

## SYMPOSIUM ON FEMINISM AND REASON

The 1992 Women in Philosophy conference, held in conjunction with the annual conference of the Australian Division of the Australasian Association of Philosophy, was organised around the theme of Feminism and Reason. Participants in the Women in Philosophy conference were invited to submit their papers for publication in a special symposium in this Journal. Of those submitted, the following five were accepted for publication. Thanks are due to Karen Green, Rae Langton and Genevieve Lloyd for various forms of help in bringing the papers to a wider audience, and to the many people from whom I obtained help in the refereeing process [Ed.].

### BEYOND A PRAGMATIC CRITIQUE OF REASON

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#### I. Prolegomena<sup>1</sup>

##### *Introduction*

Much recent feminist work in philosophy has focused on the broad claim that reason is gendered. Some say that the traditional privileging of rationality is bad because of what it leaves out: there may be norms other than norms of reason; and there may be norms of reason other than those traditionally privileged. On this first view, there is nothing objectionable about the traditional norms as such; what is objectionable is an undue preoccupation with them, at the expense of norms — traditionally associated with women, perhaps — that are just as important. Others say that the norms themselves are objectionable, that they are directly implicated in the power relations of oppression. On this second view, traditional norms are to be challenged, not because of their sins of omission, but their sins of commission.<sup>2</sup> We

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Sally Haslanger, Richard Holton, Jennifer Hornsby, Lloyd Humberstone, and Natalie Stoljar, for ideas and comments that helped to improve this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Proponents of the first view might include such writers as Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) and Carol McMillan, *Women, Reason and Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982). Proponents of the latter might include a diverse range of writers: for example, besides Catherine MacKinnon whose work I focus on here, Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Michele Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice* (Oxford: Blackwell 1991); Elisabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin 1989); see also Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka (eds), *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983).

find a vivid expression of this kind of view in the following passage from Catherine MacKinnon's work.

The stance of the 'knower' . . . is . . . the neutral posture, which I will be calling objectivity — that is, the nonsituated distanced standpoint . . . [This] is the male standpoint socially . . . [The] relationship between objectivity as the stance from which the world is known and the world that is apprehended in this way is the relationship of objectification. Objectivity is the epistemological stance of which objectification is the social process, of which male dominance is the politics, the acted out social practice. That is, to look at the world objectively is to objectify it.<sup>3</sup>

Epistemology is inextricably entwined with gender politics, on this view. To be objective is to occupy the the male standpoint; to be objective is to objectify. Objectivity is the epistemological stance of which the sexual dominance of women is the social practice. Sexed objectivity creates sex objects.

In this paper I shall be exploring and evaluating this second kind of view, especially as it is presented by MacKinnon and developed by Sally Haslanger.<sup>4</sup> I shall be using the phrase 'norm of rationality' in a rather weak sense to mean, roughly, a strategy for forming beliefs: in this sense *modus ponens* and the gambler's fallacy both count as norms of rationality, because both can be viewed as strategies for reaching some new beliefs. The challenge we shall be considering says at the very least this: the pursuit of a particular norm of rationality serves the interests of men, and hurts the interests of women.

Let us stop for a moment, though, and ask an important preliminary question. Suppose that one could indeed establish that the pursuit of some norm of rationality serves the interests of men, and hurts the interests of women. What would follow? One might be tempted to think that the task would be over. If we were to establish this, we would succeed, first, in *explaining* the widespread pursuit of the norm; and we would succeed, second, in *damning* it. After all, this is just what happens when we succeed in identifying self-serving motives in other contexts. Despite her rhetoric about free enterprise, Anne votes Liberal because she wants a tax cut. Despite his impassioned sermons about animal liberation, Jim is vegetarian because he wants to impress Jane. Here the accusations, if true, serve nicely to explain the actions in question, and to damn or at least deflate them. That p is in A's interests is always a plausible explanation for A's acting to bring it about that p. And if A has loftier stories about her action, the explanation serves to undermine them: given that p is in A's interest, she would probably have brought it about anyway. Moreover, if you can show that p not only serves A's interests but also hurts the interests of someone else, you have an additional reason to damn A's action. If you can show that voting Liberal will give Anne a tax cut, and in addition hurt the interests of the unemployed, you have two grounds for damnation: first, the *self-serving*

<sup>3</sup> *Feminism Unmodified* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1987) p.50.

<sup>4</sup> Sally Haslanger, 'On Being Objective and Being Objectified' in *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity* (eds) Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

*motive* that undermines her loftier story; and second, the discovery of *bad consequences*.

We might expect that this is just the kind of result that a feminist critique of reason, if successful, might yield. If the pursuit of a certain norm of rationality serves the interests of men, and hurts the interests of women, then pursuit of the norm will be similarly explained and damned: for there are self-serving motives, and bad consequences. Despite the lofty stories philosophers have told about rationality, the truth is that it is in men's interests to pursue its norms. Men thus have a motive to pursue the norms that has nothing to do with the lofty stories, and the stories become explanatorily irrelevant. Pursuit of the norm is explained; and, insofar as the lofty story is discredited, pursuit of the norm is damned. If the norm not only serves the interests of men but hurts the interest of women there is an additional reason for damnation: not only are the motives self-serving, but the consequences are bad, that is to say, bad for women.

These appearances are deceptive. To show that pursuing some norm of reason serves men's interests and hurts the interests of women is not yet to explain or entirely to damn that pursuit. If a feminist critique hopes to achieve those ends, it will have to do more.

### *Explanation*

The self-serving motive ascribed to Anne for voting Liberal was a possible and even a plausible motive for her action. That is why it was a good candidate for an explanation. That *p* is in *A*'s interests is generally, we said, a plausible explanation for *A*'s acting to bring it about that *p*. People generally desire what is in their interests, and act to fulfil their desires. However, in turning to norms of rationality, we are no longer in the realm of action. We are, broadly, in the realm of belief: a norm of rationality is a strategy for forming beliefs. Once we enter the realm of belief, different motives, and accordingly different explanations, apply. That *p* is in *A*'s interests may be a plausible explanation for *A*'s *acting* to bring it about that *p*; but it is not — or not without a long and complex story — a plausible explanation for *A*'s *believing* that *p*.

'Act like Elvis', I say, 'and I will give you twenty dollars'. It is in your interests to act like Elvis, you desire the twenty dollars, so you act like Elvis. 'Believe you are Elvis', I say, 'and I will give you twenty dollars'. It is in your interests to believe you are Elvis, you desire the twenty dollars, so you believe you are Elvis. That there is something extremely odd about the latter, but not the former, kind of story is something that has been noted and explored by many philosophers. While it is always in principle possible to do something for no other reason than that it is in one's interests to do it, it is not in principle possible to believe something for no other reason than that it is in one's interests to believe it.<sup>5</sup> This is often explained in terms of direction of fit: beliefs aim at being true, and their being true is their fitting the world; desires, by contrast, aim at being fulfilled, and their being fulfilled is the world fitting them. Too crudely: beliefs are arranged to fit the world; the world is

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Bernard Williams, 'Deciding to Believe' in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

arranged to fit desires.

