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Butler and Post-Analytic Philosophy

This paper has two aims: (i) to bring Judith Butler and Wilfrid Sellars into conversation; and (ii) to argue that Butler's post-structuralist critique of feminist identity politics has metaphilosophical potential, given her *pragmatic* parallel with Sellars's critique of conceptual analyses of knowledge. With regard to (i), I argue that Butler's objections to the definitional practice constitutive of certain ways of construing feminism is comparable to Sellars's critique of the analytical project geared towards providing definitions of knowledge. Specifically, I propose that moving away from a definition of 'woman' to, what one may call, post-structuralist '*sites of woman*' parallels moving away from a *definition of knowledge* to a pragmatic account of 'knowledge' as a *recognizable standing in the normative space of reasons*. With regard to (ii), I argue that the important parallels between Butler's post-structuralist feminism and Sellars's anti-representationalist normative pragmatism about knowledge enable one to think of her post-structuralist feminism as mapping out *pragmatic* cognitive strategies and visions for *doing philosophy*. This paper starts a conversation between two philosophers whom the literature has yet to fully introduce to each other.

I

If one is to see the transformative metaphilosophical potential of Judith Butler's position about gender categories in terms of prioritizing post-structuralist feminist resources over purely analytical ones, one first needs to have Wilfrid Sellars's reflections on conceptual analysis of knowledge in view. In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Sellars aimed to *radically* revise the project of normative epistemology. Central to his Kantian commitment to the conceptual irreducibility of normativity and intentionality is Sellars's rejection of an *analysis of knowledge*:

> ... the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder—even 'in principle'—into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioural, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake—a mistake of a piece with the so-called 'naturalistic fallacy' in ethics (EPM: §5) … In characterising an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says. (EPM: §36)

Rather than conceive of knowledge in terms of justified true belief,[1] or even in terms of that model's Nozickean modifications,[2] Sellars abandons any *talk* about knowledge that frames it as something to be analyzed.[3] The concern about analysis here from the (left-wing[4]) Sellarsian perspective,[5] which importantly differs to Timothy Williamson's arguments for the category of knowledge as fundamental and therefore unanalyzable,[6] is that conceptual analysis of knowledge fails to do justice to the *normative, pragmatic dimensions of epistemic practice*.[7] As Sellars writes:

> … one couldn't have observational knowledge of *any* fact unless one knew many *other* things as well. And let me emphasize that the point is not taken care of by distinguishing between *knowing how* and *knowing that*, and admitting that observational knowledge requires a lot of 'know how.' For the point is specifically that observational knowledge of any particular fact, e.g. that this is green, presupposes that one knows general facts of the form '*X is a reliable symptom of Y*'. And to admit this requires an abandonment of the traditional empiricist idea that observational knowledge "stands on its own feet". (EPM: §36)

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[1] S knows that *p* iff
    (1) *p* is true
    (2) S believes that *p*
    (3) S is justified in believing that *p*.

[2] S knows that *p* iff
    (1) *p* is true
    (2) S believes that *p*
    (3) S would believe that *p* if *p* was true
    (4) S would not believe that *p* if *p* was false.
See Nozick (1983).

[3] Viz. "Modern analytical empiricism [...] differs from that of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume by its incorporation of mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique. It is thus able, in regard to certain problems, to achieve definite answers, which have the quality of science rather than of philosophy. It has the advantage, in comparison with the philosophies of the system-builders, of being able to tackle its problems one at a time, instead of having to invent at one stroke a block theory of the whole universe. Its methods, in this respect, resemble those of science …" (Russell 1945: 834)

[4] Left-wing Sellarsians (most notably Richard Rorty, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, and Michael Williams) emphasise Sellars's Kantian commitment to the conceptual irreducibility of intentionality and the manifest image. Right-wing Sellarsians (most notably Ruth Millikan, Paul Churchland, William Lycan, Jay Rosenberg, Daniel Dennett, and Johanna Seibt) emphasise Sellars's commitment to a strong form of scientific realism pointing to the eliminability or reducibility of normativity.
Crucially, the cost of putting Sellars into dialogue with Butler should not be fixing on *one* aspect of his views, the conceptual irreducibility of the logical space of reasons, at the expense of his strong scientific realism.

[5] *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* is clearly hostile to foundationalist approaches to knowledge, but such anti-foundationalism does not obviously entail a rejection of *analyzing knowledge as such*. One might even call Sellars's anti-foundationalist conception of knowledge a 'protracted re-analysis' of knowledge. In response, I would contend that the Sellarsian objection to analyzing knowledge *as such* rests on the notion that since *knowledge is not a natural kind*, making sense of it requires a different framework from analysis, which is used to best make sense of natural kinds.

[6] See Williamson (2000).

[7] Cf. Rouse (1987) and Tanesini (1999).

In perceptual experience, for Sellars, human beings do not just produce responses to causally affecting stimuli by means of verbal mechanisms, whether these are just atomic or complex propositions. Rather, in responding to stimuli in this linguistic way, *human beings are articulating the representational content of perception in such a way as to enable reflection on it*. Because we *reflect* on the content of our experience, we see ourselves, to use an expression from John McDowell, as 'having the world in view', and, as such, rationally constrained by and answerable to the world. For us to be in this phenomenological position, the content of our experience must be brought under concepts, because reflection is impossible without concepts. Sellars, in opposing the Myth of the Given,[8] allies with Kant, who is one of the forbearers of inferentialism, because Kant's claim that intuitions without concepts are blind underpins the idea that nothing can count as a legitimate component of experience (or phenomenological state) if it is not subject to concepts, whose function is to structure content in such a manner as to make contents inferentially relevant. In other words, perception is epistemically valuable if

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[8] The Myth of the Given can be explicated in the following manner: it refers to the traditional empiricist claim that perceptual judgments are epistemically justified by non-conceptual sense contents. At the *base* of our perceptual experience, there are things which do not have propositional content that immediately provide us with epistemic relations, particularly relations of justification. But, perceptual judgments, for Sellars, can only be justified to the extent that they have epistemic relations with cognitive states, things with propositional content. As Edrie Sobstyl puts it: "[t]he whole point of his challenge to the Myth of the Given is to undermine foundationalism in empiricism. The empiricist tradition … holds that you cannot have observational knowledge without other kinds of knowledge, on pain of succumbing to the Myth of the Given. And, Sellars goes on to argue, it is impossible to make sense of our agency in the world without giving up this myth". (Sobstyl 2004: 133)
See also the following helpful explications of what the Myth of the Given is from James O'Shea and Rebecca Kukla respectively:
"Roughly speaking, one version of the idea of the Given that Sellars famously rejects, at least in one of its traditional epistemological roles, is the idea that since it would seem not all items of knowledge can be epistemically dependent on other items of knowledge, there must be some items of knowledge that are directly warranted for us simply in our immediate experience or apprehension of them, whether by sense or by reason, independently of any other knowledge that we might possess. Sellars, however, argued that there are no epistemically autonomous or independent items of directly given knowledge that could coherently fit that bill. And like Kant, the ways in which Sellars argued for this claim made it a point not just about knowledge, but about the more basic possibility of having any contentful and potentially self-aware experience of objects in a world at all—a point about intentionality or representational purport itself" (O'Shea 2016: 2).
"Sellars argues that if perception is to be able to provide any warrant, its contents have to have conceptual structure sufficient to allow them to bear rational relationships to other conceptually articulated judgments. We must be able to perceive *that* x is F, rather than just taking in brute sense data. But, Sellars contends, our ability to *perceive that* some perceptual fact of the form 'x is F' holds requires that we grasp the conditions for the appropriate application of the concept F. That is, we must understand the conditions under which things that *appear to be F are F*, and vice versa. To use his example, I cannot *see that* a necktie is green unless I understand facts such as that green things look green under natural lighting, that they don't look green when seen on a black and white television, and so forth (EPM: §18). Now, grasping such conditions for property recognition involves understanding under what conditions various inferences (such as the inference, in a certain context, to x's actually being F) are or are not licensed by appearances. Without this normative and inferential mastery, we cannot distinguish between *seeing that* x is F and it merely *looking as though* x is F, in which case, according to Sellars, we could not drive the crucial wedge between appearance and reality that is necessary for our perceptual states to count as properly epistemic states. Hence for him, the ability to recognize a piece of evidence cannot be neatly separated from our ability to use it in inference, and hence perception cannot be taken as a capacity for discovery that lies outside the context of justification" (Kukla 2006: 85-86).

and only if it is inferentially relevant. Inferential relevance is determined by how perceptual contents are structured so that they can figure as elements of conceptually articulated judgments, as being involved in either premise or conclusion; to put this more clearly, *concepts, as the logical functions of judgment, are used in the formation of judgments, and the form of judgment articulates experiential states*. In articulating experiential states *qua* the form of judgment, experiential states become inferentially significant and relevant, because these states now figure in *the space of reasons*. Therefore, concepts play a crucial role in the inferential articulation of experiential states, given the relationship between concepts and judgment.

