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Gender

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Introduction

Like all concepts in political theory, gender has a history. Unlike most of these concepts, though, the history of gender is comparatively short. The term itself originated in the nineteenth century, arising in the context of descriptive and diagnostic social sciences of human behaviour. It was only adopted into political theory, as a result of a political process of struggle, about 100 years later in the 1970s. When it arrived, gender was itself a highly political concept, signalling a rearrangement of the scope, terms and politics of political theory itself. Gender theorists at that point conceived of their work within political theory as a further engagement of feminism with 'malestream' thought, that is, theorisations of politics written by men and reflecting their assumptions and interests. The feminist stance towards the discipline, and towards its traditionalist practitioners, was critical and transformative.¹

To understand this important development in political theory, however, we will need to examine the concepts of sex and sexuality as well. Moreover, it will also be necessary to bear in mind that gender, woman and women's lives are all feminist concepts, but that within feminism itself they are *not all the same thing*. Finally, to make matters even more interesting, political theory is now engaged with theorisations of gender drawn from very recent developments, such as cultural studies, media studies, multiculturalism, post-structuralism and post-modernisms. These ideas and interests are not necessarily aligned with all, or indeed any, of contemporary feminisms in terms of subject matter or inspiration. On the whole, though, there is a tremendous debt in this area to feminist thought.

While strong claims can be made for understanding gender in feminist frame, this is to some extent a matter of acknowledging a conceptual development in history, rather than stating a necessary truth about the concept. Political theory itself records any number of historical encounters in which specific movements have defined and deployed philosophical concepts, which have then been dropped or redefined as political circumstances changed. 'Monarch', 'republic', 'citizen', 'equality', 'right' and 'obligation' are obvious examples. Gender is another concept in political theory recording and consolidating a political engagement, that

of feminism with malestream thought, but its own conceptual genesis predates contemporary feminisms, and its future is open to other interpretative moves and political movements.

1 Sex and the single political theorist

Political theorists in the malestream canon have certainly noticed sex, taking sex as the two 'opposite' sexes – male and female – and considering them reproductively. Or rather, when the subject of reproducing the community arises, women appear as wives and mothers (in that order), and men appear in relation to them as husbands and fathers within 'the family'. This is not necessarily just any family, as it could be a royal family (in theorists of patriarchal, hereditary monarchy). At the other end of the class spectrum the family arrangements of slaves, household servants, unpropertied workers (on or off the land) are rarely explicitly theorised. Rather traditional political theory most usually characterises a subject or citizen of a certain class and status, whose sex only emerges as explicitly male when reproductive issues eventually arise. Otherwise the subject or citizen has an abstract quality in relation to sex, and specifically to femaleness, in that this supposedly generic 'man' is always singular (that is, never pregnant) and occupies a public status that presumes certain background institutions, typically but not exclusively the family.²

Background institutions are not wholly forgotten or excluded, of course. Sexual, reproductive and 'family' circumstances are generally theorised as natural and therefore inevitable and unchanging. Nonetheless, they are, somewhat paradoxically, also theorised as subject to the protection and supervision of the 'properly' political processes that constitute the foreground of political theory. Theories that naturalise relationships and institutions always provoke a certain tension, because they also *necessarily* invoke a concept of unnaturalness and a need for regularisation. If heterosexual marriage and patriarchal families are so completely natural, why then theorise them at all? In political theory they are theorised not only in relation to 'public man' the subject or citizen as background, but also as a potential political problem within foreground concerns. One of the political responsibilities of 'public man' is the orderly maintenance of 'natural' reproductive arrangements in the 'family' and heterosexual relationships in patriarchal marriages, even when these are (rather disingenuously) claimed to be 'private' and somehow protected from state 'interference'.

