

## Feminist Epistemology and A Fictional Narrative On Love

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### Abstract

The holism (Quinean and Kuhnian, in general) of post-war epistemology and the focus of feminist epistemology on the role of values in knowledge production form the background to this article. The aim of the text is twofold: 1) I wish to show that feminist epistemology can offer an illuminating viewpoint on non-theoretical attitudes, such as experiences of love, due to its intuition that epistemology deals with complex wholes comprising both factual and value contents. 2) I also intend to use a parallel with love to contribute to the discussion among feminist theorists about whether values are properly understood only as implicit background assumptions that motivate whole theories, or if they play more varied roles in explicit local arguments. Interestingly, the accounts of love that favour only the former pattern seem to be insufficient. A fictional narrative by Marcel Proust is used as an example.

**Keywords:** holism, feminist epistemology, love

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This paper is a side-note to the feminist philosophy of science. In the first part, I recapitulate a few of the most important achievements of post-war epistemology within the analytical tradition: the emphasis on the holistic nature of knowledge, the importance of background preconceptions, the role and nature of paradigm shifts, and the relation between theories and facts (underdeterminacy). In the second part, I present some of the main contributions of the productive way in which feminist thinking has used these epistemological ideas. Feminist theorists have analysed the way knowledge is produced within societies and for the purposes designed by those societies, and have shown that the situated nature of our theories goes hand in hand with their value-ladenness (Longino 1990, for instance). However, if we are to look into the contribution of values in detail, it must be more carefully analysed than just from a general holistic viewpoint. Feminist values, e.g. the emphasis on individual differences and higher awareness of patriarchal stereotypes, can also support this research in the form of explicit arguments. In the third part, I discuss a possible extrapolation of the tools of feminist

epistemology and the philosophy of science. The integration of values and experiences, like disillusionment, into the frameworks of knowledge production shows that an extrapolation that goes beyond science is possible. With the help of the example of Marcel Proust's novel *Swann in Love*, I try to show that the way we often reflect and speak of our emotional experiences, such as those of love and the disillusionment of love, parallels the conceptual tools of epistemology which picture our theories as underdetermined and value-laden. However, illuminating as this extrapolation may be, it must not be over-generalised. A feminist critique could justly object on the grounds that 1) the diversity of individual experiences cannot be easily reduced, or that 2) modelling love as a theory or as analogous to a theory is restrictive at best. (This approach of objectifying one's counterpart in love, typically a woman, is implicitly patriarchal.) The different experiences of love suggest that the initial holistic intuitions about the way values form part of the procedures of knowledge production have to be refined and differentiated, too. These reservations are presented in the final, fourth part of the paper.

## 1.

The analytical philosophy of the U.S. post-World War II produced a number of important stimuli for epistemology and philosophy of science. Although perceived as revolutionary during their time, these contributions now represent legitimate parts of the body of the philosophical mainstream. I will refer to only a few of the most important of these, which are relevant to my point here.

In his criticisms of what he saw as the core of Western philosophical tradition, Richard Rorty (1979, chap. III.4) questions the assumption that knowledge is constructed like a building, the upper floors of which stand upon its more basic foundations and that we can – in reflecting upon the structure of our knowledge – “go down” to its foundational elements. In many popular epistemologies, both folk and philosophical, this role is played by sense data. In reality, when attempting such a “going down”, we still move within the “logical space of

reasons”. The distinction between necessary and contingent truths does not correspond to their respective proximity to the foundations of our knowledge, but rather to how indispensable they are for our theories to successfully explain the world around us. For example, “what we perceive is, *per se*, neither an illusion nor an essential distortion of the reality” is an indispensable building block in most of our theories of the world. Rorty gives credit for this argument to Sellars’ (1963) previous attacks on the “Myth of the Given”.

Later, Rorty elaborates this general conception in a more detailed analysis of the nature of inquiry, including scientific inquiry. According to him, explorations of the world do not consist in establishing a clear and unobscured link between the inquiring mind and the surrounding world, but in revising and re-interpreting what we are accustomed to as to our knowledge. Human knowledge takes shape of a web of beliefs, desires and sentential attitudes, and so on; through inquiry – in acquiring new knowledge – the web reweaves itself. We routinely reshape the context of our knowledge, usually in small pieces, but sometimes considerably. All these changes are essentially re-contextualisations, a self-reweaving of the web of our beliefs (Rorty 1991: 93ff).

This account owes much – as Rorty himself admits – to Thomas Kuhn’s view on the development of science. Kuhn showed that in science all pieces of knowledge make sense only against the background of a whole “paradigm”. Paradigms are conceptual and theoretical frameworks providing scientists with tools to distinguish between true and false statements about the world in an internally coherent way. Once there are more discrepancies than the theory can explain, it is time to replace the whole paradigm. Important achievements in the history of science have often been tied to the need to change the paradigm, such as the introduction of the heliocentric system to astronomy or of evolution theory to biology. The regnant paradigm, in fact, *decides* the way in which we understand the meaning of particular observations or theses; and when paradigms shift, changes in understanding a piece of knowledge may be substantial, e.g. what it is what happens when we see the sun set. The persistence of the established paradigm also influences scientists’ willingness to understand

properly or to even see a piece of knowledge that could undermine the paradigm (Kuhn 1970).

