THINKING ABOUT GENDER AND VALUE

WHAT "GENDER" IS NOT

A frequent popular confusion is to take the word "gender" to mean "about women." This interpretation is misleading on two counts. First of all, women are not the only sexed people in the world. Men are also sexed; it is only because maleness has often been confused with universality that the implications of male sexual identity have been pushed into the background. Second, (except where the substitution of "gender" for "sex" is done because of squeamishness about the latter word's possible connotation of sexual activity) "gender" is now used in much scholarly literature to refer to something different from biological sex. Seeking to distinguish between inborn proclivities and socially created stereotypes, feminists have taken over the term "gender" to refer to the latter. While this book takes a feminist viewpoint, in this chapter the term "gender" will be used in a way that also has much in common with the term's older, linguistic, sense.

In linguistics, gender refers to the way in which many cultures divide words into distinct classes and mark them accordingly. While masculine/feminine are common linguistic genders, other classifications such as inanimate/animate can also form the basis for grammatical gender. That is, the emphasis in this book is on the way in which the masculine/feminine distinction serves as a means of classification undergirding language and thought, rather than how the sex/gender system tends to mold men and women in stereotypical ways. This chapter investigates how gender serves as a cognitive organizer, based on the idea of metaphor as a basic building block of understanding. Without this background, the argument of the next chapter -- that current economics is held back by its gender associations -- can hardly help but be misunderstood.

This chapter investigates current conceptions of gender, and suggests a way of envisioning gender which does not conflate notions of masculinity and femininity with judgments about worthiness.
THE ESSENCE OF METAPHOR

"The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another," as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson say in their work, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980: 5). According to them, and numerous other researchers in the areas of cognition, philosophy, rhetoric, and linguistics, metaphor is not merely a fancy addition to language, but is instead the fundamental way in which we understand our world and communicate our understanding from one person to another (e.g., Ortony 1979; Grassi 1980, cited in Weinreich-Haste 1986; Margolis 1987; McCloskey 1985). Lakoff and Johnson give many examples of how the language we use reflects metaphorical elaborations of more abstract concepts on the foundation of basic physical experiences. Our perception of "up/down," for example, forms the basis for "good is up, bad is down," "reason is up, emotion is down," "control is up, subjection is down," and "high status is up, low status is down." Richer meanings can be found in more complex metaphors such as "argument is war" (reflected in language like "win," "lose," "defend," "attack"), "argument is a journey" (e.g., "step by step," "arrive at conclusions") or "argument is a building" (e.g., "groundwork," "framework," "construct," "buttress," "fall apart").

These metaphors affect our understanding and our action: for example, if we perceive ourselves as engaged in an argument, how we interpret what we hear and how we respond depends in good part on which metaphor we use. Metaphorical understanding is also culturally variable. For example, there could exist another culture that uses the metaphor "argument is dance" and so uses language of esthetics, style and synchronization. All of the above examples are given by Lakoff and Johnson.1 Echoes of a similar understanding of cognition and communication can be found in works that speak about cognition in terms of "webs of connection" (C. Keller 1986), "patterning" (Margolis 1987; Wilshire 1989), "cognitive schema" (Bem 1981), Gestalts, or analogies, instead of metaphor. I will use the word "metaphor" loosely, to mean all these.

One can gain additional insight into the human mind's way of classifying and understanding by looking at "gender" in the strictly

1 While tracing out an intricate pattern of metaphors based on physical experience, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 29) base their concept of "embodiment" on experiences of separation and self-containment that feminist scholars could identify as distinctly masculine. They also overlook some possible sexual bases for metaphors (e.g., "up is good", see pages 15, 29) that might appear more readily to a feminist linguist or philosopher. Their analysis of "our" use of metaphor may be easily reinterpreted as an analysis of a distinctly masculine (as well as white, Western, and English-speaking) construction of cognition.

