

DIVERSITY READING LIST PRESENTS:

FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

A DRL READING GROUP BLUEPRINT BY **ALCARAZ SÁNCHEZ, ADRIANA AND RUSSELL, JODIE**
LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

INTRODUCTION

Feminist philosophy of mind is “an area of study that investigates the nature of mind with reference to social locations marked by categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality, and ability, and/or investigates the nature of social locations with reference to theories about the mind” (McWeeny & Maitra, 2022:3). Contrary to more mainstream approaches to the study of the mind, feminist approaches aim at considering the whole array of factors that might impact our understanding of what the mind is. Whilst feminist philosophy of mind is still a new area of study, it has gained increasing popularity in recent years. In 2023, the Minorities and Philosophy Chapter in Lisbon organised the first conference on the topic, bringing together researchers working in both subfields.

This blueprint aims at fostering this new and exciting approach to the study of the mind to students and researchers without previous knowledge of feminist philosophy curious to understand how tools from this subdiscipline can provide a richer account of the nature of the mind.

How to use this blueprint: The blueprint is designed for both self-study and for helping the organisation of reading groups. The blueprint is organised in 8 weeks, each of them considering a different topic of study that can be advanced with the joint endeavour of feminist thought and work in philosophy of mind. Each week takes one or more selected readings from the anthology “Feminist Philosophy of Mind” (McKeeny and Maitra, 2022) plus one or two additional readings. Each reading is accompanied by prompt questions designed to lead discussion in a reading group session, but also, to guide reading. Except for the first week, the order of the rest of the weeks can be followed in any order.

No previous knowledge of feminist philosophy is presupposed. Some basic knowledge on core topics on philosophy of mind is helpful, yet not indispensable. The reading group is targeted at advanced undergraduate students and postgraduate students, but it can also be useful for teaching staff designing a module on the topic.

CATEGORIES

- Philosophy of Mind
- Feminist Philosophy of Mind

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

<https://diversityreadinglist.org/blueprint/feminist-philosophy-of-mind/>

WEEK 1. APPLYING A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE IN PHILOSOPHY

The first week aims at prompting discussion about how feminist philosophies and methods can aid and improve the study of the mind. The Essential reading by McWeeny and Maitra (2022) provides a novel characterisation of the term "feminist philosophy of mind" and argues for its implementation in mainstream philosophy. This reading can be complemented by reading Garry et al (2017) who give further considerations on how the implementation of feminist viewpoints and approaches can benefit different subdisciplines in philosophy, including philosophy of mind.

MCWEENY, JENNIFER & KEYA MAITRA. *WHAT IS FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY OF MIND?*

2022, in Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*,
Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 1–37.

Difficulty: Easy

Essential Reading

Abstract: McWeeny and Maitra motivate the adoption of a feminist perspective in contemporary debates within the philosophy of mind to further illuminate the nature of conscious experience. They argue that the adoption of a feminist perspective leads to the implementation of a more nuanced investigation of the mind, one that avoids a conceptualization of the mind as a “uniform” concept across beings or groups, and instead, considers the role of the body and different societal contexts. In philosophy of mind, when thinking about “the mind”, we are usually prompted to think about the mind as a universal thing, as something that we all (humans) have. Moreover, when exploring and investigating what makes the mind to be what it is (i.e. which are the intrinsic and special features or consciousness), traditionally, we have been encouraged to think about certain properties of the mind that are universal and can be attributed to anyone. McWeeny and Maitra argue that this mainstream methodology in philosophy of mind is simplistic one. Not only it overlooks the many inter and intrapersonal nuances of each individual’s “mind”, but also the impact of social constructs, such as gender, race, and class, in our understanding of what the mind is, and who has a mind.

Comment: This is the introductory chapter to the anthology "Feminist Philosophy of Mind" (OUP). In here, McWeeny and Maitra (the editors) offer one of the first definitions "feminist philosophy of mind" as a subdiscipline and as a methodology to the study of the mind. They argue that current methods and theoretical work in philosophy of mind has highly overseen the role of the body and society in our understanding of the mind. This text works as a prompt to initiate the blueprint and to consider how the study of the mind could benefit from the application of tools from feminist philosophy.

Discussion questions:

1. What has been the mainstream goal of the subfield of philosophy of mind within contemporary philosophy?
2. In which way feminist philosophers have historically addressed some of the main concerns within the philosophy of mind?
3. According to McWeeny and Maitra, what is “feminist philosophy of mind”?
4. How does a feminist perspective conceptualise the “mind/consciousness”? How does this differ from mainstream definitions in philosophy of mind?
5. How could debates in the philosophy of mind change if we switch to talking about “this [particular person’s mind]” instead of “the [universal] mind”?
6. How feminist perspectives can add value to current work within the philosophy of mind? And, how feminist philosophies would benefit from work in the philosophy of mind?

2017, In *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. Garry, A., Khader, S. J., & Stone, A. (Eds). Routledge: New York, pp. 1-10.

Difficulty: Easy

Additional Reading

Abstract: In this introductory chapter to “The Routledge Companion of Feminist Philosophy”, Garry, Khader and Stone examine the different applications of feminist philosophy outside political philosophy, as well as the different questions concerning this subdiscipline, other than the impact of gender in society and the injustices arising from it. While doing so, the editors advocate for a revision of the history of feminist thought in philosophy that takes a more intersectional approach, an approach that fully considers the role played by authors belonging to a minority group(s). This short chapter provides a quick overview of two very important questions. A first question is how the use of feminist approaches can enrich different more mainstream areas in philosophy, including philosophy of mind, philosophy of science and metaphysics, but also question the philosophical canon. A second question is how considering the voices that are underrepresented in the philosophical canon, including female and non-binary philosophers, but also, non-Western traditions, can shift our understanding of mainstream philosophical issues.

Comment: This chapter should be read as a complimentary to McWeeny and Maitra's as further food for thought on how feminist thought can be applied to different areas of philosophy. Additionally, the authors introduce the notion of "intersectionality" and argue for a revision of the history of philosophy that considers the impact of discrimination in the promotion of different forms of thought. This text can also be a useful starting point or complimentary text for the readings of week 5.

Discussion questions:

1. What makes feminist philosophy different from other subdisciplines in philosophy?
2. According to the authors, how can feminist philosophers in more privileged positions help to make this subdiscipline more representative?
3. How can intersectionality be applied across different domains in philosophy?
4. Do you think that a feminist perspective in philosophy is only limited to the examination of political and social issues? How could be applied to more traditional areas in the discipline?
5. How can feminist philosophy help to narrow the gap between non-Western and Western voices in philosophy?
6. How can we apply a feminist lens when re-examining the philosophical canon?
7. Which aspects of the relation between body and mind were largely neglected by second-wave feminist thought?