The importance of background context has been pointed out by N. R. Hanson (1965). Hanson uses arguments and experiments from *Gestalttheorie* to document that, in many cases, what we experience is determined by what we already know or how we have been instructed, knowingly or not. *Seeing* itself is theory-laden. Hanson refers to later Wittgenstein's (2009: Part II, xi) analyses of aspect-seeing, where Wittgenstein demonstrates the importance of background context with respect to language. The context of seeing includes many learned things: grammatical shortcuts, conventions of picturing, and all kinds of customs and habits. He also notes that in most cases of this theory-laden experience we are not aware of this background. There is no interpretation of a given material, leading to an inferred "conception"; we see straightforwardly what we see. For instance, *if* children's and illustrated books prefer picturing figures as directed/going from the right to the left – this was, I think, the prevalent artistic convention in the books I read as a little boy – one can be tempted to see Wittgenstein's duck-hare head (with the duck head looking to the left versus the hare looking to the right) as the head of a duck, on the basis of this accustomed convention, but not as a result of a conscious inference from this background convention, which is known.

All these authors, even if they are, in some respects, very different as to the nature and the aim of their philosophies, advocate a *holistic* understanding of knowledge. In the classical form, general holistic considerations of the philosophy of science have been expressed by W. V. O. Quine. Quine (1960) introduces the example of a field linguist studying indigenous people on a rabbit hunt to show that the theories we form are essentially under-determined. What we can observe *in situ*, and to be true, regardless of how large the data of the body of evidence we are able to gather, is not decisive enough to determine the theory we should adopt to explain the data. There is always a background context that determines our choice of theory. The problem is that there is never only one theory possible; and the

rival systems of analytical hypotheses can conform to all speech dispositions within each of the languages concerned and yet dictate, in countless cases, utterly disparate translations; not mere mutual paraphrases, but translations each of which would be excluded by the other system of translation. (Quine 1960: 73).

In choosing between theories, the reference to outer stimuli may not suffice, since we usually adopt the theory that serves our explanatory purposes better or conforms better to the bulk of our various pre-conceptions, including what we want and expect from any inquiry. In other words, theories depend on observations, but observations are themselves theory-laden and never quite free of such preconceptions.

Interestingly, in many respects, this complex shift in the view of knowledge that the analytical mainstream has undergone since WWII, has a distinguished predecessor in the German phenomenologist Martin Heidegger (1977, § 32). His conception showed that understanding takes shape of the *hermeneutical circle*. All our meaningful experiences are preceded by the body of all our experience, in the context of which they are subsequently incorporated as its new parts. The preceding whole can, of course, consist only of partial experiences, too; but in gaining any new knowledge, we acquire it only through the previous preceding whole of understanding, to which it joins. The whole-part-whole relationship is necessarily circular, not as a flaw; by the very nature of our understanding it needs no correction. Theories of all sciences arise through the same procedure without exception:

the ontological presuppositions of historical knowledge reach in principle farther than the idea of the rigor of the exact sciences. Mathematics is not more rigorous than history, it is only narrower in the domain of its relevant existential fundamentals (Heidegger 1977: 204).

**2.**

The work undertaken by post-war epistemology and the philosophy of science, although not uncontested, has been petrified to the status of the modern classics. Not everyone concurs with all the details, but these ideas generally have to be taken into account. However, this epistemological tradition also became the stimulus for a much more controversial philosophical stream: feminist epistemology and philosophy of science. Feminist theorists have paid most attention to Quine's account.

If it is true that theories are notoriously underdetermined by facts and observations, and, on the other hand, also that many facts are deeply influenced by our theories, it is relevant to question the mechanism of choice among rivalling theories. Let us leave aside here the situations where some theories are clearly ruled out by acknowledged facts, like most versions of creationism in comparison with mainstream geology and evolutionary biology. Instead, let us consider subtler cases where the decision is difficult or even controversial.

