Feminist Philosophy of Mind**,** Keya Maitra and Jennifer McWeeny (eds.), Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 408

'Would contemporary debates in philosophy of mind be furthered by taking note of feminist insights?' the editors, Keya Maitra and Jennifer McWeeny ask, in their extensive introduction to this volume (2022, 2). The book provides a resoundingly positive answer. What can feminist perspectives bring to the core question of philosophy of mind: '*what is the mind?*' Maitra and McWeeny propose two key questions by way of augmenting that core question: '*whose* mind is the model for the theory? To *whom* is mind attributed?' (2022, 3-4).

One might surmise that the answers to these questions concern the ways that gender, power, and social hierarchy inform this domain of philosophy, as it has many others: moral (Calhoun 2003, hooks 1984), legal (Crenshaw 1989, Williams 1991), political philosophy (Okin 1991; Nussbaum, 1999), and metaphysics (Witt 2011; Haslanger 2012). The minds of elite - predominantly white and male - academics have served as the model for many theorists; minds have been attributed primarily to those in power, and deficits in, or complete absences of, mentality have been attributed to justify the oppression of people on the basis of gender, as well as race, class, nationality, ability. Making the case that this is so - showing precisely how those partial models and skewed attributions have informed what has been said about the mind - and exploring what might be said instead, across a range of topics in philosophy of mind, requires detailed articulation.

Moreover, the editors' introduction emphasises that the volume also provides an affirmative answer to their question: 'Would new philosophical questions, topics, and phenomena be revealed by an integration of the two fields?' (3, 2022). New topics and methodologies are deployed in understanding the relationship between mental processes, society and emancipatory movements. This work is undertaken by many of the 20 chapters of this volume, organised into five thematic parts: mind and gender&race&; self and selves; naturalism and normativity; body and mind; memory and emotion. The volume contains five reprinted papers, alongside new contributions from authors.

In this review, I illustrate the contributions that some chapters make to those two initial questions, showing how some of the previously published works, reprinted here, relate to the new contributions (section 1). I turn to some further important ways in which the contributions demonstrate how feminist philosophy of mind advances novel questions. I raise a critical point about one way of construing the connection between feminist commitments or methodologies and philosophy of mind, which seems to surface in some of the chapters (section 2). I also raise a question about the organisation of the volume - less as criticism, more as encouragement to the reader to explore for themselves the connections between the chapters of this rich and fruitful volume (section 3).

1: whose minds? To whom is mind attributed?

A number of chapters take up the question of *whose mind* has served as a model in developing theories of mind. Susan James' chapter (reprinted from 2000) argues that various oppositions and evaluative hierarchies have (perhaps unintentionally) informed thinking about personal identity - in particular with respect to the relevance of bodily continuity in personal identity; the nature of memory in bodily and psychological continuity; and the social embeddedness of the self that persists overtime. For example, James draws attention to common moves in debates about personal identity, such as 'imaginary cases in

which one person's character is transplanted into another person' that construe the body merely 'as a receptacle' (158). Features that might 'enable the body to disrupt the psychological continuity of the character transplanted into it are removed' (158). Such features include aspects of character such as one's dexterity, or delight in sexuality, which, James suggests, seem manifestly more embodied than others (courage or patience), and yet have not been the focus of philosophers. Other aspects include 'the possession of a body image and, … an emotional investment in it' (161). Perhaps not prominent in the minds of mid-twentieth century male philosophers, gender socialisation has long encouraged women to attend closely to, and to find their selves defined by, their bodies (see Bordo (1993) and Bartky (1990), and more recently Widdows on the ethical aspects of such investments (2018)). Another way in which gendered embodiment might shape psychological states is in shaping one's first-person perspective, which Lynne Rudder Baker argues in her chapter, can be informed by one's gender identity (47-51). Such aspects of the self are wholly invisible on a conception of the continuing self that treats the body as irrelevant. And yet this choice of focus of many earlier philosophers of mind had not been fully argued for nor fully articulated.

James points to Williams' observation that it might be hard to imagine body swapping people of different sexes, and his dismissive "Let us forget this" (Williams 1973, 46, in James 158); and to Quinton's assertion that 'in our general relations with other human beings, their bodies are for the most part intrinsically unimportant' (1975, 64, quoted by James 162). I suspect that, 50 years on, such dismissals will strike many people as deeply problematic.

