

## Part III

# Understanding Binarisms.

**Part III, 'Understanding Binarisms'**, introduces the notion of 'power-inflected epistemic materials' in public knowledge-systems. Practical reason is employed in this Part as an organising background framework for an analysis of the relations between power phenomena and epistemic phenomena in public epistemological contexts. It is argued that these relations are governed by the political imperative of influencing the choices of practical reasoners through lying or deceptive justification ('persuasion'). This persuasion trades upon the epistemological connexions between descriptive and evaluative knowledge and choice, and is facilitated by the deceptive use of legitimate epistemic strategies and tools used to organise and communicate descriptive, evaluative and practical information in public epistemological contexts. The epistemological analyses from Parts I and II are then applied to an analysis of those power-inflected epistemic materials known as 'binarisms' (also 'dualisms', 'binary oppositions', 'dichotomies', etc.), and are demonstrated to provide detailed substantiating evidence for some important politico-epistemological accounts of binaristic constructions, including those of Genevieve Lloyd and Val Plumwood, as well as facilitating detailed elaboration of such accounts.

## Index

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Understanding Binarisms</b>	<b>168</b>
i) The Power of Persuasion	168
ii) A Politico-Logical Account	175
<b>Chapter 2. Elaborating Plumwood</b>	<b>185</b>
i) The Ambivalence of Classical Negation and the Iconic Dichomiser	185
ii) An Explicit Value Logic	197
a) The Necessarily Better-Maker	197
b) Better- and Worse-Makers	199
c) Intensifiers	201
<b>Chapter 3. Contextualising in Practical Reason</b>	<b>203</b>
i) The Moral Hierarchy and The Right to Rule	203
ii) The Man of Practical Reason: Agency as Control	215
iii) Power and Prescription and the Double Bind	228
<b>Conclusion: Gender as Social DNA</b>	<b>233</b>

## Introduction

Philosophical systems can be viewed as highly abstract conceptual taxonomies, which, like other taxonomies, evolve in the context of epistemological practices in which they have a point. Poststructuralists have long recognised the influence of political context upon philosophical systems, upon, for example, the contents of specific concepts in those systems, and upon the rules and organisational principles guiding relations between these concepts. Recognition of this influence in the analytic tradition is, however, a relatively recent phenomenon. Probably the most important contribution made by Genevieve Lloyd's book 'The Man of Reason'<sup>1</sup> is that, within this tradition, it reveals the practice of philosophy, and the epistemological domain in general, to be **political** territory.

'Reason', the flagship value concept of Western philosophical enquiry, also gathers together a range of more specific epistemological value concepts (such as order, clarity, objectivity, and so on). In the course of Lloyd's analysis, the apparently 'pure' research of philosophers, including the epistemological materials (concepts, and arrangements of them) that they help to forge, is revealed to be strongly influenced by contextual political factors (such as the inferior power position and status of women), and to be able in its turn to have political effects (such as the exclusion of women from public-epistemological authority). This work, then, reveals philosophical research as **itself a potentially political activity**. The inescapable conclusion is that philosophy cannot evade participation in the political domain *a priori* (that is, it cannot simply declare itself apolitical in principle): to convert a now-tired slogan to the present point, the philosophical, in being vulnerable to political inflexion, is political.

Val Plumwood (1993<sup>2</sup>) writes of the 'conceptual structures of oppression' (p1). This phrase explicitly links epistemological phenomena with power relations. The argument is that the epistemological materials with which we work are not necessarily selected or constructed according to principles of correspondence to some 'reality' or of usefulness to the body of users, or whatever, but can have features which reflect the interests of power groups, including the facilitation of the oppression of others.

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<sup>1</sup>First edition 1984, Methuen & Co, Second edition 1993, London: Routledge. Lloyd's thesis will be examined in detail in Chapter 1., Section ii., b).

<sup>2</sup>Feminism and the Mastery of Nature (1993) London: Routledge.

Lloyd's and Plumwood's work is representative of what I would characterise as the 'epistemological turn' in Feminist philosophical analysis, a paradigm of politically-motivated research in the analytic tradition in which connexions are made between the domains of power and knowledge. This paradigm treats the way that we understand the world, the way we divide up reality, as a contributing cause, source or foundation of certain political phenomena, as itself affected by such phenomena, and as a site of political contest. The very nature of the abstract, general epistemological phenomena under analysis in such work facilitates the generalisation of the analysis well beyond specifically Feminist concerns into the domain of power phenomena in general; this research is applicable to, for example, environmental concerns, animal welfare, racism, classism, exploitation between states, etc<sup>3</sup>.

I will call epistemological materials which have features that are explained by unjust power relations **power-inflected** epistemological materials. Among epistemological materials, or features of them, which can be power-inflected are, for example, the binarisms, and the larger epistemic structures in which they are embedded, which will be the focus of attention of this Part. But other examples would include the conceptual contents of ambiguously sexed 'generics' like 'Man', of ideological catch-phrases like 'family values', 'law and order', and so on, the concept of 'intelligence' as measured by IQ tests, and the concept of the 'individual' as it figures in liberal political theory. For example, Nancy J. Hirschmann gives a (psychoanalytic feminist) critique of the evolution of the liberal political tradition and some of its defining features<sup>4</sup>. Hirschmann argues that accounts of psychosexual development can be used as theories of power in which terms like 'girl' and 'boy' represent the background sexual power relations in which psychosexual development is contextualised. She applies this to make connexions between certain important features of liberal political theory and sexual power relations. What interests me here is that this work exemplifies the identification of power-inflected epistemological materials: these features of liberal political theory (such as the construal of 'liberty' as freedom from interference by others) are

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<sup>3</sup>Val Plumwood best exemplifies the general applicability of an epistemologically-focussed power analysis; in the 1993 book (op. cit.), for example, her analysis is applied directly to environmentalist issues, as well as gender, race, economic and state power relations.

<sup>4</sup>See Nancy J. Hirschmann (1989) Freedom, Recognition and Obligation: a Feminist Approach to Political Theory, in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4, Dec., pp 1227-1244.

epistemological materials; the account given of them by Hirschmann is power-based.

An explanation of the presence of given power-inflected epistemological materials among the epistemological resources available to a community of knowers must go beyond 'natural' selection to the 'unnatural' selections made by power-holders in the community of users of public knowledge-systems. Whatever their sources happen to be, materials which are not necessarily epistemologically advantageous to the community of users will tend to survive if they serve the interests of power-holders. Those which go against these interests will not be taken up or disseminated; they will be selected out of the system. A thesis that epistemological materials (in this case, specifically linguistic materials) are 'selected' by power groups underpins Dale Spender's account of the pattern of male-positive/female-negative to which, she argues, sexed vocabulary and other features of language conform<sup>5</sup>. And this is the way that Plumwood, for example, explains the power inflexion of negation semantics in classical logic<sup>6</sup>.

Epistemological materials can also be 'adjusted' by pre-existing structural elements of the public knowledge-system, becoming unrecognisable to well-intentioned originators. This is one interpretation of the transformation that Lloyd reports of Descartes' intentionally sexually egalitarian conceptualisation of mind into a re-sexed concept subtly excluding the feminine<sup>7</sup>. While no self-consciously intentional intervention by individuals needs to be posited to explain politically-inflected epistemological materials, there is an enormous amount of evidence that intentional interventions have often been employed in, for example, prescriptive linguistics. Ann Bodine (1990<sup>8</sup>) explains that the use of the male personal pronoun as a generic was not a 'tradition' of English in Britain but was enshrined in law by an act of British Parliament in 1850. Prior to this, British writers freely used both 'he or she' and the plural 'they'. Bodine offers a quotation (which I have reproduced in part) from a work of prescriptive grammar in 1886, in order to illustrate the political intent of linguistic interventions:

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<sup>5</sup>1980, *Man Made Language*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Plumwood, *op. cit.*, pp 55-9.

<sup>7</sup>*Op. Cit.*, see especially Chapter 3., and the Preface to the Second Edition.

<sup>8</sup>'Androcentrism in Prescriptive Grammar: Singular 'They', Sex-Indefinite 'He', and 'He or She'. First published 1975. Reprinted in D. Cameron (ed.) *The Feminist Critique of Language*, London: Routledge, 1990, pp 166-86.

MARRY - ... Properly speaking, a man is not married to a woman, or married with her; nor are a man and a woman married with each other. The woman is married to the man. It is her name that is lost in his, not his in hers; she becomes a member of his family, not he of hers; it is her life that is merged, or supposed to be merged, in his, not his in hers; she follows his fortunes, and takes his station, not he hers. And thus, manifestly, she has been attached to him by a legal bond, not he to her; except, indeed, as all attachment is necessarily mutual. But, nevertheless, we do not speak of tying a ship to a boat, but a boat to a ship. And so long, at least, as man is the larger, the stronger, the more individually important, as long as woman generally lives in her husband's house and bears his name, - still more should she not bear his name, - it is the woman who is married to the man.<sup>9</sup>

'Political correctness' was alive and well in 1886; the political agenda has merely shifted a little since then.

This illustrates that one source of power-inflected epistemological materials is also those groups whose power is definitively public-epistemological in some way, those, for example, who have, or can in some way control those who have, the power of naming, prescribing usage, or of 'writing up' knowledge, merchandising it, or disseminating it. Presumably this is where we could locate professional philosophers as at least one source or vehicle of power influences upon public knowledge-systems. The 'epistemological turn' in Feminist analysis is an encroachment of Feminist research upon philosophical domains previously thought immune to political critiques; as we will see, even logic is not safe. This work can be construed as part of a project of political intervention in a particular, specialised sphere of public knowledge, which has ramifications for public knowledge-systems with a much wider membership. The questions that are posed by this project are first, how power-inflected epistemological materials support and maintain unjust power relations, and secondly, how to stop them from doing this. In order to answer these questions, we need a framework which provides a common denominator (or background epistemic field) for both power phenomena and epistemological phenomena, in which the relations between them can be identified and understood.

In this thesis I have devoted considerable space to developing a model of simple descriptive and evaluative taxonomic strategies, which I have argued are readily

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<sup>9</sup>Op. Cit., p 175. Bodine has taken the quotation from White, R.G. Words and Their Uses, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1886, pp 139-40.

available and attractive to users in public epistemological contexts. I have taken this trouble because I wish to contribute to the provision of a firmly-sourced analytic paradigm for the analysis of power-inflected epistemological materials. But because I have relied so heavily upon the analytic philosophical tradition and methodology, I am vulnerable to the charge of utilising the very tools of trade that political critiques of the Western canon seek to challenge. Another way of putting this problem is to raise the question of how we are to distinguish genuine epistemological basics, revealed by the distillation effect of natural selection over public systems of knowledge, from power-inflected materials 'unnaturally' selected in the interests of power groups.

