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Kant and Feminism

by Kurt Mosser, Dayton/Ohio

I. Introduction

The juxtaposition of Kant's name with "feminism" seems almost designed to invite scorn and indignation. As we will soon see, throughout his career Kant made a variety of noxious and distasteful comments about women. As we will also see, Kant has been regarded, with Descartes, as the philosopher chiefly responsible for providing modern Western philosophy with a picture of reason that has been employed in a variety of ways oppressive to women. Yet the reader of Kant's works in practical philosophy, specifically the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, could very well harbor a considerably different expectation, namely, that Kant's views of women — *qua* rational agents — should be able to provide the grounding for a liberatory project. After all, the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative — "Act so that you treat humanity [*Menschheit*], whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end [*Zweck*] and never as a means only"¹ — appears, *prima facie*, to yield precisely that grounding. One might expect still further support for such a project from Kant's extensive and detailed discussion of human freedom. Kant's readers, then, are faced with the hermeneutical task of either 1) reconciling these seemingly inconsistent claims, 2) trying to eliminate that material that is indefensible, while retaining that which remains of philosophical interest, or 3) rejecting the entire Kantian approach as irredeemably sexist and oppressive.

In what follows, I seek to address the issues raised by this conflict between Kant's sexist remarks and the "official" picture of human agency one finds in his work. As might be expected, most of the attention of Kant's feminist critics has been concentrated on his practical philosophy, as well as other remarks of his found in the lectures and less systematic works. I will focus, instead, on a text that plays a surprisingly small role in these discussions, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, particularly its account of the subject, its cognitive capacities, and its theoretical limitations. In

¹ *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, IV, p. 429; Beck, p. 54. All references to Kant's texts, except the *Critique of Pure Reason*, will be given to the Academy edition — *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–) by volume and page number, and to the translation by the translator's last name. Hence, here Beck, L. W. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969). These translations may be altered; if no translation is cited, it can be assumed that it is my own.

so doing, it will be shown that some — although certainly not all — of the feminist critique of Kant can be deflected. This raises, in turn, two general historiographical questions that frequently arise: is it ever possible to detach, or otherwise eliminate, the “problematic” — if not simply reprehensible — claims made by a philosopher whose insights we otherwise hope to retain and utilize? And if it is, how can it be done? Although I return briefly to these difficult questions in concluding this discussion, I am more interested here in pursuing a philosophical point. For on the interpretation of the subject given here, and the consequences of this interpretation, we can see that there may be good reasons to regard this Kantian (or perhaps, more appropriately, “neo-Kantian”) account as *not* resulting in the kind of sexism conveyed by Kant’s own remarks. Indeed, it may have the surprising result of grounding, in a remarkably robust way, a progressive liberatory project many feminists have seen Kant as actively preventing. It is not my intention, here, to show what such a Kantian feminism would look like; rather I only want to argue that the results of Kant’s critical philosophy, including the essential contribution to that philosophy made by the First *Critique*, are too valuable for feminism to be dismissed without considerably more careful attention than it has often received.

II. Kant’s Remarks about Women

It is not difficult to find Kant making denigrating remarks about women. They are scattered throughout his writings, although the majority can be found in two works: the 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, and the Lectures on “Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point of View.”² While briefer comments can be found in other lecture series, the essay on Theory and Practice, the *Metaphysics of Morals*, and elsewhere, the first two texts mentioned are Kant’s most systematic treatment of the sexes and hence, understandably, are those on which Kant’s feminist critics have focused.

To modern ears, Kant’s observations may sound embarrassingly crude — if not laughable — both for their sheer generality and, relatedly, as based on Kant’s minimal exposure to women. As J. H. W. Stuckenberg sympathetically notes in his 19th-century biography of Kant:

Those who expect from Kant broad views respecting woman, must not forget to study his opinions in the light of that day; even then they will likely conclude that the philosophic

² References to these two works will be abbreviated, respectively, as *Observations* and *Anthropology*, and be given parenthetically. The *Observations* may be found in vol. II of the Academy edition, and has been translated by John Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960). The *Anthropology* may be found in vol. VII of the Academy edition, and has been translated by Mary Gregor (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974). These lectures were published in 1797, although Kant had been giving them “for some thirty years,” as Gregor points out in her translation (p. ix).

bachelor, limited in his observations of humanity to Königsberg, early losing his mother, and avoiding all intercourse with his sisters, was not the man to do justice to woman.³

Yet Kant's relative isolation from the company of women⁴ hardly justifies what can be described, at best, as his paternalism. So we see Kant's well-known remark that a woman of scholarly accomplishment might as well be a man: "A woman who has a head full of Greek, like Mme Dacier, or carries on fundamental controversies about mechanics, like the Marquise de Châtelet, might as well have a beard" (*Observations* II. 230/Goldthwait 78). More generally, Kant wishes to distinguish two types of understanding: that of the fair sex, which concerns itself with the beautiful and belongs to women, and that of the noble sex, which concerns itself with the sublime and belongs to men. While women, it is worth noting, have "as much understanding" as men, the two are specifically distinct. This difference is crucial to much of Kant's discussion in the *Observations* and elsewhere. Thus, in the Blomberg Logic:

There are sciences which require a sharp mind, much reflection, and profundity. These are for the male sex. On the other hand there are sciences that require wit and a kind of feeling, and these are proper for women.⁵

In the *Anthropology*, Kant focuses on the different roles men and women play in the household and in civil society. In the former, "woman should reign [*herrschen*] and the man govern" for women are driven by passion and inclination, while men are characterized by their understanding (VII. 310). The functions of women in civil society consist of their biological role in the "preservation of the species" and in their social role of refining and cultivating society, specifically the men who dominate — politically, economically, and otherwise — that society (VII. 306). The latter point echoes one made in the *Observations*: "The content of woman's great science ... is humankind [*Mensch*], and among humanity, men," for they "refine even the masculine sex" (II. 229 f.(Goldthwait 78 f.). Women, then, in general, are subject to men politically, economically, pedagogically, and in virtually all ways in which society reflects its power, power that is, with few or no exceptions, vested in men. This situation, presumably, is amenable to Kant, who refers, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, to "the natural superiority of the husband to the wife in his capacity to promote the common interest of the household," and almost offhandedly mentions the lack of all women's fitness to vote, thus depriving them

³ Stuckenber, J. H. W. *The Life of Immanuel Kant* (London, MacMillan, 1882), p. 184; reprinted (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1986).

⁴ Pauline Kleingeld ("The Problematic Status of Gender-Neutral Language in the History of Philosophy: The Case of Kant"; *Philosophical Forum* XXIV (1992–1993), pp. 143–144), has pointed out that Kant was familiar with learned women and socialized with them on occasion; this doesn't, however, affect the point that such interaction was relatively rare and, as Kleingeld also points out, Kant actively avoided it.

⁵ Blomberg Logic, vol. XXIV, p. 29; translated by Michael Young *Lectures on Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 17. As Young notes in his Introduction (p. xxiv), these lectures could not be earlier than 1770.

of the “only qualification for being a citizen.”⁶ As Pauline Kleingeld has summarized Kant’s account:

Because women, according to Kant, are weak, fearful, and guided by their inclinations – that is, because women cannot act autonomously or think for themselves – they need the competent guidance of men.⁷

As we will now see, views such as these cannot – or certainly should not – be palatable to us 200 years later.

III. Kant’s Feminist Critics

Given the odiousness of the above comments from Kant, one need not read very widely in the feminist literature to discover that Kant is frequently taken to be the central philosophical figure responsible for a picture of reason that has been used in a variety of ways to exploit and oppress women.⁸ Thus Barbara Herman has referred to Kant’s “unhappy status as the modern moral philosopher feminists find most objectionable.”⁹ While Martha Nussbaum has claimed that “Kant’s evident misogyny and disdain have caused feminists to dismiss his arguments without seriously considering them,”¹⁰ there has been an enormous amount of work “seriously considering” those arguments, if only, in the end, generally, if not unanimously, to reject them. Without trying to perform the impossible task of surveying this literature, it is worthwhile to look at some of the representative criticisms feminists have leveled against Kant.

The fundamental charge against Kant is his exclusion of women from the province of reason. At times, this charge is qualified, as when Ruth Ginzberg writes that “Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Rousseau, and Schopenhauer were but a few of the

⁶ VI. 279 (“Rechtslehre” § 26), translated by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 98. For the discussion of voting and dependence, *ibid.*, VI. 314, Gregor 126.

⁷ Kleingeld, *op. cit.*, p. 137. The other discussions of women I have been able to track down in Kant’s works are all in the tone of those given above, and consistently have the flavor of offhand remarks or asides: Logik Blomberg XXIV.1.46, 65, 68, 75, 79–80, 185, 290; Logik Phillipi, XXIV.1.380; “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?,” VIII. 35; “Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis,” VIII. 295, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* V.153, Briefwechsel XI. 411–412. There are no doubt many others scattered throughout Kant’s writings, particularly in the various lecture series and in Kant’s own notes (the “Reflexionen”).

⁸ The other central figure in these discussions is Descartes (Bacon is also occasionally mentioned); see Bordo, Susan *The Flight to Objectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

⁹ Herman, Barbara “Could It Be Worth Thinking About Kant on Sex and Marriage?” in Antony, L. and Witt, C. (eds.) *A Mind of One’s Own* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), p. 50.

¹⁰ Nussbaum, Martha “Feminists and Philosophy,” *New York Review of Books* vol. XLI. 1 (Oct. 20 1994), p. 62.

philosophers who asserted that woman is not rational, *at least not in the same way as man.*"¹¹ Jean Grimshaw, specifying Kant's account of practical reason, argues:

There is a clear sense ... in which aspects of Kant's moral philosophy might be seen as 'masculine.' Like Aristotle, he in effect excludes women from a philosophical idea, this time of 'moral worth.' ... [I]n a way Kant's exclusion of women is less arbitrary than that of Aristotle. And the reason is that the ideal of moral worth *itself* encapsulates qualities seen as paradigmatically masculine, and excludes those seen as feminine.¹²

At other times, the charge is leveled without qualification – thus Robin May Schott takes Kant's view of objectivity "to be correlated with a dismissal of women as sexual beings, who are incapable of rational thought."¹³ Susan Mendus argues that "It would appear that in the kingdom of rational beings there are only adult males."¹⁴ Val Plumwood notes that for Kant, "it is not only women who are excluded from reason by their possession of a gallantly presented but clearly inferiorised 'beautiful understanding', but also workers and blacks, the latter being ascribed an inferiority 'as great in regard to mental capacities as in color'.¹⁵ In a similar vein, Sandra Harding writes of the "fathers of our intellectual traditions" – presumably including, if not chiefly, Kant –

have insisted for centuries that we are exactly *not* the kind of persons whose beliefs can ever be expected to achieve the status of knowledge. They still claim that only the impersonal, disinterested, socially anonymous representatives of human reason – a description that refers to themselves, of course – are capable of producing knowledge. Mere opinion is all that folks like us can hope to produce.¹⁶

Carole Pateman provides what is perhaps the most strongly-worded version of this objection: "Kant excludes women from the category of persons or individuals. Women can only be property."¹⁷

The vast majority of feminist complaints against Kant focus on what Harding here describes as the commitment to an "impersonal" and "disinterested" concep-

¹¹ Ginzberg, Ruth "Feminism, Rationality and Logic" *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* vol. 88 no. 2 (March 1989), p. 35; my emphasis. Similarly, in the preface to Antony and Witt (*op. cit.*), p. xv, they write that both "Aristotle and Kant defined reason in their own male image and denied women full rationality."

