

Masks, Finks, and Gender

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Introduction

That there is some connection between our dispositions and our gender identities seems clear. People are disposed to act in certain ways and to refer to themselves using certain pronouns in virtue of having certain gender identities. This connection might incline one towards a metaphysics of gender identity that places a strong emphasis on our dispositions. In recent work, however, Robin Dembroff (2020) has criticized existing views of gender—including Jennifer McKittrick’s (2015) dispositional account—as exclusionary. Dembroff argues that neither *externalist* nor *internalist* views of gender are able to account for *genderqueer* identities.¹ Externalists hold that the focus of an account of gender ought to be on social features: one’s perception by others, one’s social position, or one’s conferred social properties.² Internalists, on the other hand, hold that the focus of an account of gender ought to be on one’s *internal* features: one’s self-identification as belonging to a gender or one’s gendered behavioral dispositions.³ In short, Dembroff argues that the fundamental problem with such views is that they are tailored to focus on men and women, putting genderqueer identities to the side. For Dembroff, genderqueer is a *critical gender kind*: “a category whose members collectively destabilize the **binary axis**, or the idea that the only possible genders are the exclusive and exhaustive kinds *men* and *women*” (2020: 2; Dembroff’s emphasis). Dembroff argues that by focusing on gender *kinds*, rather than

¹ Following Dembroff (2020: 3), I will use the term ‘genderqueer’ as a blanket term to refer to those whose identities lie outside of the gender binary.

² See Haslanger (2000, 2012), Witt (2011), Ásta (2018), and Barnes (2020) for externalist accounts of gender.

³ See Bettcher (2009, 2013), Jenkins (2016, 2018), and McKittrick (2015) for internalist accounts of gender.

on the property that constitutes some individual's gender, we can achieve a better understanding of genderqueer identities.

The motivation for Dembroff's positive view rests largely on their rejection of current views of gender. My aims in this paper are to argue that Dembroff fails in this regard insofar as their case against Jennifer McKittrick's (2015) dispositional view of gender identity is unsuccessful and to argue that a dispositional view can better accomplish some of what Dembroff hopes to accomplish with their alternative conception. While Dembroff argues that the dispositional view cannot capture the extension of genderqueer identities without reducing being genderqueer to a matter of linguistic convention, thus trivializing it, I will argue that tools developed in the literature on dispositions can overcome this worry. Dembroff fails to account for two problems central to the metaphysics of dispositions: *masks* (phenomena that prevent dispositions from manifesting when their stimulus conditions obtain) and *finks* (phenomena that would change dispositions when their stimulus conditions obtain).⁴ A better understanding of masks and finks will allow a dispositional account of gender identity to circumvent the problems that Dembroff levels against it, and a dispositional view of gender identity can better address the core problem that Dembroff has attempted to solve. Further, exploring precisely why Dembroff's case against the dispositional view fails can help develop a positive dispositional view of genderqueer identities.

This paper is structured as follows. In the first portion (§§1-3), I will outline McKittrick's dispositional view and discuss Dembroff's objections to it, as well as Dembroff's proposed alternative. In the second portion (§§4-7), I will argue that an account of dispositions that addresses masks and finks overcomes the alleged extensional problems that Dembroff raises.

⁴ The first discussion of finks is credited to Martin (1994); the first discussions of masks are credited to Johnston (1992) and Bird (1998) (Bird calls them 'antidotes').

Finally (§8), I will address Dembroff's charge that the dispositional view trivializes what it means to be genderqueer. I will argue that Dembroff's own positive view of genderqueer as a kind is not inconsistent with a dispositional view of genderqueer as an individual property, and that addressing their objection can help spell out a positive dispositional account of genderqueer identities.

I think that Dembroff's view has many merits and the dispositional account of genderqueer identities that I will defend draws heavily on their work. However, the metaphysical picture that a dispositional account can offer us can better deal with some of the problems that Dembroff raises. If the dispositional view of genderqueer identities that I develop here is successful, the dispositional view of gender should receive renewed consideration as a serious contender for a metaphysical account of gender identity. The implications of this paper are thus significant for any philosopher interested in gender identity.