WEEK 2. EXPERIENCES OF GENDER

This week considers the metaphysics of gender from two different perspectives: the nature of gender as part of our identity and perspective, and gender as a way of living and acting. As such, this week is designed to raise questions around the nature of gender and how it relates to our cognitive faculties and experience at large. Young's paper pushes the discussion further to present an account of the embodiment of gender that can be oppressive to women, thus allowing for further discussion over the ethical and political nature of gender expression and the possibility of liberation.

RUDDER BAKER, LYNNE. *IS THE FIRST-PERSON PERSPECTIVE GENDERED?*

2022, In Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*,
Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 41-53.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Essential Reading

Abstract: The notion of gender identity has been characterized as “one’s sense of oneself as male, female or transgender.” To have a sense of oneself at all, one must have a robust first-person perspective—a capacity to conceive of oneself as oneself in the first person. A robust first-person perspective requires that one have a language complex enough to express thoughts like “I wonder how I am going to die.” Since a robust first-person perspective requires that one have a language, and languages embed whole worldviews, the question arises: in learning a language, does the robust first-person perspective itself introduce gender stereotypes? Without denying that we unconsciously acquire attitudes about gender that shape our normative expectations, this chapter argues that one’s gender identity is not just attributable to the biases implicit in the language one speaks. So the robust first-person perspective itself is not responsible for which gender-specific attitudes a person acquires.

Comment: Rudder Baker's chapter on the first-person perspective and gender identity is a great starting place to begin thinking about what it means to experience the world through the lens of gender. Rudder Baker's chapter also poses interesting thought experiments, such as whether a disembodied being would have a gender identity (she argues "no") or whether it is possible to live in a gender-less society. The chapter also introduces the reader to the necessary conditions by which we might want to say that someone has a gender identity and so is a fruitful springboard for further and deeper discussions about not only gender, but language and personal identity more broadly.

Discussion questions:

1. What role does language play in the acquisition of a first-person perspective? And is language necessary for the acquisition of gender identity?
2. Could someone have a first-person perspective that isn't gendered?
3. Can we imagine a society where all gender norms and attitudes would disappear in virtue of social-normative and technologic-normative changes?
4. In so far as gender becomes relevant to first-person perspectives through the adoption of norms, how do gendered experiences that doesn't exist on the normative binary of man/woman come about? Similarly, how is a plurality of gendered experiences under one unifying label (such as 'woman') possible?
5. To what extent does Rudder Baker imply that we have some agency over constructing our gender identity? Do you agree?

Essential Reading A

Abstract: The enactivist paradigm of embodied cognition represents a powerful alternative to Cartesian and cognitivist approaches in the philosophy of mind. On this view, the body plays a constitutive role in the integrated functioning of perception, affect, and other cognitive processes. Enactivism shares many of the central themes of feminist theory and is extended to apply to social and political concerns. Following a discussion of the key components of the enactive approach, we apply it to explain more complex social manifestations, specifically gender performance and its reproduction through time. By employing Judith Butler's notion of performativity, we demonstrate how gender, as one marker of social identity and difference, emerges through processes of embodied and embedded sense-making as articulated by enactive theory. We argue that more attention to embodied and embedded values allow for the interruption and transformation of histories of oppressive practices and opens the door to more liberatory possibilities.

Comment: Butnor and MacKenzie apply a specific paradigm - the enactive model of cognition - to the understanding of gender identity in this chapter. This chapter is thus a useful introduction to the enactive framework, but is also an important reading for those already familiar with the literature as it both tries to consider how gender can be 'natural' but also deeply social and political. As such, Butnor and MacKenzie straddle the line between the scientific and the political by providing a non-reductive, natural account of gender that does liberatory work. This reading is also highly relevant to feminists who are critical of essentialist views of gender and poses to them the question of whether we can have our naturalist cake and eat it too.

Discussion questions:

1. What does the enactive framework buy us for our understanding of gender as performance? Does looking at gender through an enactive lens apply new insights to the phenomena? If so, what are they?
2. How would you cash out power in terms of enactivism? Enactivism argues that the social environment places constraints on autonomy, but how do power imbalances arise from that?
3. Can enactivism be a liberatory framework for overcoming oppressive gender scripts, as Butnor and MacKenzie suggest?
4. As a naturalistic theory of mind, does enactivism provide us with a middle way between essentialist and social constructivist accounts of gender?
5. In so far as enactivism is a framework for life and mind, not just human cognition, what might we infer about gender and non-humans? Could other social creatures have gender identities?

YOUNG, IRIS MARION. *THROWING LIKE A GIRL: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF FEMININE BODY COMPORTMENT MOTILITY AND SPATIALITY*

1980, *Human Studies* 3 (1), pp.137-156

Difficulty: Intermediate

Essential Reading B

Abstract: This essay describes experience and oppressions of feminine styles of comportment, tracing in a provisional way some of the basic modalities of feminine body comportment, manner of moving, and relation in space. It highlights the certain observable and rather ordinary ways in which women in society typically comport themselves and move differently from the ways that men do. The account developed here combines the insights of the theory of the lived body as expressed by Merleau-Ponty and the theory of the situation of women as developed by Beauvoir. It limits itself to the experience of women in contemporary advanced industrial, urban, and commercial society, offering specific observations, phenomenological interpretation, and implications for an understanding of the oppression of women.

Comment: Young's paper "Throwing Like a Girl" has become a classic text on the embodiment of gender and thus an important touchstone for contemporary discussions on the effects of gender norms. Given an embodied view of the mind, Young's paper can also be said to elucidate not only how we enact gender norms but also how gender permeates our way of cognitively interacting with the world. Thus, this reading compliments the chapters from Butnor & MacKenzie and Rudder Baker, while introducing the reader to two prominent phenomenologists which the feminist philosophy of mind movement draws on: Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This paper would also nicely compliment Benette Jackson's chapter "Embodiments of Sex and Gender: The Metaphors of Speaking Surfaces" in Maitra and McWeeny's *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*.

Discussion questions:

1. Name other examples of what Young describes as distinctly female body comportment. What makes them 'female' and why have these come about?
2. Does Young accurately capture the differences in the way that different genders are expressed in embodiment?
3. In the characterization of women as immanent beings, does Young (and de Beauvoir) overlook the agential (or transcendent) experiences that also define womanhood?
4. Given the habitual nature of gender that is impressed on women from without, how is resistance possible?
5. When does female body comportment materially disadvantage women? How does it otherwise contribute to their oppression?