Focusing on the *production* and *reproduction* of epistemic norms and knowledge-attributions that undercuts the Myth of the Given necessarily involves articulating knowledge as a particular kind of *language-game* – where this epistemic practice is inherently normative, insofar as one is, to use Robert Brandom's well-known left-wing Sellarsian expression, *playing the game of giving and asking for reasons*. To put this another way, the idea of framing questions about knowledge in this manner views such an epistemic kind as something one cannot intelligibly grasp independently of a deliberative public sphere. Since Sellars construes human beings as *persons* – i.e. *intentional, linguistic, discursive, agentive beings* – the normative *space of reasons* clearly contrasts with the descriptive *space of nature*.[9] As Sellars puts it:

> To say that a certain person desired to do A, thought it his duty to do B but was forced to do C, is not to describe him as one might *describe* a scientific specimen. One does, indeed, describe him, but one does something more. And it is this something more which is the irreducible core framework of persons … Now, the fundamental principles of a community, which define what is 'correct' or 'incorrect', 'right' or 'wrong', 'done' or 'not done', are the most general common *intentions* of that community with respect to the behavior of the members of the group. It follows that to recognize a featherless biped or dolphin or Martian as a person requires that one think thoughts of the form 'We (one) shall do (or abstain from doing) actions of kind A in circumstances of kind C'. To think thoughts of this kind is not to *classify* or *explain*, but to *rehearse an intention*. (SPR: 39-40)

In Hegelian fashion, Sellars insists that what individuates *persons* is not just a description of their practices, but also an account of how those practices convey persons' sensitivity to a normative community; the ways in which persons are sensitive to fellow language-using agents. For Rebecca Kukla and Mark Lance, "Sellars is getting at the point that recognizing

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[9] Cf. "… The image marks a contrast between two kinds of intelligibility: the kind that is sought by (as we call it) natural science ["the kind we find in a phenomenon when we see it as governed by natural law"] and the kind we find in something when we place it in relation to other occupants of "the logical space of reasons" ["the kind of intelligibility that is proper to meaning"]." (McDowell 1994: 70)

someone as a person is not merely an observative act, but also a practical act of the second kind … We become and remain the types of beings that have specific, agent-relative engagements with others through an ongoing network of hails and acknowledgments …"[10] Equally, epistemic kinds are not discrete, purely representational kinds that can be broken down into primitives, *to the extent that epistemic kinds are articulated asocially*.[11] Speech-acts involved in playing the game of giving and asking for reasons "are the acts they are in virtue of being planted within and constituted by a rich social and institutional context".[12] Any commitment to the social dimension of knowledge-attribution must involve a commitment to viewing the fixation of belief, to use Peirce's term, as something that cannot be achieved independently of *practices* of inquiry.[13] Since knowledge-attribution is a *normative* practice through-and-through, it is necessarily social, as norms can only be meaningfully established through *deliberative discourse* in order to be deemed authoritative, legitimate, and valid for those engaging in such discourse.

According to Sellars, because norms are "social achievements",[14] established by the *intersubjective* epistemic practices between agents, norms get their normative purchase – i.e. their *rational bindingness* – by virtue of being assented to and acknowledged by a community of discursive agents.[15] To quote Steven Levine here, "[n]orms have no existence outside of their being taken as correct or incorrect – as being authoritative or not – by a community of persons".[16] Crucially, though, the practice of assenting to and acknowledging normative constraints and normative entitlements[17] comprises determining the content of norms "through a 'process of *negotiation*' involving ourselves *and* those who attribute norms to us".[18] By virtue of being a process of *negotiation*, norms and identities are never *fixed* but always subject to "further assessment, challenge, defence, and correction".[19] As such, for Sellars, one replaces

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[10] Kukla and Lance 2009: 180-81.
[11] Cf. Lorraine Code's feminist empiricism (1991).
[12] Kukla and Lance 2016: 86.
[13] To quote Sobstyl here, such an approach heralds "[a] shift away from Cartesian individualism toward more social models of knowledge" (Sobstyl 2004: 119).
[14] Brandom 2002: 216.
[15] As Herbert Feigl puts this point: "The quest for scientific knowledge is regulated by certain standards or criteria … the most important of these regulative ideals [is] intersubjective testability… What is here involved is … the requirement that the knowledge claims of science be in principle capable of test on the part of any person properly equipped with intelligence and the technical devices of observation and experimentation" (Feigl 1953: 11). Interestingly, though, one should note here that Feigl is rather more friendly to conceptual analysis than my construal of Sellars.
[16] Levine 2019: 253.
[17] See Haugeland (1997).
[18] Houlgate 2007: 139.
[19] Brandom 1994: 647.

the model of conceptual analysis with a normative pragmatic framework: *knowing is a recognizable standing in the normative space of reasons*.

I think a crucial motivation for Sellars's move here is not simply his Kantianism-Hegelianism about normativity and meaning.[20] His *pragmatic* abandonment of the framework of analysis about knowledge in 1956 also seems to spring from a prophetic concern with an apparently ossified noetic state of play: mainstream analytic epistemology's apparent inability to get over Gettier-style problematics since 1963 led to discursive banality in *talk* about knowledge. For, one either had to find a counter-example to Gettier cases which safely secured the third necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge; or, one had to put forward a fourth necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge, having recognized the hopelessness of the tripartite model. Since Sellars aligned himself in complex ways with the pragmatist tradition, I think one has good reason to suppose his critique of the project of analysis about knowledge is, in part, a William James-inspired worry, insofar as normative epistemology was *talking* about normative matters in the wrong way. Overcoming the rigidity of conceptual analysis in *this* context would involve *broadening one's sense-making vocabulary*.

Thus far, I have reconstructed Sellars's critique of the analytical project geared towards providing definitions of knowledge. In what follows, I argue that Butler's critique of feminist identity should be understood as comparable to the Sellarsian critique of conceptual analysis here: *definitional practices tend to over-simply and exclude other equally cogent and rich sense-making enterprises in favour of a non-pluralistic explanatory scheme*. For, moving away from definitions of 'woman', to, what one may call, post-structuralist 'sites of woman' concerning performativity and social constitution, parallels moving away *from* a *definition* of knowledge *to* a *pragmatic* account of 'knowledge' as a recognizable standing in the normative space of reasons.[21] The important similarities between Butler's post-structuralist position on

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As Kukla and Lance similarly express the point: "… we are not truly responsive to norms if we are merely subject to them and cannot author or resist them. Norms make claims on us only insofar as they are legitimate, and hence we must be capable, not only of violating them, but of challenging their legitimacy in order to count as able to recognize their binding force" (Kukla and Lance 2009: 185).

[20] There is a sizeable literature on this subject. See McDowell (1994, 2009), Brandom (1994, 2000, 2002, 2008, 2015), Kukla and Lance (2009, 2016), O'Shea (2007, 2009, 2016), and deVries (2009, 2016) in particular.

[21] A potential critique of my argument concerning post-structuralist dimensions of gender could come from Cressida Heyes (2000), who argues that a Wittgensteinian form of feminism – one focused on *family resemblances* (cf. *PI* §§65-67) – may be better than a post-structuralist variety of feminism. Crucially, though, both Heyes and I reject any articulation of feminism that is foundationalist and questing for purity. As such, the structure of the dialectic here shifts from a *suasive* interplay between essentialist and anti-essentialist to a debate concerning *explanatory* arguments for anti-essentialism. The advantage of such a Dummettian shift consists in opening new frontiers of discussion. Addressing whether Heyes's Wittgensteinian variety of feminism is the most convincing anti-essentialist feminism is the task of another paper, but I would venture to note at least I have initial concerns about the usefulness of family resemblances here.

gender and Sellars's normative pragmatism about knowledge enable one to think of her post-structuralist feminism as mapping out *pragmatic* cognitive strategies and visions for *doing philosophy*.

