

Questioning Real Gender *

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Abstract

What is gender and on what should gender classification be based? Dembroff (2018) has recently claimed that, for reasons of social justice, gender classification should not track extant gender kinds. They further argue for ontological pluralism—the existence of many gender kinds, and recommend that we combat oppression by imitating the gender kinds and classification practices in non-oppressive communities. Contra Dembroff, I argue that the analysis is subject to a number of internal problems, including a misguided self-characterization and a tension between ontological pluralism and imitation. In addition, I sketch a different perspective on the relation between gender kinds and gender classification practices that upholds Dembroff's intended goal but ameliorates the unintended complications.

Keywords: Dembroff, gender, metaphysics of gender, ontological pluralism

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I. Introduction

There have been increasing philosophical interests in gender. Recently, Dembroff (2018) has argued that debates about gender typically assumes the Real Gender assumption (hereafter RG):

Real Gender: Gender classification practice ought to track the operative gender kind membership facts. (Dembroff, 2018: 29)

They submit that we must reject RG for reasons of social justice, as universal commitment to it leads to the unjust marginalization, exclusion, and oppression of people who are trans or nonbinary. They further propose that we adopt gender pluralism and imitate the practices in non-exclusive communities.

This paper takes a critical approach to Dembroff's analysis and shows that the account is subject to a number of internal problems. I will question and clarify the intended scope of the rejection to RG, demonstrate that assuming gender pluralism does not lend support to the positive proposal, and argue that there is some tension between the existence of many gender kinds and the imitation strategy. In addition, I offer a different perspective on the relation between gender kinds and gender classification practices.

To be clear, I do not deny that gender-related oppression, marginalization, and exclusion are real and harmful.¹ However, precisely because gender is personally, politically, and socially important, we stand better chance to convince philosophers and the society at large of the need for change when we are equipped with strong arguments.

II. Dembroff on Real Gender

Consider the following arguments:

¹ I have in mind, for example, Betcher's (2009, 2012) discussion of the badness of trans-exclusion and Kapusta's (2016) argument on the harm and moral contestability of misgendering.

Argument 1

Premise 1: Trans women should be classified as women.

Premise 2: Position-based theories of gender imply that trans women are not women.

Conclusion: Therefore we should reject position-based theories of gender. (Dembroff, 2018: 30-31)²

Argument 2

Premise 1: Trans women should be classified as women.

Premise 2: Biology-based theories of gender imply that trans women are not women.

Conclusion: Therefore we should reject biology-based theories of gender.

Both arguments draws on the same argument schema:

Argument Schema

Premise 1: Persons in Group X should be classified as women.

Premise 2: Theory T implies that persons in Group X aren't women.

Conclusion: Therefore we should reject Theory T.³

This schema evaluates a theory of gender on the basis of whether it aligns well with the prescribed classification practice. As Dembroff clarifies, this schema (a) prescribes a certain gender classification practice, and (b) evaluates a theory of gender on the basis of whether it aligns well with the said classification practice. The crucial move, however, relies on an assumption that there is some sort of correspondence between kind membership and classification practice—that is, gender kind membership facts should constrain classification practice, and classification practice ought to track kind membership (Dembroff, 2018: 31). Dembroff calls this covert step the Real Gender assumption:

² Arguments like this can be found in, for instance, Barnes (2017), McKittrick (2015), and Mikkola (2016).

³ This schema is modeled after Dembroff (2018: 31).