By marginalising such aspects of embodiment, James argues, theorists prevent us from confronting more fully the ways in which one's embodiment, and gendered embodiment in particular, might shape one's psychological states. Indeed, rich seams of work have emerged which take seriously the idea of enacted and embodied cognition (for summary, see Shapiro 2007, Shapiro and Spaulding 2021), whereby our cognitions are constituted by the interaction between body and environment (194-196). Even there, however, Butnor and Mackenzie argue (in their contribution to the volume), the literature would benefit from greater attention to dimensions of sociality, and social power. For example, they point to the ways that our interactions with our environment is not limited to the material but also the social environment: 'we instantiate social meaning through our reproduction of social scripts' (200). This helps raise the question about the extent to which we can shape and change oppressive social scripts (201); and helps the articulation of the harms of embodying one's own oppression. Drawing on Lugones' (reprinted, from 1987) chapter in the volume, Butnor and Mackenzie attend to the social environments in which one may be at ease, as well as those that may be risky or hostile (202-3, Lugones 113-114). Lugones' chapter itself explores the ways in which such social environments - 'worlds' in her terms - may construct the self in stereotyped ways, leading one to 'inhabit those selves ambiguously' and with resistance (120). For example, one might embody racism when one rejects it; embody inferiority when one is a feminist; or enact a stereotype of oneself that one rejects (Lugones 113-114). Together, these aspects of feminist thought and the competing perspectives on the self and mind they present, alongside the partial view of the mind James draws attention to in strands of 20th century philosophy of mind, themselves serve to emphasise both the opacity of our own minds, and the relationship between our mental states and the communities and meanings we inhabit (see also Maitra's contribution on externalism about mental content, further discussed below).

Another illustration of how asking '*whose mind?*' can enrich work in philosophy of mind concerns memory and embodiment. Feminists and other theorists who have attended

to experiences of oppression have articulated the impact of trauma on the body and on memory, where memories are 'closely tied to the body, indeed are *in* the body' (James, 160). Of course, this can be the case for people of any gender who experience trauma. But it is rendered visible from a feminist perspective which speaks - as does Susan Brison's work - to experiences of gender violence and their impact on the body and mind. Brison's chapter (reprinted from 2002) charts a path from her perspective which tended to 'value the cerebral over the corporeal' (316) - in James's terms, the 'symbolically masculine' and 'symbolically feminine' respectively, according to 'cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity' (156-158, 168), as encouraged by a philosophical training. Brison's later revised perspective, of the undeniable enmeshment of self and of memory with corporeal experiences, was the result of bodily experiences both positive and wanted - in gestation and childbirth - and horrific and traumatising - in surviving a violent assault. Brison argues that the impact of trauma not only supports a view of the surviving self as disunified - cut off in complex ways from the self prior to the traumatic event; but also as relationally dependent - both in 'remaking' the self - in part through others bearing witness to one's experiences, enabling narratives that restore control to the survivor to be constructed - and through relationships with others that provide new narratives, and restore trust.

Engaging in philosophy of mind whilst ignoring gendered embodiment and experiences, then, means a host of mental states have to be set aside. These cognitions are rendered more visible through attention to gendered bodies, social relations, and hierarchies. Whilst there may sometimes be good reason for isolating a subset of memories or psychological states as particularly pertinent to questions such as the nature of the mind, memory, or personal identity, such a move would need to be argued for, rather than assumed in asides. And without adequate justification, theorists who set aside these lines of reasoning, as James puts it, 'cut themselves off from an important set of issues and in doing so render themselves philosophically impoverished' (167).

What about *to whom* minds have been attributed? Again, a number of chapters show what we can learn from looking at what McWeeny calls the 'attribution pattern' (273) of theories of mind. For example, Janine Jones's chapter focuses on how minds have either not been attributed to black people, or have been attributed only minimally, assuming that black people are not capable of rationality: 'the nature of black mind as something practically nonexistent, but criminal or submissive when in existence' (87). As a result the minds of black people are (contingently) 'unknowable' (87) to white people in a way that hinders empathy, on any of the three models of empathy Jones considers: white people may be unable to adequately understand or perceive the objects of empathy, instead imposing their own experiences. Jones proposes that instead of such failed attempts at empathy with black people's experiences of oppression, white people engage in self-empathy that enables them to encounter themselves and the conditions that have produced their racist mental states (97-99).