II

For Butler, the emancipatory function of feminism should not be predicated on *any* attempt to *define* 'woman'. As she writes:

> If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reifications of gender and identity, one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal … The identity of the feminist subject ought not to be the foundation of feminist politics.[22]

> [T]he identity categories often presumed to be foundational to feminist politics, that is, deemed necessary in order to mobilize feminism as an identity politics, simultaneously work to limit and constrain in advance the very cultural possibilities that feminism is supposed to open up.[23]

Under Butler's account, feminist identity politics,[24] since it is grounded on an analysis of *woman*, risks presupposing gender essentialism insofar as feminist identity politics is said to be organised around women as a *unitary collective*. Group membership is fixed by some "golden nugget of womanness",[25] a set of *natural conditions*, *experiences*, *practices*, or *features* that women *qua* women supposedly share and that are necessary and sufficient for their gender: e.g. a human being who (i) has an XX chromosome, female physical features and sex organs, (ii) female somatic phenomenology, and (iii) the social phenomenological features traditionally associated with the term 'woman'. As K. Anthony Appiah notes on the logic of identity politics *tout court*, "[c]ollective identities, in short, provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories".[26] For Butler, the danger of defining 'woman' lies in how the definitional practice (a) oversimplifies; and (b) is itself *ideological* and risks deeming some women as inauthentic.

Regarding (a), unitary gender notions narrow the conceptual field and fail to take differences *amongst* women into account, thus failing to recognize "the multiplicity of cultural,

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[22] Butler 1999: 9.
[23] Ibid., p. 187.
[24] For further on identity politics, see Alcoff (1997, 2000, 2006a, 2006b).
[25] Spelman 1988: 159.
[26] Appiah 1994: 159-60.

social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of "women" are constructed".[27] Blindness to plurality is the result of a conceptual lacuna in which the vocabulary and discursive matrix for coordinating discourse about identity is overly restricted. As Susan Strickland phrases it:

> [D]ominant theories and categories were wrong not simply in universalising beyond their scope, i.e., that they were partial in the sense of being limited, not universally applicable, but that they were also partial in the sense of being ideological, interested and distorted; in short to a greater or lesser extent false … The assertion of feminist 'difference' was and is, basically a challenge and critique.[28]

From this perspective, then, I would argue that whatever deficiencies there are in making sense of 'women' are instantiations of a more *general* and *structural* conceptual failure that is part and parcel of identity politics *eo ipso*. To quote Appiah here:

> But it seems to me that one reasonable ground for suspicion of much contemporary multicultural talk is that it presupposes conceptions of collective identity that are remarkably unsubtle in their understandings of the processes by which identities, both individual and collective, develop.[29]

Though one could argue definitional practice is *politically useful* for mobilizing attention, a powerful left-wing worry about contemporary identity talk is that its propensity for construing groups as monolithic blocs risks articulating identities in Parmenidean ways. Using a *tournure de phrase* from Pringle-Pattison, an overly simple and unsubtle discursive framework about groups sees individuals "devoured, like clouds before the sun, in the white light of the *unica substantia*".[30] As if failing to make substantive room for differences *within* groups is not problematic enough, the Parmenidean articulation of identity would also render inquirers conceptually blind to the *genealogical* backdrop for developing an approach to identity as, what one might call, a 'hermeneutic sphere'. For, conceptualising identity through a narrow prism that does not refer to historical, sociological, cultural, psychological, psychoanalytic, and anthropological backdrops, serving as the crucible in which identities are formed, reformed, moulded, developed, redeveloped, and *contested* would seem a rather impoverished way of making sense of things.[31]

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[27] Butler 1999: 19-20.
For further on this subject, see Spelman (1988).
[28] Strickland 1994: 267. For further on this subject, see Spelman (1988).
[29] Appiah 1994: 156.
[30] MPC: 173.
[31] Viz. Butler 1999: 7.

Regarding (b), in the attempt to undercut phallogocentric ways of conceptualizing the feminine subject, feminist identity politics created a *new* form of *ideology*.[32] The definition of 'woman' invariably *reifies* gender,[33] which, as Linda Nicholson argues, "operates as a policing force which generates and legitimizes certain conditions, experiences, practices, experiences, etc., and curtails and delegitimizes others".[34] However, one should not lose sight of how the ideological-reificatory features of *gender* definitions spring from the ideological-reificatory features built into *identity* definitions *eo ipso*, since "[i]dentity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary".[35] As William Connolly writes:

> An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity. Entrenched in this indispensable relation is a second set of tendencies, themselves in need of exploration, to congeal established identities into fixed forms, thought and lived as if their structure expressed the true order of things. When these pressures prevail, the maintenance of one identity (or field of identities) involves the conversion of some differences into otherness, into evil, or one of its numerous surrogates. Identity requires difference in order to be, and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty. Identity is thus a slippery, insecure experience …[36]

The significant problem with feminist identity politics is that if one does not satisfy the definition of 'woman', the implication is that one is not *truly* a woman; one is not *authentically* a woman; one is not *really* a woman. And, extending this to the political sphere, if one is not *truly* a woman, if one is not *authentically* a woman, if one is not *really* a woman, then one is highly unlikely to receive feminist representation at *any* level of concerted resistance to androcentric environments. In other words, feminist identity politics involves symbolic violence with material effects, insofar as 'woman' can *never* be defined in a way that does not suggest – either implicitly or explicitly – some "unspoken normative requirements"[37] to which women should conform, so as to be deemed *real women*. As Appiah writes, "[i]t is at this point that someone who takes autonomy seriously will ask whether we have not replaced one kind of tyranny with another".[38]

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[32] Viz. "Do the exclusionary practices that ground feminist theory in a notion of "women" as subject paradoxically undercut feminist goals to extend its claims to "representation"?" (Butler 1999: 8)

[33] Viz. "Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations? And is not such a reification precisely contrary to feminist aims?" (Butler 1999: 8-9)

[34] Nicholson 1998: 293.

[35] Butler 1991: 160.

[36] Connolly 2002: 64.

[37] Butler 1999: 9.

[38] Appiah 1994: 162-63.

I agree with Appiah about how the dialectic shifts to *intra*-group struggles – however, there is room to substantiate the particular notion of tyranny here and explicate in more detail what exactly is so dangerous about this type of tyranny: mobilising discourse and *praxis* around unitary collective identity invariably means that membership of that collective turns on how *pure* one's identity claims are judged.[39] This, as Christopher Zurn rightly phrases it, "fosters illiberal pressures toward conformity against supposedly "inauthentic" members; it perpetuates subordinating intra-group hierarchies whereby only some have the privilege of defining and speaking for the group's collective identity".[40] For example, consider the following table, which illustrates how a first-person question about inclusion in a relevant social group can often be met with a gatekeeping response concerning the 'purity' and 'legitimacy' of that individual's claim for inclusion in that particular social group:

Ain't I Black/Latinx/Asian/White?	Is X Black/Latinx/Asian/White Enough?[41]
Ain't I a Man?	Is X Enough of a Man?[42]
Ain't I a Woman?	Is X Enough of a Woman?[43]
Ain't I a Conservative?	Is X Conservative Enough?
Ain't I a Radical?	Is X Radical Enough?
Ain't I a Liberal?	Is X Liberal Enough?
Ain't I Disabled?	Is X Disabled Enough?
Ain't I Queer?	Is X Queer Enough?[44]
Ain't I Poor?	Is X Poor Enough?
Ain't I Young/Old?	Is X Young/Old Enough?

The following powerful quote makes all these worries about *intra*-group hierarchies clear:

> When the General Federation of Women's Clubs was faced with the question of the color line at the turn of the [twentieth] century, Southern clubs threatened to secede. One of the first expressions of the adamant opposition to the admission of colored clubs was disclosed by the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Examiner* during the great festival of fraternization at the Atlanta Exposition, the Encampment of the GAR in Louisville, and the dedication of the Chickamauga battlefield … The Georgia Women's Press Club felt so strongly on the subject that members were in favor of withdrawing from the

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[39] Viz. "You're not black enough for them. You're not R&B enough. You're very pop. The white audience has taken you away from them" – Whitney Houston, after being booed at the 1989 Soul Train Awards.

[40] Zurn 2015: 88.
See also Fraser (2000, 2001).

[41] Viz. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/09/too-white-too-black-or-not-black-enough-this-is-not-a-question-for-others-to-decide
Viz. http://theconversation.com/who-counts-as-black-71443.

[41] Logan 1997: 235.

[42] Viz. https://everydayfeminism.com/2017/03/trans-folk-dont-feel-trans-enough/;
https://www.politicalresearch.org/2016/08/11/the-christian-rights-love-affair-with-anti-trans-feminists/

[43] Viz. https://everydayfeminism.com/2017/03/trans-folk-dont-feel-trans-enough/;
https://www.politicalresearch.org/2016/08/11/the-christian-rights-love-affair-with-anti-trans-feminists/

[44] See Valocchi (2005).