¹² Grimshaw, Jean *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 45.

¹³ Schott, Robin May *Eros and Cognition* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), p. viii.

¹⁴ Mendus, Susan "An Honest but Narrow-Minded Bourgeois?" in Williams, H. (ed.) *Essays on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 180.

¹⁵ Plumwood, Val "The Politics of Reason: Towards a Feminist Logic," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* vol. 71 no. 4 (Dec. 1993), p. 436. (Plumwood misidentifies the final citation as being from the *Grundlegung*; all her citations are in fact from the *Observations*.)

¹⁶ Harding, Sandra "Who Knows? Identities and Feminist Epistemologies" in Hartman, J. and Messer-Davidow, E. (eds.) (*En*)*Gendering Knowledge* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), p. 100. Harding concludes the point by adding "(We reply that 'human reason,' reason that claims to be race-free, gender-free, free of sexual identity, and class-free, is in fact unselfconsciously racist, sexist, heterosexist, and bourgeois reason)."

¹⁷ Pateman, Carole *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 171.

tion of reason. Kant's austere detachment then becomes the basis for criticizing both his theoretical and practical philosophy. In his epistemology he fails to take into account, or explicitly excludes, ineliminable aspects of the cognitive context, including the passions, emotions, desires, and interests; Schott refers to his approach as the "fetishism of objectivity," writing that his "restriction of the cognitive portion of sensibility to intuition itself expresses an interest in selecting from and modifying the real."¹⁸ Thus by restricting cognitive judgements to those countenanced by his epistemology, Kant introduces a systematic bias into his account of knowledge. Furthermore, Kant's approach, by its emphasis on the subjective contribution to cognition, is seen as generating a radical individualism, if not solipsism; Schott thus sees the thinker, on Kant's view, as having "sundered all immediate bonds with other individuals."¹⁹ As Selya Benhabib makes the point:

The question of classical epistemology from Descartes to Hume, from Locke to Kant was how to make congruous the order of representations in consciousness with the order of representations outside the self. Caught in the prison-house of its own consciousness, the modern epistemological subject tried to recover the world it had well lost.²⁰

The criticism of Kant's practical philosophy, as too austere and too "otherworldly," is undoubtedly the longest-standing and most influential complaint leveled at his work in ethics, and is well-known enough not to require further review here.²¹ It is worth noting, however, that it has been incorporated as well into the feminist critique of Kant. Along these lines, Carol McMillan writes that "Kant goes so far to say that no action springing from natural inclination can have moral worth. For him, an action has genuine moral worth only when it is done solely out of duty, without any liking or preference for it."²²

In sum, then, the general critique of Kant revolves around what feminists have seen, in both the theoretical and practical dimensions of his work, as his commitment to an austere formality. By abstracting, in a fundamentally distorting way, from the flesh-and-blood contingencies of interpersonal relationships, as well as bracketing the essential components of the full context of experience in his account of cognitive judgements, Kant imposes a false set of standards for the employment of reason. These standards, in turn, have been used to characterize reason *simpliciter*, thus imposing a systematic masculine bias in the standard conception of ratio-

¹⁸ Schott, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

²⁰ Benhabib, Selya "Epistemologies of Postmodernism: A Rejoinder to Jean-François Lyotard" in Nicholson, Linda J. (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 110. The reference in the concluding comment is, of course, to Richard Rorty's influential "The World Well Lost."

²¹ For an account of this, and other long-standing criticisms of Kant's practical philosophy, see Allison, Henry *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapter 10.

²² McMillan, Carol *Women, Reason and Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 20.

nality, thus opening the way for a philosophically-grounded rejection of female reason as either inadequate (by not satisfying this masculine standard) or inferior (by not being *able* to satisfy this masculine standard). It furthermore has the effect of discounting those aspects of human experience such a picture of rationality does not take as its ultimate desiderata. Jane Flax has provided a clear summary of the basic complaint:

In philosophy, being (ontology) has been divorced from knowing (epistemology) and both have been separated from either ethics or politics. These divisions were blessed by Kant and transformed by him into a fundamental principle derived from the structure of mind itself. A consequence of this principle has been the enshrining within mainstream Anglo-American philosophy of a rigid distinction between fact and value which has had the effect of consigning the philosopher to silence on issues of utmost importance to human life.²³

IV. Kant's Conception of the Subject

Much of the basis for the kinds of criticism we have just surveyed focuses on the Kant's conception of the subject, frequently, and with some justice, taking that conception to be a response to the Cartesian project of the *Meditations*. In turn, Kant's own account of the subject had extraordinary impact, both within the Enlightenment and beyond. As Iris Young writes:

Beginning with Descartes, modern philosophy is particularly preoccupied with the unity of consciousness and its immediate presence to itself. The tradition of transcendental philosophy from Descartes through Kant to Husserl conceives the subject as a unity and an origin, the self-same starting point of thought and meaning, whose signification is out of its grasp.²⁴

In short, Kant is seen as imposing an even more austere, and more detached — if possible — solipsism than Descartes on the methods of modern philosophy. This results in an empty and formalistic picture of this subject, achieving universality by abstracting from all content, and illegitimately claiming universality for what, in fact, is a masculine model of reason. Hence the very emptiness of Kant's subject

²³ Flax, Jane "The Patriarchal Unconscious" in Harding, S. and Hintikka, M. B. (eds.) *Discovering Reality* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983), p. 248.

²⁴ Young, Iris "The Ideal Community and the Politics of Difference," in Nicholson, *Feminism/Postmodernism*, p. 303. Margaret Atherton has offered an important account challenging this picture of Cartesianism; see her "Cartesian Reason and Gendered Reason" in Witt and Antony, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–34. Drawing on her extensive reading of the history of seventeenth-century philosophy, specifically here Mary Astell and Damaris Masham, she concludes "The arguments of Astell and Masham, however, remind us that there is another use of reason, one that picks out *whatever it is that all styles of reasoning have in common*"; p. 32, my emphasis.

– that represented by the transcendental unity of apperception – becomes the philosophical basis for denying women rationality, or full rationality.²⁵

There is much of interest in this argument, but before turning to those issues, I want to sketch briefly the picture Kant provides, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*²⁶, of the thinking subject. Part of the motivation for doing so is the occasional misinterpretation of that picture by some feminist critics of Kant²⁷; more important, however, is that this may provide a way to critique Kant's sexism using precisely the tools he develops in the "canonical" works of the Critical philosophy.²⁸

A central concern – if not the central methodological locus – of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is Kant's desire to show "how subjective conditions of thought can have objective [*objektive*] validity" (A 89/B 122). The articulation of this relationship, which is fundamentally the result of Kant's "Copernican Revolution," proceeds by an elaborate characterization of the subject, represented by the "I think" of the transcendental unity of apperception. This "I think," as an ineliminable component of thought and cognitive experience, in turn becomes the basis for Kant's epistemology.

Kant begins the Transcendental Deduction with a discussion of the possibility of combination (*Verbindung*; *conjunctio*) in general. This act of combining, which Kant calls synthesis, is a spontaneous act of the understanding. As spontaneous, it cannot be given through the senses, but rather is an act that imposes unity on that given through the senses; indeed, "of all representations combination is the only one which cannot be given through objects [*Objecte*]" (B 130). This spontaneous act is grounded in Kant's transcendental unity of apperception. It is then crucial for understanding Kant's conception of the subject that we see how he describes this apperceptive unity.

²⁵ Schott (*ibid.*, p. 125) argues "Since the unity of consciousness constitutes the unity of the object, and since all consciousnesses are identical in this relation, the object that is thereby unified is valid for all thinkers." She precedes to connect Kant's radically subjective approach to the exploitation both of women and of workers, who are reified by means of the formal claims Kant makes about the subject and their alleged universality.

²⁶ All references to the First *Critique* will be given parenthetically, to the standard pagination of the A (1781) and B (1787) editions; passages that occur in only one edition will indicate "A" or "B." In general, I follow Kemp Smith's translation (London: MacMillan, 1929), but on occasion alter it.

²⁷ It probably goes without saying that in the confines of this discussion, a full picture of Kant's views of the thinking and judging subject cannot be attempted here, nor can I consider the vast range of criticisms that have been raised against these views, by self-conscious feminist critics and others.

²⁸ By this term I mean, minimally, the three great *Critiques*, as well as the *Prolegomena*, the *Grundlegung*, the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, and the *Metaphysik der Sitten*. Others may well wish to add other texts, such as the *Religion*; others may wish to subtract some texts from this list. The point, which should be obvious but is consistently ignored in much of the writing on Kant's sexism, is that his entire *corpus* cannot be viewed as a whole, but that different texts have different statuses within that *corpus*.

In § 15 of the second-edition Transcendental Deduction, combination is characterized as “an *Aktus* of the self-activity of the subject,” an activity that “can only be carried out by the subject itself” (*ibid.*). Kant describes this combinatory function in a variety of ways: obviously enough as transcendental and as unified or unifying, but also as objective, spontaneous, original, universal, necessary, and identical. This set of adjectives, taken together, denote a unique capacity of a thinking subject. The peculiar status of this subject’s capacity – to assert “I think” – is noted by Kant in the introduction to the Paralogisms of Pure Reason:

We now come to a concept which was not included in the general list of transcendental concepts but which must yet be counted as belonging to that list, without, however, in the least altering it or declaring it defective. This is the concept or, if the term be preferred, the judgement, “I think.” As is easily seen, this is the vehicle of all concepts, and therefore also of transcendental concepts, and so is always included in the conceiving of these latter, and is itself transcendental. But it can have no special designation, because it serves only to introduce all our thought, as belonging to consciousness (A 341/B 399–400).