Real Gender: Gender classification practice ought to track the operative gender kind membership facts. (Dembroff, 2018: 29)

While RG is extremely common in present debates, Dembroff argues that it leads to a unique kind of oppression:

Ontological Oppression: a phenomenon that “occurs when the social kinds (or the lack thereof) unjustly constrain (or enable) persons’ behaviors, concepts, or affect due to their group membership.” (Dembroff, 2018: 26)

Dembroff thinks ontological oppression is a general phenomenon⁴ with two major manifestations: (i) social kinds with “unjust membership conditions” and (ii) social contexts that “unjustly fail to recognize or construct certain kinds” (Dembroff, 2018: 23).⁵

Take the social kind voters. The membership conditions vary across times and regions. In 1893, New Zealand became the first country that had women voters. In 1948, with the announcement of its first constitutional law, both men and women were given suffrage in South Korea. By contrast, women were not allowed to vote in Saudi Arabia until December 2015. Plausibly, the membership conditions of the category voters unjustly constrain (or enable) the behaviors, concepts, and affect of both women and men, along with widespread and long-lasting social, political, practical, and material ramifications.

When the social kinds in question concern genders or the lack thereof, we have ontological *gender* oppression. Instances of ontological gender oppression include the marginalization and exclusion of trans and nonbinary people. Trans individuals suffer from the first manifestation of ontological oppression, for the social kinds men and women in dominant society have unjust membership conditions such that trans men are not men and trans women are not women; nonbinary individuals suffer from

⁴ Independently, Jenkins (2020) argues for a closely related notion of *ontic injustice*: a form of injustice in which “an individual is wronged by the very fact of being socially constructed as a member of a certain social kind” (Jenkins, 2020: 188).

⁵ A third manifestation is when the social meaning of a kind membership is unjust. Salient cases in point include transphobia, racism, and ableism. See Dembroff (2018: 26).

the second manifestation of ontological oppression, for the dominant ideology does not even recognize or construct the gender kind nonbinary or genderqueer.⁶

On Dembroff's view, due to the possibility of ontological oppression, we should reject not only the assumption that "gender classifications should track the gender kind membership fact" (Dembroff, 2018: 22), but also the assumption that "the metaphysics of gender (i.e. the real definite of gender, or of women, etc.) should constrain gender classification practices" (Dembroff, 2018: 23). Dembroff challenges both assumptions to the effect that the metaphysics of gender and gender classificatory practices need not inform one another.

Here is the alternative Dembroff proffers. First, they propose a *modest ontological pluralism*, according to which one simultaneously has multiple genders relative to the gender kinds operative in different contexts.⁷ Contexts differ in their operative gender kinds. While all of one's multiple genders are indexed to some gender kind in a certain context, because "the salience and relevance of a given gender differs across contexts" (Dembroff, 2018: 40), many of one's various genders "may not operate in one's immediate context" (Dembroff, 2018: 41).

Crucially, even in traditional, dominant contexts where the membership conditions of men and women are not trans-inclusive, trans people's gender are validated. This is so because there are contexts—i.e. the trans-inclusive contexts—where alternative gender kinds are operative.

Suppose that someone is a woman relative to dominant gender kinds, but a man relative to trans-inclusive gender kinds. According to modest ontological pluralism, this person has both of these gender kind memberships in all contexts. For this reason he can truthfully say, "I am a man." This is because the term "man" in his claim refers to the trans-inclusive gender kind—a kind he retains

⁶ See Dembroff (2020) on genderqueer as a *critical gender kind* whose members collectively destabilize core elements of the dominant gender ideology in the society.

⁷ By contrast, extreme ontological pluralism is the view that one's gender kind membership changes across contexts (Dembroff, 2018: 40).

membership in even when in contexts where this kind is not operative. (Dembroff, 2018: 41)

Furthermore, Dembroff recommends an *imitation approach* to combat ontological gender oppression. Consider first a bootstrapping approach. This approach aims to figure out what should guide our classification practices by attempting to answer a range of complex normative questions. While this might appeal to theorists, bootstrapping poses “serious practical worries.” In contrast, an imitation approach that recommends imitating extant practices in non-oppressive communities is much more feasible in answering the pressing practical needs. Not only can “classification practices be revised based upon those that already exist within other communities,” those in the dominant, trans-exclusive contexts can also “attempt to revise their operative gender kinds by mirroring or otherwise imitating the structures and practices that already exist in other contexts” (Dembroff, 2018: 36).