Federation if colored women were admitted there. Miss Corinne Stocker, a member of the Managing Board of the Georgia Women's Press Club and one of the editors of the *Atlanta Journal*, stated on September 19: "In this matter the Southern women are not narrow-minded or bigoted, but they simply cannot recognize the colored women socially … At the same time we feel that the South is the colored woman's best friend."[45]

Furthermore, bell hooks importantly reminds her readers that in this example of the *Georgia Women's Press Club*:

Here we have the spectacle of educated, refined, and Christian women who have been protesting and laboring for years against the unjust discrimination practised against them by men, now getting together and the first shot out of their reticules is fired at one of their own because she is black, no other reason or pretence of reason.[46]

In their respective ways, both Rayford Logan and hooks portray systemic testimonial as well as hermeneutic injustice in these contexts, to the extent that these socio-epistemic pathologies are revealed as the workings of an epistemic *hierarchy*: white women claimed to understand black women better than black women understood themselves. According to the white feminists here, black women lacked the discursive architecture to produce knowledge; as such, the white feminists epistemically and politically managed the black women as they defined them.

Tragically, the irony is that movements which are deemed *progressive* and hallmarks of the New Left contain *fascistic features with the concern for purity and authenticity*,[47] *to the extent that oppressive and marginalizing power relations are being ideologically reproduced rather than being systematically eroded*. To quote Butler here:

[T]he premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category. These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipatory purposes. Indeed, the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from "women" whom feminism claims to represent suggest the necessary limits of identity politics.[48]

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[45] Logan 1997: 235.

[46] Letter to the *Chicago Tribune* sent by a white male – referenced by hooks 1982: 130.

[47] Particularly evocative examples of this can be seen in the conflict between Trans-exclusionary Radical Feminist (terf) activism and trans-activism. What is common to terf-activism, to quote Katherine O'Donnell in conversation with me, is "a yearning for a taxonomy that can provide for stability, hierarchy, and purity".

[48] Butler 1999: 7-8.

As such, the mistake of feminist identity politics was *not* that they gave a bad definition of 'woman', *but that feminist identity politics aimed to define 'woman'*.[49] The definitional practice operates *juridically*, since "the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures".[50] In order to overcome the limitations of such a way of theorizing about gender and its corresponding story of political representation and participation, Butler argues one ought to adopt a *performativity* thesis. A performativity thesis necessarily involves understanding 'woman' as "a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification".[51]

Genders and gendered traits (like being nurturing or ambitious) are the "intended or unintended product[s] of a social practice".[52] Females *become* women through a process whereby they acquire 'womanly' traits and learn 'womanly' conduct.[53] Children are often dressed in gender-specific clothes and colors, and parents tend to buy their children gender-specific toys and games. Parents also (regardless of intentions) tend to reaffirm certain 'appropriate' gender-specific behaviors: girls *qua* 'girls' are often discouraged from playing sports like rugby; boys *qua* 'boys' are often told not to cry. For Butler, then, gender is not "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is … instituted … through a stylised repetition of [habitual] acts".[54] These acts include wearing certain clothing that *marks* one's gender, moving and positioning one's body that *marks* one's gender, etc. Understood in such a manner, performativity and its new vocabulary involves *pragmatic* constitution: gender is not something one *is*, it is something one *does*; it is a sequence of acts, a *doing* rather than a *being*. "Gender only comes into being through these gendering acts".[55] Repetition and institutionalisation of these performative acts – speech, behavioral, etc. –

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[49] Cf. the following from Monique Wittig: "What is woman? Panic, general alarm for an active defense. Frankly, it is a problem that the lesbians do not have because of a change of perspective, and it would be incorrect to say that lesbians associate, make love, live with women, for "woman" has meaning only in heterosexual systems of thought and heterosexual economic systems. Lesbians are not women". (Wittig 1992: 32)

[50] Butler 1999: 4.

[51] Ibid., p. 43.
A very common critique of Butler's post-structuralism, one which is most clearly evidenced by Martha Nussbaum's extraordinarily vicious 'The Professor of Parody', centers on the claim that Butler's position undermines feminist activism and politics, since post-structuralism depoliticizes the feminine standpoint, stultifying its emancipatory potential. However, on the contrary, I think there is *every* reason to see Butler's post-structuralism as *furthering* feminist activism and politics by articulating a genealogical and performative framework, a framework that is *far more* democratic and inclusive. For further on this point, see Stone (2004).

[52] Haslanger 1995: 97.

[53] Viz. TSS: 273.

[54] Butler 1999: 179.

[55] https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/

crystallizes gender, and, in doing so, invariably encourages people to think of gender as a *natural* kind. The *critical* perspective on gender provided by performative theory and its conceptual allies, therefore, aims at the progressive transformation of society from one structured in accordance with *reified* and *oppressive* gender norms.

The *epistemic* advantages of performative theory are that, unlike definitional practices, performativity is better equipped to *make sense* of gender: it recognises how gender is a 'messy' concept and therefore requires a discursive matrix that can *sensitively* coordinate and capture *the complex phenomenological and hermeneutic textures indicative of gendered bodies and gendered experiences*.[56] Both Natalie Stoljar and Mari Mikkola, to varying extents, write in a supportive manner on the subject of acknowledging just how complex and multidimensional gender is:

> *womanness is something complex, not something simple, and the ingredients in the complex structure of womanness are not always the same ingredients from one woman to another*. The same ingredients make up the components in our concept of woman but are not always all instantiated in the individuals to whom the concept applies.[57]
>
> Women may simply have an extremely complex and, thus, unanalysable feature of womanness in common that makes them women.[58]

I would argue that applying definitional practices to such a domain of inquiry is a *category error* insofar as definitions are "too buttoned-up and white-chokered and clean-shaven a thing"[59] to adequately make sense of *not only* messy and contested bodies and experiences, *but also the norms and power dynamics governing gender-attribution*. In this way, one increasingly moves away from definitions of 'woman' to, what one may call, post-structuralist *sites of 'woman'*.[60] From this perspective, then, the following *pragmatist* critique of early modern rationalism by James is particularly relevant to Butler's post-structuralism here:

> A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power. (*Pragmatism*: 27)

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[56] Cf. "The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/ doings/actions. I would argue that these approaches also bring to the forefront important questions of ontology, materiality, and agency …" (Barad 2003: 803).
See also Haraway (1997).
[57] Stoljar 2011: 40.
[58] Mikkola 2006: 92.
[59] EIRE: 146.
[60] See Stoljar 2011: 42 for a useful counter-point here.

However, a crucial set of points must be made before directly returning to the proposed Sellars-Butler conversation, as the stakes are *philosophically and politically* high here. Analytic feminists, of course, are not blind to the complex phenomenological and hermeneutic textures indicative of gendered bodies and gendered experiences. Indeed, Katherine Ritchie (2015; forthcoming) has recently argued that talk about racial, gender, disabled, and sexual orientation groups *needs greater nuance*, helpfully distinguishing between Organised Social Groups and Feature Social Groups. For Ritchie, Organised Social Groups are groups like sports teams, committees, and clubs, typified by a formal structure. Feature Social Groups are racial groups, gender groups, disabled groups, and sexual orientation groups constituted by a *shared feature*. "Social groups of this sort are not simply collections of people, for they are more fundamentally intertwined with the identities of the people described as belonging to them. They are a specific kind of collectivity, with specific consequences for how people understand one another and themselves".[61] Ritchie, crucially, notes that 'sharing a feature' must *not* be interpreted in such a way that involves a commitment to essentialism about gender or race or disability or sexuality: "[o]ne might argue that the view that social kinds are property clusters rather than properties is preferable, as taking there to be a property *womanness* or *Blackness* is to essentialise.[62] One might argue that not all women or all Black people have a shared (even socially constructed) feature; one should be anti-essentialist".[63]

Ritchie stays neutral on the subject of whether the shared feature emblematic of racial groups, gender groups, disabled groups, and sexual orientation groups is *a natural property* or *a socially constructed property* or *some combination of natural and socially constructed property*.[64] However, while this quasi-Lockean position on the metaphysics of Feature Social Groups could be construed dissatisfying, insofar as one is none-the-wiser about the *positive* nature of the shared feature, Ritchie's position should *not* be dismissed. This is because her commitment to anti-essentialism in conjunction with her notion of a cluster concept at least seems to *explicitly* resist the urge to reduce gender, etc. in "an all or nothing way as a simple idea".[65] To quote Brian Epstein, "[the aim here is] to challenge the idea that they have simple