In general, I would suggest that the difference can be discerned by utilising the Marxian methodology of looking at the distribution of epistemological benefits from the use of the materials we are examining. 'Epistemological benefit' is the degree of answerability to the epistemological needs of the users of the system. Public knowledge-systems, and the epistemic materials they contain, should be able to accommodate the multiply-situated perspectives, especially the value perspectives, of the users of the system. For example, one default position of our investigative strategy should surely be that people are not going to happily and freely position themselves as inferior in a public knowledge-system. If some system contains materials which position some group of users as inferior, then our suspicions should be raised: this is good evidence that participation in that system by that group is in some way coerced, and not for the benefit of the inferiorised group. It is therefore worth investigating those epistemic materials in order to discover what role they might play, not only in the public knowledge-system, but in the social practices in which this system is contextualised.

Other bad signs include the allocation in a knowledge-system of epistemological authority to some minority of system users without any requirement of accountability to other users. This is something we find in 'fundamentalist' knowledge-systems of various kinds (not limited to religious knowledge-systems), vestigial elements of which are also evident in the guild-like structure of the professions, including, unfortunately, the research professions. However, there are many more subtle signs of power-inflexion which, I would argue, will be thrown into relief if we simply take an appropriate attitude of respect towards users of public knowledge-systems, and recognise that epistemological practices, like all practices, fall within the domain of moral evaluation.

Probably the easiest and least controversial way to articulate the immorality of certain power relations, without getting too bogged down in moral analysis, is to hold that subjects or points of view have a value that derives in part from their uniqueness and irreplaceability; they are in this sense 'priceless'. We could then argue that immoral power relations compromise or fail to respect this value by treating the points of view of some subject/s as evaluatively replaceable or overrideable. Of course in practice points of view will have to be overridden, but this requires justification. We can take the moral default position to be that a balance of power is *prima facie* not wrong, and that imbalances, manifested as the successful overriding of some point/s of view, are *prima facie* wrong and must be morally justified. The question of how such justifications might succeed is one for the exercisers of power to grapple with; the onus of justification is on them.

Similarly, we can get a long way with a morally motivated, power-based critique of a public knowledge-system by taking it as an emergent value of any system representing itself as a system of reason-based 'knowledge' that the overriding of the points of view of participants must be justified and not coerced: participation should be epistemologically 'free'. This means that participants in public knowledge-systems are not bound by claims that do not answer to their experience, including their value experience. This is one way of understanding justification between knowers: a justification to a knower (whatever form it takes) makes the knowledge-claim answerable to that knower's experience. Mutual justification is therefore an expression of respect for each other's experiential perspectives.

The revelation that a value claim encoded in a binarism, for example, cannot be justified, relies for its critical effectiveness upon the general recognition that unjustified value claims do not bind rational evaluators, as well as specifically upon the unanswerability of the specific content of the claim to (some group's) value experience. In short, both a position of respect for all users of public knowledge-systems, and a recognition that these systems have a point in practices which themselves are open to moral appraisal, will guide us in deciding what deserves a power-based critique. Knowledge-systems which coerce or manipulatively coopt the participation of some users without answering to the experiences of those users constitute an abuse of power.



I remarked earlier that some framework is required that will provide a uniting background field, or common denominator, upon which we can organise the relations between power phenomena and epistemic phenomena. The framework that I will employ is that of **practical reason**, and the connexion that I will argue makes reciprocal explanatory links between power relations and epistemological materials is **rational persuasion**. The point of this framework is to provide a template for strategies of intervention in the public epistemological domain which are intended to break the functional ties between power-inflected epistemological materials and the power interests that they serve.

Part III has two aims: first, to demonstrate the integrity of the epistemological models defended in Parts I and II, and secondly, reciprocally, to provide both a general framework for the interpretation of, and detailed substantiating evidence for, some important critiques of certain significant varieties of power-inflected epistemological materials.

## Chapter 1. Understanding Binarisms

### i) The Power of Persuasion: Goodness, Morality and Choice

A dualistic description does not exist in isolation; it attracts justification and consistency.<sup>10</sup>

We have seen the power of deliberate manipulation of people's choices on a massive scale in this century; in Western Capitalist societies we are very familiar with manipulative marketing, as well as with the encoding of social propaganda in advertising and in popular entertainment<sup>11</sup>; this is becoming increasingly overt with, for example, 'public service' advertising, the increasing utilisation of public relations and media expertise, and the professional marketing of political candidates. It is important not to underestimate the degree of professional, research-based expertise and skill that goes in to manipulating our beliefs and values to various purposes. It is not surprising that we are overwhelmed in the face of these committed and resourceful efforts. But there are further features of the contemporary public-epistemological environment that make its ideological potential more dangerous than it has been before.

The present context of rapidly expanding and increasingly narrowly-sourced domination of public discourses by commercial mass media creates a situation in which extremely large numbers of people can be influenced in their beliefs and values from extremely narrow perspectives. In her book 'Backlash - the Undeclared War Against Women'<sup>12</sup>, Susan Faludi describes what she calls the media 'echo chamber', a phenomenon that arises in part from the serial plagiarism (from news services and from stories in other journals) that characterises the production of mass media news-entertainment products. The significance of the media 'echo chamber' is that it swamps important checking procedures that we utilise in public-epistemological contexts in order to weigh the credibility of claims.

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<sup>10</sup>Helen Weinreich-Haste (1986), pp 116-7. *Brother Son, Sister Moon: Does Rationality Overcome a Dualistic World View?* in *Perspectives on Gender and Science*, Jan Harding (ed.), 1986, London: The Falmer Press, pp 113-131.

<sup>11</sup>Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963, Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin) provides an extremely illuminating account of the intentional pursuit of a social agenda directed at women by marketers and advertisers after the Second World War in the U.S. Most striking are first, the degree of research skill and effort applied (exhibiting an awareness of women's capacities and needs that would put a contemporary feminist to shame) and secondly, the callousness with which these were applied.

<sup>12</sup>1992, London: Chatto & Windus

Human beings are social beings, and are knowers in a social context. The availability of information from other knowers is of great advantage to us, however it requires us to employ criteria for belief based not upon direct experience, but upon the credibility of knowledge claims made by others. Because of this, we have learned to employ various checking procedures upon information acquired from other knowers. We weigh claims by other knowers against our own experience, and we take account of any limitations upon, or advantages of, the particular perspective from which the claim is made. So, for example, we give more weight to perspectives with special expertise in some area. We will also make allowances for any stake the claimant might have in our believing the claim. We take account of the number of knowers who subscribe to the claim, and of the degree of diversity of the perspectives from which the claim is made; these are 'objectivity' checks. This of course can go wrong; the phenomenon of large majorities thereby feeling secure in false beliefs is not unusual in human history. But the epistemic underpinnings of this kind of error are legitimate, deriving from human recognition of the legitimacy of other points of view.

In a situation where there is disagreement, we can think of a diversity of views on some particular topic as able to be mapped on an epistemic field of possibly true claims between which we must decide. This field can be partitioned in the normal way to represent significant differences in the content of the claims. This strategy accounts for the 'adversarial' structuring of discussion and debate in Western political and information institutions, where perspectives are polarised (an oppositional structure is used) in order supposedly to summarise the range of belief options. This strategy, however, becomes distorted and misleading in imbalanced power contexts where the selected views do not represent the field of real options at all but merely insignificant distinctions from one end of the spectrum. In this way the appearance of fair debate is given while genuine dissent is not exposed for assessment. In any case, we can think of ourselves, in making decisions about what to believe in an environment of disagreement, as constructing a value field of 'credibility' for competing claims which is saliently partitioned using the various criteria described above. We are then in a position, if we have constructed our field properly, to follow its guidance in the acceptance or rejection of particular claims.

However, Faludi's media 'echo chamber' gives a false impression both of the wide sharing of a belief and of its being shared from diverse perspectives, two significant credibility criteria. In addition, the interestedness of the perspective from which the

belief is expounded is hidden as its true source is refracted through multiple repetitions. Further, the appearance of expertise is part of the packaging of these media products. These factors will overwhelm our checking procedures if we have not been alerted to the special characteristics of commercial 'information' products. This false credibility problem is greatly exacerbated by the existence of narrow and interested controlling sources for the disseminated material, combined with a large and rapidly increasing target audience. False impressions are successfully conveyed to very large numbers of people, whose choices, based on misinformation, can combine in overwhelming numbers in the service of the interests of the controlling sources: ultimately, it is the 'mass' in 'mass media' that constitutes the danger it presents.

It is hard to know how public knowledge-systems will evolve in this kind of environment; there are factors which may help counteract the effects of the mass-marketing of 'information' (increasing cynicism with the media, more finely-tuned targeting of consumers, the emergence of anarchic communication systems such as email). It is nevertheless important to clearly understand first, the seriousness of the threat posed by the commercial distortion of public knowledge-systems, and secondly, the (intentional or unintentional) sophistication of the techniques by which system-users are misled. These by themselves attest to the need for a similarly sophisticated response: we must, if we wish to resist the manipulation of our values and our social arrangements by groups who have no interest whatsoever in our well-being, arm ourselves with a level of expertise in human strategies of belief and choice that can match what can be purchased by any politician, media mogul or advertising agency. In order to successfully respond to this particular form of the abuse of power, we have to know what we are doing, and this is the point of a systematic approach to understanding the mutual relations between power and knowledge.

What is it for epistemological materials to 'serve the interests' of powerholders? If we are to provide a framework for the analysis of the relations between power and epistemological materials, we must understand what connects the interests of power-holders with what we think. This is very simply done with a model of practical reason in which we can place epistemic materials, such as a concept or a system of them, or a convention or rule for arranging concepts in relations with

each other, or whatever, in a relationship of **influence** upon the **choices of practical reasoners**.

The most important source of power is the power of numbers, of unified assent or dissent. You can directly control the behaviour of other agents through force, but this in fact is a very hard thing to do where large numbers of potential dissenters are involved: no amount of weaponry can control a united majority of dissenters. Manipulation of people's practical choices through the manipulation of what they believe will much more effectively serve the interests of power-holders than overt threats of force.

