Part Four

Other Voices
Feminism is an entire world view or Gestalt, not just a laundry list of "women’s issues." —Charlotte Bunch

Girls and boys develop different relational capacities and senses of self as a result of growing up in a family in which women mother. —Nancy Chodorow

As nature [during the Scientific Revolution] came to seem more like a woman whom it is appropriate to rape and torture than like a nurturing mother; did rape and torture come to seem a more natural relation of men to women? —Sandra Harding

What is feminist philosophy? Feminist philosophy as an academic discipline did not emerge until the seventies in the United States, Europe, and Australia. But this doesn’t mean there were no feminist philosophers until then—far from it! There have been women philosophers since the eighteenth century, and they have made significant contributions to feminist philosophy today.

An important thing to remember as we explore this chapter is that there is really no such thing as feminism; instead, there are feminisms. This is because feminism has developed out of different issues and goals in different countries, cultures, and circumstances. Feminists do not always agree on what the agenda should be, but what they do all share is a deep commitment that women and men should be treated equally. Beyond that, complexities have evolved.

As feminist theory has mushroomed in the field of women’s studies, new interdisciplinary bases have formed, and each of these contributes to the proliferation of feminisms. Similarly, feminist philosophy must now be considered a loose term for the

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many varieties of feminist philosophical discourse: liberal, Marxist/socialist, radical/anarchical, ecological, phenomenological, postmodern, and postfeminist.

Traditional philosophy has developed around some major categories of questions and issues—the ontological concerns of subjectivity and the nature of reality; the epistemological concerns of truth and knowledge; the ethical concerns of morality and the good; the political concerns of rights and responsibilities—so we can see that philosophy as an intellectual discipline has provided us with the grounding to understand ordinary life as we live it. It has historically presented itself as a neutral, disinterested set of discourses, and therein lies the problem as feminist philosophers view it. Traditional philosophy is viewed by feminists as a masculine body of theoretical concepts through its sexism, its underlying patriarchal constructs, and its social misogyny: it is a phallocentric (male-centered) discursive strategy. Traditional philosophy, feminist thinkers claim, has defined women in negative ways, has misrepresented them, and has rendered them subservient or even invisible.

Feminist philosophy has evolved in response to these systematic injustices and demands that the fundamental questions of philosophy be reconceived before they can be reconsidered. Feminist philosophy is thus both a reconstruction of the philosophical canon and a revisionist approach to those philosophical claims that misrepresent women. The challenge of feminist philosophy is to transform the ideas of traditional philosophy by producing new ideas that include women and women’s issues and ideas, particularly in the world of the other and the constitution of the self. The oppositions between body and mind and between emotion and reason are gendered oppositions as viewed by feminist philosophers. The tension of these opposing alterities and the accompanying social identities that compose the field of feminist philosophy.

Feminist thought in general is often divided into categories known as first wave, second wave, postfeminism, and third wave. Note that these distinctions do have approximate timelines, but the borders are somewhat merged because feminists do not all agree to be categorized and have independent ideas that may carry over from one wave to another. As Marilyn Frye points out, “Thought is universal, but philosophy is local—temporally, culturally, and historically specific.”

THE FIRST WAVE

One of the grandmothers of feminist thought was Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797). She was a precursor of the first-wave feminist movement, which did not begin in any organized way until the 1850s and lasted to the early part of the twentieth century. Some scholars regard her as the founder of what is now the feminist movement. Wollstonecraft was particularly interested in the education of women, opposing Rousseau’s view that women’s role was to please men and be useful to them in various solicitous ways. Wollstonecraft argued that educating women to be the ornaments and playthings of men would have negative consequences for society in the long run as well as for the women themselves. She
argued that women are as capable as men of the “masculine” virtues of wisdom and rationality if they are permitted to cultivate them. She published several important pamphlets and books, including what has now become a classic of feminist thought, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

**Anna Doyle Wheeler** (1765–1833) was another major contributor to pre-first-wave thought. An Irish self-educated philosopher and an avid utilitarian, Wheeler published numerous articles before collaborating with utopian/reformist philosopher **William Thompson** (1775–1833). Together they published “The Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Restrain Them in Political, and Thence in Civil and Domestic, Slavery.” In this essay Wheeler and Thompson argued that denying rights to women is not consistent with the utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It was a stirring defense of equal rights for women. Another important utilitarian was **Harriet Taylor** (1807–1858), who was a vociferous proponent of women’s suffrage and was among the first to assert that differences between men and women that are not biological are socially constructed.

The first wave of feminist thought worked toward obtaining voting rights for women, abolition, and temperance causes; it saw some dramatic results, including changes in the right to vote and property rights for women. But larger social problems remained: women were still educated differently, still viewed primarily as ornamental and nurturing, still paid less, and still valued differently than men.

## THE SECOND WAVE

The personal is political. —Carol Hanisch (1970)

The term *second wave* refers to the swell of feminist activism in the United States, Britain, and Europe from the late 1960s through the late 1980s. To some degree, second-wave theory still exists, and some second-wave theorists continue to write, so there is not a firm chronological boundary between the waves. That philosophy has traditionally been a male occupation is indisputable. What is more odious,
proclaimed second-wave feminists, is the way some philosophers, particularly Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant, have denigrated women.

Philosopher and novelist **Simone de Beauvoir** [bow-VWAHR] (1908–1986) recognized the problem. Earlier feminists were primarily English and American, steeped in the traditions of empiricism and utilitarianism. Beauvoir came from the Continental traditions of existentialism and phenomenology. Her approach focused less on the public world of laws, rights, and education, and more on the cultural mechanisms of oppression, which placed women in the role of *Other* to man’s *Self*. She developed this notion of women’s otherness in her book *The Second Sex*, which undertook a sweeping analysis of all the ideas and forces that conspired to keep women in a subordinate position relative to men. Despite the vitriolic response from her French contemporaries, *The Second Sex* had far-reaching ramifications for other feminist philosophers. Not only had Beauvoir answered the question “What is a woman?” with her famous statement “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” but she had successfully created a bridge between philosophical concepts and the social constructs that create them. Feminist thinkers who followed now had a broad platform from which to go in the various directions the second wave has produced.

The word **patriarchy** was coined early in the second wave to represent the set of institutions that legitimized universal male power. *The Second Sex* had opened the door to radical feminist perspectives that explored the existence of patriarchal constructs in everything from politics to the economy to rape, pornography, prostitution, and marriage. Even heterosexuality was seen as a patriarchal dictate.

The sixties, seventies, and early eighties saw an explosion of feminist theory. Here is a short list (!) of representative writings by American and Continental women about women from a feminist standpoint in this era: Betty Friedan’s *The Feminist Mystique* (1963); Robin Morgan’s *Sisterhood Is Powerful* (1970); Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970); Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970); Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1971); Ti-Grace Atkinson’s *Amazon Odyssey* (1974); Charlotte Bunch’s *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement* (1975); Andrea Dworkin’s *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1979); Susan Brownmiller’s *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (1975); Eva Figes’s *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970); Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978);

What this list of titles reflects is an interesting phenomenon: women at the grassroots level and women in academia began to push for revolutionary changes in the ways men and women have traditionally interacted in terms of power and authority. Further, the mushrooming of theory began to take shape in ways that can be categorized into different approaches, such as liberal, Marxist/socialist, and radical. Special-interest women’s theory emerged: lesbian feminism, black feminism, feminist men, and, beginning around 1990, cyberfeminism and ecofeminism. Feminist theory had now arrived in full force and was being integrated into our ordinary lives as well as into academic scholarship. When there are so many feminist perspectives and voices and interest groups, there will inevitably be conflict. As you can readily see from the list, feminists do not speak in one voice; they do not agree as to which issues should be given priority, nor do they always find common ground in their various agendas.

**Liberal feminism** was the earliest form of feminist theory. There are numerous feminist positions within this category, but what they all share is a belief in autonomy and equality for women. The central claim of liberal feminists is that all humans deserve freedom of choice and equality of opportunity. Toward this end, liberal feminists operate in the public sphere, working to change restrictive laws and eliminating barriers to women’s advancement in the workplace. Feminist
philosophers identifying as liberal feminists examine the ideals that underlie the political inequalities and analyze strategies that can effect change. Critics of liberal feminism argue that liberal feminism is a white, middle-class, Western women’s movement that doesn’t adequately address the needs of minority and non-Western women.

**Radical feminism** identifies patriarchy as the root cause of women’s subordination in the global sphere, focusing on women’s reproduction, women’s sexuality, and the feminine ideal. Radical feminists argue that drastic steps must be taken to change social attitudes that foster rape, violence, and general contempt for women by reducing women to their sexuality. Accordingly, they target cultural phenomena such as advertising, pornography, and music that treat women as sexual objects. Like the other feminist theoretical positions, radical feminism has many forms. Radical feminists are interested in women’s experience rather than any specific form of social justice. But this is problematic for critics of radical feminism, because identifying women by their “female nature” is considered an essentialist position in that it claims that all women have a universal nature in common. Mary Daly and some of the French feminist philosophers fall under the umbrella of radical feminism, focusing on epistemology and female forms of writing.

**Lesbian feminism** views the social norm of heterosexuality as a form of oppression. For a time, lesbianism was regarded as the politically correct identity for all feminists, heterosexual or not. Lesbian feminists argue that lesbians are doubly oppressed—first as women, and second as women who reject men as sexual partners. Lesbian feminism has its roots in the lesbian community at large, but it is also informed by feminist ethics. Not only does it critique traditional gender roles, but it also challenges the dominant tradition of moral philosophy by pointing out that lesbian morality is the morality of a community, not isolated individuals’ moral choices.

**Socialist feminism** combines Marxist and radical feminist perspectives. Following Marxist principles, socialist feminists regard the bearing and raising of children as forms of productive activity. They strive to equate these activities that reflect women’s experience with “male” work production activities. Socialist feminists agree with radical feminists that there is a need to correct women’s oppression in their everyday lives, but they disagree with radical feminists in their view that women’s oppression is not caused solely by male dominance. Nevertheless, no one position defines socialist feminists. What they do agree on is that the differences between men and women that are based on economic divisions of labor should be reconstructed.

**Black feminism** is an American phenomenon. Like lesbian feminists, black feminist theorists claim a dual oppression—both gender and race. In addition, class issues intersect with race and gender. Black feminists do not identify with the label “women’s experience” of oppression, because their experience is situated in the struggles created not only by gender but also by race and class. Black theorists ascribe subjectivity to black feminists who are working to educate others about their unique experience. This is in opposition to traditional epistemology, which presents knowledge as objective and universal. Black feminism is also known as “womanism,” a term coined by Alice Walker, a key figure in black feminist thought along with Patricia Hills Collins, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks.
Second-wave feminists have made progress in many arenas. Shelters for battered women and their children, public education on abuse and rape, contraception, legalization of abortion, women’s studies programs, childcare services in the workplace, and a host of sexual harassment policies are examples of the products of their activism and publications.

THE THIRD WAVE

The pleasurable is political as well. —Terri Senft

It is not that the second wave ended and the third wave replaced it. The 1990s and early 2000s brought new activists and theorists, but there are second-wavers who continue to write and champion their causes, and there are independent feminist philosophers who don’t identify with either second or third wave. So, although third-wave feminism is generally thought to have begun between 1983 and the early 1990s out of disappointment with the lack of gains made in the second wave, particularly regarding violence against women and sexual harassment, it is even more difficult to categorize third-wave activists than second-wave theorists. In addition, third-wave thought rejects what it views as the second wave’s essentialism—that is, a female identity that represents all women. Other third-wavers want to reinstate the values of the second wave, which they feel have been disintegrating and need renewed attention.