Helen Longino (1990) argues that the determinacy of theories, along with the whole mechanism of organising facts, is supplemented by *values*, since it is absurd to hold that science *per se* is, or must be, value-neutral. According to Longino, values are already present in the very process of undertaking a scientific inquiry. Why do we explore the phenomena in question? How do we choose relevant phenomena to study? And what kind of answers are we interested in? Empirical data themselves are not enough to ground any of these questions. For when data admit different, contesting theories, scientists usually neither embrace nor accept such a dilemma. Instead, there being rivalling theories means that individual scientists adopt – on the basis of the same data – different, mutually incompatible theories, while often neglecting or dismissing concurrent ones, considering them as no genuine alternatives. It is more common that this discrepancy occurs on a *diachronic* scale. For example, rivalling astronomical frameworks that aimed to explain their observations replaced one another instead of co-existing in a long-term struggle. Longino strives to show that, in the process of

choice, values play an important role. And while *constitutive* values, i.e. those that determine what science is, what it is good for and what it is interested in, are basically shared by most scientists, they can disagree on *contextual* values which reflect different social and cultural environments, as well as personal differences. These two categories, however, cannot be easily separated. Longino also suggests that values stand not only as inputs for scientific theories but also as outputs. For example, findings about what is natural or inborn can influence our moral judgments about certain actions. In short, the neat division of facts from values, e.g. “is” from “ought”, does not seem to hold.

Lynn Hankinson Nelson (1993) focuses on the plural aspect of knowledge production: The agents of scientific enterprises are not individuals, but rather communities. The process of knowledge production includes a complex of background assumptions – methodological commitments, decisions about evidential standards – which cannot arise outside a community and through the activity of an individual. She does not deny the role of individual authors of scientific inventions and discoveries, but stresses that it is to the community that scientists refer in both learning their skills and communicating their findings. The relevance of the results, in terms of an assumed methodology but also with regard to suitability and convenience, is guided by the community’s standards, too. Elizabeth Potter (1993) notes that this line of reasoning fits with the terms of Wittgenstein’s argument against the privacy of language. Although the need for a community does not call for the authority of a mass public, or the like, no distinction between correct and incorrect theories or findings can normatively hold without inter-subjectively and communally constituted *rules*. The structure of rules in language is, however, not built as a theory; it is rather a sedimentary practice, as are the structure and standards of our knowledge.

Feminist approaches to the philosophy of science have become the target of extensive criticisms, a representative picture of which is found in the anthology edited by Pinnick et al. (2003). Typically these criticisms include the accusation that scientists, led by the maxim of under-determinacy, are free to choose whatever theory suits their political purposes, or that

they are even in a position to apply some form of censorship to the work of others. In her review of this volume, Elizabeth Anderson (2006) offers various arguments to document that this line of criticism is ungrounded. She also observes that to plead for the suppression and obstruction of certain – feminist – theoretical agendas, as such, just on the basis of their feminism, can be understood only as a “politically correct” approach. In fact, Longino (1990) herself reflects upon the problem of legitimacy when choosing between theories. Though she insists that no framework can simply *exclude* an alternative, if both are coherent and comprehensive, she admits that the choices we eventually make, or can make, are guided by value standards. The existence of alternatives is interesting in itself because it allows us to see the particular interpretive frameworks as arbitrary, e.g. the opposition of man-the-hunter and woman-the-gatherer theories. There is, however, nothing necessarily arbitrary or dogmatic about it – in order for science to work as a well-oiled community institution, it has solid tools available to prevent political abuse, such as double-blind peer-reviewing, etc. Needless to say, these tools too are established through value-laden decisions.

Longino’s account leaves ample space for value-motivated choices among otherwise equally good theories. If the mechanism of this influence is admitted and the performed scientific work is described accurately and fully, we should avoid the charge of dogmatism. However, this does not seem strong enough to avoid false “findings”. Even if we do honestly endeavour to admit our value attitudes and embrace them non-dogmatically, it does not – by itself – make us immune to false conclusions.

Kristen Intemann (2005) says that theories do not *need* to depend on values due to a logical gap between them and the facts. We do not input values intentionally to the theoretical argument because we see that facts alone do not tell us enough; theories rather intrinsically contain some normative context from the beginning. And if we are able to identify contexts where it is precisely the value judgment which serves as a good basis for a scientific theory, it may enable us to consider value judgments themselves as more or less justified.

A key to distinguishing between particular value arguments has been suggested by Anderson (2004). She explains that, in order to get an appropriate account of science as value-laden, we must be more concrete and attentive. She points out that in its general, un-elaborated form, the holistic under-determinacy thesis acts as if all values entering the scientific process were equal. A specifically feminist choice from a scale of alternative theories would, in such a case, effectively seem to be arbitrary at best or political at worst. However, this idea that values are only a backstage and invisible guiding principle of the whole bodies of science is a misleading simplification.

Anderson also attempts to show that not all the available value stances are equivalent with regard to their worth to the scientific enterprise. In the ambition to reconsider patriarchal stereotypes, “feminist” values, which involve highlighting and appraising diversity among individuals, can prove to be epistemically fruitful in social sciences, in particular when compared with research designed on the basis of unconscious patriarchal foundations. She introduces the example of a somewhat revisionist and diversified research on divorce that impartially follows the consequences of divorce in the life of all its participants, without the usual bias of seeing divorced families as broken, malfunctioning and damaging to their members. In this way, the possible *benefits* of divorce can also be studied; certainly, to open up a space for such findings, one has also to be determined to focus specifically on the experience of divorced *women*. The respect for, or the value of respecting diversity, which renders our research more epistemically productive, can therefore play a role in the choice among alternative, equally coherent and non-dogmatic theories. The moral of this example is that the value-motivated choice between theories need *not* and must not be blind, but a good value choice differs from a bad one by employing quite specific, rational arguments to validate its position. A value-laden choice does not mean that it is unaware, ungrounded, irrational, impossible to analyse, or blinded by emotion.