III. Problems of Dembroff’s Analysis

In order to pinpoint what is problematic, let me summarize Dembroff’s main theses:

- i. **Rejection of RG:** We should reject RG due to ontological gender oppression.
- ii. **Modest Ontological Pluralism:** A person has multiple genders, all of which are indexed to various gender kinds operative in some context, but only a small subset of them are operative in one’s immediate context.
- iii. **Imitation Strategy:** When ontological gender oppression occurs in one’s immediate context, we can and should resist it by revising the operative gender kinds and classification practices by imitating the gender kinds and practices in non-oppressive communities.

Among them, (ii) is descriptive whereas (i) and (iii) are normative. In

what follows, I will articulate how the descriptive element of the view is incompatible with the normative. Moreover, I will show why the rejection of RG has to be more limited than alleged or else it undermines the basis of imitation.

A. Pluralism and Context

To begin, there is a question of how ontological pluralism really works.

Recall the claim that “one is a member of many gender kinds, but the social relevance of these memberships change across contexts” (Dembroff, 2018: 40). Take contexts C_1 and C_2 , where different gender kinds are operative. Assume that in context C_1 , the membership facts of women are such that trans women are women as long as they complete certain surgical procedure. In context C_2 , by contrast, the membership facts are such that trans women are women as long as they sincerely self-identify as women.

On this view, a trans woman yet to undergo any medical procedure is a man relative to the gender kinds in C_1 and a woman relative to the gender kinds in C_2 . Moreover, because “this person has both of these gender kind memberships in all contexts” (Dembroff, 2018: 41), their claim to womanhood is veridical in C_1 , despite the fact that their self-ascribed gender does not match the gender kind operative in C_1 .

To illustrate why this is problematic, suppose Alex is a trans woman without any gender affirmation surgery.

(1) Alex is a woman.

Given the gender kinds membership facts in C_1 and C_2 outlined above, (1) is *prima facie* false in C_1 but true in C_2 . If the truth of (1) in C_2 can extend to C_1 , then (1) turns out to be true in C_1 as well. However, this means that (1) is both true and false in C_1 . Ontological pluralism thus appears to entail a blatant contradiction.

There is also a looming danger of trivializing the importance of gender claims. Dembroff’s view seems to suggest that for any gender claim p , whether or not it is true in one’s immediate context, if p is true in some context, it is true in all. But if the veridicality of gender kinds in trans-inclusive contexts can travel and hold true in other contexts, we might

wonder whether the gender kinds in trans-exclusive contexts could do the same. In addition, this account seems to entail that whatever gender claims one makes, be it “I’m a woman,” “I’m a man,” or “I’m nonbinary,” etc., so long as there is some context *C* such that the claim holds in *C* the gender claim is veridical across the board. When veridicality or truth comes so easily, it is no longer clear how pluralism helps to combat ontological gender oppression.

Part of the problem is that Dembroff does not specify the context-dependency at issue. One might hope, therefore, that the account can be salvaged once a more careful explanation of the workings of context is available. Below I offer two plausible interpretations and show that neither saves the situation.⁸

First, one could think that context is necessary to “complete the proposition expressed” (MacFarlane, 2005: 327). Under this specification of context-dependence, there is a hidden context indexical, *c*, and the proposition is incomplete when the value of *c* is missing. Hence, in *C*₁, (1) expresses the proposition <Alex is a woman in *C*₁>; in *C*₂, (1) expresses the proposition <Alex is a woman in *C*₂>. Alternatively, we can think of (1) as expressing the proposition <Alex is a woman_{dominant-kind}> in *C*₁, and <Alex is a woman_{trans-inclusive-kind}> in *C*₂.

