

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
FACULTY OF ARTS
NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

Course Guide for PHL 316 Philosophy of Gender

Course Code	PHL 316
Course Title	Philosophy of Gender
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COURSE GUIDE FOR PHILOSOPHY OF GENDER (PHL 316)

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1.0 Introduction

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This course introduces the students to some of the relevant concepts used in gender philosophy, the method and relevance of gender philosophy, ontological issues in gender philosophy, epistemology in gender philosophy and ethics in gender philosophy.

Gender inequality as you may have already known is the unequal treatment of the sexes with respect to the allocation of rights and opportunities. To reverse issues of gender inequality, the feminist struggle has canvassed for gender equality through gender mainstreaming. Whereas the feminist struggle refers to the efforts to combat all manners of misrepresentation, subjugation and marginalization of the female sex; gender mainstreaming simply means giving equal opportunities to both sexes as a way of forestalling the imbalance of the marginalization of one sex especially with respect to work, education, ownership of property and other civil/legal rights.

However, feminists have been able to show that the views of women, their inventions and contributions have been largely excluded from historical documents and narratives. In order to correct this imbalance, feminists have adopted the method of including the contributions of women that were neglected as well as debunking points of view in historical treatises and documents that misrepresent the nature of the woman. Gender philosophy is one of the results of this approach

Gender Philosophy addresses the problem of gender inequality from a philosophical perspective. One way it does this is by introducing into philosophy, the contributions, inventions and thoughts of women (past or present). It takes into cognizance, women's experiences as victims of subjugation, misrepresentation and marginalization. This is why

Gender philosophy is more or less feminist philosophy because it borders on the issues discussed in feminist metaphysics, feminist epistemology, feminist political philosophy, feminist ethics and feminist philosophy of science and technology.

One can say that Gender Philosophy is about the philosophical responses of women and professional feminists to the problems of gender inequality, sexism, marginalization, women subjugation and misrepresentation and other issues bordering on the unequal distribution of rights and privileges on account of socially misconstrued prejudices and stereotypes; and how philosophy should be done in respect to the achievement of the feminist struggle.

What you will learn in this Course

In this course, the students will learn the meaning of some relevant concepts in gender philosophy as well as the method and relevance of gender philosophy. Students will also learn ontological issues in gender and feminist philosophy, gender epistemology as well as ethics in gender philosophy.

Course aims/objectives

In order to achieve the primary aim of this course the following objectives have been set:

- To understand some of the relevant concepts in gender philosophy
- To examine the method and relevance of gender philosophy
- To examine some of the ontological issues in Gender Philosophy
- To examine what constitutes epistemology in Gender Philosophy
- To examine what ethics in Gender philosophy is all about.

Working through this Course

For maximum efficiency, effectiveness and productivity in this course, students are required to have a copy of the course guide, main course material, download the videos and podcast, and the necessary materials for this course. These will serve as a study guide

and preparation before lectures. Additionally, students are required to be actively involved in forum discussion and facilitation.

Course materials

The course materials that will be used for the course include texts and reference materials as used in this work, as well as instructional materials showing the different classifications of gender philosophy and aspects of feminist philosophy. Other instructional materials that is deemed fit can be adopted by the course lecturer for effective teaching.

Study Units

This course has 21 units which are structured into 5 modules. Each module comprises 4-5 sub-units as follows:

Module 1: Understanding the Meaning of Some Relevant Concepts in Gender Philosophy

Unit 1: The concept of gender, feminism and sexism

Unit 2: Sex, Sex Roles and Gender Roles

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Unit 1: Introducing Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy or Feminist Ethics

Unit 2: Objectives of Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy

Unit 3: Development of Feminist Ethics

Unit 4: Approaches to Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy

Text Books and References/ Further Reading

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ASSIGNMENT FILE/ TUTOR -MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Module 1:

Define the concept of feminism

- The student is expected to explain that feminism is both the intellectual and political struggle against gender inequality that are manifested as the injustices of women misrepresentation, women marginalization, women subjugation or generally the denial of equal rights to women on account of their sex.
- The student can also say that it is the fight for gender equality for both sexes. But since women have been the most disadvantaged in most cases, the term have been used frequently for struggles for social justices for women or against social injustices meted to women or others that have been institutionalized within respective societies. Additional marks should be awarded for at least one example mentioned
- The student can as well mention that feminism struggles against sexism and androcentricism especially in the allocation of roles, rights and opportunities that makes any of the sexes disadvantaged

Define the concepts Patriarchy, Androcentrism, Gynocentrism and Androgyny

- The student is expected to at least mention that Patriarchy is a social situation of male domination over women such that limits the opportunities that women get to have to fulfil their natural potentials
- The students should also mention that feminist have used the concept to describe the domination of fathers over their daughters, husbands over their wives as well as men over women generally.
- The student should define androcentrism as the social phenomena of presenting realities and points of view strictly from men's perspective.
- Whereas, Gynocentrism should be explained as the attempt to enthrone women's perspectives in much the same way as androcentrism
- Student are expected to mention that this concept was introduced by feminists to name the presentation of realities or points of view from both male and females perspectives rather from male perspectives alone (androcentric) or women's perspective alone (Gynocentrism).

Differentiate between sex and gender, sex roles and gender roles

- The student should be able to explain that the concept 'sex' names the biological features and characteristics that define, differentiate or distinguish the male from the female. Actually, the distinction between the sexes as a matter of biology is anchored on the differences in chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, the general reproductive system and other physiological traits and aspects
- The student should explain that gender is what the societies make of sexual differences especially the kind of roles that are assigned to the sexes and the norms that govern the behavioural expectations of these sexes within cultural contexts.
- The student should explain that sex roles are biological roles, while gender roles are social roles assigned by a given society to the sexes.

What does transgender and sexuality mean?

- The student is expected to explain that transgender is the gender chosen by the individual, different from the one that comes with birth. And that it often comes with or without surgical and hormonal transformation of bodies.
- Also, that people who engage in the transformation of their sex are called Transwomen or Transmen depending on who is involved. A transwoman is one whose sex "was" originally male but has been somewhat "transformed" by the transgender technology. She is otherwise regarded as "male to female" (MTF). A transman is one who was born a woman but has been transformed through the same technology. They are also called "female to male" (FTM)
- The student is expected to explain that sexuality refers to one's preferences in fulfilling sexual desires; it also names one's emotional involvement and fantasy in a variety of long-term or short-term intimate relationships.
- Homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality should be cited as examples.

Module 2:

Briefly Discuss the Relationship between Feminism and Gender Philosophy

- The student should be able to explain that feminism is the struggle against gender-related injustices or gender inequality which takes different forms such as the

denial of equal opportunities, the denial of certain rights, the relegation of feminine perspectives or the woman's perspective and so on. But gender philosophy is the introduction of these into philosophical discussions using feminist methods such as adding of women, adding of women's perspectives, adding of women's inventions and contributions as well as Victimologies.

Discuss briefly, the Branches of Feminist/Gender Philosophy

- The student should mention that the branches of feminist philosophy include: feminist metaphysics that discusses ontological issues such as the nature of the woman; Gender epistemology that discusses the traditional questions of feminist philosophy; Feminist ethics that discuss what moral action means within the perspective of the ontology of the woman as well as other fields such as feminist political philosophy and philosophy of science and technology

What Methods are used in Gender Philosophy?

- The student should mention that the method used in gender philosophy include: adding women, adding the contributions of women, searching for androcentric misgivings about women in historical documents and texts, adding the standpoints of women and their contributions as well as Victimologies, that is the testimonies of women as victims of injustice.

How is Gender Philosophy Relevant?

- The student should explain that Gender philosophy is relevant because it shows how the feminist struggles plays out even in the way philosophy is done: including what is discussed in philosophy, what should be discussed, what was presented wrongly in philosophy about women, how this can be corrected or has been corrected et cetera.

Module 3:

What are the basic questions in Gender/Feminist Ontology?

- The student should list the following:
 - Are there peculiar metaphysical assumptions or patterns of thought that feminists and feminist philosophers should challenge or endorse?
 - Have metaphysical claims of present and past philosophers about what the nature of the woman is supported sexism; if so how?

- To what extent are our philosophical frameworks or ontological worldviews for understanding the world distorting reality in the sense that they privilege men or are disadvantageous to women?
- What is the relationship between the social world and the natural world; is our construction of the social world a necessary reflection of the natural world?

Discuss the Nature of the Woman and the issue of Misogyny in Philosophy

- The student should discuss some of the androcentric misrepresentation of the woman in Aristotle's metaphysics and politics, Rousseau's sex-tool definition of the woman as seen in the course material and other possible examples not captured there.

What is the Argument from Essence and Difference?

- The student should explain that the argument from essence names the approach to argue for the equality of the sexes on grounds that all human beings have the same essence of rationality and as such male and female are to be given equal rights and opportunities.
- The student should explain that this is used by feminist to emphasize that the equality of sexes and the equality of rights and opportunities does not mean that the differentness of the female sex especially those bordering on biology are suppressed. For instance, such differentness is needed to grant women maternity leave after childbirth as arguing that they should not be granted such leave on the premise that all should be treated equally is being inhuman.

Briefly discuss Sex and Gender on Being and Becoming

- The student should explain that the binary conception of sex has been challenged by events such as natural instances of hermaphrodite and how this makes it difficult for one to say whether what makes a woman a woman is strictly her anatomy at birth or what she has become either by socialization or by surgery.
- Students who can use the example of transgender engineering to back up their arguments should have more marks

Module 4

Explain Gender Epistemology as a branch of Gender Philosophy

- The student should explain that Gender epistemology differs slightly from traditional epistemology because the underlying methods for gender epistemology are basically the approaches of feminism and feminist philosophy generally, and

also because the questions investigated in gender philosophy differs from the traditional epistemological questions we are used to.

What are the Basic Questions in Gender Epistemology?

- The student should mention the following as the basic questions asked in Gender epistemology:
 - To what extent have dominant perspectives in epistemology particularly those concerning the body and mind seemed compelling because they conform to male or masculine perception, interests and values?
 - Do dominant practices and conceptions in philosophy and in science generally reflect androcentric perspectives? If yes, could these be changed, improved?
 - Do they reflect women's standpoints and interests?
 - What is the relationship between objective and gendered perspectives in epistemology? (philosophy.ucsd.edu)

Objectives of Gender Epistemology

- The student should mention the following as the objectives of gender epistemology:
- Introducing feminist ideologies into epistemology.
- Introducing the results, view-points, opinions that come from researches carried out by female scholars into philosophy and academics in general.
- Showing how the introduction of feminist ideologies, the results of women's research and the view-points and opinions of women into theoretical knowledge and science has generated new questions, new theories and new methods.
- Showing how feminist conceptualization and construction of gender has contributed to the development and the transformation of what we regard as knowledge, how we acquire it and justify it.

What are the Approaches to Gender Epistemology?

- The student should mention the following as the approaches to gender epistemology
- Gender Structure Approach.
- Gender Symbolism Approach.
- Androcentrism Approach.

- Sexism Approach

Name the Classification of Gender Epistemology?

The student should mention the following as the classification of Gender epistemology

- Feminist Empiricism
- Standpoint Epistemology
- Feminist Postmodernism

Module 5:

What is Ethics in Gender Philosophy all about?

- The student should be able to explain that ethics in gender philosophy is feminist ethics which is a model of ethics developed from the perspective or experience of the woman especially as it concerns what the woman thinks of herself, who she feels she is, what she thinks are her obligations to her loved ones and what her expectations are from those she cares for. Feminist ethics as developed by professional female of feminist scholars tend not to anchor morality on the abstract understanding of justice but in the practical understanding of care which is what is needed to bring about practical justice.

What are the Objectives of Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy?

- The student should be able to explain that the objectives of ethics in gender philosophy include: (i) to articulate moral critiques of actions as well as practices that sustain female subordination. (ii) to prescribe morally justifiable ways of resisting actions and practices that lead to the institutionalization and continuity of female subordination (iii) to explore and put forward morally desirable alternatives that will promote women's emancipation

What are the Approaches to Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy?

The student should be able to mention the following as the approaches to ethics in gender philosophy:

- Care-Focused Feminist Ethics
- Status-Focused Feminist Ethics
- Liberal Feminist Approach
- Radical Feminist Approach
- Marxist/Socialist Feminist Approaches

- Multi-Cultural Feminist Approach
- Global Feminist and Post-Colonial Feminist Approaches
- Ecofeminist Approach

Presentation Schedule

This course has two presentations: One at the middle of the semester and the other towards the end of the semester. At the beginning of the semester, each student undertaking this course will be assigned a topic by the course facilitator, which will be made available in due time, for individual presentations during forum discussions. Each presenter has 15 minutes (10 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for questions and answer). On the other hand, students will be divided by the course facilitator into different groups. Each group is expected to come up with a topic to work on and to submit same topic to the facilitator via the recommended medium. Both attract 5% of your total marks.

Note: Students are required to submit both papers via the recommended medium for further examination and grading. Both attract 5% of your total marks.

In addition to the discussion from presentations, two other papers are required in this course. The paper should not exceed 6pages and should not be less than 5 pages (including references), typewritten in 12 fonts, double line spacing and Times New Roman. The preferred reference is MLA 6th Edition you can download a copy online). The paper topics will be made available in due time. Each carries 10% of the total marks.

To avoid plagiarism, students should use the following links to test run their papers before submission.

- <http://plagiarism.org>
- <http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html>

Finally, all students taking this course **MUST** take the final exam which attracts 70% of the total marks.

How to get Most out of this Course

For students to get the most out of this course, he/she must:

- Have 75% of attendance through active participations in both forum discussions and facilitation
- Read each topic in the course materials before it is being treated in the class;
- Submit every assignment as when due; failure to do so will attract a penalty;

- Discuss and share ideas among his/her peers; this will help in understanding the course more; Download videos, podcasts and summary of group discussions for personal consumption; Attempt each self-assessment exercises in the main material. Take the final exam;
- Approach the course facilitator when having any challenge with the course.

Facilitators/Tutors/Tutorials

This course operates a learner-centered online facilitation. To support the student's learning process, the course facilitator will, one, introduce each topic under discussion; two, open floor for discussion. Each student is expected to read the course materials, as well as other related literatures, and raise critical issues which she/he shall bring forth in the forum discussion for further dissection; three, summarizes forum discussion; four, upload materials, videos and podcasts to the forum; five, disseminate information via email and SMS if need be.

THE MAIN COURSE

MODULE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF SOME RELEVANT CONCEPTS IN GENDER PHILOSOPHY

Unit 1: Clarification of Some Relevant Concepts in Gender Philosophy

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 OBJECTIVES
- 3.0 MAIN CONTENTS
 - 3.1.1 Gender, Feminism and Sexism
 - 3.1.2 Sex, gender, Sex Roles and Gender Roles
 - 3.1.3 Patriarchy, Androcentrism and Gynocentrism and Androgyny
 - 3.1.4 Transgender and Sexuality
- 4.0 CONCLUSION
- 5.0 SUMMARY
- 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit attempts a clarification of some of the concepts used in philosophy of Gender as well as in feminist philosophy such as Gender, feminism, sexism, patriarchy, androcentrism and Gynocentrism, androgyny, sex, sex roles, gender roles, transgender, and sexuality

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help students to:

1. Understand the concepts of gender, feminism and sexism
2. Understand the concepts of patriarchy, androcentrism, Gynocentrism and Androgyny

3. Differentiate between sex, sex roles and gender roles
4. Understand the meaning of transgender and sexuality

3 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 The Concept of Gender, Feminism and Sexism

Gender

“Gender” is one of the most frequently used concepts in feminism and feminist philosophy. Many controversies often arise among scholars with regard to the meaning of the concept 'gender'. These controversies revolve around the way in which different persons understand the relation between the concepts of gender and sex. Whereas one need to go into detailed expositions of the discrepancies that exist with respect to the use of these two terms; we may as well settle in this work for Pearson's definition. According to Pearson, gender refers to “those social, cultural, and psychological traits that are linked to males and females through particular social contexts”. Pearson avers that whereas “sex” makes us male and female; “gender” makes us masculine or feminine; whereas sex is a status because one is born with it, gender is learned (2009:4). For Anderson, gender is what societies make of sexual differences, the different roles that are assigned to these sexes, the customs and norms 'governing' the behavioural expectations of these two sexes, the meanings that are assigned to the notion of “man” and “woman” as well as the things associated with them on account of their sexual characteristics (sec. 1.3).

Feminism

According to Valerie Bryson (2003:12), the term feminism first came into use in English during the 1880s, and it was used to name the avocation of equal legal rights for women. In the eighteenth-century Europe, women were not given equal legal rights with men; there was a gross marginalization of women on account of their sex, due to certain prejudices bordering on the inferiority of the female sex to the male sex. The term comes from a French word *feminisme*, which was coined by Charles Fourier. According to Mesembe Edet (2009: 49), modern feminism arose as a struggle by women to liberate themselves from the fetters of forced motherhood, to rid themselves of the evils of sexism, to gain an equal share of economic and political power and to acquire full control

over their bodies and destinies. Feminism generally advocates for gender equality as against gender inequality and for the liberation of women from all kinds of oppression and marginalization. Judith Lorber in her book *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics* observes that,

Feminism is a social movement whose basic goal is equality between women and men. In many times and places in the past, people have insisted that women and men have similar capabilities and have tried to better the social position of all women, as well as the status of disadvantaged men. As an organized movement, modern feminism arose in the nineteenth century in Europe, America, and Japan in response to the great inequalities between the legal statuses of women and men citizens (2010:2).