Anderson thus argues that feminist epistemology must interpret carefully – and not to overestimate – the holistic intuitions inherited from the Quinean tradition. There *is* a link

between factual and value items in our thinking, but value judgments are not *per se* dogmatic; if they were, then no facts could count as relevant when forming value judgments. But that is not the case; there are both dogmatic value judgments and non-dogmatic ones. If there really was a substantial gap between facts and values, the opponents of the feminist approach could not assume that feminist theorists have tried to avoid “inconvenient” facts in building their theories – because no fact could be either convenient or inconvenient for an agenda embodying values. Value judgments and questions can be subject to argumentation and discussion simply thanks to their interlinking with facts in one “space of reasons”. It would be crudely misleading if we assumed that all development in science (as well as particular amendments and corrections), which is motivated by value arguments, took the shape of a holistic paradigm shift. To account for most of the steps science makes, the available reasons are local, not holistic, yet also quite rational and perfectly explicit.

The value-ladenness of science is inevitable at least in terms of its bias towards the object of inquiry. Only bias in relation to the tested hypothesis (so that it does not give a fair chance to falsify it, for instance) would be dogmatic, but it does *not* occur inevitably, even in a value-specific inquiry such as the research on divorce cited by Anderson.

Feminist theorists – like Longino – originally introduced values to the philosophy of science as usually tacit coefficients, in order to explain the working of *holistic* systems of knowledge and their background. But we must not overlook the fact that, accordingly, the role of value theses and assumptions is not then determined properly; in reality, they also act as local, explicit arguments. In the following sections, I will try to show that the participation of values enables us to extrapolate epistemic models beyond the realm of science. This extrapolation will also support, from another perspective, Anderson’s argument that an initial holistic intuition about values, fruitful as it is, is not sufficient.

### 3.

When Anderson analyses the way our value judgments work, she provides specific examples which point to their unproblematic rationality:

Value judgments are not inherently dogmatic. ‘Disillusionment’ is another name for learning from experience that one’s deepest value judgments were mistaken. Millions of people in Eastern Europe, once dedicated communists, were disillusioned of it when they found out what living under communism was like. ‘Growing up’ is another name for learning from experience that one’s childish and adolescent values weren’t what one had chalked them up to be, an experience that most people undergo. (Anderson 2004: 8)

When we talk about disillusionment or about growing up, we naturally take these experiences, and the people capable of undergoing them, as examples of *rationality*. He/She who is able to change his/her value judgments based on experience testifies to his/her ability to think rationally and critically, meaning that we permit some value judgments and attitudes to pass the test of rationality and others we do not. Disillusionment of, or growing up from, a Communist or any enchantment parallels the structure of a paradigm shift, as explained by Kuhn, or an aspect change, according to Wittgenstein or Hanson. In factual terms, the agent observes the same phenomena/situations and perceives the same stimuli. Let us imagine propaganda broadcasting on TV – watched by two different viewers, it can be perceived and understood in dramatically opposite ways. But the difference is on the side of the viewers, their background knowledge, assumptions and values – their “belief webs”, as Rorty puts it. Anderson, however, argues that learning from experience can be a perfectly rational enterprise. Although the process which motivates one’s shift from a loyal citizen of a Communist-dictated country to a democrat who is sceptical of propaganda might be rather obscure and untraceable, it is not quite like Wittgenstein’s aspect change. There are sound, cogent arguments to morally reason that a liberal democracy is, in substantial ways, better

than a dictatorship. In favouring the former – but also the latter – one need not be just blindly dependent on unaware experiential sediments alone.

I will focus on another direction taken by the feminist argument, namely, that the tight intermingling of factual and value contents prevents us from easily telling the agents' scientific relationships to their environment from the non-scientific ones. In both cases, we deal with complex wholes comprised of both factual and value contents. Also, the civic, non-scientific ways in which I relate to the world I live in, e.g. as a citizen of a society with a particular political system, and the changes that these standpoints undergo are made up of a web of beliefs, assumptions, desires, and attitudes that is being rewoven through time. The specific manner in which the “arguments” emerge and how one engages with them follows the holistic model.

Let us now consider an example distant from the context of scientific theories: the case of when someone loves someone else but then falls out of love, or grows sober from his/her love, if you like. I do not wish to present here a comprehensive theory of love (Singer 2010, or Korsgaard 1999) or a survey of the topic (such as Wagoner 1997). For our purpose, let us look at the way we commonly talk about love and the role played by “love” in our lives. What does change when we do not love someone whom we used to love anymore? In what terms do we reflect on this? Marcel Proust's story *Swann in Love* (a part of his *In Search of Lost Time*) offers us an interesting example.