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[61] Young 1990: 43.
[62] See Stoljar (1995, 2011) for a sophisticated account of gender as a cluster concept.
[63] K. Ritchie forthcoming: 27n.
[64] Viz. "I am staying neutral on the nature of the features or properties. They might be natural, socially constructed, or partially natural and partially social in nature". (Ritchie forthcoming: 2n)
[65] Armstrong 1978: 54.

answers. There seems to be a powerful drive among theorists to unify and simplify the endless diversity and variation among kinds of groups".[66]

My concern about Ritchie's position, though, is that she appears to deploy investigations into social ontology in a manner that creates insufficient scope for *critical* social ontology. For, Ritchie claims that her articulation of the metaphysics of social groups is in service of "better understand[ing] our world and ourselves".[67] However, following Marx, the task for philosophy is not merely to interpret the world, but to *change* it. Therefore, with regard to the project of social ontology, *it is not sufficient to better carve the social at its joints; one must also have in view whether or not the metaphysical categories we use to make sense of gender, race, disabled,*[68] *and sexual orientation groups are themselves prone to ideological distortion and vitiation*. In other words, one must prepare to not only recognise that our vocabulary for talking about gender and the like is not fit for purpose, but also prepare to *transform* that very vocabulary for the *emancipatory* purpose of ending oppression, domination, and marginalisation. This is why, as Sally Haslanger writes, "[a]t the most general level, the task is to develop accounts of gender and race that will be effective in the fight against injustice".[69]

I think it is worth stating that there seems to be some degree of tension between Haslanger's claim here with her own *ameliorative* definition of 'woman'.[70] The tension seems to lie in how it would appear that although Haslanger's definition of woman clearly designates those under the oppressive forces of patriarchal misogyny and sexism*, it seems to exclude *those who identify as women who do not genuinely find themselves systematically subordinated in some dimension and who are not marked in marginalising ways*.[71] The problem is that if one does not satisfy the *ameliorative* definition of 'woman', the implication is that one is not *truly* a woman; one is not *authentically* a woman; one is not *really* a woman. 'Woman' can *never* be defined *amelioratively* in a way that does not suggest – either implicitly or explicitly – *some* unspoken normative requirements to which women should conform, so as to be deemed *real*

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[66] Epstein forthcoming: 2.
[67] K. Ritchie forthcoming: 17.
[68] See Barnes (2016).
[69] Haslanger 2012: 226. Cf. Jones 2014: 101.
[70] "S is a woman if S is systematically subordinated along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) and S is "marked" as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction" (Haslanger 2000: 39).
[71] According to Mikkola, "Haslanger's position is gender realist and she maintains that women have a feature in common that makes them women: they are all socially positioned as subordinate or oppressed where this social positioning is sex-marked" (Mikkola 2006: 87). See Stoljar (2011) for a response to Mikkola's reading of Haslanger.

women: the *ameliorative* definition of 'woman', regardless of its *critical* dispositionality, remains a *definition*, and therefore operates under *juridical* logic.[72] As Kukla and Lance express a similar point:

> to be a member of the community is not, in the first instance, to have some feature in common with other community members. Rather, the 'we' is constituted and sustained through the transactions among the various mutually recognizing subjects who make it up. The community is not a predefined space into which candidates may fit or fail to fit; it is a space *created* and given its character and its boundaries by the discursively interacting individuals who make it up—individuals who can speak from a first-person perspective to others in a second-person voice.[73]

III

The question now concerns the ways in which Sellars's critique of analysis and Butler's critique of feminist identity politics bear on one another: both Butler and Sellars, in their respective ways, object to discursive matrixes that *narrow* the conceptual field. For example, as I have argued, Butler worries that unitary categories of gender and identity are cognitively and politically destabilising, since they are inherently exclusionary and reifying;[74] Sellars worries that *analyzing* knowledge instead of construing such an epistemic kind *pragmatically* renders inquirers unable to make sense of playing *the game of giving and asking for reasons*.

(i) Sellars's critique of analysis is decidedly uninterested in finding any *features* or *states* or *properties* serving as conditions of knowledge. Rather, knowledge is conceptualised in terms of a recognizable standing in the logical space of reasons, the "network of discursive holdings"[75] comprising the norm-constituting practices of language-using discursive agents. Crucially, the act of playing the game of giving and asking for reasons is *relational*. Importantly, those "relationally defined activities sustained by mutual recognition"[76] are *complex* through-and-through, to the extent that the practices occurring in the logical space of

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[72] In response to what I have just argued, as helpfully raised by one of the reviewers of my paper, I recognise the risk that I fail to appreciate the *externalist* aspect of the ameliorative definition given by Haslanger. That is, women are in some sense defined by others as such when they are oppressed as women. Thus, my critique that some women do not think of themselves as oppressed may not apply to *Haslanger's* definition of women. First, because whether or not one thinks and/or feels they are oppressed is often *not* a good test of oppression. Second, being oppressed might be considered a concept that applies counterfactually. For example, if *x* is treated as a subordinate (systematically penalised for being not a man) under conditions *C*, then one *is* a woman. There is an important place for the externalist approach in making sense of oppression. However, my critical remark should be viewed more modestly, insofar as I only want to draw attention to how there is also an important place for an internalist dimension. To clarify, I am only talking about the internalist approach *here*.
[73] Kukla and Lance 2009: 192.
[74] And that border control becomes the focus of our politics rather than an emancipatory vision.
[75] Kukla and Lance 2009: 192.
[76] Ibid., p. 183.

reasons are articulated in *processist* terms. The processist inflections of the game of giving and asking for reasons reveal that *certain* normative functions can be performed *only* by relational, as opposed to substantival, categories. The idea that epistemic norms are *formed, moulded, and developed* implies that *ordinary analytical vocabulary is subject to an error theory*. Understood in such a manner, normative pragmatism about knowledge illustrates how conceptual analyses of knowledge rest on construing epistemic norms as *substantival, rather than as relational*; how conceptual analyses of knowledge mistakenly rest on *reifying* epistemic norms and kinds; how conceptual analyses of knowledge mistakenly rest on the ""Platonic scorecard" vision of normative space as an abstract network".[77]

The *normative* space of reasons's clear contrast with the *descriptive* space of nature means that one cannot apply conceptual analysis, a strategy best conducive for making sense of *natural* kinds (e.g. water), to the *social* space of reasons. Know*ing* is to be baptised in a deliberative public sphere of fallible discursive transactions; know*ing* is to move sufficiently well in the normative space of reasons through *sensitivity to reasons*. For Sellars, since personhood and knowledge are "equiprimordial [normative] phenomena",[78] persons and knowledge are irreducible to the ideal scientific image, not because they are 'emergent' kinds over and above the descriptive-explanatory categories of science, but because *personhood and knowledge are not in the business of describing and explaining in the first place.*

(ii) Butler's critique of definitional practice is decidedly uninterested in finding any *features* or *states* or *properties* serving as conditions of 'woman'. Rather, gender is articulated as involving repetitive and stylised *performative acts*. Crucially, those performative acts constituted the norms governing gender attribution and the like are *relational*. Importantly, the relationally defined performative activities sustained by recognition are *complex* through-and-through, to the extent that repetitive and performative stylised acts can be understood in *processist* terms. The processist inflections of gender performativity reveal that certain normative functions can be performed *only* by relational, as opposed to substantival, categories: to be gendered is not to satisfy a fixed set of biological or cultural criteria, but to be baptised in *a system of power relations* imbuing one's body and experiences with social significance. The idea that gender is *formed, moulded, and developed* implies that *ordinary vocabulary is subject to an error theory*: gender performativity illustrates how definitional practice rests on construing gender as *substantival, rather than as relational*;[79] how definitional practice

[77] Ibid., p. 193.
[78] Ibid., 189.
[79] Cf. Karen Barad's agential realist ontology.

mistakenly rests on *reifying* gender. As Karen Barad phrases it, "[i]t is hard to deny that the power of language has been substantial. One might argue too substantial, or perhaps more to the point, too substantializing".[80]

I would contend that the ways in which Sellars's critique of analysis about knowledge and Butler's critique of definitions of 'woman' bear on one another predominantly consists in how both thinkers espouse conceptual frameworks that are *democratically oriented*. For both Butler and Sellars, in their respective ways, "[t]he ideal exercise of the rational capacities that any of us has now, from an epistemic as well as a political point of view …, seeks to cultivate and educate these same capacities in the direction of maximal inclusiveness".[81]