WEEK 3. MENTAL CONTENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OBJECTS

The third week covers the topic of mental content as well as psychological objects. It considers how mainstream positions about the nature of mental content do not provide a full picture given their overlook on the impact of the social context. On the one hand, Maitra (2022) provides an original proposal for a feminist theory of mental content, one that considers the role of the historical and societal context in the development of representational content. On the other hand, Scheman and Antony examine how, and to what extent, patriarchal structures and social norms affect our conceptualisation about the ontology of psychological objects. Given the complexity of the texts, readers can choose to either read and discuss in one session Maitra, or both Scheman and Antony.

MAITRA, KEYA. *TOWARDS A FEMINIST THEORY OF MENTAL CONTENT*

2022, in Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 70–85.

Difficulty: Intermediate-Advanced

Essential reading A

Abstract: In this article, Maitra explores the intersection of feminist theory and philosophy of mind, aiming to develop a feminist theory of mental content. She examines how traditional theories of mental content in the philosophy of mind have not properly captured the experiences and mental states of marginalised groups. These theories, according to Maitra, have overlooked the role of historical and sociocultural forces and how they shape the content of many social constructs. The article advocates for a more inclusive and context-sensitive approach to mental content, one that acknowledges the impact of social and cultural factors on individual cognition and experiences. To that aim, Maitra offers a feminist modification of Millikan's Teleosemantic View by articulating a notion of "function", the content of representational content, as resulting from cultural and social contexts. She ends the article by showing an application of this modified Teleosemantic View for understanding how certain oppressive terms (i.e. 'whiteness', 'immigrant') come to have the content they do, by drawing into José Jorge Mendoza's article "Illegal: White Supremacy and Immigration Status".

Comment: Maitra is one of the first to put forward a proposal for a feminist account of mental content by offering a revision of Millikan's teleosemantic account that considers the role of the historical and societal context in the constitution of representational content. She offers a nuanced analysis of mainstream theories of mental content, including Putnam's and Burge's externalism and argues that those views should undertake some modifications before they can be adopted in a feminist framework: namely, their lack of consideration of the historical and societal context.

Discussion questions:

1. Why does Maitra think that externalism is the most appropriate view for a feminist approach to mental content? And which sort of externalism?
2. In your opinion, what makes mental states have the content they have? Are those affected by internal or external factors?
3. From a feminist perspective, what should we reject internalism?
4. What do mainstream externalist theories fail to consider? What would a feminist externalist account of mental content be like?
5. Maitra criticizes Putnam's Twin Earth thought experiment as lacking a social dimension. Do you think that in general, thought experiments in philosophy lack this dimension? Think of any examples and how they would benefit from integrating this dimension.
6. How does Maitra apply Millikan's Teleosemantic model for examining the content of some oppressive words?
7. How do you think internalised racism (or implicit bias) might affect the function of certain words?

SCHEMAN, NAOMI. *INDIVIDUALISM AND THE OBJECTS OF PSYCHOLOGY*

1983, in Hardin, S. and Hintikka, Merrill, B. (eds) *Discovering Reality*.
Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Company, pp. 225–244.

Difficulty: Advanced

Essential reading B (1)

Abstract: Scheman argues against individualism, the thesis that psychological states are intrinsic objects that can exist independently from the context in which the individual lives. Scheman argues that while individualism is taken as de facto theory about the ontology of psychological objects given its alignment with physicalism, individualism is an ideological position rooted in a patriarchal system. According to Scheman, individualism prevents us from wholly considering psychological objects in relation to socially embedded norms. Scheman advocates for an anti-individualist position by examining how individualist approaches arise as a result of an embedment of liberal individualism and patriarchal culture.

Comment: This is one of the seminal articles linking feminist philosophies to work in philosophy of mind. In here, Scheman offers a nuanced examination of how a popular doctrine in philosophy of mind, individualism, has the widespread acceptance it has if we consider its background assumptions: the need to individualise psychological states to commit to a physicalist theory of the mind. Scheman also provides a critical analysis of why individualism should be rejected from a feminist standpoint since it does not take into account the socially embedded norms in which psychological objects exist. The article is a bit difficult to follow but reading it together with Antony's quite aid comprehension.

Discussion questions:

1. What is psychological individualism?
2. Why should one question psychological individualism from a feminist perspective?
3. Why is individualism such a universally accepted assumption about the ontology of psychological states?
4. What's Scheman's argument for the role of liberal individualism in maintaining individualist positions?
5. How does Scheman rely on Freudian ideas to defend that patriarchal child-rearing practices lead to individualism? Is she right?
6. How can Scheman's anti-individualism be adopted for a feminist conception of mental content?

ANTONY, LOUISE M. *IS PSYCHOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM A PIECE OF IDEOLOGY?*

1995, *Hypatia*, 10(3), pp. 157–174.

Difficulty: Intermediate-Advanced

Essential reading B (2)

Abstract: Antony challenges Naomi Scheman's claim that "psychological individualism", sustains the ideology of patriarchy. According to Scheman, psychological individualism fails to consider the social and relational context that influences psychological phenomena. Antony challenges Scheman's view that psychological individualism has no place within a feminist approach. According to Antony, Scheman's criticism about psychological individualism is misplaced and psychological states can be individuated while at the same time maintaining their part in a more complex system (i.e. social context).

Comment: Antony offers a juxtaposed view to that of Scheman on the role of the social in understanding the nature of mental states. Antony rejects individualism as a "piece of ideology" and Scheman's claim that a feminist standpoint in philosophy of mind cannot accept the individuation of mental states. This text should be read together with Scheman's.

Discussion questions:

1. Why does Antony consider that radical feminist revisions of mainstream philosophical ideas have been received negatively? What is her position on these approaches?
2. According to Antony, what's Scheman's rationale for connecting psychological individualism with patriarchy?
3. Can psychological objects be individuated at all?
4. In which way does Antony use the example of the essence of baseballs to challenge Scheman's view against psychological individualism?

5. Do you think that one can be an individualist while still maintaining a feminist approach to the ontology of psychological objects?

WEEK 4. PERSONAL IDENTITY

The fourth week covers the topic of personal identity and how feminist approaches might challenge mainstream theories. According to James (2022), current frameworks on personal identity contend that the preservation of personhood depends on psychological continuity. At T2, I am the same person I was at T1 iff the person at T2 is psychologically continuous with the person at T1. James, as well as Brison (2022), challenge psychological continuity views by arguing that psychological features (including memory) highly depend on the body, and thus, that the body cannot be completely overlooked if we want to preserve personal identity over time. Gonzalez-Arnal (2012) provide a challenge to embodied accounts to personal identity defended by James and Brison by considering the case of transsexuality where important aspects of one's self might be incongruent with one's embodiment. Note that Brison's reading come with a trigger warning, and thus, it's reading should be optional. Thus, readers can choose to complement James' with either Brison (noting the trigger warning) for a supporting view, or with Gonzalez-Arnal for a juxtaposed view.