Because human choice is reason-based, where human choices are relevant to the interests of power-holders, we have a potential connexion between the epistemological and the political. In practical reason in public or shared epistemological contexts, under the constraints of communicability and replicability, rational links are forged by us between descriptive, evaluative and prescriptive knowledge, upon the basis of which we made decisions about what to do. The power of power-holders can therefore be exercised not with expensive and potentially ineffective violence, but by influencing choices through influencing what people think. The relevant connexion between the political and the epistemological is, then, **persuasion**. If only because consistent, orderly and predictable effects upon the choices of large numbers of diversely positioned knowers are sought by power-holders, the most useful form of persuasion **will involve rationality**. That is, the persuasion attempted will not amount to 'brainwashing' in the popularly understood sense; this is, apart from anything else, an extremely difficult thing to achieve, and has disadvantages analagous to the control of action through violence. Rather, it will involve the deliberate arrangement of ideas and information in such a way that a person seeking to make a rational decision will choose as the persuader wishes him or her to choose; that is, this is persuasion as **lying or deceptive justification**.

I argued in Part II of this work that practical reason, the hallmark act of which is rational choice, draws upon evaluative information. There are two forms of evaluative information that are highly salient to rational choice. The first is information about what should be: knowledge or belief about the good, whether that be knowledge or belief about what is good to us and others we care about, or whether it concerns the good in some more perspectively encompassing sense (this

sense of good is best understood as falling within the domain of the moral, which I will discuss presently). Knowledge about the good goes into the construction of ends, providing the telos of practical decision-making. This fact is the source of R.M. Hare's insistence, for example, that our beliefs about goodness are logically connected to our actual or hypothetical choices<sup>13</sup>. If power-holders can persuade us that certain things will be good to us or for us, that they will bring us or our loved-ones happiness, comprising self-respect, social acceptance, achievement, self-expression, security, and so on, then this will enter our practical decision-making at the point of the construction of our ends, and there will be similar effects upon our decisions if we are persuaded that certain things will be bad to us or for us. Of course, this kind of persuasion will not succeed unless it draws upon knowledge of real human evaluative experience, such as our need for happiness and whatever its components might be. And it is precisely expertise in this area that is purchased by advertisers, marketers, and politicians, from professional researchers. But successful persuasion in this area also requires facility with evaluative epistemic strategies: knowledge of the kinds of inferences that we will make from one piece of evaluative information to another, for example, knowledge of what will 'ring true' to us and what will raise our suspicions. False value systems must look authentic; they will therefore mimic legitimate constructions of human evaluative experience. This is why an understanding of the epistemology of value will be helpful to an understanding of the ideological manipulation of human choice.

The second form of evaluative information that is highly salient to human choice is information about moral value. This view may surprise cynics, but it is an obvious feature of charismatic propaganda, for example, that it overtly invokes moral considerations. Hitler, for example, portrayed the German people as **morally** superior, and morally entitled to rule the world (in fact, wars are always defended on moral, as well as prudential grounds). Jews, Gypsies, communists, homosexuals and other victims of the Holocaust were conversely portrayed not merely as annoying or simply as disposable, but as morally corrupt, as evil. On the positive side of this phenomenon, the hugely influential leadership of figures of the stature of, for example, Martin Luther King derives from their capacity to invoke **moral** responses in their audiences. And on a smaller and more tedious scale of leadership, a proliferation of claims to the moral high ground, as well as of appeals to voters' self interest, is a readily recognizable feature of election campaigns.

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<sup>13</sup>The Language of Morals (1952), Oxford: Oxford University Press, see especially Part II, Chapter 8.

This influence of moral claims upon human decision-making can only be understood if we recognise and accept the epistemological salience to us of some important features of moral reasoning and its place in practical reasoning in general. First, moral principles are logically overriding. As I argued in Part II, Chapter 3, Section vi, overridingness orders hierarchically organised epistemic fields ('nested', or recursively subdivided fields), and represents relations of relevance scope concerning the information organised by the fields. Moral epistemic fields (fields organising value information relevant to moral decisions) are the most encompassing of the value fields relevant to practical decision-making. Recalling that epistemic fields are di- or trichotomised in order to structurally represent accept/reject imperatives, the general overridingness rule is that the 'reject' side of the most encompassing field be rejected first, narrowing epistemic focus progressively through the 'accept' sides of recursively partitioned subfields of that field. The overridingness of the moral is an instance of this epistemic strategy, because of the exhaustive scope (incorporating all value considerations) of the moral domain.

While it is wrong to interpret overridingness, as Hare does<sup>14</sup>, in terms of actual influence upon choice, it is a simple matter to draw together the empirical observation that moral claims (correct or incorrect<sup>15</sup>) have a persuasive force that seems to be able to overwhelm personal interest (or, if we are more cynical, especially in the case of charismatic propaganda, to be able to provide overwhelming apparent legitimation for personal interest), with an account of moral overridingness which places it within a framework of basic human epistemic strategies and tools. We simply have to make the unambitious claim, and the core claim of this Part, that basic human epistemic strategies and tools will tend to be manifested in, to influence, our choices. In other words, they influence how we think and through this, how we choose. The epistemic role of overridingness in directing orders of priority through hierarchically-arranged epistemic fields,

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<sup>14</sup>(1981), *Moral Thinking, its Levels, Method and Point*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>15</sup> The issue of how to adequately justify moral principles or claims is well beyond the scope of this thesis; however, the view that the moral domain is the limiting case in scope of evaluative reasoning, that is, that it concerns all-things-considered value, implies that in public epistemological contexts, what is considered morally good or obligatory must be carefully negotiated, and be answerable to, the moral value, and the moral intelligences and experiences, of all participants in the system. It should be kept in mind that 'participation' is broadly construed here to include coerced participation, and that this includes subjects who do not necessarily subscribe to the beliefs in the system, but who are affected in some way by others who do.

together with the status of the moral as the most global such field relevant to practical decision-making, accounts for the epistemic weight of the moral, or the apparently moral, in our actual choices.

In short, then, moral considerations are epistemically overriding for practical decisions, and we know this. But further, the relevance of moral considerations to the practical decisions of morally capable agents is also supposed to be, and recognised to be, non-perspectival, that is, moral considerations are supposed to have relevance for all parties no matter where these parties' particular interests lie<sup>16</sup>. Again, this principle derives in part from the globality of the moral with respect to practical evaluative epistemic fields. In particular it derives from one of the sorts of thing organised by the field: moral value fields include and do not relevantly discriminate between the value perspectives of all morally capable beings.

The evaluative-epistemic non-perspectivity of the moral combines with the overridingness of the moral to provide a powerful epistemic influence upon the decisions of practical reasoners in public epistemological contexts. Recognition of these two features of moral reasoning allows us to understand why, in public justification and persuasion contexts, moral arguments are able to be portrayed as trumping other kinds of arguments, for all parties. Moral arguments, including persuasive but false moral arguments, will be especially useful in cases where programmes or policies go against the interests of those who need to be persuaded (such as those who are to give up loved-ones to a war). It is therefore prudentially rational, if not always well-intentioned, to attempt to justify one's position with moral arguments in public justification and persuasion contexts. Moral considerations sway morally-capable beings, and successful moral persuasion is extremely effective in influencing the choices of these beings, if only in neutralising a sense of injustice, which could motivate rebellion, through making the injustice appear illusory. This not only accounts for the moralizing we must endure from all directions, however; it also, in my view, accounts for philosophical and lay resistance to the idea of the 'authority' of the moral, which is rightly, if unconsciously, recognised by many to be an important vehicle, if not the most important vehicle, of ambitions for domination and control.

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<sup>16</sup>And we can take the point of Kant's Categorical Imperatives to be to try to guarantee the legitimacy of this all-encompassing relevance.



In public epistemological contexts, we must recognise that 'justification' practices shade into persuasion practices, which include false or lying justification, but it is only when we start from a position of respect for the reasoners so persuaded, that we can discern the special role of the misemployment of rational principles and legitimate epistemic structures and strategies in influencing the decisions of these reasoners. The most important element, then, of the epistemological paradigm that I am defending, is **respect**; if people are persuaded by a false argument, or persuaded to adopt an oppressive conceptual construction, then that is not because they are 'brainwashed', stupid or easily led, but because there is something in that argument or construction which can persuade a rational being. If so, it would be useful to know just what it is and how it works on us. As Sherry B. Ortner<sup>17</sup> says, for example:

...I try to expose the underlying logic of cultural thinking that assumes the inferiority of women: **I try to show the highly persuasive nature of the logic, for if it were not so persuasive, people would not keep subscribing to it.** (p 62, my emphasis).

In what follows, I will seek to expose the legitimate epistemic structures, and some illegitimate ones mimicking them, that account for the structure and content of power-inflected epistemological materials, and for the persuasiveness of the lying justifications which draw upon them as a context, or in which they have a significant place.

## ii) A Politico-Logical Account

The concept of dualism has been crucial to much philosophical and feminist thought, yet is usually only vaguely articulated. (V. Plumwood, 1993, p 2<sup>18</sup>)

...human beings seem to have a deep-rooted tendency to construct dualistic categories of interpreting the world; this tendency appears to permeate all spheres of life, including science

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<sup>17</sup>1986 (First publ. 1974). Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture? In Women and Values: Readings in Recent Feminist Philosophy, Marilyn Pearsall (ed.), Belmont: Wadsworth, pp 62-75.

<sup>18</sup>1993 (op. cit).

and technology and the human being's relationship with nature. It seems likely that if sex differences did not exist, we would have to invent them.. (H. Weinreich-Haste, 1986, p 113<sup>19</sup>)

One focus of contemporary interest in the relations between power and knowledge is the phenomenon of the use of pairs of terms or concepts, connected together in systems, which are both **oppositional** and connote a positive/negative **value contrast**. They are, as we will see, almost always associated or associable with the male/female contrast, which is why they have attracted Feminist attention. Examples of these contrasts include 'culture and nature', 'mind and body', 'reason and the emotions', 'active and passive', 'internal and external', and, of course, 'male and female'. Most authors investigating these phenomena, whether directly or indirectly, tend to note an affirmation/negation or 'privative' element in binaristic epistemic materials; however, this is often not distinguished in their accounts from negative value. Some authors note but don't further elaborate upon a 'privileging' element which is also ambiguous across definitional or semantic and evaluative interpretations; some describe this element as 'hierarchical' and some mention a general/specific contrast. All note or imply that whole series of contrasts tend to be systematically related.

A philosophy of language approach to an analysis of these and connected phenomena is exemplified by Dale Spender in 'Man Made Language' (1980<sup>20</sup>), who argues that the male/female distinction underpins a systematic linguistic convention or rule in which maleness functions as a norm against which femaleness is deviant. She claims that maleness is treated in the language as a definitional attribute and femaleness as its lack. Spender explicitly contextualises her account in (male/female) power relations; the title refers to the historical control of language by male-dominated power elites, and to a continuing selection and validation process by these elites. Linguists have attacked the technicalities of her thesis<sup>21</sup>, but some

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<sup>19</sup>Weinreich-Haste, Helen. *Brother Sun, Sister Moon: Does Rationality Overcome a Dualistic World View?* in *Perspectives on Gender and Science*, Jan Harding (ed.). London: The Falmer Press, 1986, pp 113-31.