THINKING ABOUT GENDER AND VALUE

linguistic sense. Corbett (1991) explains that gender systems always have a semantic core, that is, some words for which the meaning of the word determines its gender. This includes direct association, as, for example, in Spanish one finds la mujer (the woman, feminine) and el hombre (the man, masculine). Also included in the semantic core are metaphorical associations, mediated through associations of objects with the sexes through myths and children's stories or by association with the customary occupations of the sexes. For example, while the English language has only pronominal (pronoun) gender, dogs are commonly considered more masculine than cats in English-speaking cultures, perhaps due to images in children's literature. Some words may take their grammatical gender only formally, from morphological (word structure) or phonological (sound structure) rules, having no relation (even metaphorical) to sex (Corbett). In this book, it will be gender in the metaphorical sense that is primarily of interest, though I will go beyond the strictly linguistic sense to include metaphorical associations not reflected in word structure and to include parts of speech other than nouns. I will also use "gender" somewhat more narrowly than in the linguistic sense, in that I will discuss only metaphors built on the male/female distinction. The key point, however, is that the masculine/feminine distinction serves as an organizing pattern in our minds and language.

GENDER AND METAPHOR

I use "gender," then, to refer to the cognitive patterning a culture constructs on the base of actual or perceived differences between males and females. Gender is the metaphorical connection of non-biological phenomena with a bodily experience of biological differentiation. Bodily sexual difference is clearly a salient part of experience starting in early childhood, in most cultures. Yet one of the major breakthroughs in feminist analysis has been the discovery that many (if not most) of the traits assumed to be "essentially" male or female related, in a biological sense, actually have very strong cultural components. Take, for example, the idea that men are more suited for intellectual work than women. The smaller size of the female brain was taken as scientific proof of intellectual inferiority in the nineteenth century (Bleier 1986). While the lack of connection between size and power has since removed this craniometric argument, the undermining of such supposed biological proofs does not necessarily carry with it a cessation of gender attribution. The cultural salience of the idea of women as less intelligent than men may persist in spite of a lack of supporting theory and even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

To say something has the masculine gender, then, is not to say that it necessarily relates to intrinsic characteristics of actual men, but rather to
say that it is cognitively (or metaphorically) associated with the category "man." A male person is biologically masculine; a pair of pants (as on the stick figures that adorn restroom doors) is only metaphorically so. An angular abstract shape may also be understood through the metaphor of masculinity, as contrasted to a curvy abstract shape. Cats are generally considered in contemporary American culture to be more feminine (in disregard of their actual sex), whereas dogs are considered more masculine. The Pythagoreans connected masculinity to odd numbers and femininity to even numbers (Lloyd 1984). In all these cases, the attribution of gender tells us more about how human minds work—a about our tendency to organize what we see according to gender—than about any properties inherent in pants, shapes, cats or numbers, or about any of the constraints put on men and women in American (or Pythagorean) society. There is general agreement within a particular culture, at a particular time, in a particular context, about which objects, activities, personality attributes, skills, etc. are perceived to be masculine, which are understood as being feminine, and which are more or less ungendered. As the functioning of gender categories varies historically and cross-culturally, I need to clarify here that when I talk about "our" conceptions of gender I will be referring, with all due apologies to non-Western readers, to dominant conceptions held in the modern Western and English-speaking world. When I refer to "masculine" or "feminine" traits, I do not mean traits that are essentially "more appropriate for" or "more likely found in" persons of one sex or the other, but rather traits that have been culturally, metaphorically gendered.

The dominant conception of gender is as a hierarchical dualism. That is, to the metaphorical connections outlined by Lakoff and Johnson of up-in-center-control-rational we can add "superior" and "masculine," and to the connections of down-out-periphery-submission-emotional we can add "inferior" and "feminine." The traditional, dominant conception of gender can be represented by the following picture:

```
Masculine (+)   Feminine (-)
```

That is, masculinity and femininity are construed of largely as opposites, with masculinity claiming the high status side of the line. Discussions about the metaphorical connection of this duality with numerous