Beyond this, third-wave feminism is a challenge to describe because it contains so many strands of theory, some of which are in conflict. Some of these are queer theory, ecofeminism, postcolonial theory, postmodernism, and cultural critique, especially as it relates to sexuality. The movement often calls itself “sex-positive.” For example, its is pro-pornography, which is diametrically opposed to second-wave thought. Members of this movement support transsexuals, who were rejected by second-wavers as merely surgically altered men, and they reject the binary distinctions of male and female. Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, in their collection called Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism (1997), define the third wave as “a movement that contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures.” This is as close to a definition as you are likely to find for third-wave feminism.

Despite what may appear to be their limited list of political concerns, third-wavers have not settled on an agenda that represents them. Another complication is that some third-wave thinkers and activists do not want to be labeled as feminist at all! Third-wave thinkers believe that women should think for themselves as individuals, that feminism is a personal perspective that changes with each woman who practices it. Despite some tension between second- and third-wavers, whether the third is an extension of the second wave or an entirely new wave of thought is a matter of opinion rather than definition.

In general, third-wave thinkers are young women (and men) under the age of thirty-five for whom feminism was an established heritage. Those who identify as
third wave see themselves as redefining feminist issues and goals and have different, broader perspectives about such second-wave givens as oppression and pornography. They assert that each individual’s freedom of choice defines or redefines the issues that were very much at the core of the second-wave feminist agenda. Equity feminism, global human rights, and gender issues are part of their concerns, and popular culture—music, film, the media—are areas that third-wavers penetrate and appropriate for themselves. Bell hooks, who was prominent in the second wave and continues to lecture about the intersections of “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,” has transitioned as a third-wave icon because of her preoccupation with popular culture. The “Riot grrl” punk movement, “kawaii (cutie punk)” in Japanese culture, and the hip-hop “nasty girl” movements are third-wave phenomena, as are some elements of queer theory, the DIY ethic, art projects, transgender politics, women-of-color issues, and postcolonial theory, all of which add up to a unique collection of strands of feminist thought that cannot be categorized as a coherent new feminist theory.

The Third Wave Foundation, Code Pink, and the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance are third-wave activist organizations that reflect interest in the areas of race, class, and sexuality, but third-wavers do not believe it is necessary to join an organization to contribute to issues of concern to women.

Cyberculture has made it easy for third-wavers to connect and communicate. ‘Zines and blogs abound. Examples of third-wave print publications are Bitch and Bust. Some of the third-wave texts worth consulting are Rebecca Walker’s To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism (1995) (Rebecca Walker is Alice Walker’s daughter); Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, ManifestA: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future (2000); Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford, Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration (2007); Eve Ensler, The Vagina Monologues (2001); Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism (1997); Astrid Henry, Not My Mother’s Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism (2004).

Postfeminism is another nebulous category that defies specifics because it contains so many conflicting elements, most of which have little to do with feminist philosophy. Some feminists assert that postfeminism is a reactionary movement whose purpose is to disrupt fixed definitions and descriptions of women’s issues, goals, and theory. Postfeminists argue that all authoritative models of gender must be deconstructed and reevaluated. Some postfeminists believe that feminists have already met their goals and need to move past struggle and resistance. Another group regards postfeminism as primarily British and American third-wavers with their liberal assortment of goals and issues previously. This group is focused on activism, not theory.

And yet another group of feminists, represented by Naomi Wolf (1962– ), discuss what Wolf calls “victim feminism” and call for replacing it with “power feminism”; Rene Denfeld (1967– ) doesn’t oppose feminism per se, but she sees feminism as needing a major overhaul in ideology as well as activism. Katie Roiphe (1968– ) and Natasha Walter (1967– ) want a sharp shift in feminist objectives. Roiphe particularly targets women’s studies, which she sees as precluding any point of view that disagrees with feminism and feminist activism and as creating a
culture of fear among women. Walter’s views are similar to Wolf’s: she sees second-wave feminism as having achieved certain goals and says it is time now to recognize that, although there is still work to be done, for the most part, women can achieve what they need as individuals.

All of these postfeminists view second-wave values as lacking in appeal to younger feminists. They are sometimes regarded as antifeminist or as part of a conservative group that dismisses the feminist agenda as no longer relevant because women have already made the progress they set out to make. This group sees feminism as being no longer viable or necessary. The extremist element of the postfeminist movement could be regarded as represented by Rush Limbaugh, who has coined the term feminazi to describe unspecified feminists whose agendas he disagrees with. It should be apparent by now that nothing about feminist theory is static and predictable. There are as many forms of feminism as there are feminists, and that isn’t likely to change anytime soon.

Moral theory is another area that has been recently reconceptualized by feminist perspectives. Carol Gilligan, a psychologist who worked with Lawrence Kohlberg on his research on the moral development of people, observed that women seemed not to score as highly as men on Kohlberg’s moral development scale. Was this a failure in moral development on the part of women? Gilligan noticed that the research on children’s moral development was actually research
on boys’ moral development; the original studies had been done in boys’ schools and universities and then were just assumed to fit the case of little girls and young women. Little girls who did not fit the mold set by the research on little boys were judged to be inadequate or defective just because they were not like little boys.

Gilligan did her own research and concluded, in her famous book *In a Different Voice* (1982), that women develop differently from men and that their moral intuitions and perspectives are different as well. The reason this fact had not been recognized is that men and women speak different languages they assume are the same, “using similar words to encode disparate experiences of self and social relationships. Because these languages share an overlapping moral vocabulary, they contain a propensity for systematic mistranslation, creating misunderstandings which impede communication and limit the potential for cooperation and care in relationships.”

Gilligan found that, when we look at the way women reason about moral dilemmas, we find they put more emphasis on care and on preserving personal relationships: *issues of abstract justice and rights are secondary in their moral deliberation*. Girls place more weight than boys do on knowing the context of a moral dilemma before rendering judgment. Thus, *context* and *care for others* are central features in women’s moral reasoning.

Much of Gilligan’s research was grounded in the insights of psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow [CHO-duh-row]. Chodorow argued that our contemporary child-rearing practices foster a strong need for connectedness in little girls and for separation and autonomy in little boys. Because mothers are the first people children get attached to and identify with, girls and boys must then go through substantially different processes in establishing their gender identities: the girls can continue to perceive themselves as continuous with their mothers, but the boys must make a shift to adopt the male gender identity.

Little girls and little boys thus learn very different lessons about how to relate to the world and others in it. Girls develop their sense of themselves as women by means of *personal identification* with their mothers. According to Chodorow, personal identification consists in “diffuse identification with someone else’s general personality, behavioral traits, values, and attitudes.” Boys, however, develop their identities by means of *positional identification*: “Positional identification consists, by contrast, in identification with specific aspects of another’s role.” In other words, boys learn that to be a man means to be away at work, whereas girls learn that to be a woman means to be just like mommy in her personality, values, and so forth.

Chodorow argued that this split in gender development has resulted in a great deal of grief for the culture: boys wind up not just isolated and separate but positively *misogynous* because of their efforts to establish themselves as “not-mother.” Girls, in contrast, often suffer because they do not extricate themselves sufficiently from others in their milieu and wind up unable to distinguish their own needs from those of others; hence, they are more easily subject to exploitation. Chodorow concluded that these problems could be diminished if men and women took equal responsibility for child rearing and work outside the home, thereby allowing both boys and girls to participate in both positional and personal identification.
Presumably, little girls would become more autonomous, and little boys would become more “connected” and less misogynous.

Another important theorist, Nel Noddings, in *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), described an ethics of caring as arising out of the memory of natural caring, in which the one caring responds to the one cared for out of love and natural inclination. An **ethics of caring** is not a set of principles or maxims but a way of responding to people and situations.

The ethics of caring was contrasted by Gilligan and Noddings with the abstract ethics of rights, justice, fairness, rules, and blind impartiality. Noddings notes that, in the ethics of rights and justice, one’s thought, in considering a moral situation, “moves immediately to abstraction where thinking can take place clearly and logically in isolation from the complicating factors of particular persons, places, and circumstances,” whereas within an ethics of caring, one’s thought “moves to concretization where its feelings can be modified by the introduction of facts, the feeling of others, and personal histories.” Noddings, unlike Gilligan, thought the ethics of caring preferable to an ethics of rights; Gilligan did not make this claim of superiority.

Another writer who has picked up on these themes and worked toward developing a moral theory in response to them is Sara Ruddick. In her 1986 essay, “Maternal Thinking,” Ruddick discussed the concerns and perspectives of mothers in some patriarchal cultures and then considered how these concerns and perspectives can structure our moral responses to the world. Ruddick calls this approach to the world **maternal thinking**.

Ruddick describes the social reality of motherhood as expressed in the heterosexual nuclear family of white, middle-class, capitalist America. She invites women from other traditions to reflect on the ways in which their experiences of mothering and being mothered are both similar to and different from her own experiences. Mothers must preserve their children, foster their children’s development, and shape them into people who are acceptable to the next generation. Mothers are typically held responsible for these three things, though they do not have anywhere near complete control over their children’s environment. In response to the very real fragility of children, who can be killed or disabled in accidents, suffer through long, painful illnesses, or simply fail to thrive in an often hostile world, mothers can develop a metaphysical attitude called “holding.” Ruddick says it is “an attitude elicited by the work of ‘world-protection, world-preservation, world-repair . . . the invisible weaving of a frayed and threadbare family life.’” Since mothers recognize that they love very fragile beings, maternal thinking sees humility and resilient cheerfulness as virtues. Humility in this sense is the knowledge that one has sharp limits on what can be done to protect and preserve fragile beings in a harsh world. The resilient cheerfulness is the refusal to sink into melancholy about one’s own limitations. Ruddick distinguishes this cheerfulness from “cheery denial”; the good humor she has in mind is not the simple refusal to see the world as it is. Rather, it is the much harder task of seeing the pain in the world but refusing to be paralyzed and overcome by it.

Ruddick suggests we might employ these virtues in dealing with the world at large, not merely with our own children. A morality that extends the metaphor of maternal thinking would be less self-centered and less prone to hyperindividualism.
than other paradigms of morality. It is important to note, too, that Ruddick believes that “maternal practice” is something anyone can do, regardless of gender. Men who adopt this attitude toward the world and toward others are maternal thinkers even though they are not biological mothers. Ruddick is not guilty of biological determinism here.

Feminist ethics is not an undifferentiated monolith speaking forth in single loud acclaim for an ethics of caring and in denigration of an ethics of rights and justice. Some feminist ethicists have noted that a care-centered ethic has perhaps not been freely chosen by women but, rather, has arisen to serve the needs of patriarchal society. Men, it might be said, would hardly object to being surrounded by caring attendants. Other feminist moral and political philosophers, including one we discuss next, have emphasized the utility of an ethics of rights and justice as a foundation for social institutions where the competing claims of persons who do not know each other must be balanced. We have seen how Harriet Taylor operated within this framework to advance the cause of women in the nineteenth century.

SEXISM AND LANGUAGE

Language has contributed to women’s lower social status in quite varied ways. Many terms of the language that are supposed to be gender neutral are not; man, for example, is supposed to serve double duty, referring both to humanity as a whole and to male human beings. Similarly, he is the pronoun used both when we know that the person being referred to is male and when we do not know the gender of the individual. This is not logical; either there should be one pronoun to refer to everybody, or there should be three pronouns: male, female, and as-yet-undetermined. Feminist theorists have argued that by making words like man and he serve both as gender-specific and gender-neutral terms, the net effect is to “erase” women from our conversational landscape. The actual psychology of human beings is such that when we hear he, we think “male,” even if that was not the speaker’s intention. Philosopher Janice Moulton gives a good example of this tendency to hear man and he as male even when the original use of the term was gender-neutral. She asks us to consider the familiar syllogism:

1. All men are mortal.
2. Socrates is a man.
3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Now substitute the name Sophia for Socrates. Clearly, the “man” in the first line is supposed to be gender neutral; it is supposed to mean “all members of the human species.” Yet when the name Sophia is substituted, the second term of the syllogism seems glaringly false. Thus, Moulton argues, to say we have two meanings for man, one gender neutral and one gender specific, and we can always keep them clear and separate really does not hold water. Though we might like to believe there are two clearly differentiated uses of man and he, in practice we hardly make that distinction at all. This point is all the clearer when we realize that generations of logic
teachers have taught that syllogism without ever noticing that it is invalid, since the
“man” in the first term and the “man” in the second term have different extensions
and intentions.

