primary and Secondary Qualities, but its variants have been the focus of attention in contempory philosophy.

[21] For instance, Locke, in arguing for mechanical explanations (which, depending on which parts of Locke you read, include only Primary Qualities, or also Secondary Qualities, when understood as dispositions or powers *based* in Primary Qualities to evoke certain sensations in observers), said that they provided "the only way which we can conceive bodies to operate in" (1694, II, pp. 8, 11). The *emphasis* on the *Subject* – so central to both Montaigne's and Descartes' projects – had virtually disappeared, even at this early date.

[22] Descartes, for example, required that the objects of physical inquiry be completely independent of our knowledge, will, or experience (*see* Curley 1978, pp. 147–149; Grene 1985). *See* Locke 1694 II, pp. 8, 24–5; Bennett 1965, pp. 12, 14–17; Curley 1972, p. 442; and Mackie 1976, pp. 11, 16.

[23] *See* Burtt 1932; Curley 1978, pp. 4–9; Grene 1993, pp. 76–77, 84; and Williams 1978, p. 236.

[24] Most conspicuously, Galileo and Descartes. In the Fifth Meditation, Descartes describes the physical Really Real: "I have ideas of things which, whether or not they exist, and whether or not I think of them, have *true and immutable natures* or essences" (Curley 1978, p. 141; Descartes VII, p. 84; my emphasis). Compare Quine, who, in endorsing the philosophical currency of the Primary/Secondary Quality distinction, describes "subjectivity" as varying, inconstant, not "true once and for all" (1981, p. 95).

[25] Galileo Galilei, in Burtt 1932, p. 82. This is not primarily an anti-clerical view, but is rather a metaphysical commitment involving God and his relation to the universe and to human beings. See esp. Garber 1993, p. 292; Part I of Voss 1993; and Rodis-Lewis 1993.

[26] E.g., Mackie 1976, p. 20; Nagel 1986, p. 83; Novick 1988. Cf. Putnam, 1981, pp. 49–55, 73. This requirement is rejected by some, on the grounds that we cannot make sense of such a notion of what we are supposed to be converging on. Putnam, for example, equates "the doctrine that all 'external questions' are without cognitive sense," with "the doctrine

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that no rational reconstruction is uniquely correct or corresponds to the way things 'really are' " (1981, p. 112). Here, Putnam conflates the issue of 'making sense of statements about the world' with the issue of *convergence*. Although Putnam cites Carnap in his support, Carnap actually believed that there were any number of legitimate bases for preferring one reconstruction over another; we can sensibly approach questions about 'the world' – what Carnap rejected was the ideal of *convergence* (1963, pp. 869–873; Richard C. Jeffrey, personal communication).

[27] Searle places similar emphasis on a type of 'independence of reality' (1992, p. 192, 1993, p. 66).

[28] Hilary Putnam's recent claims, that there is no sense to be made of such a picture, seem to be based on a profound misreading of Williams' views (Putnam, 1981, pp. 49–55, 73–74, 1992, pp. 101–103, 108). For example, he takes Williams to be arguing that the absolute conception will contain only physics (Putnam 1992, pp. 83–85, 95, 99–100, 102, 107–108). On the contrary, Williams says nothing about the ontological level or nature of the entities in the absolute conception that would commit him to a physical reductionist view. Putnam's remarks suggest that he has confused one of his own earlier incarnations with Williams (Putnam 1992, pp. 2–3). Also, much of Putnam's evident confusion is generated by his reading Williams' 'absolute conception' discussion as an *argument*, rather than as the description it is meant to be (Putnam 1992, pp. 82–83, 92, 97, 100–102, 107).

[29] Note that this is the stronger version of 'public accessibility' mentioned in Section 1. Specifically, 'third-person accessible' does not include "common perceptual experience", that is, perceptual awareness that individuals have when exposed to the same phenomena (Williams 1978, p. 302).

[30] Even if we remain agnostic – as Williams does – about the possibility of anyone ever reaching the absolute conception, we are still promised *increased and converging access* to *independently existing reality*. Note that even if we acknowledge that no one can ever be *completely* detached, the degree of detachment is portrayed as positively correlating with *increased and converging* access to the Independently Existing part of the Really Real. *See* Williams 1985, pp. 111, 132, 136; cf. Smart 1963, p. 84.

[31] Antony 1993; Boyd 1980; Dennett 1978a, 1978b, p. 256, 1991, esp. p. 71; Hesse 1974, 1988, pp. 234–236; Mackie 1976, pp. 18–19; McMullin 1988a, pp. 35, 39–44, 1988b, pp. 233–224; Nagel 1980, pp. 78–79, 1986, pp. 4–5, 16–17, 77, 83, 1993, pp. 37–38; Novick 1988; Quine 1981, pp. 92, 98; Rescher 1992, pp. 12, 14; Scheffler 1967, pp. 9–10, 13–14; Shapere 1981; Smart 1963, p. 84; and Wiggins 1976, p. 360, make similar claims, as do many others.

[32] Putnam claims: "Williams believes that any conceivable species of intelligent beings (if they frame hypotheses properly, perform the appropriate experiments) can 'converge' toward agreement on the laws of the ideal physics, in the fashion first envisaged by C. S. Peirce" (1992, p. 84; Putnam cites Peirce's 1877 in support of this claim). *See also* Rorty 1982, p. 190.