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THINKING ABOUT GENDER AND VALUE

other hierarchical dualisms such as science/nature, mind/body, etc. are endemic in feminist scholarship (e.g., Hartsock 1983: 241; Harding 1986: 23). Tables like the following appear with great frequency, illustrating the metaphorical association of particular traits with gender in post-Enlightenment Western, white, thought:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reason</td>
<td>emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard</td>
<td>soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tendency to connect metaphorically behaviors, activities, and attributes with masculinity or femininity extends not only to cultural conceptions of appropriate social roles for women and men, but also far beyond, as in the cat and dog example. To a reader who would question the asymmetry of what I argue is the dominant conception of gender (who would, perhaps, prefer to think of the actual social meaning of gender differences in terms of a more benign complementarity) I need only point out some obvious manifestations of asymmetry in the social domain. Rough "tomboy" girls are socially acceptable and even praised, but woe to the gentle boy who is labeled a "sissy." A woman may wear pants but a man may not wear a skirt. Even fathers who consider themselves feminist may feel much more comfortable taking their daughter to soccer practice, than they would taking their son to ballet. The hierarchical nature of the dualism—the systematic devaluation of females and whatever is metaphorically understood as "feminine"—is what I identify as sexism. Seen in this way, sexism is a cultural and even a cognitive habit, not just an isolated personal trait.

One way of changing the understanding of gender and value might be to assert simply that "feminine is good, too." While one might be able to gain some ground by this route, when looking at the roles played by stereotypically feminine concepts and traits, it sooner or later becomes clear that some of these factors are quite unattractive. If masculine is "strong" and feminine is "weak," who wants to be weak? Another way of challenging the association of masculinity with superiority and femininity with inferiority might be to decide to do away with gender associations entirely. Perhaps we can just talk about good and bad traits, and leave gender out of the discussion. While some may hope for such a case

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3 While it is possible that the association of terms with gender categories is stronger in the thinking of some individuals than in others (Ben 1981), this does not negate the idea that certain associations are culturally dominant. The question of what significance to give to biological difference between the sexes is currently being debated in the feminist literature, as Chapter 10 discusses at more length.
theory, feminist and economic

as an ultimate goal, it seems premature to throw away gender categories if they still are actively used as cognitive and social organizers. The line between overcoming gender distinctions and simply suppressing (or, the more psychoanalytic might say, repressing) them is, as will be discussed in Chapter 10, one that can be too easily crossed. I suggest a third alternative, based on a more specific diagnosis of what is wrong with the old hierarchical gender dualism.

the old metaphor collapses categories

In contrast to traditional dualistic conceptions, I suggest that opposition is itself only unidimensional in its basis of physical orientation, and not the realms to which the dualism has been metaphorically applied. For example, "down" is clearly the opposite, negation, or reverse of "up," but "emotional" is not unambiguously an antonym for "rational." One might consider "irrational" to be a better antonym. If we think one-dimensionally and assert that each concept can have only one opposite, then the only way out of this dilemma is to collapse the rational/emotional and rational/irrational comparisons by equating emotion with irrationality (and rationality with lack of emotion). But we do not need to be limited to thinking one-dimensionally. "Irrational" is the opposite of "rational" in that it signifies as lack of the latter; "emotional" might be construed as the opposite of "rational" in the sense of complementarity, i.e., that there is some value to achieving a balance including both capacities. My Webster's dictionary (New Collegiate 1974) allows "complementary" as one definition of "opposite." Dare we use it ourselves in our thinking about gender?

I would like to suggest that we think about "opposition" as encompassing relationships both of lack and of complementarity. I will use the word "difference" to include both these aspects of opposition plus a third concept that I will call "perversion." A concept is a perversion of another if it is similar (not opposite) but different due to distortion, corruption, or degradation. For example, emotionalism, or the tendency to make judgments on purely emotional terms (and hence irrationality), is a perversive use of emotional capacity, just as rationalism, in which all emotion is suppressed, is a perversive use of rationality.

The three different concepts of difference - lack, perversion, and complementarity - can be illustrated with reference to conceptions of masculinity and femininity in Aristotle's biology of sexual difference. In thinking about gender in terms of lack, masculinity is defined by certain attributes, and femininity by their absence. For example, from Aristotle: "The woman is as it were an impotent male, for it is through a certain incapacity that the female is female" (quoted in Lange 1983: 9). Women, according to Aristotle, have less "heat" than men and, accordingly, less

A NEW METAPHOR: THE GENDER-VALUE COMPASS

My new metaphor retains gender as a cognitive patterning system; it retains hierarchy in matters of value judgment; it retains opposition. I would argue that these are fundamental categories of thought that must be transformed rather than repressed. What this conception of gender