There are disputes as to the meaning and status of these metaphors: whether claims about direction of fit involve empirical generalizations about mental dispositions, normative claims about the ethics of believing and desiring, or constitutive claims about what counts as a belief or a desire.<sup>6</sup> I shall be taking the view that some difference of direction of fit is important in both a constitutive way, and a normative way. I shall be taking the view that beliefs aim to fit the world; and that beliefs ought to fit the world. The former should be read as a constitutive claim about about *what a belief is*; the latter should be read as a normative claim about *what a good belief is*. A belief is something that aims to fit the world; a good belief is something that does fit the world.

It is the constitutive claim that is relevant here. If beliefs aim to fit the world, and not vice versa, we can see why it should be impossible to believe at the drop of a hat that one is Elvis (unless of course one is Elvis).<sup>7</sup> That I shall give you twenty dollars if you believe that you are Elvis has nothing to do with the truth of whether or not you are Elvis. It is not the kind of reason that can be reason for belief. As Bernard Williams says,

. . . it is not a contingent fact that I cannot bring it about, just like that, that I believe something . . . Why is this? One reason is connected with the characteristic of beliefs that they aim at truth. If I could acquire a belief at will, I could acquire it whether it was true or not; moreover, I would know that I could acquire it whether it was true or not. If in full consciousness I could will to acquire a 'belief' irrespective of its truth, it is unclear that before the event I could seriously think of it as a belief, i.e. as something purporting to represent reality.<sup>8</sup>

The point here is not that for a belief to be a *good* belief it should aim to fit the world, that it should purport to represent reality; the point is that, to be a belief at all, it must aim to fit the world, purport to represent reality.

What goes for belief goes for norms of belief formation. Suppose you are one of the lucky individuals not susceptible to the gambler's fallacy. I, aiming (like some contemporary psychologists)<sup>9</sup> to show the prevalence of this bad norm in the population, unscrupulously offer you twenty dollars to infer — *really* infer — in accordance with the fallacy, though not of course under that description. The task will be no easier than believing that you are Elvis, and for a similar reason. That I shall give you twenty dollars if you infer in accordance with the gambler's fallacy has nothing to do with the truth of the beliefs that will be formed by inferring that way. That it is in your interests to follow a certain norm of belief formation is not, on its

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent recent discussion of competing views and a new proposal as to what 'direction of fit' consists in, see Lloyd Humberstone, 'Direction of Fit', *Mind* 101 (1992) pp.59-83.

<sup>7</sup> Unlike the rest of us, Elvis has theoretical (not just practical) reasons for believing he is Elvis. However, not even Elvis would believe it at the drop of a hat: he would not (except in very odd circumstances) *come to* believe it.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *op.cit.*, p.148.

<sup>9</sup> Whose work is cited in Stephen Stich, *The Fragmentation of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1990) p.83. Stich, incidentally, is one who uses 'norm' in the weak sense that I do.

own, a reason for following it. Williams' remarks are as readily applicable to norms of belief as to to beliefs themselves. If in full consciousness I could will to follow a belief-forming strategy irrespective of the truth of the beliefs it would yield, it is unclear that before the event I could seriously think of it as a belief-forming strategy, i.e. as something generating states that purport to represent reality. Again, the point is not about adopting a *rational* belief forming strategy: the point is about adopting any belief forming strategy at all.

We are imagining for the moment that the following claim is true: pursuing a certain norm of rationality serves the interests of men, and hurts the interests of women. This gave us a candidate self-serving motive: men endorse the norm because it is in their interests. But if what we have just said is correct, there is a problem with this motive: that it is in one's interests to pursue a certain norm of rationality is not the kind of motive that can be a reason for pursuing it. This means that the claim, even if true, does not do the job we thought it did. It does not do the job of *explaining* the pursuit of that norm.

Or not, at any rate, on the face of it. The problem we've just identified emerges out of considerations about the different directions of fit of belief and desire, that imply restrictions on the kinds of motives that can be motives in the realm of belief formation. However, there are apparent exceptions to the neat rule that beliefs are arranged to fit the world, and the world is arranged to fit desires. Sometimes beliefs arrange themselves to fit desires. And sometimes the world arranges itself to fit beliefs.

Beliefs can arrange themselves to fit desires. I want to believe I can leap across the crevasse, and, plucking up courage, bring it about that I do so believe.<sup>10</sup> Pascal wants to believe there is a God, begins to go to church, and eventually believes that there is a God. Someone wants to believe that all is well with her marriage and (Davidson's example) turns a blind eye to the lipstick on the collar.<sup>11</sup> Wishful thinking and self-deception are phenomena that depend on belief arranging itself to fit desire; but their ubiquity has done little to undermine their mystery. Understood as intentional mental processes, they are beset by paradox. Philosophers relegate them to the margins, and resort in desperation to the machinery of divided selves and homuncular deceivers. The best efforts to make sense of them abandon the attempt to understand them as intentional processes, and view them instead as purposive but subintentional tropisms, purposive because they serve a function, but no more intentional than the heliotropism of a plant.<sup>12</sup>

The world can arrange itself to fit beliefs. I believe that I am able to leap across the crevasse, and by so believing, bring it about that I am able to leap across the

<sup>10</sup> The example, which occurs in its self-fulfilling aspect in the next paragraph, is from William James, 'The Will to Believe' in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1891).

<sup>11</sup> 'Deception and Division' in *Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (eds) E. LePore and B. McLaughlin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) p.143.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Johnston, 'Self Deception and the Nature of Mind' in *Perspectives on Self-Deception* (eds) Brian McLaughlin and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988). Johnston himself does not relegate tropisms to the margins: rational and irrational processes are alike tropisms, on his view, the former distinguished from the latter by the fact that the causes in question are in fact reasons.

crevasse. I stare at my reflection and believe that every day, in every way, I am getting better and better. I thereby (with luck) bring it about that every day, in every way, I am getting better and better. The teacher believes that the child is of below average intelligence, and thereby brings it about — with a little help from her actions — that the child is of below average intelligence.<sup>13</sup> Self-fulfilling beliefs, like self-deception and wishful thinking, present apparent exceptions to neat rules about directions of fit. They too are beset by philosophical puzzles, for in general, thinking so doesn't make it so. If we are to avoid outright idealism, we must restrict the domain where the world arranges itself to fit belief.