Lorber's foregoing observation supports the position that feminism is a reaction opposing an age-long practice of gender inequality that manifests mostly as the subordination, subjugation and the marginalization of the female sex. Gender inequality is therefore a social problem, a social injustice, which feminists believe ought to be discontinued. Some feminists argue that biological inequalities in human beings neither constitutes a justification for the treatment of certain human beings as sub-human nor justifies the denial of certain human beings fundamental and legal rights. Due to the feminist struggle, gender inequality is gradually being accepted in many countries of the world as a problem that needs to be addressed. Some countries have taken the issue very seriously while others, especially the third world countries have not taken the issue too seriously. Today, in many countries of the world, equal opportunities are given to women to serve in different sectors like the entertainment industry, military and paramilitary, politics, education et cetera. But the situation is not the same within the religious institutions.

Whereas, there are intellectual arguments that describe the subordination and marginalization of women on account of their sex as a social vice, it has not been easy to bring about a collective political will to halt this vice in all aspects of human society. Feminists have pointed out that one reason for this is the long history of the practice. Another reason is that from pre-historic times, human societies have always been phallogocentric, that is, have always been controlled by men. Indeed, the problem of gender inequality has a very long history dating back to the origin of human society, coupled with the fact that from the outset of antiquity, religious doctrines have helped to establish the second sex status of women. Many orthodox religions and sects can hardly disentangle from androcentric misgivings with respect to the allocation of leadership responsibilities to the sexes. Imagine what the Vatican's response will be if women of the Catholic fold were to launch a protest calling for the abolition of the rules that prevent women from being ordained into holy orders; or what may happen if female Muslims launched a protest calling for women to be allowed to serve as heads of mosques or as

Imams. We cannot find a place in the church where men and women are treated as being on equal footing. There is in the church, a conscious move to downplay the spiritual and physical gifts of women, their works and their ministry; more so, that these practices are based on false ideologies that have been constructed to justify male domination and female marginalization.

It is difficult to reconcile the exclusion of women from leadership and evangelical roles in religious institutions with the reality of the presence and participation of women in other institutions of the society. Oluwagbemi-Jacob does not think that the exclusion and marginalization of women from leadership and evangelical roles in the church is a true reflection of the mind of God. Gender education is needed to reverse these practices; gender education must work on men and women to enable them perceive each other in the way God sees them, namely, in a complementary, mutually harmonized way. Gender education must critique cultures and traditions in the light of scripture; it must also highlight the complementary indebtedness of the sexes to each other and not to dismiss either as inconsequential, inessential and dispensable.

Generally, feminism has been developed in two directions, the intellectual and the political. To the intellectual direction belong all public debates (oral or written) symposiums, national and internal conferences, communiqués, scholarly articles in journals and texts et cetera, which theorize that the practices of discrimination against females on account of their sex, their unequal treatment in the society, their oppression by males, their marginalization by phallogocentric sociological systems, their subjugation and androcentric definitions or the misrepresentations of their *femininity* and womanhood, all constitute social evils or injustice against the female sex. To the intellectual direction also belong the different theories of gender equality, which are most often described as the classifications of feminism. To the political direction belong all governmental policies and decisions aimed at curbing gender imbalance through gender mainstreaming, the abolishment of oppressive rules and customs that constitute violations to women's rights and freedom. Thus, both the intellectual and political dimensions play a major role in explicating what feminism is about. This means that to correct gender imbalance, academics, religious leaders and politicians must work hand in hand because theory and praxis must be complemented across all fields and institutions of the society.

Sexism

Sexism can be defined as a theory that holds that one sex is superior to the other or that one sex is inferior to the other. Among feminist writers, the term has been used to name the theory or belief that the female sex is inferior to the male sex. In the book *The Sociology of Gender: Theoretical Perspectives and Feminist Frameworks*, Pearson observes that sexism thrives on the belief that biologically, women are weaker and men are stronger such that biological inequalities logically necessitate and justify gender

inequality (2009:3). Biological inequalities are most often cited by anti-feminists as the reason why the female sex is inferior to the male sex and should be thus treated.

3.1.2 Sex, Gender, Sex Roles and Gender Roles

Sex

Sex is a concept that names the biological uniqueness of human persons indicating their natural reproductive abilities they were born with. In other words, the concept 'sex' names the biological features and characteristics that define, differentiate or distinguish the male from the female. Actually, the distinction between the sexes as a matter of biology is anchored on the differences in chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, the general reproductive system and other physiological traits and aspects. It should be noted that although classically, the concept sex is understood from a binary perspective, that is, as naming, male or female; there are contemporary arguments against sexual binarism, consequent upon the references to intersexed bodies (Hermaphrodites) and transgender.

Gender

What is your understanding of the term, 'gender'? Generally, people tend to reason gender to mean sex of male and female. Whereas, gender refers to the masculinity and femininity of the generic man.

Sex Roles and Gender Roles

Feminist arguments have been very beneficial in the clarification of the concepts of 'sex roles' and 'gender roles'. Many persons including scholars often use these concepts wrongly; they mistake gender roles for sex roles and then base their theory of the inequality of the sexes on such misconceived definitions. To say, for instance, that it is in the nature of the woman to be a domestic worker, is tantamount to saying that domestic duties are meant for women because they are women. But the logical implication of the latter statement will be that women are domestic workers because domestic work is in the nature of the female sex and not that domestic work is a gender role. But however, the truth is that the reverse is the case. Domestic work is not an essential definitive feature of the female sex. Expertise in domestic duties comes by learning and socialization; and as such even the male can attain such expertise and proficiency if exposed from birth to the same learning procedures and conditions of socialization that girl-children are subjected to. The problem of gender inequality arises most times, as a result of the misconception that "sex roles" and "gender roles" are one and the same thing; but the truth is that they are not synonyms. Sex roles are exclusively unique and natural to the sexes such as child-

conception, child-birth, and breastfeeding for females. These are the only things that the man cannot do because it is definitive to the nature of the female who is fertile. Child-begetting is for the males who are also fertile; and this is what the female cannot do because she does not have the male genitals.

Gender roles are basically the inventions of the society and are not definitive to the sexes in the way many cultures tend to present them. For instance, some will say that it is a taboo for the man to cook in the kitchen so that cooking becomes the gender-role of the woman. However, this does not mean that males cannot cook if they want to or should not cook at all, or that the ability to cook is naturally exclusive to women because they are females. Thus, gender roles are not sexual by nature. The roles that societies assign to females can as well be undertaken by males and the roles societies assign to males can also be undertaken by females. Therefore, gender roles are not sex roles. Gender roles are the society's construction and as such everyone is born to learn how to behave as a man or as a woman according to specific and peculiar customs that vary from time to time and from place to place. Feminists argue that since gender roles are created by the society, gender inequality can as well be checked by today's society especially by re-defining stereotyped roles and assigning such roles to both sexes in a way that does not breed sexism. It is in this direction that the woman can as well be assigned the responsibility of overseeing the affairs of the state as a political office holder for instance, and the man can as well prepare meals for the family in the absence or presence of the wife. Indeed, it is in the assignment of social roles based on ability and qualification and not on some misconstrued prejudices bordering on sex and gender that feminism has arisen to fight female subordination, exclusion and marginalization in the workforce. So, using the words of Haralambos and Holborn, we can say that feminism announces a movement towards the revolution of "socio-biological" definition, sexual division of labour and the social construction of gender roles (2008: 90-92). In fact, this revolution has long begun.

3.1.3 The Concept of Patriarchy, Androcentrism and Gynocentrism

Patriarchy

The term "Patriarchy" names a system of male-domination structured on monogamous and polygamous marriages. Some feminists have argued that patriarchy is the cause of women's economic woes as well as their dependence on men. Patriarchy is also regarded by many feminists as the source of women's subjugation, marginalization and oppression. Many female feminists hold the view that human societies from the outset of antiquity have been phallogocentric because men's decisions and norms have always prevailed most times without considerations for women's feelings, opinions and perspectives. Some feminists argue that rules governing marriages have been made to favour males and women, subordinate. Such patriarchal subordination extends to daughters who are not

often allowed by their fathers to make their personal decisions about their careers. For some feminists, except patriarchy is destroyed gender inequality and the subordination of women will not end; for some others still, the only way to do that is to collapse capitalism; for some others, women should replace patriarchy with matriarchy. All these are proposals reflecting different schools of thought in the struggle against gender inequality, female subordination and oppression.

Androcentrism, Gynocentrism and Androgyny

Androcentrism is a term used to name male-centeredness and the superiority of men over women or the sexist suppression of the contributions and stand-points of women. Feminists often argue that because of the age-long practice of gender inequality, many male-centered norms have been handed down from generation to generation such that they now appear in modern times as customary paradigms of thought and criteria of judgement, or as norms guiding gendered-related behaviour and expectations. Many feminists accuse modern society of not subjecting some of these androcentric norms to critical examination so as to test their truth and objectivity. Some of these gendered-related norms are often misconceived as basic principles of nature, even when this is not the case. For example, the idea or belief that a woman's biological nature makes her unsuitable for certain public and political roles is an androcentric idea. Androcentrism portrays the world from the perspectives of men in a manner that undermines the perspectives of women.

Gynocentrism on the other hand, refers to the practice of depicting the world from the perspectives of women, or in relation to female interests, emotions and values. Androgyny names both male and female perspectives (Jaggar 1983: 86). Androgyny was proposed by early radical feminists in the early 60s as the ideal for gender equality. However, in recent times, some radical feminists have deviated from this commitment arguing that it does not resolve issues bordering on the biological constitution of both men and women.

3.1.4 Transgender and Sexuality

Transgender

In recent times, we do observe that some persons are just unhappy with the sex they are born with. There are some who were born as girls but wish they could become boys, and there are others who were born as boys but wish they could become girls. In feminist-discourses, scholars often make use of the term transgender. According to Lorber, transgender is a gender chosen by the individual; it is different from the one that comes with birth (2010: 16). It often comes with or without surgical and hormonal

transformation of bodies (16). People who engage in the transformation of their sex are called Transwomen or Transmen depending on who is involved. A transwoman is one whose sex “was” originally male but has been somewhat “transformed” by the transgender technology. “She” is otherwise regarded as “male to female” (MTF). A transman is one who “was” born a woman but has been transformed through the same technology. They are also called “female to male” (FTM) (Lorber 2020:16).

In the West, it is a common phenomenon that certain individuals decide to “change” their sex. They do this either by opting for the introduction of hormones or by carrying out surgery to replace genitals and mammary glands. However, transgender technology at the moment does not make a transwoman have the female reproductive system: ovaries, fallopian tube and the uterus; just as it does not make a transman have testicles and spermatozoa. Some have raised the criticism that those who engage in transgender practices (that is, both patient and doctors) are psychologically sick; others simply argue that they crave to show that evolution is a fact of science, and also that science proves that the beliefs we hold about the creation of the sexes as a fixed biological nature has been faulted. These are matters for serious debate. Transgender engineering is not common in Africa, not merely because of the scarcity or absence of the technology in many parts of Africa, but because African societies culturally do not support any alteration in their natural understanding of the sexes. This does not mean that we do not have gays or transgendered persons living in Africa, but that it is predominantly scarce to see Africans in Africa wishing to undergo transgender engineering. Nevertheless, with the growing trend of globalization, one may not totally rule out the possibility that this trend may soon find footings even in Africa.

Sexuality

This refers to one's preferences in fulfilling sexual desires; it also names one's emotional involvement and fantasy in a variety of long-term or short-term intimate relationships.

Homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality are the common terms used by feminists to announce an individual's sexual orientation (Lorber 2010:16). Some consider homosexuality and bisexuality as sexual disorders and as immoral. Someone who is bisexual has inclinations to heterosexual and homosexual activities at the same time. These sexual orientations are relevant issues in feminist discourse because some arguments border on them. For instance, some feminists identify gay marriage and the legal recognition of the gay people as genuine rights that need to be respected, protected and preserved by legislation. They accuse societies that deny citizens who are homosexuals, the right to marriage and freedom of expression and association, as holding onto rigid systems of thought that is typical to a phallogocentric society. There are others whose choice of preference in fulfilling lustful desires is bestiality; and who get so

emotionally and intimately attached to pet animals. For example, a woman was bold enough to arrange a “nuptial” ceremony between her and her pet dog. Some feminists may want to justify this as the freedom to express one's sexuality. However, such a justification is alien to traditional ethics. So, because of such practices, we may want to extend the use of the term “Sexuality” beyond what Lorber has articulated to include other intimate preferences like bestiality, which is a hard fact indicating the extent to which human beings can go in order to express lustful desires. Besides the issue that some feminists reject the definition of sexuality as a binarism, Virginia Held observes that a number of radical feminists believe that sexuality and the way it is socially constructed is the deepest cause of women's secondary status (2002: 159). The latter idea is reminiscent of feminists that attack conventional marriages because they are heterosexually defined and imposed on all even those who are not heterosexual in orientation.

The concepts that have been clarified in this module are key concepts that occur frequently in discourses on gender philosophy or feminist philosophy. Nevertheless they are not the only feminist-related terms used in this course guide. Other terms used within the course guide are also explained within the contexts in which they are used.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have defined the meaning of feminism, sexism, patriarchy, androcentrism and Gynocentrism, androgyny, sex, gender, sex roles and gender roles, transgender, and sexuality

5.0 SUMMARY

- Feminism arose as a struggle against the oppression, marginalization and misrepresentation of what womanhood is about by a phallogocentric society that have been characterized by sexism and androcentric injustices on women.
- As a result of this what is actually a gender role has been mistakenly presented as a sex role. The only roles that are to be understood as sexual are those having to do with biological definitions, while those that are the constructs of different societies are gender roles.
- Women have suffered greatly because some roles that would have rather helped them achieve their natural potentials have been denied them because of the sexist view that such roles belong only to males.
- These concepts defined in this module feature frequently in discourses on the philosophy of gender.

Commented [A1]: This is a typographical error. Nevertheless, the writer of the course content has co-authored a book on feminist philosophy, which has been properly cited in the references. These were her words from the said book. But this has been corrected as pointed out

6.0 TUTOR MARKED -ASSIGNMENT

- Define the concept of feminism and sexism
- Define the concept of patriarchy, androcentric and Gynocentric and androgyny
- Differentiate between sex and gender, sex roles and gender roles
- What does transgender and sexuality mean?

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MODULE 2: UNDERSTANDING THE METHOD AND RELEVANCE OF GENDER PHILOSOPHY

Unit 2: THE METHOD AND RELEVANCE OF GENDER PHILOSOPHY

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES
- 3.0 MAIN CONTENTS
 - 3.1 The Relationship between Feminism and Philosophy
 - 3.2 Branches of Gender Philosophy
 - 3.3 On the Question of Method in Feminist/Gender Philosophy
 - 3.4 The Relevance of Feminist/Gender Philosophy
- 3 CONCLUSION
- 4 SUMMARY
- 5 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
- 6 REFERENCES.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Philosophy of Gender is quite different from Gender Studies because Philosophy of Gender adopts a philosophical approach to Gender-related issues. Of course there are other approaches such as the sociological, the clinical, the psychological and so on. However, as it concerns feminist philosophy, the gender related issues that have been deliberately discussed are those that border on women and the female sex due to the very long history of marginalization and subjugation by phallogocentric human societies of different historical periods that institutionalized androcentric biases in the distribution of rights and resources. In this unit, we examine the relationship between feminism and philosophy that leads to Philosophy of gender, and we attempt a history of philosophy from a feminist perspective, the branches of philosophy from a feminist perspective, the method and the relevance of feminist/gender philosophy.

2.0 INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

This unit will help students to:

- 2.1 Understand the relationship between Feminism and philosophy
- 2.2 Know the branches of Feminist/Gender philosophy
- 2.3 Become familiar with the method of Gender/Feminist philosophy
- 2.4 Discuss the relevance of Feminist/Gender philosophy

3 MAIN CONTENTS

3.2.1 The Relationship between Feminism and Philosophy

Feminism tackles gender inequality, which is manifested in different forms such as sexism, androcentrism, female oppression, female subjugation, female marginalization and other aspects of gender bias. Philosophy has a very long history with a wide range of problems, some of which have been periodical and others perennial. Some of these problems have bordered on the question of first principles of being, substance, cause and effect, the nature and essence of things, the nature of the human person, the nature and function of human society et cetera. Philosophy has been defined by many persons in different ways. We shall not go into such details here. What we wish to establish here is that whatever stands as a philosophical ideology or speculation is simply an attempt to respond to unique problems of human existential situations or about the universe. Even speculations about the existence or non-existence of God is aimed at explaining better, the meaning of human life, the origin and destiny of humankind as well as the origin and future of the universe at large. For instance, it is often said that ancient Greek philosophy began with “wonder’ about the co-existence of unity in diversity, change and permanence, order and chaos in the universe and other problems of this sort.