This makes explicit that (1) express different propositions across contexts, which is both good news and bad news. The good news is that the account does not lead to straightforward contradiction: there doesn’t seem to be anything contradictory saying “Alex is not a woman in *C*₁ and Alex is a woman in *C*₂.” But the bad news is that there is no explaining how truth in one context gets any real purchase in the other without being trivial. Granted that the truth of “Alex is a woman in *C*₂” extends to *C*₁, the truth of “Alex is not a woman in *C*₁” also extends to *C*₂. In other words, speakers in different contexts do not disagree—they can acknowledge each other as speaking truthfully relative to the gender kinds operative in their respective community; they simply talk past each other. In other words, gender claims become cheap and the debates thereof insignificant.

⁸ These elucidations of context-dependency are inspired by MacFarlane (2005, 2007) and Haslanger (2012: ch. 15).

A second interpretation has it that context is necessary to “determine the truth-value of the proposition by determining the circumstances of evaluation” (MacFarlane, 2005: 327). That is, the context of use, or C_U , and the context of assessment, or C_A , are both crucial in determining the circumstances of evaluation. The differences between how (1) is evaluated in C_1 and C_2 is shown as follow:

- (2) a. “Alex is a woman” is false, relative to C_U and C_{A1} .
 b. “Alex is a woman” is true, relative to C_U and C_{A2} .

Common to those in C_1 and C_2 is a particular context of use, i.e. C_U . For speakers in C_1 , the context of assessment, i.e. C_{A1} , is the trans-exclusive social milieu; for speakers in C_2 , the context of assessment, i.e. C_{A2} , is the trans-inclusive social milieu.

This interpretation has the advantage of marking out the disagreement at issue, namely, the right context of assessment. However, it cannot make sense of how truth moves around different contexts.

Furthermore, extant versions of contextualist semantics of gender terms do not help either. According to the contextualism Saul (2012) suggests,⁹ (1) has different truth-values in C_1 and C_2 , and those values do not travel. Note that this version of contextualism is connected to extreme ontological pluralism, according to which one’s gender kind membership changes across contexts, not the modest ontological pluralism Dembroff supports. On the other hand, according to Diaz-Leon’s (2016) version of contextualism, (1) is evaluated relative to the objective features of the subject in each context (Diaz-Leon, 2016: 251). Again, there is no clear indication that this type of contextualism can explain why the truth in C_2 extends to C_1 . In addition, as Chen (2021b) points out, it is compatible with Diaz-Leon’s contextualism that there are objective moral, social, or political standards concerning the subject applicable across different contexts, such that (1) turns out to have the same truth-value in them all. However, this does not square with Dembroff’s pluralist picture, according to which contexts do differ in their gender kinds, classification practices, and truth-values of gender attributions.

⁹ To be clear, Saul (2012) does not endorse and eventually rejects the contextualist proposal.

In short, even when equipped with more clarification on the workings of context, Dembroff's account explains how gender kinds travel only at the expense of trivializing gender claims.

B. Metalinguistic Negotiation and Imitation

To be fair, Dembroff is sensitive to the triviality worry and the issue of disagreement. Drawing on *metalinguistic negotiation* (Plunkett, 2015; Plunkett & Sundell, 2013), they argue that the disputes in questions are not merely verbal and that speakers in C_1 and C_2 are not talking past each other.

While speakers in different contexts pick out different gender kinds with their uses of the term, their debates are normative and substantive. Their disagreements are about “who ought to have the robust associations welded to that particular gender classification” (Dembroff, 2018: 44). In addition, Dembroff thinks that when someone in C_1 renounces $woman_{\text{dominant-kind}}$ and adopts instead $woman_{\text{trans-inclusive-kind}}$, they not only provide “an internal critique” of the dominant ideology, but also demonstrates dominant gender kinds to be “contingent and malleable” (Dembroff, 2018: 45).