Much feminist work can be seen as questioning neat rules about direction of fit, in both of the above ways. Consider the following, again from MacKinnon:

Having power means, among other things, that when someone says, 'this is how it is' it is taken as being that way . . . [The] beliefs of the powerful become [proven], in part because the world actually arranges itself to affirm what the powerful want to see. If you perceive this as a process, you might call it force, or at least pressure or socialization or what money can buy. If it is imperceptible as a process, you may consider it voluntary or consensual or free will or human nature, or just the way things are. Beneath this, though, the world is not entirely the way the powerful say it is or want to believe it is.<sup>14</sup>

Here again we have a picture of beliefs fitting desires, and the world fitting beliefs. When the powerful desire that *p*, they believe that *p*: belief arranges itself to fit desire, rather than to fit the world. When the powerful believe that *p*, the world arranges itself to make it the case that *p*. The powerful are viewed as doing just as the crevasse leaper does in the familiar example from James: desiring that *p*, thereby believing that *p*, thereby bringing it about that *p*. MacKinnon (together perhaps with other theorists who speak of discourses 'constructing reality') will want to say that such phenomena are not to be relegated to the margins, that they are more pervasive, and more politically significant, than is dreamt of in our philosophy. But if we are puzzled by wishful thinking and the like, we will be no less puzzled by these larger political claims. We will want to know more.

So far I have done little more than point to a problem: on plausible analyses of belief and desire, self interest alone cannot be a motive for forming a belief, or for pursuing a certain norm of belief formation. In trying to to make sense of phenomena where self interest does look like a motive for belief, one enters a philosophical minefield: one must resort to the machinery of divided selves, or alternatively say that such phenomena are not intentional at all, but sub-intentional tropisms. We could, of course, approach a feminist critique of reason as we approach these other phenomena: we could invoke divided selves, or say that the it must involve sub-intentional, rather than intentional, processes. We could say that pursuing a certain ideal of reason serves men's interests, and that is *why* they pursue

<sup>13</sup> See Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jakobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).

<sup>14</sup> MacKinnon, *op. cit.*, pp.58-59. Following a suggestion of Haslanger, I have substituted 'proven' here for MacKinnon's own word 'proof', since it seems to make better sense of MacKinnon's point.

it. We could add that the *why* here does not explain in terms of an ordinary motive, for such a motive is not an appropriate motive for belief, or for following some norm of belief; that the *why* points not to the reason for pursuing the norm, but perhaps to the function of pursuing it.

But the envisaged feminist critique is not in the same philosophical boat as self-deception and its cousins, and it would be good to rescue it from such mystifying company. It would be good, I think, to understand it in such a way that it provides an explanation of a more ordinary kind: that in addition to saying it is in men's interests to pursue a certain norm of rationality, it shows us why, in ordinary intentional terms, men might pursue that norm. That question will occupy us in the pages to come.

### *Damnation*

If the pursuit of a certain norm of rationality serves the interests of men, and hurts the interests of women, then pursuit of that norm will be damned: first, because there are self-serving motives whose presence undermines the lofty stories told about rationality; and second, because the consequences are bad, that is to say, bad for women. That was the possible result we considered at the outset. If what we have just said is correct, however, the first of these reasons for damnation is wrong, since the motive identified — namely brute self interest — is not a possible motive for pursuing a norm of rationality. We still need to consider the second: pursuing the norm has bad consequences for women, so it is bad full stop.

Suppose we call a critique *pragmatic* just in case it evaluates a norm of rationality on the basis of the practical consequences of adopting the norm. Suppose we call a critique *Kantian* if it evaluates a norm of rationality on the basis of whether it succeeds by the lights of some more fundamental norm of rationality.<sup>15</sup> In a situation where subjects who happen to endorse the gambler's fallacy are systematically rewarded by the experimenters, the gambler's fallacy will be vulnerable to a Kantian, but not a pragmatic, critique. Inferring by that rule has good consequences for the subjects in those circumstances; but it nonetheless gives them false beliefs about probabilities.

To say that pursuing a certain norm is bad because it has bad consequences for women is to offer a pragmatic critique. This kind of strategy, if it works, offers strong grounds for damning the norm in question. But it has its costs. Pragmatism is a game that anyone can play. If feminists play it, we can hardly complain when others do. One recent champion of pragmatism about rationality argues that our only way of evaluating norms of rationality is on the basis of their consequences for the user. A belief-forming strategy is rational, says Stephen Stich, just in case it serves its user's interests.<sup>16</sup> Now if, as we are imagining, a certain norm of reason

<sup>15</sup> 'Kantian', firstly because it is not consequentialist, and secondly, in view of the Kant of the 'Transcendental Dialectic'. When we reason in the usual way, in an unusual context, namely, beyond the scope of experience, we become enmeshed in contradictions (the Antinomies). Here a certain use of reason is said to be bad by reason's own lights.

<sup>16</sup> Stich, *op. cit.*, *passim*, especially the final chapter. Notice that Stich's account will be vulnerable to exactly the same kind of objection I raised above: that a given strategy for adopting a belief is in the user's interests is not a possible motive for adopting it.

turns out to serve the interests of men, and hurt the interests of women, then on the Stich account that norm is rational — for men. The norm is a good norm — for men. Too bad if it's not good for us. Pragmatism gives us no basis from which to complain.

A Kantian critique — if we could find one — would say more. It would deny that norms of rationality can only be evaluated in terms of their consequences. It would show that, in addition to having bad consequences for women, the norm in question was bad by reason's own lights. Clearly a critique of this kind would not be a damnation of reason *tout court*, any more than Kant's was. But I don't see that as a failing. It is hard to see how there could be a critique of reason *tout court*, and harder still to see why we would want one. As Haslanger remarks,

. . . there is something peculiar about engaging in discussion and reasoned debate over the value, or legitimacy, or reality, of reason and rationality. If there is something wrong with our commitments to reason, I doubt we'll find it this way (and I don't know what we could do about it if we did).<sup>17</sup>

In what follows I assume, as she does, that some minimal norms of rationality are not at stake. In particular, I assume that considerations about direction of fit have, in addition to the constitutive aspect discussed above, *normative* implications for the evaluation of beliefs and belief forming strategies. Beliefs ought to fit the world; and belief forming strategies ought to yield beliefs that do fit the world. That assumption will play an important role in section III, enabling us to offer a Kantian critique of the norm in question.

### *Summing up*

These prolegomena have left us with two tasks. If we find that a certain norm of rationality is vulnerable to feminist critique in so far as its pursuit is found to serve the interests of men, and hurt the interests of women, we need to show in addition why the norm might be pursued; and we need to show in addition how the norm might be vulnerable to a Kantian, as well as a pragmatic, critique. That will give us both the explanation and damnation otherwise absent.

