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Feminist standpoint theory, Hegel and the dialectical self

Shifting the foundations

Abstract The claim that theoretical foundations are historically contingent does not draw the same intensity of fire as it did one or especially two decades ago. The aftermath of debates on the political boundaries created by foundations allows for a deeper exploration of the foundations of feminist theory. This article re-examines the (anti)-Hegelian foundations of the feminist standpoint put forward by Nancy Hartsock and argues that the Hegelian subject of the early *Phenomenology of Spirit* resists gender codification in its experience of ongoing rediscovery and fallibility in knowing. The subject against which the feminist self was constituted does not fit the masculinity thought to be natural. Hegel's master–slave dialectic and phenomenological subject reveal contradictions that cannot be resolved by an opposing feminist standpoint, and may provide resources that resist the rigid gender categories upon which the standpoint depends.

Key words abstract masculinity · feminist standpoint · feminist theory · foundations · Nancy Hartsock · Hegel · master–slave dialectic · subjectivity

> The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. (Karl Marx, 1972[1825])
>
> *If the dead weigh over us like a nightmare, what might they also give to us in our context to disarm their threatening stance?*

In our postmodern age, where foundations for interpretation have been shaken to their very core and have become more recognizably contingent and resignifiable (Butler, 1992: 15–19), we are still left with the project of how to understand the world and how to *act* in it. No longer

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are there uncontested claims to universality with a totalizing narrative. Particular utopias, political agents, and strategies for action are theorized without a clearly declared victor, or more importantly, without the necessity for one so triumphant, but with a new engagement where agonism has become more accepted. The legacy for subsequent generations has been to negotiate, as deftly as possible, an intellectual minefield where the degree of criticism concerning theory has deepened, evoking criticism's source, *krinein*, 'to cut'. Scholars rely upon others, importantly our colleagues, to point out the blind spots, tendencies for oppression, exclusion, and denial of the other, that escape our inherently limited self-reflective capacities. In this spirit, ongoing challenges for feminist subjects include transforming epistemological foundations as the contexts of those foundations themselves shift, and to accept that truth and certainty always have social and political investments.[1]

During the second wave of feminism, the focus of feminist theory was drawn, often against its own will, to the foundations of 'woman'. The prior assumptions of woman deployed in feminist theory were either rejected or criticized by the very women whom the theory thought it represented, but whom it alienated because the identity of woman did not speak universally for women. Another foundation, however, is just beginning to receive attention. During the second wave, the history of political thought played a large role in the development of feminist foundations, albeit a negative one since it has been a rich and pervasive source of patriarchal and sexist values.[2] In order to disarm and eliminate these values, feminist theory has focused on legitimating the authority of women's own narratives in interpreting women's experiences in social and political situations. There has been concerted effort in feminist epistemology to develop a theoretical basis for women's knowledge production that is distinct from men, one of the most prominent being feminist standpoint theory or the feminist standpoint. Developed during the second wave of the women's movement, it continues to hold currency within academic feminism.[3]

This paper explores the foundations of the feminist standpoint, specifically and exclusively Nancy Hartsock's feminist standpoint theory. Hartsock's feminist standpoint has been influential in feminist political thought for presenting foundations for women's subjectivity. Specifically, she draws upon Karl Marx and G. W. F. Hegel in her analysis of the constitutive elements of women's oppression. Of particular interest for this paper are the foundations of the standpoint from the political thought of Hegel because Hegel remains a constitutive outside for feminist theory. That is, the feminist standpoint has effectively cast intersubjective relations informed by Hegel as unredeemable for feminism. Even so, Hegel's thought, especially the master–slave relation, is at once a positive and a negative inspiration for another feminist

standpoint. A solidarity with Hegel has been expressed to the extent that feminist standpoint theorist Sandra Harding has sympathetically read, in passing, the perspective of the slave as a model for theorizing women's experience from a situation of oppression (Harding, 1993: 53–4).[4] Yet, feminist standpoint theorist Nancy Hartsock sees in the master–slave relation the foundation for what she calls abstract masculinity, an abstract masculinity that she sees as the founding dynamic for gender relations. This dynamic is marked by hostility, domination, and conflict; and it provides no emancipatory possibilities whatsoever for Hartsock. These qualities, furthermore, in Hartsock's view, are unequivocally marked by the male and masculine. Also, her reliance on psychoanalytic object relations theory combined with her understanding of rationality as inherently masculine and predisposed to violence toward the other suggests an inextricable connection with the masculine-identified body, reason, and violence whether it be a man or a woman. This tends to delimit the possibilities of what constitutes an emancipatory social agent to a prior understanding of the feminist subject as emancipatory in its desire, and closes off possibilities for Hegel's master–slave relation as a resource for understanding oppression and freedom. On my reading of Hartsock, the master–slave relation becomes, for her, a theoretical device that must be replaced by an approach that opposes her specific conception of masculinity.

This relationship between feminist standpoint theory and Hegel's master–slave relation raises some important issues. The conclusion drawn by Hartsock that Hegel's thought is masculinist, meaning inherently oppressive for women, suggests an irreconcilable difference between his work on the self and a feminist conception of the self. But, upon closer examination of Hegel's self, his historical view of the development of the self and its rediscovery of not having a final truth can share an affinity with a feminist conception of the self. Hegel's self resists gender codification defined by Hartsock because its desire to know is not premised only upon domination and hostility. The experience of the knowing self is also primarily one of despair and uncertainty, especially in reference to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. My reading of Hegel resists his identitarian tendency of a final certainty of self in a historically completed knowledge. The non-identity of Hegel's self, that is, a self whose self-understanding is both incomplete and distorted, is overlooked by Hartsock. Abstract masculinity is less clear in Hegel when the fuller story of the master–slave dialectic is taken into consideration.

Feminist truth: epistemic authority and justification

The feminist standpoint is significant in the history of feminist thought because it at once seeks to become a method and justification for women's epistemological authority. A particular conception of sexual difference, derived from a combination of object relations theory and Hegel's master–slave dialectic, is the foundation for the authority of Hartsock's feminist standpoint. The foundation for this authority will be outlined below.