The different epochs of Western philosophy have evolved just as the focus on philosophical problems has continually alternated between those bordering on the universe and those bordering on human existential situations. In recent times much emphasis has been placed on “problem-solving philosophies”. For some professional philosophers, this has become the current criterion of doing philosophy, thereby calling to question the significance of archaic philosophical speculations of the classics like those of Plato and Aristotle to current day-to-day existential problems in varying cultural settings and indigenous autonomies. Some of the lessons that can be drawn from the long history of Western philosophy, has been the realization that human existential problems and the things human beings really wonder about may be similar over generations; moreover, human existential problems do not remain the same, they evolve from place to place and from time to time. In this documented long history of philosophy in the West, as Grimshaw and Fricker observes, we see a host of “Great men of ideas” but women seem to be absent (2002:552). Does this mean that women never wrote anything

philosophical or did not speculate about the universe or about human existential problems? What could explain the absence or scarcity of women in the list of historic philosophical gurus other than an age-long practice of androcentrism especially in documenting the contributions of earlier thinkers? According to Grimshaw and Fricker, feminist philosophy arose when women started majoring in philosophy, many of them were shocked that what male philosophers had written about women were riddled with sexism and misogyny (2002:552). In the light of the feminist struggle, many feminist authors (mostly women) have seen the need to correct these misconceived prejudices about the female sex in the philosophies of outstanding male philosophers.

It is a very common feature in the discipline of philosophy for philosophy itself to become its own problem. Grimshaw and Fricker try to explicate one instance that supports this by arguing that philosophy over the millennia has been unjust to women. They observe that it is shocking that philosophy which purports to be searching for truth has been blind for all these hundreds of centuries to the truth of the injustice of women oppression, subjugation and marginalization; and that it is disheartening that some philosophers who were supposed to be holders of truth and wisdom rather spoke in favour of the falsehood of the inferiority of the woman's intellect and proceeded to justify same. The exclusion and marginalization of women's contribution to philosophy in philosophy, is a problem of philosophy that has been caused by the way philosophy has been done for many centuries. In the attempt to explain how feminist philosophy relates to feminism Grimshaw and Fricker (2002: 571-574) makes the following observations:

1. Feminist philosophy is concerned with correcting the wrong impression that philosophy is a discipline in which a woman cannot do exceedingly well as if male philosophers have superior intellectual abilities than females.
2. Feminist philosophy seeks to break all formal barriers to the independent study of philosophy by women, which is anchored on some misconstrued arguments that being a woman and a philosopher is problematic.
3. Feminist philosophy seeks to expunge from philosophy all sexist and misogynist definitions of the human nature; and insisting that women are not inferior to men and are not less capable of reason or virtue.
4. Feminist philosophy kicks against the constant tendency in philosophical theories to move towards different forms of binaries and thought-patterns presented in terms of gendered dichotomies. Examples include man-woman, culture-nature, reason-emotion, mind-body, public-private, production-reproduction et cetera. Grimshaw and Fricker aver that although these binaries do not always take the same form, there is always a hierarchical interpretation of such binaries especially those having to do with gender.

5. Philosophical books by women are often not included in the shelves labeled “philosophy”. They are placed under “gender studies” or “women studies”. Feminist philosophies advocate that this practice needs to be stopped.
6. Feminist philosophy proposes that philosophical inquiry should reject “false universalism”, because no philosophy is universally binding and applicable (2002: 571-574).

Grimshaw and Fricker's expositions helps us understand that Gender philosophy seeks to point out sexist and misogynist misconceptions in the works of earlier philosophers that have been passed on as philosophy; and to suggest gender-sensitive and gender-friendly concepts to replace those that are sexist and derogatory especially to the female sex.

3.2.2 Branches of Feminist/Gender Philosophy

There are different branches of philosophy, namely, Metaphysics, Ethics, Epistemology, Political Philosophy, Logic et cetera. How do these branches of philosophy relate with feminism? It is specifically the introduction of the feminist consciousness into the method of doing philosophy in general, watching out for sexist pronouncements and rejecting them in the face of an emerging new world order that is underscored by an increasing revolution against female subordination, female subjugation and women marginalization. The relation between feminism and the branches of philosophy anchors on a very simple logic, namely, that gender inequality and androcentric pronouncements should be expunged from philosophy if the latter must retain the objective of a discipline that searches for truth, wisdom and justice.

Feminist Epistemology

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with questions about the nature, types and processes of knowledge, what can be known, what truth entails, and so on. Feminist epistemology turns a critical eye towards fishing out sexist sentiments or implications that may be available in philosophical literature and other documented edifices on epistemology. It introduces into epistemology discourses on questions such as those bordering on knowledge from women's perspectives or standpoint and the theoretical contributions of women.

Feminist Ethics

Feminist Ethics, Ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with what is right or wrong, morally permissible or impermissible; as well as what constitutes or should constitute the standard or standards of the morality of human volitions. Feminist ethics is concerned with questions like whether men and women have, or should have the same moral experience; or whether they have, or should have different moral experience.

Feminist ethics also proposes ethics of care as necessary for addressing injustice in the society. Feminist ethicists investigate whether androcentric misgivings have been imbedded in conventional ethical theories; and if yes, should be revised.

Feminist Metaphysics

Metaphysics is concerned with a critical investigation and reflection on the nature and essence of things. Whether we include spiritual things or not as objects of inquiry depend on which school of thought in metaphysics we are loyal to. This observation arises because some approach metaphysics from the classical and scholastic tradition, while others especially those influenced by German philosophy approach metaphysics from the perspective that conceives it as ontology. Feminist metaphysics is concerned with the nature and essence of the female sex and with the question of whether the female sex, as a human person, has been misrepresented as being with a nature inferior to that of the male. Feminist metaphysics therefore seeks to address patriarchic and sexist definitions of womanhood as well as the misconceptions bordering on the nature of the female sex as a human person.

Feminist Political Philosophy

Political philosophy is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the question of what constitutes good governance and good citizenship. It is also possible to find in political philosophy, attempts to state what particular form of government is acceptable or preferable. Feminist political philosophy is not concerned with the question of which form of government is best for the female sex in the society; rather, it is concerned with how society should be structured to eradicate gender inequality. It kicks against the oppression, marginalization and exclusion of women from politics and decision-making processes on grounds of their sex. At the same time, it encourages equal participation of women with males in politics, work, education and the general civil life.

Other Areas of Feminist/Gender Philosophy

The logic is the same for feminist philosophy of science and technology, feminist philosophy of environment, feminist philosophy of religion et cetera. Feminist philosophy is all about the drive to fish out sexist propositions, statements and undertones in philosophical speculations and to expunge them in the face of the growing awareness of the long history of injustice against the female sex as well as to register the positions of women on different philosophical issues. Authors in these areas of philosophy generally try to show the sexist ideologies and idiosyncrasies that have been documented as philosophy and also to offer suggestions as to how they can be redressed especially with respect to the use of preferable concepts that suppress patriarchic undertones and

convey ideas that do not directly and indirectly imply that the female sex is a second sex. Going through all the articles in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy* as edited by Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby; one discovers as we have tried to show in the foregoing, that feminist philosophy is simply bringing feminism into philosophy. For instance, Susan James and Naomi Scheman's articles present feminist philosophy of mind as "Feminism in Philosophy of Mind" (2000: 29, 49). Similarly, Jennifer Hornsby presents feminist philosophy of language with the caption "Feminism in Philosophy of Language" (2000: 87). Sally Haslanger does the same for feminist metaphysics (2000:107) while Rae Langton and Miranda Fricker do the same for feminist epistemology (2000: 127, 146). Alison Wylie does the same for feminist philosophy of science (2000:166); Diemut Bubeck does the same for feminist political philosophy, while Marilyn Friedman and Alison Jaggar do the same for feminist ethics (2000:205, 225). There is therefore a clear indication that many professional authors in the field understand feminist philosophy as bringing feminism to bear on some traditional fields of philosophy. It does not matter which topic or peculiar philosophical problem is the point of focus in each branch of philosophy. Nevertheless, what is quite problematic in presenting feminist philosophy in this way is that most authors do not clearly indicate which branch of feminism is foundational to their presentations especially given that feminism has instances of extremism as explicated by the radical female supremacists.

Not all problems in philosophy are relevant across complex, cultural and human existential circumstances. Philosophy has been accused by some non-professionals in Nigeria to be a very dry and non-productive discipline that hardly contributes to the immediate socio-political and socio-economic problems. This is because of the way philosophy is done especially in tertiary institutions. If we accept that the marginalization and subjugation of women is a social injustice; then we should understand this to be a problem for philosophical discourse. And truly, since this problem also affects Nigerian women, philosophical apologetics against these practices would definitely make more meaning to those who are victims of such injustice. Therefore, philosophy-literatures on the plights of women or on how the injustice against women should be avoided is important and would be of great relevance to women in Nigeria.

3.2.3 On the Question of Method in Gender Philosophy

"Is there a Feminist Method?" is the title of Harding's article in *Feminism and Methodology* (1996: 1-15). In this article, Harding mentions that it is difficult to find a satisfactory answer to question whether there is a distinctive feminist method because the issue of feminist method involves different approaches that are often interchanged (1996:2). The first of these approaches is that which conceives method as the techniques for gathering evidence; the second has to do with methodology, which pursues research by adopting a theoretical framework or background theory; while the third has to do with

theories of knowledge and justification or justificatory strategies (1996:2). However, Harding observes that feminist researchers use all three approaches.

Although Harding writes from the background of sociology, we can say that the foregoing approaches she mentions are also characteristic to feminist philosophy. If we understand method to mean the techniques of gathering evidence, then in applying this to feminist philosophy-researches, the question arises as: what does feminist philosophy gather evidence about? The feminist philosopher may respond to this question by observing that the feminist-philosopher-researcher gathers evidence that support the truth of such practices like the oppression of women, the marginalization of women, the subjugation of women, sexism, androcentrism. Granted that the latter practices have a long history, the feminist-philosopher-researcher can engage in a critical analysis and critique of history as well as in the examination or re-examination/re-assessment of ideas documented in historical literatures, to bring out the truth of gender bias. Feminist philosophers would also have to critically expose and analyze ongoing practices and also expose the justifications that have been given for such practices. This means that feminist philosophers should deal with all kinds of facts that point to the truth of gender inequality as well as the documented or undocumented attempts at the justification of the activities that explicate it. But this gives the impression that there is both an empirical and social dimension to feminist philosophy.

By looking backwards into history and into historical and philosophical literatures, feminist-philosophy-researchers have noticed that women have been underrepresented and that their intellectual and theoretical contributions have been grossly excluded from historical documentations or have been gravely marginalized. It is for this reason that one of the approaches that feminist philosophers today adopt is what is commonly regarded as the method of “adding women”. This involves seeking out historical documents that contain the contributions of women for the purpose of editing and re-editing the history books especially those that concern the historical developments of philosophy, so that the contributions of women that were left out could be included. Another way is to gather the contributions of women in recent times and add them to the current ongoing processes of documentation. This approach includes interviewing female celebrities, academic gurus and other women that have excelled in public offices and positions of leadership and documenting their ideas as it concerns the policies they make or made, as well as their subjective philosophies that drive or drove them into making such policies (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai & Abakedi, 2018).

Concerning methodology, feminist philosophers argue that feminist philosophical theories should be further developed. One way of doing this is to adopt feminist theories as background theories for researches in philosophy. Feminist philosophers also argue that feminist theories propounded by women or by professional female philosophers should as well be adopted as background theories for researches in philosophy. Feminist philosophy can grow if scholars turn a critical eye either to a constructive or destructive

criticism of works by professional feminist philosophers. Some professional female philosophers argue that even though male feminist philosophers can understandably join in the development of feminist philosophy, but the contributions of women have a way of carrying the 'woman's identity' in a manner in which women can easily appreciate. In this regard, methodology in feminist philosophy is about the application of feminist ideologies towards the attempt to resolve sociological problems bordering on gender inequality. Concerning the approach bordering on theoretical inquiry and justification, feminist philosophy encourages that we should ask epistemological questions such as "can a woman know"; "how does a woman know"; "how do women approach questions bordering on knowledge or sources of knowledge"? It is a common feature among feminist philosophers to debate about the criteria for justifying claims made about issues of gender inequality and women oppression that take different forms such as domestic violence, sexual molestation, rape, and other vices. One method that feminist philosophers can adopt is what Harding calls Victimologies (1996:5). Victimologies as a feminist method involves seeking out surviving victims of gender-related oppressions such as those we have already mentioned, and treating narratives of their personal ordeals as authentic sources of knowledge or as evidences. Besides the issue of getting firsthand information from this category of persons, the method of victimology also involves including the positions, points of view and standpoints of victims of oppression with respect to how to tackle such social vices. It also involves including them in the political procedures and processes aimed at identifying perpetrators of gendered-related vices as well as identifying victims for documentation purposes. It is believed that those with similar experiences are better communicators and cooperators than those without such similar experiences. For instance, a victim of rape, who understands the ordeals involved in being raped and who has undergone some form of psychological rehabilitation, is better positioned to assist other victims of rape than one who has had no such experience. Some radical feminists have used this argument to point out that generally men, even those who are feminists, do not really have an experiential knowledge of what female oppression feels like; where it bites and how it pinches. Using women's experiences as resources for social analysis is therefore one of the methods available to the feminist philosopher. Speaking from the perspective of the woman, arguing from the perspective of the woman has thus become a key feature in the feminist struggle against gender inequality. From the foregoing, what seems to be consistent is that feminist philosophy validates the approach of positivism and naturalized epistemology both from an empirical and social perspective (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai & Abakedi, 2018).

3.2.4 The Relevance of Feminist/Gender Philosophy

We have earlier mentioned that many Feminists have argued that an age-long phallogocentric society is to be blamed for an age-long practice of subjugation, marginalization, and oppression of women because of their sex. Madubuchi Dukor is also one of those who hold the position that the issue of gender inequality has a very long history, making it one of the oldest sociological problems that human civilizations over the millennia have ignored or failed to checkmate. Dukor agrees that there is need to restructure gender roles in the society to address gender inequality, that there should be a kind of re-orientation against sexist misgivings concerning the female sex so as to create a just society in which women can become full participants in the march for progress (1998: 91). But he also notes that this does not mean that since men have for long been in the political scene, they should just give way for women just because they are women. Rather, there should be a fair competition between the two sexes (1998: 91). Contrary to what some anti-feminist philosophers think, the campaign against gender inequality, or for gender equality, has not been left for women alone. It is interesting to know that male philosophers like Plato and Marx Engels and many others are among those whose works have ideas that underscore pro-feminist stance (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai&Abakedi, 2018).

Among anti-feminist philosophers in Nigerian universities, there is the tendency to treat scholarly works on feminist philosophy with disdain or outright lack of interest. One of the reasons for this is what we call an androcentric commitment' towards discrediting what is invented or produced by a woman or whatever is defending the rights of women. Another reason is that some persons think feminism is a postmodern concept naming all manners of extremist positions proffered by females to radically take over the society from males to bring to fruition certain aspirations such as: the destruction of conventional marriage and the enthronement of matriarchy. Well, there are different schools of thought on feminism, some with reasonable propositions and advancements towards curbing the problem of sexism. Therefore, not all the feminist schools of thought are about the idea of women achieving male subjugation or the replacement of patriarchy with matriarchy (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai&Abakedi, 2018).

One of the greatest obstacles to the growth of feminist philosophy in Nigerian universities is the unwillingness of professional philosophers who are predominantly males, to delve into this area. Even the females themselves have been groomed to reason that since philosophers over the classical, medieval and modern periods have been males; therefore, if one must do philosophy or write about philosophers, one has to concentrate on male philosophers (some of whom have justified the second-sex theory). This kind of mentality is going on even as we have many professional female philosophers in Nigeria and outside Nigeria, some of whom are making their contributions to the development of the field of philosophy. Some professional women-philosophers in Nigeria are not even

helping matters as they give the impression that their major task as co-professionals is to reflect on, and teach the ideologies of celebrated male philosophers in the History of Western philosophy. The pace at which many female philosophers in Europe and the United States are emerging as prominent contributors to the growth of feminist philosophy is commendable. But the situation is not the same for Africa. For instance, in talking about African philosophy, all we hear are the names of male-philosophers such as: Placide Tempels, Mbiti, Wiredu, Bodunrin, Kagame, Houtondji, Theophilus Okere, Emmanuel Edeh, Pantaleon Iroegbu, Innocent Asouzu and many more. We hardly hear of any female African philosopher being included in the list of those now regarded as classical philosophers of African philosophy (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai & Abakedi, 2018). This view can be disputed because we now have Oluwole Sophie, Egun Oduwole and Bolatito Lanre Abass

What this points to is that African philosophy is already reproducing the feature of the marginalization of women and their contributions; and this is simply because men have been at the helm of affairs. The different schools of thought in African philosophy hardly reflect the recognition of the contributions of African women. For instance, if one considers the arguments of 'sage philosophy', one discovers that the language of the proponents of sage philosophy gives the impression that the supposed sages were males. We often hear of 'wise men' in African folklores even where there were women, discourses about wise women sages hardly surface. This trend has to be corrected. And if professional African male philosophers are not willing to make this correction or are non-challant about this issue, then the onus falls on professional female philosophers to rise up to the challenge. Why should professional female philosophers in Nigeria remain unresponsive to the systematic exclusion of women from the development of philosophy in Africa? We can say that this is because many Nigerian women who are professional philosophers have been schooled in a system where male domination and androcentrism has coloured what has been handed down as historical literatures of philosophy and also because of the failure to take the bull by the horn. Nevertheless, female professional philosophers in Nigeria are doing their best with regards to contributing scholarly articles on many philosophical issues including feminism. But the challenge has been that the scholarly inputs of professional female philosophers are often wrongly categorized under gender studies because of the absence of feminist philosophy as a philosophical branch of its own (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai & Abakedi, 2018).