Political theorists have in general been complicit with the backgrounding and naturalising of sexual, reproductive and 'family' arrangements. There are, of course, exceptions, and it is worth exploring one in particular in order to raise the issue of bodily differences and the question of the validity of generalisations in relation to sex. Plato's dramatic dialogue *The Republic* (c. 380–370 bc) is the sole malestream work that raises female sexual difference as an issue in relation to citizenship roles that were almost universally limited to men. In this work, leadership (or 'guardianship') is conceived as membership of a class

of warriors and rulers constrained to serve the best interests of the community. They are explicitly divorced from the more usual self- and family-centred concerns which all too often tempt those who exercise public power into material corruption at community expense. The 'dialogue' actually recounts dramatic yet conversational interchanges between Socrates (as a character) and other named male individuals, and the build-up given by Socrates to the introduction of such a controversial topic is considerable. He assumes that his audience will find the idea of female warriors and rulers ridiculous and absurd, which indeed they do (449a–457b).

This episode in political theory has been notorious, rather than influential, and in particular it has not been much revived by feminist commentators. In *The Republic* Socrates does not involve himself in any detailed discussion of the bodily characteristics that are generally taken to constitute the femaleness and maleness that the notion of two 'opposite' sexes is generally taken to reflect. The male audience is happy in their idea that men are physically and intellectually more suited to martial valour and wise rulership through their bodily capacities than women, whereas women are more suited to domestic concerns and child-bearing through their bodily capacities than men. The argument put forward by Socrates, in contrast, is based on exceptions to that generalisation, which the male audience is forced to admit. These include an admission that some men are better than some women at supposedly female-only pursuits, and an acknowledgement that the barriers to martial training for females are culturally rather than physically determined, and therefore malleable. Quite why Plato the author wants to make Socrates the character propound this line of argument is never explained. Feminists have been understandably unhappy with the presumed validity of the generalisations about woman, however embedded in dialogical concerns, and with the overall absence of interest in the history of female oppression and of vision with respect to women's lives.³

What Socrates does not do in *The Republic* is to explore the supposed basis of the sexual distinction between males and females in the first place to any significant degree. He deals with bodily difference by noting that women bear children and men mount women. This rather brutal account of sexual difference enables him to argue that it really does not bear on any other activities in society such that *all* women or *all* men are suitable or unsuitable for any task or tasks. He thus theorises a panoply of individual differences in relation to social activities that must be sorted out in every single case. This has the advantage of respecting any particular individual's personal qualities, without first establishing what must *necessarily* be true of them as a man or as a woman, or what is *likely* to be true of them (to which generalisations there could, with argument, be exceptions). Whether Socrates has produced a defensible theorisation of the human subject in relation to life cycle and occupational issues, or whether he is merely another reflection of mainstream inattention to the body, and in particular to the female body (for example, wombs/parturition, breasts/lactation), are interesting points of current debate.

2 Sexual behaviour and the panopticon of science⁴

Gender was coined as a term, not in political theory, but in nineteenth-century social science. The context then was the incorporation of the 'study of man' into the current framework of science, involving factual observation of regularities, careful recording of data, inductive procedures of theory-formation, deductive formulation of predictions and a search for causal factors of explanation. As with the industrial technologies that developed in conjunction with the progress of the natural sciences, so there were policy-orientated and therapeutic practices that developed from the social sciences. These ranged from bureaucratised teacher training and mass education to social work and psychoanalysis, as new 'knowledges' were conceptualised and operationalised. Sexual behaviour became a subject of study (in fields that came to be known as psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology and anthropology) and a concept was needed to indicate that biological sex itself did not produce uniform patterns of behaviour in individuals. Rather, individuals progressed through a process of development that originated in maleness or femaleness, but either arrived at corresponding masculine and feminine forms of behaviour, or did not.

Forms of behaviour that were thought to correspond correctly to maleness were, unsurprisingly, those that tended towards physical and intellectual aggression, unemotional individualism and competitive achievement, sexual promiscuity and risk-taking (among other similar human attributes). Those behaviours that were thought to correspond to femaleness were, of course, presumed to reflect an opposite: physical weakness and dependency, emotional excess and co-operative social strategies, sexual constancy and security-consciousness (again, among other similar characteristics). Moreover correctly corresponding behaviours in early gender theory were not limited to individualised expressions of masculinity and femininity, as just described, but also to the presumed biological relationship of the two sexes to the reproductive process. Desire and behaviour between the sexes (and in a negative way, within each of the two sexes) was also theorised in terms of gender; that is, masculine men and feminine women were theorised as desiring each other sexually within a reproductive relationship, or within courtship rituals and choices reflecting this supposed imperative.