The first building block for the feminist standpoint is the premise that there are psychological and social differences between men and women attributable to their sex. Hartsock draws on the object relations school of psychoanalytic theory put forward by Jane Flax and Nancy Chodorow to explain psychological and social differences, as a key structural difference between men and women. According to object relations theory, the psychological and social differences between men and women stem from their respective relationships with their mothers. Object relations theory begins with the assumption that men have a natural impulse for independence and stronger ego development. These aspects are brought out in the relationship between mother and son as the mother socializes the boy to become an independent self. The structure of the relationship between mother and son is key to this process. The son will negate the mother in order to strengthen his own identity. In contrast, girls are assumed to have a more tenuous sense of independence. The pre-Oedipal relationship lasts longer between mother and daughter, and accounts for a distinct subjectivity. The greater duration of the pre-Oedipal relationship results in girls entering adulthood 'with a more complex layering of affective ties and a rich, ongoing inner set of object relations' (Hartsock, 1983: 295). Boys, having separated themselves from their mothers, model themselves on an idealized masculinity, not a concrete masculinity since their fathers are absent from the boys' daily life and are at work for the duration of their childhood. Boys have less affective and more repressed ties to others, hence they experience themselves less relationally than girls.[5]

The second building block of the feminist standpoint is theorized from the sexual division of labor that occurs within the frame of the heterosexual nuclear family. At issue is not that a sexual division of labor exists and is exploitative of women in the form of non-paid labor or female-dominated occupations in the labor market, for this certainly occurs. Instead, Hartsock too readily assumes that the sexual division of labor is experienced by women in a relatively similar manner regardless of a woman's class, ethnicity, or sexuality. Housework and child-rearing tie together women's understanding of themselves as a unique social entity: combined, they are one of the 'things common to all

women's lives in Western class societies' (Hartsock, 1983: 290). There is a reluctance, explicitly stated on Hartsock's part, in adopting a strategy similar to Marx's, the use of a simplified two-class, two-man model, by denoting gender–class (man–woman), and gender oppression of men oppressing women. Yet in doing so, the experience of lesbians or women of color, two identities Hartsock acknowledges, are excluded from her standpoint, and additional experiences of kinship and child-rearing are set aside. As well, the differential class experiences of women are not discussed. The direct relation between the sexual division of labor and the extent of women's oppression and repressed agency becomes a concern when oppression itself becomes predictably and homogeneously transhistorical and applicable to all women. A particular understanding of an oppressed *woman's* experience, specifically heterosexual and situated in a patriarchal family, is abstracted from the myriad possibilities of women's experience. This ostensibly singular identity of an able-bodied, nurturing, heterosexual, and Euro-influenced wife and mother becomes the central, organizing perspective for the feminist standpoint. Object relations theory, in emphasizing the relationships between mother–daughter and mother–son as the basis for gender behavior and relations, reinforces the mother role as the main source for the social roles and relations for women and men. The qualities associated with motherhood carry over into women's other social roles, including those where they are *not*-mother. For men, the qualities associated with being *a man* carry over into their social roles as father and *not*-father.

Hartsock then makes a further move that combines the first two building blocks into a theory of abstract masculinity. She argues that the differentiated psychological development between girls and boys and the gendered division of labor become a mutually self-reinforcing system. The psychological differences between girls and boys, girls being more relational and affective while boys are more autonomous, 'are reinforced by the differing patterns of male and female activity required by the sexual division of labor, and are thereby replicated as epistemology and ontology' (Hartsock, 1983: 296). The mother–son relationship is oppositional owing to the contrast in psychological differences between girls and boys at the outset. The boy's understanding of himself as different and opposite to his mother 'sets a hostile and combative dualism at the heart of both the community men construct and the masculinist world view by means of which they understand their lives' (ibid.). The experience of boys and men is fundamentally hostile and combative toward girls and women. From Hartsock's perspective, girls will carry their relational and affective qualities into their adult lives. Similarly, boys will enact their autonomous and unitary selves as they mature into men. This gender relationship is replicated throughout the

human experience in that the experience of boys and men becomes the model for 'hierarchical and dualist institutions of class society and frameworks of thought' (ibid.).

Hegel is invoked by Hartsock to support the assumption that abstract masculinity is a given, and further, that his 'framework of thought' is held up as an example that grounds the differences between men and women. For Hartsock, Hegel's thought is a consummate example of masculine ideology. The passage to which she refers is the section on the master–slave dialectic from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I will now examine more closely her argument as it draws upon Hegel.

The master: is he masculinist?

The master–slave relation, according to Hartsock, provides a lens through which to see intersubjective relations which, in turn, organize social relations.[6] In this relation, two individuals confront one another with a hostility that, for Hartsock, exceeds the initial tension between mother and son. A struggle to the death between individuals occurs, a struggle first initiated in the family, but then quickly transferred to relations in society. The mother is replaced by others of either sex and dominance becomes the goal. She quotes the following from Hegel:

> Thus the relation of the two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. They must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves* to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case. (1977: §187)

The life-and-death struggle for recognition, for Hartsock, becomes the source for what she calls the masculinist world-view. This masculinist world-view is ascribed to men starting right from boyhood. Boys at once are hostile toward their mothers and turn away from the family since neither can enact the life-and-death struggle in which the boy wants to engage. The life-and-death struggle takes place in civil society, in exchange relations of capital. This public world is abstract, according to Hartsock, because it is a world condemned to repeat the life-and-death struggle mediated by capitalist relations of exchange. The household, in contrast, is concrete because the mother–child relations are freer from capitalist distortions and have greater potential for genuine affective relations. The household and its relations, however, are held in low esteem and are considered demeaning from the masculinist perspective. Because women are associated with the household, they too are devalued in comparison to men. Hartsock has aligned the life-and-death struggle of Hegel's master–slave relation with masculinity, which is also

putatively the experience of man, and named it abstract. The experience of women is one of having to expect and endure hostility from men because the masculinity that inheres in men always attempts to secure dominance over women, and succeeds.

Gender conflict, abstracted from Hegel's master–slave dialectic, also becomes the organizing motif for other dualisms considered central for social relations. Dualisms come into relief where one term is identified with masculinity and the second (other) term with femininity. Some of these dualisms include the following: abstract/concrete, mind/body, culture/nature, ideal/real, stasis/change. Hartsock maps the gender hierarchy of masculinity/femininity onto each of these pairs whereby each pair is interpreted to take on gender characteristics of masculinity and femininity, and each takes on the struggle of the gender-dominance Hartsock has characterized at the outset. The first term of each dualism is identified as masculine and is already hostile and oppressive toward its paired term. The second term, and the femininity with which it is associated, is consistently devalued and rendered as an object to be brought or maintained under the control of the superior masculine-identified term. For Hartsock, because the masculinity and femininity relation underpins this structure of dualism, it becomes the mark of phallocentric society and social theory where phallocentric means the masculine is the defining norm. In a more extensive indictment, she concludes that this logic of dualism 'can be seen to have structured Western social relations and the modes of thought to which these relations give rise at least since the founding of the *polis*' (1983: 297).