<sup>20</sup>London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

<sup>21</sup>Unfairly, in my view, since Spender's book is best understood as a work of (politically contextualised) linguistic analysis in the 'ordinary language' tradition rather than as technical linguistic research.

add (e.g., Black and Coward, 1981<sup>22</sup>), that the contrast seems rather to be hierarchical: 'man' is general, 'woman' specific.

Nancy Jay (1981<sup>23</sup>), in a more directly epistemological approach, argues that there are close connexions between 'radical gender distinctions' and logical dichotomy (p 38) as governed, in particular, by the Law of Excluded Middle. Her general concern, inspired by Durkheim, is to make a connexion between the social and the conceptual. However, she also wishes to reveal the political advantages of some forms of categorisation (radically dichotomous, 'A/Not-A phrasings') over others to certain groups in society. Arguing, finally, for a connexion between 'dichotomous thinking' and conservatism, she advocates the rejection of the construction of A/Not-A contrasts and their governing logical rules.

The coincidence of a male/female contrast with both an epistemic positive/negative contrast, and with a general/specific contrast, can be explained by the power-inflexion of the epistemic strategies and tools defended in Part I of this work. These phenomena will be examined in Chapter 2, Section ii and in Chapter 3, Section i, respectively.

A cognitive-psychological approach is exemplified by Bem (1981<sup>24</sup>), who argues that we use male/female 'gender schemas' to process information. These posited cognitive structures (networks of associations), which are thought to actively anticipate and organise perception, (p 355) become significant to our processing in part because society teaches that 'the dichotomy between male and female has extensive and intensive relevance to virtually every aspect of life' (p 362<sup>25</sup>). The 'globalisation of relevance' of power-inflected dichotomies will be examined in connexion with Val Plumwood's account of 'dualisms' in Chapter 2, Section i.

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<sup>22</sup>Black, M. and R. Coward (1990). *Linguistic, Social and Sexual Relations: A Review of Dale Spender's Man Made Language*, *The Feminist Critique of Language*, D. Cameron (ed.), London: Routledge.

<sup>23</sup>Gender and Dichotomy, in *Feminist Studies*, 7, no. 1 (Spring 1981), pp 38-56.

<sup>24</sup>Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing, in *Psychological Review*, 1981, Vol. 88, No. 4, 354-364.

<sup>25</sup>This phenomenon is characteristic of binarisms; the 'globalisation of relevance' will be explained and discussed in Chapter 2., Section ii, and with reference to the male/female binarism, in Chapter 3, ii,b.

Sherry B. Ortner (1974<sup>27</sup>), describes herself as attempting a logical explanation for the 'pan-cultural fact' of the secondary status of woman in society (p 62). Defining culture as 'the transcendence, by means of systems of thought and technology, of the natural givens of existence' (p 71) her argument is that women are recognised to belong to culture, but appear to have closer associations with nature (through reproduction and childcare, for example) than males; they are therefore seen as intermediate between the two realms. Representing the borders of culture, a territory surrounded by nature, they symbolise both positive and negative aspects of nature by comparison with culture, as well as of the immanence, concreteness, personalism and particularism with which they are also associated<sup>28</sup>; this accounts for (among other things) the 'polarized ambiguity' (p 72) of feminine symbolism across positive and negative value.

Helen Weinreich-Haste (1986<sup>29</sup>), argues that a dualistic metaphorical structure, closely aligned with sex differences, pervasively influences how we interpret the world, including those interpretations arising from, as well as about, the practice of science and its guiding model of rationality. Historical and anthropological evidence, she argues, indicates that 'the dualism of gender has been inextricably mapped on to the dualisms of man *versus* nature, reason *versus* passion, controlled *versus* uncontrolled, and logical *versus* intuitive.' (p 119) Orthodox science is perceived as 'masculine', that is, as being 'hard, complex, based on thought rather than feeling, abstract and masculine' (p 115), when in fact inspiration, the moral dimension of science, and holistic approaches to explanation are proper parts or contexts of scientific enquiry, and are connected closely with innovation. Citing research into sex differences in cognition, she identifies what might be a sex- or gender-linked contrast<sup>30</sup> in approaches to rationality: for males, a 'tendency towards exclusion, focussing and linear logic' (p 128), and for females, 'a tendency towards inclusion, broad scanning and synthesizing rather than analyzing' (pp 128-9). She concludes that the instrumental, exclusionary, controlling model

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<sup>27</sup>Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture? From Woman, Culture, and Society, J. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds.) 1974, Stanford University Press, pp 67-87, reprinted in An Women and Values: Readings in Recent Feminist Philosophy, Marilyn Pearsall (ed.), Belmont: Wadsworth, pp 62-75.

<sup>28</sup>See especially pp 70-71.

<sup>29</sup>Op. Cit.

<sup>30</sup>I say 'sex- or gender-linked' because Weinreich-Haste develops her arguments about a possible empirical connexion between sex and approaches to rationality from Chodorow's work. Chodorow's account is a theory of differential psychosexual development; such accounts greatly amplify ambiguities across the already problematic sex-gender distinction.

of rationality that she thinks might be connected both metaphorically and empirically with maleness '...has for at least one, if not two, millennia been inextricably tied up with a wide-ranging dualism which has provided a framework for Man ...to make sense of his uneasy relationship with nature, his own irrational potential, and womanhood ...' (p 129). I will discuss Ortner's 'polarized ambiguity' in Chapter 2, Section, ii, and in Chapter 3, Section i., and will show how both this, and the descriptive and evaluative relations described by Weinreich-Haste between women, nature and irrationality can be explained by power-inflections of the epistemic structures described, in particular, in Part II of this work.

Marion Tapper (1979<sup>30</sup>) describes characteristics of what she calls 'dichotomous thinking': thinking according to distinctions which are mutually exclusive and exhaustive. These distinctions, according to Tapper, are both systematically related with other dichotomous distinctions and reflect a good/bad contrast. Julie Nelson (1992)<sup>31</sup>, explicitly recognises the categories 'masculine' and 'feminine' to be both oppositional, and to have opposite values (positive and negative, respectively). She attempts to separate out and analyse the value dimension of 'the way we use the categories "masculine" and "feminine" as cognitive organisers' (p 138). In Chapter 2, Section ii., and Chapter 3, Section i, I will extend Tapper's and Nelson's recognition of the influence of value epistemology upon binaristic phenomena by applying an explicit axiological analysis to certain important structural features of binarisms, arguing that an explicit epistemology and logic of value greatly enhances the explanatory power of logical approaches to power-inflected epistemological materials.

Genevieve Lloyd in 'The Man of Reason' (1993<sup>32</sup>) argues that cultural ideals have been defined 'in opposition to the feminine' (p104), and associated with maleness, male qualities and traits. This accounts for the construction and evolution in Western philosophy of the ideal of Reason through distancing from the feminine, itself associated closely with Nature<sup>33</sup>. In Chapter 3, Section ii, I will defend a reading of her description of the pattern of exclusions from Reason in which they are seen to reflect the political imperative of control, through a model of rational agency as control, consistently with my general thesis in this Part that an account of

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<sup>30</sup>Dichotomous Thinking, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Macquarie University.

<sup>31</sup>Thinking About Gender, Hypatia, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 1992), 138-154.

<sup>32</sup>Op. cit.

<sup>33</sup>'The Man of Reason' will be discussed in more detail later in this Chapter and in Chapter 3.

power influences upon epistemological phenomena must be contextualised in a framework of practical reason.

Binarisms are power-inflected epistemic materials. Val Plumwood has provided us with a detailed politico-logical analysis of what she calls 'dualisms'<sup>34</sup>. In 'Feminism and the Mastery of Nature'<sup>35</sup>, she defines them as follows:

Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings constructed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change. (pp 47-8).

Plumwood argues that dualisms reflect institutionalised power, and the history of their evolution in a culture reflects the history of evolution of the patterns of power relations in that culture (pp 43-4, op. cit.). They form a pervasive interlocking system<sup>36</sup>:

The set of interrelated and mutually reinforcing dualisms which permeate western culture forms a fault-line which runs through its entire conceptual system. (p 42)

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<sup>34</sup>Terminology is diverse in the literature; what I call 'binarisms' are also known as 'dualisms', 'dichotomy', and 'binary opposition'. I have chosen the term 'binarisms' because this terminology makes a connexion with the poststructuralist term 'binary opposition', which itself has the advantage of explicitly recognising the oppositional epistemic roots of these phenomena. Where I am discussing an author's work, however, I will seek as far as possible to use her terminology. Since the meanings of these terms is transparent, this strategy should not cause confusion, although it may be annoying, for which I apologise.

<sup>35</sup>1993 (op. cit.).

<sup>36</sup>Op.Cit. p 42.

She lists the 'key' dualisms for western thought as follows:

culture/nature	freedom/necessity (nature)
reason/nature	universal/particular
male/female	human/nature(non-human)
mind/body (nature)	civilised/primitive (nature)
master/slave	production/reproduction (nature)
reason/matter (physicality)	public/private
rationality/animality (nature)	subject/object
reason/emotion (nature)	self/other (p 43)
mind, spirit/nature	

Plumwood holds that **any** distinction can be constructed into a dualism, which is:

...an alienated form of differentiation, in which power construes and constructs difference in terms of an inferior and alien realm. ...in systematised forms of power, power is normally institutionalised and 'naturalised' by latching on to existing forms of difference.

The key dualisms she lists here are therefore not a 'complete' list (p 43). These express the dominant power relations in western culture. For example, and especially, male/female 'naturalises' gender power relations, mental/manual (drawing upon the mind/body contrast) naturalises class power relations, and human/nature and civilised/primitive naturalise domination of nature (p 43); the latter, she would elaborate, is also used to naturalise the exploitation of 'natives' within colonialist power relations. These dualisms have developed in historically evolving power contexts. More ancient dualisms, such as reason/nature remain as 'sediment' in more recent ones (such as subject/object), able to be 'mined, refined and redeployed for new uses' (p 43).

The systemic nature of dualisms is evident in their associations and connexions with each other. Plumwood argues that a **gendered reason/nature** dualism (with 'reason' male and 'nature' female) is the 'overarching, most general, basic and connecting form of these dualisms' (p 44). She believes that, in the above list of key dualisms, almost all of the categories on the left, positive side are forms of reason, and almost all of those on the right, negative side are forms of nature.