It is evident from this passage that the “I think” introduces a complex set of issues. It is a transcendental concept, yet doesn’t appear on the list of transcendental concepts, and its absence doesn’t affect the completeness of that list. It is a concept, but must be presupposed in the conception of other concepts, including transcendental concepts. Kant is even willing to call the “I think” a judgement, although it clearly lacks some of the requisite features of a judgement (e. g. a predicate), and hence is at best an incomplete judgement.

The peculiar nature of the “I think” stems from its unique logical status. It is, in effect, an ultimate presupposition, a presupposition *sine qua non*, for all thought and possible experience. Through a process of reflection, the “I think” can be isolated as a starting point, lacking any special designation save its function of introducing all my thoughts as belonging to one consciousness. In this way, it serves as the Archimedean point Descartes sought in the Second Meditation, although with dramatically different results. Viewing this “I think” as such an Archimedean point allows us to see that “apperception, and with it thought, precedes *all* possible determinate ordering of representations” (A 289/B 345; my emphasis).

The combination involved here is the act of “bringing the manifold of given representations under the unity of apperception” (B 135) and, as original, cannot be given through objects. Kant is quite emphatic on this point: combination is the *only* representation which cannot be given through objects, but is an affair or achievement (*Verrichtung*) of the understanding alone (B 134–135). The strength of this claim, and the universality of this characterization of combination, is underscored in a footnote to § 15, where Kant points out that this synthetic activity is necessary even for analytic judgements. Given an analytic judgement “All S are P,” where “P” is “contained under” the concept represented by “S,” the consciousness of the one concept is distinct from the consciousness of the other. It is the original act of combination that makes possible the bringing together of the two concepts in this analytic judgement, and “it is with the synthesis of this (possible) conscious-

ness that we are here alone concerned" (B 131 n.; cf. B 133 n.). It is the transcendental unity of apperception that allows me (reflectively) to attach "I think" to all my representations, and thus bring all my representations under one general or universal (*allgemeine*) self-consciousness (B 132). This possibility serves as the "supreme principle of all employment of the understanding," for this possibility is necessary for anything to be thought or cognized (B 137). Thus the role of combining — an ineliminable component of cognition — must be carried out by the thinking subject, by means of the epistemic function of the transcendental unity of apperception. And it is this claim — which serves as "the highest principle in the whole sphere of human knowledge" (B 135) — that begins § 16 of the Transcendental Deduction, and serves as the fundamental claim in Kant's argument about the subject:

It must be possible for the "I think" to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least be nothing to me (B 131–132).

To be sure, Kant's support for the premise is difficult and, at times, bewildering.²⁹ Very briefly, however, the central notion operative in the argument is summarized at B 134:

... only in so far as I can grasp the manifold of representations in one consciousness, do I call them one and all mine. For otherwise I should have as many-colored and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious to myself.

This is a straightforward argument in *modus tollens*. Without a logically simple subject grounding a set of diverse representations, it would be impossible for that subject to judge that its different representations *were* all its representations, and hence could not unify them into a coherent, rule-ordered experience. Thus, if I don't have a unifying consciousness, my self is as diverse as my representations. Kant takes it as self-evident that the thinking subject is not as diverse as its representations;³⁰ therefore it must have some kind of unified, or unifying, consciousness. As Kant indicates in a significant, although obscure, addition to the second edition of the *Critique*, the unity in question is "the unity of the theme in a play, a speech, or story" (B 114), a qualitative unity effected by relating diverse elements to a com-

²⁹ The difficulties Kant has in explaining and developing his views about the thinking subject, and what those views entail, are best exemplified in the long footnote of the second-edition Paralogisms, beginning at B 422.

³⁰ While in this argument Kant takes it as self-evident that the subject of the "I think" is not as diverse as its representations, the point is really an outcome of a general theme running throughout the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, and particularly emphasized in the second edition — that the unity of the subject is reflected in the unity of objects. This notion has been clearly outlined by Arthur Melnick in his *Kant's Analogies of Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 144–149, and is discussed in detail in A. C. Ewing's *Kant's Treatment of Causality* (London: Kegan Paul, 1924), chapter five, and Michael Washburn's *The Problem of Self-Knowledge and the Evolution of the Critical Epistemology 1781–1787* (Dissertation: University of California San Diego, 1970).

mon ground, in contrast to the numerical unity or identity proposed in the first edition.³¹

In this way, Kant seeks to establish the “I think” of the transcendental unity of apperception as a universal and necessary condition for the possibility of thought and objective experience. But it must be emphasized that the radical subjectivity of this apperceptive unity is not the kind of radically individualistic, relativistic, idiosyncratic views, such as those Socrates attributes to Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*. First, the arguments of the Transcendental Analytic yield only a formal, albeit universal, framework that structures experience, and doesn’t address the issue of specific perceptual claims. Second, as noted, such conditions themselves are necessary for the possibility of experience and for the objects of experience — they are conditions for the ascription of objectivity itself. Finally, subjective conditions possess objectivity not so much in the sense of being justified by an independent reality, but by having the salient characteristic of being recognized, on reflection, as unavoidable presuppositions. This last point is fundamental to Kant’s “first-person” perspective, that *a priori* conditions must be provided by a subject, yet hold universally and necessarily because we have no choice but to accept them. As Manley Thompson has observed, “we also regard as objective whatever we cannot make otherwise — what we are forced to accept whether we like it or not.”³² On such a view, all necessity must be found in this contribution that is in one sense subjective — contributed by the subject — and in another sense objective — universal and necessary *qua* transcendental condition. In this way, the subject–object relation must be seen in Kant’s treatment as considerably more complex, subtle, and (even) dialectical than it is frequently taken to be.

I have gone on at some length here to show that, indeed, Kant’s account of the self — insofar as that self is represented by the “I think” of the transcendental unity of apperception — is remarkably empty and formal, functioning solely as a necessary “logical placeholder” in order to make possible the unity presupposed by

³¹ This point is ignored in Frank Kirkland’s interpretation of the “B” Deduction — “Apperception and Combination: Some Kantian Problems,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49 (1989), pp. 447–461. Kirkland stresses “numerical identity” as a “structural characteristic” of apperception. However, he offers no textual support from the second edition for this reading, and in quoting B 407, he goes so far as to *add* (in brackets) the qualification “numerically” singular in giving Kant’s description of the “I” of apperception; see p. 449. On my reading, Kant expressly *avoids* this terminology, and in the second edition consistently refrains from characterizing this “I” as *numerically* singular or *numerically* identical. This change in the Deduction is reflected, as well, in changes Kant makes for the second-edition chapter “The Ground of the Distinction of All Objects in General into Phenomena and Noumena”; cf. especially A 250 with 307 f. The first-edition language, referring to the transcendental object as “correlate,” is cited by Schott (*op. cit.*, p. 130) without any indication of the changes that occur in the second edition; in a similar way, she relies on the first-edition Paralogisms to discuss the difficult conceptual relationship between Kant’s epistemic and moral subject; *ibid.*, p. 224 n. 4.

³² Thompson, Manley “On A Priori Truth,” *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), p. 464.

thought and experience. Without question, the issues here are extraordinarily complex, and lie at the heart of trying to give even a sketch of the role of the thinking subject; as such, a variety of Kant scholars have re-focused their attention on clarifying that role, led by Dieter Henrich's *Identität und Objektivität*.³³ More recently, in his Locke lectures, John McDowell has argued that Kant has much to offer in helping us see what is at stake in understanding the relationship between the subject and the world about which it seeks to make cognitive claims. Yet, as Graham Bird has observed, McDowell's interpretation founders by failing to recognize the crucial context provided by the perspectival shift of the "Copernican Revolution"; simply put, Kant's various claims about subjectivity, objectivity, and the relationship between them don't make sense outside of that context. In this way, McDowell contributes to a long line of Kant's readers – among whom one might include Jacobi, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Rorty – who continue to demand of Kant's text philosophical obligations that text has shown are untenable.³⁴ In contrast, S. L. Hurley has argued that despite Kant's essential contribution to the recognition of the "myth of the given," his inability to provide a plausible account of the subject within his own phenomena/noumena framework causes him to succumb to what she calls the "myth of the giving." Hurley's account raises important points that are unquestionably fundamental for giving a complete picture of the Kantian subject, including the systematic ambiguity of "objectivity" and the peculiar logic of the "I think"; unfortunately, I cannot hope to do justice to the issues she raises here.³⁵ To return to the topic at hand, however, one other relevant aspect of Kant's view must be considered, however briefly, namely what might be called his "conceptual scheme," or, in more Kantian terms, Kant's conception of logic.

The German text of the second-edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is almost 900 pages long; the "Doctrine of Elements," which constitutes the vast majority of the text, (excluding the Prefaces, Introduction, and the Doctrine of Method) is divided into two radically uneven halves, the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic. We can regard the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic as the "positive" dimension of Kant's epistemology, while the Dialectic presents its "negative" dimension, where Kant provides critical argument after critical argument, taking on, in a sense, the entire history of Western philosophical thought. In general, then, Transcendental Logic constitutes most of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

³³ Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1976.

³⁴ See McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), and Bird's review in *Philosophy* vol. 71 (1996), pp. 219–243. I have argued for the historical claim involved here, relative to the misinterpretation of Kant's views of the thing-in-itself, in "Stoff and Nonsense in Kant's First Critique" (*History of Philosophy Quarterly* Vol. 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1993) and "Nietzsche, Kant, and the Thing in Itself," *International Studies in Philosophy*, XXV/2 (1993).

³⁵ "Kant on Spontaneity and the Myth of the Giving," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 94 (1994), pp. 137–164. It is worth noting that Hurley does not directly take up the crucial claims made at B 422 n.

A logic is designed to exhibit a grounded, systematic set of rules for thought. General (*allgemeine*) logic, what in contemporary terms is called “formal” logic,³⁶ presents such a set of rules for thought in general. It “abstracts from all content of the knowledge of understanding and from all differences in its objects, and deals with nothing but the mere form of thought” (A 54/B 78). General logic serves as a “canon of understanding and reason, but only in respect to what is formal in their employment” (A 53/B 77). Finally, general logic “has nothing to do with the origin of cognition” (A 56/B 80). General logic is concerned only to secure a systematic doctrine, certain and *a priori*, for the formal employment of all thought in judgement. It adds nothing to the content of cognition; its sole tasks are to make clear the concepts given to it, and to provide the “principles of all logical criticism of our cognition” (A 60/B 84).