1 At least, they are fundamental categories for most present-day, English-speaking Westerners. While one can learn much about the limitations of one's own cognitive structure from cross-cultural comparisons, I am skeptical about whether one can, as an adult, deliberately "rewire" one's own cognitive processing at such a basic level that these categories could be overcome. (See Chapter 10.)
gains over the unidimensional dualism is a radical break of gender categories from value categories, and an explicit exposition of the various meanings of difference. It can be presented in the form of a diagram which may seem deceptively simple: it just separates the masculine-positive and feminine-negative ends of the dominant conception into two separate dimensions: feminine/masculine and positive/negative. I hope that this simplicity will make it immediately useful as a cognitive organizer. The apparent simplicity is deceptive because the jump from one to two dimensions doubles the number of categories involved - increases them from two to four - while tripling the types of relationships that can be represented: from that of poles on one dimension to relationships that are horizontal (which will represent complementarity), vertical (which will represent perversion), and diagonal (which will represent lack). This complexity makes the picture richer than it may first appear.

I will present the mechanics of the diagram first and then illustrate with examples of how it may clarify thinking. Imagine a situation or question that asks for a judgment about human behavior and that has often been answered in gender-oriented ways. Draw the diagram in two dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Feminine, Positive</td>
<td>Feminine, Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The shape of this diagram should have immediate cognitive "availability" for readers familiar with four-quadrant graphs or two-by-two matrices, without need for further metaphorical elaboration. For those readers who find this diagram unfriendly, I suggest thinking about it as analogous to a directional compass, with poles corresponding to north, south, east, and west. This interpretation suggests further metaphorical insights. As a compass, its service is to guide and direct - in this case to guide our thinking. It also "encompasses" a larger space than the old dualistic metaphor, which could be represented by the masculine-positive and feminine-negative diagonal.

The four cells marked off by the axes are related in the following ways. "Good" or positive attributes are entered in the top of the
The "compass" metaphor for this diagram also highlights the human-defined, culturally variable meaning of gender: objectivity is no more inherently "masculine" than Europe is inherently "Western," though in contemporary discussions of science it often resonates as such. Speaking from an American perspective, it would be more logical, in fact, to say that Europe is "Eastern." Directionality, like gender, depends on the standpoint of the perceiver. Examples of the fluidity of gender categories are legion. Evelyn Fox Keller (1986b) points out that "visibility" is associated with femininity in literary criticism, but with masculinity in the history of science. "Softness" is associated with femininity within a context of white, middle-class culture, but less associated with femininity when images of gender are intermixed with images of race and class. I find it interesting to note that when the image of science under discussion is one of serious, methodical people in white lab coats, creativity is often considered a feminine, flighty attribute. But if the image of science is of a bushy-haired Albert Einstein pondering creative new solutions, it is patience with routine (and the proverbial nimble fingers) that is considered to be the "natural" strength of the feminine gender. From this comes the conclusion that, while women are suited to be laboratory assistants, they are not potential scientists. The point of this diagram is not to set gender-value judgments in stone: it is merely to explore them in their contextual setting when they are culturally salient.

Take as an example the soft/hard distinction given in the simple dualistic chart. The sense in which masculine-associated hardness is good is through its association with strength. The feminine-negative correspondent term, indicating a lack of hardness or strength is "soft," in the sense of "weak." This fills up one diagonal of the diagram:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
M+ & F+ \\
\hline
\text{strong-hard} & \text{flexible-soft} \\
\hline
M- & F- \\
\text{rigid-hard} & \text{weak-soft} \\
\end{array}
\]

But hardness can also mean a lack of flexibility, that is, rigidity or a lack of the malleability needed to adapt to changing conditions. "Softness" also has other connotations besides weakness. The aspect of feminine "softness" that needs elevation here is not weakness, but rather flexibility or resilience:

Each of the positive terms now in the diagram can be seen as one half of a necessary complementarity to achieve "durability." In addressing a problem, one needs to have the strength to endure at the same time as one needs the flexibility to try new solutions. Weakness is the absence of strength, and rigidity is the absence of flexibility. Weakness is the negative aspect of softness, whereas rigidity is the negative aspect of hardness. The negative complementarity defines "brittleness."