1. McKittrick's dispositional account

According to the dispositional view of gender identity, to have a gender identity is to have a set of behavioral dispositions. While many accounts of gender acknowledge a relationship between certain patterns of behavior and certain genders, the dispositional view maintains a tighter relationship between the two than mere correlation. Jennifer McKittrick, whose (2015) statement of the dispositional view is the dominant dispositional view in the literature today, holds that gender identity is metaphysically reducible to a disposition or a set of dispositions: all that it is to have a gender identity is to have a certain massively multi-track disposition or a set of behavioral dispositions which are associated in one's society with being a member of that

gender.⁵ McKittrick formalizes her view as follows:

x is gender G iff

x has (sufficiently many, sufficiently strong) dispositions $D_1 \dots D_n$ to behave in ways $B_1 \dots B_n$ in situations $S_1 \dots S_n$, and
 The relevant social group considers behaving in ways $B_1 \dots B_n$ in situations $S_1 \dots S_n$ to be G (2015: 2581).

The relevant behaviors, for McKittrick, might “include modes of dress, posture and mannerisms, productive and leisure time activities, styles of communication and social interaction” (2015: 2581). In the United States, for instance, some person has the gender identity ‘man’ just in case they have sufficiently many and sufficiently strong dispositions to behave in the various ways considered within the United States to be masculine: wearing clothing considered masculine (e.g. suits instead of dresses), engaging in particular leisure time activities (e.g. watching sports), using the men’s bathroom in public places, publicly identifying as a man, requesting that others refer to them with he/him pronouns, and so on.

These dispositions, on McKittrick’s view, are *extrinsic*. A disposition is extrinsic just in case two perfect physiological duplicates governed by the same laws of nature can differ with respect to that disposition. Paradigm examples include weight, the power to open a door, and safety (cf. McKittrick 2003). How much one weighs depends in part on the local gravitational field within which one is located: my weight would change if I were to go to the Moon and would change back if I were then to return to Earth. Whether the key in my pocket has the power to open my front door depends in part on the structure of the lock in my front door: the key could lose and reacquire this power without undergoing any intrinsic changes. How safe I am depends in part on my surrounding environment: I am safer in my office than I would be if I were

⁵ McKittrick sometimes presents this as a view of gender—including in the analysis presented below—but does make clear that gender role and gender identity must be distinguished (2015: 2577).

standing in a busy intersection, even though I would be no different intrinsically if such a change occurred.⁶

To explain how the dispositions associated with gender identity are extrinsic, McKittrick offers an analogy to a traffic light's disposition to cause certain patterns of behavior (2015: 2583). We can distinguish between a traffic light's dispositions to emit different colors of light and its disposition to elicit certain patterns of behavior in perceivers. The former is an intrinsic disposition; the latter is an extrinsic disposition. While the existence of the latter depends on the existence of the former—the traffic light would not be disposed to elicit any patterns of behavior in perceivers if it did not have dispositions to emit certain colors of light—it is a distinct disposition. Because two identical traffic lights could differ with respect to the behaviors that they caused as the result of emitting red lights in different societies, it is an extrinsic disposition.

McKittrick argues that the same is true with respect to gendered behavior. Though the dispositions to engage in certain behaviors (e.g. wearing skirts) might be intrinsic, the fact that these behavioral dispositions are gendered in the ways that they are depends on social contingencies. Different societies might take different patterns of behavior to be gendered, and while the dispositions to engage in those patterns of behavior might be intrinsic dispositions, the fact that they are gendered is extrinsic (2015: 2585).⁷ Consider, for instance, the dispositions to wear one's hair short, to engage in political activism, and to be the primary breadwinner for one's family. While these behaviors might be intrinsic dispositions in which individuals would engage

⁶ I will assume for the duration of this paper that at least some dispositions are extrinsic. While one might object to this claim, a defense of it is beyond the scope of this paper. If one is unconvinced that dispositions can be extrinsic, then much of what I say can be altered to apply to a dispositional view of gender according to which the dispositions associated with gender are intrinsic.

⁷ As with other extrinsic dispositions, environmental differences do not necessitate differences in dispositions: it is merely possible that a difference in one's environment can result in a change in one's dispositions. While it is possible, for instance, that one would adjust one's behavior such that one's gender remains constant across all social contexts and times, and thus would undergo no changes in one's gender, what matters for the claim that these dispositions are extrinsic is that it is possible for two physiological duplicates to differ with respect to these dispositions, given some environmental differences.

regardless of social factors, they were once associated in the United States with masculinity, McKittrick argues, and they are now associated with femininity as well (2015: 2581). As social customs and norms, both of which are extrinsic, change over time, which behaviors are gendered in which ways also change.

