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A Curious Case of Feminist Logic

The last few years have seen a surge of interest in feminist philosophy of logic, a research program established by Val Plumwood (1993). There is little doubt that a novel field of research is beginning to take shape, and that it may soon be as well-established as some other feminist interventions into philosophy, like feminist epistemology or feminist philosophy of science. Given that the field is still in its early stages of development, the literature focuses on foundational questions – the most prominent of them being what, if anything, is "feminist logic".

In my talk, I consider two notable proposed meanings of "feminist logic": (i) logic guided by feminist values (Russell 2024; Saint-Croix and Cook 2024) and (ii) logic developed from a feminist standpoint (Cook 2023). These two accounts roughly correspond to Harding's (1986) differentiation between feminist approaches to science: feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory, respectively. I want to propose a possible counterexample to these meanings of "feminist logic", based on an autobiographical case study, namely, my own discovery of a fuzzy model of gender identity – which turns out to be, in Plumwood's sense, an example of a feminist logic.

In Plumwood's (1993) view, feminist logic is a logic that disallows rigid and overly oppositional differentiation. Her account is mostly directed toward a critique of classical negation since, in her opinion, this kind of negation most closely resembles oppressive "dualisms", i.e., representations of the world in terms of pairs of mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive notions, such that one notion is always considered inferior. Some examples of dualisms include reason/emotion, mind/body, civilized/primitive, and male/female. The oppressive features of dualistic differentiation that any feminist logic should avoid are – according to Plumwood – relational definition, homogenization, radical exclusion, instrumentalization, and backgrounding. Arguably, Plumwood's work is guided by

feminist values (cf. Russell 2024), if not also developed from a feminist standpoint. Her proposal for a feminist revision of classical logic stems from her critique of dualist philosophy and of the hegemonic notion of rationality.

On the other hand, my own work in (arguably) feminist logic had a different genealogy. The context of discovery went along the following lines. In 2019, I was working on a formal representation of Brouwer's "theory of the exodus of consciousness", which features three fundamental, trichotomous terms – desire, fear, and 'egoicity'. This led me to represent these notions by the classical logical hexagon, a widely applicable extension of the square of opposition that represents all the semantic relations between three trichotomous terms and their negations. But given that – at later stages of the "exodus of consciousness" – desire, fear, and 'egoicity' can come in degrees, I also got an idea to use the *fuzzy* logical hexagon. I found it fascinating that, in the case of Brouwer's philosophy, the logical hexagon works both in its classical and in its fuzzy version. This led me to consider which other trichotomies can be meaningfully fuzzified and put into the fuzzy hexagon. I came up with the following: "male", "female", and "agender".

Only later did I discover Plumwood's work (and feminist philosophy of logic in general) and found out that "the fuzzy gender hexagon", with fuzzy contrariety as the opposition between the three gender categories, fits her criteria for emancipatory differentiation and can thus be considered a feminist logic of gender identity. Although I was a feminist when I stumbled upon the said model (and still am to this day), I would not say that my initial idea was explicitly and consciously driven by feminist values – unless one considers the very recognition of the existence of non-traditional gender identities to be a feminist value, which, I believe, would be setting the bar somewhat low. Nor would I say that, at the time, I was occupying a feminist standpoint that had been critically reflected upon and, importantly, shaped through group interactions (cf. Harding 1986).

I believe my story shows that a feminist logic can result from much more mundane and unreflected considerations. As I want to claim, the descriptions of feminist logic as "logic guided by feminist values" and "logic developed from a feminist standpoint" put feminist prerequisites on the context of discovery, while it seems that what makes a logic feminist can as well be its *post hoc* feminist justification. A feminist logic can also be described – or so I will argue – as a logic that satisfies Plumwood's criteria, no matter the values or standpoints informing the work behind it.

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