For the human being, all thinking is expressed in judgement, and the faculty of judgement is the same as the faculty of thought (A 69/B 94; A 81/B 106). In general logic we abstract from all content of cognition, and “consider only the mere form of understanding” (A 70/B 95). Only the formal relations between representations are involved, regardless of their source or what they represent. As H. J. Paton reminds us, it is not that general logic has no objects, but that “it ignores *differences* in objects.”³⁷ Kant’s claim then is that the act of judging reveals the capacity to unite the manifold of representations under the unity of thinking *in general*, and that the various syntactic moments of this act can be displayed in a systematic table of judgements which provides a set of general or universal rules for the possibility of thought.

Transcendental logic is presented in comparison and contrast to general logic. Kant gets a good bit of philosophical mileage out of this connection; it allows him to display the formal structure of the intellectual understanding, and permits him to display the table of judgements as a “*Leitfaden*,” or “guiding thread,” for the table of categories. Indeed, the discussion of general logic in the *Critique* seems to have been written expressly to emphasize what is common to both *qua* logics, as well as to underscore what distinguishes one from the other. The details involved here are both complex and contentious; for present purposes, I can only discuss transcendental logic in the broadest of terms.³⁸

Transcendental logic exhibits a set of rules for the possibility of experience, and for the knowledge of objects that constitutes experience. As a logic, it must consist

³⁶ It is probably, however, a mistake to *identify* Kant’s conception of general logic with a contemporary conception of formal or symbolic logic.

³⁷ Paton, H. J. *Kant’s Metaphysics of Experience* (New York: MacMillan, 1936), vol. I, p. 191 n. 1.

³⁸ The success of Kant’s analogy between general and transcendental logic, as described here, clearly rests on providing a plausible reading of the so-called Metaphysical Deduction. Rolf-Peter Horstmann has insisted on the crucial significance of the Metaphysical Deduction for Kant’s project, a point that is often, and surprisingly, overlooked. See his “Die metaphysische Deduktion in Kants ‘Kritik der reinen Vernunft’” in Tuschling, B. (ed.), *Probleme der “Kritik der reinen Vernunft”* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).

of secure, *a priori* rules, and abstract from all empirical – i. e. contingent – content. As transcendental, it must show that such rules can be applied *a priori*, and how they are to be applied. But transcendental logic does not “abstract from the entire content of cognition” (A 55/B 80). Rather, just as Transcendental Aesthetic isolates sensibility, transcendental logic isolates the understanding to determine what, if any, *a priori* elements can be presented in a systematic doctrine. In this fashion, transcendental logic – specifically transcendental analytic – exhibits “the laws of the understanding and reason solely in so far as they relate to objects [Gegenstände]” (A 57/B 81), and thus transcendental analytic yields the canon of pure understanding.

It is clearly no accident that Kant calls the science “which should determine the origin, the scope, and the objective validity” of the capacity to know objects *a priori* “transcendental logic” (*ibid.*). The point can be obscured by referring to “general logic” as “formal logic,” for both logics are in an important sense formal. Again, general logic is a “*canon* of understanding and of reason, but only in respect of what is formal in their employment” (A 53/B 77; my emphasis).³⁹ Transcendental logic provides a set of formal rules that serve as necessary conditions for the thought of objects; Kant refers to the “pure modes of cognition” given in transcendental logic as “pure and merely formal principles” (A 62/B 88; cf. A 136/B 175; A 44/B 62). The distinction between the two logics is not so much made with respect to their formality, but with respect to their application and employment – by distinguishing and specifying the domains over which their respective rules range.⁴⁰

We can regard (with some qualification⁴¹) Kant’s logic – the legitimate rules of general logic and transcendental analytic – as a conceptual scheme, imposing a set of unyielding, invariant synthetic *a priori* concepts and principles. But these concepts and principles must be regarded as conditions of possible thought and experience, and fixing the limits within which they occur.⁴² The structure Kant argues for in the Transcendental Analytic, and the exposure of the errors of attempting to transcend the limits imposed by that structure (along with those of the Aesthetic),

³⁹ For a very valuable discussion of Kant’s technical terms “Canon” and “Organon,” see Carboncini, S. and Finster, R. “Das Begriffspaar Kanon–Organon” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 26 (1982), pp. 25–59.

⁴⁰ See Amihud Gilead, “The Relationship Between Formal and Transcendental-Metaphysical Logic According to Kant,” *The Monist* 65 (1982), pp. 437–443.

⁴¹ The qualification is, of course, that introduced by Donald Davidson calling into question the very coherence of conceptual schemes in his “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” reprinted in *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 183–198. While Davidson’s refusal to embrace the *a priori* in any strong sense distinguishes his position from Kant’s, there are strong similarities to the conclusion Davidson draws in this article and Kant’s own views. The question, which goes beyond the scope of this discussion, is whether in attributing agency to another, we *must* attribute some set of minimal logical constraints on meaning and communicability, and, if so, whether they can be satisfactorily identified.

⁴² See *Prolegomena*, IV.352, where Kant distinguishes “*Schranken*” from “*Grenzen*.”

is for many difficult enough to accept. Any “defense” of Kant’s project becomes hopeless if his conceptual scheme is taken as establishing anything more than formal conditions for the possibility of experience, or worse, if formal conditions are taken as establishing substantial, material conclusions about the content of that experience. Thus, I think we must regard that conceptual scheme as both immodest yet minimal – immodest in establishing absolutely universal and strictly necessary conditions for the possibility of experience, yet as such imposing only a minimal framework within which questions of science, mathematics, and empirical experience are investigated. As Arthur Melnick has succinctly stated the point, “at least part of Kant’s empirical realism is that everything is ‘left open’ that *could* be left open,” where “left open” is construed as “undecidable on a priori grounds or not in any way contributed by the subject.”⁴³

V. Kant and His Critics

It would be an arduous task, and would unreasonably extend the length of this discussion, to consider the full range of the vast feminist literature that has been produced in the last two decades or so, even if the attempt were to be limited solely to discussions explicitly involving Kant’s attitudes toward women. Instead, I will focus on some prominent discussions of Kant’s views that, when taken together, represent the broad contours of the feminist critique of Kant.⁴⁴

Genevieve Lloyd’s well-known *The Man of Reason*⁴⁵ presents a history of the idea of reason, a history that has consistently emphasized the “maleness” of reason and concomitantly devalued or denied the rationality of women. While Lloyd only devotes a short section to Kant, it is worth considering, if only briefly, what she says there, given the wide and significant influence her text has had.

Lloyd focuses on two essays by Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” and “The Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View.” She pays particular attention to Kant’s notion that the development of the freedom and independence of reason reflects the motto of the Enlightenment – *sapere aude* – and that this notion is fundamentally tied to the maturing of reason

⁴³ Melnick, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, I have thus had to exclude from this account the provocative feminist critiques of reason one can find in the “postmodern” literature, e. g. the work of Luce Irigaray, beyond the discussion of Schott, whose analysis reflects the strong influence of Marx, Merleau-Ponty, the Frankfurt school, and postmodernism. I have also neglected (beyond whatever aspects of the view may be shared by the critics I consider, e. g. Lloyd) what is sometimes referred to as “standpoint” feminism, i. e. the view that women – whether for biological, political, and/or social reasons – think, perceive, know, and reason about the world in ways fundamentally distinct from men. I think there are in-principle conceptual limitations to such a view, roughly for the kinds of Kantian reasons I discuss here.

⁴⁵ (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981); further references will be given parenthetically.

during this era. At the same time, however, women are explicitly denied such independence:

by his own logic, the immaturity of women must be connected with their systematic exclusion both from the private use of Reason in the duties of civil functionaries, and from the public use of Reason, in which those roles are set aside (67).

Lloyd further points out that while on “Kant’s view, moral consciousness pertains to what is common to all minds,” he “has nevertheless has been caught up in the articulation of sexual difference” (69), thus grounding, implicitly, a hierarchical evaluation of the sexes and, consequently, the inferiority of women.

Lloyd’s discussion, while brief, is representative of much of the feminist criticism of Kant, and serves well to bring out a tension – if not an outright contradiction – in Kant’s philosophy. As noted, she focuses specifically on two essays of Kant, and her discussion does not take into account what I previously referred to as Kant’s “canonical” works. It is not surprising that such discussions have not taken into consideration those works – which must, minimally, include the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the *Critique of Judgement* – for these texts simply do not explicitly attempt to characterize women, or articulate their political status as women. At the same time, an interpretation that ignores Kant’s remarks on duty, freedom, and agency, central topics in the first two *Critiques* especially, would seem to fail to do justice to Kant’s mature views. This is *not* to say Kant did not hold the views expressed in the relatively minor, and sometimes pre-critical works – e. g. the *Observations* – or the lectures – such as those on *Anthropology* – throughout his career. It is, rather, to point to the tension between those texts that must, on any account of Kant’s work, be counted as central to his philosophy, and those texts that have been, understandably, the focus of Kant’s feminist critics.

The hazards of not considering the most detailed conception of rationality Kant provides, namely that of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, are reflected in Lloyd’s account. As discussed above, Kant’s account of reason and agency is couched in terms of the transcendental unity of apperception, represented by the “I think,” or what Kant calls in the Paralogisms “this I or He or It (the Thing) that thinks” (A 346/B 404). The fundamental condition for rationality sketched in the Critical philosophy is the ability (“*Vermögen*” or “*Fähigkeit*”) to refer to oneself as “I,” a condition Kant is explicitly unwilling to restrict to human beings, and, *a fortiori*, to men.⁴⁶ He is interested in carving out space for the kind of intellect that does not *create* its own objects (i. e., for Kant, God), but also one that does not simply react passively to external stimuli, without making judgements (e. g., for Kant, non-human animals). Lloyd, by relying on some of Kant’s relatively minor, and in any case non-systematic, works in her account, ignores this important aspect of Kant’s analysis,

⁴⁶ See Beck, L. W. “The Fact of Reason” in *Studies in the Philosophy of Kant* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1965), pp. 200–214, and “Toward a Meta-Critique of Pure Reason” in *Essays on Hume and Kant* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 31–32.

as in her reference in this context to “female consciousness” (70). If referring to the consciousness of the “I think,” she commits a category mistake, in that the apperceptive unity, as formal, is detached from any such characteristics.⁴⁷ If, on the other hand, she is referring to *empirical* consciousness, Lloyd has simply changed the subject. In a similar neglect of Kant’s argument of the first *Critique*, she remarks that on Kant’s view there, theoretical reason is “impotent” (68). Kant’s point, rather, is that the theoretical use of reason is not *constitutive* but plays an indispensable *regulative* or heuristic role in organizing the results arrived at by the understanding, which is considerably different than being “impotent.” Kant devotes an appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic – “The Regulative Employment of the Ideas of Pure Reason” – outlining this role.