One might object to the claim that these dispositions are extrinsic on the grounds that they are instead *relationally specified*—we might distinguish between dispositions in context A (the United States in the 1950s) and dispositions in context B (the United States today). If we make this distinction, then the relevant dispositions are in fact intrinsic: two physiological duplicates might differ with respect to the environments in which they are currently located yet not differ with respect to either the disposition to behave-in-masculine-fashions-in-context-A or the disposition to behave-in-masculine-fashions-in-context-B. Rather than say that a person's gender can change if their environment changes, one who adopts this objection can say that one person possesses both dispositions at all times, but that which disposition can manifest at a given time depends on the context in which the person is located. McKittrick argues, however, that the claim that individuals have these relationally specified dispositions is consistent with the claim that they have dispositions to behave-in-masculine-fashions *simpliciter*, and that this latter disposition is extrinsic (2015: 2585).⁸

⁸ Elsewhere, McKittrick addresses a similar objection (2003: 163-167). One might argue that weight is not extrinsic because it is relationally specified: weight *on Earth* is a different disposition than weight *on Mars*, and any two physiological duplicates will always agree with respect to their dispositions to weigh-*X*-pounds-on-Earth and to weigh-*X*-pounds-on-Mars, regardless of whether they are actually on Earth, on Mars, or elsewhere. But McKittrick argues that we can nonetheless distinguish these relationally specified dispositions, which she concedes are intrinsic, from the disposition to weigh-*X*-pounds *simpliciter*. As noted above, because little in my argument turns on whether these dispositions are extrinsic, I will assume that McKittrick is right on this point (but see fn. 33 and fn. 34 below for an explanation of how an objection based on the supposed extrinsicness of these dispositions can be generalized if these dispositions are instead intrinsic). For arguments against the claim that there are dispositions *simpliciter* in the way that McKittrick argues, see Fisher (2013) and Kittle (2015). Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this point.

In addition to being extrinsic in this sense, which dispositions are associated with which gender is a matter of contextual factors. What counts as a stereotypically masculine manner of behavior in the office differs from what counts as a stereotypically masculine manner of behavior when one is around one's friends or one's family. These contextual factors require making some fine-grained distinctions between the dispositions included in the set associated with having a particular gender identity. In some contexts, for instance, cooking is associated with masculinity: at a barbecue or a tailgate, men are expected to cook. In other contexts, including in the home, cooking is associated with femininity. We can thus distinguish between the disposition to cook *at a barbecue or a tailgate* and the disposition to cook *in the home*, where the former is associated with masculinity and the latter is associated with femininity.

While McKittrick takes the fact that these dispositions are extrinsic to mean that "one's gender is partially constituted by extrinsic factors" (2015: 2575), it must be noted that the sense of 'extrinsic' relevant to the metaphysics of dispositions and the sense of 'external' relevant to the metaphysics of gender differ. Within the literature on dispositions, as noted above, whether a disposition is extrinsic or intrinsic is a matter of whether two physiological duplicates governed by the same laws of nature could differ with respect to that disposition. Within the literature on the metaphysics of gender, externalist views are those that focus on one's social position, whereas internalist views are those that focus on the properties of individuals. Because McKittrick's view focuses on behavioral dispositions, it is taken as an internalist view.⁹

The dispositional view has a number of key strengths. Foremost among them is the fact that because an individual's gender is determined by their behavioral dispositions, facts about

⁹ See Barnes (2020: 706-709) for a discussion of the difference between externalist and internalist views of gender. Both Barnes (2020: 709) and Dembroff (2020: 8) argue that McKittrick is an internalist about gender, and I follow them here merely for the sake of consistency with the literature; nothing in my discussion turns on whether McKittrick's account is better characterized as a form of internalism or as a form of externalism.

their social position or the manner in which they are perceived by others and facts about the sex that one was assigned at birth play no central role. A person with sufficiently many dispositions counted as feminine in a particular society is a woman, regardless of the sex that she was assigned at birth and regardless of the manner in which others perceive her. The dispositional view thus seems *prima facie* capable of accounting for trans and nonbinary gender identities to a better degree than externalist views.¹⁰