To change the scenario of the underrepresentation of the philosophical contributions of women, professional women philosophers in Nigeria and in Africa, need to make their own original contributions to philosophy. One way is to carry out a critical re-assessment of the ideologies of past philosophers; another way is to study the philosophical works written by women who are in the academic line especially those who are professional philosophers. Professional female philosophers need to come out with indigenous philosophical systems, ideologies, theories and method. Students of philosophy need to

study feminist philosophy to get attuned to the recent developments in this field. Feminist philosophy needs to be included in the curriculum of philosophy in all Nigerian Universities, public and private. This will make undergraduate-students, graduate-students and lecturers to carryout research in this area. Gender inequality is not only a social problem, it is also a philosophical problem that is waxing stronger and stronger in both developed and developing countries. The failure to include feminist philosophy in the curriculum of philosophy in Nigerian universities is regrettable, as students who are future professionals remain ignorant about the developments in this field; and about the increasing number of female professional philosophers (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai & Abakedi, 2018).

Philosophy cannot be static because the problems, with which philosophy is concerned, are not always static but dynamic, evolutionary and sometimes revolutionary. Philosophy should be used to solve human problems. This is how its relevance to the Nigerian people and the justification for its inclusion in the list of courses in the humanities can be shown. If philosophy cannot assist in proffering solutions to the problems that immediately affect us as a nation, then its relevance will be put into question. Since female marginalization, female subjugation, female oppression and gender inequality constitute social problems to the contemporary Nigerian society, Nigerian philosophers need to focus on how these problems can be addressed. Since feminist philosophy is about these categories of problems, it is all the more important for both lecturers and students of philosophy. Any society that oppresses women and denies them the opportunity to be fully human because they are women is still very far from social justice. On his working visit to Kenya, the first African American president of the United States, Barack Obama stressed that Africa can hardly achieve the development it so desires if she does not protect and respect the rights of women. The gender-equality gospel is therefore a key factor for socio-economic development and social justice in democratic systems of government. The earlier, we realize this as a people, the better we will be in the nearest future (Oluwagbemi-Jacob, Egbai & Abakedi, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

This unit discussed the relationship between feminism and Philosophy, the history of philosophy from a feminist perspective, the branches of feminist/gender philosophy, the method of feminist philosophy, and the relevance of feminist philosophy.

5. SUMMARY

As a reaction to gender inequality in the documentation of history and in the discussion of historical ideas, feminist scholarship have argued that the way gender philosophy should go is by reexamining old documentations to fish out sexist and androcentric misrepresentations of the nature women and the female sex, to include the achievements of women and their views/innovations as well as their standpoint and positionality as the immediate victims of such large scale systems of oppression and marginalization

6. TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- Discuss the relationship between Feminism and Philosophy
- Name and discuss briefly, the branches of Gender/Feminist Philosophy
- Discuss the Feminist Method used in Feminist/Gender Philosophy
- How is Gender/ Feminist philosophy relevant?

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MODULE 3: ONTOLOGICAL ISSUES IN GENDER AND FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Unit 3: Metaphysics in Gender Philosophy

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 OBJECTIVES
- 3.0 MAIN CONTENTS
 - 3.3.1 Some Basic Questions in Gender/Feminist Ontology
 - 3.3.2 The Nature of the Woman and the issue of Misogyny in Philosophy
 - 3.3.3 Argument from Essence
 - 3.3.4 Argument from Difference
 - 3.3.5 Sex and Gender on Being and Becoming
- 4 CONCLUSION
- 5 SUMMARY
- 6 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
- 7 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The question of the nature of the woman has been extensively discussed. Questions bordering on biology, ontology, sociology and psychology as it concerns the feminist approach has been attempted by many feminist scholars. Since this is a work on gender philosophy, this unit focuses on some of the basic ontological questions asked in feminist ontology, the issue of misogyny in western philosophy as it concerns the woman's nature, arguments against gender inequality based on Essence as well as arguments against gender uniqueness based on difference. It should be noted that these issue may be presented under different topics in other works on Gender studies. One reason for this is that different authors try to make discourses relevant to the issues in their respective contexts. But this unit tries to capture in a very brief way some of those issues.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help students to:

- 2.1 Some Basic Questions in Feminist Ontology

- 2.2 The Nature of the Woman and the issue Misogyny in Gender Philosophy
- 2.3 Argument from Essence
- 2.4 Argument from Difference
- 2.5 Sex and Gender on Being and Becoming

3.3.1 Some Basic Questions in Gender/Feminist Ontology

The following are some of the questions asked in feminist/gender ontology

- Are there peculiar metaphysical assumptions or patterns of thought that feminists and feminist philosophers should challenge or endorse?
- Have metaphysical claims of present and past philosophers about what the nature of the woman is supported sexism; if so, how?
- To what extent are our philosophical frameworks or ontological worldviews for understanding the world distorting reality in the sense that they privilege men or are disadvantageous to women?
- What is the relationship between the social world and the natural world; is our construction of the social world a necessary reflection of the natural world?

The questions numbered 1 to 4 can be further summarized into two basic inquiries (i) whether the history of philosophy past and present have instances where sexism was or has been mistaken for truth or (ii) whether it is correct or wrong to describe social normative principles necessarily as natural principles or essences.

3.2.2 The Nature of the Woman and the issue of Misogyny in Gender Philosophy

Misogyny in Metaphysics can be seen to be the standard problem of feminist metaphysics. Many metaphysicians have had something to say about the origin, nature and definition of womanhood. Some have justified the subordination and subjugation of the female sex by presupposing that there is something about the woman's nature which necessitates her subordination by males. The task of correcting sexist claims in metaphysics can only come after reading what has already been postulated, theorized and documented. Some of our very much celebrated philosophical geniuses were guilty of the anti-feminist stance because they had played some roles in justifying the subjugation and marginalization of women.

In his *Phaedo* and *Meno*, Plato did not say whether there is inequality in the soul-abilities of the human person as a male or as a female. Nevertheless, his misogynist position appears in his *Republic*, where he mentions that the female members of the

guardian class are not to be elected as kings but are to serve as servants of the state with the principal duty of making babies for the male elites of the guardian class; and that women of the guardian class are to be exempted from monogamous marriages for no particular woman of this class is to be entitled to any particular man (1974:79). According to Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, Plato later abandoned this line of argument to support monogamy in his work *The Laws* (1999: 42). Like other members of the guardian class, Plato averred that women are to be exempted from the possession of private property. Thus, Plato is specific about the sex-role of women in the guardian class but he does not assign the exercise of political authority to them as a gender role. Some scholars describe Plato as a feminist because he gave room for women to be part of the guardian class; however, this position is not shared by everyone because somehow, he excluded women from the main business of kingship. This is a pointer to an early attempt at a philosophical proposal for the marginalization and exclusion of women from key political offices. Plato's idea of marginalization is further aggravated by his student Aristotle. Plato did well to attempt a general definition of the human person, stating his position about ultimate origin of the human person as a cosmic entity with a pre-existent soul that is destined unto eternity as well as his limitations and strengths. Nevertheless, androcentric mindset beclouded his viewpoint, when it came to the question of who can serve as the general ruler of the state. Women are left out by Plato and what appears to be the reason he offers is the sex role of reproduction.

Kristin Sampson (2005) in her critique of Plato's metaphor of birth in the *Timaeus*, she observes that Plato's idea of describing things in the cosmos as copies of the ideas in the world of form creates room for the treatment of things in the cosmos as feminine, which is reminiscent of the traditional metaphor of describing nature as a woman. Sampson observes:

The copies are defective because of this necessary space, which in the *Timaeus* is portrayed as a feminine figure. I will argue that the metaphor of copying opens up certain ways of thinking about birth and procreation and excludes others, and that this metaphor excludes a notion of two different fundamental principles...I further wish to argue that Plato's philosophy necessitates a conception of the feminine – i.e. the mother – as an ideally empty space, devoid of any properties of its own. By connecting space and the mother through the image he presents in *Timaeus* Plato weaves the concept of space into a pattern of sexual difference. Or maybe it is the other way around: Maybe it is sexual difference that is modeled after the model of a certain concept of space (19).

Sampson's position is that space is presented by Plato in the *Timaeus* as a somewhat female receptacle in the sense that like the imperfect things it houses, she is also imperfect. That she is the one hindering the similarity of the copies to their father the

forms that gives birth to them (2005:0). In other words, while she is a necessary condition for the material things, at the same time she prevents the material things from being like the forms (20). Similar arguments about the feminist status of nature as given by Sampson border around Plato's concept of (Gê) the earth and time (2005: 20-27).

A comprehensive list of Aristotle's work is captured by Jonathan Barnes in *The Cambridge Companion of Aristotle* (6-9). His embracive interest in science, astronomy, poetry, philosophy et cetera makes him a father of almost all the current ramifications of epistemological disciplines. Mukherjee and Ramaswamy observe that his most famous books are *Politics*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudaemian Ethics* (1953: 96). In an attempt to distinguish human beings from the animals, Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* observes that man by nature is a rational animal (Book I). In the *Politics* we can identify two definitive qualities of man as proposed by Aristotle. These definitive qualities are sociability and self-insufficiency. For Aristotle, the human being is by nature self-insufficient and because of this self-insufficiency, he must live in a natural community and living in a natural community entail living within the political situation of the ruler and the ruled. Aristotle observes in the first book of his *Politics* that this ruler-ruled situation can be despotic or constitutional. It is constitutional when this relationship exists among equals – freemen and freewomen such as husbands and wives or between Kings and citizens. It is despotic when it involves the master and the slave because the slave and the master are not equals. The master is a free citizen whereas the slave is not a free citizen.

In his book *Metaphysics*, Aristotle identifies rationality as the definitive essence of the human being. In his *Politics*, he repeats this by averring that rationality is an essential quality of the soul that distinguishes the human being from the animals and the plants (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 106). In the latter parts of his *Politics*, he proposes gender inequality even in the practice of virtue or justice between men and women because he considers men as having a superior deliberative rational faculty to women (*Politics* Bk.1 XII). He also proposes a natural inequality among human beings generally with respect to the faculties and abilities of the soul. For Aristotle, even though constitutional rule ought to exist between the husband and the wife because they are free persons; the wife must necessarily be ruled by her husband for her own sake. The idea of the woman's inequality to the man as a wife, and the idea of the woman's equality to the man as freepersons, amounts to a contradiction that Aristotle may not have noticed.

The rationalization given by Aristotle for the inferiority of the woman to the man is that the woman is naturally and biologically determined by some limitations that necessitate her subordination and subservience to the man. One of these limitations, according to Aristotle, is the absence of authority in the woman's rational deliberative faculty (*Politics*, Bk.1. XII). McClelland in summarizing the first book of Aristotle's *Politics* observes that:

Aristotle ... discusses the forms of relationship, which naturally occur in a household on the basis of the possessions of 'reason' (the capacity to direct one's own life and so the life of others). ...freemen in whom the directive faculty naturally rules over others, including wives (because the directive faculty, which exists in women, is inoperative); slaves having no reason are ruled as tools or beasts of burden (1996:57).

In her article "Feminism in Ancient Philosophy", Sabina Lovibond captures Aristotle's logic of presentation in the *Politics* in a succinct way that reveals his intention to present a logically consistent philosophical theory of human nature and the state. We shall simply highlight how this logic of presentation goes in a summary-manner as follows:

- In the *Politics* (1253a20-25) and *de Anima* (412b18-20), Aristotle holds that the essence of a thing is to be identified with its function as part of an organic whole. This is because nature does nothing in vain (Pol. 1256b21), that is, there is a purpose to everything in nature (Lovibond 2000:12). Therefore, in order to understand a thing, we must first find out its ultimate purpose.
- Nature is hierarchical in the division of purpose to things; some things are just meant to serve the purpose of others as in serving as food (Pol. 125b15-20). For instance, animals that are lower in the hierarchy are by nature to serve human beings as food. In this way, there is a natural principle of domination by the one who is higher.
- On the basis of (ii), it is therefore only natural that the things higher in the hierarchy must dominate or rule the ones that are lower. This principle should also exist in human society both in the private household and in the public.
- The household is analogous to the natural world. Just as some things are higher and dominate over the lower ones, so too should it be in the household. Those that have greater responsibilities and consequently greater authority are to rule and dominate over the others that are under them. In the household, nature's hierarchy must be allowed to take its effect. The males have greater responsibilities and are therefore to rule and dominate the females for it is the natural function of the males to dominate and rule, while it is the natural function of the females to be ruled and dominated by the males for their own good (2000:12-13).
- According to Lovibond's reading of *On the Generation of Animals*, Aristotle observes that in sexual reproduction the 'body' comes from the female while the 'soul' comes from the male; that the male is the proximate motive cause, to which belong the logos and the form. Since the logos and the form is

more divine and better than matter, and since in reproduction this comes from the males; then wherever possible and so far as possible, the male is superior to the female (13).

From the foregoing, there is a conscious effort to preserve biological inequality from an androcentric perspective and mistaking social inequality for natural inequality. Aristotle thought that biological inequalities were natural definitions necessitating social inequality in the assignment of gender roles. So, we discover that Aristotle started off in his *Metaphysics* to define human beings as rational animals but only ended up in the *Politics* to assign an inferior rational deliberative faculty to women, and presumed that this was a natural definitive feature of womanhood, their functional essence and the reason for which they should be ruled, marginalized and subjugated in the society. Of course, it is not only women that are affected in this derogatory social construction of gender by Aristotle. Some males were also seen as having no deliberative rationality at all, namely, those born as slaves. Lovibond throws more light to this observation as follows:

When Aristotle opines that we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity, though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature, he lends his authority to what has proved remarkably a durable conception of the female animal, qua female, as defective. And this supposed defectiveness is as much psychological as physical, for we read in *Politics I* (1260a10ff.) that 'All these persons [freeman and slave, male and female, adult and child] possess in common the different parts of the soul [namely, the rational/ruling and the irrational/ruled elements]; but they possess them in different ways. The slave is entirely without the faculty of deliberation; the female indeed possesses it, but in a form which remains inconclusive [akuron, lacking in authority]; and if children also possess it, it is only in an immature form (13).

So, it is quite clear in the *Politics* that by implication, the definition of the human person as a rational animal does not apply to all classes of human beings or in the same degree. Aristotle thus opines that not all human beings are deliberatively rational after all, and that some human beings are more rational than the others.

In his treatise on slaves, Aristotle acknowledges that slaves by birth bred their kind. The implication of this is that slaves had wives and children who were also slaves. Therefore, it is not logically out of place to say that they were both male and female slaves who were slaves by nature. And if as he said, slaves by birth had not deliberative faculty at all, and that males have superior deliberative faculties than females; then it is not clear what the status of a male slave in connection with a female slave is, over the issue of absence of deliberative faculty. One may ask whether it is plausible to ask if

there is a variation of degree in the lack of this faculty between male slaves and female slaves. But what is most likely is the existence of males with deliberative faculties higher than women as well as male slaves, with no deliberative faculties at all. There are also women with deliberative faculties inferior to those of the males that are not slaves by birth, at the same time there are women (slaves) with no deliberative faculties at all. This was a very dangerous philosophical position, which Aristotle may not have thought about because he was a product of the culture of his time and his philosophical prowess could not lift him beyond cultural presuppositions that were sexist.

Aristotle's definition of womanhood along misogynist perspectives therefore points to the fact that even he himself did not recognize that he was a slave to the cultural ambivalences of a male-controlled society at the time. A feminist once said: "If Aristotle were to return to the world now, he will weep for his ignorance; he will see educated women competing in all ramifications of societal life even where he had warned they should not be allowed to go".

In the *Politics*, after declaring the woman to be physically and rationally inferior to the man, Aristotle goes ahead to claim that the woman's proper place in the society is in the home, controlled by her husband (www.constitution.org). Thus, the role of the woman in the society is summarized by the notion of household keeping and it is in respect to the latter that Aristotle avers that the woman should be educated and trained only in gymnastics and domestic arts to enable her manage the household, bear and raise children and remain obedient and pleasing to her husband (*Politics* Bk. 3. www.constitution.org). For Aristotle, arts like medicine or gymnastics are practiced for the sake of the patient, so, it is for the sake of the woman and the household that training in gymnastics and domestic arts should be undertaken (*Politics* Bk. 3. www.constitution.org). Aristotle argues that both sexes are constitutionally equal only with respect to the legal status of being free but with respect to anything natural and biological, the females are inferior. So, what turns out as his theory of legal freedom for the woman is ironically being free only in the sense of not being a slave but in subservience to the bondage imposed on her by a patriarchal and phallogocentric system. Aristotle's reduction of the role of women to the household or to their husband's homes implies that the woman is a political animal only in her husband's home. Female politics in Aristotle's Aristocracy is in other words, a subservient-domestic politics of being ruled by her husband. Outside the home, Aristotle observes in the *Politics* that the woman should remain silent for her silence in the society is her glory (Bk.1. chap.1).