JAMES, SUSAN. *FEMINISM IN PHILOSOPHY OF MIND: THE QUESTION OF PERSONAL IDENTITY*

2022, in Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*,
Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 156–172.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Essential Reading

Abstract: In this essay, James challenges current psychological theories on personal identity—theories arguing that psychological continuity is a criterion for personal identity. James offers a feminist examination of popular thought experiments aimed at showing that one's person's character and memories could be transplanted into someone's else body, thus, preserving a person's survival. According to James, those thought experiments don't take into account the role of the body in constructing one's identity and character, as well as influencing one's memories.

Comment: In this article, James argues for a deeply embodied account of personal identity. James claims that current psychological theories on personal identity, tend to overlook the role of the body in maintaining psychological continuity. Mainstream thought experiments used by those theories, for instance, examples of body swap, undermine the extent to which psychological traits of a person depend on a body. James claims that the body is constitutive for developing one's identity and character. Additionally, she offers an analysis of the role of gender on personal identity by examining how patriarchal structures promote the idea that the mind can be independent of the body.

Discussion questions:

1. What do you think makes psychological transplant cases so intuitive and attractive to some philosophers?
2. Discuss: could all character's traits survive any sort of alterations to the body? If not, which sort of alterations might have an impact?
3. In which way does James think that transplant cases regard the body as a mere receptacle?
4. In your view, are we born with an already established character and identity?
5. Consider the comparison between the twin case and the female fashion model in the body of a male garage mechanic presented by James. Which role does gender play in these cases? Would the female fashion model case be different if she were to be transplanted into another female body?
6. According to James, in which way have patriarchal ideologies played a role in downplaying the role of the body in the preservation of personal identity?
7. In the words of James, "What is it to survive"? For you, what would it mean that "personhood" has been preserved in transplant cases and other similar thought experiments?

BRISON, SUSAN J. *OUTLIVING ONESELF: TRAUMA, MEMORY, AND PERSONAL IDENTITY*

2022, in Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*,
Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 313–328.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Additional Reading (see TW)

Abstract: “How can one die in Vietnam or fail to survive a death camp and still live to tell one’s story? How does a life-threatening event come to be experienced as self-annihilating? And what self is it who remembers having had this experience?” By examining the lived experience of survivors from traumatic events, Brison sets to explore what exactly “the self” is. According to Brison, the self is “both autonomous and socially dependent”, which makes it prone to be disrupted by traumatic events, but also, can be healed through safe and healthy relationships.

Comment: Trigger warning: This article discusses accounts of trauma, including descriptions of an event of sexual assault that occurred to the author, as well as its aftermath. If used in a syllabi, this text should be presented as "optional" and students should be warned about its sensitive nature. A brief notice of TW should also be presented at the beginning of a session where the text is discussed. Also note that the suggested prompted questions for guiding reading of this article, as well as prompting discussion, also treat sensitive topics.

Susan Brison provides a compelling argument about the embodied nature of the self by examining how traumatic events can have an impact on our personal identity and highly disrupt our personhood. Brison defends a relational account of the self in which the self is constructed through our interactions with others, and at the same time, affected by those interactions, making it vulnerable. By drawing first-hand from her own experience with trauma, Brison shows the importance of integrating lived experiences in the development of philosophical accounts.

Discussion questions:

1. Discuss: What do you think about the definition of “trauma” that Brison provides? Do you think that it should be wider or narrower?
2. According to Brison, after a traumatic event, “one can no longer be oneself even to oneself, since the self exists fundamentally in relation to others”. What do you think of this claim? Can one exist independently of their relation to others?
3. Discuss: Why do you think that the body has been historically rejected by (male) philosophers? Could that view have been different in a non-patriarchal society?
4. In Brison’s view, how do traumatic events challenge psychological (or memory) views of personal identity?
5. According to Brison, how reporting the traumatic event to others might eventually become therapeutic? What do you think?
6. What does it say about the relational self, the fact that trauma survivors do better by engaging with others? (others being empathic to them)

Additional Reading

Abstract: In this article, Gonzalez-Arnal challenges Susan James' embodied conception of personal identity by analysing transexual narratives. According to Gonzalez-Arnal, James' account cannot fully capture the experience of transexual persons since they describe the continuity of their personal (but also gender) identity despite significant changes in their bodies. Gonzalez-Arnal examines how other two theories of personal identity, a reductionist and a dualist one, might provide a better picture of the transexual narratives. After concluding that none the reductionist nor the dualist account does much better than an embodied view of personal identity, Gonzalez-Arnal proposes an improvement to James' view that accommodates transexual experiences, namely, acknowledging the integration of the "inner" self and other's perception of one's body in shaping one's "outer self".

Comment: This article would be a good pairing to support the reading of James' "The Question on Personal Identity" (2002). In this article, Gonzalez-Arnal presents a compelling counter-example to James' argument that her theory should be preferred over psychological theories on personal identity given the role of embodiment on personal identity. According to James, mainstream thought experiments involving body swaps rarely discuss cases involving two bodies of different gender because they, intuitively, do not bring us to believe that Person A would survive a body swap with a Person B of different gender. Gonzalez-Arnal challenges James' argumentation by presenting the example of transsexuality by showing that their personal identity is preserved even though significant changes in their body take place.

Discussion questions:

1. According to Gonzalez-Arnal, why James' embodied conception of the self does not capture the sense of personal identity in transexual narratives?
2. What is Gonzalez-Arnal rationale to argue that for certain important aspects of our personal identity, such as gender identity, the role of the body might be necessary but not sufficient? Can you think of other aspects of our self to which the same rationale might be applied?
3. What sort of criticism can be made to reductionist accounts of personal identity regarding gender as a culturally and historically variable construct?
4. How could a Cartesian account of the self be applied to understand the idea that transexual persons might have an "inner 'core'" which is incongruent with their bodily characteristics?
5. On Prosser's theory, what are the differences between the "inner" and the "outer" body, between what can be "felt" and what can be "seen"? Other than in cases of transsexuality, in which those two don't seem to match, can you think of other cases in which incongruencies might also take place?
6. Following Green's narrative on becoming a visible man, how do you think a relational account of the self might be useful to explain his process of coming out as trans? How our relationship with others might turn helpful in cases in which the inner self doesn't match with the outer self?

WEEK 5. RACE

Following on from weeks 2, 3 and 4, this week considers the nature of self and other understanding within the context of race and hegemony. These readings consider the nature of White and non-White empathy, understanding, and experience and how the differences lead to the marginalisation and alienation of non-White individuals.