In the discussion that follows, I will focus on Dembroff's objections to McKittrick's view. It should be noted, however, that a dispositionalist about gender need not adopt her account as it stands. Dembroff's objections and my reply to them generalize to similar views that analyze gender identity in dispositional terms even if, for instance, such accounts hold that the dispositions in question are intrinsic properties, that gender identity is not metaphysically reducible to a set of dispositions but instead merely corresponds to them, that one cannot have a different gender identity in different contexts or societies, or that there are particular dispositions which are necessary for having a particular gender identity. The same is true if one holds that gender identity is best explained in terms of *cognitive* rather than *behavioral* dispositions.¹¹ If one holds that a person's gender is best explained by their dispositions to judge or feel that they are a certain gender, or by their dispositions to judge or feel that certain norms are relevant to them, Dembroff's objections remain relevant.¹²

¹⁰ See Jenkins (2016) for a critique of Haslanger's (2000) view along these lines.

¹¹ Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

¹² Many theorists—including both Dembroff (2020: 14) and McKittrick (2015: 2582), as well as Jenkins (2018)—emphasize the significance of phenomenal states to gender identity. While Dembroff and Jenkins do not frame their discussions of phenomenal states in terms of cognitive dispositions, a dispositionalist about gender could incorporate either view into the dispositional framework by making such a move. I will take some steps towards this with respect to Dembroff's account in §8 below.

2. Dembroff's objections

Dembroff raises two significant issues for the dispositional view. First, they argue that such a view cannot account for some genderqueer individuals' identities because there is a social cost for many of the actions which one might take to be indicative of being genderqueer (2020: 11). Presenting oneself in a way that is neither masculine nor feminine, for instance, incurs a social cost, as does publicly identifying oneself as being any gender other than a man or a woman. These social costs are wide-ranging. One might be bullied or fired, one might be discriminated against in other ways, or one might be physically assaulted. Because of the social cost of identifying as genderqueer, some genderqueer individuals will *not* manifest the dispositions associated with their genders: a genderqueer person worried about being fired or assaulted might continue to publicly identify within the gender binary. It would thus appear that some genderqueer people do not display the dispositions associated with being genderqueer when the stimulus conditions for those dispositions appear. Such cases thus present *prima facie* counterexamples to McKittrick's reductive analysis: because the stimulus conditions for these dispositions obtain and the dispositions do not manifest, it seems that they do not, in fact, have those dispositions and thus would not be included in the category of genderqueer.¹³

To address these seeming counterexamples, the dispositionalist can either (1) argue that the dispositions are not actually stimulated and are thus analogous to fragile glasses that never break because they are never struck or dropped, or (2) argue that the dispositions are stimulated, but that something interferes with their manifestation. The former seems obviously false, as it is clear that the disposition to sincerely avow what one's gender is gets stimulated whenever one is

¹³ Even if such cases would be relatively rare, they are nonetheless significant because of the nature of McKittrick's project. Because her aim is to present a reductive analysis, it must get the extension of the category right in every case. Compare this to discussions of finkish dispositions: even though only a relatively small number of dispositions would change if their stimulus conditions came about, the possibility of such cases nonetheless threatens reductive analyses of dispositions.

in a position such that they must tell another person which pronouns to use for them. The latter move, at least initially, looks more promising: perhaps the genderqueer people who do not display these behaviors really do have these dispositions, but they are prevented from manifesting by social costs.

If the relevant dispositions are prevented from manifesting by the social costs that people would incur by behaving in those ways, then determining whether someone actually has these dispositions requires that we appeal to *ideal* conditions in which these masks do not exist, rather than the *actual* conditions in which they do. If we lived in an ideal, just world, there would be no social pressures to refrain from identifying as genderqueer, and so these counterexamples could be avoided. Yet Dembroff (2020: 11) argues that idealizing the manifestation conditions for gender dispositions in this way presents a further problem: some men and women would come to identify as genderqueer if there were no social costs to doing so. As such, appealing to ideal conditions would result in *overextending* the category of genderqueer, as it will wrongly count some men and women as genderqueer. We cannot simply say that these are dispositions subject to interference of some kind, as doing so would also result in the dispositional view getting the extension wrong.