Proust's protagonist Swann falls in love with Odette, a “woman who is not in his style”. In their first encounter, he saw her not

as being devoid of beauty, but as endowed with a style of beauty which left him indifferent, which aroused in him no desire, which gave him, indeed, a sort of physical repulsion... To give him any pleasure her profile was too sharp, her skin too delicate, her cheek-

bones too prominent, her features too tightly drawn. Her eyes were fine, but so large that they seemed to be bending beneath their own weight, strained the rest of her face and always made her appear unwell or in an ill humour. (Proust 2005: 216)

But later on, he highlights these very features as exactly those which attract him; and when his love has gone he recalls them as something that rather repulses him:

he felt that he now hated Odette, he would gladly have crushed those eyes which, a moment ago, he had loved so dearly, have torn the blood into those lifeless cheeks. (Proust 2005: 416f)

Proust's observations dissect in great detail what happens in the situation readily described as "being in love" and the subsequent state of "not being in love anymore". These two states are presented as two complex attitudes or perspectives of particular life situations or observed phenomena. At first, when Swann refers to Odette's looks, he does that with rather disinterested language, even though he cannot help "disapproving" of her face, which is not "to his taste". When he is later in love with her, various details of her personality and her looks are a source of joy, excitement and aesthetic pleasure for him. He even imagines and contemplates quite sophisticated "reasons" illuminating her beauty to him, such as her alleged similarity to Alessandro di Mariano's Zipporah from the Sistine frescoes. When he is in love with her, it enables him to establish deep, non-trivial, cognitive relations to her. Being in love thus proves to be a condition that enriches even the most banal details of two people's intimacy, adding interpretive depth. It is also true that Odette's looks either bear no meaning *per se*, or bear various meanings; it is the background of Swann's condition that makes seeing a particular aspect possible. And when his love becomes extinct, it is this *changed* condition that makes it unintelligible for him to imagine how he could have thought that there was something special about her air.

The "aspect change" which takes place here is not a simple one, i.e. the aesthetic

contemplation of Odette's countenance, since Odette's personality, which acts as the object in Swann's love, has multiple facets, some of which are rather complex. For Swann, what he loves about Odette includes – among other things – also the peculiar society in which he can meet her regularly, the salon of the Verdurins, a party of rather smallish and conceited people. At the top of affection for Odette, Swann thinks very highly of the Verdurins:

What a charming atmosphere! ... How entirely genuine life is to these people! They are far more intelligent, far more artistic, surely, than the people one knows. Mme. Verdurin, in spite of a few trifling exaggerations which are rather absurd, has a sincere love of painting and music! What a passion for works of art, what anxiety to give pleasure to artists! Her ideas about some of the people one knows are not quite right, but then their ideas about artistic circles are altogether wrong! ... I have elected to love none but magnanimous souls, and to live only in an atmosphere of magnanimity. You ask me whether Mme. Verdurin is really intelligent. I can assure you that she has given me proofs of a nobility of heart, of a loftiness of soul, to which no one could possibly attain—how could they?—without a corresponding loftiness of mind. Without question, she has a profound understanding of art. But it is not, perhaps, in that that she is most admirable; every little action, ingeniously, exquisitely kind, which she has performed for my sake, every friendly attention, simple little things, quite domestic and yet quite sublime, reveal a more profound comprehension of existence than all your textbooks of philosophy. (Proust 2005: 274ff)

But when things get worse, the suspicion, scepticism and dislike for Odette concern all particulars of her personality, including the Verdurins as well:

... just as the conversation, the smiles, the kisses of Odette became as odious to him as he had once found them charming, if they were diverted to others than himself, so the Verdurins' drawing-room,

which, not an hour before, had still seemed to him amusing, inspired with a genuine feeling for art and even with a sort of moral aristocracy, now that it was another than himself whom Odette was going to meet there, to love there without restraint, laid bare to him all its absurdities, its stupidity, its shame. (Proust 2005: 316)

He later views the society with repulsion:

Upon my word, these people are sublime in their smugness; they can't really exist; they must all have come out of one of Labiche's plays! ... People 'in society' have their failings, as no one knows better than I; but, after all, they are people to whom some things, at least, are impossible. So-and-so (a fashionable woman whom he had known) was far from being perfect, but, after all, one did find in her a fundamental delicacy, a loyalty in her conduct which made her, whatever happened, incapable of a felony, which fixes a vast gulf between her and an old hag like Verdurin. Verdurin! What a name! Oh, there's something complete about them, something almost fine in their trueness to type; they're the most perfect specimens of their disgusting class! Thank God, it was high time that I stopped condescending to promiscuous intercourse with such infamy, such dung. (Proust 2005: 316, 318f)