The epistemological subject, when grounded in this kind of self–other relation, according to Hartsock, will exhibit the problems of masculinity she identifies: dominance, hostility, and destruction. Again, she refers to Hegel for evidence. According to Hartsock, the Hegelian self depends upon maintaining a hostile relation with the other. The desire to live is bound up with the desire for the other's death. However, the desire for the other's death cannot come to pass since a solitary existence would just as much enact a living death for the would-be solitary individual. The necessity of the other's subjection must be preserved, since without the other the self loses the possibility of domination. The contradictory desire to kill another and to allow the other to live under one's control is, for Hartsock, the very expression of masculinity and man's experience. It is this male experience, in Hartsock's view, that has influenced the way both men and women understand themselves and the world and also the way both men and women suffer in the world:

> . . . the male experience when replicated as epistemology leads to a world conceived as, and (in fact) inhabited by, a number of fundamentally hostile others whom one comes to know by means of opposition (even death struggle) and yet with whom one must construct a social relation in order to survive. (1983: 298)

Hartsock's theorization of abstract masculinity based upon her interpretation of object relations theory provides a perspective of social relations that is pervasively masculinized. This masculine lens is then affirmed by a single aspect of one episode in Hegel's thought found in the *Phenomenology*. Hartsock draws on only one aspect of Hegel's master–slave relation, the historically pre-modern representation of the development of consciousness. The individuals are hostile to one another and do desire each other's death, but this gives way to a more complex social relation. Hartsock, unlike Beauvoir, does not further explore the meaning of this paradox; instead, she emphasizes the autonomy of the Hegelian self (the master).[7] Yet, when Hegel's master–slave relation is followed through to its dialectical conclusion the irony of this self-perception comes to light. The self comes to realize that he is dependent upon how he views and is viewed by another. Two subjects struggle with one another but the encounter is not neutral. The identity of an independent self-consciousness must be achieved through the negation of an equivalent identity in the other, but the other as another self cannot be *completely* negated. This more fruitful struggle is distinguished by Hegel from the more primitive struggle to the death that may secure self-preservation but does not produce a reflective self-consciousness. No recognition can be gleaned from the dead. The other may be vanquished in the struggle, but nevertheless must be granted a similar reflective self-consciousness in order for the superior identity to be preserved. Thus the 'master' is not – can never be – *completely* master, *completely* self-sufficient, despite what he may desire. The problem, however, is that the master sees himself as the self-actualized subject independent of the slave, for otherwise, Hegel thinks, the master could not claim a complete victory. He has power over the slave by granting the slave his life: 'but the master[8] is the power over this thing, for he proved in the struggle that it [the slave-object] is something merely negative; since he is the power over this thing and this again is the power over the other [the slave], it follows that he holds the other in subjection' (1977: §190). The master believes that because he has won against the slave, he controls the slave's life right down to the smallest details. In other words, the master sees the slave as a negative reflection, an extension of himself. What is significant in this is the need for the master to dominate the slave, his other, in order to preserve his self-identity, but *without* recognizing that this domination of the other entails a self-domination (control over what cannot be acknowledged as beyond his grasp) and therefore limitation of just what was thought to have been achieved most fully. This is the importance of the dialectic. The sense of not really belonging, of being suspicious that something is missing from one's field of vision yet never quite being able to grasp it, something essential for a complete sense of satisfaction in one's

life – all these experiences can be understood in a way as products of the operation of this dialectic. For Hegel, the great risk of being unable to recognize this lack is the manifestation of far more serious individual and social pathologies, which he wanted to solve.

Hegel's slave, however, consequently comes to experience an inner change in self-understanding as a result of the struggle. But it is *not* that the slave's experience can be valorized in opposition to the master, as Harding argues.[9] The slave's sense of self is also that given by the master: 'the other consciousness sets aside its own being-for-self, and in so doing itself does what the first does to it' (Hegel, 1977: §191). But the slave is not completely dependent upon the master; he has felt the fear of death, risked his life, and so has felt a formative self-actualization: 'the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness' (1977: §194). A rudimentary independence from the master is achieved in the sense that the slave too is a subject even if he is in servitude: he 'becomes aware that being-for-self belongs to *him*, that he himself exists essentially and actually in his own right' (1977: §196). Similarly, the master's self-identity does not stay the same even after superiority has been achieved. The recognition of the master's independent existence can be sustained only by recognition of a subject that the master considers his equal. Because he has conquered his equal and enslaved him, he now no longer has an equal who can complete his sense of self-identity as independent. The irony, here, is that the master becomes dependent upon the slave for recognition. And, what is more, the recognition is an incomplete one because the slave cannot provide the very recognition that is required for the master to maintain his self-identity.

What escapes Hartsock's interpretation of Hegel's master–slave relation is that the self is not in full control of the relation over the other. The dualism of self and other is not strictly speaking a *fait accompli*. In fact, it is clear that the masculine self does not succeed in maintaining his masculinity since he fails even on Hegel's terms. This suggests that the boundary between master and slave, self and other, and masculinity and femininity is not as rigid as Hartsock presents it. Indeed, there is an interrelationship consisting in the very aspects Hartsock rejects, hostility, conflict, and the desire for domination, and yet, there is also at once for both parties a beginning toward an incomplete independence and troubled interdependence. The self–other relationship is a necessary one for without each other there would be no self-understanding, no sense of independence from the other. This independence is not construed as merely and purely domination on the part of the self. Hegel makes the point powerfully that the sense of self is actually self-deprived because the mastery thought to be gained is in fact false. Self-identity is not merely the desire and actualized control of self over other; it also consists in disillusion and unfulfillment on the part of the self, and

self-realizing discoveries and independence on the part of the other. Hegel's master–slave relation, far from being a normative model for self–other relations suggested by Hartsock, is his own interpretation of the status of self-consciousness's underdevelopment and relative lack of relation with another individual. Hartsock's tendency to focus exclusively on the one-sided struggle of the self for mastery leads her to overlook Hegel's critical message of the failed self whose domination also turns against himself. The focus on the self as hostile, destructive and dominating toward the other becomes Hartsock's operative definition of what it means to be masculine, to be a man, yet this does not bring Hegel's full message to light. That Hegel never thought of women in terms of the master–slave relation appears to reinforce her position, but this is only the case if the Hegelian self is read exclusively as masculine.