In what follows I attempt to address these tasks. Whether or not the attempt succeeds, I hope at the very least to have convinced the reader that they need addressing. In section II I consider a particular norm of rationality, raised by MacKinnon in the first passage I quoted, and analysed and developed in detail by Haslanger. The Haslanger analysis aims to answer the general question 'Is reason gendered?' by considering whether this particular norm is gendered, and if it is gendered, in what way. Her analysis provides, in my view, an interesting and plausible way of interpreting the claim that reason is gendered, and in what follows I will do my best to convey the gist of it. The reader is warned, however, that Haslanger's paper is substantial, and my relatively brief exegesis fails to do it justice in at least two ways: I leave out much that is of interest, and I actively tinker with it at certain points (to be noted in due course). A further caveat: there are, of course, norms of rationality

<sup>17</sup> Haslanger, *op.cit.*, p.87.



and accounts of gender other than those considered here; and many other ways of understanding the claim that reason is gendered. But there is enough on our plate without them.

Haslanger's analysis shows how the pursuit of a certain norm might serve the interests of men, and hurt the interests of women. In addition, though this is not her chief aim, I think it provides the resources for answering the questions we have been considering: it can both explain pursuit of the norm, and convincingly damn it. In section III I try to show how.

## II. Objectivity and Objectification

To look at the world objectively, says MacKinnon, is to objectify it. This slogan encapsulates the thought that to follow a certain traditional norm of rationality is to oppress, that being objective makes you an objectifier, and that in this sense reason is gendered. We are about to interpret and evaluate this claim. What is meant by 'objectivity' here? And what is meant by 'objectification'? How exactly are the two related? We will take these three issues one at a time.

### *Reason and objectivity*

Objectivity, says MacKinnon, is the stance of the knower in traditional philosophical thought: it is 'the neutral posture', the 'non-situated distanced standpoint'.<sup>18</sup> Drawing on these and similar themes in MacKinnon's work, Haslanger develops the norm in the following way, the aim being to find a norm that has some claim to the label of 'objectivity', and that might also be implicated in objectification.

The norm goes along with a familiar picture of the world and our place in it. The world we live in is independent of us, and things in it behave the way they do because of how they are. Things behave as they do because of what their natures are. Regular patterns in the behaviour of things can be explained in terms of their qualities or natures. A thing's nature is essential to it; it is that in virtue of which it is the kind of thing it is. Since the world is independent of us in this way, it places constraints on what we can do in it. In practical matters we need to attend to things' natures. 'It won't do to try to fry an egg on a paper plate; there's no point in trying to teach a rock how to read.'<sup>19</sup> It is wise, in practical matters, to accommodate our decisions to the way things are, wise to accommodate the natures of things. However, it is difficult to discover the natures of things. Since natures are responsible for the regular behaviour of things in normal circumstances, the best way of discovering what they are is to infer them on the basis of observed regular behaviour. You need to be sure that circumstances really are normal, and not subject to interfering conditions; you need to be sure that observed regularities are genuine regularities. But normal circumstances are usual circumstances, so you will usually be safe in assuming that the regularities you observe are genuine.

We have here a mixed bag of rough epistemic and practical norms that tell you how to draw on observation in forming beliefs about the world, and how to constrain your actions in light of your beliefs about how the world is. Looked at more

<sup>18</sup> MacKinnon, *op.cit.*, pp.58, 59.

<sup>19</sup> Haslanger, *op.cit.*, p.105.

closely, the norm — which Haslanger labels ‘Assumed Objectivity’ — can be seen to consist of four sub-norms.

- i) *epistemic neutrality*: take a ‘genuine’ regularity in the behaviour of something to be a consequence of its nature.
- ii) *practical neutrality*: constrain your decision making (and so your action) to accommodate things’ natures.
- iii) *absolute aperspectivity*: count observed regularities as ‘genuine’ regularities just in case the observations occur under normal circumstances (that they are not, for example, conditioned by the observer’s social position, and that the observer has not influenced the behaviour of the items under observation).
- iv) *assumed aperspectivity*: if a regularity is observed, assume that circumstances are normal<sup>20</sup>

For example, says Haslanger, you observe that every time you water begonias with ammonia, they die. By iv), you assume that circumstances are normal. By iii), you conclude that this is a genuine regularity. By i), you attribute the regularity to the workings of the natures of ammonia and begonias. By ii), you only water your begonias with ammonia if you want them to die.<sup>21</sup>

Another example (mine this time): you observe that every time you see a lyre bird, it is completely silent. By iv) you assume that circumstances are normal. By iii), you conclude that this is a genuine regularity. By i) you attribute the regularity to the workings of the nature of lyre birds. By ii), when you make your long awaited ‘Sounds of the Australian Bush’ recording, you do not take your recording equipment to the favourite haunts of lyre birds.

### *Gender and objectification*

MacKinnon’s version of the idea that reason is gendered is that being objective makes one an objectifier; and Haslanger is exploring the suggestion that there is *some* relationship, yet to be specified, between objectivity and objectification. We have just looked at a particular norm of rationality that has some claim to the label of ‘objectivity’, and our next task is to get a grip on the notion of objectification.

Haslanger draws on MacKinnon’s analysis of gender, according to which the distinction between men and women is a distinction between objectifier and objectified. That is why the question about whether reason is gendered is seen as a question about objectivity’s relationship to objectification. MacKinnon falls within the camp of those who think that gender properties are social, relational, and hierarchical, and Haslanger interprets her in a way that preserves a sex/gender distinction, at least on a provisional basis. What sex you are is not a social, relational, hierarchical fact about you; what gender you are is.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.110.

If we keep ‘male/female’ for the distinction between the sexes, and ‘man/woman’ for the distinction between the genders, then on the MacKinnon view it is a necessary truth that men dominate women: for gender is constituted by relations of domination. According to this view, as a matter of fact most males are men, and most females are women; but it doesn’t have to be so, and feminists work towards the day when this is no longer the case. Feminists really *are* women who don’t want to be women, on this view: that is to say, we are persons perceived and treated as sexually subordinate who would prefer not to be perceived and treated as sexually subordinate. This use of the labels will be unsatisfactory to some (to understate the point considerably), but for the purposes of this section of the paper I shall go along with the MacKinnon/Haslanger usage. The usage will also, I’m afraid, lead to some terminological confusion which I clear up at the beginning of section III.

A distinctive feature of the MacKinnon approach is that it views gender as sexualized or eroticized: gender is

. . . created through the eroticization of dominance and submission. The man/woman difference and the dominance/submission dynamic define each other. This is the social meaning of sex and the distinctively feminist account of gender inequality.<sup>22</sup>

Gender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women.<sup>23</sup>

A theory of sexuality becomes feminist methodologically, to the extent that it treats sexuality as a social construct of male power: defined by men, forced on women, and constitutive of the meaning of gender.<sup>24</sup>

Given the eroticization of the dominance/submission dynamic, the submissive participant is viewed as and treated as an object for the satisfaction of the dominant’s desire. ‘Men treat women as who they see women as being.’<sup>25</sup> Men see women as being submissive by nature, and they want them to be that way, and treat them accordingly. Men project the desired qualities on to women, but the projection ‘is not just an illusion or a fantasy or a mistake. It becomes embodied because it is enforced.’<sup>26</sup>

So what exactly is objectification? Haslanger draws on the above ideas, and abstracts from the sexual dimension integral to MacKinnon’s own story, to reach the following more general view of what it is to objectify someone or something. To *objectify* a thing or person is:

<sup>22</sup> MacKinnon, *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) pp.113-114.