Sometimes the causality seems to flow the other way. Many historians and an-
thropologists have noted that anything associated with women tends to get deval-
ued over time. Occupations associated with women tend to pay less and have lower
status than those associated with men. This holds true across cultures even when
the occupation is objectively the same; for instance, in cultures where the women
build the homes, that occupation is looked down on, but in our own culture being
a contractor is a perfectly respectable thing to do and often is quite well paid.

The same phenomenon holds true of language. Words associated with women
come to have lower status and can even degenerate into insults. Many slang
expressions and metaphors are evidence of this. These metaphors and slang ex-
pressions are taken to be evidence of underlying cultural attitudes toward women.
Sometimes words start out with perfectly legitimate, nonderogatory literal mean-
ings and, through their association with women, come to have derogatory and
insulting slang meanings. Consider the words queen, dame, madam, mistress, hussy
(which originally meant housewife), and spinster. None of the male equivalents of
those words have suffered the same kind of devaluation. Through slang, women
also get unflatteringly allied to animals, as in vixen, bitch, pussy, biddy, and cow.
And finally, the words we use to describe sexual intercourse are often extremely
violent—and the violence is metaphorically directed toward the women, not the
men. The word fuck has strike as its etymological ancestor; ream and drill do not
require any arcane linguistic background to understand. The language use and the
attitudes are thought to influence one another; hence, if we make an effort not to
use such violent metaphors, perhaps the attitudes of violence will decrease a little
as well. But, for the present, it seems painfully clear that our language at least partly
reflects certain hostile dispositions.

Stephanie Ross, for example, in her 1981 article “How Words Hurt: Atti-
tude, Metaphor, and Oppression,” argues that screw is a usefully representative
metaphor that tells us more than we wanted to know about certain cultural atti-
tudes toward women: “A screw is hard and sharp; wood by contrast is soft and
yielding; force is applied to make a screw penetrate wood; a screw can be un-
screwed and reused but wood—wherever a screw has been embedded in it—is de-
stroyed forever.” Ross argues that, if we acknowledge that the metaphors we use
carry over cultural attitudes, then we can see that the attitude toward sex is that
women are permanently harmed by intercourse. Furthermore, there is an odd me-
chanical connotation in the word screw. It suggests that intercourse is something
alienated from ordinary human flesh and behavior. It is an interesting exercise to
list all the common slang terms for sexual intercourse and try to analyze all the
meanings and connotations associated with the metaphors.

One expression that students use routinely without examining the underlying
sexist connotation is you guys, used to refer to any group composed of men, men
and women, and even all women. In her article “Sexist Language Matters” and in
an informal essay titled “Goodbye, You Guys,” Sherryl Kleinman argues that if
women really had equal status with men they wouldn’t be included in the clearly
masculine term you guys. Her argument is especially powerful when she asks men
to consider how they would feel about being called “you gals.” Think about the
defects Kleinman makes if you’re tempted to dismiss use of the term as “so com-
mon that it doesn’t matter” or as not containing any intention to denigrate women
when you use it. Sexist language matters.

Many feminist writers have argued that the traditional postpositivist empiricist
epistemology, which has dominated philosophy in the twentieth century, is a lim-
ited theoretical approach to human knowing. This mainstream epistemology has
tended toward assuming that ideal knowers are disembodied, purely rational, fully
informed, and completely objective entities. Although most philosophers admit
that no human being ever approximates this ideal knower, since real people have
bodies, personal histories, points of view, and so forth, most philosophers are
reluctant to let go of that ideal.

Feminist epistemologists have made several challenges. First, they argue, it is
troubling that the ideal knower resembles the ideal male, since men are supposedly
more rational, objective, and unemotional. Feminists suggest that this conveniently
excludes the knowledge claims of women right off the bat. Lorraine Code, one of
today’s leading feminist epistemologists, points out that, for feminists, “the ques-
tions continually arise: Whose science—or whose knowledge—has been proved?
Why has its veneration led Western societies to discount other findings, suppress
other forms of experience, deny epistemic status to female . . . wisdom?”

Let us take one example of the way scientific knowledge can be biased. Lila
Leibowitz cites a case in which E. O. Wilson, the sociobiologist, argues that mouse
lemurs are “essentially solitary” except for certain periods in the mating cycle. It
turns out that female mouse lemurs nest together; it is the males who are “essen-
tially solitary,” and this behavior is generalized over the entire species. “Dominant”
males are those who manage to breed. But why should we suppose them to be
dominant just for that simple reason? Perhaps those males are merely the ones the
females like best, for some reason known only to the female lemurs. This “evi-
dence” of dominant behavior is then quickly overgeneralized to provide support
for Wilson’s view that almost all males of almost all species are dominant over
females. Scientists are not idealized objective observers. As the Wilson example
shows, they import their own prejudices and biases into their observations and the-
ories. Feminist epistemologists ask that this fact about all human beings—male and
female—be acknowledged. They point out that knowledge is never gathered in a
vacuum. People look for answers to specific questions, even—perhaps especially—
in science. Knowledge gathering is always done to serve human purposes, and
those purposes shape the kind of knowledge that is gathered.

This is not to say that feminist epistemologists want to denigrate or discount
rationality or objectivity. But many are concerned that the rational/emotional,
objective/subjective dichotomies are false and misleading. Most emotions are struc-
tured by rationality. Suppose, for example, you come across a friend who is obviously
extremely angry. You might ask, “What’s wrong? What are you angry about?” If the answer is, “Light blue shirts are back in style!” you would probably ask a few more questions, since this seems too insignificant to be intensely angry about. Was your friend traumatized by light blue shirts as a child? Was he or she forced to wear them every day? If the answer is, “No, I just hate light blue shirts!” you might plausibly conclude that your friend is a little weird. Only emotions based on plausible reasons make sense to most of us. It is not true that people generally have emotional responses “for no reason at all”; if they do, they are often considered mentally unstable. Reason and emotion are more interconnected than that. Feminist epistemologists generally emphasize that knowledge gathering is a human project and must be identified as such. Reason, emotion, social class, gender, and other factors play a role in what we can know. Any ideal that rules out the “human factor” in its characterization of knowledge is bound to be wrong and will unjustly privilege the group claiming that true knowledge is only obtainable by people who are just like them and have only their social characteristics.

In the reading selections at the end of this chapter, you will find one by Sandra Harding, a feminist philosopher of science, who believes that the epistemologies of scientists and philosophers of science are revealed by the metaphors they use; in the selection, she examines some of the apparently misogynous metaphors used by scientists and philosophers at the beginning of the Scientific Revolution.

**FRENCH FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORY**

**French feminist philosophy** deserves a section of its own. France has produced so many distinguished philosophers—Descartes, Bergson, Sartre, Camus, Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida—some of the finest minds have formulated French thought. In French society, philosophy plays an integral role, affecting not only culture, psychology, and politics, but art, literature, and drama as well. French feminism has evolved out of these rich philosophical roots quite differently from the way U.S. feminism has developed, and it is considerably more complex to come to understand.

In France, students take, on the average, two courses in philosophy and logic in order to graduate from the lycée (high school). U.S. students might get their first introduction to critical thinking in college in an English department, not in a philosophy department, so they might never learn the principles of formal argument, they might not be introduced to philosophers, and they might never study logic at all. But in France, even students who do not go on to higher education have learned critical thinking skills and have a solid background in the work of key figures of philosophical thought. As a result, politics and philosophy are more connected in France than in the United States. French politicians cannot get away with glittering generalities and other forms of fallacious reasoning—it would be instantly recognized!

In the 1980s, a few Francophile feminist critics in the United States began to take notice of what the French feminist philosophers were doing. Alice Jardine,
Toril Moi, and Jane Gallop were primarily responsible for the introduction of French psychoanalytical theory into American academia, but few others could follow their lead because they lacked facility in the French language, and very few of the French texts were published in English until the late eighties. By the time the texts were generally available, many were a decade old. The French theorists by then had gone on to other topics and genres. Most of the American scholars who attempted to read the French feminist philosophers were not up to the intellectual challenge because they did not share the intellectual and social histories. Consequently, the three feminist philosophers we will discuss in this chapter were often dismissed or misunderstood.

In general, French feminist philosophy is a feminism based on psychoanalytic theory, concerned with the unconscious and with gendered subjectivity. In other words, the major voices in French feminist thought have all examined the “I” in some form, sometimes looking at agency, sometimes at the way the subject is produced, sometimes at linguistics as it contributes to the formation of the subject, sometimes at literary/textual expressions, and sometimes at psycholinguistics, which is the language of the unconscious. French feminist philosophy draws heavily on the ideas of Freud, Lacan, and Derrida, so we must examine aspects of their theory in order to understand the way French feminist philosophy has evolved.

**Sigmund Freud** (1859–1939) developed two pillars of psychoanalysis, the Oedipus complex and the castration complex. Simply put, the Oedipus complex is the notion that the male child desires to possess the mother and kill the father as a rival. The castration complex involves the male child’s fear of being castrated by the father. A correlate is the theory that the female child experiences penis envy when she discovers that male children have penises and she doesn’t.

**Jacques Lacan** (1901–1981) took Freud’s consciousness studies to a new depth. Rejecting parts of Freud’s work, Lacan placed it instead in the context of semiotics, linguistics, and literature. This puts him in direct conflict with philosophers who assume a rational, unified consciousness. Lacan’s subject is split between consciousness and unconsciousness, the latter being the absence of identity. According to Lacan, both subjectivity and sexuality are functions of the symbolic as produced by language, and both consciousness and unconsciousness are structured like a language. His theory develops the relationship between the acquisition of language and the development of the self.

Lacan’s work is very difficult for laypersons to understand. To simplify, he sees masculinity and femininity as a result of the child’s development of an identity, that is, the meaning of sexual difference, not the anatomical differences themselves. Thus, sexual difference becomes a part of language, thought, and culture.

In his discussion of the pre-oedipal stage, where there is no separation between the self of the child and its mother, there is no Other. It is not until the child enters the “symbolic order” of the patriarchal culture that the child perceives the phallus as the symbol of the father, and then the self splits into self and other. This phenomenon also results in the birth of the unconscious, which Lacan regards as repressed desire.

Lacan theorizes that there is never an end to desire. Because the stage of merged identity with the mother has ceased, the person is doomed to eternal fragmentation, and all of life is a seeking for that lost unity. Three French feminist
philosophers in particular—Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva—have built on Lacan’s theory. They theorize about Lacan’s discussions of the relationship of gender to repressed desire, resulting in a model for both social relations and, on an abstract level, textual relations. Meaning is created out of this intersection between the two.

These three French theorists acknowledge the existence of a female self (subject) who is still and always Other. They create from the basis of Lacan’s theory of psycholinguistics as it relates to the language of the unconscious. In this language, there is no grammar or syntax, nor are there words. Instead, the communications are in terms of gaps, silences, interruptions, moments between decisions, and other nonverbal transactions. However, it is very important to note that all three of these French feminist philosophers dispute Lacan’s (and Freud’s) “Law of the Father” in various ways unique to each.