At the same time, Lloyd’s account is valuable in highlighting the conflict we have already observed. Kant presents in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (and the *Critique of Practical Reason*) his account of reason (which contains within it an explicit commitment to autonomy) in the context of a purely formal conception of reason. As Thomas Hill jr. puts it, “Despite some appearances to the contrary, Kant typically treats autonomy as an all-or-nothing trait that grounds a basic respect due to all human beings.”⁴⁸ Yet in those texts where he specifically discusses women, they are characterized as lacking reason, or reason in its fullest sense, presumably on the basis of properties due to their biological sex, their gendered social roles, or both. How these two points can be reconciled – *if* they can be reconciled – is an issue to which I will return.

Robyn May Schott’s *Eros and Cognition*⁴⁹ is an extended discussion of what Schott calls the “Kantian paradigm” of objectivity; as such, it provides a much fuller account of Kant’s views than Lloyd tries to do. Indeed, Schott’s text is not fundamentally concerned with presenting a specifically feminist critique of Kant’s philosophy but, much more ambitiously, seeks to connect what Schott sees as Kant’s asceticism and purism – here echoing the criticism first expressed by J. G. Hamann – with the reification of the person, the authoritarian control of capitalism, and the fetishism of the commodity. At the same time, Schott’s critique of Kant’s approach to the subject, as one detached from its historical and embodied context, is representative of a central thread of the feminist critique of Kant, a relationship she outlines toward the conclusion of her work.

⁴⁷ As we have seen, and will see again, this very detachment has been the basis for much of the feminist critique of Kant. It is, of course, the very “emptiness” of the “I think” that allows Kant to present the powerful critique of Descartes’s *cogito* argument, the focus of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason.

⁴⁸ “The Kantian Critique of Autonomy” in Hill’s *Dignity and Practical Reason in Kant’s Moral Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 79.

⁴⁹ (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); further references will be given parenthetically. While I discuss only Schott’s account of Kant to the extent that it treats what are now standard feminist issues, it should be emphasized that she has a great deal to say about *other* important forms exploitation has assumed in the guise of objective reason, particularly the exploitation of the working class.

After presenting the historical background of asceticism, from the Greeks through medieval Christianity (and its influence in the development of the modern University), Schott turns to Kant's account of objectivity, which "has become paradigmatic for modern views about knowledge" (vii). Her interpretation fundamentally rests on a reading of Kant's conception of objective knowledge – *Erkenntnis* – as a secularization of the ascetic desideratum of purity. Thus, "Modern philosophical theories such as Kant's maintain the principles of the dominance of reason over passion and of pure truth over temporal existence" (71). This emphasis on the search for "pure truth," on Schott's reading, rejects any role for the sensual – "the erotic" – in knowledge and, in turn, in morality and in aesthetic judgement. This results in a suppression of the erotic and in a distorted conception of human life. In general,

Kant's demand for rational control echoes the Calvinist imperative to rationalize every moment of existence. For the Calvinist, one's natural state must be subjugated to a rational discipline, eliminating any trace of spontaneity. Similarly, Kant's principle of apathy and self-control must be completely repudiated by the rational man (107).

While Schott's thesis is undoubtedly provocative, and raises important issues that have been neglected, to a large extent, in many standard accounts of Kant's Critical philosophy, her critique ultimately fails to compel. Instead of trying to clarify these issues individually, here I can only address some of the systematic problems that vitiate her account.

Whether or not it is accurate – which I doubt – to regard Kant's conception of objectivity as "paradigmatic" for contemporary philosophy, or even "analytic" philosophy, Schott tends to neglect important aspects of that Kantian conception. As characterized above, Kant tries to provide a "logic" of experience by establishing a set of universal and necessary rules for the possibility of experience. Such rules, while *a priori* in the strongest sense (B 2), must be construed as *necessary* conditions of experience, whereas Schott frequently seems to regard them as *sufficient* conditions. Thus she claims that on Kant's analysis, individuals "will arrive at identical results in their thought" (129); in general:

Not only are all objects known in exactly the same way by the individual thinker, but all thinkers know each object in the same way as every other thinker (131).

It is difficult to know precisely how to interpret this claim. Certainly Kant is not claiming that all cognitive agents make the *same* cognitive judgements, nor can he be seen as claiming that all such agents *should* make the same cognitive judgements. Transcendental analytic provides an framework *within which* judgements of experience are possible, hence, a framework within which meaningful disagreement can take place. If, for instance, two people find themselves arguing over the relationship between interest rates and the effect on the stock market, both presuppose a basic cause-and-effect framework within which they pursue the specifics of their respective causal (and empirical) analyses. The structure that makes this debate possible

is that which Kant argues for in the Transcendental Analytic, most specifically the Second (and Third) Analogy.

For Kant, “the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are likewise conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience” (A 158/B 197). Cognitive claims – claims about objects of experience – are made in cognitive judgements. One set of universal and necessary rules for possible judgements of experience is that contributed by the understanding. The other set is provided by the Transcendental Aesthetic, where Kant argues that the pure forms of intuition – space and time – provide *a priori* conditions for sensible receptivity. When brought together, by means of Kant’s notorious account in the “Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding,” we have in place a set of necessary conditions for the possibility of experience. But any specific cognitive claim is still very much underdetermined; for Kant specific empirical cognitive claims are always contingent.

A sufficient and at the same time general criterion [*Kennzeichen*] of truth cannot possibly be given. Since we have already entitled the content of cognition its matter, we must be prepared to say that of the truth of cognition, so far as its matter is concerned, no general criterion can be demanded. Such a criterion would by its very nature [*in sich selbst*] be self-contradictory (A 59/B 83; cf. A 480/B 508).

Beyond the formal conditions imposed by a thinking subject, the truth of a given empirical proposition must be determined by returning to what Kant calls “the fruitful bathos of experience.”⁵⁰ Thus Transcendental Analytic cannot by itself *yield* the truth; it serves only as a “logic of truth” (A 62/B 87). Given these remarks, it also becomes difficult to understand precisely what Schott means by her frequently repeated observation that Kant seeks “pure truth” (20; 71; 110 *inter alii*). Similarly, Schott frequently refers to Kant’s fundamental philosophical goal as the discovery, or establishment, of “pure reason” (3; 168; 171), without pausing to consider that an ineliminable motivation of Kant’s project is the *critique* of pure reason.

Schott also comes perilously close to giving a caricature of the transcendental unity of apperception, by uncritically treating the account of subject found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as of a piece with the account found in the *Anthropology*. Thus she writes that Kant’s “discussion of human nature in the *Anthropology* is not merely an addendum to his picture of human knowledge. It provides the substantive correlate to his model of cognition” (105).⁵¹ Below, I will take up briefly the histo-

⁵⁰ *Prolegomena*, Appendix; IV. 373 n. (Ellington, 113 n.). For an illuminating discussion of the role “truth” plays in Kant’s philosophy, see Prauss, Gerold “Zum Wahrheitsproblem bei Kant,” *Kant-Studien* 60 (1969), pp. 166–182, as well as Prauss’s *Erscheinung bei Kant* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), pp. 275 ff.

⁵¹ Compare Kant’s remark at (A 841–842/B 869–870), “... the metaphysics of morals is really pure moral philosophy, with no underlying basis of anthropology or of other empirical conditions.” Given the intimate connection between the metaphysics of morals and the scope and limits of human cognition established in the First *Critique*, Schott seems to give undue emphasis to the *empirical* (and hence contingent) observations Kant makes about human nature in the *Anthropology*.

riographical and philosophical problems raised by Kant's remarks – particularly about women – in the Anthropology. But here I will only note that, again, Schott seems either to confuse necessary and sufficient conditions in her interpretation of the “I think,” or to employ an inappropriately reductive model of Kant's claims concerning apperceptive unity, as when Schott writes that “In Kant's system the essential features of consciousness become reduced to the formal condition ‘I think,’ which establishes an *equivalence* between all subjects” (124). Keeping the account of the first *Critique* distinct from that given in the Anthropology, we do indeed see Kant emphasize the empty, formal of the “I think.” *Insofar* as agents are rational, we might be able to substantiate Schott's claim concerning the “equivalence” between all subjects. But that merely commits us to the minimal claims involved in the attribution of agency: the ability to use the first-person pronoun, the ability to make judgements, and the ability to regard oneself as free. To be sure, this conflicts markedly with Kant's empirical account, in the Anthropology and elsewhere. At the same time, however, these abilities, as characterized in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, are minimal characteristics Kant attributes to an agent, and cannot, on the account given there, be limited to men. Indeed, such a view only distinguishes this kind of agent from non-human animals – in that they do not make (discursive) judgements – and from what Kant calls an “archtypal” intellect – in that such an intellect doesn't make judgements at all, in the sense of judgements that could be true or false.⁵² Only if we conceive of the human being's characteristics as *exhausted* by what Kant described in terms of the transcendental unity of apperception can we say, with Schott, that “All possible impressions become equal and exchangeable in the face of a possible relation to the ‘I think’” (121). But this would amount to a radically reductive, and distorted, reading of what Kant says in the first *Critique*. Furthermore, Schott's analysis neglects what amounts to a dialectical view of the Kantian subject: not only in the subject's (partial) determination in relationship to the external world, but in its universality. Schott emphasizes Kant's atomistic individualism, grounded in “an ‘I’ who is not part of the ‘we’” (146). Yet, as others have pointed out, including Lucien Goldmann, from whose interpretation Schott draws,⁵³ the very universality of the attribution of agency, *via* the transcendental unity of apperception, imposes in-principle demands on our view of others. Those to whom we attribute rationality are then seen as possessing the capacities mentioned above, and we demand that others recognize these same ca-

⁵² I have argued for this in more detail in “Kant's Critical Model of the Experiencing Subject,” *Idealistic Studies* Vol. 25, no. 1 (Winter 1995). While one may indeed be dismayed at Kant's cavalier attitude toward other species of animals, I obviously cannot take up the issue here.

⁵³ Goldmann, while repeatedly pointing out that Kant was unable to transcend the limits of his own bourgeois individualist social order, also remarks that he was able “to take the first decisive steps towards a new philosophical category, that of the *universe*, of the *whole*, and thus to open the way for the later development of modern philosophy” (by which Goldmann means, at least, Hegel and Marx). *Immanuel Kant* (London: New Left Books, 1971), translated by Robert Black, p. 27.

pacities in ourselves. Thus while the “I” is radically subjective, it is at the same time objective in the sense of being a universal and ineliminable feature of all agents. As Goldmann suggests, “For Kant, man is a rational being and, since reason implies universality and community, at least in part a ‘social’ being.”⁵⁴ While Kant may have not been able to transcend many of the cultural and intellectual limitations of his day, there is no in-principle reason that the atomistic individualism attributed to Kant by Schott is *entailed* by his conception of the thinking subject.