In drawing attention to the 'attribution pattern' that theories have adopted, McWeeny encourages us to consider three dimensions: 1) the ratio of attribution - of all bodies in the world, which do have mentality and which don't?; 2) degree - of those things that have mentality, do some have more or less than others?; and 3) constitution - how is mentality constituted - in Newtonian, composable ways (mechanistic)? Or irreducibly (organicist)? (273). McWeeny locates two panpsychist views (from Russell and Cavendish) in relation to the different answers they provide to these questions, showing the useful taxonomic role of these questions; but they also enable us, she argues, to systematise in more nuanced ways different aspects of oppression experienced by differently socially located groups:

immanence, non-being, dehumanization, objectification and hypermateriality (273, also at 276, 279-280, 282). (See also Apostolova's chapter for discussion of Russell's panpsychic view, and her emphasis on the importance of relational aspects of memory (242-243).)

2: Correctives; Expansions; Contentions

Reading with the two questions in mind that Maitra and McWeeny pose in their introduction is extremely helpful. But as they emphasise, many of the contributions bring rich insights that go beyond these two questions, and show feminist philosophy to have not only an important *corrective* role in philosophy of mind, but also *expanding* the questions that thereby populate a new field, feminist philosophy of mind.

The *corrective* role of feminist perspectives is visible where unwarranted assumptions or exclusions have led to neglect of important aspects of a theory of mind, as illustrated by chapters from James, Jones, Lugones, Brison (described above), inter alia.

Amy Kind's chapter also illustrates how simply rendering gender visible where it has been ignored can be an important corrective. For example, many Philosophy undergraduates will be introduced to the Turing test, designed as a tool to detect machine mentality. As often understood, if a questioner is unable to reliably discern from two unseen interlocutors which is a person and which a machine, we conclude the machine bears all the hallmarks of intelligent thinking (a question as hotly debated as ever, given current evolutions of AI). As Kind points out, however, Turing's formulation of the test was based on a 'gendered imitation game', yet this is rarely mentioned in standard interpretations of the test, and is 'dismissed as unimportant or irrelevant to the key matter at hand' (56). In the gendered game, a questioner has to guess which interlocutor is a woman, and which is a man imitating a woman. How does attending to the gendered version of the test inform our thinking about the Turing test and machine intelligence? For one thing, it offers an alternative model for the kind of test Turing was advancing. Rather than a direct test for whether a machine can fool the questioner into supposing it is a person, it may instead be an indirect test for a kind of sophisticated imitation (57).

The roots of the Turing test in a gendered imitation game as the model for thinking about machine intelligence, Kind argues, may have imported problematic assumptions: a (false) model of gender as binary and fixed would lead us to suppose that intelligence is similarly binary and fixed (the machine passes the test or doesn't), rather than a continuum, or multidimensional (60-63). It promotes a tendency to focus on superficial markers of intelligence - in the gendered game, markers that fit the stereotype of gender categories; superficial or at least partial, markers of intelligence likewise inflect the Turing test itself (64-66). Finally, it reminds us that conclusions we draw should be about pretence - we don't suppose a man who successfully pretends in the game to be a woman is a woman; the analogous conclusion should be that the machine succeeds in the pretence of intelligence, not that it *is* an intelligent thinking thing (66). This chapter strikes me as an indispensable addition to any philosophy of mind course.