Thus gender as a concept presumed that biological sex issued forth in corresponding behaviours related both to rather generalised strategies in social behaviour (for example, independence and aggression versus dependence and co-operation) and to specifically sexual activity (for example, heterosexual courtship and reproductive marriage). For the policy-orientated and therapeutic practices that flowed from this laboriously observed (if not newly discovered) scientific knowledge, the concept of unsuccessful, incomplete or abnormal behaviours was crucially important by definition, because policies and therapies must conceptualise the problems they aim to solve. It follows that these problems must be intensely observed in order to discover their causes, and strategies must be developed to deal with their consequences, both individually and socially.

Within the social science of human sexology, masculine women and feminine men were defined conceptually, located, observed, recorded and studied. Homosexual behaviour was similarly studied and made individually and socially problematic. Linkages between 'inverted' gender (masculine women and feminine men) were theorised, but rather unsatisfactorily: homosexual men did not always seem to exhibit any uniformity of pairing behaviour between feminine men (unless such 'inverts' were defined tautologically as 'feminine' in virtue of same-sex attraction). In so far as masculine women and lesbians were investigated, which was considerably less, much the same kind of incongruity arose. Attempts to map same-sex relationships back on to assumptions that sexual relationships require the attraction of 'opposites' generally tended to fail. In sum, gender came to stand for the behavioural aspects of sex and sexuality, whether in correct correspondence with 'reproductive biology' or in deviance from it in diverse but problematic ways.

Between societies these behaviours could be similarly tracked and classified, subject to cultural and historical differences that social scientists were trained to factor out. A naturalised conception of opposite sexes and reproductive heterosexuality was clearly the basis from which the concept of gender emerged, and it did so precisely because it enabled social scientists to project the presumed truths of biological science forward into hitherto unsystematic studies of human behaviour, given that humans were in their bodily construction, and deepest identities, necessarily of two 'opposite' kinds.

3 Sexual politics and political theory

Political theory has reflected methodological assumptions in common intellectual currency. These, of course, have been different, at different times. Plato's dialogues reflect a particular way of doing philosophy, and a number of assumptions about how truth is produced, and what it is for. Other theorists have employed rather different assumptions, reflecting other views about truth, and what political difference its circulation could make (for example, Hobbes's 'science of politics'). Moreover political theorists have often had more or less overt political agendas themselves, and have been in touch with political movements that they hoped to influence, and which influenced them. These movements may have been highly elitist or radically egalitarian, or anything moderate and moderating in between.

Political theorists thus typically endeavour to link the most abstract questions of method applicable to human affairs with truths that are communicable to their contemporaries and even translatable, at times, into actions and institutions. The attempted incorporation and ultimate acceptance (at least in some circles) of gender as an important, perhaps even fundamental concept in political theory, has involved similar considerations. That is, a link between feminism as a political movement, and feminist political theorists, has been fundamental in this process. Moreover feminists in political theory have arguably contributed

independently to a reconceptualisation of gender, sexuality and sex itself, with far-reaching consequences for the social sciences and, indeed, for the way that biological science conceptualises the human life form, and others.

Feminism, as a theory of women's oppression, and a practice of resistance to male domination, brought women's lives, woman and gender to political theory. This was not an easy process, as the canon of authors, the register of concepts and the discursive presumptions – about 'man' and 'his' social relationships, and about who is writing for whom about what kind of things – were regarded as, if not fixed, at least very stable. Indeed, by the 1950s and 1960s it was suggested that perhaps this stability in political theory reflected a decline because the world had less need for political theory itself. Ideological battles were said by some to be over, and liberal consensus declared to be ascendant. Feminists were not the only ones to disturb this latter-day tranquillity, but disturb it they did. Battling to get women's concerns recognised as theoretically significant, and woman validated as an object of theoretical interest, feminists launched the gendering of political theory.