The connexions of other dualisms with the basic gendered reason/nature contrast are made with what she calls **linking postulates**. These are 'assumptions normally made or implicit in the cultural background which create equivalences or mapping between the pairs.' (p 45). For example, culture/nature is mapped onto human/nature by 'All and only humans possess culture'. Reason/body is mapped onto male/female by 'The sphere of reason is masculine'. Mind/body is mapped onto human/nature by 'The sphere of the human coincides with that of intellect or mentality'. And mind/body is also mapped onto male/female by transitivity from human/nature. (All of these postulates are quoted from p 45, op. cit.).

Other examples are given by Plumwood connecting public/private with a gendered reason/nature contrast; she also mentions the allocation of the poor to the 'animal' side of a human/animal contrast, and of the working class to the 'body' side of a mind/body contrast (p 45).

Since the linking postulates are culturally contextual, they will differ across different cultural environments, and have differed between different philosophers. Because of their functional role in perpetuating power relations, however, the content of dualisms can be understood through, in effect, the contrast between master and slave:

The connection of the dualisms with the perspective of the master appears plainly in many ancient sources which make clear the role of domination in shaping the relationship between 'superior' and 'inferior' sides in instrumental terms. (p 46<sup>37</sup>)

In Chapter 3, I will be arguing in some detail, with special reference to Genevieve Lloyd's book 'The Man of Reason', that the valorisation of **rational agency as control** is the best predictor of the contents of dualistic pairs. For the present, however, Plumwood's insight that the contrasts concern domination and control from the point of view of a 'master' category has to be understood in terms of the **logical** position that the 'master' category also occupies. Drawing upon her work with R. Routley<sup>38</sup> and others on alternatives to what they argue are politically 'selected' logics, Plumwood links the logical structure of dualisms with their

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<sup>37</sup>Op. Cit. p 46..

<sup>38</sup>E.g., R. Routley (now Sylvan) and V. Routley (now Plumwood), *Relevant Logics and Their Rivals*, op. cit.



political function, arguing that this structure itself both reflects and perpetuates power relations. There is:

...a form of reciprocal selection in which those theories and technologies are selected from an adequate group which accord with and help to naturalise certain dominant social structures. These selected theories in turn help to fix, extend and perpetuate social relations of domination. (p 441<sup>39</sup>)

The structure of dualisms, according to Plumwood, can be understood logically through the contrast between 'centre' and 'other', a contrast manifested in the **power-inflected negation semantics** of traditional logics.

...accounts of negation can be seen as providing, at a very abstract level, certain structures and principles for conceiving and treating otherness, the other which is not self, whatever self may be. Once this ...interpretation of negation is made, the illusion of the timelessness and political neutrality of logic vanishes. (p 441<sup>40</sup>)

Plumwood argues that the diversity of modern logics, and of possible logics, is not widely understood. Logics, or elements of them, portrayed as 'intuitive' or 'normal' (p 441) are in fact **selected** on the basis of their commensurability with dominant, elite points of view, just as scientific theories and models of rationality are selected:

...as in other areas of knowledge there are competing and contested accounts of reason, and correspondingly of logical systems. (p 440<sup>41</sup>)

In particular, the semantics of the negation of classical propositional logic involves the contrast of a category presented as epistemically positive and self-sufficient with an otherwise all-encompassing, and undifferentiated lack, 'otherness'<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup>V. Plumwood, The Politics of Reason: Towards a Feminist Logic. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 71, No. 4; December 1993 pp 436-462.

<sup>40</sup>Op. Cit.

<sup>41</sup>Op. Cit.

<sup>42</sup>Plumwood recognises the connexions between her account and poststructuralist accounts of phallogocentrism in western thought, seeing her account as 'extending and supporting' such accounts (i.e., as able to be generalised to other power relations), p 442, op. cit.

I will be examining Plumwood's analysis of classical negation and its role in dualistic constructions, and the details of the structure of dualisms that she identifies, in Chapter 2, Section i. For the present we could summarise her views as making the connexion between power and epistemic materials from two directions: first, through an account of the **semantic content** of the dualism: this is determined by, in effect, a master/slave contrast, with whatever contents are contextually appropriate, arising from the role of the dualism in legitimating ('naturalising') domination and control; secondly, she provides an account of the **formal** or structural features of the dualism, that is, the relations of association between dualistic pairs and the properties associated with them, and of distancing across the dualistic divide. This is the centre/other contrast enshrined in classical logic's negation semantics. Content and form come together in 'a particular way of dividing the world which results from a certain kind of denied dependency on a subordinated other', where 'the denial and the relation of domination/subordination shapes the identity of both the relata' (p 443<sup>43</sup>): a dualism.

In the following Chapter, I will argue that the epistemic strategies and tools for both descriptive and evaluative taxonomising in public epistemological contexts defended in Parts I and II of this thesis can be usefully applied to i) contextualise Plumwood's account in a background epistemological framework linking power and epistemic phenomena, ii) provide detailed substantiating evidence for her account and iii) provide elaborations of her account. In general, I will argue that dualistic or binaristic epistemic materials deceive practical reasoners in the service of the interests of power groups by mimicking legitimate epistemological structures in such a way that they appear to be justified or to not require justification.

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<sup>43</sup>Op. cit.

## Chapter 2. Elaborating Plumwood

### i) The Ambivalence of Classical Negation and the Iconic Dichotomiser.

An understanding of negation is central to understanding the ideological inflexion of epistemic materials. This is because of the deep semantic connexions between descriptive negation, evaluative badness, and prescriptive overridingness: all reflect a metaepistemic 'accept/reject' contrast (overridingness expressing this in a nested, hierarchical form). Plumwood says (e.g., op. cit., p 56) :

At the level of propositional logic, classical logic is the closest approximation to the dualistic structure I have outlined. The 'naturalness' of classical logic is the 'naturalness' of domination, of concepts of otherness framed in terms of the perspective of the master.

Dualisms are power-inflected epistemic fields. We can express Plumwood's claims about classical negation and its relations with dualism as follows: it is a power-inflected epistemological structuring device, and has been 'selected' by power groups because it structures descriptive, evaluative and prescriptive relations between groups in ways that are commensurate with the value of the power relations between those groups from the point of view of the power-holders. We could say that the descriptive, evaluative and prescriptive relations on the power-inflected epistemic fields 'selected' by power groups in public knowledge-systems are made to epistemically **supervene** upon descriptive relations of power.

Recalling that supervenient, or 'consequential' properties, in Hare's usage<sup>44</sup>, in supervening upon some other property/ies, also supervene upon any exactly similar property/ies (i.e., there can be no variation in the supervenient property without there being a variation in the properties upon which it supervenes). Supervenience in this sense, then, characterises the relations between coextensive descriptive, and evaluative and prescriptive epistemic fields (and this is one way of articulating presuppositional relations between practical, evaluative and descriptive reasoning defended in Part II, Chapter 1. However, I would argue that these supervenience relations are properly governed by principles that map one field onto another).

From an epistemological point of view, there is no reason, however, to suppose that supervenience relations cannot be constructed, stipulated or forged. I am suggesting that in power-inflected epistemic fields, superveniences are forged over

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<sup>44</sup>Op. cit. p 80f.

power relations. If this is so, certain relational properties (that is, those constituting power relations between groups) covertly underpin descriptive, evaluative and prescriptive partitions of power-inflected epistemic fields. This is one way of understanding what it is for them to be power-inflected.

The effects of this on the overt descriptive field will include descriptively illegitimate definitional contrasts between groups (and the obscuring of differences within groups); on the evaluative field they will include a *better than* relation supervenient upon the power relation, and a good/bad contrast supervenient upon the power relation (both favouring the power group); on the prescriptive field the effects will include a 'right to rule' relation supervenient upon the power relation, and an 'ought to control'/'ought to be controlled' contrast supervenient upon the power relation. Further, the power relations influencing the field are those power relations experienced from the point of view of the power-holder; it is this perspective from which the field is (in effect) constructed. Perspectival dichotomous partitions such as 'self/other', 'knower/known', 'subject/object' and so on will also, therefore, be made to supervene upon the power relation covertly structuring the field, with, for example, 'self', 'knower', and 'subject' all located at the position occupied by the power group on the field. What we can take Plumwood to be arguing, then, is that the forging of these superveniences is greatly facilitated by the use of classical negation as an epistemic tool.

Plumwood and colleagues have diagnosed the flawed semantics of classical negation as arising from the view that  $A$  and its contradiction  $\sim A$  must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive, of 'everything'<sup>45</sup>. I have argued in Part I, Chapter 4, Section ii, that Classical negation can be diagnosed as ambivalently combining elements of what I have described as 'spotlight' and 'toggle' negations, two separately legitimate epistemic tools which are supposed to work together hierarchically in positing and partitioning epistemic fields. The usefulness of this diagnosis can be demonstrated by showing how it can be used to elaborate Plumwood's account of the defining logical features of dualisms.

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<sup>45</sup>For example, R. and V. Routley, Negation and Contradiction, *Revista Colombiana de Matematicas*, Vol. XIX (1985), pp 201-301. See especially p 207, and p 216-17.

Plumwood lists five connected defining features of dualisms<sup>46</sup>. They are:

i), **backgrounding** or 'denial', which involves a denied dependence between the 'master' and 'slave' categories. First, the 'master' category is dependent for its identity on the 'slave' category, but this dependence is concealed. An example is the category 'white' (applied to race), which is epistemically dependent for its content upon the contrasting categories 'non-white', 'coloured' or 'black'. In addition, those belonging to the 'master' category are dependent for the satisfaction of their interests upon those belonging to the 'slave' category, but this is concealed, and the instrumental value of those in the negative category is denied. An example would be the ideal of independence that characterises the liberal model of the individual, which denies the universal fact of dependence (especially in the early stages of life) of human beings upon other human beings (especially upon female human beings).

ii) **Radical exclusion** or 'hyperseparation', involves differences between the categories being exaggerated and polarised and similarities being denied. This is, for Plumwood, a hallmark of dualism (p 49, op. cit.), distinguishing it from simple difference or distinction. The relevant descriptive attributions might include such properties as skin colour, where, for example, infinite grades of difference are polarised into the two categories black and white, with attendant evaluative implications. But also, polarisation occurs in more direct evaluative and prescriptive attributions. An example that Plumwood gives from gender is the set of attributions/prescriptions for men: 'active, intellectual, egoistic, competitive and dominant' and for women: 'passive, intuitive, altruistic, nurturant and submissive' (p 51, op. cit.). These sets of attributions/prescriptions, matched across dualistically constructed categories, are not random (p 50) but follow a pattern of mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness, and hence are constructed as complementary. These formal features of radical exclusion will accommodate contents consistent with 'instrumentalism' (which will be discussed presently): the 'complementary' traits and activities prescribed for the group/s to be dominated will be arranged so as to serve the interests of the 'master' category (and so will be 'instrumental' complements of the traits and activities prescribed for the 'master' category).

iii) **Incorporation** or 'relational definition', involves the 'slave' category being defined by a negation contrast (a 'lack') with respect to the 'master' category. The

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<sup>46</sup>E.g., pp 48-55 of Feminism and the Mastery of Nature(1993).