The outburst of aversion to the Verdurins is interesting, in that Swann's change of aspect is more specific here than in the case of Odette's looks. While in the latter case, after his love for her ends, he only faces difficulties in understanding what he had seen in her; in the former, he explicitly identifies the particulars of the Verdurins as a society which a respectable well-informed man should avoid. Surprisingly, they are much the same as the particulars that constituted their former "magnanimity" and "nobility of heart". Swann's disillusionment is couched in the same terms as the disillusionment experienced by people who have lived in formerly Communist countries. What the observers see is in a sense still the same, but the background details of altered assumptions, knowledge and/or value

judgments allow them to view their situations in a very different light. Unlike Odette's case, which bears the hallmarks of a pure aspect change, the shift in the relationship to the Verdurins is more like Anderson's learning from experience; it involves arguments, some of which seem sound.

This belongs to and characterises the experience of "love left" as we know it, and of which we commonly speak. The same things do not make sense anymore or rather make different sense. One may hate the things one used to love in another. What has changed is the background paradigm, not the object encountered. Indeed, love is not construed axiomatically, so to speak; even less than scientific theories are. When Swann is in love with Odette, he is not so "on the basis of" any feature of her personality that he would have consciously used for such an "experiential inference". This experience is of a hermeneutic-circular character. Though his falling in love with Odette may be linked to some of her personality particulars, he could hardly identify them. Quite frankly, he could not admit that he fell in love with her exactly "because of" her beauty, or her wits, or whatever else. On the contrary, the emergent state of his love has the capacity to determine his perspective on her character, looks, and wit. But the particular events of experience, e.g. the repeated cases of Odette's inability or unwillingness to explain discrepancies in her whereabouts, gradually enrich the context of his love and shift it slowly in a certain direction, eventually resulting in love's extinction.

We have seen that, in the case of scientific enterprises, the scientist has some freedom to choose, when alternatives are available. The scientist can, to a certain extent, choose from competing value standards, which in return shape the direction of his/her research. This may be, I think, not quite adequate: the choice between, say, feminist and patriarchal values in social science research is not a matter of a purely momentary decision. Though I personally can admit the preference for feminist value judgments as a background, as a man I will most probably inadvertently apply at least some patriarchal stereotypes, despite my best efforts. Scientists endeavour at making their background assumptions as explicit as possible and

treating them as cautiously as possible. But if such an explicit conception were simply a matter of momentary decision, the development in sciences would be less slow and troublesome.

In extra-theoretical contexts, nobody is pressed to identify and reflect upon their background assumptions. To identify the background determinants that account for my perspective on numerous everyday encounters with both my nearest people and strangers would be a menial task indeed requiring more (spare) time and attention than one has. So while in science we are sometimes relatively successful in excavating our background assumptions and highlighting their relevance (as in the case of the research on divorce, cited by Anderson), in our everyday lives we usually let them go unnoticed; we do not even try to make them explicit. Let us just realise that a full disclosure and understanding of one's affections for, or aversions to, family members, for instance, may require long-time work on oneself in psychotherapy.

Rorty identifies the nature and form of inquiry as a self-reweaving web of beliefs. Exploring Swann's and Odette's story, we obtain a similar picture. Swann's relationship to Odette develops and gradually reweaves itself, as more and more dissonant elements enter it. It is only questionable whether *beliefs* are what constitute this web first and foremost. When his intimacy with Odette begins to crack, Swann hopelessly attempts to clarify certain things about Odette: Does she really love him? Is she faithful to him? How does she spend her time without him? But in the end, answering these questions and creating a "theory" of Odette is not the point; after all, it seems that Swann discovered the answers rather soon. Instead, he constantly recapitulates – reweaves – his *attitude* to her. It is not a question of Swann changing his opinion, since his opinions change so often and in such a volatile manner that it is beyond reasonable survey. Of importance here is rather the *practice* of his relationship with Odette, which changes gradually, and in the changes of which we can observe certain logic – from cool and distant politeness, through enchantment, jealousy and suspicion to disillusionment and aversion – all of which are descriptions of how Swann approaches and

deals with Odette, rather than of his developing theories of her.

In the context of these shifted terms, it also makes sense to speak of the changing paradigm in the cases of self-reweaving *practice* and emotional structures, and not only scientific theories. Characterologic observations that are a part of folk psychology also – in the anecdotal manner – have similar themes with Kuhn’s analyses. One of the most interesting things is the chronological aspect. When love goes through the experience of disillusionment, the retrospective reflection often takes the form of: “I don’t understand anymore what I saw in him/her, why he/she was so dear and important to me in everything I was doing”. And while the past state is reflected upon as blindness, the disillusioned agent is in return blind to what he/she saw before. At the end of *Swann in Love*, Proust describes an interesting chronological observation of Swann’s:

he saw once again, as he had felt them close beside him, Odette's pallid complexion, her too thin cheeks, her drawn features, her tired eyes, all the things which—in the course of those successive bursts of affection which had made of his enduring love for Odette a long oblivion of the first impression that he had formed of her—he had ceased to observe after the first few days of their intimacy, days to which, doubtless, while he slept, his memory had returned to seek the exact sensation of those things. (Proust 2005: 419)

The diachronic moment is distinct: At first, Swann’s perspective had been “impartial”, then it was forgotten in favour of enchanted perception, and only afterwards was his memory able to achieve the unclouded view again; not willingly, but in a dream.