JONES, JANINE. *DISAPPEARING BLACK PEOPLE THROUGH FAILURES OF WHITE EMPATHY*

2022, In Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*,
Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 86-101.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Essential Reading

Abstract: Empathy is sometimes thought to be, if not a moral panacea for crimes against humanity, then a moral motivator to work against them. This chapter argues that the construction of black people's minds in Manichaeian opposition to that of white people's is at the root of white failures of empathy for black people. The chapter maintains that it is primarily due to this Manichaeian-structured opposition, grounded in a fundamental difference between white and black fungibility, that white people's ability to successfully perceive or empathize with black people is impeded. This view understands white and black fungibility as established by and derived from the nature of the kinds of minds constructed through anti-black, white-supremacist logics. Black fungibility is derivatively attributed to black bodies and implemented through them. The chapter proposes that rather than seek to empathize with black people, white people aim to self-empathize.

Comment: Jones' chapter nicely situates problems with models of empathy within the discussion of understanding racial injustices. As such, this chapter provides a clear, brief introduction to three different ways that empathy might be cashed out, as well as the issues with each from the perspective of where White empathy can, and does, fail. Jones also expands the concept of 'fungibility' to Black and White bodies as part of the diagnosis of why empathy fails, which is a useful tool for unpacking and critiquing other aspects of philosophy of mind, such as the nature of 'reasons' or 'rationality'.

Discussion questions:

1. Name some cases in which Black people, stories or bodies are used in popular media (film, TV, literature etc.) as a vehicle for White exploration. How are Black individuals 'fungible' in these cases?
2. What problems could Jones's account of the failure of White empathy also pose for models of social cognition? Are these frameworks (e.g. Theory Theory, Simulation Theory) constructed along White expectations of empathetic understanding?
3. How are White and Black fungibility importantly different and how can this difference be used to move past problematic forms of White empathy?
4. What kind of depth of empathy does Jones think White people should strive for? What does this entail and where can it go wrong?
5. How might Jones' analysis apply to other theories of empathy not mentioned?

AHMED, SARA. *A PHENOMENOLOGY OF WHITENESS*

2007, *Feminist Theory*, 8(2), pp.149-168

Difficulty: Intermediate

Additional Reading

Abstract: The paper suggests that we can usefully approach whiteness through the lens of phenomenology. Whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space, and what they 'can do'. The paper considers how whiteness functions as a habit, even a bad habit, which becomes a background to social action. The paper draws on experiences of inhabiting a white world as a non-white body and explores how whiteness becomes worldly

through the noticeability of the arrival of some bodies more than others. A phenomenology of whiteness helps us to notice institutional habits; it brings what is behind to the surface in a certain way.

Comment: Ahmed provides a phenomenological account of White experience as comfort and being at home, which compliments Jones's analysis of the failure of White empathy. While Ahmed's focus is on race in this paper, her analysis of the structure of Whiteness equally applies to multiple domains, such as gender, class, sexuality and disability, so while it is marked as 'further' reading here, this text could easily provide the foundation to multiple themes for this blueprint, and would also make a good starting point for those that wish to read Ahmed's excellent "Queer Phenomenology".

Discussion questions:

1. Given the strength of which Whiteness is an ingrained habit of being in the world, how is resistance possible and how does it already occur?
2. Think about the reading group/tutorial/seminar/workshop in which you are discussing this text. What are the stopping and orientation devices at play and how do they work?
3. How could Ahmed's analysis apply to other kinds of orientations (e.g. gender, class, sexuality, disability)?
4. How do you think Ahmed would diagnose the problem of failures of White empathy?
5. In what ways are we shaped by what we inherit and what we are proximal to? Give examples.

LUGONES, MARÍA. *PLAYFULNESS, 'WORLD'-TRAVELLING, AND LOVING PERCEPTION*

2022, In Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*,
Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 105-122.

Difficulty: Easy

Essential Reading

Abstract: This paper considers the ontological implications of encountering varying levels of intelligibility when one traverses social structures, such as when one immigrates to a new culture or works in a place with people of a different economic class than one's own. This paper terms this phenomenon "world-travelling," which the paper understands as the shift in self-experience that occurs when an oppressed person moves from an environment where she is readily perceived as an active subject to one where she is perceived as a passive instrument of others' wills and desires. Such a situation opens on an ontological paradox because it seems that the same person is capable of possessing two contradictory attributes at the same time. The chapter explains how this paradoxical situation could obtain by arguing that attributes of consciousness are world-dependent. It concludes that the self is actually "a plurality of selves" and that the structure of subjectivity is neither unitary, universal, nor ahistorical.

Comment: Lugones' concept of world-travelling and playfulness compliments well the discussion in Jones' chapter on empathy. Both authors consider how identification can fail, but come to slightly different conclusions about how to facilitate empathy. These readings would thus work well when read together closely. Lugones' discussion on play also provides a springboard for not only discussing resistance to oppression, or arrogant perception, but also the embedded and problematic assumptions behind the notion of play that may be present in academic definitions. Indeed, if we understand play more along Lugones' lines, this may not only help us 'world travel' to meet other humans, but, perhaps, non-humans as well.

Discussion questions:

1. What characterises 'arrogant perception'?
2. Does Jones' worries about transference and fungibility in White empathy apply in the case of Lugones' loving perception, where identification is key?
3. Lugones links a lack of playfulness with a lack of health. How should we understand this claim? Are all serious individuals 'sick'?
4. If we are different 'selves' in the worlds we inhabit, what creates continuity, or is there any?
5. Is there a difference between world-travelling and code-switching?

WEEK 6. MENTAL DISORDER

This week's readings seek to answer the question of why feminists should be concerned about the topic of mental disorder in philosophy of mind; mental disorder is not merely a fringe topic or case where 'normal' cognition goes wrong, but is central to understanding one of the many ways in which the study of the mind marginalises particular individuals. This topic is covered from two perspectives: problems with the medical model, as raised by Jennifer Radden, and problems with the science of the brain, as raised by Anne Jacobson. The additional readings here supplement these discussions with further elaboration of particular concepts, like epistemic injustice and values in scientific claims.

RADDEN, JENNIFER. *SYMPTOMS IN PARTICULAR: FEMINISM AND THE DISORDERED MIND*

2022, In Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*,
Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 121-138.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Essential Reading

Abstract: Contrary to influential medical and cognitivist models governing how mental disorder is usually understood today, the socially embedded, disordered “mind,” or subject, of feminist theory leaves little room for idiopathic causal analyses, with their narrow focus on the brain and its functioning, and reluctant acknowledgment of symptoms. Mental disorder must originate well beyond the particular brain of the person with whom it is associated, feminist analyses imply. Because the voiced distress of the sufferer cannot be reduced to the downstream, “symptomatic” effects of brain dysfunction, symptoms can be seen differently, as central to the diagnostic identity, and constitutive of (at least some) disorders. And new attention is required for the testimony of women diagnosed with mental disorder, vulnerable as it is to epistemic injustices. Corrected explanations of women’s mental disorder leave remaining concerns, both epistemological and ethical, over the madwoman narrating her symptoms.