Therefore, the central argument in the philosophy of Aristotle concerning the relationship between the human nature and the state is that of gender inequality. As we have made effort to explain in this section, Aristotle argued extensively to show that nature is filled with inequalities and as such even human nature expresses inequalities. Hence, within humankind, inequality is a natural principle. Reading through Aristotle's

Politics, we can draw out certain positions that are implied by Aristotle's propositions on the nature of women and their role in the society:

- Males are biologically, mentally and essentially superior to females. In view of this natural superiority, females are by nature destined to be ruled and dominated by men. Thus, biological inequality is a reflection of inequality in essence, which serves as a basis for the rationalization of female subjugation.
- Married women must out of natural necessity be ruled by their husbands and must remain absolutely obedient to them. Women are naturally destined for a monogamous home in the city-state.
- Citizenship is meant for the most superior kind of human beings. Males are naturally superior to the females. Hence, they are the only qualified sex for citizenship. Women, who are firstly inferior to males generally as well as to their husbands cannot constitute the citizenship class for in their natural inferiority to the males, they can neither act justly, virtuously or courageously like the males.
- Since they cannot be citizens or are not fit to be citizens, they cannot rule any city-state, community or village. In other words, they cannot hold political offices. Hence, they are not qualified by nature to compete with the males with respect to civil services rendered outside the home. In other words, women are by nature unfit to be civil servants or politicians.
- Since their inferior mental status cannot guarantee an equal competition with the males, with respect to virtue or courage, then women are not fit to defend their city-states. In other words, women cannot join the army or police or other paramilitary establishments.
- The ultimate reason therefore for a woman's existence is child rearing and the satisfaction of a patriarchal monarch – the father of the home.
- Women should be educated in gymnastics and domestic arts only for the purpose of satisfying matrimonial roles. Hence, women must have an inferior kind of education befitting their sociological status of subservience to the males. Such education is therefore not for the labour market.
- In a nutshell, women must glorify themselves in the society by remaining quiet and staying off legislative, judicial and executive deliberations and decisions.).

Dorothy Ucheaga observes that Aristotle's position is tantamount to the denial of women basic political rights such as the right to vote and be voted for as well as the denial of the right to be part of the decision-making process that shape the patterns of society (2005:41). What this logically implies is that for instance, on Aristotle's

recommendations, women should not be elected into key political offices like the Presidency, the House of Representatives or the Senate or even be appointed to serve as public officers. For Aristotle, women are not born to rule but to be ruled in all ramifications of authority by men. In short, Mukherjee and Ramaswamy summarize it all; that according to Aristotle, the woman's rightful place in the society is in her husband's or marital monogamous home (2005:41).

Discourse on female participation in politics is hardly seen to be a dominant feature of the philosophies of the medieval age and other medieval schools of thought. However, some of those who attempted to say something about the nature and function of women followed in the classical tradition of conceiving women as the second sex, and on this ground, are naturally bound for chauvinistic marginalization and subjugation.

According to Osborne, Aquinas sees the male's sex role of begetting as a peculiar ability that the male has which the female does not have. This ability he calls the power of generation (1979: 69). According to Joan Chittiser in the book *Women Ministry and the Church*, Aquinas defined the woman as a misbegotten male (1979: 6). If Chittiser reading of Aquinas is correct, then Aquinas would be saying that the woman is a biological defect. This position is actually asserted by Reuther in her book *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*. Reuther avers that Aquinas taught that the female sex is biologically defective and lacks the fullness of human nature; and because of this, she has to be ruled by the male since her condition makes her incapable of exercising public leadership in the church or in the state (33). Granted that during Aquinas' time, the science of biology was not as fully developed as we have it today; one can understand why it was possible that speculations about the nature of the sexes that were scientifically proven could pass as knowledge. But if we may ask, what is the fullness of the human nature that is in the male and not in the female? Certainly, whatever is meant by the fullness of human nature is a metaphysical claim that cannot be investigated by science. But if this has anything to do with human anatomy, then the question will arise whether there is any part of the human body that carries the fullness of the human nature that is in the male but not in the female. Besides the differences of the reproductive organs, one wonders whether there is any organ in the male that is not in the female. Even if we look at it from the perspective of the soul, what guarantee is there that we can establish an essential difference between male-soul and female-soul; or does it mean that sex-binary extend to the soul?

One of the modern philosophers that dealt a devastating blow on the female sex was John Locke. Locke made the proposition that the man is naturally stronger and abler than the woman. It is not clear on what grounds Locke had based his theory of inequality. It is not also clear whether Locke was talking about the strength of muscular abilities or of perseverance or in the management of temperaments or emotions or in the endurance of suffering et cetera. But what stands as a derogatory definition on the nature of womanhood is his position that the woman was cursed by the Supreme Being at the

beginning of anthropological order, to be dominated and ruled by the man (209). In one of his books, *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, Locke avers that the woman consents to the man's domination by marital contract, which originates ultimately as a curse placed on womanhood by God (1960:209-210). In other words, the woman has a pre-established destiny of male domination especially whenever she decides to go into a marital contract by consent. What this means is that any woman who so desires to enter into marriage must make up her mind to accept the man's domination.

The idea of a sex cursed by God is a metaphysical claim indicating that the female sex has a natural function that arises from a supernatural curse. This represents Locke's attempt to distinguish the definitive nature of the male sex from the female sex. There are as many implications as there can be of defining the nature of the female sex as essentially cursed. One who applies this mindset can subject women to all kinds of inhuman treatment and abuse. This is one of the damages that Locke's philosophy has done to the dignity of womanhood. Feminist metaphysics is concerned with an apologetics against such positions in metaphysics. There is no reason why the definition of the female sex as a cursed sex should be presented on the table of what philosophy must offer to the human society for the resolution of existential problems and for social justice to prevail in the society.

In his *Emile* Rousseau made a lot of statements that can be described as anti-feminist. But we are particularly drawn to a metaphysical pronouncement that is anti-feminist and very much annoying and derogatory, which sees the woman as a tool for the man's sexual delight and pleasure. Mukherjee and Ramaswamy quote Rousseau as observing thus:

Woman is specifically made for man's delight. If man in his turn ought to be pleasing in her eyes, the necessity is less urgent...if a woman is made to please and to be in subjection to man, she ought to make herself pleasing in his eyes and not provoke him to anger (1999: 231).

This observation reduces womanhood to a tool for man's appeasement, sexual gratification. And in this respect, her place is the private space of the home (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 1999: 252). One can imagine what the implications of this remark are for women in the society. It can give rise to sex-trade, prostitution, sex-slavery, rape, child molestation et cetera.

3.3.3 Argument from Essence and Difference

Different authors and scholars have used the concept of essentialism in different ways. Some authors use the concept to name the practice by feminists to argue that both the male and female sex have the same essence, in that sense, they are equal by virtue of belonging to a specific organic class, which we call humankind (rather than mankind because feminist metaphysicians frown at the use of the latter concept to name the human

race). Other authors use the concept of essentialism to name the presupposition that feminist struggles have a common form because the problems of women are similar across the globe. For instance, they argue that the different branches of feminism have a unique form, namely, the liberation of women from androcentric oppression and undue suffrage. These perspectives of explaining essentialism in feminist metaphysics has logical implications for feminism. For instance, for those who regard essentialism as naming the sameness or oneness of “nature” between males and females; the feminist theory that arises out of the logic of essentialism can be represented as follows:

- In nature, the male and female are equal; they are born equal, they have one nature, which distinguishes them from other animal species.
- On the premise of the equality of the sexes or on the presupposition of their possession of one nature, the following feminist claims are anchored: (i) that human rights and civil privileges should be shared equally; (ii) that opportunities to civil and public service, education, self-empowerment, politics and decision-making processes, should be distributed equally between the sexes; (iii) that undue marginalization and subjugation of the female sex and the favoritism of the male sex in the family with respect to ownership of property, right to ancestral and parental inheritance, personal opinion et cetera, should cease. (iv) Therefore, that gender roles in the society should be constructed along the basis of the natural equality between males and females.

For others who regard essentialism as naming the uniqueness of the form of all feminist struggles against women oppression; the logical implication for feminism is that for instance, what is good for “white women” is also good for “black women”. In other words, that social justice understood as the halting of gender inequality in all its possible ramifications of need and interest, should not exclude any category of women in the world. More so, women who feel they are struggling against one kind of sexist practices and marginalization are not to be found promoting some other forms of sexist practices and marginalization either from the angle of tribalism, classism, racism, fanaticism and selfishly motivated interests and greed for wealth, fame and power. Indeed, the logic of the essentialists is simple: the natural equality of the sexes should be the foundation for the equal treatment of the sexes in the society as well as the yardstick for condemning and correcting all kinds of sexism, gender bias, gender inequality. On the other hand, the natural equality of all women should also be the ontological foundation for the equal treatment of women by their fellow women irrespective of race, tongue, class, status, position, religion, country, culture et cetera.

Differentialism holds that in the struggle against gender inequality and gender bias, there is no need to suppress the reality of the differences between the sexes; these differences, which are mostly biological, are real and should be regarded as such. Like essentialism, Differentialism also has conflicting schools of thought. There are those

whose principal thesis is that the sexes are naturally and biologically different and so gender roles should reflect this difference but in a way that reflects division of labour, which does not disadvantage women. This view of Differentialism was predominant during the period of the first wave when few feminists started the struggle against women suffrage. It is best described by some strands of liberal feminism and the historical materialism of the Marxists. For instance, it is possible to find scholars who argue for the division of labour in the sense that the sexes can alternate or take turns in performing peculiar gender roles without nullifying the fact that they are naturally different. Many feminists use the family as the stronghold for this theory. They argue that in the family, the husband should take turns to cook, and cater for children, such that no particular sets of gender roles within the home should be reserved for any of the sexes. This category of feminists argues that even the children should be trained in this way such that no particular gender role should be assigned to only one of the sexes even as they may have biological differences.

The other version of Differentialism holds that the differences between the sexes are not necessarily perceived as natural inequalities, but as biological uniqueness that do not in any way suggest the superiority of the male to the female. Nevertheless, the proponents of this version argue that the ascription of gender roles should be done in direct consideration of the biological differences of the woman. In this regard, certain privileges, especially those having to do with maternity, should be brought into constant consideration when apportioning gender roles that are of a civic or political kind. However, the consideration of women's biological differences in the construction of gender should not be misrepresented as natural inequalities upon which to anchor gender inequality and the marginalization and subjugation of the female sex.

Feminist theories of essentialism and Differentialism have been foundational to feminist conceptions of the woman's nature and have had corresponding significance for the development of feminist political theory. Other feminist theories of the human nature that arise from essentialism and Differentialism include: abstract individualism, formal equality, biological determinism and historical materialism. Essentialism in feminist metaphysics evokes arguments bordering on the question of the origins. Feminist metaphysicians often denounce the androcentric interpretation of Differentialism as a formal essence established by the masculine God at the beginning of anthropological order in the cosmos. Of course, arguments for and against these two schools of thought often overlap. As we have earlier mentioned, there is still more to do with respect to the development of feminist metaphysics. It is the desire of pro-feminist metaphysicians that metaphysics in contemporary times should embrace these issues. But the immediate consequence this would have for metaphysics is the complementary interplay of the ontological tradition and the scholastic tradition, which some academics are unwilling to compromise.

3.3.4 Sex and Gender: On Being and Becoming

In the history and development of Western metaphysics, two major ways of describing the nature of a thing has been predominant. Here we can regard them as two logical approaches to the description and explanation of the essence of a thing. The first approach is that which presupposes that the nature of a thing is already in the being, that is, is already fixed at its inception. In other words, what a thing is or will become is already in its being such that growth and development only displays the manifestation of what was already in the thing. This logical approach was greatly used by Aristotle and his followers. The second is that which holds that the nature of a thing will only be made manifested after a period of development. In other words, a thing has to grow and develop into its essence. A thing has to become what it should be by a process of growth or development. The former is regarded as “being” and the latter is regarded as “becoming” and this explains the debate between being and becoming.

Ásta Sveinsdóttir observes in her article in the book *Feminist Metaphysics*, the distinction between sex and gender started with the introduction of Simone de Beauvoir's book the *Second Sex* into the academic scene (48). Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* explicates the patronage of the second approach that defines or explains the female sex from the ontological perspective of becoming. One of de Beauvoir's most famous claims, which have remained fundamental to the discourse on feminist metaphysics, was that “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (*Second Sex* 1953:267). The philosophical significance of de Beauvoir's statement is that what the society understands as the essence of the woman is not there at birth rather, she has to become it through socialization. This introduces the tension between the interpretation of essence as being and essence as becoming or what we may rather call essence as learnt. In claiming that one is not born a woman, Beauvoir was not suggesting that one is not born with the female reproductive parts, but that most often it is the society that determines what actually constitutes the differences between the man and the woman. But this does not mean that such definitions are natural and objective. Philosophical problems often arise from questions about the ontology of sex and gender. Some of these questions include:

Is sex or gender an idea or an object?

Is sex or gender a social construct?

Is sex or gender inter-relational?

Is sex or gender a kind of dualism?

Another of Beauvoir's famous claim in the *Second Sex* is: “‘He' is the subject, 'He' is the Absolute; 'She' is the other” (xxviii). For Beauvoir, differentiating between sex and

gender was aimed at arguing against the view that social reality was determined by natural reality. As Aristotle had averred, the division of labour between men and women and the inequality that accrued from that division had been thought to have a natural justification from biology. Aristotle had raised the argument that women's biological features justified women's place and function in the society as the inferior sex. Beauvoir's point of argument was that this cannot be done; that biological facts were brute fact that could not be used as a basis for the normative question of how society ought to be organized.

The failure of Aristotle's supposed essence of womanhood to stand the test of time has awoken feminist philosophers to the realization that what we call sex and gender is to a great extent coloured by our conceptual frameworks, which may sometimes become the very obstacles obstructing us from getting at reality. Some of these frameworks are cultural and to a large extent, and deterministic because they fashion us with the tools with which we interpret our experiences of reality. For instance, everyone born into the world has to learn an already existing language, which he or she must use to describe his/her experience of the world. Our culture is therefore largely responsible for the interpretive tools. Sometimes, we may forget that what and how we think is affected by social forces. This was the experience of those Western thinkers who wrongly supported sexism. But the

truth is that sometimes the conceptual framework with which we interpret the world may become obstacles to truth. For instance, we are used to assuming that there are only two sexes, males and females. For those who regard sex as naming an object, problems arise as to what are the definitive anatomical constituents differentiating sex as an object, given that in recent times we are gradually becoming aware of intersexed bodies, that is, bodies that show the mixture of what we call male and female features.

By intersexed bodies, what comes immediately to mind is an hermaphrodite. Hard as this may sound, many persons are born with the male and female genitals or other male-female features. Sometimes, they are commonly nicknamed 'she-male' or 'he-female'. Generally, despite having two genitals, hermaphrodites are commonly observed not to have both male and female reproductive systems. We are not ruling out the possibility of finding human hermaphrodites with complete reproductive organs of the both sexes. What we are rather saying is that it is very rare. What is common among human hermaphrodites is the possession of male and female genitals. Some have both genitals, the sperm-system but without a womb and ovaries; while others have both genitals with the womb and ovary-system, but without the sperm-system. Some that are 'she-male' may be seen with other outward male features like enlarged muscles, deep-voice, beards and moustaches; while others that are he-male may also have mammary glands (protruded breasts) and other feminine features like large hips, light-voice et cetera Using Darwin's terms, hermaphrodites could be biologically described as monstrosities. In meeting people, you cannot immediately say if they are hermaphrodites

because, we are all expected to put on clothes. But the truth is that, this biological constitution poses a challenge to our classical way of describing sex, and at the same time, we cannot deny the latter as having possible logical implications for a theory of gender that is anchored strictly on biological constitution. In this regard, the question arises as to how a hermaphrodite stands in an ontological interpretation of gender as becoming, given that biological constitution is a necessary consideration? This constitutes new philosophical problems that feminist metaphysics brings into discourses in metaphysics.

Despite the fact that there are evidences of intersexed bodies, many do not revise their conceptual framework with regard to the assumption that there are only two sexes, but others do. The theory of sexual binarism takes for granted the position that there are only two sexes, male and female. This is our classical way of reasoning about the sexes. But instances of hermaphrodites are cited by others as evidence against the theory of sexual binarism. In this regard, the argument is raised that nature also blesses others with sexual monism to prevent one from absolutizing the theory of sexual binarism. Others, as we have already observed, maintain that sexual monism does not disprove sexual binarism because hermaphroditic constitution neither includes uterine-constitution and ovulation-processes nor testes-constitution and sperm-processes. Nevertheless, sexual binarism and sexual monism as different manifestations of bio-sexual constitution, have led some feminist metaphysicians to suppose that sex is not necessarily an object but an idea, and to suppose that sexual binarism is not necessarily a natural phenomenon but a social construct. The evidences of intersexed bodies have led others to revise the conceptual framework of sexual binaries to make way for inter-relational definitions and considerations.