**SEPARATION AND CONNECTION IN THE COMPASS**

As a more complex example, and one that will undergird many of the later discussions in this book, consider the simple dualistic metaphor of masculine-separate as contrasted to feminine-connected. The relation of gender to the "privileging" of separation and independence, on the one hand, over connection and dependence (or interdependence), on the other, has been traced through history by Susan Bordo (1986) and Sandra Harding (1986); through psychological development by Nancy Chodorow (1980); through personal ethical development by Carol Gilligan (1982, 1986); and through myth and religion by Catherine Keller (1986).

Of these works, the one that has attracted the most popular attention is Gilligan's (1982) work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Prior to Gilligan's work, research into ethical development relied heavily on a model which considered the decision to put rules above relationships as marking an advance in ethical sophistication. It put the conception of ethics in terms of universal principles at the pinnacle of ethical development. Gilligan questioned the notion that there can only be a single path of maturation, and that justice and fairness are exhaustive of sophisticated moral thinking. She suggested that side by side with an "ethic of justice" lies an "ethic of care," that is, an ethic of responsibility towards other persons in relationships. While
the justice ethic can be formulated in abstract rules, the care ethic is
heavily contextual, and dependent on the recognition of the particular
needs of others. Justice is primarily concerned with maintaining fairness
among equals; care with maintaining equity and nonviolence among
people with different needs and abilities.

Consider, for example, Gilligan's use of the "Heinz dilemma," a
brief passage describing the situation of a man who must decide whether
to steal a drug that he cannot afford to save his wife's life. According
to the justice orientation, this is best seen as the story of a man's
logically takes precedence. Yet in interview research some respondents,
when faced with this dilemma, tend to go off on what the pre-Gilligan
not donating the drug, for example, or pondering whether Heinz
would be able to take care of his wife if he went to jail. While previous
researchers had considered these responses to be less mature than those
based on abstract principles, Gilligan saw in them a suggestion of a
different but equally legitimate interpretation, in which the dilemma is
and the druggist.

Gilligan claimed that in her research the "care" orientation was found
to be more typical among women, and the "justice" orientation among
gender identity early in life, drawing on the influential work of Nancy
Chodorow (1978). Chodorow argued that girls early on identify with
their primary caretaker, since that caretaker is usually a woman, while
boys must define their gender identity in opposition to that of their
earliest and most intense object of attachment. As a result, she wrote,
girls tend to

define and experience themselves as continuous with others; their
experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego bounda-
ries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct,
with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiation.
The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic
masculine sense of self is separate.

(Chodorow 1978: 169)

While both these views have been influential in subsequent feminist
scholarship, the assertion by Gilligan that the two ethical orientations
references in Marksbridge 1993), and agreement among feminists about
the validity of Chodorow's psychoanalytic claims is not universal. Some
feminists have suggested, for example, that it is not so much distinction
between boys and girls as distinction between privileged and less-
privileged groups (by race or class as well as sex), that forces some groups
into the lesser-valued, identification-by-connection role (Harding 1987).

Unfortunately, the association of connectedness with women in
the work of Gilligan and Chodorow tends to reinforce, on the part of the
naive observer, the idea that only women are or can be "connected." This
has lead, at the mildest, to warnings about the political implications
of talking about connectedness (Ruddick 1987); at the most extreme, to
the distancing of independence-oriented feminists from feminists in-
volved in the separation/connection conversation, with labeling of the
latter as false bearers of the feminist banner. Gilligan's analysis has often
been badly paraphrased as saying that "there are two ways of thinking:
men's and women's." Books with titles like Women's Ways of Knowing
(Belensky, et al. 1986) may reinforce these views. 8

It is more helpful, I believe, to focus on how separation and connection
have been culturally and metaphorically linked with notions of masculin-
ity and femininity. The projection of autonomy on to masculinity and
connection to nature and society on to femininity is "embarrassingly
naive," to borrow a phrase from Catherine Keller (1986: 201).

Abstract philosophy connects with gendered experience in everyday
distinctions between who does the thinking versus who does the dishes;
who writes the journal articles versus who writes the Christmas cards;
the man who envisages "man" as individual and autonomous versus the
woman who changes her name to Mrs John Jones when she marries.
What could be a recognition of physical embodiment and social connect-

8 I say "naive observer," since Gilligan presented her results about differential tendencies
to adopt one viewpoint or another as empirically observed tendencies, with overlapping
statistical distributions (Gilligan 1987a: 25), rather than as biologically determined,
distinct viewpoints. More importantly, Gilligan viewed neither a purely masculine, nor
a purely feminine, approach to identity or moral reasoning as adequate in itself. In
Gilligan's view, while men and women tend to take different paths in moral develop-
ment, probably due to differences in early childhood experiences, moral maturity for
both sexes involves a complementarity between both types of moral reasoning: a
dialog between fairness and care" (1982: 174).