Finally, only on the kind of picture of the Kantian subject outlined by Schott are we compelled to the bleak description of human life she attributes to Kant, where we are, or ought to be, hostile to emotion (106), apathetic (109), and sexually repressed (173), where feelings are irrational (141) and property is valued over life (147), and where there may be an attraction to, if not a tendency, to fascism (224 n. 10).⁵⁵ There is no question that Kant’s life was rigidly organized and prone to the excesses of the stereotypical Prussian bourgeois – indeed Kant’s life is largely responsible for the stereotype. Nor is there any doubt that Kant’s life was overwhelmingly spent, as he desired, in the company of men. At the same time, the biographical accounts of Kant’s life do not support quite the portrait Schott’s does, nor do Kant’s own texts require the joylessness or melancholy (107) Schott takes Kant to urge as most desirable.⁵⁶ Kant seeks to impose rules – universal and necessary – for the possibility of cognition and of moral behavior and, in the case of the latter, strong prohibitions are imposed on certain kinds of behavior, including, notoriously, lying. It is not clear to me that Kant’s morality, even at its most stringent, requires our *unhappiness*, which Schott, at times, suggests. “In Kant’s view, if an individual derives inner satisfaction in spreading joy, his action has no moral worth” (139).⁵⁷ Kant’s point, rather, is that whether we feel miserable or ecstatic in doing what duty demands, such feelings are irrelevant for the moral evaluation

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁵⁵ It is interesting in this context to note Goldmann’s comparison between “race” for National Socialism and “instinct” for Bergson, where “the collective and the biological replaced the intellect.” Goldmann remarks that “Kant had seen just this danger; hence his categorical rejection of any feeling which does not arise from the ‘reverence for the law’” (*ibid.*, p. 151 n. 29). Schott, and most of Kant’s contemporary critics, ignore the long tradition of seeing in Kant’s philosophy the foundations for an emancipatory politics, including the socialism of many of the members of the Marburg school of neo-Kantianism, such as Hermann Cohen. For a discussion of this tradition, see Karl Vorländer’s generally neglected *Kant und Marx* (Tübingen: M. C. B. Mohr, 1926); more recently, Harry van der Linden’s *Kantian Ethics and Socialism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988). Kleingeld (*op. cit.*, pp. 144–145) mentions van der Linden’s interpretation, criticizing it for failing to challenge the sexist framework within which Kant works.

⁵⁶ Even Kant’s famous reputation for sexual asceticism has been called into question; see Gulyga, Arsenij *Immanuel Kant* (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel Verlag, 1983), translated by Sigrun Bielfeldt, pp. 76–77.

⁵⁷ See Korsgaard, Christine, “From Duty and for the Sake of the Noble: Kant and Aristotle on Morally Good Action” in Whiting, J. and Engstrom, S. (eds.) *Rethinking Happiness and Duty: Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

of the act, in that such feelings are idiosyncratic, and – significantly – we can never *know* whether or not an act was done for the sake of duty or not. Only by recognizing this limitation to introspection are we able to recognize that aspect of ourselves that is *not* ultimately characterizable, or reducible, to the empirical self, thus “making room” for freedom. In sum, Schott’s account presents a caricature of Kant’s conception of the subject in both its transcendental and empirical dimensions, and thus fails to do justice to the Kantian conception of the subject, insofar as that conception plays a significant role in Kant’s practical philosophy.

While Schott’s interpretation is seriously hampered by what might be viewed as her exegetical legerdemain in treating all of Kant’s texts as equivalent in status, Pauline Kleingeld has been considerably more careful in setting out her argument against Kant’s views on women. In her article “The Problematic Status of Gender-Neutral Language in the History of Philosophy: The Case of Kant,”⁵⁸ Kleingeld is quite specific in focusing on the work on Kant’s critical period, a strategy which has not always been followed by many of Kant’s feminist critics, as we have seen. Drawing predominantly from the Anthropology, Kleingeld argues that Kant, as we have seen, omits women from the role of active citizens and thus as fully rational. This in turn infects his apparent sexless, or gender-neutral, references, in the published works on moral and political philosophy, specifically the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (she does not discuss the *Critique of Pure Reason* or the *Critique of Judgment*). On the basis of this argument, Kleingeld goes on to reject interpretations of Kant’s philosophy that either 1) accept his sexism, 2) reject his work as irredeemably misogynist, or 3) ignore his remarks about women and “translate” them into gender-neutral language (139 ff.). She quite correctly dismisses the first option as inadequate, and notes that the second is not “self-evident,” and its “rejection out of hand is not possible” (140). As she further remarks, the last approach has been that which mainstream Kant scholarship has generally adopted and concludes, also correctly I think, that even if someone would be willing to *excuse* Kant for holding them (his sexist views), this would not by itself entitle her to *ignore* these views (144).

Kleingeld’s discussion is quite valuable, then, not just in drawing our attention to the noxious remarks Kant makes about women, which are generally well-known, but in making the connection between those remarks and Kant’s systematic works in practical philosophy and the tension to which this connection gives rise. Her specific proposed remedy, that we “draw attention, where appropriate, to Kant’s limitation of his argument to men” by means of “interjected clarifying remarks, discussions, digressions, footnotes and annotations” (146) is perhaps less valuable than the general lesson she offers, that we should, in general, be aware of the tension implicit in any passage of Kant’s employing gender-neutral language.

⁵⁸ *Philosophical Forum* XXIV (1992–1993), pp. 134–150; further references will be given parenthetically.

Kleingeld's approach is to recognize that there is a conflict between Kant's alleged gender-neutral language in the systematic works and an in-principle exclusion of women – as passive, as inferior, and as less than rational – in the *Anthropology* and other texts. She argues that we must then read the exclusionary language back into the other texts, cognizant of the fact that when Kant speaks of "Menschheit," for instance, he really only means "men." One might pursue an alternate strategy, however: one that insists on the gender-neutral language of the systematic works, and rejects the assumptions and conclusions of the other texts. Kleingeld recognizes such a possible strategy that argues "Kant does not discuss the characters of the sexes in his Critiques, therefore this issue clearly does not affect transcendental philosophy" (141), while dismissing it. Her argument for this dismissal, again drawing on the *Anthropology*, is that given Kant's claims there that the exercise of reason is "deficient," his characterization holds at the level of transcendental philosophy (142).

There are really two distinct issues here: one concerns the exegesis of Kant's *œuvre*, and one that concerns the assumptions, strategies, and conclusions of transcendental philosophy. The two are obviously related, for only if one takes the latter set of issues as equivalent to Kant's texts *überhaupt* are we faced with the problem that the Critical philosophy is unrepentantly sexist. This requires, however, some consideration of the status of the various texts in Kant's *œuvre*, a point that has been surprisingly overlooked by virtually all of Kant's feminist critics. While Kleingeld, as noted, distinguishes the critical and pre-critical texts, the *Anthropology* has to be viewed with considerably more suspicion than she gives it. As we have seen, the lectures, which are student notes, had been given by Kant "for some thirty years;" we know that he had been lecturing on philosophical anthropology as early as 1772–1773.⁵⁹ While Kant approved their publication, it is not yet clear what kind of changes they underwent during the decades in which Kant delivered them.⁶⁰ Furthermore, it is clear that the relevant claims made in the *Anthropology* are not *a priori* in the strong sense discussed above; as Kleingeld notes, "Kant apparently does not want to give transcendental status to the sexual difference" (141). Indeed, the kinds of remarks Kant makes about women, understandably, lack much if any argument or support. Such arguments cannot come from any kind of biological account for, as far as I know, Kant gives none; at best, Kant's remarks about the "natural" superiority of men are based, at best, on a hasty inductive generalization with his mind, as Susan Mendus puts it, "almost wholly uncluttered by any actual experience."⁶¹ As Mendus makes the more general point,

⁵⁹ See the remarks in the Academy edition VII. 354–356.

⁶⁰ Some light may be shed on this question with the forthcoming publication of volume XXV of the Academy edition, edited by Reinhard Brandt, containing transcripts of Kant's anthropology lectures from 1772 to the 1780s.

⁶¹ Mendus, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

his reasons for insisting on this [the passivity of women] are far from clear: sometimes he gestures at reasons, sometimes he merely states baldly that this is so, but nowhere does he spell out explicitly and consistently exactly why women cannot be active citizens.⁶²

The rest of Kant's remarks about women, as we have seen, are in pre-critical works — such as the *Observations* — or given as offhand remarks or asides in relatively minor works, such as the essay on Theory and Practice. The only exception to this I am aware of is the comment Kant makes about the husband's "natural superiority" to his wife in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: but here again, Kant gives no argument supporting this view, and it is entirely unclear how he *could* support this rather Aristotelian-sounding claim on the basis of anything else he says in the systematic works. It should be remembered, as well, that Kant's remarks about the dependence and passivity of women are in some sense politically accurate, given his era's *de jure* and *de facto* denial to women of their own, independent, identities.

Robert Paul Wolff reminds us that Kant "persists in claiming, as logical consequences of his argument, doctrines which are both manifestly false in themselves and *not even implied by his philosophy*."⁶³ Kant's claims about women are not claimed to be logical consequences of the Critical philosophy, can draw no support from that philosophy, and seem to be the blinkered and confused generalizations by a philosopher whose interaction with women was limited and uncomfortable. Such remarks, at best, are contingent empirical claims, and, as we know from Kant's own account, are subject to falsification. This suggests as an alternate approach to Kleingeld's: that we happily reject the sexism of Kant's texts, while retaining that which can, and should, be read in a gender-neutral fashion. This may well conflict with what Kant says and believes — which is, of course, Kleingeld's point. The question remains whether we can preserve and utilize the insights of Kant's own systematic philosophical texts without being committed to the sexism one finds in the other works. If we can, we may discover, from a surprising source, that those insights ground a robust liberatory and progressive approach.

In this way, we need neither ignore nor excuse Kant's sexism. Indeed, it may be that Kant simply did not care much about this issue. In spite of the fact that he knew well-educated women, and the radical (for his day) views of Theodor Hippel,⁶⁴ the issues that related to women *per se* did not matter much to Kant. Kant

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 166–167.

⁶³ *The Autonomy of Reason* (New York: Harper, 1973), p. 29.