This involved more than introducing woman as an idea and empirical referent, precisely because this introduction challenged the former universality of 'man' as the human individual. This was a double challenge: 'man' was revealed to incorporate masculine presumptions concerning social behaviour and bodily configurations; woman introduced whole new areas to political theory that had formerly been treated as pre-political, non-political or anti-political. These included reproductive roles, family structures, sexual relationships, domestic spaces and numerous moral or religious or cultural issues as they bore on women's lives. These had generally been unnoticed, discounted or naturalised by male political theorists. Whether there is any way of salvaging an unsexed conception of the human individual as a foundational concept in political theory, or any point in doing so, is currently an area of debate within, as well as outside, contemporary feminisms. Similarly, whether there are any aspects of women's lives (or anyone's life) that are, or should be, excluded or protected from politics, is again a debatable question.

It is clear, however, that feminist work has considerably developed and enhanced the concept of gender in interesting and complex ways within political theory, and in the disciplines on which it draws. Working through this development requires rigorous attention to what gender adds to conceptions of sex and sexuality. In so far as gender slips back towards the supposed simplicities of males and females as 'opposite' sexes, it fails to add value to those notions, and detracts from the work that the concept should be doing. Gender as a synonym for sex is clearly redundant, and reductive strategies to push it that way produce confusion. Rather than reinscribe conventional understandings of sex and sexuality in political theory, theories of gender must *locate* sex and sexuality in relevant ways. Or, in other words, beware of the current tendency to substitute gender for sex just to the side of the boxes where you are supposed to tick M or F.⁵

4 Three theories of gender

While there is a case to be made that three theories of gender have emerged chronologically, it is certainly true that all three exist at present, are utilised, and are useful. It is probably better to view them that way than as evolutionary steps in a literature towards something superior, with possible reverse extinctions. I shall try to indicate something of the strengths of each theory as I go, by suggesting the kinds of problems that each could address, and the characteristic kinds of conceptualisations that a theorist would employ. Perhaps rather against the grain of canonical conceptions of political theory, I have chosen this somewhat authorless way of presenting ideas. However, I hope in this way to keep a clear analytical focus, and to provide a framework through which to follow what particular authors are saying. I would not claim that any set of authors exemplifies any one of my theories, the way that I have set them out, nor that anyone's work would be better if this happened. Most authors provide discussions that employ at least one of my three theories at some stage. Nonetheless I have given some reading for each theory that is particularly relevant to the area, either as background or as analysis. My hope is that readers (and authors) will get a clearer picture of what they mean by gender at different points in any discussion, and not fall into the trap of letting this useful term slip to mean just 'biological sex'.

4(a) *Behavioural theories of gender*⁶

In these theories gender stands for behavioural aspects of sex and sexuality, understood at first in a biological context of presumed reproductive instincts located in individuals, who are of two profoundly different types, namely, male and female. Individuals of these two types then exhibit a range of 'normally' corresponding individualised behaviours, as masculine men and feminine women, or other-directed behaviours, as heterosexuals (of two types, males and females), desiring biological opposites and reproductive mates. This further entails exhibiting non-sexual behaviours in relations with other individuals of the same sex, given the impossibility of biological mating. Where individual behaviours deviate from this 'normality', whether individually as personality-types or in interpersonal relations, this is then deemed scientifically and therapeutically problematic, and causes are hypothesised, mechanisms described, and tests conducted.

The strength of these theories is precisely that they are behavioural, and that observations can be accumulated and regularities postulated. This would not have been possible if the relationship between biological sex and behaviour (both as sexed individual, and within interpersonal sexuality) was presumed to be fixed. If that were the case, then certain processes could never be observed, because they could never exist. Here the theories become more complex and developmental as they move out of the biological and into the sociological and psychoanalytic realms. Theorisations include individual processes of

psychosexual development and socialised forms of education, such that boys become boys, girls become girls, men men and women women. Political theory became gendered, that is, concerned with individual sexed behaviour and with sexual relationships of all kinds, as central both to the very notions of the human individual and political society.

Unsurprisingly there have been a number of protests, and protest movements, reacting to the claims of deviancy and abnormality that were openly stated or covertly implied in the study of gender. Feminisms and gay movements struggled against the stigmatising and demeaning classificatory schemes within gender studies, while simultaneously enriching and realigning the scope and content of the research conducted. While these critiques revealed that classification schemes and research results were in general very close reflections of the assumptions and prejudices of the researchers and of dominant groups in their respective societies, the approach still has a certain conceptual and descriptive validity.