Women are not participants in the master–slave relation as master, for Hartsock, because the master can ever only be a man. Authentic or feminine-only women are outside this relation but at the same time women's lives are affected by the gender relation since men as a gender class rule over them just as they seek dominance individually over other men. Gender difference, for Hartsock, is premised on a naturalized, irredeemable conception of man and masculinity. Her corrective is as follows: if being a man entails a hostile, domination-driven self, a self she sees very clearly in Hegel's master, then the characteristics of being a woman need to be explored and brought out. What she creates, in an attempt to free women from men who embody this idealized and abstract masculinity, is a notion of woman who is the opposite of the hostile and domination-driven self. Women are ascribed non-hostile, relational characteristics, derived from object relations theory whose foundations assume an a priori gender difference in psychological and social development. Hartsock attempts to create a feminist perspective by inverting the gender relation.

Hartsock poses the feminist standpoint as an effective antidote to the harmful tendencies of masculinity. 'The female experience', she says, 'not only inverts that of the male, but forms a basis on which to expose abstract masculinity as both partial and fundamentally perverse, as not only occupying only one side of the dualities it has constructed but reversing the proper valuation of human activity' (Hartsock, 1983: 299). Men who are inherently masculine by virtue of the combination of their sex and psychological make-up have created a world that is in dire need of change. The world reflects masculine values: hostility among men and women, the domination of men over women, the value of death and domination over life and peace, the abstract over the concrete, the relations of capital over the relations of the household. It takes an authentic woman distinct, and free, from masculinity to expose

the detrimental effects of abstract masculinity, and to bring into the world the feminine basis of women's experience: an emphasis on and valuation of life, family, relational qualities among human beings, and peace. In keeping with the masculine/feminine dualism upon which social relations are dualistically founded, Hartsock's feminist standpoint replicates the dualism but this time the feminine is the heroine and the masculine is the vanquished.

Hartsock's position on abstract masculinity, while derived from a part of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, deserves further exploration *vis-à-vis* Hegel's text itself. If Hartsock is right, Hegel is anathema to feminist thought on the basis of his representation of the self as at the outset masculine in her specifically abstract meaning. Those who embody masculinity as hostile and domination-seeking come, following Hartsock's perspective, perilously close to a condition of essential pathology. At the same time this condition risks becoming overdrawn to the extent that Hartsock's abstract masculinity harbors a potential generalization to all men as social agents not to mention key institutions of civil society and the state. The master–slave relation upon which Hartsock draws is an historical representation of the development of consciousness, albeit one that is highly abstract in its attempt to provide a representation of thought itself, though not masculine in the way she purports. Whether consciousness itself, however, would inherently be sexist and tend toward the systematic delegitimation of women from political and social life is dubious, given my interpretation of Hegel's view of the way consciousness grasps the world.

The subject and masculinity

The analysis of Hegel's master–slave relation reveals that the master is not pervasively masculine, as Hartsock suggests, in spite of his being male. To a degree, the master is emasculated on Hartsock's own terms because he cannot guarantee the full autonomy of which he presumes himself to be in possession. But Hartsock overlooks this aspect of the master and in so doing abstract masculinity remains a singular wellspring of domination and the relevance of Hegel for feminist epistemological concerns continues to be unexamined. An additional limit of abstract masculinity can be drawn out when a further aspect of Hegel's theory of knowledge is examined from the early sections of the *Phenomenology*. In his theory, the knowing subject, often referred to as consciousness or self-consciousness, is presumed to be a man. However, this subject does not bear the imprint of masculinity as Hartsock suggests. One key dualism, which is not explored by Hartsock, in Hegel's theory of knowledge I will examine is cognition/truth of cognition. Cognition

and truth of cognition are Hegelian terms that are now more recognizable as subject and object. From Hartsock's epistemology, there is an expectation that Hegel's knowing self and its object will exhibit traits of masculinity. Yet, the knowing self does not exhibit masculinity in the way portrayed by Hartsock. This next section demonstrates the limits of applying abstract masculinity to Hegel's knowing subject and suggests ways in which the feminist standpoint can draw upon aspects of Hegel's understanding of consciousness as a way of strengthening the standpoint's claim for feminist epistemology.

Hegel's central concern in the *Phenomenology* is to narrate how human consciousness, the subject, comes to the self-realization of his own knowledge and status as a knower:

> It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded as either the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it. (1977: §73)

Truth remains the primary subject-matter of philosophy, but important for Hegel is the prior consideration of how one cognizes truth. How one understands cognition will significantly affect what can be said about the truth-claims that are made. Hegel first considers whether the subject is an instrument or a medium for truth, and in so doing, acknowledges the limitations of the subject:

> . . . a certain uneasiness seems justified partly because there are different types of cognition, and one of them might be more appropriate than another for the attainment of this goal, so that would make a bad choice of means; and partly because cognition is a faculty of a definite kind and scope, and thus, without a more precise definition of its nature and limits, we might grasp clouds of error instead of the heaven of truth. (1977: §73)

The understanding of cognition as either instrument or medium cannot guarantee that one is not speaking 'clouds of error'. Hegel argues that a subject will change the object it is working over, or attempting to know. This means that the object of knowledge or the cognized object is never exclusively an object unto itself, untouched, independent of the act of cognition or the agent of cognition, the subject itself. It would seem impossible to know the object in and of itself since the instrument or medium alters it; it changes and is only knowable as cognition, and never fully cognizable. Hegel wryly muses that perhaps the cognized object could be purified of the instrument or medium of knowledge through which it has been rendered; 'for this would enable us to eliminate from the representation of the Absolute which we have gained through it whatever is due to the instrument, and thus get the truth in its purity' (1977: §73). But this calls into question the very instrument

in use and the expectation that it can deliver reality in full. If the instrument merely brings reality into complete focus, 'like a bird caught by a lime-twig', then we will always find ourselves caught out by appearance and in deep mistrust of the knowledge we produce. In effect, the suggestion that the act of cognition must be controlled for in the cognized object is to accept that the knowing subject as an instrument cannot guarantee the truth of reality. This is unsatisfactory because the untenable position of prior knowledge rears its head once again in the following formulation. A cognized object, stripped of the instrument or medium by which it is brought to the knower, becomes a 'blank space', and the knower is put in the position of being prior to knowledge. A dilemma has emerged. If truth is the goal, the focus on the knowing subject as an instrument or medium will always produce the opposite of truth since, in Hegel's view, there will always be a gap between the two. While Kant's name is not specifically mentioned by Hegel, it is Kant who is very much in the background when knowing things in themselves is in question.[10]