[33] Cf. Williams 1978, pp. 245, 301. Putnam seems to have missed this vital facet of Williams' view, when he writes about "the absolute conception (which is equated with the complete description of the world in terms of Primary Qualities)..." (Putnam 1992, p. 98, also pp. 84–85, 92–94, 102). Williams put it in black and white: "It is centrally important that these ideas relate to science, not to all kinds of knowledge" of reality (1985, p. 139).

[34] Reprinted in Peirce, 1992. References to Peirce's papers will appear with their original dates of publication, while page numbers will refer to the 1992 edition, unless otherwise noted.

[35] For instance, Shimony attributes to Peirce "an infallible asymptotic approach," and Rorty

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objects to Peirce's "view 'that truth is fated to win' " (Shimony 1970, p. 127; Rorty 1982, pp. xiv, 173; *also* Murphy 1990, p. 30; Nagel 1986, p. 83; Rescher 1978, pp. 1–10, 16, 95; van Fraassen 1989, pp. 21–23).

[36] Part of this argument is an attack on Mill's statistical methods; Peirce's method demands that we designate the character(s) under investigation *before* any statistical samples are taken, in order for the resulting data to count as a test of a Law or generalization.

[37] Vocal opponents of the ontological tyranny have come from all quarters: e.g., Cartwright 1983, 1990; Dupre 1983, 1993; Fine 1984, 1986; Hacking 1983, 1988; Hull 1988; Johnson 1987; Laudan 1981; McDowell 1979, pp. 347, 346, 341, 1988; Polanyi 1969c; Suppes 1978; Wiggins 1976, pp. 338, 340, 363; and much of the literature of feminist epistemologists, esp.: Bordo 1987, 1989; Code 1991, 1993; Haraway 1989, 1991; Haslanger 1993; Jaggar & Bordo 1989; Rose 1983; and Whitbeck 1984.

[38] Note that these concerns were not new for Carnap; *see* his 1928, 1950, 1956, 1967.

[39] Wiggins views are, for the most part, similar in content and motivation to McDowell's. *See* Wiggins 1976, pp. 341, 370–371, 1987, esp. pp. 174–175, 1991.

[40] 1986, pp. 140–141; *see* 1979, p. 206, 1980, pp. 79–81, 91.

[41] 1986, pp. 62–66; cf. 1980, pp. 81–83, 118.

[42] 1979, p. 212, 1980, p. 91, 1986, p. 26.

[43] 1980, p. 90; cf. p. 118; also 1979, p. 170.

[44] Nagel 1979, pp. 207–208; cf. Wittgenstein 1953, 1965; McDowell 1979.

[45] Note that Nagel's view of the dependence of reality on our descriptions of it is the reverse of Peirce's actual view.

[46] As Searle puts the point in *Mind, Brains and Science*, "there *really are* mental states; some of them are conscious; many have intentionaiity; they all have subjectivity..." (1984, p. 27, my emphasis).

[47] Nagel 1993, pp. 39–41; *see* P. S. Churchland 1993 pp. 30–31.

[48] It does seem that Searle also intends gender, i.e., the polarity between masculine and feminine, to be included here, but this is not necessary to my argument.

[49] Oddly, Searle later attacks those who claim that objectivity and universality "tend to reflect local historical conditions" (1993, p. 69). It is difficult to reconcile his rejection of this claim with his own descriptions of the Background.

[50] Other, more direct investigations of the *social* dimension of judgments, inquiry, meaning, and truth have been most thoroughly pursued in feminist philosophy of science and epistemology. For example, *see*: Alcoff & Potter 1993; Antony & Witt 1993; Babbitt 1993; Dupre 1993; Harding 1991, 1992, 1993; Haslanger 1993; Longino 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Nelson 1990, 1993; Rouse 1987; Tuana 1989; Wylie 1988, 1989. *See also*: Bernstein 1983, 1988; Dewey 1925, 1929, 1938; Foucault 1972, 1987, pp. 96–98, 103, 107–112; Hacking 1988, p. 149; Haskell 1990, pp. 131–139; Hesse, 1974, 1988; Hull 1988; Johnson 1987, pp. 190–195, 200, 212; Kuhn, 1970, 1977a, 1992, pp. 11, 13–15; Latour 1993; Nietzsche 1967; Peirce 1871, 1878a; Polanyi 1969b,c; Proctor 1991; Rorty 1988, p. 71; Scheffler 1967, pp. 1–10; Sellars 1968, esp. pp. 220–226; Wilson 1990; Ziman, 1968.

[51] See n. 3. As an instance of the quantifiable social facts I refer to, I offer the following information about sections 3.2–3.4. I discussed fifteen works in these sections, and took six of them (all published after the most recent wave of feminism in the US) as a sample: of the total of 329 works cited in these six sources, there were *zero* citations of works that incorporate sex and/or gender analysis. (The six sources are: McDowell 1979; Nagle 1986; Searle 1984, 1992, 1993; Wiggins 1976).

[52] This conclusion was urged on me by Jonathan Sills and James Lennox independently.

[53] E.g., Searle, on the pernicious influence of ideology in feminist scholarship and teaching:

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"... if you think that the purpose of teaching the history of the past is to achieve social and political transformation of the present, then the traditional canons of historical scholarship – the canons of objectivity, evidence, close attention to the facts, and above all, truth – can sometimes seem an unnecessary and oppressive regime that stands in the way of achieving more important social objectives" (1993, pp. 70–71). That is, political activists don't let facts stand in the way of social reform. It is worth noting that Searle does not cite a single feminist work in this entire piece, even though his examples are almost exclusively about the dangers of feminism in the academy.

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