Another key way in which feminist perspectives can enhance philosophy is by *expanding* its domain in significant ways, both with respect to the topics covered, and the methodologies adopted. In terms of topics covered, these reach beyond those perhaps 'traditionally' conceived of as falling within philosophy of mind, including questions about whether the first-person perspective is gendered (Rudder Baker), the role of passivity in agency (Meyers), apt metaphors for the expression of gender (Jackson), gendered and relational aspects of mental disorder (Jacobson and Radden respectively), analyses of

sexual orientation, and sexuality (Diaz-Leon and Butler, respectively), uncovering the self through the relational 'method of grief' (in contrast to the familiar Cartesian 'method of doubt') (Dalmiya) and analysing the structure of 'loving attention' (McRae). These authors engage in diverse methodologies, including from Indian philosophy (Dalmiya), Buddhist philosophy (McRae), neuroscience (Jacobson), psychiatry (Radden), and interdisciplinary work drawing on biology and cognitive ethology (Droege), linguistics (Jackson), and social and political philosophy (Maitra, Diaz-Leon). This illustrates the rich topics and methods that animate the new field of feminist philosophy of mind.

One very nice feature of Droege's chapter ('Why feminists should be materialists and vice versa') is the articulation of the ways in which methodologies prominent in feminist philosophy can be helpful for debates in philosophy of mind. Droege suggests that feminist philosophy can be especially useful since 'work done by multicultural feminisms addresses the challenges and possibilities of communicating across different worldviews'; 'feminist practices such as focus on process rather than product and dialogue rather than debate facilitate an open-ended approach that can expand thinking beyond disciplinary borders'; moreover, 'feminist critique of power relations that reinforce existing research paradigms' can be useful for interdisciplinary work (264-265).

On the other hand, here, and at some other places in the volume, there is occasionally what - to my mind - is an undesirable tendency to see certain positions as 'the' feminist view or certain methodologies as feminist and liberatory, others not. This is illustrated by the pair of chapters from Naomi Scheman and Paula Droege (which is, on the other hand, a lovely example of interesting engagement within the volume). Scheman's reprinted chapter (from 2000) argues that illuminating explanations of psychological and social phenomena cannot be given by a reductive physicalism. Important kinds in social explanations - social kinds such as genders, socially significant understandings of situations, and social events such as performances - will show up in physical descriptions of the world as 'incoherent jumbles or heaps - certainly not the sorts of things to enter as particulars into nomological causal relationships' (245). Feminists, Scheman argues, should be 'against physicalism'.

Droege disagrees, arguing that whilst it would be a mistake to suppose that the physical is always the most illuminating or fundamental level of explanation, and agreeing we should be 'careful that social and political explanations are not eclipsed when a physical account appears' (258) it can be important that there is an 'ontology of the physical forces at play in our interactions with the world and one another' (259). As such, feminists 'should be materialists' (and *vice versa*).

I find the idea that feminists *qua* feminists *should* hold *a particular* substantive position a problematic stance. Elsewhere in philosophy, we find similar dynamics about whether one substantive position is best placed to advance feminist and liberatory goals: in debates about internalism/externalism about justification (Amia Srinivasan 2020, Zoe Johnson King, 2022), Susan Haack's feminist defence of empiricism against feminist critique (2000), Louise Antony's (2022) defence of a number of views targeted by feminist critiques: psychological individualism, cognitive nativism, e.g.. As the pair of chapters from Scheman and Droege show, the methodology of attending to social phenomena and relations of power can generate argumentative support from either perspective: no one position is *the* feminist one.

Similarly, in Maitra's extremely interesting chapter on externalism about mental content, we find claims about 'the anti-individualist or externalist theory of content *that feminist theorising requires*' (77, my emphasis). This is required, Maitra argues, because we

need to recognise ‘that our minds are constitutively dependent on our sociopolitical realities’, and that this is necessary in order to change those realities (77). Maitra claims we need to consider the function of a representation in a social and political context. Her example is of ‘whiteness’ as a racial, ethnic and national identity in the US. The idea (if I understand well) is that whatever is ‘in the head’, the social environment and relations in which this notion is embedded and its functions (to prop up white nationalism), determine the mental content of someone thinking about ‘whiteness’ (81). Whilst I absolutely agree that it is important to scrutinise the role that notions of *whiteness* have played in socio-political contexts, it is far from clear to me that an externalist account of content is *conducive* to, much less *required* for liberatory goals. It is important to be able to discern the oppressive function some terms have, irrespective of one’s intentions; but it is also sometimes important to be able to insist on a schism between what one means and what others take one to mean. If I utter, in the UK in August 2025, ‘I support Palestine Action’, even if I do not intend to support a terrorist organisation, an externalist account of content means that the constitutive social and political factors (laws proscribing the group Palestine Action) constitute my mental representation as support for a terrorist group (cf. Langton 1993, Antony 2022). It isn’t clear that this is a liberatory rather than repressive conclusion. This difficulty - of acknowledging the role of social relations in shaping meaning, whilst retaining some independence of content - is articulated and negotiated in Iva Apostolova’s relational account of memory, in section V of the volume: there Apostolova discusses the problem of ‘social contagion’ (336-337), whereby relational accounts of memory are argued to be too vulnerable to distortion by others.