Hegel rejects the subject–object dualism as a straightforward relationship of one leading to the other because the subject as an instrument or medium for truth cannot deliver on its claims. Using Hartsock's framework, the subject would be inherently masculine, and if this were the case, one would expect to see Hegel simply replicate the masculine qualities in his conceptualization of the knowing subject. Hegel indicates that one of these qualities is the self-certainty on the part of the subject to render the truth. However, my reading of Hegel also concludes that the subject fails. This is discordant with Hartsock's understanding of masculinity whose desire for domination is not reflective with respect to its success and certainly not its failure. In contrast, for Hegel, the object maintains its independence from the subject even though the object is mediated by the subject. The reasons why Hegel rejects the formulation of the subject–object dualism, as one that privileges the subject, is actually more sympathetic to Hartsock's criticism of masculinity than she is toward his theory of knowledge. He is interested more in preserving the independence of the object from a predatory subject that believes it can grasp truth as it traps an animal.

There is another Hegelian dualism that should be assessed against the masculinity with which it is charged. Does the subject produce a final truth, or is the truth constituted in a manner that has temporal and political considerations beyond the subject's control? The former evokes an infallibility issuing from the masculine subject inherently constituted as a hostile power. The latter already suggests an uncertain stance toward the knowledge produced and an epistemological respect of the object that arises from its independence from the subject. It is this position from which Hegel begins.

Subject, experience, and history

If there can only be uncertainty and error in the way reality is cognized and what is taken to be reality, 'it is hard to see why', says Hegel, 'we should not turn round and mistrust this very mistrust' (1977: §74). The 'fear of error' may actually be the error itself. Instead of focusing on the subject's imminent failure, Hegel focuses on what one can know and how to assess this historically. Hartsock may interpret this as masculine arrogance on the part of the subject. The subject, knowing that it is wrong, turns this around and declares that, in actuality, this uncertainty is truth. Hegel, however, does not attribute a final sense of certainty to the subject. Instead, he argues that error takes place where one ends up with traditional epistemology that depends on the direct relationship and distinction between subject and object. What is meant by 'subject' and 'object' will remain unclear as long as they are considered separate entities: 'this kind of talk which goes back and forth only leads to a hazy distinction between an absolute truth and some other kind of truth' (1977: §75).

Hegel's project is to change the terms of how truth is justified. The criteria for truth cannot rest on some presupposed conception of truth to assure its delivery, but nonetheless Hegel must still rely on some kind of starting-point for conceiving of truth. The starting-point is the description of knowledge as it develops from a formative consciousness and 'presses forward to true knowledge' (1977: §77). Hegel too relies on a presupposed conception of truth that guarantees his description of knowledge as truth, but there is an important difference. The criterion for truth, so Hegel claims, is not prior to the description of the truth. Instead, he attempts to locate the criterion internally within the description of the knowledge itself. The description of knowledge as a phenomenon does not at first glance look like Science, or a system that could guarantee knowledge, because it will indeed change over time. But, the internal criterion that necessitates a change in knowledge is in actuality truth coming to greater clarity. This phenomenological approach, the description of knowledge through its development, is how Hegel responds to the conundrum of knowing and the truth status of knowing he outlines. He does not see the subject as an instrument or a medium for ascertaining knowledge and its truth. Instead, he attempts to overcome the dualism of subject and object by viewing knowledge as a phenomenon where subject and object are inseparable with their own history and development. Hegel acknowledges that this does not seem to be Science at all since the description of phenomenal knowledge appears to be 'free and self-moving in its own peculiar shape' (1977: §77).

The reassurance of the truth produced by the subject–object will lie in its own self-critical development. The development is self-critical

because the description of knowledge is at once inadequate and formative for subsequent stages of understanding. It is inadequate because there will always be the truth of error, meaning the knowledge under examination will be insufficient for a final sense of truth. But, this truth of error provides the path for the next stage or form of knowledge that will displace its prior description. In this sense, each stage is formative of the next phenomenal moment for knowledge. This process is the 'way of despair'. The familiar is not 'real knowledge' (Hegel, 1977: §78) even though it is accepted as knowledge in its current context. The eventual realization that the familiar is untrue is the source of despair since the experience of the falling away of the 'truth' is the very loss of self-certainty for the subject.

There is a conscious insight that reality in its phenomenal appearance is untrue. This untruth, however, is itself ironically the truth of an unrealized knowledge. The untruth in question here is not related to the kind of doubt experienced everyday. Nor is Hegel referring to a personal skepticism represented by the initial realization of untruth. Such skepticism is an attitude that accepts only knowledge that is personally generated. This personal skepticism believes itself to be in search of truth and independently capable of seeking it out. Phenomenal reality is taken for the most part as a result of the skeptic's personal conviction. There is not necessarily a change in the opinion held or an arrival at truth. So, for Hegel, this is too simplistic a developmental view for knowledge. It relies on the conceit that the skeptic's personal views about knowledge are authoritative. Following this method, there can be no reassurance of the truth of knowledge. Knowledge will be assured only when, according to Hegel, skepticism is directed against the 'whole range of phenomenal consciousness' (1977: §78). The difference between personal skepticism and a 'comprehensive' skepticism, which Hegel favors, hinges on the understanding that knowledge is phenomenal. Personal skepticism does not see its activity as an educative process. In contrast, phenomenal consciousness has a history and is poised to reflect upon its own development. It realizes its role in self-education. When this happens the subject falls into a state of despair about the reality it understands. It realizes that its own resources are not up to the task, incapable of discovering its self-certainty.