'master' category is the point of descriptive and evaluative reference for the 'slave' category. What is noticed about, and hence attributed to a member of the 'slave' category is their lacking some trait ascribed to members of the 'master' category (p 52). Note that this can be an evaluatively positive or negative trait; in acknowledging this, Plumwood is unusual in recognising that evaluative and descriptive negativity can come apart. That is, something can be described epistemically negatively by contrast with an epistemic positive, but nevertheless have positive value compared to the negative value of that epistemic positive. An example would be describing God as 'not finite' or infinite, by comparison with lesser, finite beings like ourselves.

Evaluatively positive traits attributed to the 'slave' category will tend to be instrumental to the interests of the 'master' category (see 'instrumentalism', below), and serve more as prescriptions for members of the 'slave' category than as descriptions of them. The point for present purposes, however, is that in 'incorporation', no independent characterisation of the slave category or its members is given. This would be exemplified by the characterisation of native populations as 'uncivilised', as if this were a relevant description of them independently of any comparison with 'civilised' colonisers, or the characterisation of women as physically 'weak' as if this represented a characteristic that would be attributed to them independently of comparison with 'strong' men.

iv) **Instrumentalism** involves the 'slave' category being valued only in terms of its servicing the 'master' category's interests, that is, members of this category are valued extrinsically, as a means to, the intrinsic value of the interest-satisfaction of members of the 'master' category. This will be reflected in the prescriptive attributions made to members of the 'slave' category: for example, a good 'slave' will be considered docile and obedient. An example of this from gender is the gender prescription for women that they be sexually available to certain men (hence the negative value connotation of 'frigid') and not to others (hence the negative value connotation of various terms labelling female promiscuity).

Finally, v) **homogenisation** or 'stereotyping', in which relevant or salient differences between members of the 'slave' category are denied, would be exemplified by the categorisation of non-human animals with highly complex cognitive and social capacities like the non-human primates, with non-human animals of all kinds, including animals with no such capacities like worms and

insects. This is reflected in our categorisation of them all as 'animals', in sharp contrast to ourselves, 'humans'.

Recall that a 'spotlight' affirmation posits an epistemic field against an epistemically negative and indeterminate background, while 'toggle' affirmation and negation is used to partition spotlight background epistemic fields mutually exclusively and exhaustively. The mutually dependent functions of spotlight and toggle negations require that they not be conflated; toggle negations are required for partitions of spotlight fields and hence are necessary to predication in the proposition. Spotlight affirmations are required to underpin the recursive involutariness of toggle negations, and constitute the subjects of propositions.

For power-inflected epistemic fields, however, the toggling categories ('master'/'slave') upon an (unspecified or ambiguously specified) background field ('everything') are constructed from groups defined by power relations, and from the point of view of the dominant group. This generates a relational epistemic field the main structures of which are first, the relation, and second, its two relata. These should be two epistemic positives (which stand to each other, like 'master' and 'slave', as correlative opposites), between which 'toggle' negation can switch epistemic attention.

In power-inflected epistemic fields, however, the point of view of the 'master' category is projected into the field. This results in 'master' category always occupying the toggle-affirmed side of the partitioning of the field. But further, it results in that part of the field also, and inconsistently, functioning as a spotlight, independent, field unto itself, while the toggle-negated side is tipped off the field (becoming an epistemic, and thence an evaluative, and prescriptive, negative in value fields supervening upon elements of the descriptive field). Call the 'master' category 'A' and the 'slave' category  $\sim A$ . This spotlighting structurally underpins i) the A category's misrepresentation as descriptively or evaluatively independent (so as to ground the denial of epistemic and evaluative dependence upon  $\sim A$  in 'backgrounding'), ii) the  $\sim A$  category's misrepresentation as not requiring and not amenable to independent characterisation (relevant to 'incorporation' and also to 'backgrounding'), iii) The 'infiniator' of the  $\sim A$  category, which in turn

compromises relevant distinctions within  $\sim A$  (relevant to 'homogenisation'), iv) the denial of any relevant similarities between  $A$  and  $\sim A$  (relevant to 'hyperseparation').

On the other hand, however, the field must also underpin, different, and contradictory construals of the descriptive, evaluative and prescriptive relations between  $A$  and  $\sim A$ . The category  $\sim A$  must not be an epistemic negative, but a toggle negation of  $A$ , if it is to stand in epistemically positive relations with the category  $A$ , and if it is to be able to be spotlighted as the subject in (derogatory and prescriptive) propositions about members of  $\sim A$ . The 'toggle' interpretation of  $\sim A$  as an epistemic positive structurally underpins i) the attribution and mapping of relations such as *better than* between the two categories (relevant to 'instrumentalism' and 'backgrounding'), ii) the purported descriptive integrity (epistemic positivity) of the category  $\sim A$  (also relevant to 'homogenisation', and to any attempt to predicate properties of members of  $\sim A$ ), and iii) descriptive and evaluative oppositionality between  $A$  and  $\sim A$  (relevant to 'hyperseparation').

These forms of binaristic construction express an ambivalently spotlighted toggle affirmation (expressing the projection of the 'master' category onto the field on its toggle-affirmed side), with the toggle negation side of the field infinitated. There is a special form of binarism, however, in which both sides of the field are infinitated. This is the limiting case of binaristic construction, and the limiting case of spotlight/toggle conflation. It involves the use of an infinitated, radically heterogeneously divided epistemic field (as, for example, represented by the 'sacred/profane' contrast<sup>47</sup>). As I will presently argue, the hallmark of this extreme form of binarism is the use of what I will call an **iconic dichotomiser**.

The confusion has two elements or dimensions: the first is an overblown conceptualisation of **exhaustiveness**: the view that that the contrast is all-incompassingly 'global', or exhaustive of every actual or possible object. The second is an overblown conceptualisation of **exclusiveness**: the view that the contrast is radically heterogeneous, that the two categories have nothing in common. Both are exaggerations of the two functions of spotlight and toggle negations, respectively, of the two defining features of dichotomous partition (mutual exhaustiveness and exclusivity) respectively, and of the two taxonomising maxims

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<sup>47</sup>First described by Emile Durkheim (1915), in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Joseph Ward Swain (transl.), London: Allen & Unwin.



to maximise unity and diversity, respectively. Each relies upon a conflation of orders of analysis of a characteristic kind: first, applying a toggle affirmation/negation at the level of the background field (which should be spotlight), and second, applying spotlight affirmation/negation at the level of the subfields (which should be toggle affirmed and negated).

Where a background field is treated as itself dichotomously divided by a toggle negation (rather than as providing a spotlight unifying framework for toggling partitions made at a finer level of analysis), there is nothing to sustain the unity of the field as a whole, and therefore nothing to sustain the integrity of its borders. This results in, not only the infinitation of the negative, but an accompanying infinitation of the positive. At the order of analysis represented by the background field, only spotlight affirmation, the negation contrast of which provides the limits of the field, is appropriate. We could think of a spotlight affirmation/negation contrast as **overriding** a toggle affirmation/negation contrast (consistently with the role of overridingness in marking relevance-scope relations between hierarchically arranged epistemic fields, see Part II, Chapter 2, Section ii), in this way overriding toggling partitions of the field and sustaining the unity of the field. A background field which is itself divided by a toggle negation contrast has no unifying affirmation to override the partition; this results in an infinitation of the **partition**; like the Cheshire cat's smile, it is made to suspend itself in a division of an ultimately epistemically negative infinity. We could characterise this error as overdoing the scope of the exclusiveness of the field, at the expense of the relevant contrasts that are supposed to be highlighted by mutual exclusivity. Because it has been applied at the wrong order of analysis, there is an 'infinitation', beyond functional limits, of the mutual relevance of the toggle affirmation/negation relation.

Conversely, the representation of the partition as dividing 'two worlds' involves overdoing the scope (the exhaustiveness) of the subfields. Each side of a toggling partition is treated as an exhaustive, spotlight epistemic positive having nothing in common with its (spotlight) negation. The link between the two subfields appears to be supported by a toggling contrast made at the level of the background field, but this contrast is overridden by a spotlight affirmation/negation contrast made at the level of the subfields. In other words, the affirmation of one subfield swamps the other, pitching it into epistemic negativity, and there is nothing to underpin recursive involution between the 'worlds', nothing even to underpin the idea that there are two 'worlds', since neither 'world' is epistemically accessible from the

point of view of the other. Because it has been applied at the wrong order of analysis, there is an infinitation, beyond functional limits, of the exhaustiveness of a spotlight affirmation.

The combination of these two errors results in a characteristically distorted epistemic field. Imagine two lights arranged so that when one is turned off, the other comes on, and vice versa, and the presence of each light is undetectable when the other light is on. In such a case, the 'negations' (turning off the lights) are acting like recursively involutory toggles, but over spotlight affirmations which reciprocally swamp each other. Each affirmation is a spotlight in that when the light is on, the lit area appears to be epistemically sufficient unto itself: it is self-contained, and exhausts the epistemic field that is relevant to the enquiry. Such a field is a whole, not a part of anything else, and because of this, has nothing in common with anything else. It is, in a sense, all there is, a 'world'. However, if its negation is read as a toggle, pulling into epistemic focus another spotlight epistemic field, we have another self-sufficient field, another 'all there is', another 'world', again, not a part of anything else, and because of this, having nothing in common with anything else. However, this metaphor reveals serious problems with this epistemic arrangement. Because each is undetectable when the other is on, we have no way of judging how the lights stand in relation to each other; whether, for example, they light up mutually exclusive and exhaustive domains, or whether, when one is on, the other exists at all.