<sup>23</sup> MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*, p.6.

<sup>24</sup> MacKinnon, *Toward A Feminist Theory of the State*, p.128. These three quotations are all cited by Haslanger, *op.cit.*, p.99.

<sup>25</sup> MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*; p.122.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.119.

- i. to view and treat it as an object for the satisfaction of one's *desire*;
- ii. where one desires it to be F, to *force* it to be F;
- iii. to *believe* that it is F (accurate descriptive belief); and
- iv. to believe that it is F *by nature* (illusory projective belief).

So men objectify women in so far as they view and treat them as objects of male sexual desire; they desire them to be submissive, and force them to submit; they believe that women are in fact submissive; and they believe that they are submissive by nature. Under conditions of gender hierarchy the belief mentioned in the third condition, that women are in fact submissive, will typically be a true belief, an accurate descriptive belief. The belief is, as MacKinnon says, 'not just an illusion or a fantasy or a mistake'. What is an illusion is the belief of the final condition: that women are submissive *by nature*. In principle one could tell this story for properties of women other than sexual submissiveness; and for objectified things other than women.<sup>27</sup>

### *Is reason gendered? The relation between objectivity and objectification*

What we have identified so far is a particular norm of rationality, namely Assumed Objectivity; and a particular way of understanding gender that sees gender roles as social, relational, hierarchical, and constituted by objectification. In asking about the relation between reason and gender in this context, one is asking about the relation between a particular norm and a particular role or roles. And there are some quite general things one can say about the relation of norms to roles.

A norm in general, says Haslanger, can be thought of as a virtue for a particular kind of thing or person: fulfilling the norm will make one an excellent exemplar of that role, given that one occupies it. For example, it is a virtue in a pen-knife that it have a sharp blade and fit comfortably in the hand: fulfilling that norm will help to make it an good exemplar of the kind 'pen-knife'. It is a virtue in a Nazi commander to be ruthless: following that norm will help to make him a good exemplar of that role. It may be a virtue in a master to be kind, in so far as kindness will inspire the slave's loyalty: fulfilling the norm of kindness will help to make him a good exemplar of that role. It is a virtue in a tenant to be considerate to the neighbours, and pay the rent on time. It is a virtue in a teacher to listen carefully, and to reliably inform and guide others in learning.

The examples illustrate Haslanger's view that norms often need to be understood as norms relative to some role or function. One can sometimes raise the question independently as to whether the norms are good norms: but that question will often have to be answered in terms of the goodness or otherwise of the role for which it is a norm. 'Be ruthless' is a norm for a Nazi commander; but if we think that the role

<sup>27</sup> Haslanger herself applies this notion of objectification to the case of animals. 'What do the deer, tuna and lamb have in common that the horse, dolphin and kitten lack?' she asks. The answer is that the former count as meat. The category of meat is in her view analogous to the category of gender. Human beings objectify animals by viewing and treating some of them as objects for the satisfaction of human appetite; desiring them to have certain properties (lean, tasty muscle tissue); bringing it about that they have those properties; believing that they (and not the other animals) have the properties appropriate to meat by nature (Haslanger, *op.cit.*, p.101).

is a bad one, we may want to question the norm that goes with it.

There are a variety of relations that may hold between a role and a norm that goes with it. Consider the tenant again. Following the first norm, being considerate to the neighbours, will help make a tenant a good tenant: it is, says Haslanger, *appropriate* to the role of tenant. However, the second norm has a much tighter connection with the role: paying one's rent on time is not just appropriate for someone in the role of tenant. Following this second norm is *sufficient* to make you a tenant. Not so for the first norm: one can be considerate to the neighbours and fail to be a tenant; one can be considerate to the neighbours, and be an owner or a squatter. Norms of the second kind, whose satisfaction is sufficient for occupying the role in question, are said to be *grounded in* that role. Something similar is true for the teacher: listening carefully will help make her a good teacher, and is thus appropriate to that role. Reliably informing and guiding others in learning is sufficient for being a teacher, and is thus grounded in that role.

We have, then, two ways in which a norm can be related to a role, which in turn yields two ways of understanding the claim that reason is gendered. A norm of rationality is gendered if it is related in one of these two ways to a gender role. A norm may be appropriate to the role, in which case we will say it is *weakly gendered*. A norm may be grounded in the role, in which case we will say it is *strongly gendered*. A norm would be weakly gendered if it were appropriate to the gender role of men: if satisfying the norm were to make one an excellent man, contribute to success as a man. Assumed Objectivity would be weakly gendered if it were appropriate to the role of objectifier. A norm would be strongly gendered if it were grounded in the gender role of men, if satisfying the norm were sufficient for being a man. Assumed Objectivity would be strongly gendered if satisfying it were sufficient for being an objectifier.

We are now in a position to ask: is Assumed Objectivity gendered? And if so, how? Suppose a man were to apply the norm in a context of existing gender hierarchy. He ought to do as follows. He should observe that women appear, in general, to be submissive. By iv), the norm of assumed aperspectivity, he should assume that circumstances are normal. By iii), the norm of absolute aperspectivity, he should conclude that this is a genuine regularity. By i), the norm of epistemic neutrality, he should attribute the regularity to the workings of the nature of women. By ii), the norm of practical neutrality, he should structure social arrangements to accommodate these natures: in sexual encounters, he should dominate women.

Would following the norm in this way help him succeed in the role of a man? Well, yes, if we have taken the role of a man to be the role of an objectifier. An objectifier, recall, needs i) to view and treat women as objects for the satisfaction of his *desire*; ii) where he desires them to have a certain property, such as submissiveness, to *force* them to have that property; iii) to *believe* that they in fact have the property in question: to believe that they are in fact submissive (the accurate descriptive belief); and finally iv) to believe that they have that property *by nature* (the illusory projective belief). Following the norm of Assumed Objectivity will help an objectifier succeed in his role, since it will help him achieve the third and fourth of the above conditions: the epistemic norms will enable him to interpret reg-

ular submissive behaviour of women as genuine regularity, and believe accordingly that women are submissive by nature. The practical norm will legitimate actions that, given his position of power, will help him achieve the second condition. Acting on the assumption that women are by nature submissive, he will force them to submit. If this — or even part of this — is correct, then the norm of Assumed Objectivity is appropriate to the role of an objectifier, and is thus at least *weakly gendered*.