Another important influence in French feminist philosophy is Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). Like Lacan, Derrida focuses on unseen discourse, one that is different from conscious discourse. For Derrida, a text always contains its own subversions, elements that are not reducible. These may be as simple as punctuation, indications of pauses, missing expressions, or they may be as complex as sophisticated literary devices, figurative representations, remarks that deflect, divert, or expose undercurrents—in other words, a textual unconscious.

Derrida delights in targeting figures such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Mill, Hegel, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Freud, and others because these are the central texts that must be deconstructed in order to reveal other forms of subjectivity. What Lacan does to subject-as-consciousness, Derrida does to texts, setting up the text as its own Other, different from itself. Derridean thought is about constructing binary oppositions so that they play off each other, and this is a key tactic in feminist philosophy as well.

Derrida is not posing any theory, however. Instead he is using a process. His theory of “deconstruction” is really a progression of close readings of philosophical/literary texts, which become destabilized in the process of using metaphors, images, phrases, and other linguistic devices that keep the main text from staying whole and unfragmented. Just as Lacan insists that both the conscious and the unconscious are always present, Derrida insists that both the text and its subtext (its hidden meaning) are always present, always already there. When the subtext is expressed, paradoxes come into focus, excesses and holes in the text are exposed, and the text thus exceeds its own borders, becoming fluid and subject to multiple interpretations. Whatever spills over the edges of the text displaces subjectivity, so the subject changes shape and form and is no longer a stable symbol of power and authority. A deconstructed text is potentially endless because each deferral creates another set of relationships. In this process, the text deconstructs itself.

What takes place between the two poles (binary oppositions) is a combination of sameness and difference, a kind of “play”—a free radical, a kind of endless escape from anything stable and unitary. Derrida calls this space “différance,” which does not translate into our word “difference.” It is, instead, as just described, a free space where all sorts of things can take place without being pinned down to a specific meaning.

This open circle of reinscription is of paramount interest to the three feminist philosophers under discussion here. Each in her own way creates a “feminine”
writing (écriture féminine) that dissolves the traditional invisible line between author and text. Each uses highly experimental literary forms. And each, in her way, creates a new language from the roots provided by Lacan and Derrida.

Luce Irigaray

A discourse may poison, surround, encircle, imprison or liberate, heal, nourish, fertilize.
—Luce Irigaray, Speaking Is Never Neutral

Luce Irigaray (1930– ), (e-RIG-uh-ray) born in Belgium, is a philosopher and psychoanalyst trained in linguistics. Some readers find it disconcerting that she doesn’t ascribe boundaries to philosophy and uses associative reasoning rather than systematic reasoning in her claims. She moves with ease across disciplines in ways that most academics find overwhelming. Irigaray focuses on sexual difference, which is a concern of psychoanalysis; the historical roots of language, which is a linguistic concern; and the realities of women’s lives, which is a sociopolitical concern; and she also has ethical concerns. So what she is really doing, as Margaret Whitford points out, is rethinking the whole social contract. In this process, even the sex of the philosopher comes under scrutiny.

Because Irigaray uses associative thinking in her discourse, her texts are difficult to follow. She requires the reader to stretch, to project herself, and to identify in imaginative ways. For Irigaray, the entrance into écriture féminine includes all the facets of woman—her roles, interactions, places in history, places in the pre-oedipal stage—the changing plurality that is woman. Irigaray recognizes all the aspects of feminism in philosophical discourse and the ways those are multiplying, and she is doing something creative about it.

Irigaray’s argument centers on female desire. Male and female desire/language are fundamentally alien to each other, Irigaray claims. The patriarchal order of the phallus as linear, rational, and symbolic cannot comprehend feminine expressions of desire/language. There is no space for the feminine in the traditional masculinist order of discourse or in the masculine structure of desire. So Irigaray looks at what could be described as cultural representations, both in texts and in psychoanalysis. She focuses in particular on texts that reflect the repression of the feminine.

Irigaray is critical of Freudian theory because it describes women as dependent and secondary, but she uses Freudian theory as a representational system by inverting it. If woman is not one, for example, then she is more than one. In her Speculum of the Other Woman, she problematizes the representational system, rejecting the maternal function of woman in particular. Woman is more than her capacity for motherhood, and a woman’s individual identity must be reconceptualized in order to free her of Freud’s legacy for her.

The feminine Irigaray envisions is not related to women’s anatomical nature. Instead, she focuses on women’s experienced reality, a re-visioning of Lacan, which also short-circuits Freud’s model. She thus deconstructs both. She frees woman to be her own source to produce meaning so that woman has her own identity apart from what is traditionally assigned to her as culturally produced identity.

The language of Irigaray’s texts is elliptical, poetic, rhythmic, ambiguous, playful, and often mocking in tone. Her imagery expresses both a multiplicity and an excess
of female sexuality. She carves her way through patriarchal constructs of sexuality and textuality, making space for the female voice/body. She does this by describing the options, by seizing Lacan’s mirror and stepping through it, like Alice in the looking-glass, building metaphors and smashing binary polarizations along the way.

On the other side of the looking-glass, Irigaray’s vision of woman is a speaking subject. The purpose of crossing through the mirror is the process itself, the process of “jamming the theoretical machinery.” Once that machinery has been silenced, then woman can speak.

For readers not trained in psychoanalysis, Irigaray is difficult to follow. It is helpful to understand that in psychoanalytic technique, words are not important in the ways they are in traditional masculinist discourse. In the unconscious, there are no words, only moving, fluid, half-formed associations. The way to understand these movements is not through words, which create meanings that are fixed in ways that movement is not, but to express them in new ways that suggest meanings in the plural and do not define in closed ways.

Critics of Irigaray accuse her of essentialism, of focusing on the essential female qualities of embodiment. This is in part because some of these scholars keep trying to get to the bottom of her theory, stripping away the trappings, and fail to understand that Irigaray’s whole process must be understood, not just the bottom line. The process is the bottom line, and not to see this distorts her theory. Looking for analytical connections and rational progressions in Irigaray’s work is a mistake that cannot describe what she has created: ways to reconstruct the female body through metaphors and symbols. Whereas her earlier works (*Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One*) focused on the history of philosophy as seen through embodiment, her later works focus on woman’s capacity to define herself.

Irigaray moves the divine into her discussion of the feminine by linking God, language, and woman in the process of “becoming.” There is always the movement, never a static condition. Her notion of “Divine Women” is difficult for those raised in traditional Christian belief structures to comprehend. She discusses salvation and grace, but only as forms of escapism. God becomes a metaphor for being that is situated in space and time yet has the capacity for autonomous identity, a metaphor to describe becoming. Reappropriating the divine as female is part of the struggle to reclaim autonomy for women. Her work in the area of religion must be understood as part of her larger project, that of creating an ideal for women to work toward. By constructing a new divine in one’s own image, Irigaray is moving her project to the ultimate realm of exchange, the infinite.

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**Julia Kristeva (1941–)**

Woman is here to shake up, to disturb, to deflate masculine values, and not to espouse them. Her role is to maintain difference by pointing to them, by giving them life, by putting them into play against one another. —Julia Kristeva, *Polylogues*

Born in Bulgaria, **Julia Kristeva** (krisst-EH-vuh) moved to France in 1966 to continue her education and to escape Stalinist communism. A brilliant young woman, she was appointed professor of linguistics studies in 1974. She has been
contributing ever since to the theories of language, poetics, psychoanalysis, political philosophy, and literature. In each field, she practices a radical critique of what she calls the “signifying practice.” Although she resists being counted as a feminist and is often rejected by feminists as antifeminist, Kristeva has nevertheless contributed significantly to feminist theories of discourse.

Early on, Kristeva studied women in China out of her conviction that Marxist principles could rescue women from inequality. But when she saw the actual conditions under which Chinese women lived, she became disenchanted with Marxist politics and switched from political writing to psychoanalysis. She became convinced that she could make more difference in the status of women by treating one patient at a time. Her writing is dense, difficult, and replete with the terms and symbols of logocentrism (explained on page 185). She writes in this way partly because her field is linguistics and partly because she believes that all writing should be in the traditional structure of discourse, the only discourse there is. Feminist critics of her work do not always realize that her view of language is centered on the speaking subject and that she is committed to a more complex analysis than many theorists take the pains to follow. She requires that we go deeper, where language is more than naming and communication, where it becomes a device for the production of subjectivity.

Even though Kristeva uses Lacanian terms, her work is original and revolutionary. For example, in Revolution in Poetic Language, she reworks Lacan’s separation of the preconscious and symbolic orders into what she calls the semiotic (i.e. dealing with sign and symbol systems) and the symbolic, looking closely at what takes place between the two orders. Expanding the Lacanian model of the mirror stage, she argues that the female semiotic has been devalued, that both the prelinguistic level and the symbolic are present in the subject. She argues further that the reason feminine signification has been marginalized is precisely because it threatens the traditionally masculinist symbolic discourse. And, contrary to Freud and Lacan, in her view every child can choose to identify with either parent after the mirror stage.

Kristeva focuses on the maternal semiotic as disruptive to the rational, unified, speaking subject, challenging the symbolic order. The core of her work is in the area of what she calls “subject-in-process,” which is another way of describing the subject as unstable. This concept of the self links her linguistic theory and her psychoanalytical theory to her social concerns. Closely related is her work in the maternal semiotic. Only if both the unstable subject and the maternal semiotic could be under the control of the symbolic would the masculinist speaking subject be victorious. Because this cannot occur, given the nature of semiotic discourse and the unstable subject, the symbolic is always subverted or at risk.

In “Women’s Time,” Kristeva differentiates between the time of the symbolic order as linear, sequential, and goal oriented, and the semiotic order, which contains another kind of time. In this essay, she emphasizes the multiple nature of women’s expressions in order to open up sexual difference. Her solution is a kind of metaethics that takes into account all differences. Feminism, of course, is one step in the direction of that larger dynamic.

Kristeva’s writing is startlingly effective when she breaks out of a style that at first seems suspiciously patterned after masculinist discourse. In “Stabat Mater,” which is about motherhood and the cult of the Virgin Mary as mother...
of all, she begins with a typically masculinist analysis, then intersperses feminine text about the birth of her own son; the result is a complete splitting of the discourse. The feminine text of the piece is open, a literal and figurative birthing. The effect is a visual delight and a stirring commentary on both the paradox she is describing in the texts and on masculine-feminine discourse in general. More than this: she creates her own intertextual reading of herself. “Stabat Mater” does not behave as a text “should.” It looks different, and it acts differently; it winds and jumps on the page. Juxtaposed as the two texts are, they are nevertheless parallel, feminine and masculine texts complementing, rather than opposing, one another. The essay successfully transgresses the line between literature and theory, between the abstract and the personal, and between the semiotic and the symbolic.

In her later work Kristeva shows a preoccupation with the divine. Although she doesn’t believe in an actual divinity, she sees religion as a feminine discourse, a place where love and ethics meet. For her, theology is a kind of constructed fantasy invented to ward off the reality of death, a way to blind ourselves to the ultimate truth of death as nothingness. She sees religion as a language that maintains the tension between our psychological needs and our personal cognition of reality. So she uses religious discourse to mediate a healing space between spirit and flesh, the symbolic and the semiotic, self and other, while not buying into it as ultimate truth. She asserts that we need the rituals of religion, which are an expression of the semiotic. She views religion as a healing art form if it is divested of its harsh and punitive doctrines. Claiming religion as the feminine semiotic, she opens it to imaginative spaces that heal the psyche and permit language to expand.

Finally, Kristeva’s most recent work consists of a number of mystery novels in which she deals with “radical evil,” which she explains as “the desire for death,” and various other themes such as motherhood, historical projects, and psychic pain. These are detective action novels with the usual violence and serial killers, to be sure, but they are also mysteries for the intelligent reader to ponder. Here is theory in practice: she has freed herself to make her own way with ease in any environment, in both intellectual and ordinary life.