But the epistemic subfields represented by these lights must, nevertheless, somehow share a background epistemic field if the negation of one is to imply the other (as with toggle negation). The self-sufficient and exhaustive 'spotlight' ('two worlds') interpretation of the affirmation of both sides of a dichotomy belies the necessary presence of a background field which provides a common ground of relevant contrasts between the two 'worlds', over which toggle negation can switch epistemic attention<sup>48</sup>. The notion of radically heterogeneous categories, is, if this diagnosis of it is correct, logically incoherent, relying upon contradictory

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<sup>48</sup>This is perhaps more easily seen to presuppose common ground if we draw again upon the metaphor of spotlights wired up as a toggle; the wiring requires the presence of both, no matter which happens to be switched on, and represents the relation between affirmation and negation in a toggle negation.

presuppositions about the presence/absence of a background field held in common by both categories<sup>49</sup>.

The contradictory employment of spotlight and toggle negations constitutes a conflation of orders of analysis, since spotlight and toggle negations work together at different orders of generality on epistemic fields. 'All-encompassing', or infinitated, radically dichotomous contrasts are like three-dimensional objects 'flattened' into two dimensions, with attendant distortions. The contradiction inherent in positing a sameness undifferentiated by relevant difference and a difference unlimited by salient sameness will express itself in contradictory and colliding partitions of the field. Positing (spotlighting) this field (positing 'everything') involves positing a contradiction (the **conjunction of mutually exclusive** categories, made at the same level of analysis). This **ambivalently undoes** the mutually exclusive and exhaustive partition. This will express itself in the epistemic field as a category of objects which ambivalently straddles the partition<sup>50</sup>.

This is exemplified by the notion of the 'sacred object': sacred objects are ordinary (non-sacred) objects made to symbolise the sacred. Through iconically acquiring sacred characteristics, they represent the common ground between the non-sacred and the sacred, which is suppressed and denied in the apparent radical division of the 'background field ('everything') into sacred and profane<sup>51</sup>. Logically, sacred objects occupy the intermediate position normally occupied by the category 'indifference' between polar opposites, but constitute instead an 'ambivalent' category, which, like a scaling fractal to the entire field, expresses the distorted relations between sameness and difference governing the field.

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<sup>49</sup>This criticism would apply to any taxonomy positing radically heterogeneous, but exhaustive categories. What they are exhaustive of is at least one thing that they have in common.

<sup>50</sup>I would argue that there is nothing wrong with a contradictory epistemic field, as long as there is a matched incomplete field which constitutes its toggle negation, so that the field and its toggle negation comprise a toggling partition of a complete and consistent background field. The problem with infinitated and radically heterogeneous epistemic fields is that they are made to function as their own background fields, both concealing relevant similarities and enforcing the global relevance of difference in epistemic distortions that serve no legitimate epistemological purpose.

<sup>51</sup>On this, see Nancy Jay (1981), *Gender and Dichotomy*, *Feminist Studies*, Vol 7, No 1, Spring, pp 38-56. The 'common ground' or 'bridging' role of sacred objects, spaces and so on is explained by Mircea Eliade (1959) in *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, Willard R. Trask (transl.), N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & World.

I earlier argued (Part II, Chapter 2, Section ii) that the 'internal' indifference category of oppositional value fields can be defined as the conjoined toggle negations of the positive and negative categories on those fields, where these conjoined negations stand in *better than* relations with those categories (are on the field). When using these (trichotomous) fields as an evaluative database for choices, we can map our 'accept/reject' options onto the field in various ways, depending upon whether, in the context of the decision, it is more important to pursue the good, or to avoid the bad (as I argued in Part II, Chapter 1, Section iv). So, for example, either the conjoined not-good categories can be used for the negative, 'reject' side of the toggle (if pursuit of the good is more important), or the conjoined not-bad categories can be used for the 'accept' side (if avoidance of the bad is more important).

The category 'ambivalence' on value fields can be analogously defined as the conjoined toggle affirmations of the positive and negative categories, again where these conjoined affirmations stand in *better than* relations with those categories (and hence are on the field). However, such fields are logically dichotomous, not trichotomous; there is no 'middle ground'; there is an overlap instead. Secondly, since the ambivalent category contains the bad, the imperatives of pursuing the good and avoiding the bad come together to doubly determine a mapping of 'accept/reject' onto the distinction between the positive category, and the ambivalent category conjoined with the negative category. That is, 'ambivalent' will be combined with the negative category to make up the 'reject' side of the toggle.

'Ambivalent' categories on power-inflected epistemic fields are 'iconic' toggles, in functioning as partitions of the power-inflected axiological and prescriptive value fields on which they also have a place as a category. As I will later argue (Chapter 3, Section i), in certain ideological constructions, the category 'Woman' acts as an iconic toggle over a power-inflected field dichotomised into 'reason' and 'nature'. 'Woman' is a 'rational' object symbolically and thence iconically representing the sub-rational or 'natural' (like an inversion of a 'sacred' object). In ambivalently combining the 'rational' and the 'natural', this category carries the logical burden of concealed common ground behind an apparently radical division into 'rational' and 'natural' in the 'order of nature'.

All toggling affirmation/negation pairs are scaling fractals to the field that they divide. But ambivalent categories, in straddling the partition of the field, incorporate

the global structure of the field by themselves as affirmations. **Iconic dichotomisers** (another example of which is the category of 'sacred objects' iconically dichotomising the sacred and profane) are the property or category analogues of infinitated and radically heterogeneous epistemic fields. In representing and expressing the suppressed contradictions of a background field distorted into a global and radically heterogeneous dichotomy, they can be used to immediately identify such fields.

Finally, the use of relational properties as toggles over epistemic fields makes these fields especially vulnerable to the kinds of structural distortions described above. Recall Chisholm and Sosa's use of positive and negative pleasure/displeasure proportions as (on my account) criteria for goodness and badness (see Part II, especially Chapter 3). These proportions were chosen by them to stand in for 'pleasure' and 'displeasure' as intrinsically good-making of states of affairs, because the properties 'having pleasure' and 'having displeasure' are not mutually exclusive. Nor are they exhaustive; objects can have neither. The proportions, however, toggle; they are mutually exclusive, and they and their conjoined negations generate an exhaustive field. This is a fairly ordinary epistemic strategy, that is, creating toggling predicates from properties that are mixed using toggling proportional relations between them. And this strategy, I would argue, underpins the apparent contradictions in power-inflected epistemic fields. 'Sacredness' and 'profanity', 'rational' and 'natural', must be mutually compatible properties if they can combine in ambivalent categories or epistemic value fields. The claim that they are mutually exclusive is power-inflected (this is just a restatement of the claim that the radical exclusiveness of the field is 'overblown'). Any partitions on the field, then, must be in fact being made on the basis of **relations** between 'sacredness' and 'profanity', or between 'rational' and 'natural'. These can be relations of proportion (e.g., 'is more rational than natural', 'is equally rational and natural', 'is less rational than natural') or they can be relations of rule or dominance, which can be described in various ways (e.g., 'is such that the rational rules the natural', 'is such that the rational sometimes rules the natural the natural sometimes rules the rational', 'is such that the natural rules the rational'). I would suggest that ambivalent middle categories or iconic dichotomisers result from the covert use of relational toggles, and that, consistently with the use of power relations as the covert subvenient foundation of power-inflected epistemic fields, the use of relational toggles is a major factor in the epistemic etymology of all infinitated and radically heterogeneous binaristic constructions.

As I remarked earlier, the representing of a contrast as global is and radically heterogeneous is connected with an additional logical phenomenon, which I would call the **globalisation of relevance**. Bem (op. cit., p 362) refers to

...society's ubiquitous insistence on the functional importance of the gender dichotomy, from its insistence that an individual's sex makes a difference in virtually every domain of human parents, teachers, and peers consider to be appropriate behavior varies as a function of sex; that toys, clothing, occupations, hobbies, domestic chores - even pronouns- all vary as a function of sex...the dichotomy between male and female has extensive and intensive relevance to virtually every aspect of life.

We could add to her examples the phenomenon of using gender as a grammatical category in some languages. If the background field is represented as comprising 'everything', then a partition over it will partition everything, and the toggle making the partition will appear to be relevant to every taxonomic act. This serves to prevent escape from the epistemic field and its evaluative and prescriptive implications for the inferiorised category. Further, radical heterogeneity serves to block movement across the partition in a form of epistemic apartheid. This feature of dualisms (the globalisation of relevance) makes understandable certain apparently accidental focusses of empirical research concerning, for example, sex differences and the differences between human and non-human animals, and will be discussed below in connexion with the evaluative epistemologies of dualisms.

I would argue that spotlight/toggle confections work in a pincer movement on taxonomising to whatever ideological task falls to hand. They make the 'slave' category descriptively infinite, a catch-all for any category of 'slave' that might come along. They obscure relevant similarities between 'masters' and 'slaves', and relevant differences among 'slaves', by corrupting the structures of the epistemic field on which the categories are organised. The tendency to 'spotlight' the master category is connected with the tendency, for example in power-inflected linguistic constructions, to place the 'master' category in the 'subject' position, and reflects a projection of perspective of the knower (the master) into the epistemic field. However, the 'toggling' relationship between 'master' and 'slave', and the epistemic positivity that this implies for the 'slave' category, must always be retained, if suppressed and concealed, if the evaluative and prescriptive relations made to supervene on power relations are to be adequately represented on the field.

This device (the spotlight/toggle conflation) entraps users of public knowledge-systems with familiar, trusted, epistemic devices; like rearranged road signs, they are employed to guide practical reasoners into places they may not wish to go.

## ii) An Explicit Value Logic

Plumwood is well aware of the role of value contrasts in structuring dualisms. On p 47 of 'Feminism and the Mastery of Nature', she says:

A dualism is more than a relation of dichotomy, difference, or non-identity, and more than a simple hierarchical relationship. In dualistic construction, as in hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed), the culture, the values and the areas of life associated with the dualised other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as **inferior**. (my emphasis)

In this section, I will show how first, an explicit value epistemology, and secondly, the contextualisation of our analysis in practical reasoning, can both substantiate and elaborate Plumwood's account of binarisms. In Chapter 3, 'Contextualising in Practical Reasoning', Section i, I will argue in some detail that 'nested' value scales, ordered by overridingness, account for important features of the systematic connexions between different pairs of binarisms. Such hierarchies employ concepts from practical (specifically moral) reasoning, portraying lower categories of being as morally inferior to, and as subject to the rule of, higher categories. Some further analysis based on the practical (action-guiding) intent and content of binarisms will be offered in subsequent sections of that chapter. But a finer-grained analysis of binarisms is also facilitated by the employment of the analysis provided in Part II of the good/bad contrast, and of the various different kinds of evaluative criteria employed in constructing and elaborating it.