Let me note a few points. First, Dembroff remarks that Plunkett (2015) characterizes a metalinguistic negotiation as a dispute over what concept a term should mean. By contrast, they themselves frame the point “in terms of the kind referents, rather than concepts” because “the *concepts* are important only because of the *kinds* they pick out” (Dembroff, 2018: 44; my emphasis). Again, in so doing, Dembroff effectively assumes the correlation between classification practices and kinds. This is yet another evidence that some commitment to RG is operative.

Second, on Dembroff's view there is clearly one preferred result of negotiations. This brings to the fore an internal tension between the pluralistic outlook, the imitation strategy, and the methodology of negotiation: why insist on a plurality of gender kinds, when the objective of metalinguistic of negotiation is that we adopt some (e.g. $woman_{\text{trans-inclusive-kind}}$) and abandon some other (e.g. $woman_{\text{dominant-kind}}$)?

Importantly, the imitation strategy is supposed to replace RG in guiding gender classification (Dembroff, 2018: 36). But what justifies imitation? On the one hand, the existence of many different gender kinds

entails that speakers in contexts with oppressive gender kinds and classification practices are, ontologically speaking, not in error. But ontological pluralism is utterly unhelpful in the face of ontological gender oppression—it offers no explanation as to why imitation is needed, and arguably gives the bigots too much credit. Furthermore, like all negotiations, metalinguistic negotiations are subject to power dynamics. When the power relation is very much asymmetric, it is questionable how much can be realistically negotiated. On the other hand, if there are independent, normative reasons that we adopt certain gender kinds and the corresponding classification practices, appealing to modest ontological pluralism and metalinguistic negotiation would be pointless.

To recap, I have shown in (A) that Dembroff's account can only explain the travelling of gender kinds at the expense of trivializing gender claims; next, as discussed here in (B), to remedy the charge of such trivialization, Dembroff appeals to metalinguistic negotiation, but metalinguistic negotiation is in tension with the proposal of imitation. Thus, the workings of many gender kinds, the imitation strategy, and the methodology of metalinguistic negotiation form an inconsistent triad.

C. The Scope of RG and Imitation

Finally, there is a question of how to understand the denial of RG—i.e., whether we should resist RG in all contexts.

Let us examine the textual evidence. First, Dembroff specifies two formulations of RG, one generic and one specific: the generic version states that “*social kind* classifications ought to track the operative social kind membership facts” (Dembroff, 2018: 27-28; my emphasis); the more specific version states that “*gender* classifications should track the operative gender kind membership fact” (Dembroff, 2018: 29; my emphasis). The lack of additional adverbs of quantification (such as “often”) or quantificational expressions (such as “in most contexts”) arguably indicates a default universal reading that RG is at work in all contexts.¹⁰ Moreover, Dembroff states that they take their “claim to undercut the Real Gender

¹⁰ See Lewis (1975) for a classical treatment of adverbs of quantification such as “always,” “generally,” “sometimes,” and “seldom.”

assumption *in all contexts*, but here focus on dominant ones” (Dembroff, 2018: 35, fn. 53; emphasis mine). So, the rejection of RG appears to be across the board.¹¹

But this apparent generality is problematic. If RG is to be rejected completely, it follows that even in trans-inclusive contexts, where presumably the operative gender kinds membership facts do not cause ontological oppression, gender classifications still ought not track the metaphysics.

To put the problem in sharp focus, consider the two ways to interpret the force of the rejection:

Strong Rejection: Gender classifications should not track the operative gender kind membership facts in any context.

Weak Rejection: It is not the case that gender classifications should track the operative gender kind membership facts in all contexts.¹²

Given the alleged rejection of RG *in all contexts*, Strong Rejection seems to be the case. Yet if gender classification practices ought not track the operative gender kinds in any context, it’s a mystery how things work in trans-inclusive contexts.

In fact, there are good reasons to think that we are not to resist RG unconditionally. Recall the suggestion to tackle gender marginalization, exclusion, and oppression by imitating the classification practices and gender kinds in non-oppressive communities. This proposal itself presupposes the alignment between operative gender kinds and classification practices.