Comment: Radden's paper introduces the reader to broad concerns with the dominant medical model of disorder from a feminist perspective, highlighting the tension with a naturalistic, reductionist approach with the situated and ecological approach of Radden's feminism. This article touches on topics mentioned in other readings (such as enactive conceptions of mind and epistemic injustice) but contextualises them within the field of philosophy of psychiatry. As such, this article is a fruitful springboard for critically considering the nature of medicine and psychiatry from multiple angles. This chapter would be complimented by the further reading of Russell's (2023) paper on Enactive Psychiatry.

Discussion questions:

1. Can / should a feminist approach to madness and mental disorder be associated with the medical model at all? Is the feminist approach to ‘amend’ the medical model?
2. How can we use feminist theory to bridge the ‘experiential gap’ between clinicians and patients to avoid epistemic injustices?
3. How could the epistemic injustices Radden mentions affect disorder experience itself?
4. Are there important differences between mental and somatic illnesses in the ways that women are treated?
5. How does simply having disordered experience itself marginalise individuals as 'minded' beings?
6. Can we overcome epistemic injustices with more socially informed scientific research (as in Jacobson's chapter)?

Additional Reading

Abstract: In recent years, autopoietic enactivism has been used to address persistent conceptual problems in psychiatry, such as the problem of demarcating disorder, that other models thus far have failed to overcome. There appear to be three main enactive accounts of psychopathology with subtle, although not incompatible, differences: Maiese characterizes disorder as distinct disruptions in autonomy and agency; Nielsen characterizes disorder as behaviours that relevantly conflict with the functional norms of an individual; De Haan emphasizes patterns of disordered sense-making, that are transformed through the existential dimension. Given that these accounts are intended to provide not only an ontologically richer account of psychopathology but also reduce the stigma experienced by individuals with mental disorders by accounting for lived experience, a critical analysis of these approaches is needed. Russell provides a problematization of enactive accounts of mental disorder, showing that this particular framework does not, as it stands, necessarily reduce the harm and suffering experienced by individuals with mental disorder because of its ontological openness; enactivism leaves much to be interpreted and applied by the clinician (or patient) such that practical and ethical problems in its use arise.

Comment: This cheeky inclusion of Russell's paper as further reading would suitably compliment both the readings on mental disorder, and Butnor and MacKenzie's chapter on gender, for a deeper discussion. The positive feminist thesis is left vague at the end of this paper, which provides a nice starting point to discuss solutions to the problems with enactivism raised therein. This paper also provides a nice entry-point into the enactive literature, which might provide an enticing, situated model of mind to compliment particular feminist outlooks.

Discussion questions:

1. How does enactivism overcome the problems with reductive models of mental disorder?
2. Does enactivism plausibly provide better understanding of disorder experience?
3. Are the claims made by enactivism 'mixed', as Russell claims? Is this a problem for other models of mental disorder?
4. What kinds of frameworks, as Russell suggests, be supplemented to overcome the issues with enactive psychiatry?
5. Does enactivism convincingly naturalise the normative?

Essential Reading

Abstract: Cognitive neuroscience can offer us new explanations of episodes human behaviour that, unlike many explanations traditionally available, do not draw on questionable past theories arising from cultures and traditions that are in fact patriarchal. At the same time, feminists have had a number of reasons for regarding it suspiciously as, among other things, reductive and dehumanizing. In this paper, new work on borderline personality disorder provides an illustrative example of the first. It is also used in an extended argument against the second. Cognitive neuroscience is interested principally in explaining how creatures function well in their niches. It is replete with covert references to values and interests. The paper draws an important distinction between cases in which culture creates new conditions for old functions to be realized and those where it creates new functions.

Comment: Jacobson's chapter is an insightful exemplar of feminist philosophy of neuroscience that charts a course between hard-naturalism of mind in science and the pure social-constructivist theories of mental disorder. Jacobson's case study of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) demonstrates the ways in which values may be embedded in psychiatric categories, but the phenomena can nevertheless be accounted for using normatively-informed neuroscience. Feminist philosophy of science at large is an influence here, and thus this chapter is an important bridge between this topic and our own, feminist philosophy of mind.

Discussion questions:

1. When men largely dictate the interests of fields like neuroscience, how do feminists steer those interests towards equality and liberation?
2. One may argue that the neuroscientific view inherently excludes lived experience; how does a feminist philosophy of neuroscience prevent epistemic injustices that have come about from the historical exclusion of lived experience in health research?
3. How do we adjudicate between competing interests in neuroscience?
4. Can a neuroscience that incorporates normativity ever be called 'objective'? What does that mean for the strength of neuroscientific claims?
5. Can the incorporation of values in CNS help adjust the power balance between researchers/clinicians and patients? If so, how?

RITUNNANO, ROSA. *OVERCOMING HERMENEUTICAL INJUSTICE IN MENTAL HEALTH: A ROLE FOR CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY*

2022, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 53(3), pp. 243–260.

Difficulty: Easy

Additional Reading

Abstract: The significance of critical phenomenology for psychiatric praxis has yet to be expounded. In this paper, Rituanno argues that the adoption of a critical phenomenological stance can remedy localised instances of hermeneutical injustice, which may arise in the encounter between clinicians and patients with psychosis. In this context, what is communicated is often deemed to lack meaning or to be difficult to understand. While a degree of un-shareability is inherent to subjective life, Rituanno argues that issues of unintelligibility can be addressed by shifting from individualistic conceptions of understanding to an interactionist view. This takes into account the contextual, historical and relational background within which meaning is co-constituted. She concludes by providing a corrective for hermeneutical injustice, which entails a specific attentiveness towards the person's subjectivity, a careful sensitivity to contingent meaning-generating structures, and a degree of hermeneutical flexibility as an attitude of openness towards alternative horizons of possibility.

Comment: Ritunnano's paper clearly situates the concept of hermeneutic injustice in the field of mental health, using psychosis as a case study. Although it predominantly deals with just one type of epistemic injustice, Ritunnano's paper is nevertheless an approachable entry into the topic that complements Radden's chapter. The field of critical phenomenology is also introduced, which links strongly to feminist considerations when trying to understand lived experience. Thus, this paper makes for good further reading on the topic of feminist philosophy of mind and mental illness.

Discussion questions:

1. What are the kinds of challenges that clinicians and patients may face when communicating?
2. In what way is hermeneutic injustice a 'harm'?
3. Does Ritunnano's focus on critical phenomenology help us overcome hermeneutical gaps?
4. How might Lugones' idea of playful world travelling (from week 5) contribute to the discussion on hermeneutic injustice?
5. Can critical phenomenology help with overcoming testimonial injustices as well?