One might attempt to push back against the claim that such cases genuinely count as counterexamples to the dispositional account by contending that this would not amount to an overextension of the category of genderqueer. But I share Dembroff's commitment to taking first-person authority as a desideratum here; an adequate account of gender identity must afford individuals authority over what their own gender identities are.¹⁴ At least some of the people who would come to identify as genderqueer if there were no social costs to doing currently identify as

¹⁴ See Dembroff (2020: 3) for a discussion of first-person authority relevant to this discussion; see Bettcher (2009) for an account of first-person authority.

men or as women. As such, if a dispositional account yielded the conclusion that such individuals are genderqueer, it would violate their first-person authority and fail to satisfy this desideratum.

Advocates of the dispositional view thus appear to face a dilemma. On the first horn, if we appeal to actual, unjust conditions, the category will be underinclusive, as some genderqueer people will wrongly be counted as men and women. On the second horn, if we appeal to ideal, just conditions, the category will be overinclusive, as some men and women will wrongly be counted as genderqueer. If this objection is correct, the dispositional view is unable to properly capture the extension of the category, rendering it incapable of succeeding as a metaphysical reduction.¹⁵

Second, Dembroff argues that the only behavior in which all and only genderqueer people engage is that of asserting that they are genderqueer (2020: 10). If the dispositional account is meant to offer a metaphysical reduction, as McKittrick argues, then being genderqueer can only be metaphysically reduced to the disposition to assert that one is genderqueer, as there is no other candidate disposition to which being genderqueer could be reduced. But Dembroff argues that this would render being genderqueer an unimportant property—being disposed to utter a certain string of words is a matter of linguistic conventions, and is not the sort of thing that we ought to take seriously by default when interacting with others or when engaging in political projects. Though a linguistic disposition *can* be the kind of thing that we ought to take seriously, Dembroff's worry highlights, if nothing else, that it is not clear why we *should* take these particular linguistic dispositions seriously. The only real difference between someone who

¹⁵ This challenge would still stand if one held that gender identity is best explained in terms of cognitive rather than behavioral dispositions. Whatever those cognitive dispositions might be, it is plausible that they would at least sometimes not manifest under ordinary conditions, which would force the dispositionalist to appeal to ideal conditions. And in ideal conditions, some people who are actually men and women would acquire the relevant cognitive dispositions.

is genderqueer and someone who is not, on this view, is a seemingly trivial matter, and so there is no substantive difference between people who are genderqueer and people who are not (2020: 11).¹⁶

One might object to this latter argument of Dembroff's on the grounds that the disposition to sincerely report one's gender identity is only an indicator of some more substantive set of dispositions that one has.¹⁷ Suppose, for instance, that rather than saying that gender identity is a behavioral disposition or a set of behavioral dispositions, we instead said that gender identity is at core a cognitive disposition such as a felt sense of belonging to a certain group or a sense that certain gender norms are relevant to oneself.¹⁸ On such a view, it might still be true that all genderqueer people are disposed to sincerely assert that they are genderqueer, but that this disposition merely correlates to the more significant property of having a felt sense of belonging to a certain group or taking certain norms to be relevant to oneself. If correct, this objection would allow the dispositionalist to circumvent Dembroff's second objection: the dispositionalist could say that the disposition to sincerely report that one has a particular gender is a part of a person's gender identity, but that there is more to a person's gender identity than these particular dispositions. Recall, however, that McKittrick's dispositional view is a metaphysical reduction. Because the only behavior shared by all and only genderqueer people is the behavior to sincerely avow that they are genderqueer, it is the only disposition to which gender identity can be reduced. A dispositionalist about gender who holds that the relationship between gender identity and behavioral dispositions is not a matter of metaphysical reduction

¹⁶ Note that this worry about the property being trivialized is distinct from worries such as that raised by Fara (2005) that a counterfactual analysis of dispositions could at best be trivially true. Dembroff's worry here is that a dispositional account cannot identify any substantive difference between people who are genderqueer and people who are not, not that the dispositional account will only yield a trivially true analysis.

¹⁷ Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this objection. While I agree that a dispositional account of gender can be developed that takes sincere avowals of one's gender identity as indicative of a deeper, more substantive property, presenting and defending such a move is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁸ This latter view is similar to Jenkins's (2018) account of gender identity.

might thus find this objection unconvincing. However, I think that this objection can be addressed even on a reductive project such as McKittrick's, and I will argue for this point in §8 below.