### a) The Necessarily Better-Maker

The necessarily better-maker, or good-maker, is the global partition over a value field supervenient upon some constructed or selected descriptive 'toggle', which preserves a *better than* ordering between the resulting subfields. Influential examples include the racial 'black/white' contrast, constructed from skin colour. The 'male/female' contrast is the paradigmatic construction of this kind (in more

ways than one, as I will argue in the final section). The first and most obvious sign that the male/female distinction is constructed oppositionally is the common phrase 'the opposite sex': it is a dichotomous opposition, no matter how the having/lacking P contrast is empirically construed (poststructuralists, for example, have made considerable metaphorical mileage with the crudest interpretation of it). On the simplest interpretation of this contrast, the scalar *better than* field supervenient upon the descriptive distinction, itself possibly salient for evaluative and power-based reasons, uses the 'male/not male' contrast as a *necessarily better-maker* over the category 'human beings'. This implies that that every male is better than every female, no matter what other properties members of the two categories may share or differ in. This value ordering is suppressed and concealed within an apparently innocent descriptive partition, and is used to make lying value justifications for the existence and consequences of the power relations between males and females.

In power-inflected evaluative epistemic fields, organising categories of beings or subjects, the axiological 'should be/should not be' toggle can literally work over those beings' right to existence; so, for example, 'bad' categories can be portrayed as having no right to exist in lying justifications for genocides, wars, or the allocation of life-supporting resources. In addition, the spotlight/toggle conflation permits a negation infinitation that accommodates the association of the derogated category with any 'lower' category of being (e.g., of women with other 'non-men', e.g., animals, matter).

The axiological toggle can also work, at a meta-evaluative level, over these beings' evaluative perspectives, prioritising the evaluative perspectives, by overridingness, of the 'master' category. This accounts for Plumwood's 'instrumentalism', in which the value asymmetry between the categories is employed to ground an intrinsic/extrinsic value contrast between them. This facilitates the legitimation of the overriding of the 'inferior' group's interests and choices by the 'superior' group, as well as the legitimation of any obviously bad consequences for the 'inferior' group of their exclusion from the privileges given the 'superior' group. An example of this is the representation of Australian Aborigines as childlike, lazy, undisciplined, and in other ways inferior, as a way of attempting to account for the historical overriding of their interests, and of legitimating their poor health, poverty, poor participation in education and in the workforce, and so on. Further features of instrumentalism derive from the practical epistemic relations between the groups, and will be discussed in the following chapter.



## b) Better- and Worse-Makers

A good/bad contrast is either a dichotomous or polar scalar opposition, depending upon whether the field is di- or trichotomised (this will depend upon whether the toggle used is comprised of a conjunction of better-makers, or whether it is itself evaluatively indivisible). Given that opposition involves maximal difference within a kind, maximal evaluative difference is guaranteed by an oppositional relationship between the better-makers which comprise the good-maker, and the worse-makers which comprise the bad-maker. This accounts for the mirroring of property attributions across the binaristic divide, and it also accounts logically for the polarising tendency of binarisms.

The descriptive toggle, P (e.g., biological sex) must preserve the evaluative relations between the categories it partitions, and hence any better- or worse-makers attributed to those categories must be necessarily connected with it if it is to guarantee betterness with regard to  $\sim P$ . This connexion may be sourced in P's comprising a conjunction of better-makers, or in P's implying better-makers (perhaps empirically). A conjoined set of better-makers making up a *necessarily better maker* can be envisaged structurally as the use of a series of evaluative toggles to trip the overarching good/bad toggle (or, good/indifferent/bad toggle). So if P, for example comprises or implies better-makers a, b, and c, then  $\sim P$  must comprise or imply  $\sim a$ ,  $\sim b$  and  $\sim c$  if the betterness of P with respect to  $\sim P$  is to be guaranteed, and  $\sim a$ ,  $\sim b$  and  $\sim c$  will be worse-makers. Recalling the 'playlist' analogy, the conjunction of better than/worse than toggles which make up the global good/bad toggle will mirror each other, generating a semantic opposition between the 'good' and 'bad' categories on the scale. This accounts for the matching of properties, in mutually exclusive and exhaustive complementary pairs, across the binaristic divide, that Plumwood connects with 'hyperseparation' (p 50, op. cit.)

But even in the case where we have a dichotomous opposition (where there is no 'indifferent' category, as with the male/female contrast), there can be a mirroring pattern of attributions (semantic opposition) in power-inflected fields. This can be done by holding that evaluatively opposite attributes **follow** in some way from the global toggle (rather than grounding it). As Helen Weinreich-Haste (1986) observes:

...the issue of gender is part of a pervasive and fundamental *dualism*, a tendency to create frameworks for viewing the world in terms of bimodal categories, with attendant evaluations. These categories are the basis of commonsense explanations, expressed in metaphor and folk-wisdom. A dualistic description does not exist in isolation; it attracts justification and consistency. So women's greater passivity is not merely an observation; it is seen to serve some purpose in childcare or sexual relations. Evolutionary explanations are produced to explain its origin; biochemical evidence to analyze the mechanisms (pp 116-17)<sup>52</sup>.

This is exemplified most impressively by the huge interest in the humanities in trivial matters of sex difference, while potentially important sex differences (as might, for example, bear on drug trials) are ignored. Further, sex differences, once discovered, are often constructed to reflect an evaluative contrast valorising maleness, as Dale Spender argues in 'Man Made Language'. And finally, this research is enthusiastically taken up and disseminated by commercial 'information' providers, as Susan Faludi explains in 'Backlash', while conflicting research is ignored. It is not just the exaggeration of sex difference, its valorisation of any male attribute over any contrasting female attribute, or the wide dissemination of this research in the popular media that are of interest, however. What is interesting for my purposes, and what Weinreich-Haste is concerned to note, is how these differences are insistently explained by causal necessity, usually contextualised in an evolutionary causal framework, drawing upon a hypothetical model of humanity's extremely distant past (itself heavily politically inflected, as, for example, Riane Eisler and Marilyn French have argued<sup>53</sup>). This, I would argue, reflects the political imperative to construct matched better- and worse-makers across binaristic constructions, linked irrevocably by causal necessity (underpinned by the necessity of 'survival') to their respective categories, in order to further consolidate and polarise existing descriptive and evaluative contrasts between the categories.

A similar phenomenon is a feature of the way we conceptualise our relations with non-human animals, as Plumwood explains in her Introduction to 'Feminism and the Mastery of Nature', that is, exaggerating difference at the expense of similarity. The deep contradiction underlying our attitudes to sameness and difference between

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<sup>52</sup>Weinrich-Haste(1986), op. cit.

<sup>53</sup>Riane Eisler, 1987, *The Chalice and the Blade*, London: Pandora, and Marilyn French, 1986, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals*, London: Cardinal.

human and non-human animals is reflected in the use of them for trials of cosmetics or drugs where, for example, on the one hand relevant 'sameness' (of pain, or damage) underpins the validity of the trial for generalisation to human beings, but on the other hand, the use of the animals for these trials is legitimated by a moral argument that they are **not** relevantly similar, either in terms of their capacity to suffer, or in terms of the moral significance of their suffering.

The logical relations between better- and worse-makers, between these and the descriptive distinctions upon which they are based, as well as their relations to the global good/bad contrast, then, explain both the progressive descriptive and evaluative polarisation characteristic of binarisms, and the insistent construction of these in public knowledge-systems as either underpinning, or more usually, as necessarily following from, the criterion that forges the global contrast.

Non-instrumental complementarity (i.e., of property attributions of **equal** value) across binaristic contrasts amounts to a 'division of labour' of complementary properties and duties between the two categories. Examples are available from Nelson's<sup>54</sup> 'gender/value compass': 'strong-hard' and 'flexible-soft', according to Nelson, are respectively masculine and feminine value complements (of 'durability'); their 'perversions' are 'rigid-hard' and 'weak-soft' respectively. These latter are the result of one complement lacking the support or context of the other (so that, for example, 'strong-hard' becomes 'rigid-hard' when flexibility is absent, p 144). However, even where complementary property attributions seem to be egalitarian, it is easy to see how, in ideological contexts, the attribution of the perversion of a value (e.g., 'Women are weak without men's strength') can be used to legitimate the controlling intervention of one group in the decisions and activities of the other group ('Therefore they need men's intervention in their decisions').

### c) Intensifiers

A hallmark of the presence of a good/bad contrast is the presence of value intensifiers, since these operate over (and hence presuppose) value sign. Intensifiers are properties which make good things better and bad things worse (see Part 2., Chapter 3., Section v). An intensifier should reflect or be consistent with the global toggle, for example degree might be an intensifier over the value of pleasure or pain, consistently with the nature of the distinction between pleasure

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<sup>54</sup>Julie A. Nelson, Thinking About Gender, *Hypatia* vol. 7, no. 3 (Summer 1992), pp 138-154.

and pain as objects of value. In the case of the male/female contrast, value intensifiers are often disguised as different properties by the use of different (sexed) labels. An example is the property 'single marital status', on the basis of which the sexed and **oppositely signed**, although otherwise descriptively synonymous, pair of labels bachelor/spinster are attributed. The only way the same property can have opposite value effects on the same sort of object (in this case, human beings) is if those objects **themselves** differ in value sign. Only if the male/female human distinction is being used as the descriptive base for a good/bad contrast, will differently signed but otherwise identical properties for the two sexes be able to be attributed.

There are innumerable other examples of descriptions of human beings that differ in being better-making or worse-making of them depending on the sex of the person being described. Notorious intensifiers include assertiveness, sexual experience, emotional restraint, ambition and so on, which we will all recognise as connected closely with gender prescriptions, and as being positively signed when attributed to males, and negatively signed when attributed to females. However, once we have an understanding of the logic underpinning these prescriptions, we are better equipped to make conceptual links between them and reveal their true sources in background power imbalances. Obviously, single marital status is starkly implausible as an intensifier of the value or disvalue of human beings distinguished by sex. The identification of the value logic underpinning it (its status as an intensifier and the good/bad contrast that it presupposes), assists us to recognise its implausibility by removing the mystery that surrounds gender and other value prescriptions and making clear what exactly is being claimed. Further, the mystery is removed not only from the values themselves but from their sources, which are revealed as not mysterious realms of nature or reason known only to an initiated few, but the self-interest of power groups. The apparently irrational, idiosyncratic and inconsistent set of values that characterise gender demands and claims about the differential value of males and females begin to exhibit patterns of consistency and underlying method when we are able to apply a sufficiently sophisticated account of the value logic that underpins them. The political imperative generating intensifiers like single marital status and sexual promiscuity is revealed in their connexion with (un)controllability, itself an intensifier obviously consistent with the self-interested enforcement of a power imbalance between the sexes.