9 The recent concentration on "hearing women's voices" may be necessary for the study of
"connected" ways of knowing, since men currently have relatively little practice in self-
definition through connection, while women are still socially rewarded for it. The use
of women subjects can also be a deliberate part of the design in a compensatory sense,
because volumes have been written on "human" psychology using only male subjects.
Takes on the perverse and extreme form of a mythical ability to live without relatedness or interdependence with others. She calls this the creation of the "separative" self. On the other hand, relatedness is stressed for women, to the point where women are rewarded for trying to let our own identities dissolve in marriage and family. This she calls the "soluble" self. Pictured in a gender-value compass, we have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M+</th>
<th>F+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>individual</td>
<td>related</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M-</th>
<th>F-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>separative</td>
<td>soluble</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The positive complementarity represents a conception of humans as differentiated individuals who are also interdependent and connected. "Soluble" is the lack of "individual" and the perversion of "related." "Separative" is the lack of "related" and the perversion of "individual." The negative complementarity is the functional complementary of sexist social and psychological roles, where individuality and relation are taken on as distinct sex roles instead of incorporated into each person. The positive complementarity is a self-identity that includes both elements of individual distinction and of connection to others. The negative elements refer to the extremes of femininity or masculinity, when the complementary cross-gender element is lacking. People who are overly connected have too little idea of themselves as distinct persons; they may define themselves only as others see them, or care for others to the extreme of failing to see themselves as also worthy of care and respect. This seems to be a vice that particularly affects women in Western middle-class culture, who are encouraged to sacrifice themselves for their husbands and children. On the other hand, people - and in contemporary culture it is disproportionately men who have the expectation and the opportunity - who pursue individuation to the point of cutting themselves off from relationships, end up isolated and uncaring. The feelings of vulnerability and loneliness that accompany isolation may breed attempts to recreate the only kind of connection consistent with extreme self-individuation: relationships based on control and domination, rather than on empathy and mutual concern. Only in recognizing that both individuation and relation are important in defining human identity, is the foundation laid for mature self-identity and responsible, non oppressive human relationships. This analysis of separation and connection will form the basis for much of the analysis in later chapters of this book.

The separation/connection dualism also has important ties to cultural interpretations of the relation between reason and emotion - reason, of course, being associated with masculinity and emotion with femininity. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1993) has outlined how in much of the Western philosophical tradition (and in some Eastern traditions as well) rational judgment has been associated with an ideal of self-containment and impermeability, that is, of the wise person as someone who is complete, invulnerable, and impervious to fortune because of their complete self-sufficiency. Emotions, in these traditions, are considered as opposed to rationality since to be affected by something not under the control of one’s rational will is taken as a sign of weakness and vulnerability. Emotions are "holes, so to speak, in the walls of the self" (Nussbaum 1993: 11). She reinterprets emotions as playing an important part in truly rational judgment: in a world in which human life is in fact vulnerable - to mortality, illness, want of all kinds - emotional acknowledgement of need is, though sometimes painful, a prerequisite for good judgment. With notions of reason being highly associated with notions of objectivity and adequacy in current scientific (and economic) study, this reinterpretation of the role of emotion will also play an important role in the later analysis in this book.

SEXISM IN THE COMPASS

I have presented the diagram as if sexism does not exist, because I argue that the model is a useful tool for envisioning how we might think of gender in a nonsexist way. In the present-day situation, however, I have found (and expect to find more) problems of sexism popping up at every turn. It is simply much easier, in constructing these tables, to come up with the M+ and F- content of any concept than to find words for negative masculinity and positive femininity. The legacy of sexism makes positive femininity, and the negative effects of the lack of positive femininity, almost invisible.