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**Hélène Cixous (1937– )**

I don’t write. Life becomes text starting out from my body. I am already text. —Hélène Cixous

**Hélène Cixous** (aay-LAYN seek-soo) was born in Algeria, and her early education was there. She describes herself as “triply marginalized” as an Algerian colonial, female, and a Jew. As a Jew, she was not permitted to attend regular school, but she nevertheless learned French, Arabic, Hebrew, German, Spanish, and English. Later, in order to study the work of Clarice Lişpector in the original, she also learned Portuguese. In 1955 her family emigrated to France, where at the age of 21 she became the youngest student to pass l’agrégation in English. Earlier, Simone de Beauvoir had been the youngest ever to pass it in French. In 1958 she published her 900-page doctoral thesis, and in 1969 she won the *Prix Médicis*, a prestigious...
literary award, for *Dedans*, an autobiographical novel about her oedipal attachment to her father.

Cixous worked with Jacques Lacan for two years before accepting a chair position at the radical left-wing French institution that was to become the scene of the famous 1968 student upheavals and the subsequent intellectual revolution. She went on to create the first doctoral program in women’s studies in Europe. Today she continues to supervise the program as it has evolved and gives international lectures. Despite this heavy schedule of responsibilities, she continues to produce, in her seventies, a text nearly every year.

Jacques Derrida, who was Cixous’s longtime mentor and friend until his death in 2004, once said of Hélène Cixous that her entire body of work is “nearly untranslatable.” This is because even in the original French her texts use subtle displacements and because they spill over into multiple disciplines. Her work is philosophy, poetry, fiction, literary criticism, autobiography, commentary, and psychoanalytical theory, often all at the same time. In contrast, most U.S. feminist thinkers are educated in and publish in only one primary discipline unless they are consciously interdisciplinary.

In spite of her focus on women’s writing and female embodiment as a metaphor for women’s writing in her texts, *feminist* is not a word she has been willing to agree to as a label for her perspective, largely because feminism has evolved in different ways in Europe and the United States. In more recent years, however, her work is quite clearly feminist. While her work is political, it is political in a textual sense; she recognizes that social structures are inherent in language, so she writes at the limits of language in a style called *écriture féminine* (ay-cree-tur fem-in-ee) to mitigate the damage done by “masculinist” structures in philosophical writing.

Another reason Cixous is difficult for American scholars to understand is that even after all these years, only part of her hundreds of essays and novels have been translated into English. And the focus of her work doesn’t fit into American feminists’ agenda. Many find her work essentialist or utopian because she doesn’t write about domestic violence, child care, abortion, pornography, or poverty, the mainstay feminist activist issues. This is not to say that she avoids sociopolitical conflicts between the sexes, but she does it from a plane that is less familiar to U.S. scholars—from the unconscious, from the ambiguous feminine language that originates there.

Cixous’s many themes are reworked continually in subsequent texts in the way that Derrida’s sentences are restatements: the circles of thought expand and become ever more inclusive. Some of these themes are the author and the writing process, the reading-writing relationship, the reader-writer relationship, philosophical questions, psychoanalytical concerns (especially those related to identity and other self-other relations), birth, death, endings, love lost/found, the prehistory of art, internal landscapes, embodiment, autobiography, the maternal/paternal (especially the absent father), the revisioning of motherhood, the reweaving of myths, arriving/departing, the metaphors of exile, the stretching of the concept of the gift/exchange/spending . . . the list is dizzying, but under Cixous’s pen these topics take on life and breath, interact with each other, and move from text to text, transforming themselves as the shapes of concepts appear, shift, and disappear.
Themes not only repeat but are refined and presented through new characters, through multidimensional selves of indeterminate gender, each struggling in a different challenge of relation. It would be tempting to say that all these themes spring from the basic category of self and other, but this would be doing Cixous’s work a disservice. The word *category* is not in the Cixousian vocabulary; her themes defy boundaries. Her texts “escape” all limitations in the way that Derrida’s conversations contain endless deferrals. Methods of discussing Cixous’s work always fall short of the intricate, elusive richness that is always present in her texts.

Cixous’s novels do not have traditional beginnings, middles, and endings. All of her texts are “open,” which is to say that even when considering philosophical questions, looking closely at Hegel, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Deleuze, and Derrida, her writings are not on a conceptual level. Her goal is to read texts, including philosophical texts, and to displace those that are “masculine” to find the feminine elements. She wants to efface the Western ideal that privileges concepts, truth, presence, mastery, and patriarchal law, so she examines dialectical structures that dominate the formation of subjectivity. She opposes absolute knowledge. Thus even her philosophical discussions are rooted in autobiographical fiction as her work interrogates and subverts the linguistic representations of women society has assigned them. The subversion is always done in creative ways that are both serious and playful, and is always, in one way or another, related to women’s subjectivity.

Cixous’s work can be recognized in four phases. Her early work was literary criticism focusing on Joyce, Gide, Shakespeare, Woolf, Kafka, and Jeffers. These writings are in traditional academic prose. The second phase is the Freud/Lacan period. Her first and only volume of short stories deals with various facets of identity, the unconscious, and dream work. Her third period was the discovery of Clarice Lispector, a Brazilian writer whom she described as her “unhoped-for other.” This period is a flurry of books and essays on the feminine element in Lispector’s work.

The fourth phase is her work in theater. The “other” in her plays is often whole races of people as she engages with historical representations. Her plays, which contribute to social change more than her other genres, deal with humanity’s global pain and injustice. But even though these phases can be traced chronologically, they do not represent distinct areas. She continues to write autobiographical fiction, and it continues to cross over the boundaries of genre. There are no real beginnings or endings in the study of Cixous, any more than there are beginnings or endings in her novels. All of her texts—not just the plays—are performative, in the sense that they show rather than tell. They draw the reader into regions that are both familiar and alien, comforting and threatening, intellectually stimulating and emotionally challenging. This is how she opens up spaces in her texts to create expanded meaning out of ambiguous realms and entices the reader to learn to read and write in a new language.

Irigaray, Kristeva, and Cixous all use a form of *écriture féminine*, which doesn’t translate into “feminine writing” in the sense in which Americans use the word *feminine*. The French word *feminine* doesn’t have the connotations of sly, pretentious, coy, and manipulative that it has in English. Instead, it is a language that is in
the process of continued evolution, that uses metaphor to cross the boundaries between theory and other forms of discourse.

Each writer who uses *écriture féminine* has her own style of it. Cixous’s is a libidinal form of discourse that includes encounter with other, embodiment, moments of ephiphany, and experiences of passion that disrupt the socialized binary structure of consciousness. In this way, she is able to transcend the limits that conventional methods of understanding difference impose on language and social relations. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about Cixous is that she does not conceive of the body as a biological universal or as a referential independent of texts. The whole focus of her work is to demonstrate that language doesn’t exist outside the body.

“*Laugh of the Medusa*” The myth of the Medusa is an ancient one. Medusa was a beautiful young woman whom the goddess Athena turned into a monster with hair made of live snakes because Medusa had sex with Poseidon. Subsequently, any man who looked at Medusa would be turned into stone. Perseus later killed Medusa and presented Athena with her head, which still retained the power to turn men into stone. Freud gave this myth a psychosexual interpretation. He identified Medusa’s decapitated head with men’s terror of castration: decapitation equals castration. Medusa’s paralyzing effect on men was interpreted by Freud as the erect penis, and the snakes that are Medusa’s hair were all penises. For Freud, this combination of erection and terror represented the two ways men feel about women—they desire women, and they fear women as different, mysterious, and dangerous. Medusa was both alive and capable of causing men’s desire, and dead, causing men to fear that they would be dead as well if they consummated their desire. Man, who considers himself whole, may have his identity altered by the woman/monster.

So, on one hand, man desires to possess woman, and on the other, he fears being subsumed into woman by the sex act. Freud argued that men’s dread of women is based on their difference, which man finds incomprehensible and therefore terrifying. He fears being weakened or overcome by her feminine qualities. Woman becomes castrating woman. The menacing Medusa’s many penises, however, according to Freud, metaphorically reassure the man that his own penis will not be lost.

In “*Laugh of the Medusa*,” an early Cixous’s text that has become a classic of feminist literature, the feminine body is not a body at all; it is embodied textual movement, a metaphor. Once the body is understood as text, this piece becomes easier to understand. Cixous moves back and forth from the literal level to the metaphorical level when she writes of woman. The same is true when she writes of the “feminine.” Yes, she is talking about femaleness and female bodies, but she is simultaneously using it as a metaphor for linguistic representation. Cixous transforms Freud’s “dark continent” as women’s writing, which is alien to men. Medusa is not to be feared, Cixous argues: she is approachable and even has a sense of humor. Women must show men their “sexts” (sex + text), the new women’s writing in which there is space for difference, and there is no Lacanian “lack.” Like all of her writing, Cixous’s “*Laugh of the Medusa*” first defines the oppressive structures that frame our cultural lives, then deconstructs and reconstructs them in ways that free women to write themselves.
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Mary Wollstonecraft

[In the following selection, Wollstonecraft defends the view that society should abandon the practice of enculturating women to weakness and servility.]

I love man as my fellow; but this sceptre, real, or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of man. In fact, the conduct of an accountable being must be regulated by the operations of its own reason; or on what foundation rests the throne of God?

It appears to me necessary to dwell on these obvious truths, because females have been insulated, as it were; and, while they have been stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity, they have been decked with artificial graces that enable them to exercise a short-lived tyranny. Love, in their bosoms, taking the place of every nobler passion, their sole ambition is to be fair, to raise emotion instead of inspiring respect; and this ignoble desire, like the servility in absolute monarchies, destroys all strength of character. Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics, and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature. . . .

But should it be proved that woman is naturally weaker than man, whence does it follow that it is natural for her to labour to become still weaker than nature intended her to be? Arguments of this cast are an insult to common sense, and savour of passion. The divine right of husbands, like the divine right of kings, may, it is to be hoped, in this enlightened age, be contested without danger, and though conviction may not silence many boisterous disputants, yet, when any prevailing prejudice is attacked, the wife will consider, and leave the narrow-minded to rail with thoughtless vehemence at innovation.

It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them their lost dignity—and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world. It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners.

The Second Sex*

Simone de Beauvoir

[This extract is from Beauvoir’s 1949 classic, The Second Sex.]

If her functioning as a female is not enough to define woman, if we decline also to explain her through “the eternal feminine,” and if nevertheless we admit, provisionally, that women do exist, then we must face the question: what is a woman?

To state the question is, to me, to suggest, at once, a preliminary answer. The fact that I ask it is in itself significant. A man would never set out to write a book on the peculiar situation of the human male. But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: “I am a woman”; on this truth must be based all further discussion. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man. The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common

use of *man* to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity. In the midst of an abstract discussion it is vexing to hear a man say: “You think thus and so because you are a woman”; but I know that my only defence is to reply: “I think thus and so because it is true,” thereby removing my subjective self from the argument. It would be out of the question to reply: “And you think the contrary because you are a man,” for it is understood that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity. A man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong. It amounts to this: just as for the ancients there was an absolute vertical with reference to which the oblique was defined, so there is an absolute human type, the masculine. Woman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. Man superbly ignores the fact that his anatomy also includes glands, such as the testicles, and that they secrete hormones. He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. “The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities,” said Aristotle; “we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness.” And St Thomas for his part pronounced woman to be an “imperfect man,” an “incidental” being. This is symbolized in Genesis where Eve is depicted as made from what Bossuet called “a supernumerary bone” of Adam.

Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Michelet writes: “Woman, the relative being...” And Benda is most positive in his *Rapport d’Uriel*: “The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself. . . . Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man.” And she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called “the sex,” by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex—absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other.

The category of the *Other* is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other. This duality was not originally attached to the division of the sexes; it was not dependent upon any empirical facts. It is revealed in such works as that of Granet on Chinese thought and those of Dumézil on the East Indies and Rome. The feminine element was at first no more involved in such pairs as Varuna–Mitra, Uranus–Zeus, Sun–Moon, and Day–Night than it was in the contrasts between Good and Evil, lucky and unlucky auspices, right and left, God and Lucifer. Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought.

Thus it is that no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself. If three travellers chance to occupy the same compartment, that is enough to make vaguely hostile “others” out of all the rest of the passengers on the train. In small-town eyes all persons not belonging to the village are “strangers” and suspect; to the native of a country all who inhabit other countries are “foreigners”; Jews are “different” for the anti-Semite, Negros are “inferior” for American racists, aborigines are “natives” for colonists, proletarians are the “lower class” for the privileged. . . .

. . . One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between man and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an Other. . . .

. . . New relations of flesh and sentiment of which we have no conception will arise between the sexes; already, indeed, there have appeared between men and women friendships, rivalries, complicities, comradeships—chaste or sensual—which past centuries could not have conceived. To mention one point, nothing could seem more debatable than the opinion that dooms the new world to uniformity and hence to boredom. I fail to see that this present world is free from boredom or that liberty ever creates uniformity.

To begin with, there will always be certain differences between man and woman; her eroticism, and therefore her sexual world, have a special form of their own and therefore cannot fail to engender a sensuality, a sensitivity, of a special nature. This
means that her relations to her own body, to that of
the male, to the child, will never be identical with
those the male bears to his own body, to that of the
female, and to the child; those who make much of
“equality in difference” could not with good grace
refuse to grant me the possible existence of differ-
ences in equality. Then again, it is institutions that
create uniformity. Young and pretty, the slaves of
the harem are always the same in the sultan’s em-
brace; Christianity gave eroticism its savour of sin
and legend when it endowed the human female
with a soul; if society restores her sovereign individ-
uality to woman, it will not thereby destroy the
power of love’s embrace to move the heart.

It is nonsense to assert that revelry, vice, ecstasy,
passion, would become impossible if man and
woman were equal in concrete matters; the contra-
dictions that put the flesh in opposition to the
spirit, the instant to time, the swoon of immanence
to the challenge of transcendence, the absolute of
pleasure to the nothingness of forgetting, will never
be resolved; in sexuality will always be materialized
the tension, the anguish, the joy, the frustration, and
the triumph of existence. To emancipate woman is
to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to
man, not to deny them to her; let her have her inde-
pendent existence and she will continue none the
less to exist for him also: mutually recognizing each
other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an
other. The reciprocity of their relations will not do
away with the miracles—desire, possession, love,
dream, adventure—worked by the division of human
beings into two separate categories; and the words
that move us—giving, conquering, uniting—will not
lose their meaning. On the contrary, when we abolish
the slavery of half of humanity, together with the
whole system of hypocrisy that it implies, then the
“division” of humanity will reveal its genuine sig-
nificance and the human couple will find its true
form. “The direct, natural, necessary relation of
human creatures is the relation of man to woman,”
Marx has said. “The nature of this relation deter-
mines to what point man himself is to be considered
as a generic being, as mankind; the relation of man to
woman is the most natural relation of human being
to human being. By it is shown, therefore, to what
point the natural behaviour of man has become
human or to what point the human being has be-
come his natural being, to what point his human na-
ture has become his nature.”

The case could not be better stated. It is for man
to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the
world of the given. To gain the supreme victory, it is
necessary, for one thing, that by and through their
natural differentiation men and women unequivoc-
ally affirm their brotherhood.

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**SELECTION 14.3**

**The Reproduction of Mothering:**

**Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender***

Nancy Chodorow

[Chodorow argues that gender identity is socially
constructed differently for women and men because
women are the primary family caretakers. This inequality
can be corrected by a fundamental reorganization of
parenting.]

This book is a contribution to the feminist effort. It
analyzes the reproduction of mothering as a central
and constituting element in the social organization
and reproduction of gender. In what follows, I

* REPRODUCTION OF MOTHERING: PSYCHO-
ANALYSIS AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER
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argue that the contemporary reproduction of moth-
ering occurs through social structurally induced
psychological processes. It is neither a product of
biology nor of intentional role-training. I draw on
the psychoanalytic account of female and male per-
sonality development to demonstrate that women’s
mothering reproduces itself cyclically. Women, as
mothers, produce daughters with mothering capac-
ities and the desire to mother. These capacities and
needs are built into and grow out of the mother–
daughter relationship itself. By contrast, women as
mothers (and men as non-mothers) produce sons
whose nurturant capacities and needs have been
systematically curtailed and repressed. This pre-
pares men for their less effective later family role,
and for primary participation in the impersonal extrafamilial world of work and public life. The sexual and familial division of labor in which women mother and are more involved in interpersonal, affective relationships than men produces in daughters and sons a division of psychological capacities which leads them to reproduce this sexual and familial division of labor.

I attempt to provide a theoretical account of what has unquestionably been true—that women have had primary responsibility for child care in families and outside of them; that women by and large want to mother, and get gratification from their mothering; and finally, that, with all the conflicts and contradictions, women have succeeded at mothering. . . .

Post-Oedipal Gender Personality: A Recapitulation

Children of both sexes are originally matrisexual, though, as many accounts suggest, they have different kinds of relationships to their mother and later their father. Girls, for many overdetermined reasons, do develop penis envy and may repress knowledge of their vagina because they cannot otherwise win their heterosexual mother; because of exhibitionistic desires; because the penis symbolizes independence from the (internalized) powerful mother; as a defense against fantasies of acting on sexual desires for their father and anxiety at the possible consequence of this; because they have received either conscious or unconscious communication from their parents that penises (or being male) are better, or sensed maternal conflict about the mother’s own genitals; and because the penis symbolizes the social privileges of their father and men.

The only psychoanalytic account of the origin of penis envy that seems inconceivable is Freud’s original claim that a girl “makes her judgment and her decision in a flash”—that as soon as she learns about genitals different from hers, she wants a penis. Yet there is little to suggest either that penis envy completely permeates women’s lives, or that the envy, jealousy, vanity, and pettiness that supposedly result from penis envy are characteristic of women. Similarly, most contemporary analysts agree that passivity, masochism, and narcissism are psychological defenses found in both women and men, and have the same object-relational origins in each, in the early mother–infant relationship. To the extent that these are (or were) more characteristically women’s solutions to anxiety or guilt, this is not because of female biology but because the particular generating mother–child pattern is more characteristic of women’s than men’s early experience.

The oedipus complex, according to the psychoanalytic paradigm, is a time of major developmental differentiation in personality and of a relative fixing of personality structure for girls and boys. For the traditional psychoanalyst, the major developmental outcomes of the oedipus complex are erotic heterosexuality and superego formation, masculinity and femininity. Even within this traditional account, however, with its teleological formulation of conscious parental and social goals arising from their own assumptions about appropriate gender roles, and unconscious goals arising from unconscious parental attitudes to gender and sexuality and their own oedipal stance, it is clear that what is being negotiated and what needs explaining is different for boys and girls as a result of the asymmetrical structure of parenting. For boys, gender identifications are more the issue; for girls, psychosexual development. Because both are originally involved with their mother, the attainment of heterosexuality—achieved with the feminine change of object—is the major traditional oedipal goal for girls. For boys the major goal is the achievement of personal masculine identification with their father and sense of secure masculine self, achieved through superego formation and disparagement of women. Superego formation and further identification with their mother also happen for girls, and giving up the original attachment to their mother is also an issue for boys. Yet the ways these happen, the conflicts and defenses involved, and typical gender differences between them are not elaborated in the psychoanalytic account. (These differences include varying forms of superego operation; differences in what identification with the parent of the same gender means, differences in what doubt about femininity and doubt about masculinity consist in, the particular ways in which each does and does not give up the mother as a love object; and implications for asymmetries in modes of libidinal relationship and heterosexual love.)

My account suggests that these gender-related issues may be influenced during the period of the oedipus complex, but they are not its only focus or outcome. The negotiation of these issues occurs in the context of broader object-relational and ego processes. These broader processes have equal influence on psychic structure formation, and psychic life and relational modes in men and women.
They account for differing modes of identification and orientation to heterosexual objects, for the more asymmetrical oedipal issues psychoanalysts describe. These outcomes, like more traditional oedipal outcomes, arise from the asymmetrical organization of parenting, with the mother’s role as primary parent and the father’s typically greater remoteness and his investment in socialization especially in areas concerned with gender-typing.

The oedipal period is a nodal time of the creation of psychic reality in a child and of important internalizations of objects in relation to the ego. The main importance of the oedipus complex, I argue, is not primarily in the development of gender identity and socially appropriate heterosexual genitality, but in the constitution of different forms of “relational potential” in people of different genders. The oedipus complex is the form in which the internal interpersonal world will later be imposed on and help to create the external. Post-oedipal (and, in the girl, postpubertal) personality is the relatively stable foundation upon which other forms of relational development will build.

A girl continues a preoedipal relationship to her mother for a long time. Freud is concerned that it takes the girl so long to develop an oedipal attachment to her father and the “feminine” sexual modes that go with this attachment. The stress is on the girl’s attachment as preoedipal rather than on the attachment itself.

It is important to stress the other side of this process. Mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with, themselves. Correspondingly, girls tend to remain part of the dyadic primary mother–child relationship itself. This means that a girl continues to experience herself as involved in issues of merging and separation, and in an attachment characterized by primary identification and the fusion of identification and object choice. By contrast, mothers experience their sons as a male opposite. Boys are more likely to have been pushed out of the preoedipal relationship, and to have had to curtail their primary love and sense of empathic tie with their mother. A boy has engaged, and been required to engage, in a more emphatic individuation and a more defensive firming of experienced ego boundaries. Issues of differentiation have become intertwined with sexual issues. This does not mean that women have “weaker” ego boundaries than men or are more prone to psychosis. Disturbances in the early relation to a caretaker have equally profound effects on each, but these effects differ according to gender. The earliest mode of individuation, the primary construction of the ego and its inner object-world, the earliest conflicts and the earliest unconscious definitions of self, the earliest threats to individuation, and the earliest anxieties which call up defenses all differ for boys and girls because of differences in the character of the early mother–child relationship for each.

Girls emerge from this period with a basis for “empathy” built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not. Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another’s needs or feelings as one’s own (or of thinking that one is so experiencing another’s needs and feelings). Furthermore, girls do not define themselves in terms of the denial of preoedipal relational modes to the same extent as do boys. Therefore, regression to these modes tends not to feel as much a basic threat to their ego. From very early, then, because they are parented by a person of the same gender (a person who has already internalized a set of unconscious meanings, fantasies, and self-images about this gender and brings to her experience her own internalized early relationship to her own mother), girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well.

. . . Women’s mothering, then, produces asymmetries in the relational experiences of girls and boys as they grow up, which account for crucial differences in feminine and masculine personality, and the relational capacities and modes which these entail. Women and men grow up with personalities affected by different boundary experiences and differently constructed and experienced inner object-worlds, and are preoccupied with different relational issues. Feminine personality comes to be based less on repression of inner objects, and fixed and firm splits in the ego and more on retention and continuity of external relationships. From the retention of preoedipal attachments to their mother, growing girls come to define and experience themselves as continuous with others; their experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiation. The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate.
Woman’s Place in Man’s Life Cycle*

[In this essay Gilligan argues that a woman’s moral development is related to her psychological development, which is altered by the conflicting responsibilities of her role as nurturer. This results in a contextual mode of thinking that frames moral decisions.]