Some feminists have raised arguments in support of the position that it is high time the dualistic mode of thinking that divide issues into conflicting poles be modified and revised; because there are instances in nature that point in the direction that the conflict dualism creates is merely a social or individual construction and not necessarily a principle of nature. This is the same line of thought that feminist metaphysicians have adopted to explain gender roles. Their argument is that since no gender role is a natural principle of nature but the social constructions of the society, then dualism should not be the conceptual framework for defining sex and gender in the way that traditional metaphysics has done. Some other feminist metaphysicians have argued that the evidence of intersexed bodies should in a way be seen as a good reason why dualism does not best describe the real situation of things. Their argument is that for those who think that a dualistic definition of sex should establish dualistic definition of gender and gender roles; then intersexed bodies are evidences to destroy such dualistic conceptual frameworks. There is another dimension of debate between sexual binarism and sexual monism which anchor their arguments on the hormonal constitution of the sexes. In this respect, a male is a male by virtue of the biological composition of testosterone while the female is a

female by virtue of the composition of estrogen. Citing cases of transgender engineering, the proponents of hormone-based sexual binarism present these hormones as the ontological definition of the sexes in the sense that they are the sole determinants. They argue that the MTF (male to female) transition will naturally redefine and reconstitute the sexual biology of the individual on the introduction of estrogen. In a BBC programme broadcasted on the 11th of August, 2015, a transwoman and a transman who were interviewed narrated their experiences of the transition processes, which included both painful and less painful surgeries, and real modifications in some parts of their anatomy consequent upon the introduction of the chemicals that constitute the composition of estrogen and testosterone. For many of us who listened to that programme we may have had our different reactions but for one of the contributing authors of this book, the take home lesson that was quite glaring was the immediate effects of the artificial introduction of more hormones to a natural anatomy.

That the technology of transgender engineering makes it possible for the natural biological composition which underlies the classical understanding of sex to be altered is bewildering. For some, it is a proof that sexual binary is not biologically closed but open. This has logical implications for the being-becoming debate on the ontology of sex. Some scholars have argued that it is a case disproving that sexual binarism is absolutely two-valued; that real cases of hermaphroditic persons, transmen and transwomen, should force us to abandon our classical dualist definition of sex as a binary, as well as the dualist feminine-masculine dichotomy that arises from it. The philosophical implication here is that there is more to sex than the male-female dichotomy, which in turn poses more problems to whatever we would mean by masculinity and femininity. However, other scholars argue that hermaphrodites and transgender technology is possible because either sex has both estrogen and testosterone as biological composites of their anatomy; that what we biologically describe as male and female is simply a reflection of inequalities in the biological constitution of these bio-chemicals. The argument here is that the male is a male because there is a greater amount of testosterone than estrogen, while the female has a higher amount of estrogen than testosterone; but should there be any possibility of increasing the genetically deficient hormone in a person by artificial means, we would discover that the human sex display is not an absolutely rigid boundary, it can be cracked. The definitive presence of both hormones in every anatomical instantiation of the human nature is cited by others in support of sexual monism, meaning that the biological determinants of sex are unequally distributed. And as such, male and female distinction is a result of nature's display of natural selection by genetic conglomerations during the reproductive processes of species propagation.

4. CONCLUSION.

This unit discussed some basic questions in gender/feminist philosophy, the nature of the woman and the issue of misogyny in gender philosophy, argument from essence, argument from difference

5. SUMMARY

In responding to the question of the nature of the woman in relation to her opportunities and rights in the society, besides rejecting the misogynist positions defended by some philosophers, feminist philosophers have defended gender equality using arguments from equality of essence for both sexes, or have defended the uniqueness of women by encouraging women to see their biological differences as a plus rather than as an inferior state for which to be exploited, molested or marginalized

6. TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- What are the Questions asked in Feminist Ontology
- Critically discuss what misogyny means in Gender Philosophy, using examples from the history of western philosophy
- Briefly discuss what the argument from essence and difference is about
- Using examples distinguish between Sex and Gender within the ontological contexts of Being and Becoming

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MODULE 4: GENDER EPISTEMOLOGY

Unit 4: Some Epistemological Issues in Gender Philosophy

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 OBJECTIVES
- 3.0 MAIN CONTENTS
 - 3.4.1 Gender Epistemology as a branch of Gender Philosophy.
 - 3.4.2 Some Basic Questions in Gender Epistemology
 - 3.4.3 Objectives of Gender Epistemology
 - 3.4.4 Approaches to Gender Epistemology
 - 3.4.5 Classification of Gender Epistemology
- 3 CONCLUSION
- 4 SUMMARY
- 5 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
- 6 REFERENCES.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gender epistemology differs slightly from traditional epistemology because the underlying methods for gender epistemology are basically the approaches of feminism and feminist philosophy generally, and also because the questions investigated in gender philosophy differs from the traditional epistemological questions we are used to. This unit discusses the basic questions of gender epistemology, the objectives of gender epistemology, the approaches and classification of gender epistemology.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

This unit will help students to:

- 2.1 Understand gender philosophy as a branch of philosophy
- 2.2 Know some of the basic questions asked in gender epistemology
- 2.3 Understand the objectives of gender epistemology
- 2.4 Know the approaches in Gender epistemology

2.5 Know the classification of Gender epistemology

3. MAIN CONTENT

3.4.1 Gender Epistemology as a branch of Gender Philosophy

Feminist epistemology is often treated as Gender epistemology in Gender Philosophy. This is because gender issues that border on the emancipation of women are mostly done by professional feminist-philosophers. Gender epistemology or feminist epistemology is basically concerned with the task of finding out whether the historical, the traditional or even the standard theories about knowledge-attribution, knowledge-acquisition and knowledge-justification are sexist or coloured by androcentrism.

3.4.2 Some Basic Questions asked in Gender Philosophy

Christian Wüthrich mentions some of the questions of Gender epistemology to include:

- To what extent have dominant perspectives in epistemology particularly those concerning the body and mind seemed compelling because they conform to male or masculine perception, interests and values?
- Do dominant practices and conceptions in philosophy and in science generally reflect androcentric perspectives? If yes, could these be changed, improved?
- Do they reflect women's standpoints and interests?
- What is the relationship between objective and gendered perspectives in epistemology? (philosophy.ucsd.edu)

From the foregoing questions, it can be argued that that gender/feminist epistemology introduces the feminist-consciousness into discourses on epistemology in order to expunge sexism and androcentrism or to preserve anti-sexist or anti-androcentric or what some feminists call *gynocentric* perspectives in epistemology. One way of doing this is to search the works of historical philosophers for evidences of sexist or androcentric bias in their presentation of epistemological issues such as knowledge ascription, knowledge acquisition and knowledge justification. In trying to do so certain questions arise to guide research such as: (i) have women been presented as having an inferior epistemological experience as compared to males? (ii) Have philosophers speculated that the women are naturally incapable of having the same degree of knowledge with males; (iii) or have women been relegated to a sub-human status in the description of how and what human beings know or can know? Due to the realization that gender inequality has been a very long practice in human history (which is still in

vogue in different ways and places), many feminist epistemologists believe that the knowledge of others in gendered relationships or as derived from researches may be influenced by the androcentric understanding of gender. Therefore, caution has to be adopted to forestall further marginalization of the theoretical contributions of the female sex.

3.4.3 Objectives of Feminist Epistemology

From the foregoing observations, one can say that feminist epistemology is anchored on the conceptualization that all ideas, methods and prejudices that enthrone or support the rationalization or justification of female subordination should be forestalled especially with respect to ascribing an inferior status to the cognitive faculties of women, relegating the opinions and view-points of women to a secondary status compared to those of men, and suppressing the individual and general contributions of women on grounds of sexism. More so, that extra-care should be taken when conducting researches to ensure that the truth and findings of such researches are not weighed down by sexist and androcentric biases. Some of the objectives of feminist epistemology include:

Introducing feminist ideologies into epistemology.

Feminist epistemology is unique because its scope is narrowed down to the investigation of how the wake of feminism has affected or should affect our treatment of issues like foundationalism and justification in epistemology.

Introducing the results, view-points, opinions that come from researches carried out by female scholars into philosophy and academics in general

Feminist epistemologists believe that the problem of androcentrism in academics is the product of a phallogentric society. Consequent upon the rise of feminism, many academics believe that one way to revolutionize androcentric academics is to ensure that more women engage in all the available categories of research in the humanities as well as in the sciences. The argument is that if this is done, it will not only boost the participation of women in the development of human knowledge through research, it will also create rooms for women to prevent male scholars from misrepresenting facts about the female nature or the feminine experience. In this way, it is believed that women will be in a better position to present their opinions, points of view, and their peculiarly feminine dimensions of documentation and communication of the results of research.

Showing how the introduction of feminist ideologies, the results of women's research and the view-points and opinions of women into theoretical knowledge and science has generated new questions, new theories and new methods.

Feminist epistemologists believe that given the dominance of androcentric bias in the way academics and researches were done over centuries; the introduction of feminist ideologies as well as the inclusion of a sufficient number of women into the scheme of things will definitely have a lot of significance for contemporary epistemology. In philosophy for instance, the introduction of feminist ideologies has generated new philosophical problems for ethics, for metaphysics, for political philosophy et cetera. For example in ethics, Aristotle and some other Western philosophers had thought that women are less virtuous because of some peculiar limitations that are natural; but today new questions in ethics arise as to whether it is correct or wrong to regard males and females to be essentially different or one; whether their essential difference or essential oneness makes them destined to have different moral experiences, with females having the inferior experience and the males having a superior experience. In another instance, Aristotle had thought that natural inequalities justify social inequalities. But with the rise of the feminist struggle, the question arises whether the inequalities in the society is an immediate effect of the inequalities of nature or whether they are mere gender-related constructions of human beings. Similar examples exist for the other branches of philosophy.

Showing how feminist conceptualization and construction of gender has contributed to the development and the transformation of what we regard as knowledge, how we acquire it and justify it.

According to Elizabeth Anderson, feminist epistemology investigates the influence of socially constructed conceptions and norms of gender and gender-specific interests and experiences on the production of knowledge; it asks how the historical exclusion of women from theoretical inquiry has affected the direction and content of research in fields such as anthropology, philosophy, and psychology; how the use of gender metaphors in biology has made some phenomena more salient than others; how history, economics, and medicine would change if we viewed phenomena from the standpoint of women's rather than men's lives; how the feminist movement has changed our data, our ways of describing the data, and our theories about differences between men and women (1995:54).

When conducting research on feminist epistemology; these objectives becomes useful in the sense that it makes it easy for the researcher to situate the ideas of a particular author within the contexts of the philosophical questions that feminist epistemology is concerned with. What this means is that questions in feminist epistemology can be, and is also attempted by non-professional philosophers. In this respect, the task of correcting the injustices of sexism and androcentrism in the pursuit and documentation of knowledge cannot be left only for professional feminist epistemologists or students of philosophy or for female scholars.

3.4.4 Approaches to Feminist Epistemology

Feminist epistemology has been approached from different perspectives. These perspectives have been informed by the developments made in the feminist struggle over the first, second and third waves. Anderson observes that these perspectives include those that investigate gender structures, those that investigate gender symbolism, those that investigate androcentrism and those that investigate sexism (1995: 57-58).

Gender Structure Approach

Many feminist epistemologists approach the subject by focusing on the investigation of gender structures, that is, on the ways in which gender norms structure the division of skilled and unskilled labour in the society. In other words, it considers gender structuration of intellectual, manual and service labour among researchers and teachers. Feminist epistemologists who adopt this approach are often concerned with investigating whether the content of theories and knowledge-claims has been affected (i) by the historical discrimination against women entering the sciences and other fields of theoretical research (ii) by the difficulties women scholars and scientists have getting their work and intellectual contributions recognized (iii) by the ways women have changed the orientation of fields of study once they have entered the elite ranks in significant numbers. So, this approach focuses on answering the question of what difference does, or would, an equal representation and the status of women researchers make to theoretical inquiry and the growth of knowledge.

Gender Symbolism Approach

Feminist epistemologists who adopt this approach, focus on rendering explicitly intelligible the possible implications that abound and philosophical problems that arise when we represent nonhuman and inanimate objects and phenomena with the gender concepts of “masculine” and “feminine”, and then model them after gender ideals and stereotypes. This approach to feminist epistemology attempts to answer questions like: what difference does it make to our theories and epistemic practices in general when we regard theoretical inquiry itself and its subjects of study as gendered phenomena; how would the theories we propound and hold as well as our practices of inquiry change if we were to alter how we conceive masculinity and femininity or cease to use such gender symbolism in interpreting, describing or analyzing knowledge as products of theoretical inquiry even about inanimate objects.

Androcentrism Approach

Some studies in feminist epistemology focus on androcentrism in biology and the social sciences as well as in cultural and literary studies. Feminist epistemologists concerned with this approach often argue that androcentrism occurs when in the articulation of theories,

we take males or the lives of men, or masculinity as ideals such that we use same to set norms for human beings or animals, while at the same time, we ignore female differences or regard them as deviant. Androcentrism occurs when phenomena, whether natural or social are viewed from the perspective of how it affects males or generally, men's lives, without regard to how women see them differently; it also occurs when male activities or predicaments are represented as the primary causes or sites of important changes without also considering the roles females play in initiating or facilitating changes (Anderson 57-1995: 58). In this respect, feminist epistemologies focusing on this approach are preoccupied with questions like how the content of theories can be different if phenomena are viewed from the perspectives of women or how such issues are relevant or significant to women's lives.

Sexism Approach

Sexism is commonly used to name situations where women's issues and natures are made to be subordinate to those of men. In feminist epistemology, the approach of sexism is not different from this understanding. Feminist epistemologists apply this understanding to the question of how claims to theoretical or scientific knowledge undermines women's interests when they assert or imply that women are inferior to men or that their subordination to men is just or justifiable; or when they assert or imply the marginalization of women is properly defined by stereotyped roles that are not only natural, but also spiritually determined. Feminist epistemologists in the West that are concerned with studies of sexism in theories, often explore ways in which alternative scientific theories that meet the demands or criteria of empirical adequacy preserves women's interest in the bid to promote universal equality.

3.4.5 Classification of Feminist/Gender Epistemology

One of the standard classifications of feminist epistemology was given by Sandra Harding. According to this classification, feminist epistemology is divided into three, namely, feminist empiricism, standpoint epistemology and feminist postmodernism.

Feminist Empiricism

Empiricism is a school of thought in traditional epistemology. Professional philosophers and students of philosophy are familiar with the empiricist doctrine that emphasizes experience and 'the sensible' as the foundation of theoretical and scientific knowledge, and at the same time patronizes 'observation' and 'observability' as the criterion of genuine knowledge-claims. In the history of Western philosophy, there has been a recurring tendency among philosophers to advocate that human experience of cosmological phenomena are to be regarded as pre-conditions to authentic scientific knowledge. Many epistemological theories have arisen from the worldview which supposes that true human knowledge stands as the relation between the human cognitive

faculties and the objects and experiential phenomena of the world. For instance, logical positivism holds that meaning should stand as a one-to-one mapping of words to facts. Empiricism as a theory that upholds the *givenness* of the objects of knowledge has both concrete and social dimension because while it is possible to describe our knowledge of the physical world as experiential, it is also possible to describe our observations of human actions and activities as experiential. Therefore, narrowing the conditions of genuine scientific inquiry to what is “observed” or “observable” extends to human actions and inactions and this is exactly the idea that feminist empiricism adopts. Feminist empiricism preserves 'observation' and 'observability' as foundational definitive criteria of authentic scientific inquiry. While it does not oppose the focus on natural phenomena, feminist empiricism places more emphasis on the observation and observability of social phenomena. The reason for this is that in line with the feminist struggle, the practice of female oppression may be observable but it is a social problem because it is about human actions or inactions.

The different practices that promote female suffering are observable within human societies, for instance, issues like female oppression, female exclusion from politics, women marginalization and female subordination are not mere abstract propositions but real social phenomena that are empirical facts observable within different societies. Therefore, going by the empiricist-criterion of observation and observability, feminist empiricists maintain that issues of gender inequality can be described as worthy issues for genuine epistemological inquiry. They argue that even where naturalized epistemology holds that epistemology should be about natural phenomena; in our practices of communicating and documenting the results of researches about natural and social phenomena, we should not allow sexism, androcentrism and the ways we understand and apply the concepts of gender to discredit our efforts.

Anderson anchors feminist epistemology on what she calls modest empiricism and rationality. By modest empiricism, she means “a purely methodological doctrine which rejects a priori commitments to what the contents of our theories and models must be” (52). In this respect, she avers that empiricism is promiscuous in its permissible ontology and opportunistic in its methods and models such that any hypothesis or method that advances the goals of discovering and explaining novel phenomena in a way that consistently preserves the idea that the theories seek empirical adequacy is permitted in feminist epistemology (1995: 52). In our understanding, Anderson simply re-iterates the empiricist dogmas of naturalized epistemology and connects them to social and overtly-psychological perspectives. In this way, she is of the view that real empirical and sociological circumstances should inform our methods of doing feminist epistemology rather than adopting a priori, certain presumptions. She argues that we should not approach natural and social issues with gender-rigid or gender-stereotyped mindsets.

For Anderson, even though feminist epistemology has both empirical and sociological dimensions, reason is the reflective endorser. Reason, she believes has the

power to change our attitudes, intentions, and practices. Through reason, we reflect on different attitudes, intentions and practices; and we make judgements and decision about their morality their objective axiological value et cetera.