Again, this characterization of the subject distances itself from Hartsock's assessment that Hegel's subject dominates its object. The subject, for Hegel, involves both journey and education, whereas Hartsock assumes the masculine subject to be the bearer of truth that aims to maintain this status. An oppressive world is rendered and organized by such an unreflective abstract masculinity. The truth of this oppressive world is revealed by an oppositional force found and brought out by specific women's experience. Hegel's consciousness is aimed toward truth, but it bears truth in quite a different way. Unlike

Hartsock's conception of abstract masculinity borne by male consciousness, the journey of Hegel's consciousness relies on the historical dimension of the subject's development. The temporal aspect of the subject's development involves an understanding of oneself in phases or shapes with each having their own truth.

The telos of this process is to arrive at the point 'where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion' (Hegel, 1977: §80). The subject continues in its movement through various stages of understanding. It does not rest because each stage of understanding turns out not to be the final resting-place. There is thus a restlessness felt within the subject. Its grasp of the world is never a finished product, and it is always pushing the limits of understanding which is also to say that it is extending itself. The subject is a partial, but not complete, source of its own change. Change signifies, for Hegel, a sense of limited self-satisfaction and of limited dissatisfaction. Anxiety accompanies this change because there is no certainty of self nor the achievement of the goal even as one embraces and pushes oneself toward it. If the subject were satisfied with itself, implicitly, there would be no impetus, no movement for change. The status of the subject even as it understands itself, however one-sidedly, is never at peace since its goal of knowledge is not yet achieved. Even if the subject accepts its limitations, it will inevitably become anxious. Knowledge's continuous change, for Hegel, is the 'necessary progression and interconnection of the forms of the unreal consciousness' (1977: §79). What is the ground for this necessity? Is it a prior assumption that the development of knowledge is a necessity? Here, we arrive at a famous impasse in Hegel's thought. He must rely on an unstated presupposition that knowledge develops from prior inadequate forms of knowledge and so continues until it satisfies its desire to know, which, in turn, is always again unsatisfied and surpassed.

A knowing subject is already and always imperfect, yet it strives toward its goal where, to recall, 'knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion'. The impulse for knowing, according to Hegel, is something inherently a part of being human. There is no satisfaction until its goal is achieved. From Hegel, it is unclear whether this point is ever reached by a particular knowing subject even though it could exist in thought as a completed structure. The despair and doubt of the untruth will not go away. A subject may avoid the untruth by seeking satisfaction in a particular self-limiting moment of understanding, but satisfaction will not be achieved. There is even the possibility that the subject may actually enjoy its self-imposed limits of knowledge. This becomes vanity and is maintained only by pretension or fear of being found out. It may sustain its status of 'knowledge' through conceit, by 'belittling every truth'. But genuine

consciousness 'troubles its thoughtlessness, and its own unrest disturbs its inertia' (1977: §80). As well, Hegel points out that the subject cannot ignore the social context. A social consciousness cannot be ignored; at one point or another a single knowing subject who tries to hide from truth or ignore the anxiety that there is error in current knowledge will be found to be in error. Hegel's subject is unable to declare self-certainty, in contrast to unencumbered masculinity, because it realizes the lack of control over the object and it expects to be tested within the social context. An emphasis on failed self-certainty and the potential that lies within this acknowledgement of the subject's paradoxical desire for knowledge and lack of attaining it in a final sense may very well be a source of politics that Hegel himself never elaborated upon.

If knowledge of the object is unrealizable in a final sense, and the subject is all too painfully aware of its fallibility in understanding, then the question of truth and how it is ascertained remains at issue. The question of truth, for Hegel, is about knowledge and what knowledge is: 'consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction made above falls within it.' Yet, at the same time 'non-identity' of knowledge, or the untruth of knowledge, remains present. The subject's knowledge exists '*for* another'. That is, knowledge produced by a subject becomes an object. This object-form of knowledge then takes on a different relation to the subject. It is created by the subject, and also becomes an object for further reflection. It becomes independent from the subject and comes to exist *in itself*. The object of knowledge is not merely a transparent image created by and exclusively under the control of the subject. Hence, this knowledge is itself incomplete: 'this other is to consciousness not merely *for it*, but is outside of this relationship, or exists *in itself*: the moment of truth' (1977: §84). There is, Hegel writes, no way to 'get behind the object as it exists for consciousness so as to examine what the object is *in itself*, and hence, too, cannot test its own knowledge by that standard'. The process of knowing an object entails two different moments. First, the object exists separately from the subject as something other, but in the act of knowing, the object becomes something for the subject. There is a moment of certainty of what the object *is*, but there is also uncertainty since the object as object is always independent of consciousness. When these two moments coincide, consciousness 'must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object' (1977: §85). Yet, in the alteration of its knowledge, the object will have changed as well. This is the path of despair revisited. The object of knowledge is not what the subject thought it to be, and so the subject must begin again its determination of what the object is since its identity is not fixed. This means that the criteria for assessing the status of knowledge will also change, and by

changing the criteria, the very understanding of knowledge itself is also altered. The reiterative nature of this phenomenal process is experience itself.[11]

Experience [*Erfahrung*] and negation play key roles in the subject's understanding of knowledge. It is through time that experience and negation occur for the subject and object, and it is through the understanding of itself and object as temporal that the assessment of knowledge takes place. The object becomes part of experience in two distinct moments, according to Hegel. The first is the moment of knowing something of the object, what Hegel calls the *in-itself*. The second is the moment of *being-for consciousness of this in-itself*. This second moment appears as the truth of the object for consciousness, but Hegel wants to dispel the conception of the object as being 'merely the reflection of consciousness into itself, i.e., what consciousness has in mind is not an object, but only its knowledge of that first object' (1977: §86), by pointing out that the object has been altered by and for the subject. The truth status of the object is dependent upon the subject having worked it over in its attempt to make it an object of knowledge. The object ceases to be a pure in-itself since it becomes an object for the subject. How it becomes this object is through the succession of experiences. The subject will realize that a first understanding of the object will be untrue. This happens deceptively since it would appear that a second understanding of the object will 'come upon by chance and externally, so that our part in all this is simply the pure *apprehension* of what is in and for itself' (1977: §87). However, what has happened is a 'scientific' progression of experience. The subject can learn to expect that its knowledge of the object and itself will come to change as it experiences the object over time. The curiosity of this science of experience is that 'it is now known to the consciousness' while it happens. It can be discerned after the fact, and it can be anticipated, but the becoming of the object through the experience of it is something that cannot be entirely *known* or controlled. This unknown is not a Kantian noumenon. Hegel does not give this non-identity the status of an 'empty unknown'. Instead, he states that it 'must necessarily be grasped as the nothing *of that from which it results* – a result which contains what was true in the preceding knowledge' (1977: §87). Experience makes possible the unfolding of the object in 'new' patterns for consciousness. The truth of the new understanding of the object is always something different from its prior understanding of the object. The emergence of new understanding is a necessity for Hegel in the sense that necessity is related to experience. The relationship between necessity and experience is not transparent and Hegel does not fully explain them in accessible terms. The subject cannot but help develop different forms of understanding of both self and world, particular and universal. The necessity seems