“It is obvious,” Virginia Woolf said, “that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex.” Yet, she adds, it is the masculine values that prevail. As a result, women come to question the “normality” of their feelings and to alter their judgments in deference to the opinion of others. In the nineteenth-century novels written by women, Woolf sees at work “a mind slightly pulled from the straight, altering its clear vision in the anger and confusion of deference to external authority.” The same deference that Woolf identifies in nineteenth-century fiction can be seen as well in the judgments of twentieth-century women. Women’s reluctance to make moral judgments, the difficulty they experience in finding or speaking publicly in their own voice, emerge repeatedly in the form of qualification and self-doubt, in intimations of a divided judgment, a public and private assessment which are fundamentally at odds.

Yet the deference and confusion that Woolf criticizes in women derive from the values she sees as their strength. Women’s deference is rooted not only in their social circumstances but also in the substance of their moral concern. Sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view. Women’s moral weakness, manifest in an apparent diffusion and confusion of judgment, is thus inseparable from women’s moral strength, an overriding concern with relationships and responsibilities. The reluctance to judge can itself be indicative of the same care and concern for others that infuses the psychology of women’s development and is responsible for what is characteristically seen as problematic in its nature.

Thus women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Woman’s place in man’s life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. While women have thus taken care of men, however, men have in their theories of psychological development tended either to assume or devalue that care. The focus on individuation and individual achievement that has dominated the description of child and adolescent development has recently been extended to the depiction of adult development as well. Levinson in his study, The Seasons of a Man’s Life, elaborates a view of adult development in which relationships are portrayed as a means to an end of individual achievement and success. In the critical relationships of early adulthood, the “Mentor” and the “Special Woman” are defined by the role they play in facilitating the man’s realization of his “Dream.” Along similar lines Vaillant, in his study of men, considers altruism a defense, characteristic of mature ego functioning and associated with successful “adaptation to life,” but conceived as derivative rather than primary in contrast to Chodorow’s analysis, in which empathy is considered “built-in” to the woman’s primary definition of self.

The discovery now being celebrated by men in mid-life of the importance of intimacy, relationships, and care is something that women have known from the beginning. However, because that knowledge has been considered “intuitive” or “instinctive,” a function of anatomy coupled with destiny, psychologists have neglected to describe its development. In my research, I have found that women’s moral development centers on the elaboration of that knowledge. Women’s moral development thus delineates a critical line of psychological development whose importance for both sexes becomes apparent in the intergenerational framework of a life-cycle perspective. While the subject of moral development provides the final illustration of the reiterative pattern in

the observation and assessment of sex differences in the literature on human development, it also indicates more particularly why the nature and significance of women’s development has for so long been obscured and considered shrouded in mystery. . .

. . . Research on moral judgment has shown that when the categories of women’s thinking are examined in detail . . . the outline of a moral conception different from that described by Freud, Piaget, or Kohlberg begins to emerge and to inform a different description of moral development. In this conception, the moral problem is seen to arise from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and to require for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and inductive rather than formal and abstract.

This conception of morality as fundamentally concerned with the capacity for understanding and care also develops through a structural progression of increasing differentiation and integration. This progression witnesses the shift from an egocentric through a societal to the universal moral perspective that Kohlberg described in his research on men, but it does so in different terms. The shift in women’s judgment from an egocentric to a conventional to a principled ethical understanding is articulated through their use of a distinct moral language, in which the terms “selfishness” and “responsibility” define the moral problem as one of care. Moral development then consists of the progressive reconstruction of this understanding toward a more adequate conception of care.

SELECTION 14.5
Conclusion: Epistemological Questions*
Sandra Harding

[Harding explains major theories of feminist science and attempts to examine concerns of gender-loyalty and scientific objectivity.]

A second set of epistemological issues has arisen between the feminist empiricists and standpoint theorists, on the one hand, and the feminist critics of Enlightenment assumptions—the feminist postmodernists—on the other hand. The empiricists and standpoint theorists are both attempting to ground accounts of the social world which are less partial and distorted than the prevailing ones. In this sense, they are attempting to produce a feminist science—one that better reflects the world around us than the incomplete and distorting accounts provided by traditional social science. This science would not substitute one gender-loyalty for the others, but, instead, advance the objectivity of science. The feminist postmodernists raise questions about this epistemological project. Can there be a feminist science, or is any science doomed to replicate undesirable—and perhaps even androcentric—ways of being in the world?

There appear to be two at least somewhat distinct origins of skepticism about the kind of epistemological project in which both the feminist empiricists and the standpoint theorists are engaged. One emerges from feminists who participate in the agendas of such otherwise disparate discourses as those of semiotics, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis. The other has appeared in the writings of women of color.

The discourses mentioned are all deeply skeptical of universalizing claims for reason, science, language, progress, and the subject/self. Thus both of the feminist epistemological strategies we examined are legitimate targets of such skepticism, since they assume that through reason, observation, and progressive politics, the more authentic “self” produced by feminist struggles can tell “one true story” about “the world”: there can be a kind of feminist author of a new “master story,” a narrative about social life which feminist inquiry will produce. The critics respond, but “perhaps ‘reality’ can have ‘a’ structure only from the falsely universalizing perspective of the master. That is, only to the extent that one person or group can dominate the whole, can ‘reality’ appear to be governed by one set of rules or be constituted by one privileged set of social relations.”

This kind of criticism points to the way science constructs the fiction of the human mind as a glassy mirror which can reflect a world that is out there and ready-made for reflecting. In contrast, we can detect ("in reality"?) that at any moment in history there are many "subjugated knowledges" that conflict with, and are never reflected in, the dominant stories a culture tells about social life. Moreover, some argue that women are a primary location of these subjugated knowledges—in fact, that the female subject is a "site of differences." From this perspective, there can never be a feminist science, sociology, anthropology, or epistemology, but only many stories that different women tell about the different knowledge they have.

A second source of criticism of a unitary feminist perspective implied by the two epistemological strategies emerges from women of color. For instance, Bell Hooks insists that what makes feminism possible is not that women share certain kinds of experiences, for women’s experiences of patriarchal oppression differ by race, class, and culture. Instead, feminism names the fact that women can federate around their common resistance to all the different forms of male domination. Thus there could not be “a” feminist standpoint as the generator of true stories about social life. There could, presumably, only be feminist oppositions, and criticisms of false stories. There could not be feminist science, because feminism’s opposition to domination stories locates feminism in an antagonistic position towards any attempts to do science—androcentric or not. These strains of postmodernism are richer and more complex than these few paragraphs can reveal. But one can already sense the troubles they create for other feminist epistemologies.

Should feminists be willing to give up the political benefits which can accrue from believing that we are producing a new, less biased, more accurate, social science? Social scientists might well want to respond to the postmodernist critics that we do need to federate our feminisms in opposition to all of the ways in which domination is enacted and institutionalized. But it is premature for women to be willing to give up what they have never had. Should women—no matter what their race, class, or culture—find it reasonable to give up the desire to know and understand the world from the standpoint of their experiences for the first time? As several feminist literary critics have suggested, perhaps only those who have had access to the benefits of the Enlightenment can “give up” those benefits.

There are good reasons to find valuable the tension between these two epistemological positions. We need to think critically about the fundamental impulses of knowledge-seeking, and especially of science, even as we transform them to feminists’ (plural!) ends.

One can easily see that the new feminist analyses unsettle traditional assumptions about knowledge as they challenge familiar beliefs about women, men, and social life. How could it have been otherwise when our ways of knowing are such an important part of our ways of participating in the social world?

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**SELECTION 14.6**

**The Laugh of the Medusa***

_Hélène Cixous_

*[In this essay Cixous is arguing on two levels—the metaphorical and the literal—about the nature of women’s sexuality and the need for women to write themselves.]*

I shall speak about women’s writing: about what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as

bear the mark of our time—a time during which the new breaks away from the old, and, more precisely, the (feminine) new from the old (la nouvelle de l’ancien). Thus, as there are no grounds for establishing a discourse, but rather an arid millennial ground to break, what I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project.

I write this as a woman, toward women. When I say “woman,” I’m speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history. But first it must be said that in spite of the enormity of the repression that has kept them in the “dark”—that dark which people have been trying to make them accept as their attribute—there is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman. What they have in common I will say. But what strikes me is the infinite richness of their individual constitutions: you can’t talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes—any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women’s imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible.

I have been amazed more than once by a description a woman gave me of a world all her own which she had been secretly haunting since early childhood. A world of searching, the elaboration of a knowledge, on the basis of a systematic experimentation with the bodily functions, a passionate and precise interrogation of her erotogeneity. This practice, extraordinarily rich and inventive, in particular as concerns masturbation, is prolonged or accompanied by a production of forms, a veritable aesthetic activity, each stage of rapture inscribing a resonant vision, a composition, something beautiful. Beauty will no longer be forbidden.

I wished that that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs. Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst—burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune. And I, too, said nothing, showed nothing; I didn’t open my mouth, I didn’t repaint my half of the world, I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! What’s the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naiveté, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallocentrism, hasn’t been ashamed of her strength? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a . . . divine composure), hasn’t accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn’t thought she was sick? Well, her shameful sickness is that she resists death, that she makes trouble.

And why don’t you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven’t written. (And why I didn’t write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it’s reserved for the great—that is, for “great men”; and it’s “silly.” Besides, you’ve written a little, but in secret. And it wasn’t good, because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing, because you didn’t go all the way; or because you wrote, irresistibly, as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just enough to take the edge off. And then as soon as we come, we go and make ourselves feel guilty—so as to be forgiven; or to forget, to bury it until the next time.

Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and not yourself. Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don’t like the true texts of women—female-sexed texts. That kind scares them.

I write woman: woman must write woman. And man, man. So only an oblique consideration will be found here of man; it’s up to him to say where his

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1 Men still have everything to say about their sexuality, and everything to write. For what they have said so far, for the most part, stems from the opposition activity/passivity, from the power relation between a fantasized obligatory virility meant to invade, to colonize, and the consequent phantasm of woman as a “dark continent” to penetrate and to “pacify.” (We know what “pacify” means in terms of scotomizing the other and misrecognizing the self.) Conquering her, they’ve made haste to depart from her borders, to get out of sight, out of body. The way man has of getting out of himself and into her whom he takes not for the other but for his own, deprives him, he knows, of his own bodily territory. One can understand how man, confusing himself with his penis and rushing in for the attack, might feel resentment and fear of being “taken” by the woman, of being lost in her, absorbed, or alone.
masculinity and femininity are at: this will concern us once men have opened their eyes and seen themselves clearly.¹

Now women return from afar, from always: from “without,” from the heath where witches are kept alive; from below, from beyond “culture”; from their childhood which men have been trying desperately to make them forget, condemning it to “eternal rest.” The little girls and their “ill-mannered” bodies immured, well-preserved, intact unto themselves, in the mirror. Frigidified. But are they ever seething underneath! What an effort it takes—there’s no end to it—for the sex cops to bar their threatening return. Such a display of forces on both sides that the struggle has for centuries been immobilized in the trembling equilibrium of a deadlock. . . .

. . . It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn’t be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem.

Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering (if she hasn’t painfully lost her wind). She doesn’t “speak,” she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it’s with her body that she vitally supports the “logic” of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materializes what she’s thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she’s saying, because she doesn’t deny her drives the intractable and impasioned part they have in speaking. Her speech, even when “theoretical” or political, is never simple or linear or “objectified,” generalized: she draws her story into history.