I think it is reasonable to claim that Sellars's commitment to anti-foundationalism and expansive conceptual frameworks, typified by his notion of *synoptic vision*,[82] is democratic and non-supremacist. His commitment to anti-foundationalism is democratic and non-supremacist, because the activity of playing the game of giving and asking for reasons is sustained by *mutual* recognition. Sellars's notion of *synoptic vision*, namely his attempt to fuse or combine the *manifest image* of the world[83] with the *ideal scientific image* of the world,[84] aims to be democratic and non-supremacist, because there must be a pluralism of vocabularies in play to *adequately make sense of things*. To quote James O'Shea here, "the manifest image conception of persons as thinking and intending beings is supposed to be *preserved* rather than "overwhelmed" (SPR: 8-9)"[85] when combined with the ideal scientific image of the world. Above all, Sellars's commitment to anti-foundationalism and to the synoptic vision paints a picture of a thinker who wishes to replace, as Adriana Cavarero would phrase it,[86] a *rectitudinal*

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[80] Barad 2003: 802.
[81] Kukla 2006: 92.
I should note that it not obvious that Kukla *herself* would attribute the aspiration of maximal inclusiveness to Sellars himself, *even though* she is starting from a Sellarsian account of perceptual knowledge, for, as I previously noted, the cost of putting Sellars into dialogue with Butler should not be fixing on *one* aspect of his views, the (left-wing) conceptual irreducibility of the logical space of reasons, at the expense of his (right-wing) strong scientific realism.
[82] The synoptic vision is "his attempt to bring his scientific naturalism fully to bear on his Kantian-pragmatist conception of the manifest image as the holistic and conceptually irreducible domain of persons and norms, of meaning and intentionality" (O'Shea 2016: 7).
[83] The perspective of first-person intentionality and irreducible normative vocabulary.
[84] The 'Peirceish' perspective of natural science and purely descriptive and non-evaluative ways of sense-making.
[85] O'Shea 2007: 136.
Cf. "Sellars's effort to fuse the manifest and scientific images constitutes one of the richest and most penetrating attempts to make room for mathematically recalcitrant manifest properties within a scientific worldview" (Rosenthal 2016: 150).
[86] See Cavarero (2016).

and vertical image of sense-making practice and philosophical inquiry with a *stereoscopic* image of sense-making practice and philosophical inquiry:[87]

> The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term … To achieve success in philosophy would be, to use a contemporary turn of phrase, to 'know one's way around' with respect to all these things … in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred (SPR: 1) … The conceptual framework of persons is the framework in which we think of one another as sharing the community intentions which provide the ambience of principles and standards (above all, those which make meaningful discourse and rationality itself possible) within which we live our own individual lives. A person can almost be defined as a being that has intentions. Thus the conceptual framework of persons is not something that needs to be *reconciled with* the scientific image, but rather something to be *joined* to it. Thus, to complete the scientific image we need to enrich it *not* with more ways of saying what is the case, but with the language of community and individual intentions, so that by construing the actions we intend to do and the circumstances in which we intend to do them in scientific terms, we *directly* relate the world as conceived by scientific theory to our purposes, and make it our world and no longer an alien appendage to the world in which we do our living. We can, of course, as matters now stand, realize this direct incorporation of the scientific image into our way of life only in imagination. But to do so is, if only in imagination, to transcend the dualism of the manifest and scientific images of man-in-the-world. (SPR: 40)

Such a vision of what philosophy looks like and what its particular mode of cognitive engagement aspires to achieve seems to be shared by Nicholas Rescher:

> The definitive mission of philosophy is to provide a basis for understanding the world and our place within it as intelligent agents – with 'the world' understood comprehensively to encompass the realms of nature, culture, and artifice. The aim of the enterprise is to provide us with cognitive orientation for conducting our intellectual and practical affairs … Given this massive mandate, the prime flaw of philosophising is a narrowness of vision. Granted the issues are complex and specialisation becomes necessary. But its cultivation is never sufficient because the details must always be fitted into a comprehensive whole.[88]

> A philosopher who achieves her proximate, localised ends at the cost of off-loading difficulties onto other sectors of the wider domain is simply not doing an adequate job. With rationally cogent philosophising, it is not local minimalism but global optimalism that is required. To be acceptable, a philosophical problem-solution must form an integral part of a wider doctrine that makes acceptably good sense overall. Here only systemic, holistically attuned positions can yield truly satisfactory solutions – solutions that do not involve undue externalities for the larger scheme of things.[89]

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[87] See deVries (2016), O'Shea (2007, 2009), * (2019), and Levine (2019) for responses to whether Sellars's notion of the synoptic vision is ultimately coherent and plausible.
[88] Rescher 2017: 32.
[89] Ibid., p. 42.

Central to both Sellars's and Rescher's respective conceptions of the aims and task of philosophy is a commitment to *holism*. The kind of holism one can reasonably attribute to Sellars and Rescher is a Hegelian variety: in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel (in)famously claimed that "[t]he True is the whole. However, the whole is only the essence completing itself through its own development".[90] Here, the framework for understanding objects of experience is *not* restricted to the level of *ordinary* consciousness, where we can only make 'thin' judgements that express their atomistic separation and only an artificial kind of unity. This is why, for Hegel, a move from *ordinary* to *philosophical* consciousness consists in recognising, to use Paolo Diego Bubbio's terminology, 'mediate objectivity' – "an ongoing process of mediation between subject and object which is always already in place".[91]

Rather than viewing reality as loosely connected sets of objects, we ought to conceive of Being as a complex and interconnected whole in which finite members are dialectically related. Such a move aims to supplant the perspective of *Verstand* with the perspective of *Vernunft* in discourse about sense-making. For Hegel, the advantage of drawing this distinction between reason and understanding is that we can be in a position to not be wrapped up in the various dualisms which are the inevitable consequence of reflecting only from the perspective of *Verstand*, i.e. purely *analytical* forms of reflection. What *Vernunft* provides consciousness with is the means to avoid the problems of analysis by thinking *dialectically*, i.e. by drawing distinctions yet establishing interconnectedness to a whole.

Butler's Foucauldian critique of feminist identity politics as well as her performativity thesis are clearly democratic and non-supremacist:

> Foucault points out that juridical systems of power *produce* the subjects they subsequently come to represent. Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms—that is, through the limitation, prohibition, regulation, control, and even "protection" of individuals related to that political structure through the contingent and retractable operation of choice. But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures. If this analysis is right, then the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation.[92]

> For the purposes of a radical democratic transformation, we need to know that our fundamental categories can and must be expanded to become more inclusive and more responsive to the full range of cultural populations. This does not mean that a social

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[90] PS: §20, 13.
[91] Bubbio 2016: 238-39.
[92] Butler 1999: 4.

engineer plots at a distance how best to include everyone in his or her category. It means that the category itself must be subjected to a reworking from myriad directions, that it must emerge anew as a result of the cultural translations it undergoes. What moves me politically, and that for which I want to make room, is the moment in which a subject— a person, a collective—asserts a right or entitlement to a livable life when no such prior authorization exists, when no clearly enabling convention is in place.[93]

Crucially, if one's metaphysics of gender is performative, then one is committed to the *fallibilist* view that the category of gender identity is never *fixed*, so much so that "[t]his field of possibilities is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity".[94] Above all, these theoretical gains have an important transformative and emancipatory advantage: *they enable more democratic forms of association*, "to produce new forms of intimacy, alliance, and communicability".[95]

To my mind, a particularly evocative example of a category itself needing to be subjected to a reworking from myriad directions, for the purposes of a radical democratic transformation, *one bound up with Butler's post-structuralism about gender*, is Butler's queering of kinship, namely "the radical project of articulating and supporting the proliferation of sexual practices outside of marriage [producing] variations on kinship that depart from normative, dyadic heterosexually based family forms secured through the marriage vow".[96] For Butler, the contention that marriage – *whether heterosexual or homosexual* – is what *legitimates* kinship and sexual relations between partners is "unacceptably conservative".[97] States explicitly disincentivize non-marital relationships and arrangements, for non-marital kinship structures are not admitted into state-protection and state-incentive protocols *despite having caring relationships*. Therefore, the liberal claim to progressiveness, extending marriage to homosexuals, is not just premature, but a disturbing form of ideology. Coded ideology serves to create a pathological genus of doubt about the *metaphysical* legitimacy of one's non-marital relationship. This particular variety of doubt is hermeneutically crippling and deeply distressing, preventing a healthy practical-relation-to-one's-beloved. For, *if your lover is not officially recognised, can you even mourn for them? If your lover is not officially recognised, can you even be said to have lost them if the relationship ends?* As Butler writes:

> If you're not real, it can be hard to sustain yourselves over time; the sense of delegitimation can make it harder to sustain a bond, a bond that is not real anyway, a bond