Is the norm *strongly gendered*? MacKinnon seems to say ‘yes’: being objective makes you an objectifier. To look at the world objectively is to objectify it. Haslanger says ‘no’. She points out that one can satisfy the norm with respect to the non-social world — for example with respect to begonias — without being an objectifier. It is one thing to say that the social world has been shaped by men’s power and desire. It is quite another to say that this is true of the universe at large. MacKinnon’s analysis of how the social world has been shaped by male power and desire is persuasive, but it is a mistake to extend this analysis to the world in general.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, one can satisfy the norm of Assumed Objectivity with respect to the social world, even in conditions of gender hierarchy, without being an objectifier. Women themselves might satisfy the norms, conforming their beliefs and actions to the objectifier’s projected reality, and thereby fulfilling the third and fourth conditions of being an objectifier; but without finding the reality desirable, or having the power to enforce it, thereby failing to fulfil the first and second conditions of being an objectifier. Being objective is not sufficient for being an objectifier, because being an objectifier takes social *power*. No norm of rationality will give you that.

In discovering that the norm is not strongly gendered, we have discovered that it is weakly gendered in a new way: besides being appropriate to the role of an objectifier, it seems to be appropriate to the role of an *objectified*. A woman who satisfies the norm will interpret apparent regularities in women’s own behaviour as genuine regularities, and attribute them to the nature of women. That will help her succeed in the role of a woman: she will think that change is impossible, resistance useless. So although the norm is not *grounded* in either gender role, it is *appropriate* to both gender roles: given that one is a woman, following the norm helps one be a better woman; given that one is a man, following the norm helps one be a better man. The norm, applied in these ways, helps sustain the power relations that constitute gender.<sup>29</sup>

What can we conclude from this? If we think, for political reasons, that certain roles are bad, can we conclude that norms appropriate to them are bad also? Ruthlessness is appropriate to the role of the Nazi commander; and we might think that the norm should be abolished as we abolish the role to which it is appropriate. But it’s not so simple. Good norms can be appropriate to bad roles. Kindness is a

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

<sup>29</sup> This paragraph goes beyond Haslanger’s own conclusions. She does not conclude that the norm is appropriate for women; she does think, though, that it is contextually grounded in a politically problematic role that she labels that of a ‘collaborator’, a role that women can occupy. (A norm is contextually grounded in a role if satisfying it is sufficient in some particular context for occupying the role.) The reader is referred to her paper for the fuller picture.

virtue in the slave's master, helping the master succeed in his role. But we want to abolish slavery and mastery without abolishing kindness. Perhaps Assumed Objectivity is similar: a good norm appropriate to a bad role. Do we want to abolish the gender roles and hold on to the norm of Assumed Objectivity? No: for there is, says, Haslanger, a conflict between valuing the norm and wanting to abolish the roles. If one holds on to the norm and applies it in a context of gender hierarchy, one will see the gender roles as fixed, immutable, impossible to abolish. We will interpret as natural, inevitable, the regularities that are in fact the result of objectification. We therefore have a political motive for rejecting the norm, in both its epistemic and practical dimensions. In committing ourselves to social change, she says, we reject the attitudes and actions sanctioned by the norm.<sup>30</sup>

### III. The Critique, and the Two Tasks

#### *Pragmatic critique*

I said at the outset that the Haslanger analysis provided an interesting and plausible way of understanding the claim that reason is gendered: that pursuing a certain norm of rationality serves the interests of men and hurts the interests of women. And I think it does. However, there is a surface contradiction here that we need to resolve. In section II it was argued that the norm of Assumed Objectivity was appropriate to the roles of both men and women: given that one is a man, following the norm helps one succeed as a man; given that one is a woman, following the norm helps one succeed as a woman. The norm helps men and women alike. Isn't this conclusion just the antithesis of what was promised?

The apparent contradiction is an artifact of the linguistic legislation adopted in section II, that kept the labels 'man/woman' for the distinction between the genders. This made it a necessary truth, given the MacKinnon account of gender, that men are objectifiers and women are objectified: with the consequence that a norm appropriate to a woman is a norm that helps a woman, in so far as it helps her succeed in the role of an objectified. However, we want a way to refer to the people who in fact occupy these gender roles, but need not; we want a way to refer to the people for whom it is *not* a necessary truth that they are objectified. I could say, perhaps, 'female persons'; but that is cumbersome. And I already referred to such people in section I as 'women'. So I propose to change gear at this point, and revert to the usage of section I. Such people are women; and from now on I shall use 'Women' with a capital for the MacKinnon/Haslanger usage (and similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, for 'men' and 'Men'). Let me now try to sort out the apparent contradiction.

The norm of Assumed Objectivity is appropriate to Women, since it helps an occupier of that gender role to succeed in it; but it is not in the interests of women. By analogy, the norm of obedience is appropriate to a slave, since it helps the occupier of that role to succeed in it. But it is not in his interests to pursue the norm. It is not in his interests to be a slave, for it is not in any person's interests to be a slave. The norm of Assumed Objectivity helps a woman be a better Woman. But it is not

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115.

in her interests to pursue the norm. It is not in her interests to be a Woman, for it is not in any person's interests to be objectified. Indeed, every person has an interest in *not* being objectified. If pursuing Assumed Objectivity helps a person succeed in the role of an objectified, it thereby hurts her interests. So Women's pursuing the norm hurts the interests of women. The norm helps Women succeed in their role; it thereby hurts the interests of women.

Moreover, when someone who occupies the role of a Man applies the norm in the context of gender hierarchy, it helps him objectify women. So Men's pursuing the norm hurts the interests of women. Pursuing the norm of Assumed Objectivity, in the context of gender hierarchy, thus hurts the interests of women, no matter who pursues it.

Does Assumed Objectivity in addition serve the interests of men? We have seen that it is a norm appropriate to the gender role of Men: it helps them succeed as objectifiers. We cannot conclude immediately from this that it serves the interests of men: for that would require the premise that it is in men's interests to be objectifiers, that it is in men's interests to be Men. And this is something that many might want to deny: men and women alike will surely be better off when there are no Men and Women. Nevertheless there is a sense in which it is in the interests of men to be Men, in so far as it is in one's interests to occupy a position of power; it is in one's interests to have the world conform itself to one's desires; it is in one's interests to have apparent justifications for beliefs in one's own superiority; it is in one's interests to be able to interpret as inevitable an asymmetry of power of which one is the beneficiary. Perhaps it is not in one's best interests; but it is in one's interests none the less. Pursuing the norm of Assumed Objectivity does serve these interests, as we saw in section II. So the norm serves the interests of men. We can see, then, that the claim that the norm is weakly gendered does not conflict with the idea that it serves the interests of men, and hurts the interests of women, but rather entails it.

Pursuing the norm of Assumed Objectivity serves the interests of men, and hurts the interests of women. We have here the result that we envisaged at the outset. But why would men pursue this norm? And what is bad about it? We have, indeed, a pragmatic answer to both of these questions: men pursue it because it is in their interests; and it is bad because it hurts women. But we know, from the argument of section I, that the pragmatic answers are inadequate. The two tasks of explanation and damnation are still before us.

