

## **“Why focus on sexism in your department?” A reductive explanation**

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*Abstract.* Why focus on sexism, rather than other kinds of discrimination? In this brief paper, I introduce a reductive explanation which says, “All other prejudices are just varieties of sexism.”

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*“When I see you, unsteady fellow,*

*I see a coward all yellow.”*

There is this quotation I often find myself responding to and there is a question regarding it which seems worth engaging with. Here is the quotation:

Dougherty, Baron and Miller (2015) provide a useful taxonomy of existing explanatory hypotheses concerning the steep decline in the proportion of women between introductory philosophy courses and philosophy honours (majors), which they divide into five broad categories: *course content hypotheses*, *teaching method hypotheses* (e.g. implicit bias and Buckwalter-and-Stich-style hypotheses concerning gender differences in philosophical intuitions), *hostile atmosphere hypotheses* (e.g. discrimination and sexual harassment), *internalized stereotypes/gender schema hypotheses* (e.g. stereotype threat), and the *impractical subject hypothesis*. (2020: 167)

The question is: why have the writers decided to focus on sexism, when the big

discriminatory issue in your local department seems to be “racist or not”? One suggestion is that there is a reductive approach which needs to be considered and this is that there is one fundamental kind of unacceptable discrimination and all other kinds can be analysed in terms of this one. So here is a reductive schema for making sense of racial prejudice:

East Asians are feminine (in respect EA), and so they need to be suppressed.

Blacks are feminine (in respect B), and so they need to be suppressed.

Jews are feminine (in respect J), and so they need to be suppressed.

And so on...

I worry that if the paradigm of European masculinity is also found to be feminine in some respect, it will lead to suicide! Anyway, has this reduction occurred to someone before? I would guess it has, but it has not been explored in the way that analytic philosophers would like. I am not sure about reopening Otto Weininger.

I can imagine these perceptions of the feminine being combined with an all-or-nothing mentality. Rather like the mentality of a person who thinks, “If you are starting to go bald, just accept baldness and shave off all your hair,” if you are feminine, you should be absolutely feminine and ideally this should be publicly evident; and if you are masculine, you should be absolutely masculine and this should be publicly evident. They even introduce a system of pressures to result in this visible dualism. I am not convinced that is a good idea. It sounds messy! If one insists on liberalism, it may nevertheless be an itch that they cannot stop scratching.

## References

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