We can thus say that because feminist theorists have highlighted the involvement of values in the formation of scientific theories, the findings of the epistemological revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are also relevant for the analysis of our non-theoretical attitudes and experiences, and of the way we commonly think and speak of them. Both the former and the latter are

comprised of facts as well as values that create a complex. The changes in the structure of our life experiences, embedded as they are with emotional attitudes, can be studied by using a model of these changes in theoretical frameworks. Both feminist theorists (e.g. Jaggar 1989) and their counterparts in debate (Diamond 1991) have expressed the view that love, in fact, enriches cognitive attitudes, or even is itself one such attitude.

On the other hand, for instance, Christine Korsgaard (1999; 2009) observes that one's being in love both has its "grounds" and serves as the ground for further actions and so on. In other words, it can be understood as playing a role in "arguments" of various kinds. If love – as a comparative example – reveals the role of values in the "webs" of our relationships to the world, it suggests that this role is not exhausted by acting as the motivation behind an entire theory. I will refer to this in the last section.

In any case, if we are to consider some value motivation acting "from behind", brief consideration may be useful. I have tried to express reservations to the idea that we are able to change or choose our background assumptions at will. When we reflect upon the connection with emotional relationships or inter-personal attitudes, to which the context of science does not seem completely alien anymore, we should re-consider the importance of some kind of *ethical training*. Even though the adoption of feminist values may help one become a better scientist, it is not something that can be done on the spur of the moment, at will. On the contrary, such pre-dispositions to making better choices are gained, or learned, over a long period. To want to be a feminist (for the sake of becoming thereby a good scientist) on the basis of a momentary motive is fine, but it is not that simple. It requires time, effort, self-edification; just as with roots within a cultural tradition, or with a sense of humour, it cannot be achieved through a whim:

Tradition is not something that anyone can pick up, it's not a thread, that someone can pick up, if & when he pleases; any more than you can choose your own ancestors. Someone who has no tradition & would like to have it, is like an unhappy lover. ... Humour is not a mood, but a way of looking at the world. So, if it's right to say that humour was eradicated in Nazi Germany, that does not mean that people were not in good spirits or anything of that sort, but something much deeper & more important. (Wittgenstein 1998: 86, 88)

#### 4.

In the previous section, I tried to show that life experiences, such as love and falling out of love, can be accounted for in terms similar to those used to describe epistemic shifts in the history of science. It can be, however, justly objected that such an account of love is crudely narrowing or distorting. I do not want to argue against the psychological relevance or accuracy of Proust's intriguing narrative. However, it is worth noting that there are other forms and notions of love that fit into this frame only with considerable difficulties.

Thus, Elizabeth Anderson mentions the relationship between her epistemological analyses and emotions:

Zina may love John. But daily contact with his petty scheming could arouse her contempt, in the light of which he appears unworthy of her love. (Anderson 2004: 9)

This example differs somewhat from what we read in Proust. Here, we see a change of view or *opinion* rather than of *attitude*. Zina has *reasons* for seeing that John is quite unworthy of her love. She can then 1) *still love* him; after all, her inner discord will attest to the great measure of her love if she loves him despite his petty character. In Proust's example, there is no such distance or gap between what one feels and what one thinks. Swann's love for Odette gradually rises and falls, where his momentary ability to see first the good and then the bad

qualities in her personality and character only testifies to, instead of being a cause of, his actual emotional attitudes.

Alternatively, Zina can 2) stop loving John on the basis of her observations. Here, the observations – the light in which she suddenly sees him as unworthy of her love – certainly serve as reasons for changing the attitude/relationship. Again, there is a difference in Swann's case: he seems to be quite unable to reflect upon the reasons for the changes in his attitude to Odette. He records them – or they are recorded for us by the acute author, rather than by the character – but in no time he is able to decide to start or stop loving Odette on the basis of his actual observation of her character. We are, however, familiar with cases like Zina's and John's; the observation can be the reason opening the observer's eyes and changing his/her attitude. Somebody – not necessarily everybody – in Zina's position could follow up by saying that “in the moment when I found out he was only manipulating me, my love for him turned to loathing”. Either way, we shouldn't face any substantial difficulties in admitting that what Zina observes *is* a valid reason for not loving John anymore, it makes perfect sense to respond to such observation as to such a sound reason.