4(b) *Power theories of gender*⁷

As a theory of women's oppression, feminism is by definition concerned with power. The framework sketched above was already, if not always explicitly, imbued with a further dimension, that of power-relations. This included both structural power in terms of institutions and micro-power in terms of interpersonal relations. In this theoretical framework gender works not merely to reveal the role of institutions and agency in individual behaviours and relationships, but to analyse and evaluate the power-relations that are characteristically in place as sexed individuals and sexual relationships are produced in societies according to certain regularities. Feminist analysis and commentary revealed the extent to which individuals that ('successfully') became conventionally masculine/heterosexual then accumulated advantages at the expense of those who were produced as female/homosexual. Theories of patriarchy reflect this linkage between the characteristic ways that masculine/heterosexual men are produced as power-wielding individuals, and as intimidatory ideals, in relation to women's lives and any usual concept of woman.

While patriarchy is literally 'rule of the fathers', the term has been successively refined and rechristened as fratriarchy and viriarchy to denote the homosocial relationships among masculine/heterosexual men through which economic and emotional resources are monopolised, against the participation and influence of women. Theorisations of this kind have been criticised for over-generalisation about power-relations, neglecting the competitive power-relations within masculine/heterosexual power structures, and for devaluing, dismissing or denying the extent to which women can, to their advantage, gain entry to power-relations as they currently exist. The former point has been addressed by work that theorises dominant and non-dominant masculinities, particularly non-heterosexual ones. The latter point has been aired by feminists keen to promote equality of opportunity and individual achievement for

women in contemporary conditions, even at the possible expense of an all-encompassing female solidarity.

These debates within feminism have raised very traditional issues in political theory: what is the good society? What are the appropriate strategies for realising it? How are individual rights and present entitlements balanced against the possibilities for collective change? How can change benefit excluded and oppressed groups? Without a theory of gender, the relevance of sex and sexuality to these questions would not be visible, and without a power-theory of gender, the link between contemporary political debates and movements, and the literature of political theory, would not be available.

Much of conventional political theory has been descriptive and naturalising, telling us what must be the case about 'man and society', such that we can understand why relations of political power in society are necessary, and then see which principles and institutions are most advisable within realistic bounds of possible change. Power theories of gender imply a new agenda for political change, driven by political theory. This is one that bears on very basic questions of individual identity, fulfilment and protection. Theorisations suggesting that politics is about 'who gets what' or about 'individuals choosing life-plans' now seem rather bland and simplistic.

Once the individual that political theory conceptualises becomes much more complicated and differentiated, and more thoroughly embedded in complex and constitutive relationships and bodily configurations, then power relationships become much more varied and problematic. This opens the way to radical revisions of political theory, rather than just critique, however thorough, of existing frameworks. Once sexed behaviour and sexual relationships are released from biological or psychoanalytic reductionism, it follows that gender describes and empowers 'differences' that far exceed the limited and limiting vocabulary of conventional wisdom: male/female, straight/gay, masculine/feminine.

Gender politics liberated 'difference' in a way that affects everyone (as opposed to race/ethnicity, multiculturalism, and any number of other rather more sociological categories that might not *seem* to affect every human individual). However, gender, because of its origins in sex and sexuality, also *seems* to license a constant reduction of 'difference' back to the supposed basics of sex and sexuality. Is there a hierarchy within 'differences'? Are sex and sexuality more central to human political identities than, for example, race/ethnicity or religion? If not, what concerns then allow or circumscribe an intelligible and predictable politics of identity? Political theory currently reflects this tension in its theorisations, much as practical politics reflects the ways that people battle it out. Feminism faced up to these questions when confronted with 'women of colour', who famously refused the generalisations about woman that white women had offered. Any identity politics faces these issues, and political theory is one area in which such debates take place.

4(c) *Performative theories of gender*^s

The 'linguistic turn' in post-structuralist philosophy has been extremely influential across the social sciences and humanities, and particularly so in gender studies. Feminists had already addressed categorial questions about the relation between women's lives and the category woman, both in terms of the way that social institutions produce women and in terms of the ways that female- or feminine-identified categories are defined in relation to, or as the 'other' of, male- and masculine-identified ones. Feminists had charted the way that these categories are represented visually and in other non-textual ways, particularly in popular culture. It was a small but revolutionary step from these studies to a dramatic reversal of the sex-gender story.