Consider, for example, how one would complete a gender-value diagram with the term "virility" (meaning "manly vigor") as its masculine-positive term. The lack of virility is "emasculating," which is

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*Robin West (1988) proposes a strikingly similar diagrammatic analysis of the separation/connection issue, which was unknown to me at the time of my design of this compass. West, however, finds the source of gender distinctions in divergent material and existential "natures" of the sexes (though she moderates this somewhat in her concluding section). I locate the gender associations primarily at the level of cultural belief. Val Plumwood (1993) contains a recent treatment of the separation/connection issue. She calls isolation "hyperseparation," and solubility "merger."
a term in common use and which belongs in the feminine-negative quadrant. There exists a term, “muliebrity,” whose definition is “womanliness” or the feminine “correlative of virility,” but this is a very obscure word, to say the least. There exists no term suited for the masculine-negative quadrant:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
M^+ & F^+ \\
\hline
\text{virility} & \text{muliebrity} \\
M^- & F^- \\
? & \text{emascula} \\
\end{array}
\]

The term that belongs in the lower left-hand cell should by analogy to “emascula” be “effemination,” but the word “effeminate” already exists and signifies an abundance of feminine (presumably negative) traits, not the lack of feminine positive traits. Even when one does come up with positive complementarities, one finds oneself dealing with expressions like “embodied rationality” or “social individuality” that sound awkward and vague in a society used to thinking in terms of dualisms and clear demarcations. Extend this problem to all areas of discourse, and it becomes obvious why much feminist scholarship is devoted to analysis of language, and why at times the process of communication is frustrating and slow.

Sexism is also historically wound up in previous attempts at a more complex understanding of gender. I can identify, with caution, the diagram that originally started me thinking along the lines of the four-quadrant diagram. I found something similar in Aletha C. Huston’s 1983 work on sex-typing, which in turn drew on earlier studies by Sandra L. Bem (1974) and by Eleanor E. Maccoby and John C. Masters (1970). The central contribution of these studies was to envision masculinity and femininity as separate dimensions instead of as opposites in the same dimension. The problem with these studies is that the criterion for positive value was identified as “social desirability,” a criterion that functions rather strangely in a sexist society. In a sexist society, maintenance of accustomed patterns of oppression and victimization receive social approval. Bem’s original “positive” traits rated by students as especially desirable for women included “childlike,” “gullible,” and “yielding”; the masculine-identified “positive” traits included “aggressive,” “dominant,” and “forceful” (Bem 1974: 156). Such a conceptualization of gender was associated with the term “androgyny,” which has since lost respect in many feminist circles. I hesitate to apply that term to what I have outlined as the positive complementarity because of inappropriate associations it may call forth. To the extent that “androgyny” is associated with Bem’s earlier work and high ratings on both masculine- and feminine-identified “socially desirable” traits, it suggests that combining “yielding” and “dominant” is somehow possible, and a good thing. I would identify both of these as negative terms – perversions of “sensitive to others” and “assertive,” respectively. In a gender-value compass,

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{Positive} & \text{Negative} \\
\hline
\text{asserts own interests} & \text{sensitive to others} & \text{insensitive to others} \\
\text{masculine} & \text{feminine} & \text{yields to others} \\
\end{array}
\]

In this more complex understanding of gender, it is the balance of self- and other interests that is valued, not the sex-stereotyped extremes. Unlike Bem’s and Maccoby and Masters’s work, my diagram is not (at least in its use here) empirically based. Rather, it is theoretical, subjective, and visionary. I suggest that it can be used to investigate what the gender and value associations of concepts might be in a world where sexism is absent.

Conceptual sexism can be characterized as an ability to see only the \( M^+ / F^- \) aspects of the full diagram, or as a tendency to reassert a hierarchy on top of it (e.g., “relatedness is good, but individuality is better”). The central task of the feminist project on gender, then, as I see it, is the exploration and valuation of the feminine-positive and the exposing of the masculine-negative. This intellectual project is associated both metaphorically and by the position of individual feminists in particular and varied relationships to other dimensions of difference – racial, class, cultural – that have been similarly distorted by unidimensional thinking. This intellectual project can also be turned towards the examination of sexist influences in particular areas – such as academic economics.

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]

1. For a study of the development of the concept of androgyny and critiques of the same, see J.G. Morawski (1987). See also further discussion in Chapter 10.

2. The distinction between self-interest and selfishness is further discussed in Chapter 9.