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[93] Butler 2004: 223-24.
[94] Barad 2003: 819.
[95] Butler 2004: 208.
[96] Butler 2002: 16-17.
[97] Ibid., p. 21.

that does not "exist," that never had a chance to exist, that was never meant to exist. Here is where the absence of state legitimation can emerge within the psyche as a pervasive, if not fatal, sense of self doubt. And if you've actually lost the lover who was never recognized to be your lover, then did you really lose that person? Is this a loss, and can it be publicly grieved? Surely this is something that has become a pervasive problem in the queer community, given the losses from AIDS, the loss of lives and loves that are always in struggle to be recognized as such.[98]

However, in response to my central comparative point concerning Butler and Sellars, namely the democratic and non-supremacist character of what they substitute for definitional analysis of key concepts, one may object in the following manner: there is a substantive difference between the sense in which Butler's post-structuralism is aspiring to a radical democratic transformation, which concerns *political subjects*, and a democratic and non-supremacist relation between Sellars's two images. Under the Sellarsian synoptic vision of fusing the manifest and scientific images together into *one* coherent image, as O'Shea correctly notes, "Sellars does indeed want to hold that the ontology of persons as rational agents and conceptual thinkers within the space of reasons is in principle successfully accommodated *within* the comprehensively physicalist ontology of the ideal scientific image of the world".[99] Since the Sellarsian synoptic vision is *primarily* structured by the comprehensively physicalist ontology of the (ideal) scientific image, the purely third-person naturalistic vocabulary will invariably have *priority* over the first-person intentional vocabulary of the *manifest* image. Under Sellars's synoptic vision, so the argument goes, there is still some kind of epistemic hierarchy: *non-eliminativist supremacy of the scientific image*.

I think there is much to agree with in this objection, *since there is a real risk of equivocation here*. However, while I am happy to concede that, given the *fundamental ambiguity* of Sellars's conceptual irreducibility of the manifest image-cum-strong scientific-realism, his synoptic project is not radically transformative in exactly the *same* way that Butler's project is radically transformative about kinship structures, I would contend that there is still an important sense in which Sellars can be legitimately regarded as radically transformative in the same *formal* way as Butler. *Both thinkers are focused on myth-debunking*: in Sellars's case, overcoming the Myth of the Given; in Butler's case, overcoming what one might call, the Myth of Immutability – where the ideological contention that marriage is the grounds of kinship shares the same *formal* fixed character as the Given's foundationalism.

[98] Ibid., pp. 25-26.
[99] O'Shea 2009: 194.

The important parallel between Butler's post-structuralist thesis about gender (as well as kinship structures) and Sellars's normative pragmatism about knowledge enable one to think of her feminism as mapping out *pragmatic* cognitive strategies and visions for *doing philosophy*. What I mean by this is that her approach to gendered bodies and experiences employs conceptual resources providing a particularly rich and engaging way of *doing philosophy*, so much so that philosophy's "self-image"[100] can be improved, confirming Gary Gutting's claim that "feminism promises to improve not only the climate for women but also philosophical thinking itself":[101] if one wishes to remain wedded to a view of philosophy as a *second-order* discipline concerned with critical reflection on the ways in which one makes sense of sense-making practices, then Butler's post-structuralist anti-representationalist variety of feminist theorising makes a substantive *metaphilosophical* contribution, precisely because overturning the paradigm of definitional practice here is *a prime instantiation of critical reflection on making sense of sense-making.*

So, as Bernard Williams would put it, *what might philosophy become now*? I think it is reasonable to claim that the professional self-image of philosophy in the Anglo-American analytic tradition is 'naturalism', the view that *the image of the world provided by the natural sciences is all there is to the world*.[102] Naturalism, therefore, has metaphysical *and* methodological dimensions: (i) at the most fundamental ontological level, reality is just what the natural sciences deem it to be; (ii) our ways of intelligibly articulating reality, the ways in which we make sense of things, are ultimately justifiable only by the methods and practices of the *Naturwissenschaften*. The conjunction of (i) and (ii) is often referred to as 'scientific naturalism'. In what follows, I propose to treat 'naturalism' and the philosophy-science relation in a way close to the anti-essentialist spirit ascribed to Sellars on epistemology and Butler on feminism. *Crucially, though, having eschewed definitional treatments of 'knowledge' and 'woman' in favor of pragmatic/democratic treatments, such a metaphilosophical lesson cannot now insist upon a definitional treatment of 'naturalism', a particularly contested philosophical term.*

According to Williams, Jaegwon Kim, and Mario De Caro & David Macarthur respectively:

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[100] Williams 2006: 202.
See also Williamson 2007: ix.
[101] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/opinion/feminist-philosophy-future.html
[102] See Papineau (1993), De Caro & Macarthur (2004, 2010), J. Ritchie (2008), and Giladi (2019).

> It is hard to deny that over too much of the subject, the idea of getting it right which has gone into the self-image of analytic philosophy, and which has supported some of its exclusions, is one drawn from the natural sciences; and that the effects of this can be unhappy.[103]

> If current analytic philosophy can be said to have a philosophical ideology, it is unquestionably, naturalism.[104]

> Naturalism is the current orthodoxy, at least within Anglo-American philosophy.[105]

In terms of one's philosophical coming-of-age in many analytic departments, one is baptised a naturalist, to remove the original sin of supernaturalism. And, in terms of one's aspirations to be taken seriously in the Anglophone philosophical world and maintain good working relationships with the relevant powers-that-be, naturalism must be a doctrine which demands absolute loyalty on pain of some intellectual *auto da fé*. To quote Hilary Putnam:

> [t]oday the most common use of the term "naturalism" might be described as follows: philosophers – perhaps even a majority of all the philosophers writing about issues in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind and philosophy of language – announce in one or another conspicuous place in their essays and books that they are "naturalists" or that the view or account being defended is a "naturalist" one; this announcement, in its placing and emphasis, resembles the placing of the announcement in articles written in Stalin's Soviet Union that a view was in agreement with Comrade Stalin's; as in the case of the latter announcement, it is supposed to be clear that any view which is not "naturalist" (not in agreement with Comrade Stalin's) is anathema, and could not possibly be correct.[106]

Over many years, however, the naturalistic self-image of Anglo-American analytic philosophy has come under scrutiny by analytically-trained thinkers, such as Richard Bernstein, Brandom, Stanley Cavell, Donald Davidson, Susan Haack, John Haugeland, Alasdair MacIntyre, Joseph Margolis, John McDowell, Adrian Moore, Stephen Mulhall, Thomas Nagel, Putnam, Rescher, Rorty, Sellars, Charles Taylor, and Williams,[107] who are – in varying respects and with varying levels of intensity – *internal critics* of the Anglo-American

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[103] Williams 2006: 203.
[104] Kim 2003: 84.
[105] De Caro and Macarthur 2004: 1.
[106] Putnam, 2004: 59.
[107] Williams gave the Inaugural Lecture at the Centre for Post-Analytic Philosophy at Southampton University in November 1997.

analytic tradition.[108] Crucially, though, these 'post-analytic'[109] thinkers are *not* clustered together because each of them contributes to a fully defined and articulated philosophical tradition. Rather, Bernstein et al.[110] are clustered in terms of how they all *broadly* share a

[108] There is some similarity but also some difference between my cluster and the original cluster comprising the first collection of writings on post-analytic philosophy by Rajchman and West (1985), which regards Rorty as the *paradigmatic* post-analytic philosopher. As far as I am aware, the only other volume on post-analytic philosophy is Reynolds, Chase, Williams and Mares (2010).

See the following from Williams: "it is particularly important that "post-analytic" should not be understood in terms of the supposed distinction between analytic and continental philosophy. I say this as one who is, both deniably and undeniably, an analytic philosopher: deniably, because I am disposed to deny it, and undeniably, because I suspect that few who have anything to say on the subject will accept that denial. What I do want to deny is the helpfulness of the distinction itself, and I shall mark that in particular by saying very little about it. But it is worth emphasising that what is unhelpful in this contrast goes beyond the matter of the unfortunate labels it uses". (Williams 2006: 201)

[109] The following from George Duke, Elena Walsh, James Chase and Jack Reynolds is helpful here: "The term 'postanalytic' has been used to characterize the work of thinkers who, having started out in the mainstream analytic tradition, came to place in question some of its central presuppositions" (Duke et al. 2010: 7).