Rather than presuming, however variably and malleably, the supposed biological baseline of male/female difference, and seeing behavioural gender and gendered power-relations as in some sense following on from sex differences embedded in the body, a performative theory of gender reversed direction. Very simply, gender was no longer viewed as an aspect of sex, but rather our very idea of sex was said to be an aspect of gender. Gender was said to be a categorial structure of binaries, arranged hierarchically, such that concepts of sexual difference and sexualities were produced, including the apparently natural biology of reproductive sex. That is, conceptual binaries male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, rational/irrational, strong/weak, active/passive, physical/emotional, and so on, exist within language. From that language we construct and create realities of all kinds, including supposed 'natural' or 'biological' facts as sexual difference. The hierarchical binaries through which core identities are constructed are then mapped back on to bodies, enforcing their identification as male or female, irrespective of inter-chromosomal and other deviations from a norm that biological and psychological sciences themselves create. On this view 'nature' does not create anything; rather, humans have concepts of nature that explain, often with political import, what is fixed and inevitable about the world.

Gender is thus a 'performative', that is, a category that seems to name as a reality that which it constructs itself in and through the performances that are its only existence. Or in other words, there is nothing natural or biological that gives us men and women. Men and women are constructed conceptually through hierarchical conceptual binaries that make such social and physical identifications as possible as they are. These performances are so thoroughly learned through processes of citation and repetition that they generally seem natural to the subjects who perform them. Human subjects are thus stylised and scripted, naturalised and inscribed, such that concepts of voluntary action and agency exist always and already within this apparent core of personal identity.

While this kind of theorisation is counter-intuitive, there are clues to its validity that we can recognise. One is the extent to which supposedly naturalised realities have to be regularised, enforced and produced through social processes involving education, medicine and commercialisation. This includes all

manner of goods and services that seem to be directed at men and women, but actually as performances constitute human subjects in these guises. Personal consumption of men's and women's items, on this view, does not reflect identities and differences that have the universal and natural importance that they are said to have. Rather these patterns of consumption cite a socially constructed and culturally malleable pattern of hierarchical binaries, as subjects are 'educated' and 'disciplined' into gendered groups to consume them.⁹

Conceiving of gender as a constantly changing, yet relentlessly naturalising, system of hierarchical binaries, allows for an almost infinite differentiation between ways of being men and women, and ways of being sexual. In this way niche markets create new kinds of consuming subjects, who come to feel their 'inner' identities as natural. The work in gay studies on the origin and development of the homosexual subject, as well as feminist work on 'drag' and other subversions of femininity, have been influential in revealing the extent to which gender as a performative allows for 'playful and erotic games' that we all come to understand.¹⁰ These occur within the performances through which gender, as an open-ended and inherently diversifying system, pervades an increasingly sexualised and concomitantly commercialised society.

5 Gender and political theory

Gender is arguably the biggest thing to hit political theory since democracy. Equally arguably, gender is a conceptualisation that has arisen within the globalised thrust of democratic political change. This movement has not only expanded the categories of persons deemed worthy to share in ruling and being ruled, it has also expanded the scope of state power to determine rights and obligations, to protect and regulate all kinds of activities, and to promote and distribute material welfare. As mentioned above, the emancipation of women from restricted civil liberties and reduced material welfare is proceeding, and this has brought considerations of sex (specifically as femaleness) into political theory from a new perspective. It has also raised corresponding issues concerning men, along with matters related to children and 'family' roles, including reproductive heterosexuality. This has effectively and irrevocably politicised an apparently natural order of things. Something of the same considerations apply to sexualities alternative to reproductive heterosexuality, further loosening the grip of naturalising accounts that validate behaviours for some, and criminalise or demean the behaviours of others.