There is not that scission, that division made by the common man between the logic of oral speech and the logic of the text, bound as he is by his antiquated relation—servile, calculating—to mastery. From which proceeds the niggardly lip service which would conjure away castration (the writer who puts up his sign: “bisexual written here, come and see,” when the odds are good that it’s neither one nor the other), I oppose the other bisexuality on which every subject not enclosed in the false theater of phallic mystification has generally contaminated good relationships, a woman is never far from “mother” (I mean outside her role functions: the “mother” as nonname and as source of goods). There is always within her at least a little of that good mother’s milk. She writes in white ink.

Woman for women—There always remains in woman that force which produces/is produced by the other—in particular, the other woman. In her, matrix, cradler; herself giver as her mother and child; she is her own sister-daughter. You might object, “What about she who is the hysterical offspring of a bad mother?” Everything will be changed once woman gives woman to the other woman. There is hidden and always ready in woman the source; the locus for the other. The mother, too, is a metaphor. It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was “born” to her. . . .

. . . It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded—which doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate. . . .

. . . To this self-effacing, merger-type bisexuality, which would conjure away castration (the writer who puts up his sign: “bisexual written here, come and see,” when the odds are good that it’s neither one nor the other), I oppose the other bisexuality on which every subject not enclosed in the false theater of phallocentric representationalism has founded his/her erotic universe. Bisexuality: that is, each one’s location in self (répérage en soi) of the presence—variably manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female—of both sexes, nonexclusion either of the difference or of one sex, and, from this “self-permission,” multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body.

Now it happens that at present, for historicocultural reasons, it is women who are opening up to and benefiting from this vatic bisexuality which doesn’t annual differences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases their number. In a certain way, “woman is bisexual”; man—it’s a secret to no
One—being poised to keep glorious phallic monosexuality in view. By virtue of affirming the primacy of the phallus and of bringing it into play, phallocratic ideology has claimed more than one victim. As a woman, I've been clouded over by the great shadow of the scepter and been told: idolize it, that which you cannot brandish. But at the same time, man has been handed that grotesque and scarcely enviable destiny (just imagine) of being reduced to a single idol with clay balls. And consumed, as Freud and his followers note, by a fear of being a woman! For, if psychoanalysis was constituted from woman, to repress femininity (and not so successful a repression at that—men have made it clear), its account of masculine sexuality is now hardly refutable; as with all the “human” sciences, it reproduces the masculine view, of which it is one of the effects.

. . . Let the priests tremble, we’re going to show them our sexts! Too bad for them if they fall apart upon discovering that women aren’t men, or that the mother doesn’t have one. But isn’t this fear convenient for them? Wouldn’t the worst be, isn’t the worst, in truth, that women aren’t castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing. . .

. . . This doesn’t mean that she’s an undifferentiated magma, but that she doesn’t lord it over her body or her desire. Though masculine sexuality gravitates around the penis, engendering that centralized body (in political anatomy) under the dictatorship of its parts, woman does not bring about the same regionalization which serves the couple head/genitals and which is inscribed only within boundaries. Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is world-wide. Her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours, daring to make these vertiginous crossings of the other(s) ephemeral and passionate sojourns in him, her, them, whom she inhabits long enough to look at from the point closest to their unconscious from the moment they awaken, to love them at the point closest to their drives; and then further, impregnated through and through with these brief, identificatory embraces, she goes and passes into infinity. She alone dares and wishes to know from within, where she, the outcast, has never ceased to hear the resonance of fore-language. She lets the other language speak—the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death. To life she refuses nothing. Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible. When id is ambiguously uttered—the wonder of being several—she doesn’t defend herself against these unknown women whom she’s surprised at becoming, but derives pleasure from this gift of alterability. I am spacious, singing flesh, on which is grafted no one knows which I, more or less human, but alive because of transformation.

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**SELECTION 14.7**

**Goodbye, You Guys**

*Sherryl Kleinman*

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firefighter slowly made their way onto paper and into speech. Many people began to see that it’s a problem when the so-called generic person has a man’s face.

So when did “you guys” sneak by and then sneak in? I suspect it entered the scene around the time that official titles like “chairman” were being challenged. You can push the provost to change freshman to first-year student or complain to publishers about their use of congressman in textbooks. But you can’t go to court to make your friends stop using “you guys.”

Some women tell me that “you guys” is different from “mankind.” It’s informal. It makes everyone feel included. It’s an equalizer. As one woman put it, “It’s friendly. It’s not like calling us sluts or bitches.”

That’s what worries me. Too many of us believe “you guys” is benign. But imagine a world—as Douglas Hofstadter did in his 1986 satire on sexist language—where people used generics based on race rather than gender. In that world, people would use “freshwhite,” “chairwhite,” and yes, “you whiteys.” Substituting “white” for “man” makes it easy to see why using “man” for all human beings is wrong.

Perhaps some women believe that being “one of the guys” will protect them from the hazards of being women. “You guys” provides the guise of inclusion in the dominant group. But if women really had equal status with men, we wouldn’t have to disappear into their term. After all, can you think of one, just one, instance when a female term has been used to describe a group of women and men? Can you even imagine that happening?

I’m not saying that those of us who use “you guys” have bad intentions. But let’s consider the consequences. Think about the messages we get about the value of women—hundreds of times a day, every day—when we hear it. So let’s recognize (as feminists did with “mankind”) that a friendly-sounding phrase like “you guys” can do damage.

I think about my colleague’s five-year-old daughter who ran out of the room crying when she heard the teacher say, “What do you guys think?” She thought the teacher didn’t care about what she thought. The teacher told her that of course she was included. Her tears stopped, but what was the lesson? She learned that her opinion as a girl counts only when she’s a guy. She learned, as most of us have, that men set the standard.

I think about my friend’s six-year-old son who refused to believe that the female firefighter who came to his school to talk to the class—dressed in uniform—actually fought fires. The firefighter repeatedly referred to herself as a “fireman.” Despite the protests of the teacher and the firefighter, the boy would not be convinced. “A fireman can’t be a woman,” he said. His mother, who is fastidious in her use of nonsexist language, had a tough time doing damage control.

Several months ago I was complaining, as usual, about the “you guys” problem. “What we need is a card that explains why we don’t want to be called ‘guys’!”

Smita Varia, a veteran of my gender course, said, “Let’s write one.”

And so we did. Smita enlisted T. Christian Helms, another former student, to design a graphic for the card. . . . We hope you’ll agree that the card doesn’t scold people. Give it to friends and ask them to think about it. Leave it with a big tip after you’ve been “you guysed” during a meal. The card explains the problem and offers alternatives. You can also access the layout of the card from our website: http://www.youall.freeservers.com.

It’s impossible to legislate against “you guys,” so I’m calling for no less than an anti-you-guys movement. Does that sound silly? If so, maybe it’s because many of us secretly believe that guys are better. And the guys know they’re better, too. If you don’t believe me, saunter up to a group of them and offer a friendly, “Hey, gals, how’re you doing?” Let me know what happens.

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**CHECKLIST**

To help you review, here is a checklist of the key philosophers and terms and concepts of this chapter. The brief descriptive sentences summarize the philosophers’ leading ideas. Keep in mind that some of these summary statements are oversimplifications of complex positions.

**Philosophers**

- **Simone de Beauvoir** was a feminist existentialist who extended the discussion of feminism into all areas of intellectual endeavor. 449

- **Nancy Chodorow** argues that the differences between men and women can be traced to the psychodynamics of the nuclear family. 455
• **Hélène Cixous** is a French feminist writer, critic, and philosopher who uses the discourse called *écriture féminine*. She argues that women’s place as other can be changed through the power of her writing, which will disrupt the logic or masculinist discourse. 466

• **Jacques Derrida** is best known for his theory of deconstruction, a critical practice that explores the meaning of a text by dissolving its stability, thus opening the text to multiple interpretations. 462

• **Sigmund Freud** was the founder of psychoanalysis, focusing on stages of psychosexual development, dream interpretation, and aspects of the unconscious. 461

• **Carol Gilligan** argues that men and women have characteristically different ways of reasoning about moral issues. 454

• **Sandra Harding**, a feminist epistemologist and philosopher of science, is noted for her feminist analysis of the metaphors of early scientists and philosophers of science. 476

• **Luce Irigaray** is a French feminist who claims women should find their own identity rooted in their own symbolism. 463

• **Julia Kristeva** is a French literary theorist and practicing psychoanalyst who extends Lacan’s theory of the symbolic and adds her own theory of the semiotic. 464

• **Jacques Lacan** reemphasized the importance of Freud’s oedipus complex, giving the father the role of freeing the child from its presymbolic, imaginary world and introducing it into the adult world. 461

• **Nel Noddings** is a leading exponent of ethics of care. 456

• **Stephanie Ross** suggests that the metaphors we use in ordinary speech can shape the way we think about women. 458

• **Sara Ruddick** holds that the experience of being a mother influences one’s moral perceptions. 456

• **Harriet Taylor**, a utilitarian philosopher, thought nonphysiological differences between men and women were socially constructed, to the detriment of women and society in general. She was a vociferous proponent of women’s suffrage. 448

• **William Thompson** was an English liberal, utilitarian, utopian, feminist. An economist, he argued for women’s rights and the rights of workers. 448

• **Anna Doyle Wheeler**, an Irish feminist and utilitarian, was a utopian. 448

• **Mary Wollstonecraft**, a leading early feminist, held that males and females should be educated according to the same standards. 447

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**Key Terms and Concepts**

- black feminism, 451
- ecofeminism, 452
- misogynous, 455
- *écriture féminine*, 467
- patriarchy, 449
- essentialism, 464
- phallus, 463
- ethics of caring, 456
- postcolonial
- feminisms, 446
- theory, 452
- feminist philosophy, 446
- postfeminism, 453
- queer theory, 452
- French feminist philosophy, 460
- radical feminism, 451
- lesbian feminism, 451
- Self/Other, 449
- liberal feminism, 450
- semiotic, 465
- logocentrism, 465
- socialistic feminism, 451

**Questions for Discussion and Review**

1. Define feminist philosophy.
2. What were the results of first-wave efforts?
3. Explain Beauvoir’s theory of Self and Other as it relates to women and men.
4. What was Beauvoir’s major contribution to what we now call feminist philosophy?
5. Do all oppressed groups suffer? Are all groups that suffer oppressed?
6. What did second-wave feminism achieve?
7. What are the major differences between second- and third-wave feminism?
8. What is radical about “radical feminism”?
9. How can white/Anglo women try to learn about the perspectives of women of color? Do you think it’s possible for different groups to have truly empathetic understanding of each other?
10. Explain how Chodorow sees women’s mothering as resulting in differences between the relational experiences of girls and boys as they grow up.
11. Explain the argument for and against Harding’s view of feminist science.

12. According to Ruddick, how does “maternal thinking” affect moral reasoning?

13. What did Gilligan discover about the differences between women’s and men’s moral reasoning?

14. Summarize Kleinman’s reasoning in her argument that the term you guys should not be used to include women.

15. How does postfeminism relate to second- and third-wave goals?

16. What are the main differences between U.S. and French feminist philosophy?

17. What is Derrida’s contribution to French feminist philosophy?

18. What is écriture féminine?

19. Why is Irigaray critical of Freudian theory?

20. Explain Kristeva’s use of the terms semiotic and symbolic.

21. What are the main reasons American scholars have found Cixous’s work so difficult?

22. Explain how Cixous uses metaphor in “Laugh of the Medusa.”

23. In which ways have you personally benefited or suffered from our sexist society?

24. Think back to your early childhood. What were some of the ways you were programmed to behave in masculine or feminine ways? Think about gifts you received, games you played, toys you played with, clothing and colors you were encouraged to choose. How did these contribute to your sense of yourself as male or female?

25. Which one idea in this chapter has influenced your thinking most? Explain.

**SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**


Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970). An in-depth analysis of the workings of patriarchy, with emphasis on examples from literature.