⁶⁴ Kleingeld mentions Hippel (p. 144; see n. 35). For an excellent discussion of Hippel's views, in contrast to the neo-humanism of Humboldt and others which came to dominate, see William Rasch, "Mensch, Bürger, Weib: Gender and the Limitations of Late 18th-Century Neohumanist Discourse," *The German Quarterly*, 66.1 (Winter 1993), pp. 20–33. Humboldt emphasizes the lack of a woman's "Selbstätigkeit," in contrast to men, a term worth considering in light of Kant's similar claims about the dependence of women, but also in terms of his remarks about spontaneity in the first *Critique* and the role it plays in his conception of freedom. See also Jauch, Ursula *Immanuel Kant zur Geschlechterdifferenz* (Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1988), who sees Kant, in some sense, as an early or proto-feminist ("Frühfeminist"), yet unwilling to pursue in practice what he argued for in his theoretical work. However Jauch, with whom I share the approach that "turns Kant against Kant himself" (*ibid.*, p. 225), also neglects to consider the *Critique of Pure Reason* in any depth.

lived in a society that was pervasively oppressive – and not solely to women – and Kant not only failed to see this as a problem, he not infrequently provided it intellectual support. This hardly singles him out; one might consider how radical, much later, and in a politically much more progressive society, J. S. Mill was considered for proposing his own views on the emancipation of women. That Kant failed to see this problem is regrettable, and those of his views that invite and deserve censure should receive it; but beyond that, it seems unproductive to criticize him for not having been a visionary in Prussia relative to women. We should, at the same time, acknowledge how little influence views such as Hippel's had in Kant's era,⁶⁵ how generally misogynist that society was, and that Kant in fact was considered, relatively speaking, a political radical – being referred to, on occasion, as “the old Jacobin” for his support for the French Revolution. We should remember as well that he was regarded, even by his friend Moses Mendelssohn, as “der Alleszermalmer,” was censored from teaching religion by Friedrich Wilhelm II, and served as a threat to many of the standard ways and conventions of his day by insisting (if on occasion disingenuously) that his intellectual era was “the age of criticism,” and that “to criticism everything must submit” (A xi). While Kleingeld has shown quite clearly the tension that remains within Kant's work, it seems at least a plausible strategy to develop an alternate, albeit *neo*-Kantian, approach that at the same time dispenses with the contingent views of Kant the “narrow-minded bourgeois,” and preserves the insights of the radical implications of the Critical philosophy's commitment to freedom, independence, and criticism.

VI. *Feminism and Naturalized Epistemology*

While the discussions surveyed above offer significant contributions to the critique of Kant's views of women, the most valuable account in helping focus on the conflicts relative to feminism within Kant's philosophy is, perhaps surprisingly, a text that for the most part ignores Kant: Louise Antony's “Quine as Feminist: The Radical Import of Naturalized Epistemology.”⁶⁶ This article is far too rich to do justice to here; rather, I will simply sketch the basic argument Antony presents in order to identify precisely those aspects of Kant's position that might be exploited to ground a feminist project. This will, in turn, lead to questions about whether naturalized epistemology is in a position to supply adequate support to such a project.

⁶⁵ See Rasch, *op. cit.*, p. 20: Hippel's “radical call for the full integration of women in society had virtually no impact on contemporary political debates in Germany.” I would like to thank Professor Marion Gray for alerting me to Rasch's article, and for some very valuable discussions about the social and cultural characteristics of late 18th-century Prussia.

⁶⁶ In Antony and Witt (eds.), *op. cit.*; further references will be given parenthetically. Antony herself observes that for the most part she is “going to pretty much ignore” Kant (220 n. 23).

Antony's general approach is to reject the idea that "there is some kind of natural antipathy between radicalism on the one hand and the methods and aims of analytic philosophy on the other" (188). Indeed, as we have seen, not only analytic philosophy but the history of Western philosophy has frequently been attacked, with some justification, as fundamentally phallogocentric and patriarchal, wherein those views characteristic of *masculine* reason are universalized as characteristic of *human* reason, yielding a standard that simultaneously excludes women and marginalizes them for failing to satisfy this standard of rationality.

Antony argues that this attack has led to a "bias paradox," where such masculine standards — Antony mentions impartiality and objectivity — are criticized as displaying male bias, while the critique itself relies on some kind of appeal to an unbiased criterion:

... how is it possible to criticize the partiality of the concept of objectivity without presupposing the very value under attack? Put baldly: If we don't think it's good to be *impartial*, then how can we object to men's being *partial*? (189).

Antony employs this strategy to criticize feminists who have embraced various "anti-Enlightenment" perspectives in developing their analyses, mentioning, among others, Jane Flax, Allison Jaggar, Sandra Harding, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Lorraine Code.⁶⁷ In addition to being ensnared by this bias paradox, Antony argues that too many of these feminist critiques rely on an inadequate and oversimplified reading of the history of philosophy, obscuring "the enormous amount of controversy surrounding such notions as knowledge and the self during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (193). Furthermore, Antony suggests that feminist objections to the dated conceptions they employ of "objectivity" and "scientific method" suffer from a consistent neglect of the criticism one finds of these very conceptions "among American analytic philosophers from the 1950s onward" (193).⁶⁸ This combined lack of historical and philosophical context leads to a picture of analytic epistemology Antony regards as at times "downright cartoonish" (193). More specifically, Antony wants to call into question the attribution to contemporary epistemology a view she calls "the Dagnet theory of knowledge," a view which 1) is strongly foundationalist, 2) regards the mind as a mechanism for processing the sensory reports which serve as these foundations and 3) sharply distinguishes fact from

⁶⁷ I won't attempt here to clarify the various strands that constitute these approaches, which include, but are not limited to, standpoint feminism and postmodernism. Harding has paid particularly close attention to these issues; see her "Feminism, Science, and the Anti-Enlightenment Critiques" in Nicholson, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–106. It is worth noting that, elsewhere, Antony has glossed the problem of normativity in Quine's own philosophy in terms of this issue of "bias," as well; see her "Naturalized Epistemology and Language" in Shimony, A. and Nails, D. (eds.), *Naturalistic Epistemology* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987), p. 251 ff.

⁶⁸ Antony qualifies this slightly (220 n. 4), noting that Harding mentions Quine (but "nothing after"), while Code mentions, but does not discuss Alvin Goldman, a situation Antony finds "ironic" in light of Goldman's arguments for reliabilist accounts of knowledge.

value, observation from theory, and discovery from justification (205). In short, the caricature Antony sees as emerging from a wide range of feminist literature fails to exploit the powerful liberatory tools that analytic philosophy itself has provided:

... the stereotyping of contemporary analytic philosophy – the tendency to link it with views (like the Dragnet theory) to which it is in fact antipathetic – has turned feminists away from fruitful philosophical work, limiting our collective capacity to imagine genuinely novel and transformative philosophical strategies (218).

In contrast, Antony argues for a naturalized epistemology that retains a “minimally realist notion” of truth (190), and insists on the ineliminable situatedness of the knowing subject. Thus, rather than simply criticizing the pervasive problems generated by bias and falling into the paradox described above, Antony urges that we recognize and include this bias within our account of knowledge, while remaining cognizant that “we have no possibility of getting *a priori* guarantees that our biases incline us in the right direction” (215). Rather, “*We must treat the goodness or badness of particular biases as an empirical question*” (*ibid.*).

Antony adopts what I take to be an “expansive” reading of Kant’s epistemology, by attributing to him what she calls “cognitive essentialism,” characterized by the possession of universal cognitive properties, distinctive of human beings and which are “a kind of innate knowledge,” and which are connected to “our status as moral agents” (194). In contrast, as sketched above, I have argued for a “minimalist” reading of Kant’s view of cognition: an interpretation that takes seriously Kant’s refusal to restrict that view to human beings, and that emphasizes that to qualify as a rational agent, one must satisfy a rather modest set of conditions *qua* capacities: the ability to refer to oneself as “I”; the ability to judge discursively, or by means of concepts; and the ability to regard oneself as free. To be sure, Kant couches his discussion in the *Critique of Pure Reason* largely in terms of *human* capacities; yet there is no in-principle limitation given there to human beings (and *a fortiori* no in-principle restriction to men). Furthermore, those concepts such agents possess – absolutely universal and strictly necessary – are not regarded by Kant as “innate” in any rich sense. Kant’s arguments in the *Critique* for rejecting any strong sense of innateness to the categories – for instance his obscure discussion of epigenesis at B 167 – are hardly helpful. Kant does, however, explicitly deny the innateness of the categories in the polemic with J. A. Eberhard, where he asserts that the “transcendental concepts of the understanding”

are acquired and not innate, but their *acquisitio ... is originaria* and presupposes nothing innate except the subjective conditions of the spontaneity of thought (in accordance with the unity of apperception).⁶⁹

In general, then, Kant’s account of agency, including moral agency, requires considerably less, in terms of that account’s *a priori* commitments, than the full-blown “cognitive essentialism” Antony attributes to both him and the rationalists.

⁶⁹ VIII. 223; translated by Henry Allison as *The Kant–Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 136.

More important, however, is that Kant takes great pains to distinguish the *explanation* of certain notions from their *justification*; indeed, this distinction motivates the centerpiece of Kant's transcendental philosophy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Transcendental Deduction. Some concepts, Kant readily admits, are widely employed without controversy; that this is the case, however, only responds to the *quaestio facti*. In contrast, those concepts "marked out for pure *a priori* employment" must submit to the *quaestio juris*, requiring a transcendental deduction (A 84–85/B 116–117). Only the latter can provide legitimacy and warrant, rather than merely offering an account in terms of a "*de facto* mode of origination" (A 85/B 117):

The principle, that all cognition arises from experience alone, and which concerns a *quaestio facti*, thus does not belong here, and the fact is accepted without reservation. But whether it is also derived from experience alone, as its highest cognitive ground, is a *quaestio juris*, an affirmative answer to which would establish the empiricism of transcendental philosophy and the denial of its rationalism.⁷⁰

It is this question of justification, and how we respond to it, that generates the central tension between an approach such as Kant's and the naturalized approach endorsed by Antony. In short, is there a requirement above and beyond the wholly empirical account sought for and provided by naturalized epistemology? It is not clear to me that this is an issue that can be decided on the basis of any specific argument, or "fact of the matter."