WEEK 7. THEORIES ABOUT THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM

This week approaches one of the main topics in the philosophy of mind, the mind-body problem. It does so by examining how applying a feminist approach, one that considers the role of the social on the mental, can provide a full characterisation about the nature of mental states. On the one hand, McWeeny considers the potential of panpsychism to answer the attribution question, the question of which bodies, or entities, have minds. On the other hand, Droege and Scheman provide a criticism of reductionist physicalist theories and argue for a theory on the nature of mental states that considers the social as constitutive of the mental. As in Week 2, given the complexity of the topics covered, we recommend that readers choose to either read and discuss McWeeny or the combination of Droege and Scheman's for a reading group's session.

MCWEENY, JENNIFER. *WHICH BODIES HAVE MINDS? FEMINISM, PANPSYCHISM, AND THE ATTRIBUTION QUESTION*

2022, in McWeeny, J. and Maitra, K. (eds) *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*.
New York: Oxford University Press (OUP), pp. 272–293.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Essential Reading A

Abstract: This article develops a new framework for addressing the attribution question, the question of which bodies have minds, by bringing a feminist perspective to metaphysical considerations about the mind. McWeeny argues that the attribution question, when applied to individuals who have been subject to different sorts of oppression, is not only a question about whose bodies have minds but also a question about the degree of “mentality” attributed to certain individuals and the mental constitution of those individuals.

Comment: McWeeny provides a novel examination of the attribution question by looking into what might be considered one of the most inclusive theories about the mind: panpsychism. According to Panpsychism, “mentality is ubiquitous in nature”. Thus, we should expect panpsychism to hold an equal attribution across all bodies, and assert that all bodies have minds, without discrimination. McWeeny shows us, upon further examination, how mainstream panpsychist views (Russellian or physicalist panpsychism) fail to do so. McWeeny provides a detailed analysis of how Cavendishian Panpsychism is more well-placed to give a feminist perspective on the attribution question.

Discussion questions:

1. According to McWeeny, what are the benefits of Cavendishian panpsychism over Russellian panpsychism? Do you think it provides a more feminist approach to the mind-body problem than other frameworks?
2. What are the risks of Cavendishian panpsychism? Would the assumption of an equal attribution ratio for every single body lead to the overinclusion of minds? (i.e. fetuses, micro-organisms).
3. According to Cavendish, “bodies are necessarily minded”. Do think that her view could affect current developments in AI and robotics? Shall we reframe what we mean by “body”?
4. In your view, how the “degree attribution” might still prevail nowadays as a result of implicit racism? Discuss.
5. How does Cavendish reject the “degree attribution” by maintaining a difference in the kind of conscious experience across species?
6. According to McWeeny’s analysis, how capitalism has contributed to a mechanistic view of the body? How could we change this?
7. McWeeny closes the article with the following: “Here we find that not all views of mind are equal when it comes to explaining mental phenomena, nor are all conceptions of mind equally egalitarian when it comes to instantiating liberatory configurations of the social. The task of a feminist philosophy of mind is to hold both desiderata at the same time.” How do you think feminist philosophy of mind can help to advance research in this respect?

Essential Reading B (1)

Abstract: In this article, Droeger defends a nonreductive account of materialism, which in her view, can be endorsed by feminists since it considers the dynamic relations among mind, body, and environment. Droeger shows how “new materialism” or nonreductive materialism preserves the role of social interactions in explaining the constitution of mental states, while at the same time, also considers the role of the physical. Droeger argues that ignoring the physical is a mistake that some feminists commit that prevents us from offering a full picture of the nature of social constructs, such as “gender”. In the materialist view that Droeger supports, physical causation is seen as “indeterminate, constantly in flux, and potentially both disruptive and supportive of human projects”. Droeger closes the article by showing how feminist methods, by taking an interdisciplinary approach, can provide a more nuanced picture of the nature of the mind, one that considers both the role of the physical and social world.

Comment: Droeger defends a nonreductive account of materialism, which, in her view, doesn't stand against feminist criticisms of physicalism. Similarly to Scheman's "Against Physicalism", Droeger argues that mainstream physicalist theories have ignored the role of the social in their explanations about the mental. Droeger offers an analysis of how feminist practices can illuminate work on the philosophy of mind by taking an interdisciplinary approach that brings together findings and viewpoints from different disciplines.

Discussion questions:

1. Droeger states: “A belief is a meaningful object only at the psychological level of explanation”. Why does she claim so? And do you agree?
2. Droeger claims that “physical explanations[...] are tempting because they offer the possibility of simple solutions”. She presents the example of two explanations such as “testosterone makes men aggressive” or “poor diet explains poverty”. Can you think of similar examples in the philosophy of mind? And how could those explanations benefit from a more careful examination of the social and political sphere?
3. Why does Droeger think that we need an ontology of the physical world to fully capture social constructs?
4. Droeger claims: “Feminists should be materialists, because our engagement with the material world shapes who we are and holds the promise of what we can become.” Do you agree?
5. According to Droeger, work on animal cognition is less patriarchal, yet is not published as “feminist.” Why do you think this is the case?
6. Why does Droeger think that feminists can help researchers deal with interdisciplinary research? Isn't this an extra burden for the feminist? (i.e. to play the role of “mediator”?)
7. Droeger quotes Janice Moulton and says “Philosophers problematically assume that “the only, or at any rate, the best, way of evaluating work in philosophy is to subject it to the strongest or most extreme opposition’. Why is that problematic? And how is this hindering the field of philosophy instead of advancing it?
8. Is Droeger right in considering the methods of cognitive ethologists similar to those of feminists, and thus, to regard them as feminist methods? Is this just a matter of semantics? (p.265)
9. Discuss: Was Nagel wrong after all, can you know what is it like to be a bat? (p.266)

Essential Reading B (2)

Abstract: This is a revision of Scheman's seminal paper originally published in 2000 which provides one of the first pieces showing how mainstream philosophy of mind can benefit from the insertion of feminist thought in its practices. In this article, Scheman criticises mainstream physicalism as ignoring the social context in its explanations of the mental. According to Scheman, this dismissal is a mistake since “beliefs, desires, emotions, and other phenomena of our mental lives are the particulars that they are because they are socially meaningful [...]”

Comment: Scheman's article is a revision of a seminal paper originally published in 2000 which provides one of the first pieces showing how mainstream philosophy of mind can benefit from the insertion of feminist thought in its practices. In this article, Scheman criticises mainstream physicalism as ignoring the social context in its explanations of the mental. According to Scheman, this dismissal is a mistake since “beliefs, desires, emotions, and other phenomena of our mental lives are the particulars that they are because they are socially meaningful [...]” This article can be nicely paired with the reading of Droege's one for a different viewpoint on how to develop a feminist theory on the mind/body problem.