In non-oppressive contexts, gender kinds have such membership facts that nonbinary and trans people’s identities receive full respect. It strikes me that classificatory practices *should* track these facts in such contexts. For

¹¹ Though “undercutting” is not “rejecting,” it is synonymous with “undermining,” “challenging,” “threatening,” and “weakening.” Therefore the textual evidence still seems to be in favor of a universal reading of the rejection.

¹² In Strong Rejection, negation takes narrower scope relative to *ought*; in Weak Rejection, negation takes wider scope relative to *ought*.

what else should practices track? Indeed, the imitation strategy rests on two pre-conditions. First, there must be contexts where the operative gender kinds are not oppressive; second, gender classification practices in these contexts do align with the non-oppressive membership facts. Only then can those in contexts where ontological oppression occurs resort to imitation.

If Dembroff intends to deny RG in all contexts, they undermine the basis of the imitation approach. Therefore, some version of RG has to be the case.

Summing up, I have raised three objections to Dembroff's proposal: (1) modest ontological pluralism risks either making gender claims contradictory or trivial; (2) modest ontological pluralism is incompatible with the imitation approach; (3) rejecting RG in all context is implausible.

To clarify, I agree with much of the criticism Dembroff voices against pernicious gender classification practices, and while Dembroff's positive proposal is defective, we can learn important lessons from their meaningful errors. More specifically, Dembroff's account to my mind suffers from the following internal problems. On the one hand, there is a question of how the rejection of RG relates to the imitation strategy: rejecting RG in all contexts is implausible for it renders imitation baseless. This is the first internal tension—a tension between the two normative claims. On the other hand, it is not transparent how ontological pluralism can address the triviality worry by making recourse to metalinguistic negotiation without thereby challenging imitation. This is the second internal tension—a tension between the descriptive and the normative parts of the analysis.

IV. Back to Real Gender

With these in mind, I want to propose a different articulation of the relation between gender and gender classification practices that (i) is more sensitive to the difference between the descriptive and normative components and (ii) delineates more carefully the relationship between gender kinds and classification practices.

Let me begin with Dembroff's formulation of RG. Note that RG is a claim about what *ought to* be the case: classificatory practices ought to track ontological membership facts, and ontological membership facts ought to

constrain classificatory practices. But why think the operative gender kinds have the normative force pictured in RG? Of course, we do not want gender classification practices that are random, arbitrary, or ungrounded; presumably, such practices are to track something deep about gender, that is, they ought to be about the real gender. But what reasons do we have that the operative gender kinds are, and should be, the real gender?

Here is what I think is a more convincing picture. Gender classification practices in a specific context *C* illustrate the gender kinds operative in *C*. Yet neither the gender classification practices nor the gender kinds operative in *C* tells us what gender kinds really should be. Crucially, to take on ontological oppression, focusing on the oppressive facts and changing those facts is what really matters; we do not need to reject the correlation between metaphysics and classification practices universally.

With these in mind, I propose the Really Good Gender assumption (RGG):

- i. Extant gender classification practices reveal the operative gender kind membership facts.
- ii. Better gender classification practices should track the really good gender kind membership facts.

When we investigate the relationship between classification practices and metaphysics, an assumption such as RGG helps to put the normative considerations in sharper focus. The first, *descriptive* dimension of RGG states that we study the classification practices to identify the operative gender kinds. The second, *normative* dimension urges that we adopt classification practices and kinds that do not constitute or cause oppression.