Reason as a tool of reflective endorsement is proposed by Anderson as a necessary working complement of modest empiricism within the context of feminist naturalized or social epistemology. Under this functional interpretation, the traditional idea of reflective individualistic self-sufficiency that was proposed by some Western philosophers like Descartes and Kant is rejected. Feminist epistemology does not require that individuals base the authenticity of judgements only on individualistic patterns of reflection.

Feminist epistemologists argue that self-critical assessments are needed to forestall gender bias in theoretical and scientific researches and inquiry. It is a common practice among feminists and feminist philosophers alike, to attack male-domination by advocating some form of a balancing of female actors with male actors; while some others call for the replacement of male-domination with female-domination. The latter idea has been adopted by critics of feminist epistemology to argue that feminist empiricism is not able to clearly delineate the pseudo-status of epistemology on grounds of androcentric bias from the supposed non-pseudo status on the grounds of gynocentric bias. If doing science from an androcentric epistemological perspective is regarded as bad science; does this immediately entail that doing science from a gynocentric perspective makes science good? Many feel that this is a paradox that feminist empiricism has not addressed; others have argued that it is more like replacing one problem with another one.

Standpoint Epistemology

According to Christian Wüthrich, standpoint epistemology is concerned with the “situatedness” or positionality of the epistemic subject (philosophy.ucsd.edu). This version of feminist epistemology holds that the opinions and stand points of women who are oppressed or marginalized are epistemically superior in the sense that they have an experiential knowledge and can speak more authoritatively about the circumstances they experience than males who are not experiencing such situations and may want to criticize or make comments from a non-situated standpoint. This version of feminist epistemology demands that more attention should be given to the viewpoint of the woman who is the epistemic agent that is really under some form of marginalization or oppression especially a kind that is sexist. For instance, some feminist epistemologists have argued that in the definition of epistemology and in the ascription of objectives and functions to it, rooms should be created to accommodate and give priority to women's points of view and standpoints concerning how women define knowledge, what women say they know, how they actually know, what they do with the knowledge that they have

and also how they acquire knowledge, especially in circumstances where androcentrism is very influential.

Of course, standpoint epistemology is adopted by some feminist epistemologists to argue home the position that it is women who know what it actually means to be a woman; therefore, all attempts by men to define women, describe women or communicate their feminine beliefs and worldviews can hardly be free from androcentric bias. The implication here is that as far as women are the oppressed, the subjugated, the marginalized, women's comments, opinions, research-results and knowledge-claims should be treated as superior when it comes to issues that directly concern the female sex. Wühtrich tries to capture what looks like a summary of the different theses of the feminist standpoint epistemology as follows:

- That being particularly situated within the society gives women certain epistemic privileges such as the right to their own opinions.
- That women are better knowers because they are women.
- Those who are oppressed have the interest and the ability to represent the world from a larger perspective than those who are not oppressed.
- That group membership is sometimes a precondition for epistemic credibility.

Feminist Postmodernism

Feminist postmodernism embraces relativism and anarchism. It holds the position that a true neutral description of the world is actually an illusion. It tries to make room for the observation that the social identity of the knowing subject is not only contingent but also unstable or unfixed. Actually, in the history and philosophy of science, there have been lessons learnt especially as it concerns the relativity of human knowledge and the limitations of the human cognitive faculties. In the succeeding paragraphs, we highlight and explain Christian Wühtrich's exposition of the basic theses of feminist postmodernism.

- The first point that Wühtrich raises is that feminist postmodernism holds that social realities are a product of our discursive construction.
- The next point that Wühtrich raises is that feminist postmodernism adopts the Heraclitean version of explaining the historicism of ideas.
- Another point that Wühtrich raises is that feminist postmodernism holds that it is actually a dangerous fiction to think that we can totalize extra-linguistic reality.

- Finally, Wüthrich observes that for feminist postmodernism, gender identity is not universal; neither is it trans-historical nor is it a necessity (Wüthrich philosophy.ucsd.edu).

Feminist postmodernism is skeptical about the universality of the definitions we give to gender, especially with respect to how we use it within our different conceptual frameworks. For instance, we can describe the concept “woman” from diverse perspectives. One of the criticisms raised against feminist postmodernism is that without some sense of objectivity in the understanding and definition of gender, it becomes difficult for feminist epistemology to be about the same problems. Where social realities are not treated as objective then feminist postmodernism can hardly justify that sexism and androcentrism is the key problem that necessitates feminist epistemology. Moreover, by adopting the Heraclitean way of explaining the reality of social phenomena; feminist postmodernism leaves a big room for the proliferation of feminist epistemology. Under such proliferations it will become all the more difficult to unify into one category.

4. CONCLUSION

This unit discussed some of the basic questions in gender epistemology, the objectives of gender epistemology, the approaches involved in Gender epistemology and the classification of epistemology.

5. SUMMARY

Gender epistemology is more or less feminist epistemology which investigates gender-related issues and the contributions of the feminist struggle to epistemology. It is an epistemology modelled after the methods adopted in feminist studies such as victimology, positionality, and the perspectives of women. This does not however mean that gender epistemology should be only about women and women’s views, excluded men and men’s views. Rather existing literature have dwelt more on women as a reaction to the feminist struggle against androcentrism in academics, history and the way philosophy has been done.

6. TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- Briefly explain why gender epistemology is a branch of philosophy
- What are some of the questions asked in gender epistemology?
- Briefly discuss the objectives of gender epistemology.
- What are the approaches adopted in gender epistemology?
- What are the classifications of Gender Epistemology?

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MODULE 5: ETHICS IN GENDER PHILOSOPHY

Unit 5: Some Ethical Issues in Gender Philosophy

1.0	INTRODUCTION
2.0	OBJECTIVES
3.0	MAIN CONTENTS
3.5.1	Introducing Ethics in Gender Philosophy or Feminist Ethics
3.5.2	Objectives of Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy
3.5.3	Development of Feminist Ethics
3.5.4	Approaches to Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy
4	CONCLUSION
5	SUMMARY
6	TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
7	REFERENCES/FURTHER READING.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Feminist ethics focuses on overcoming sexism and androcentrism in traditional and conventional ethics. Many feminist ethicists hold the view that traditional or conventional ethics is androcentric because it has been developed without the contributions of women and without the consideration of the view-points of women due to a long history of the subordination and marginalization of women. In the chapter dealing with feminist metaphysics, it was established that certain Western philosophers justified women subordination and marginalization, claiming that women were inferior to men because of some natural inequalities that are disadvantageous to women. On the premise of the latter, some of these philosophers described women as having inferior moral experiences because being morally upright entails being virtuous, but the ability to act virtuously is a rational one. This unit discusses the objectives of feminist ethics as a branch of gender philosophy, the development of feminist ethics, the approaches as well as the classification.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help students to:

- 2.1 Introducing Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy
- 2.2 Objectives of Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy
- 2.3 Development of Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy
- 2.4 Classification of Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy

3. MAIN CONTENT

3.5.1 Introducing Feminist Ethics

Feminist ethicists reject the sexist claims in ethics as being morally wrong and unjust; whereas some feminist ethicists are of the view that such injustices should not be found in ethics, others think women have to develop their own ethics to capture the essence and uniqueness of being a woman. Others aver that the moral experience of women is not supposed to be different from those of men; and that the moral experiences of women have to be respected and accommodated within ethics. In this respect, feminist ethics attempts to bring the feminism-consciousness and the theories of gender equality into the way ethics is done and should be done. The advocates of feminist ethics have given different reasons why feminist ethics has developed and should be continued. The central argument has been that traditional Western ethics has been biased in the description of the nature of the woman and in the description of and their moral experiences. Feminist ethicists have leveled criticisms on traditional ethics. The word 'traditional' is used here to indicate the ethical theories that have been proposed and defended by Western philosophers, who have predominantly been males over the ancient, medieval and modern periods of the history of Western philosophy. In this respect, we are referring to ethical theories like natural law theory, utilitarianism, deontological ethics et cetera. Some of the typical criticisms that have been leveled against traditional Western ethics by feminist ethicists are articulated by Alison Jaggar in her book *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1995:530).

The first criticism that Jaggar mentions is that traditional Western ethics neglects women issues especially those that have to do with feminine values in private and domestic realms as in the household and familial settings. In other words, since the major proponents and defenders of ethical theories have been males, there is always the tendency to forget how such proposals apply to women's issues, their predicaments in the family and in the society at large. This takes us to the next point raised by Jaggar, namely, that traditional Western ethics denies women's moral agency in the sense that it has often excluded women from the moral debates, and ignored their contribution with respect to how they define the nature of the woman as well as their positions with respect how gender should be constructed (1995:530). Jaggar observes that such denials have arisen because of the androcentric mindset of male ethicists that directly or indirectly

suppose that women are somewhat rationally inferior to men. A critical assessment of the works of Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Sigmund Freud, reveals a conscious attempt to degrade the woman's moral experience on the supposition of androcentric patterns of reasoning. Another point raised by Jaggar is that traditional Western ethics depreciate feminine values in the sense that they do not reflect how such ethical theories stand in relation to the reality of feminity and feminine values. Jaggar also raises the point that traditional Western ethics devalue women's moral experiences. What this means is that besides dichotomizing the moral experiences of men and women, traditional ethics devalue the moral experience of women in comparison to the males (1995: 530).

Therefore, what Jaggar's exposition is trying to establish is that men have been on the forefront in the debate and development of Western ethics, and the consequence has been the exclusion of women's contribution, their standpoint, their experiences and their values. So, the rise in feminist ethics poses some challenges and problems to traditional western ethics at least in the direction that necessitates its revision, re-assessment and re-interpretation to accommodate the points raised by feminist philosophers.

3.5.2 The Objectives of Feminist Ethics

According to Alison Jaggar, the objectives of feminist ethics can be divided into two, namely, the practical and the theoretical. She observes that practically, feminist ethics has the following objectives: (i) to articulate moral critiques of actions as well as practices that sustain female subordination. (ii) to prescribe morally justifiable ways of resisting actions and practices that lead to the institutionalization and continuity of female subordination (iii) to explore and put forward morally desirable alternatives that will promote women's emancipation (528). Theoretically, feminist ethics aims at developing philosophical accounts of the nature of morality as well as moral concepts that treat women's moral experiences respectfully but critically (Jaggar 1995: 528). However, that feminist ethics is concerned with these objectives does not necessarily imply that other versions of ethics that do not share these objectives are to be regarded as anti-feminist.

3.5.3 Development of Feminist Ethics

In the early modern period, scholars like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Frederick Engels and Simone de Beauvoir did well to draw attention to the social problem of female subordination and marginalization in Europe. Mary Wollstonecraft lived from 1759 to 1797. Her work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792. In this work, Mary Wollstonecraft spoke out for the rights of women at the time. John Stuart Mill's reaction against the oppression of women is found in his book. *The Subjection of Women*, which was published in 1869. Frederick Engels also

spoke against women's subordination in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which was published in 1884. Among these, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* that appeared in 1949 gained more popularity and is often referred to as one of the master pieces of the gender discourse in contemporary times. Other contributors whose works have been instrumental to the development of feminism include Catherine Beecher, Charlotte Perkins, Gilman Elizabeth, Cady Stanton et cetera

Wollstonecraft was concerned with questions such as those bordering on whether feminine traits are the products of nature or biology or some kind of social conditions; whether moral virtues and gender traits are determined by the strength of one's cognitive capacities in the way Aristotle conceived, and if so, whether males and females therefore have different moral virtues and different gender roles. Wollstonecraft in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* held that moral virtue is unitary and as such men and women are obliged to practice the same morality and virtue on the grounds that women are not less virtuous than men (105). Moreover, she averred that the features that are adjudged to be biological limitations of women (e.g. being too emotional, too hypersensitive, narcissistic et cetera), were consequences of a long culture that deprived women equal rights and privileges and that denied women the opportunity to develop their rational powers through education (105).

John Stuart Mill argued that the woman's morality was not the product of autonomous choice but rather, the product of social conditioning and programming. He noted that women were systematically conditioned by a phallogocentric society to exhibit the peculiar feminine traits that the society desires such as living for others, caring for others, being generous, to submit, to yield and to obey (*The Subjection of Women* 32). In this way, Mill argued that the society is wrong to dictate different moral experiences for women, which unfortunately, has to be assessed by men and not women themselves. For Mill, both males and females are supposed to have the same moral experience of virtue (32). However, other authors in the nineteenth century thought differently. Some proposed that males and females should have a separate but equal theory of virtue, while others proposed that females should also develop a separate but unequal theory of virtue for women in much the same way in which traditional western ethics had done for males. Therefore, one can say that the arguments of Wollstonecraft, Mill, Engels and de Beauvoir were somewhat instrumental to the feminist activism that sprang up in the 1960s. Jaggar observes that during the period of the first wave, actions and practices whose gendered dimensions hitherto had been either unnoticed or unchallenged, became the foci of public and philosophical attention. Feminists subjected these actions and practices to moral critique with outspoken boldness. They also developed strategies for opposing them and proposed alternatives that non-feminists regarded as dangerously radical. Some of these practices included the questioning of the morality of certain issues like abortion and contraceptives, unequal opportunities for women in labour and production, politics, education, as well as the unjust androcentric portrayals of women in

mass media over a variety of issues especially as it concerns their sexuality such as in the cases of sexual abuse, rape, compulsory heterosexuality, pornography, domestic violence et cetera.

The term “feminist ethics” came into use in the 70s and 80s. One of the reasons why this concept was adopted was that it was discovered that the traditional conceptual frameworks of ethics that had been in vogue before the climax of the feminist activism, distorted the way in which discussions about feminist issues like abortion, pregnancy, motherhood et cetera proceeded. The argument here is that since most of the ethical theorists in the history of Western philosophy have been projected by males who have no firsthand experience of what the moral experience of the woman looks like; for instance, what it takes to undergo an abortion, what it feels like before the abortion, during the abortion and after the abortion, or what it feels like to be pregnant, to carry a pregnancy for nine months and other female matters, they often tend to suppress the voice of women and the emotions of women on this matters. Some feminist ethicists argue that it is unacceptable that ethical discussions concerning these issues should be anchored on some abstract principles “discovered” by male ethicists who are blind to the plights and tribulations of women. Thus, there has been a continuous increase in the number of feminist writings suggesting that traditional ethics is deeply androcentric and as such needs to be revised.

What appears to be an enduring problem in feminist ethics is the question whether women are supposed to have a different moral experience from men or whether they should have the same moral experience with men. And of course, feminist ethicists, as we have already indicated, are divided on this issue. In his *Politics*, although Aristotle described women as being less able to exhibit virtue and by so doing, undervalued women's ethical experiences; nevertheless, he can be seen as one of those who introduced the *separation* of masculine ethics from feminine ethics or male ethics from female ethics. Even as many feminists reject Aristotle's anti-feminist stance as extremely androcentric, many today have not been able to break away from the dualistic mindset of thinking that ethics should also be categorized along the lines of gender binary.

In the book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Carol Gilligan sustains this dichotomy between male and female ethics. She explains that whereas men are most likely to act in accordance to abstract moral principles of justice, which are equality and fairness; females are most likely to act in accordance to feelings and emotions (82-90). In other words, whereas males adhere to a morality of justice where equality and fairness are the primary values; females adhere to a morality of care. On critical analysis, this pronouncement does not only retain the separation of women's moral experiences from men's moral experiences, but justify female's moral experiences by an appeal to non-abstract concepts.

The idea that men and women should have different moral experiences sparked a wave of interest from feminists who were pleased that since conventional ethics is in their

description, androcentric, women can have their own ethics after all. So, many feminists do not only like the idea that women can have their own ethics but that in such an ethics women's natural ways of self-expression, feeling and practical exigencies should be the emphasis. This is why some feminist ethicists propose the "ethics of care" as a model that should be considered and developed. Other feminists have argued that while we may regard conventional ethics as "ethics of fairness and equality" feminist ethics should be described as "ethics of care". In this regard, there is a preservation of the binary between male and female moral experience. Thus the "ethics of fairness and equality" and the "ethics of care" turn out to be another ideological invention of the dualistic mode of thought, which is common in the ontological worldview of the West. Of course, the call for and development of feminist ethics is more pronounced in the West, and most of the proponents of feminist ethics are women from the West especially Europe and America. It is not surprising therefore to notice elements of Western thought system. But on a critical reflection, especially if we come from a background that perceives reality as complementary, we can say that "care" and "fairness or equality" are not necessarily extreme poles standing for masculine ethics and feminine ethics in the way in which some feminist ethicists want us to believe. It is common to see that feminists who describe feminist ethics as "ethics of care" frequently use the medical profession as their anchor base. For instance, Brenda Green in her article in the journal *Nurse & Care* applies feminist "ethics of care" to the nursing practice (1-4). Being fair or treating people equally and showing care can be said to emanate from the consciousness to respect the rights and dignity of all so it does not necessarily mean that these two virtues belong to two gender binary poles. Nevertheless, the idea of developing an ethics that pays emphasis to the woman's practical exigencies has opened up the issue of feminist ethics to philosophers and non-philosophers alike. Also, scholarly work on feminist ethics has not been limited to the agitations of academic feminists but also embraces the agitations of non-academic feminists. This is why it is common to see that literatures on feminism frequently turn towards the ethical consideration of public policies and value-systems especially with respect to how they preserve the genuine needs and interests of women or how they are generally disadvantageous to, or neglectful of women.

