

3 [manifest] Feminism

3.1 Manifest vs. Literary Feminism

These notes relate to *manifest* rather than *literary* feminism. That is, the type of feminist thought that can be observed in everyday life. Manifest feminism is the type of feminism that people come into contact with on a regular basis and that directly informs our culture.

Most people have not read *feminist literature* such as *THE FEMALE EUNUCH*. However, that book, and other, similar books, have collectively influenced our culture. The evidence of this influence can be found through examination of our behaviour, myths, media, social policy and even the analysis of informal discourse such as a conversation in a supermarket. It should be apparent at this point that what I term 'manifest feminism' can exist in literary form too; a woman's magazine would be an example of this. There is, of course, a degree of overlap between manifest and literary feminism. This attribution to either category must be a subjective judgement which is dependant on context.

3.2 The Feminist Flip (TFF)

*Feminist argument often rests heavily on selectivity. I call this The Feminist Flip. TFF is an aspect of the anti-science orientation of feminism; it is directly opposed to **scientific method**.*

[explain and compare: interpretive analysis, value judgements, empirical statements, analytic/logical statements]

Legitimate logical enquiry is always focused on process whereas, the focus in feministic enquiry is instead on outcome. A feminist argument is usually an attempt to force agreement between outcome and expectation. This is achieved through the use of selectivity.

The selectivity that underpins much feminist argument is manifest in two different forms: the selective application of thesis and the selective application of method. The pattern of selection is not attached to nor does it correlate with the school of feminism to which the feminist belongs; the link exists, instead, between *method or thesis* and the *subject of the debate*. Obviously, the nature of this form of dialectal carries with it the possibility of paradox.

So, for example, a feminist might cite an example of unequal male/female representation within a workplace as an example of injustice and disadvantage. This argument could be reformulated thus:

Men and women are equals in terms of intellect and emotion. Therefore - if women are under-represented in a given type of job which is universally desirable, this must be proof of disadvantage.

Or more analytically:

Given that Sex A and Sex B are equal, if Sex A is more prominently represented than Sex B within a desirable role, then Sex B must have suffered disadvantage and Sex A must have experienced privilege.

Most people, who believe in gender equality, would accept this statement as axiomatic. Even people who do not believe in equality between the sexes would find it difficult to find

fault with the statement in that form: It is irrefutable that *if* Sex A and Sex B *are* equals in all matters regarding the scope of the investigation, then any case of greater or lower representation in a desirable field *must* be the result of the forces of disadvantage and privilege. In the case in which one person or group is *disadvantaged* compared to others, the *privilege* of other groups or individuals is implicit as a condition of not being the object of the disadvantage. Even in cases in which it is difficult to identify the exact nature of privilege, it exists in the form of *lack* of disadvantage.

Matters Of The Workplace

- Although the statement might be judged acceptable as an axiom, the actual application of the outlined principle, to real world situations, is a task fraught with difficulty; given such a task, the agent of application is presented with classic difficulties that dominate the application of all physical and social sciences: The messy interaction between theory and real world.
- How do we arrive at values for the variables that are stipulated? How do we arrive at an irrefutable determination of whether or not a job is *desirable*. Relying on the reasoning that 'everyone knows' that something is so isn't very useful when one is trying to reach an value-free determination. As much of section 9 is concerned with making an attack upon the conventional wisdom in this matter we won't examine it any further here.

One way of testing a statement to see if it is truly an axiom is through the application of a comparative methodology. If the statement is analytically true then it is not dependent on context; such a statement can be transposed in terms of era or situation and will remain true. Applying this, reasonable sounding, statement to another context reveals a feminist paradox:

It is observable that men are more prominently represented in the prison system. Few would argue that being in prison is a desirable role. Therefore, women are over-represented in the desirable role, that of being free from imprisonment.

This point throws a spotlight on a feminist contradiction: men are overwhelming over-represented in this clearly disadvantaged role. And here, the ideology of feminism begins to crumble.