Nevertheless, the peculiar nature of experiences of love prevents us from reducing them easily to one model, with which we can successfully explain shifts and developments in science. One difference from science is that if Zina disregards reasons she is perfectly aware of, it is still a legitimate, though perhaps not reasonable, alternative for her; while no legitimate science can simply ignore evidence. Unlike science, our language of love admits *both* cases of loving despite good reasons *and* cases of love abandoned from (the same) good reasons – both can perfectly well, under appropriate situational circumstances, qualify as love. The “reasons” indicated for motivating our loving or – more often – not loving someone anymore also frequently prove to be only excuses or rationalisations (see also Korsgaard 1999). When one *ex post* explains or reflects on their love history, the “reasons” serve as answers to the unpleasant questions: “How could you love such a person at all?” “Why did your love stop?” And while in science we can trace the breakthrough insights that mark great

discoveries and paradigm shifts and can usually analyse whether, in what respect, and to what extent they really are motivations for the shifts (as Anderson justly points out, cases of genuine “blind” holistic shifts are relatively rare in science) – in the case of love and disillusionment, the distinction between genuine reasons and subsequent reflections or rationalisations is often rather inconclusive and, in many cases, questionable at best.

Somewhat surprisingly, we can observe that life experiences on love and disillusionment are successfully modelled using the framework of science in those cases, where the love in question shares certain typical features of *theoretical attitudes*. But such an account of love is not the only one possible. At least, it is rather bizarre in some cases – the selfish, collector’s perspective of Proust’s character is quite alien to many people’s sensitivity today and, in fact, seems borderline psychopathic. We could even deny Swann the status of a loving person, since he does not meet some of what we accept as the essential criteria of love, in that he treats Odette as a thing rather than as a person (see Singer 2010: Chap. 2). However, this objection is essentialist, too, since what we consider as “love” falls into a diverse variety of relations, emotions and attitudes (see also Jaggar 1989).

The feminist message is thus twofold:

1) If we account for theories as underdetermined by facts, and as being holistic and value-laden, we can occasionally use the same conceptual tools for the analysis of emotional experiences as well, since they are not fully irrational or separate from arguments, facts, and reasoning. The domain of scientific knowledge, strongly value-infused as it is, is not sharply distinguished and divided from its non-scientific or even non-cognitive surroundings, i.e. life experiences and attitudes.

2) On the other hand, the analogy should not be overestimated. Let us consider, for instance, the relative absence of a tenable distinction between “dogmatic” and “non-dogmatic” love. Science is also expected to be *coherent*: Two pieces of certifiable

knowledge should not contradict/falsify one other, but life experiences like love need not be unified in this way, not to mention that it is quite unclear what it should mean that “parts” of love experience “contradict” one another. Love contains a diverse variety of individual experiences and emotional attitudes; science is not diverse in this manner. What thus proves to be a useful explanatory tool on first inspection should be used cautiously if we are to avoid the essentialist trap.

Feminist epistemology, which adopts the Quinean framework and imbues it with its own content, cannot content itself with an unspecified emphasis on the role of values in constituting scientific theories. It teaches us two things: Sometimes 1) the whole landscape of knowledge is reorganised (paradigm shifts) and the motivating arguments cannot be made quite explicit. *Implicit* value motivations are also at play in theoretical dilemmas, where the ways part, for instance, into “man-the-hunter” and “woman-the-gatherer” alternatives. Where a particular love situation parallels these situations – as in the Swann scenario – the comparison with “reweaving” science is, in general, illuminating and reveals the holistic, unthematized love-paradigm. However, as we have seen in most cases, 2) either these unthematized value assumptions are not necessary to invoke; we can make the argument to satisfy on “factual” grounds only, or we can make the applied value arguments perfectly explicit by demonstrating them to be quite rational since they operate on a perspicuous local level. The parallel to love can, in some cases, be led into these particulars, where the lover works with arguments. But what we call “love” very often also assumes various other forms. The variety of specific, contextualised patterns of love, which employ arguments in various forms, deserves a treatise in its own right.

I would like to summarise that 1) knowledge, in general, and science, in particular, are a holistic system; the exchange of whole systems proceeds through leaps. 2) In order to illuminate the grounds of these whole systems and their shifts, an admission of value assumptions is necessary. However, it is questionable whether values act only as such holistic grounds, and not also as particular, explicit arguments. 3) The type of epistemology that

studies the interconnection of factual and value contents can be, due to this link, also used to shed light on the description of – at the first sight – non-theoretical, emotional experiences, such as love. 4) The parallel with love suggests that the accounts that are assigning to values only the role of implicit motivation from behind are insufficient. A proper evaluation of the role values play in knowledge production should take into account the rich variety of *rational* value arguments, as is also suggested by Anderson. The variety of emotional experiences that count as love is even greater, including such that are dissimilar to the epistemological patterns.<sup>1</sup>

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