### *Explanation*

To show that the pursuit of some norm of rationality serves the interests of men does not yet explain why they pursue it. That it is in one's interests to pursue some such norm cannot be one's reason for pursuing it, any more than the fact that I would give you twenty dollars could be a reason for believing that you are Elvis, or for inferring according to the gambler's fallacy. Recall my earlier misquotation of Williams: if I could will to follow a belief-forming strategy irrespective of the truth of the beliefs it would yield, it is unclear that I could seriously think of it as a belief-forming strategy, that is to say, as something generating states that purport to represent reality. One cannot say: pursuing this norm serves men's interests, and that is



*why* they pursue it, unless one is prepared to accept that the *why* here is not the *why* of intentional, but only sub-intentional, explanation. One's explanation would be on a par with those invoked to account for self-deception and the like; and on a par with the botanist's explanation as to why a plant turns towards the sun.

I said that it would be good to rescue the feminist critique from the mystifying company of self-deception and its cousins. Not that we should deny the role the latter have played: self-deception, wishful thinking and the like must be among the more benign of the mechanisms that perpetuate patriarchy. However, it would be better to have intentional explanation where we can; and here, I think, we can. We do not have to say: pursuing the norm of Assumed Objectivity serves men's interests, and that is why they pursue it. We do not have to say that men simply will to follow it, irrespective of the truth of the beliefs it would yield. Just as well: for, understood as intentional explanation, that does not make any sense. What we can say instead is this. Pursuing the norm of Assumed Objectivity serves men's interests, and they pursue it because *it appears to yield true beliefs*.

Applying it in conditions of gender hierarchy, a man will interpret the apparent regularities he sees in women's behaviour as genuine regularities, attribute them to the workings of women's natures, act in a way that accommodates those natures, and thereby bring it about that the original regularity is continued. With respect to the properties that interest MacKinnon, he will view women as sexually submissive, as sexually submissive by nature, dominate them, and thereby perpetuate the submissiveness. (Presumably the same will be true for other properties traditionally associated with women.) No evidence emerges to contradict the beliefs; so the beliefs appear to be true. What we have here is the repellent fact that a strategy that perpetuates gender hierarchy, a strategy that is used to justify rape and domination, is a strategy that in certain circumstances looks rational. No wonder feminists have wanted to cast a sceptical eye upon rationality.

Pursuing the norm of Assumed Objectivity will yield some true beliefs, and will be seen to yield some true beliefs. A man who pursues it will better succeed in the role of an objectifier, and it is a feature of being an objectifier that one has certain true beliefs, 'accurate descriptive beliefs' as I earlier called them. As MacKinnon herself says, the beliefs about what women are like are 'not just an illusion or a fantasy or a mistake'. So in following this norm, one is not simply following a belief-forming strategy 'irrespective of the truth of the beliefs it would yield'. In following this norm, one can indeed seriously think of it as a belief-forming strategy, that is to say, as something generating states that purport to represent reality. One can satisfy the direction of fit constraints on belief formation. This makes it very different to the impossible situation of deciding to infer in accordance with the gambler's fallacy in the hope of gaining twenty dollars. To cite the norm of Assumed Objectivity in an explanation of men's beliefs is to offer an ordinary, intentional explanation. There is no need to resort to homuncular deceivers or subintentional tropisms.<sup>31</sup> In following this norm, one can aim to have one's beliefs fit the world.

<sup>31</sup> Though they may indeed, for all I have said, be operating as well.

### *Damnation*

If the pursuit of some norm of rationality serves the interests of men and hurts the interests of women, then it is damned. So we imagined at the outset. For the discovery of self-serving motives would undermine whatever lofty stories were told about rationality, and the discovery that the norm had bad consequences for women would put the clinching nail in its coffin. We have seen, though, that the motives are not — or not simply — self serving, and in any case, self-servingness would not explain or undermine. We cannot damn quite so quickly.

Pursuit of the norm has bad consequences for women. There is no doubt of this, if the earlier arguments are correct: it hurts one's interests to be objectified, and pursuit of this norm will result in women being objectified. Since the norm has bad consequences for women, we have a pragmatic critique of the norm. It seems to me that Haslanger herself in the end construes her argument as pragmatic: adopting the norm, she says, will make social change impossible; since we have social change as our goal, we should reject the norm. Since the consequences identified are so very bad, we do have good grounds for damning the norm; the pragmatic argument is a strong one. However, it would be better if we could give, in addition to the pragmatic argument, a Kantian one: a critique of reason that showed that this norm was bad by reason's own lights.

Following the norm of Assumed Objectivity yielded a number of true beliefs, when applied to women under conditions of gender hierarchy; and could be seen to do so. That is what made it possible to follow it. However, there is more to the story than this. As MacKinnon says, 'the world is not entirely the way the powerful say it is or want to believe it is'.<sup>32</sup> There is a certain *lack of fit* between how the powerful believe the world to be, and how the world is.

The beliefs of the powerful do indeed aim to fit the world, as we just saw. Otherwise they would not be beliefs. That is the constitutive claim about direction of fit, relevant to our task of explanation. The powerful pursue a norm that appears to yield beliefs that fit the world, and that is why they can pursue it. But if there is a certain lack of fit between how the powerful believe the world to be and how the world is, then despite the aim, the beliefs of the powerful do not in fact fit the world. Here the normative claim about direction of fit comes into play, and it will give us grounds for damnation.

Beliefs ought to fit the world. A good norm of belief formation is one that, if applied, will reliably yield beliefs that fit the world: it will reliably yield knowledge. Although all beliefs aim to fit the world, not all beliefs do fit the world. Sometime they do not fit the world because they are false. Sometimes they do not fit the world because they are true but unjustified. If a norm reliably yields false beliefs, or reliably yields true but unjustified beliefs, then it is not a good norm. What I would like to show is that the norm of Assumed Objectivity fails in both of these ways, and it is therefore vulnerable to a Kantian as well as pragmatic critique.

First, the norm reliably yields false beliefs. A man who pursues it will better succeed in the role of an objectifier, and while it is a feature of being an objectifier that one has certain accurate descriptive beliefs, it is a further feature of being an

<sup>32</sup> MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*, p.59.

objectifier that one has certain illusory projective beliefs. He will believe, for example, that women are sexually submissive by nature. Haslanger describes this as a modal mistake:

The illusion in successful objectification is not in the reports of its consequences, the women who have been forced to submit do submit; the illusion is in, so to speak, the modality of such claims: women submit *by nature*.<sup>33</sup>

Now pursuing the norm not only yields false beliefs of this particular kind: it prevents the emergence of evidence for the falsity of these beliefs. The simplest evidence against the belief that women submit by nature would be evidence that women do not submit in fact: the best proof that something is possible is a proof that it is actual. But if a man follows the norm in conditions of gender hierarchy, he will act in a way that on the whole prevents such evidence from emerging. Where it does emerge, the norm will teach him to treat the occasional rebellious woman as an exception that does not disprove the rule. What counts are observations made in normal circumstances, and an abnormal observation must have resulted from aberrant circumstances. So the norm, applied in such a domain, will reliably yield false beliefs.