I had some similar concerns with respect to methodology: Droege laments that ‘philosophy of mind continues to be dominated by masculinist values. Logical analysis is prized over explanation that incorporates other forms of reasoning based on empirical evidence and hermeneutic interpretation’ (265). This need not speak against logical analysis per se - Droege also writes of the ‘need to decenter logical analysis’ (267), suggesting that she only considers it antithetical to feminist aims if used to the exclusion of other methods.

Indeed, elsewhere in the volume, we see the promise and power of logical analysis in a number of chapters. Esa Diaz-Leon’s contribution beautifully exemplifies this, in meticulously deploying logical and philosophical argumentation: considering thought experiments that appeal to nearer and further possible worlds to tease out the challenges for Dembroff’s view (‘bidimensional dispositionalism’) of sexual orientation (299-301). Indeed, this chapter shows just how promising is the cross-fertilisation of an expanded field of philosophy of mind, as Diaz-Leon brings to bear Ryle’s 1949 critique of dispositionalism to bear on Dembroff’s 2016 account of sexual orientation. Similarly, Jacobson draws on philosophical debates about function to inform an evaluation of the prospects for a naturalistic account of function in cognitive neuroscience (Jacobson’s conclusion is that an interest-based account that makes reference to both ‘perspective and normativity’, is in fact the most promising account (217).) In my view, these chapters show the promise of genuinely pluralistic openness to diverse methodologies; and of eschewing the idea of one substantive view or method as ‘the feminist’ one.

3: Fruitful connections

One could also ask about the decision to sort papers into the clusters the editors have: I. Mind and Gender&Race&; II. Self and Selves; III. Naturalism and Normativity; IV. Body and Mind; V. Memory and Emotion. Take, for instance, section III. Naturalism and Normativity,

which contains papers from Butler (reprinted from 1981, on Merleau-Ponty's account of sexuality), Butnor and MacKenzie (on enactivism), Jacobson (on what we can learn from cognitive neuroscience about BPD), and Jackson's scrutiny of the metaphors used to describe gendered embodiment. All do take up issues of naturalism and normativity - Butler asks whether one can draw on Merleau-Ponty's account of sexuality to give an account of sexuality that is rid of 'naturalistic ideology' (178); Jacobson considers the prospects for an account of neural function in naturalistic terms, for example (perhaps using 'naturalism' in different ways, resonant with the differential meanings Maitra sketches at page 80).

However, the Butler chapter in part III, which ends with an exhortation to look to the feminist philosophy of the future to provide the terms of inquiry into sexuality (188), would be as fruitfully followed by Diaz-Leon's chapter (from part IV), which does just that. Jacobson's analysis of the profile of mental disorder would sit as well with Radden's discussion of the relevance of symptoms in diagnosis (in part II). Brison's account of memory is as much about the self (part II); McRae's analysis in part IV of loving attention fruitfully develops the idea of 'loving perception' articulated in Lugones (in part II). This is not to critique the manner in which the pieces are collected. Rather, it is to highlight the richness, and potential for cross-fertilisation of ideas, across the chapters in the collection.

One further critical remark is that important contributions to feminist philosophy of mind from trans philosophy and from philosophy of disability are not represented in the volume - in both fields there is important work on embodiment, identity, the self, memory and perception. (See e.g. Bettcher 2014, and more recently, her 2024, and Ashley 2023; Blankmeyer-Burke 2019, Tremain 2020.) I heartily encourage readers to take up, and explore for themselves, the evolving debates that the collection draws together, many of which I have regrettably been able to mention only in passing here.

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