This points to a central tension that ultimately arises within any contemporary discussion that involves justification. On the one hand, Kant's view is that no "naturalized" approach can respond in a satisfactory way to the demands that normative constraints require. If Kant's account of a logic of experience is at all plausible, it becomes at least coherent to see why a rule such as the causal principle should be viewed as playing a necessary constitutive role in making experience for the "healthy" understanding possible. If we extend the strategy to Kant's moral philosophy, we can also begin to see why the attribution of agency to another brings with it normative practical constraints on its behavior. As Christine Korsgaard has glossed this last point,

... your whole sense that another is for you a *person*, someone with whom you can interact in characteristically human ways, seems to depend on her having a certain complement of the moral virtues – at least enough honesty and integrity so that you are neither a tool in her hands nor she in yours.⁷¹

These normative constraints may be *shown* to be operative in a wide variety of human societies by the naturalized approach Antony recommends; but as we have

⁷⁰ "Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnitzens und Wolff's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?," XX. 275. One might compare this with Darwin's remark in *The Descent of Man* (London: Murray, 1874) (2nd ed.), p. 486: "The imperious word *ought* seems merely to imply the consciousness of the existence of a rule of conduct, however it may have originated."

⁷¹ *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 11.

seen, if we insist that such constraints, in addition to being *explained* must be *justified*, that approach fails to provide that legitimacy at the same time it presupposes it within its own account.

On the other hand, a position found in much contemporary work in the philosophy of logic, the philosophy of mind, epistemology, and elsewhere has taken as its *Leitmotif* that, whether glossed as convention or otherwise, no non-natural account is forthcoming that can provide the justification sought, and that we have no choice but to work within such a naturalized context. A resolution of this issue is, of course, beyond the scope of this discussion. But the virtue of Antony's approach is not only to highlight this issue, but to bring it to the forefront as perhaps the central point of tension between Kant and his feminist critics, with the further suggestion that how we respond to this issue will determine whether or not a conception of feminism along Kantian or neo-Kantian lines is at all plausible.

VII. Kant as Feminist

I began this discussion by looking at what, on almost any view, must be regarded as the noxious remarks Kant made about women, and at the responses those remarks have generated. I want to conclude by suggesting what a Kantian feminism — a notion many may find oxymoronic — might look like, if only in the barest of outlines.

Initially, one must distinguish the central texts presenting Kant's philosophical doctrine from the various minor works, unpublished notes, and student lectures. With the sole exception of Kant's remark about the "natural superiority" of men in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the views Kant expresses about women, and which have earned him, justifiably, harsh reactions from feminists, cannot be found in the systematic works such as the First *Critique*. Indeed, the texts focused on by Kant's feminists critics are the *Observations*, a pre-critical work on aesthetics, and the *Anthropology*, a collection of student notes. Kant clearly rejected much of the aesthetic doctrine of the *Observations* in writing the *Critique of Judgement*; the *Anthropology* lectures were given, as we have seen, as early as the 1770s, and it is unclear how much, if any revision they underwent. In any case, these two texts cannot be regarded as having the same status in Kant's work as the three *Critiques* and other systematic texts. To treat all of Kant's texts, from the early essay *De Igne* to the unpublished Prize Essay on the Progress of Metaphysics, as a seamless whole is intellectually irresponsible in neglecting the evolution of Kant's thought over 50 years; it is, as well, an impossible task, given Kant's own rejection of many of his earlier views.

One might, in this context, compare Hegel, who has received relatively less attention than Kant from feminist critics. Yet in *The Philosophy of Right*, a text which must be regarded as central to the presentation of Hegel's views, we see the following:

Man [der Mann] has then his actual substantial life in the state, in science and similar areas, and in the struggle and work with the external world and with himself ... the woman has her substantial determination in the family and her moral sense in this piety.

Women can indeed be educated, but are not made for the higher sciences, philosophy and certain productions of art, which demand a sense of the universal [ein Allgemeines].⁷²

In general, feminist critics of the Western philosophical tradition have provided an invaluable service by insisting that we recognize and consider the long history of oppression, implicitly and explicitly endorsed by a wide range of philosophers. At the same time, one may find a great deal of inspiration in Plato, while rejecting his elitism and anti-democratic leanings; similarly, one need not accept Aristotle's remarks on banausic ways of living, nor his support for slavery, to find value in his work. Hume held some rather distasteful views of minorities, and was hardly alone; indeed, he is quoted to this effect by Kant. A long and sad story of anti-Semitism can be traced through Western philosophy, from Luther to Wagner, if not Heidegger. Schopenhauer's remarks on women, frequently endorsed by his erstwhile follower Nietzsche, need not be regarded without suspicion by those who find great insight in either philosopher's work. Indeed, the more one writes, and takes up diverse subjects, the more likely one is to treat issues of controversy. Historical figures guilty of such ambitions, one might say, are *likely* to venture into social, political, and – in general – ideological territory where their views will come to be seen not just as wrong-headed, but as fundamental errors, ranging from the venial to the unforgivable.

This situation presents the interpreter of a given philosopher with the problem Pauline Kleingeld has articulated: can one separate aspects of a philosopher's views – particularly those we find distasteful, or worse – from other positions held by that same philosopher we find insightful and important? (This issue becomes particularly acute in the case of Heidegger, in determining the relationship between his philosophical views and his more overt political activity and commitment.) And if one can, in principle, do so, how does one go about it? Kleingeld, as we have seen, suggests that we keep in mind Kant's views about women when we read his remarks about subject and rational agency as presented in the purportedly "gender free" systematic works. I have suggested, instead, that we censure Kant's views about women, and recognize that there is no in-principle connection, and certainly no argument worth the name, connecting his systematic treatment of rationality and agency in the first *Critique* and those views.⁷³ Thus what we may regard as

⁷² *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1964) (reprint of Jubiläumsausgabe of E. Gans), § 166; the second comment is a Zusatz from student notes.

⁷³ Kleingeld, *op. cit.*, p. 142 observes that one can justifiably distinguish between the "essential and inessential elements in Kant's writings." As I have tried to argue here, Kant's views on women do not need to be seen as essential to his philosophical doctrine as presented in the systematic works; at worst, the noxious views of women Kant puts forward may characterize his beliefs, without being essential to what one might call the Kantian philosophy, unless we take everything Kant says throughout his work as essential to that philosophy.

insightful in Kant's critical philosophy may be retained and utilized, without committing us to some of the indefensible positions Kant held. This is, in fact, considerably easier to do in Kant's case, relative to some of the other thinkers mentioned above, given what we have seen about where the majority of his remarks about women occur.

Again, it should be emphasized that none of this should be taken as indicating in any way that Kant did *not* hold the noxious views of women expressed in the *Observations*, the *Anthropology*, and elsewhere. Indeed, it seems quite likely that many of Kant's positions, including those about women, were held by him precisely as stated in those texts. The point, rather, is that those views can be, and should be, rejected, without fundamentally altering the results one might draw on from the systematic works. And it seems to me that those results can, in fact, ground a robust and progressive version of feminism.

In beginning this discussion, I mentioned that one version of the Categorical Imperative — that which prohibits treating another solely as a means, and insists on regarding all human beings as ends in themselves (and thus as members of the Kingdom of Ends) — could ground a progressive and liberatory project. And as several contemporary Kant scholars have shown, notably Herman, this imperative can indeed be a powerful tool, not only in constructing a moral doctrine along Kantian, yet progressive, lines, but also in criticizing traditional ideological positions (including Kant's) that conflict with that doctrine. As Herman remarks,

We would do well, I believe, to attend to the details of what happens when Kant's views about women engage with matters he takes to be central to his enterprise. It is in such places that his forced to go beyond what he otherwise casually accepts, and that is where things can get interesting.⁷⁴

In addition, several of Kant's interpreters, including Korsgaard, Herman, Jauch, van der Linden, Marcia Baron, and Onora O'Neill, have defended a robust moral conception along Kantian lines that can well be exploited in providing a framework for progressive politics and the rejection of oppression of not just women, but children, workers, and others excluded from traditional hierarchical manifestations of power.

Both those sympathetic to Kant's philosophical project, broadly construed, as well as those feminist critics we have seen who are, for various reasons, hostile to that project, have tended to neglect the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Yet, as Kant himself remarks, those views presented in the practical philosophy are themselves made possible by the extensive critical investigation of the First *Critique*. It is there that Kant characterizes the thinking subject as spontaneous, playing a constitutive role in its cognition and reflectively able to discover the universal and necessary condi-

Thus it is important to distinguish *Kant* from *Kantianism*, and I have tried to show here that the latter cannot be reduced unproblematically to the former.

⁷⁴ Herman, *op. cit.*, p. 51. For a more thorough treatment of Kant's practical philosophy, see her *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

tions of its own objective experience. It is there, furthermore, that Kant shows the errors that arise when theoretical reason attempts to go beyond its legitimate cognitive scope, as established in the *Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic*. It is there, as well, that Kant attempts to demonstrate that freedom and the causal principle of the Second Analogy are not incompatible, thus making room for genuine human freedom. For these reasons, Kant can claim in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that practical reason shows its reality in its actions, having already cleared the way by showing both the scope and limits of pure speculative reason.⁷⁵

What, then, would a Kantian or neo-Kantian feminism look like? As Sandra Harding has observed, "There is no single set of claims beyond a few generalities that could be called 'feminism' without controversy among feminists."⁷⁶ Yet among those generalities surely are a strong commitment to the dignity, autonomy, freedom, and respect for the human being, and an equally strong rejection of heteronomy and the objectification of that human being. This is, I have tried to show above, precisely the picture that emerges from what Kant says about rational agency in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is not a picture of the solipsistic individual, but rather of an agent that recognizes within itself capacities, rights, and obligations that are binding not just on that agent but on all the members of that agent's community, where that community is taken to consist of all rational agents. It is, at the same time, a picture of that community that does not evaluate normative standards in terms of convention or utility, criteria that have long been used in an arbitrary and oppressive fashion.

To be sure, a Kantian feminism would be an Enlightenment feminism, which may be sufficient for many of his critics to reject it outright. But as Antony and others have pointed out, there are systematic problems in sustaining a feminist perspective that rejects a realistic commitment to truth and some commitment, however minimal, to objectivity and impartiality. At the same time, it is unclear how a feminist perspective that is unwilling to endorse some set of conditions that makes possible communication and community itself can put forth the kind of criticism that feminism itself has shown to be a painful lacuna in the history of Western philosophy. It is, in the end, difficult to see how to defend a feminism that fails to be committed to the freedom and autonomy of all the individuals who interact to constitute the human community and thus remains susceptible to the profound dangers of arbitrariness and relativism. As I have tried to show here, in spite of his own noxious personal views, a surprisingly robust account of the autonomy and interdependence among the members of that community emerges from Kant.*

⁷⁵ V. p. 4 ("Preface").

⁷⁶ *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 6.

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