Applying the norm in some other domains will yield no false beliefs whatsoever. In applying it to the relationship of ammonia to begonias it works splendidly. Begonias regularly die when watered with ammonia, and this regularity should be explained in terms of their natures. However, applied in a neighbouring domain, trouble begins. Applying the norm to the behaviour of lyre birds in the way I earlier described yielded some dramatically false beliefs: lyre birds, though shy, are remarkable songsters and mimics. The culprit here is the fourth norm, namely assumed aperspectivity. It tells you to have, as a default setting, the assumption that the circumstances of your observation are normal: that they are not, for example, distorted by the influence of the observer. If we remove the fourth norm, what we have left is relatively innocuous. As it stands, however, application of the full conjunctive norm in any domain where circumstances are 'normally abnormal' is bound to yield falsehoods: that is to say, in circumstances where it is regularly the case that the natures of observed things are not being manifested.

Notice that what is bad about Assumed Objectivity is not that it is objective, therefore male, therefore oppressive, contrary to MacKinnon. What is bad about the norm is that in a sense it is *not objective enough*. The ornithologist who rejects the norm and begins to learn what lyre birds are really like will begin to have a more objective view about them than do his naive colleagues. Someone who abandons the norm and begins to learn what women are really like will begin to have a more objective view of us.<sup>34</sup>

Second, the norm reliably yields true but unjustified beliefs. We just saw that the

<sup>33</sup> Haslanger, *op.cit.*, p.103.

<sup>34</sup> The ornithologist simply has to observe more carefully and cautiously. But this would not be sufficient for learning what women are really like, since women actually do have the properties of submissiveness, etc., attributed to them by those following the norm. It will take more time for the modal truth - that things do not have to be this way - to emerge.

norm reliably yields falsehoods: but in addition, when it yields truths, it yields them for the wrong reason. Thus even the true beliefs are unjustified. Establishing this conclusion will be somewhat more tricky. But I begin by taking up again MacKinnon's idea that

. . . the beliefs of the powerful become [proven] in part because the world actually arranges itself to affirm what the powerful want to see; . . .<sup>35</sup>

The projection of the desired properties onto women 'is not just an illusion or a fantasy or a mistake. It becomes embodied because it is enforced.'<sup>36</sup>

This idea, I said, apparently challenges received views about direction of fit. The idea here seems to be that the world arranges itself to fit the beliefs of the powerful, rather than *vice versa*. However this idea is not so mystifying after all. It does not conflict with the constitutive claim that beliefs must aim to fit the world. Rather, it describes a situation that we can evaluate in terms of the normative claim that beliefs ought to fit the world.

Somebody who occupies a position of power and follows the norm of Assumed Objectivity will bring it about that the world conforms itself to his beliefs: his true belief that women are submissive will be self-fulfilling, since he will make them submit. We can see how the mechanism works. But this does not, as we have seen, require that in forming a belief he *aims* that the world comes to fit his belief. That would be impossible. He aims, as we have seen, that his belief fits the world. He believes that his beliefs have the correct direction of fit. That is precisely what makes it possible for him to form them. He satisfies the direction of fit constraint on belief formation. However, his beliefs do not in fact have the correct direction of fit: his beliefs match the world, not because they arrange themselves to fit the world, but because the world arranges itself to fit them. MacKinnon has a political critique of this phenomenon. 'If you perceive this as a process, you might call it force.' Haslanger says: 'Thinking alone doesn't make it so, but thinking plus power makes it so.'<sup>37</sup>

But we can now add to this political critique a philosophical one: it is a defect in any belief that it should have the wrong direction of fit. If you believe that *p*, and your belief that *p* has the wrong direction of fit, then you do not know that *p*. Consider the following example, which I borrow from Lloyd Humberstone.<sup>38</sup> Consider Sam, whose beliefs are monitored by a benevolent supernatural being who, wanting Sam's beliefs to be true, intervenes in the course of history to make them true. Sam, ignorant of his supernatural friend, forms his beliefs aiming that his beliefs fit the world. He believes that his beliefs have the correct direction of fit. That is precisely what makes it possible for him to form them. He satisfies the

<sup>35</sup> MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified*, p.59.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.119.

<sup>37</sup> Haslanger, *op.cit.*, p.58.

<sup>38</sup> The example, and the conclusion about it, is from Humberstone *op.cit.*, p.62. Haslanger herself considers a related issue in a footnote: whether an ideal objectifier is incorrigible with respect to the consequences of objectification (Haslanger, *op.cit.*, p.123). She does not, however, raise the direction of fit issue here.

direction of fit constraint on belief formation. However, his beliefs do not in fact have the correct direction of fit: his beliefs match the world, not because they arrange themselves to fit the world, but because the world arranges itself to fit them. Sam believes that Islam will be the state religion of a United Europe by the year 2100. He believes it, his belief is true, and it does not (unlike Gettier examples) just happen to be true. However, *he does not know it*.

We can see that the objectifier who follows the norm of Assumed Objectivity is in a position identical in these respects to the imaginary Sam. The objectifier believes that women have the desired property, his belief is true, and it does not just happen to be true. However, he does not know it. The true beliefs formed by following the norm of Assumed Objectivity are wrong with respect to direction of fit: they do not constitute knowledge.

In conclusion, then, we have two grounds for advancing a Kantian critique of the norm of Assumed Objectivity, in addition to the pragmatic critique. The norm, applied to women in conditions of gender hierarchy, reliably gets it wrong with respect to direction of fit. We have seen two ways in which a belief can fail to fit the world: it can be false; or it can be true, but true because the world has arranged itself to fit the belief. The norm fails in both of these ways: it reliably yields false beliefs; and where it yields true beliefs, reliably yields true but unjustified beliefs. Applied in such a domain, it is not a rational norm, and should be damned.

### *Concluding remarks*

We set out to find a feminist critique of reason that would enable us to address the two tasks of explanation and damnation raised in section I. We aimed to show a plausible way of understanding the claim that reason is gendered by showing that the pursuit of some norm of rationality served the interests of men, and hurt the interests of women. We aimed to tell a story that satisfactorily explained why men would pursue such a norm. And we aimed to damn it, by offering a Kantian critique in addition to the pragmatic. If we have made any progress towards these goals, it is thanks to the analysis Haslanger provides. We have not, however, shown that being objective makes one an objectifier. The real culprit is not epistemology, but bad epistemology. We have not seen that objectivity is sexed; but we have seen that Assumed Objectivity is gendered. Assumed Objectivity does not, unassisted, create sex objects; but it does, in the right context, help to create them.