3.5.4 Some Approaches to Feminist Ethics in Gender Philosophy

Many scholars have adopted different approaches to feminist ethics in recent times. The most common and standard approach has been to subject traditional Western ethics to feminist-related critiques because most of what we have in philosophy as ethics, have come from Western philosophers. To a great extent, this shows that philosophers have always speculated about problems that are the immediate products of their cultural framework or periodical milieu. On the strength of this, suffice it to mention that if all feminist scholars were to focus on the existential problems that are characteristic to their

respective cultural frameworks; we will definitely have different versions of feminist ethics that are concerned with a diversity of problems.

Care-Focused Feminist Ethics

Care-focused feminist ethics is an approach to feminist ethics that adopts the principle and practice of care as the model for defining feminist ethics. This approach takes for granted the supposition that women have a natural propensity to care for others because nature bestows on them the ability to practice this virtue as potential and actual mothers. Although many feminist ethicists who propose this model of ethics do so with the belief that it will preserve the feminine values; nevertheless, this approach to ethics can be seen as a gynocentric approach. The reason is that on a critical examination, one can say that feminist ethics of care is an attempt to use the same logic Aristotle used in justifying the inferiority of “feminine” ethics to justify feminist ethics. Aristotle thought that women's ability to be extremely caring was not a virtue, since for him, virtue is the golden mean between extremes. And more so, that being extremely caring is a disability that arises from the natural or biological limitations of the woman. But the feminist-proponents of this model of ethics rather use the idea of women's natural propensity to “care” to underscore the strength of women and the weakness of men. This group of feminist ethicists, argue that what the world needs is care: care for the environment, care for one another and care for oneself; and that if human beings were to care for each other in the way that mothers care for their children, then there will be no need to look for justice and fairness. In this respect, their thesis is that “care precedes justice and fairness”.

Some proponents of care-focused feminist ethics include Carol Gilligan and Nel Nodding's. Gilligan for instance, rejected Sigmund Freud's misgivings about women, which held that girls were inferior to boys with respect to psychosexual development; and that male children are faster to develop a sense of themselves than female children. Freud did suppose that this is what has led to men having more moral and legal consciousness than women. For most care-focused ethicists like Gilligan, traditional ethics does not allow society to hear the voice of women over certain issues like abortion, contraceptives et cetera. John Christman in the book *Social and Political Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* observes that women tend to think more in terms of care and responsibility when considering a moral problem (170). Gilligan conducted a study on women who carried out abortion and discovered from the study that women's relational ethics revolved around three moral frames of reference: (i) the over-emphasis of one's self-interest (ii) the emphasis of the interest of others (iii) the weaving together of one's interest with the interest of others. Gilligan theorized that women normally make an abortion-decision based on individual interests or the interest of others or on the combination of individual interest and the interest of others.

For Gilligan, women who act in accordance to the principle we have mentioned in (iii) are fully and properly feminist. In this way, Gilligan attempts to anchor her version of care-focused feminist ethics on a teleological foundation that takes into consideration both individual interests and the interest of others. Gilligan is of the opinion that feminist ethics of care requires that women adopt a moral experience where they judge the morality of their action by considering the effects of such actions on themselves firstly as women, and then on others. More so, women must be bold enough and ever ready to engage in moral discourse in defense of their moral experiences. Gilligan argues therefore that there is more to the woman's moral experience, which traditional ethics founded on abstract principles, does not account for or suppresses because of androcentrism.

Sandra Lee Bartky argues in her book *Femininity and Domination*, that the kind of emotional work that women do in some service-oriented occupations causes them to suppress their own personal feelings and sentiments even when they do not feel like doing so, just to please a phallogocentric society that presupposes that women in such occupations should not show their anger or pretend about their feelings when they are hurt or harassed by customers. These occupations include travel-hostesses, Hotel receptionists, waitresses, ushers and sometimes cashiers for large supermarket outfits. Sandra observes that women in this kind of economic settings are often paid to be always upbeat even when customers or patients, or clients are abusive, rude, nasty or even saucy. She argues that for feminist ethics, this is an example of a moral experience socially constructed for women by a phallogocentric society and which must be stopped. She also observes that contrary to the prejudice that nursing mothers and wives develop a sense of satisfaction and empowerment in caring for their children and husbands irrespective of the burdens they face on a daily basis; women actually are stressed beyond limits and sometimes are bitter because the feeling of empowerment that arises from caring about somebody is actually not the same as actually having power. She observes that sometimes, men may not notice how much pain their words and actions sometimes cause the women in their lives; that most often males worry less about the feelings of the women in their lives who are caring for them. And as such, women's care may sometimes amount to a collective genuflection by women to men in affirmation of male importance in a degree that is not reciprocated or reciprocal. Bartky also avers that sometimes women sacrifice their moral integrity in the process of caring for men. She gives the instance where Teresa Stangl, the wife of Fritz Stangl, the commandant of Treblinka, continued in loyal service to her husband despite the fact that he was sending thousands of Jews to concentration camps, a great evil. She argues that even in the rendering of care to men, women should not remain silent to the evils perpetuated by their husbands and loved ones. Thus, women should not show care at the detriment of their own identity, integrity and even survival.

Nel Noddings in her book *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* published in 1984, noted that ethics of care presupposes two parties, the one who is caring and the one who is cared for. In that sense, it is relational. True care, according to Noddings, does not consist in proclaiming one's universal love for all human beings in the world or in supposing that care can be bestowed from afar upon individuals in general. For instance, it is simply outside the ethics of care to suppose that a mother in Africa can care about the children in America in the same degree in which she cares for her own children. In other words, that real care requires that we have a one-to-one or direct encounter with specific individuals; it cannot be bestowed from afar upon all individuals in general. Noddings in her book *In Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy*, extends the principles of her feminist care ethics into public policy. She argues that if we are to develop social policies about matters such as homelessness, mental illness, and education we have to learn from the experience of starting at home. For it is in the home that the origins of care have their roots.

Fiona Robinson in her book *Ethics Feminist Theory and International Relations* (1999) argues that in the realm of international relations, no real progress can be made in addressing poverty without a critical feminist ethics of care. Robinson points out that despite all the efforts that the traditional rights-based and duty-based theorists have made to move countries of the world to destroy the big gap between the rich and the poor, poverty continues to increase year in year out. Robinson criticizes traditional ethics as being too abstract for the problem of poverty and claims that we need a critical feminist ethics of care because this will help privileged people to understand that unless they give up some of their advantages by fostering certain economic, political, and social changes, the gap between them and those wallowing in abject poverty will not be reduced.

The ideas raised by Sara Ruddick in her work *Maternal Thinking* (1989) and Virginia Held in her work *Feminism and Moral Theory* (1987) are somewhat in consonance with those of Gilligan and Noddings. They retain the idea that feminist ethics of care is relational, that is, it presupposes two parties. Nevertheless, what is common between Ruddick and Held is that the relational structure of ethics of care is often not between equals but between unequal and interdependent persons. This inequality is often in the direction of the care-giver being somewhat more informed or more highly placed. They both agree that feminist ethics should be founded on practices that best express virtue as it concerns the moral life of the woman especially as a wife and as a mother. According to Ruddick's feminist ethics of care, the society should begin to place more value on maternal practice. She avers that maternal practice is concerned with the preservation, growth and the acceptance of one's children such that some form of moral feminine discipline is needed at the practical level if these goals of the preservation, fostering of growth and general acceptance of children are to be sustained as peculiar maternal values. Ruddick suggests that maternal thinking should be brought into public life. She argues that if people in the public spheres begin thinking like mothers who are actually caring

for children, then things like war would not be. She argues that war entails the risk of death, which is tantamount to destroying and cancelling out the products of maternal practice in the sense that all that one has put into preserving, nurturing and training a child is likely to be lost; and this loss entails losing something very dear. Thus, if people begin to apply maternal thinking, people will not engage in anything that will foster death and the cancellation of the prospects of the future. Held shares the idea that the true maternal way of thinking founded on care is an excellent paradigm that can be adopted to redress social vices. Held's argument is that there can be care without justice but there cannot be justice without care. This is because, as she explains, without care no child will survive and there would be no persons to respect (16-17).

Status-Focused Feminist Ethics

Besides the ethics-of-care approach to feminist ethics, which we have articulated in the previous section, there is also the status-oriented feminist approach. What appears to be central in the ethics-of-care approach is the argument that care precedes justice. But for the status-oriented approach, justice precedes care. The status-oriented approach to feminist ethics asks questions about what women empowerment means in the face of male domination and their subordination to men. The proponents of the status-oriented approach hold the position that all systems, structures, institutions and practices that create or sustain power differentials between the male and female sex should be destroyed so that we can have gender equality. The different views or schools of thought under this category of approach include liberal feminist approach, radical feminist approach, Marxist and Socialist feminist approach, Multicultural feminist approach, Global feminist approach and Ecological feminist approach or Ecofeminist approach.

Liberal Feminist Approach

Liberal feminists such as Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill held that female subordination to males is caused by a set of social norms and formal laws that make it difficult for women in the public life to succeed as the males. They argue that except women have the same opportunities with men, they will not be able to develop and achieve their full potentials like males in different socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects. The liberal feminist approach argues that to a great extent, women's socio-economic empowerment has a great deal of influence on women's moral experiences. In this regard, women's socio-economic statuses can greatly influence the kind of moral life they lead. But the problem is that empowerment is not equal between men and women; most times, women tend to do care-giving jobs in the public sphere such as receptionists, hostesses et cetera; some of these jobs are of lower status and lesser pay as compared to the ones males predominantly do. So, the liberal feminist approach to feminist ethics argues that ethics should be concerned with fighting for social justice, which in this case,

is fighting against the institutionalization of gender inequality, before other things can follow.

Radical Feminist Approach

The radical feminists are often described as extremists. Their major thesis is not necessarily the restructuring of a phallogentric society for the purpose of gender equality but a call to women to restructure the current social order supposedly defined by androcentrism, to make room for gynocentrism that will be advantageous to females. Women empowerment is interpreted by some radical feminists as the ability to rise above the domination of males in a radical manner that demands rebelling against traditional androcentric prejudices, institutions and patriarchic way of thinking. They maintain that women should take full control of their lives and resist every form of subordination even those that are justified by traditional ethics and religious ethics. Religious ethics has to do with doctrinal codes of conduct for women as can be found in the various religions. Some of these codes have been influenced by androcentric biases that sometimes portray women as the “unclean sex” that is unworthy to hold religious office. Radical feminists argue that women should disregard such ethics and go for what will establish their female autonomy. It is common to find that some radical feminists like Sarah Lucia Hoagland support lesbianism in her book *Lesbian Ethics* published in 1989. Other issues supported by some radical feminists include sadomasochism, abortion, artificial reproductive technology and surrogacy. Radical feminists ask questions like “why should women suffer the psychological trauma of keeping an unwanted pregnancy when you could simply get rid of it; why must women be forced into heterosexuality in allegiance to some religious doctrines just to please males when their sexual orient is homosexuality? Radical feminist approach to feminist ethics proposes that women should develop an ethics that justifies their right to choose their sexuality, make their choices and preferences without any forced concomitance to the expectations of the conventional philosophical and religious ethics we are so familiar with.

Marxist/Socialist Feminist Approaches

Marxist and Socialist feminist Approaches to feminist ethics is coloured by what Marxist/socialist feminism propose for the resolution of the problem of female subordination and gender inequality. Actually, these groups of feminists maintain that it is very difficult or even impossible for people (including women) who are oppressed because of the capitalist socio-economic class system, to improve their living standard. Marxist feminism holds that the capitalist system has to be replaced before gender inequality can be reversed and before women can become as economically empowered as the males. For them, women's low status in the society results from the low-status jobs that come with little pay. Women should therefore be fully involved in the role of

production before their psyches can be transformed from always seeing themselves as destined for reproduction and child upbringing.

The implication of this for feminist ethics is that the operating socio-economic system determines the kind of ethics women are to adopt. Socialist or Marxist approach to feminist ethics holds that when capitalism is collapsed, and socialism is adopted, women's moral experience will evolve to suit the kind of life that suits socialism. However, the Marxist/socialist approach to feminist ethics does not give the impression that the replacement of capitalism with socialism will make women have a different moral experience from males or practice different kinds of virtues that males do not or cannot. Their underscoring argument is simply that the destruction of capitalism will destroy androcentrism and the traditional ethics that has been associated with it.

Multi-Cultural Feminist Approach

Multicultural feminists fault the other versions of feminism for not focusing on the inseparability of women's oppression and marginalization with respect to social and cultural structures and systems such as race and class. They argue that women are often victims of different kinds of oppression other than those that arise on account of sex; and sometimes women are at the same time, the oppressors and the oppressed on account of issues like racism, apartheid, classism, fanaticism and nepotism. According to Bell Hooks in her book *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, women are always found as victims of multiple jeopardy and interlocking systems of oppression (59). Multicultural feminist approach to ethics therefore kicks against some women having different moral experiences and different practices of virtue because of oppressions that are racist, classist et cetera.

For instance, in situations where society gives to some women the freedom to choose a course of action because they are indigenes and denies others such freedom because they are refugees or immigrants, what results is that a peculiar group of women in the same society will be compelled to a particular code of ethics on grounds of some kind of social oppression. This group of women will then get used to practicing this ethics of oppression because they cannot on their own rise out of the oppression. This phenomenon is analogous to the master-slave morality of Henri Bergson. Multicultural feminist ethics therefore, seeks to redress the ethics of class that polarizes women's moral experiences.

Global Feminist and Post-Colonial Feminist Approaches

Global feminism and Postcolonial feminism maintain that feminist struggles should be globally interconnected across geographical boundaries. For instance, feminists in the developed countries should not narrow the feminist struggle to their geographical or cultural axis and remain mute about sexist oppressions in the developing and third world geographic regions. For instance, feminists in America and Europe should also speak out

against sexist and androcentric-related practices in Africa such as female circumcision or genital mutilation of female children, even as they are fighting for the rights of American women. The significance this has for feminist ethics is that women's moral experiences should have the same form across the globe. They argue that whatever is good for women in developed countries is also good for women in underdeveloped or developing countries. Therefore, women in different continents should have the same moral experience as far as possible. But what is not clear about this approach is whether the moral experiences of women will be that which the males also ought to have as suggested in liberal and Marxist/socialist feminist approaches; or that which only women are to have as suggested by the radical feminist approaches.

Ecofeminist Approach

The Ecofeminist approach places emphasis on human relations with the environment or the ecosystem. Ecofeminism maintains that a capitalist driven economy is causing more harm to the environment and the natural resources and at the same time, the side effects of centuries of environmental degradation and ecological collapse caused by the drive for wealth and economic competition that leads to socio-economic and class inequalities, is threatening the existence of life in the universe. Ecofeminists argue that the reason why we have injustice, lack of care and large socio-economic gaps between different people is because human beings treat the natural world with indifference, and sometimes contempt. For instance, there is a continued development of weapons of mass destruction that can exterminate the human race in a split of a second, the production of substances that pollute the air, land and the sea. Ecofeminists argue that this arises because of human greed and selfish supposition that they have the right to control nature and make the world suitable for a better human life that is free from suffering and crude ways of doing things. Today we have so many consequences or side effects of environmental degradation such as climate change, global warming, rise in sea level, landslides, earthquake, destruction of aquatic organic resources, spread of diseases, increase in cancer-risks, acid rain, extreme temperatures et cetera. Ecofeminists argue that these side effects are being felt more by women coupled with their reproductive responsibilities and the stress of childrearing, because in some places they are responsible for droughts, famine and other unwanted environment conditions that are causing a rapid spread of poverty and helplessness amongst women. Some Ecofeminists propose that the ethics of care should be adopted to preserve the environment's scarce resources especially endangered species ranging from animals to plants. In this way, Ecofeminists propose that an ethics of care, a kind that immediately underscores maternal thinking patterns will be very relevant because it is only in the direction of looking at the future generations of humankind as grandchildren that we can appreciate the need to preserve the environment for them to survive. Ecofeminists like Josephine Donovan in *Signs* have argued that the

Ecofeminist approach allows for the development of the care approach to animal ethics (375).

Care-focused and status-focused feminist approaches to ethics do not impose a single normative standard on women, rather they offer to women multiple ways to understand the gender, race, class, et cetera. Because feminist approaches to ethics tend to be gynocentric as well as gender sensitive, non-feminist critics of them have complained that these approaches are “female-biased.” Care-focused and status-focused approaches to feminist ethics argue that feminist ethicists are attempting to do what traditional ethics should have done in the first place, that is, paying as much attention to women's moral experience as men's.

4 CONCLUSION

This unit focused on a simple introduction to feminist ethics in gender philosophy, its objectives, a brief excursus on its development as well as the different approaches.

5 SUMMARY

Feminist ethics argues for feminist approaches to morality that are not absolutely tied to the notion of justice, but that accommodates the woman's positionality, Victimologies, perspectives, and care.

6. TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- What is Feminist ethics in gender philosophy all about?
- What are the objectives of Feminist Ethics in gender philosophy?
- Briefly discuss the development of Feminist Ethics
- What are the approaches to Feminist Ethics?

7. REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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