Let me unpack the two parts. Thesis (i) is a descriptive claim about the epistemic relation between the existent gender classification practices in a given context *C* and the gender kind membership facts operative in *C*. Unlike Dembroff's RG, which conflates the descriptive and the normative, (i) says only about what *is* currently the case in *C* and makes no judgment about how things *should* be. Note that unless one is anti-realist about gender

kinds, classification practices do indicate gender kinds membership facts.¹³

In contrast, thesis (ii) is a normative claim about how the epistemic relation between gender classification practices and gender kind membership facts ought to be. Moreover, because “better” and “really good” are normative, evaluative terms, (ii) is doubly normative.¹⁴ Note also that thesis (ii) does not by itself define what “good” is. What constitutes good gender classification practices, good gender kinds, better gender classification practices, and better gender kinds are to be informed by both theoretical discussions and empirical observations. Ontological gender oppression, for example, can play an important role in how we understand and flesh out (ii).

The combination of (i) and (ii) shows how RGG is closely connected to Haslanger’s distinction between *descriptive* and *ameliorative* projects. Extant classification practices and the operative gender kinds they reveal are within the purview of Haslangerian descriptive analyses; by contrast, better gender classification practices and the really good gender kinds they track are the targets of ameliorative analyses.¹⁵ RGG makes explicit the potential tensions between what gender currently is—including both classification practices and membership facts—and what we want gender to be given legitimate purposes. Furthermore, RGG allows for the possibility that products of descriptive and ameliorative projects coincide (Haslanger, 2012: 377). Crucially, while we do not need to challenge extant operative gender kinds and classification practices that are really good, the struggle against oppression, marginalization, and exclusion requires constant efforts; even if we are able to reduce or eliminate injustice temporarily, it may re-emerge

¹³ Appiah (1995) famously holds the error theoretical stance on race. However, when it comes to gender, the majority of scholars engaged in analytic feminism adopt a realist approach. Furthermore, even proponents of deflationism (e.g. Antony, 2020; Diaz-Leon, 2018) do not refute thesis (i).

¹⁴ Following Plunkett (2015), I use “normative” in a broad sense that includes both the normative and the evaluative—by “normative” I mean issues such as what one should do; by “evaluative” I mean issues such as what is good or bad, as well as better or worse.

¹⁵ See also Chen (2021a).

later.¹⁶

RGG ameliorates Dembroff's analysis. It preserves Dembroff's intended goal and avoids the complications. First, as illustrated earlier, RGG makes clear the distinction between the descriptive and the normative, so RGG does not confuse or conflate the operative gender kinds and classification practices with those that we should aspire to. Second, RGG can address ontological gender oppression without being entangled in the details of ontological pluralism. Finally, RGG is not only compatible with but provides a justification of the imitation approach: so long as we take the gender kind membership facts and in trans-inclusive contexts to be really good, they are something those in trans-exclusive contexts can and should aspire to. RGG gives prominence to the normative ideal without the invoking cross-contextual veridicality.

Ultimately, what Dembroff and I advocate for is the same, i.e., an on-going attempt to tackle gender oppression. RGG shows that amending extant gender kinds with non-oppressive gender kinds and having the gender classification practices match the target gender kinds is a viable option. While universal commitment to RG is problematic, there is no need to deny really good configuration between kinds and classification practices.

¹⁶ O'Connor (2019) argues that social categories such as race and gender easily lead to inequality, with very basic and minimal conditions in cultural evolution.

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對真實性別的質問*

陳湘韻**

摘要

什麼是性別？性別的分類又該以何為據？丹柏弗 (2018) 主張，基於社會正義，性別的分類不應該以現行的性別類為準。丹柏弗主張性別的本體多元主義——存在著多元的性別類——並且建議我們透過仿效非壓迫社群所使用的性別類和性別分類方式，來抵抗社會中既存的性別壓迫。我認為丹柏弗的分析有著許多內在的矛盾，包括錯誤的對其理論的自我描述，以及本體多元主義跟仿效策略之間的緊張關係。此外，針對性別類與性別的分類方式兩者之間的關係，我提出了一個不同的看法，同時說明我的觀點不僅能達成丹柏弗所希望的目標，還能避免他的理論所遭遇的困難。

關鍵詞：丹柏弗、性別、性別形上學、本體多元主義

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