Construed in such a manner, one may now wonder where Quine fits into the cluster here, for Quine played arguably the most important role in moving analytic philosophy out of its Carnapian phase with his critique of the analytic/synthetic distinction, his critique of semantic reductionism, and his articulation of ontological relativity and the indeterminacy of translation. More to the point, Quine *self-described as post-analytic*. However, for all of Quine's radical dismantling of the two dogmas of empiricism and break from Carnap and analyticity, Quine's strict and conservative variety of naturalism and conception of philosophy as the abstract arm of empirical science means that he is a *different kind* of post-analytic philosopher to Bernstein et al.

Another sketch of post-analytic philosophy is provided by Christopher Norris, who writes: "What chiefly unites [various ideas and movements of thought under the broad rubric of 'post-analytic' philosophy] – on the negative side – is a growing dissatisfaction with the analytic enterprise as it developed in the wake of logical empiricism. That project is now taken to have failed in all its main objectives, among them more recently the attempt to develop a truth-theoretic compositional semantics for natural language and a theory of beliefs (or propositional attitudes) that would explain how speakers and interpreters display such remarkable – though everyday – powers of communicative grasp. These ideas have come under attack from many quarters during the past two decades. Most influential here has been Quine's assault on the two 'last dogmas' of empiricism and – supposedly following from that – his case for ontological relativity and meaning-holism as the only way forward in default of any method for individuating objects or items of belief. The result, very often, is an attitude of deep-laid skepticism with regard to the truth-claims of science and the idea that philosophy might offer grounds – reasoned or explanatory grounds – for our understanding of language and the world." (Norris 1997: x) "What these approaches share is a sense that philosophy has now arrived at a stage – with its holistic turn against any version of the logical-empiricist paradigm – where talk of 'truth' (as hitherto conceived) becomes pretty much redundant. That is to say, it either drops out altogether (as in Rorty's neopragmatist appeal to what is 'good in the way of belief'), or else figures merely as a product of formal definition." (Ibid., p. 2) "Such is at least one sense of the term 'post-analytic philosophy': the quest for an alternative to that entire tradition of thought, starting out from logical empiricism, whose upshot – after so much critical labor – would seem to be either a formalized (semantic or metalinguistic) theory of truth devoid of explanatory content, or on the other hand a pragmatist conception that reduces truth to the currency of in-place consensus belief." (Ibid., p. 6)

While some of what Norris writes about post-analytic philosophy is helpful, my concern is that (a) Norris misconstrues Quine's critique of logical empiricism as undermining the epistemic authority of the natural sciences; and (b) Norris's reliance on Rorty's pragmatist-cum-deconstructionist critique of analytic philosophy as the exemplar of the post-analytic risks post-analytic philosophers such as Williams and Haack being seen as *postmodernist* thinkers.

[110] One might counter my point here by claiming that it is disingenuousness on my part to deem liberal naturalists as outside the mainstream of the analytic tradition, since there is already a sharp conflict underway to claim that position as mainstream.

critical stance towards the naturalistic self-image, *where the more critical a thinker is of the naturalist orthodoxy, the closer such a thinker is to being branded 'apostate'*.[111] Post-analytic philosophy's self-image is no longer a conception of philosophy as handmaiden to the *Naturwissenschaften*, but rather a conception of *philosophy as an amphibious humanistic discipline*, at home with both the natural sciences *and* cultural theory. To quote Williams here, who provides a *mantra* of post-analytic philosophy's metaphilosophical outlook:

> I very much prefer that we should retain the category of philosophy and situate ourselves within it, rather than pretend that an enquiry which addresses these issues with a richer and more imaginative range of resources represents "the end of philosophy." The traditions of philosophy demand that we reflect on the presuppositions of what we think and feel. The claim which I am making, from here, from inside the subject, is that in certain areas, at least, this demand itself cannot be adequately met unless we go beyond the conceptions of getting it right that are too closely associated with the inexpressive models drawn, perhaps unconsciously, from the sciences … We can dream of a philosophy that would be thoroughly truthful and honestly helpful … It would need resources of expressive imagination to do almost any of the things it needed to do …[112] Philosophy is, rather, in these fields, the extension of our most serious concerns by other means, but at least it should introduce our ordinary concerns in a humanly recognizable form …[113] But we should remember that work may be unimaginative not because it is badly argued but because it is arguing with the wrong people; not because it has missed an argument, but because it misses the historical and psychological point …[114]

While, of course, Butler is *not* a post-analytic philosopher – and therefore unlikely to identify with the very specific ways in which Williams places philosophy – I think it would be incorrect to suppose this stultifies the potential for *instituting some communicative space* between Butler and post-analytic philosophers like Sellars. Butler's anti-representationalist post-structuralist variety of feminist theorising, and Sellars's anti-representationalist normative pragmatism about knowledge are *prime instantiations of critical reflection on making sense of sense-making*. The anti-essentialist spirit ascribed to Sellars on epistemology and Butler on feminism means that it would be incorrect to deem Williams's position as 'anti-naturalist', as he is critical of *scientistic* varieties of naturalism only.[115] As he said in a 2002 interview, "… in philosophy the thing that irritates me is smugness, particularly scientistic smugness. What makes me really angry these days are certain kinds of reductive scientism that knock all the

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[111] The way I have characterized post-analytic philosophy in the broad sense differs from how Hans-Johann Glock articulates the concept: "… continental philosophy presented by Anglophone commentators who refer to analytic thinkers like Wittgenstein, Quine and Davidson (e.g. Taylor, Cavell and Mulhall)" (Glock 2008: 256).

[112] Williams 2006: 211-12.

[113] Ibid., p. 206.

[114] Ibid., p. 212.

[115] All anti-naturalists reject scientism, but not all rejections of scientism are also rejections of naturalism.

philosophical difficulties out".[116] Williams, therefore, aims to occupy a middle-ground position between, what McDowell calls, 'bald naturalism' (reductionism or eliminativism) and 'rampant Platonism' (anti-naturalism):

> It can easily seem that there is no space to move here. Setting our faces against bald naturalism, we are committed to holding that the idea of knowing one's way about in the space of reasons, the idea of responsiveness to rational relationships, cannot be reconstructed out of materials that are naturalistic in the sense that we are trying to supersede. This can easily seem to commit us to a rampant platonism. It can seem that we must be picturing the space of reasons as an autonomous structure – autonomous in that it is constituted independently of anything specifically human, since what is specifically human is surely natural … and we are refusing to naturalise the requirements of reason … But there is a way out. We get this threat of supernaturalism if we interpret the claim that space of reasons is *sui generis* as a refusal to naturalise the requirements of reason. But what became available at the time of the modern scientific revolution is a clear-cut understanding of the realm of law, and we can refuse to equate that with a new clarity *about nature*. This makes room for us to insist that spontaneity is *sui generis*, in comparison with the realm of law, without falling into the supernaturalism of rampant platonism.[117]

For Williams et al. recognising the autonomy and heterogeneity of the normative space of reasons in no way entails conceiving of its features as "imaginary skyhooks".[118] Reality is, as Lynne Baker beautifully phrased it, "capacious … – more English garden than desert landscape".[119] In this respect, anti-essentialism can analogously help *democratically treat* 'naturalism'. I would argue that the 'scientism wars' are frustrating, principally because on one side, there are hermeneutic humanists who think that naturalists *tout court* are denying discourse-pluralism; and on the other, there are scientistic naturalists who think hermeneutic humanists are denying that, *in the dimension of describing and explaining the world*, science is the measure of all things. Because the Unity of Science thesis, whether reductionist or eliminativist, is *not* grounded in a careful examination of scientific practice, it risks opening the door to the charge of scientism. However, if one considers *those philosophers of science who are looking at science in terms of practices*, such as John Dupré, Nancy Cartwright, Steven Horst, and Joseph Rouse, a careful explication of how scientific practices yield a pragmatically efficacious grip on reality, there is reason to reject any top-down commitments to the Unity of Science (as for example driven by some *a priori* commitment to mechanistic physics as the epistemic ideal of inquiry). But, once one sees that pragmatic realism in philosophy of science

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[116] https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/nov/30/academicexperts.highereducation
[117] McDowell 1994: 77-78.
[118] Baker 2013: xxii.
[119] Ibid., p. 234.

does not entail – and in fact, strictly speaking, undermines – the Unity of Science thesis, 'scientism' just becomes a chimera.

What I hope to have achieved in this paper is to start a conversation between two philosophers, 'to produce new forms of intimacy, alliance, and communicability'.[120] The anti-essentialist spirit I have ascribed to Sellars on epistemology and Butler on feminism reveals a plethora of additional interesting and difficult questions about *how the space of reasons is organized*, *where its epistemic authority comes from*, *how one negotiates the space of reasons*, and especially, *how one gets into normative space at all*. The task of further papers is to "keep conversation going".[121]

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[121] PMN: 377.

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