integrally linked to the passage of time during which there is something happening that is not fully knowable. The evidence of this 'dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object' (1977: §86) is found *in* the development of consciousness and its changing understanding. It may be that Hegel's silence on theorizing political engagement indicates a reluctance on his part to venture into the social testing to which he only alludes. Yet, his silence need not stifle the political potential of non-identity which issues forth from reiterative experience.

Affinities between Hegelian non-identity and feminism

Women and men are distinguishable by their respective differences, differences that, for Hartsock, stem from a specific understanding of human reproductive process. The development of the feminist standpoint from this process is 'an achievement of both analysis and political struggle occurring in a particular historical space' (Hartsock, 1983: 302). It would appear that the feminist standpoint could be simply corrected by taking up non-idealized notions of women and taking into consideration the diversity of practices that women actually inhabit and carry out. This correction, made by Hartsock in the late 1990s, however, is constrained by the still largely intact idealization of abstract masculinity and the femininity which emerges against that masculinity.[12] She has not significantly altered her following position since introducing her feminist standpoint. She claims that 'the female experience not only inverts that of the male, but forms a basis on which to expose abstract masculinity as both partial and fundamentally perverse, as not only occupying only one side of the dualities it has constructed, but reversing the proper valuation of human activity' (Hartsock, 1983: 299). This opposition significantly increases the stakes for womanhood. The woman-mother occupies, for Hartsock, a position of authority that is constituted in opposition to masculinity which requires negation. The very being of woman exposes and acts against masculinity. It is from this perspective that Hartsock optimistically and enthusiastically claims that 'feminists have only begun the process of revaluing female experience' (1983: 303), and that the feminist standpoint 'provides an ontological base for developing a nonproblematic social synthesis, a social synthesis which need not operate through the denial of the body, the attack on nature, or the death struggle between the self and other, a social synthesis which does not depend on any of the forms taken by abstract masculinity' (1983: 303–4).

Hartsock accepts that human beings 'change in both more subtle and autonomous ways than any inanimate object' (1983: 299), and she

acknowledges that the development of the self has an indeterminate quality. Recently, Hartsock has also pluralized the feminist standpoint to include a diversity of locations that women actually inhabit and practices they carry out (1998: 239). Yet, this indeterminacy and diversity remain at odds with her firm distinction between femininity and masculinity. An intense contradiction between change and stasis comes to light in her understanding of the feminist self and the masculinist self. Just as abstract masculinity remains largely intact, so does the idealization of femininity even when it is pluralized beyond the woman founded upon psychoanalytic object relations theory. The self of the feminist standpoint risks becoming a non-changing, absolutizing ideal that has the effect of absolutizing masculinity in opposition to femininity, and also femininity in the process. If the self of the feminist standpoint sees herself as holding the epistemological authority of her own identity and knowledge of those (women or men) who bear the mark of abstract masculinity, she may be closing herself off to discovering how women and men constitute themselves differently from her standpoint and what women and men really might be or become. She seems to be making the claim for an absolute knowledge of what is meant by woman, man, femininity and masculinity.

Hartsock's feminist standpoint makes it difficult for women (and men) who disagree with her feminist or masculinist self to present another perspective without inadvertently finding themselves against her feminist standpoint. Women have discovered that their specific locations and the experiences drawn from these specificities result in contradictory and diverse expressions of oppression and empowerment. The feminist standpoint was criticized for generalizing the experience of the white, heterosexual, middle-class housewife modeled on the European-American norm of the nuclear family as the subject of oppression and agent of freedom at the expense of women of color, lesbians, poor women and single mothers.[13] The transhistorical activity of giving birth and caregiving has not been accepted by women as a generalized experience. During the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a proliferation in relating personal experiences under diverse conditions, which reveal that there are many ways in which women inhabit the category of woman. Non-identification with the self of the feminist standpoint puts one at odds against the premises of the standpoint itself. One may not be a mother; one may not see oneself as naturally relational or especially endowed with caregiving capacities; one may not see men as naturally hostile or having a natural tendency to dominate either women or men; one may not see oneself as oppressed but instead occupying a myriad of contradictory positions of oppression and agency. For those who do not identify with the self of the feminist standpoint, the feminist standpoint exhibits a strong tendency to dismiss the authenticity of these

other experiences and, consequently, also their analysis on the basis of its starting-position of masculinity and femininity. In a move that is consistent with the subject of the feminist standpoint, Hartsock is critical of feminist theorists who have distanced themselves from the theory of abstract masculinity and who accept that the power relations of gender can be contradictory even in the context of patriarchy. This has contributed to an intensified politics in the many movements understood and identified as feminist in the 1980s and 1990s not simply over the identity of women and what kind of strategies women should pursue for improving both women's and men's lives particularly in terms of the claims made upon political and social institutions, a vital aspect of these movements, but also over the moral rightness associated with foundational epistemological claims that enfold a bitter quality into them because of the moral tenor of exclusions made in that register.