Discussion questions:

1. According to Scheman, why feminists have been critical of dualism? (For more on this, see James' text on Week 4). Are those the same reasons held to argue against physicalism?
2. Do you think that, according to Scheman, we should reject any form of physicalism? Can we have a form of physicalism that considers mental states as dependent on the social? Do you think that physicalism could still reconcile the role of the social context?
3. Why should we take the example of the music performance as a counter-example against physicalism and the principle of causal closure? Does it succeed in showing that a physical event didn't have a physical cause?
4. Could it be that the physicalist project and Scheman's criticisms are pointing at different levels of explanation? It seems that one is to determine what is the cause of one event (i.e. mental state) and the other, how to account for the nature of that state (i.e. social). Discuss.
5. In pp. 248-49, Scheman compares the notion of mental states to socially constructed notions such as “woman”. How does she relate both notions?
6. What is the alternative, if both, dualism and physicalism should be rejected? What is the solution offered by Scheman?

WEEK 8. SEXUAL ORIENTATION

This week on sexual orientation draws together many of the themes regarding gender, agency, and recognition but situates the discussion more firmly within the topic of sexual desire. The two essential readings follow two different traditions in this manner, continental and analytic, to elucidate different issues and come to different conclusions. The goal of this week is to stimulate thought on sexual orientation from multiple angles and show its connections to other issues, such as gender. The further reading from Judith Butler is especially helpful in this regard.

AHMED, SARA. *SEXUAL ORIENTATION*

2006, In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, New York, USA: Duke University Press, pp. 65-107.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Essential Reading

Abstract: Focusing on the “orientation” aspect of “sexual orientation”, Ahmed examines what it means for bodies to be situated in space and time. Bodies take shape as they move through the world directing themselves toward or away from objects and others. Being “orientated” means feeling at home, knowing where one stands, or having certain objects within reach. Orientations affect what is proximate to the body or what can be reached. A queer phenomenology, Ahmed contends, reveals how social relations are arranged spatially, how queerness disrupts and reorders these relations by not following the accepted paths, and how a politics of disorientation puts other objects within reach, those that might, at first glance, seem awry.

Comment: This paper is especially stimulating if students earlier on the course also read the text by Ahmed on the week on race, as much of "A phenomenology of whiteness" informs Queer phenomenology. This specific chapter, however, focuses on sexual orientation, and discusses some of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Ahmed's article may also be required reading for those exploring a distinctly phenomenological approach to sexuality and could be read in alongside Díaz-León's chapter, which follows in the analytic tradition, for a broader range of 'styles' of discussion of sexual orientation in philosophy.

Discussion questions:

1. What does it mean to 'straighten' queer orientations? In what ways are queer desires 'straightened'?
2. To what extent does Ahmed successfully psychoanalyse Freud? Are you convinced by her analysis?
3. What are heterosexual objects? Name some examples. How do they come into being?
4. How do sexual orientations like bisexuality or pansexuality, where one could 'pass' as straight, fit into Ahmed's analysis? How could you apply queer phenomenology to understand these orientations?
5. how is sexual orientation linked to the idea of the 'gift'? What is this gift?

DÍAZ-LEÓN, E. *SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS: THE DESIRE VIEW*

2022, In Maitra K. & McWeeny J. (eds.), *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford University Press: New York, pp. 294-309.

Difficulty: Easy

Essential Reading

Abstract: Talk about sexual orientations is widespread in our society and our culture, but very few analytic philosophers have paid attention to questions about the nature of sexual orientations, such as what sexual orientations are and what “sexual orientation” means. This chapter examines the main theories that are available in the recent and growing literature on this issue, including behaviourism, ideal and ordinary versions of dispositionalism, structuralism, and views according to which sexual orientations are mental states such as sexual desires. It discusses several objections to these views, and develops and defends a new version of the view that characterizes sexual orientations in terms of sexual desires.

Comment: Díaz-León's paper is an approachable entry point into the literature on defining sexual orientation. This paper works well without background reading on the wider debate and is especially approachable for those already familiar with behaviourism and its issues. Díaz-León also demonstrates the different feminist projects we may take up within the literature on the mind: the descriptive and the political. Both of which provide fertile ground for discussion and debate.

Discussion questions:

1. Is there an important way in which Cary may be different from other heterosexual men? Can the views presented capture this difference?
2. Are there any other intuitive examples against the Bidimensional Dispositionalism view?
3. Is asexuality a sexual orientation on the desire view?
4. Do you agree with Díaz-León that it is politically useful to capture the sex-gender of the person in question when defining their sexual orientation? Does Díaz-León's new definition capture everything that is politically useful?
5. In footnote 7, Díaz-León describes a solution to a problem case raised to the structural definition of sexual orientation. Does this response adequately capture the nature of sexual desire between both trans women and cis-women, and between cis-women and other cis-women

BUTLER, JUDITH. *PERFORMATIVITY, PRECARIETY AND SEXUAL POLITICS*

2009, *AIBR, Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana*, 4(3),
Septiembre-Diciembre 2009, pp. i-xiii.

Difficulty: Easy

Additional Reading

Abstract: Gender performativity is one of the core concepts in Judith Butler's work. In this paper Butler re-examines this term and completes it with the idea of precarity, by making a reference to those who are exposed to injury, violence and displacement, those who are in risk of not being qualified as a subject of recognition, There are issues that constantly arise in the nation-states, such as claiming a right when there is not a right to claim, or being forced to follow certain norms in order to change these norms. This is particularly relevant in the sexual policies that are shaped within the nation-states.

Comment: Butler draws together multiple themes in this paper to talk about how facets of our identity (gender, sexuality and even our national/ethnic identity) are strongly determined by external structures, even when we try to subvert those structures. While sexuality is a key theme in this paper, Butler discusses the theme of recognition, subjecthood and precarity from multiple angles, making it a cornerstone for multiple themes in this blueprint. The discussion on assimilation and translation is also highly relevant to Ahmed's discussions both in *Queer Phenomenology* and "A phenomenology of whiteness".

Discussion questions:

1. What are the norms behind legibility and recognition? How are these enacted and enforced to include some and exclude others?
2. Are there possible connections between Butler's analysis in this paper and the literature on epistemic injustice? Would a notion of epistemic justice overcome some of the hegemonic issues Butler raises?
3. What is the connection between 'translation' and 'performance'?
4. Does Butler take an overly pessimistic view of the subversion of particular norms? Is it possible to forge new, innovative norms and identities?
5. What can we do such that other forms of living, i.e. other than heteronormativity, become less precious, without assimilating these ways of living into the normative 'standard'?