Concepts of sex and sexuality are linked to behaviour via theories of gender, of which I have outlined three. These do the additional work of raising a description or categorisation into an issue. Behavioural theories of gender map the distance between behaviours (both sexed and sexual) and the presumed fixities of reproductive biology or psychoanalytical development. Power theories of gender track the disparities of power and resources between behavioural groups (from masculine/heterosexual men on down) as society reproduces

them through educational and disciplinary processes. Performative theories of gender present the binary and hierarchical character of the concepts through which the lived experience of sex and sexuality is constructed, including the supposed 'natural' truths of reproductive biology.¹¹

Performative theories of gender are most effective in linking gendered theory to further theories of 'difference', typically involving race/ethnicity, cultural markers and multiculturalism, religious and linguistic identities, and so on. They have the effect of removing the claims of any one characteristic, even the bodily characteristics we demarcate as sex, from any clear prioritisation over any other characteristic. This defuses debates as to which identity, or which form of oppression or discrimination, is more significant or hurtful or pressing, because that form of identity is more intrinsic, natural, unchangeable, inevitable or foundational to the human person. Prioritisation must come through a clearly political process, and cannot, on this view, be factored into 'natural' hierarchies and binaries.

This move could facilitate an interesting rainbow of coalition politics, and a clearer alignment of political theory with all sections of any given community than canonical texts have allowed. On the other hand, the extent to which more traditional and foundational conceptualisations of 'difference' have a more immediate appeal, and thus a long-term future, is undeniable, given the way that political organisation and conceptual discussion tend to proceed along familiar, well-trodden paths, perhaps for very good reasons. Ultimately gender could dissolve into one aspect of the 'politics of difference', among others.¹² Alternatively, the universality of sex and sexuality, and their persistent connection to power relations in society, suggest that the concept of gender will attain a permanent and salient position in the political theory of the future.

Notes

- 1 For standard works on the engagement of feminist with 'malestream' theory, see S.M. Okin, *Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1979); G. Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London, Methuen, 1984); J. Grimshaw, *Feminist Philosophers: Women's Perspectives on Philosophical Traditions* (Brighton, Wheatsheaf Books, 1986); E. Kennedy and S. Mendus, *Women in Western Political Philosophy* (Brighton, Wheatsheaf Books, 1987); A. Nye, *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Men* (New York, Routledge, 1989); M. Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991); D. Coole, *Women in Political Theory: From Ancient Misogyny to Contemporary Feminism* (Brighton, Harvester Press/Wheatsheaf Books, 1992, 2nd edn); R. Prokhovnik, *Rational Woman: A Feminist Critique of Dichotomy* (London and New York, Routledge, 1999).
- 2 The classical account of this analysis is C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988).
- 3 See the discussions in J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 183–5; and in N. Pappas, *Plato and the Republic* (New York, Routledge, 1995), pp. 101–6.

- 4 For helpful background discussions, see J. Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven, CT, and London, Yale University Press, 1994), esp. pt 1, pp. 13–119; J. Grant, *Fundamental Feminism* (New York and London, Routledge, 1993), pp. 160–88; T. Carri-gan, B. Connell and J. Lee, 'Toward a New Sociology o Masculinity', in H. Brod (ed.), *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies* (Winchester, MA, and Hemel Hempstead, Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 65–89; R.W. Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002), pp. 1–11, 28–52.
- 5 For a discussion of these issues, see T. Carver, 'A Political Theory of Gender: Perspectives on the "universal subject"', in V. Randall and G. Waylen (eds), *Gender, Politics and the State* (London, Routledge, 1998), pp. 18–24.
- 6 See, for example, S. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London, Cape, 1971); N. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1978).
- 7 See, for example, S. Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990); J. Hearn, *The Gender of Oppression: Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism* (Brighton, Wheatsheaf, 1987).
- 8 See, pre-eminently, J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, Routledge, 1990); for a very recent exposition of this position in a political theory context, see R.C. Synder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military Service and Gender in the Civic Republican Tradition* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), pp. 3–7, 138–47.
- 9 See D.T. Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London, Routledge, 1993), pp. 36–64.
- 10 See J. Weeks, *Sexuality and its Discontents: Meaning, Myths and Modern Sexualities* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 211–45; see also Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 128–41.
- 11 For the classic feminist critique of scientific certainties in biology and reproduction, see D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London, Free Association, 1991).
- 12 For an interesting set of chapters that explore this theme, see G. Bottomley, M. de Lepervanche and J. Martin (eds), *Gender/Class/Culture/Ethnicity* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1991).