As long as the feminist standpoint continues to accept that masculinity and femininity ground its epistemological claims of a homogeneous oppression among women, the politics within feminism regarding women's authentic oppression and freedom will remain a specialized area of investigation of questionable interest to non-feminists. This is not to suggest that a rejection of abstract masculinity will end feminist politics regarding oppression and freedom, but when abstract masculinity remains a constitutive aspect of the feminist standpoint, the standpoint will render a specific interpretation of lived experience both empirically and normatively. This occurs when dominance is seen as having a temporal consistency applicable to all political spaces, both actual and imagined. With respect to the dominance of abstract masculinity, Hartsock writes that a feminist standpoint involves 'learning to speak in a voice the dominant culture both suppresses and claims cannot exist and finally to see and name the ideology and social relations of the dominant culture as insane' (1997: 95). The question of dominant groups within self-identified feminist organizations or minority cultures does not appear to be an issue in this formulation. Can abstract masculinity always be relied upon to emerge in an embodied male form? Hartsock acknowledges that women can become complicit in the oppression of others (1997: 97). This very acknowledgement would seem to be a provocation for her to retheorize the bases of her feminist standpoint because such acknowledgement suggests that women are no less immune to bearing abstract masculinity than men. Another way in which abstract masculinity questionably produces itself consistently is through the assessment of the history of political thought as phallocratic or demonstrating masculinist tendencies. Hartsock argues that feminist theory which borrows from phallocratic ideologies will suffer in their analysis (1998: 194), yet a distinction can be made between phallocratic ideology and a theory of self and

knowledge. Hegel did believe that only men were capable of full self-consciousness; but, this does not mean as I have tried to show that his theory of self-consciousness is phallocratic in and of itself.

The resources of a revised Hegelian dialectic can be drawn upon to correct for the absolutizing tendencies of Hartsock's feminist standpoint. First, the role of history in the conceptualization of the feminist subject is key. Hegel provides the insight that self-understanding changes in time. There is a truth to be found in a particular self-understanding but it is one that is incomplete. The certainty of a truth's falseness is assured by the Hegelian doubt which is never eliminated or satisfied. Second, the emphasis on experience as education for self-understanding shares an affinity with feminism. It was the shared but not universal experiences of women that shaped the consciousness of feminist activism during the first and second waves of the women's movement. Experience, too, is historical, for Hegel. It is something that does not remain static because the self continuously labors in the activity of understanding. When Hartsock speaks of her understanding of the sexual division of labor as 'documented in both the theory and practice of the contemporary women's movement and needs no further development' (1983: 299), there could be consideration given to the Hegelian expectation that understanding the sexual division of labor will change as it is experienced by women over time. Precisely how it will change and come to be understood cannot be fully anticipated. The limits of this anticipated development are tied to the present understanding and the uncertain future. The future is something that must be allowed to be discovered.

In retracing two aspects of Hegel's thought that rely on non-identity and the return of doubt to truth that is always temporal, I am not arguing for a masculinist subject. The masculinist subject is understood to be a subject that seeks the death of the other and in so doing realizes that the other must be allowed to live. I have argued above that the Hegelian self of the master–slave dialectic is not simply a conquering master who becomes the ruling ego. Hegel reveals that the master indeed shares in the slave subjectivity because the master is dependent upon the recognition of the slave. Yet, the slave cannot afford the needed and demanded recognition because he is not the master's equal. The master lives without complete recognition and is an incomplete identity. This incompleteness, the non-identity of the self in a specific context, is the critical resource which I emphasize for feminist theorizing of the self.

This reconstitution of the Hegelian self and the affinities I draw out for the feminist self relies on setting aside the fact that Hegel disqualified women as self-reflective beings on par with men. The above exploration of Hegel and the reconstituted self-understanding inspired by his knowing self are not intended to reinscribe Hegel's potent sexism.

History, particularly feminist history, in large part pre-empts such attempts. The disqualification of women as unequal in capacity for self-reflection is insufficient to dismiss Hegel completely. It is possible to sidestep his sexism, because Hegel's sexism is not essential to his idea of the knowing self. The knowing self is not premised on the necessary a priori subjugation of women because self-understanding is fundamentally historical. The foundation of the Hegelian self is the expression of self-understanding or self-consciousness. One's gender will affect this self-understanding, but it will not narrowly determine it.

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PSC

Notes

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1 Wendy Brown argues that feminism's vitality in its theoretical endeavor and political aims hinges upon its capacity to remain political without reliance on a conversion (or conflation) of its epistemological grounds into moral ones borne out of *ressentiment* (Brown, 1995: 43–47).

2 This body of literature includes the following: Rosemary Agonito (ed.) *History of Ideas on Women* (1978); Lorenne M. G. Clark and Lynda Lange (eds) *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche* (1979); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (1992); Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (1993); Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (eds) *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* (1991).

Feminist theorists such as Herta Nagl-Docekal (1999) and Linda M. G. Zerilli (1994) have discussed the problems of maintaining a selective focus on the history of political thought that emphasizes sexist ideology. Also, see my 'Hegel's Antigone: a Response to the Feminist Critique' (2002) for a re-reading of Hegel's Antigone.

3 There are several variations of feminist standpoint theory. The main theme of the feminist standpoint is that there is a distinct difference between women and men that makes an epistemological difference. The following feminist theorists are considered to fall under the general category of feminist standpoint theory: Dorothy Smith, Mary O'Brien, Hilary Rose, Alison Jaggar, Sandra Harding, and Patricia Hill Collins.

4 Jeffrey A. Gauthier presents a fuller account of women's victimization and fear as the catalyst for recovering women's agency. See Gauthier (1997) 'Slaves without Fear: Hegel and the Feminism of Simone de Beauvoir'.

5 For further discussion of object relations theory see Flax (1973) and Chodorow (1978).
6 I refer to Hegel's master–slave dialectic as the master–slave relation. What makes the relation dialectical will be discussed below.
7 See my 'Reason and Sex: Making Sense of Simone de Beauvoir's Appropriation of Hegel's Master–Slave Dialectic', an unpublished paper.
8 I use the terms master and slave in contrast to A. V. Miller's translation of the *Phenomenology*. Hyppolite translates lord and bondsman as master and slave. See Hegel (1941: 155–66).
9 Sandra Harding states that the genealogy of the feminist standpoint can be traced back to the standpoint of the Hegelian slave in relation to the master (1993: 53).
10 For a concise discussion on Hegel's critique of Kant, see Norman (1976: 10).
11 Hartsock writes in 'Standpoint Theories for the Next Century': 'The truly difficult task is to understand both how language affects the interpretation of experience, and how language at the same time does not completely structure our experience. But the problem is how to name and, most importantly, redescribe the experience and, in so doing, change the nature of that experience' (1997: 101). Hegel provides one way of theorizing experience that addresses these issues.
12 See Hartsock (1997, 1998).
13 This critique was made by feminists such as bell hooks (1990), Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1987), Uma Narayan (1989), Julia Penelope (1990) and Joyce Trebilcot (1990).

PSC

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