3. Dembroff's positive view

Dembroff argues that because neither internalist nor externalist views of gender are able to account for genderqueer identities, both should be rejected. Rather than focus on the property in virtue of which individuals are gendered, Dembroff contends, we should understand genderqueer "in terms of features of a collective" (2020: 12). To this end, Dembroff argues that genderqueer is a *critical gender kind*:

Critical Gender Kinds: For a given kind X, X is a *critical gender kind* relative to a given society iff X's members collectively destabilize one or more core elements of the dominant gender ideology in that society (2020: 12, Dembroff's emphasis).

Destabilizing can take two forms: principled destabilizing, which one engages in when one believes that the binary assumption is harmful or wrong, regardless of one's own gender identity, and existential destabilizing, which one engages in because one's own gender exists outside of the assumed gender binary (2020: 13). Many people engage in destabilizing to at least some degree by doing things such as dressing in ways that contradict gender stereotypes, engaging in relationships that violate heteronormative standards, and using gender-neutral terms to make one's language more hospitable to those whose gender identities lie beyond the binary (2020: 13).

Genderqueer is not the only critical gender kind. Many other groups can and do resist other dimensions of gender ideology (2020: 14-15). Genderqueer differs from other critical gender kinds insofar as the destabilization in which genderqueer individuals engage is directed towards the binary axis—the assumption that 'men' and 'women' are the only gender kinds—and stems from their own felt or desired gender categorizations (2020: 16).

Importantly, this is not an account of the property of being genderqueer at the individual level. Dembroff argues that analyses of social kinds are often confused with the conditions necessary for being a member of a certain social kind, but that this is a mistake. They compare this to an analysis of *Christianity* as opposed to an analysis of the property of *being a Christian*: their view of genderqueer is meant as analysis of the kind *genderqueer*, not of the property of *being genderqueer* (2020: 12).

My aim in the remainder of this paper is to argue that a dispositional account of gender identity has room to avoid both of the objections that Dembroff levels. If the dispositional account can survive Dembroff's attack, then Dembroff's move in shifting focus away from the property in virtue of which individuals have gender identities towards the properties of gender kinds more generally fails: an account exists that can capture the extension of the category of genderqueer without trivializing what it means to be genderqueer.

4. Masked dispositions

As noted above, the first strategy for which the dispositionalist might opt when confronted with the problem of social costs is to appeal to the notion of *masks*. A disposition is masked when something would interfere with its manifestation when its stimulus obtains while leaving the disposition itself intact. The paradigm example, due to Johnston (1992), is of a glass with a styrofoam support placed in its center: though the glass remains fragile, the presence of the styrofoam now makes it such that the disposition will not manifest when its stimulus obtains.

The dispositionalist about gender can argue as follows. The glass protected by the inserted piece of styrofoam is fragile despite the fact that the styrofoam prevents its fragility from manifesting. The fact that the stimulus for fragility would not, in this case, bring about the manifestation for fragility does not entail that the glass is not fragile: it simply entails that the

glass' disposition is masked. If we want to know whether the glass is fragile, we should consider what it would do if its fragility were not protected with the styrofoam insert. Likewise, with respect to gender, we should not take the social costs of publicly identifying as genderqueer to mean that certain individuals are not genderqueer. Instead, we should consider how those individuals would behave if they did not run the risk of incurring social costs—in other words, we should consider what they would do if their dispositions were not masked.¹⁹

My aim in this paper, as noted above, is to show that this strategy can succeed despite Dembroff's objection. While Dembroff argues that an appeal to ideal conditions will result in overextending the category of genderqueer, I will ultimately argue that dispositionalists can address this problem by appealing to the notion of *finks*: dispositions that would change when stimulated. Before turning to that argument, however, I will spell out exactly how this strategy can deal with the problem of social costs. Doing so requires some further discussion of masked dispositions.²⁰

The problem of masks was originally raised as a kind of counterexample for conditional analyses of dispositions, according to which disposition ascriptions are reducible to simple counterfactual conditionals. Fragility, for instance, was once standardly analyzed as follows:

X is fragile iff, if *X* were dropped, then *X* would break.²¹

Masks clearly present counterexamples to this reductive analysis. Suppose that *X* is, in fact, fragile, and is supported with a piece of styrofoam. If *X* were dropped, the presence of the

¹⁹ Adopting this strategy does not require that we assume that dispositions can be reduced to counterfactual conditionals: counterfactuals might simply play an epistemic role of allowing us to evaluate whether something has a disposition. I intend for the arguments I advance here to be neutral with respect to a theory of dispositions.

²⁰ Much of what I say about masks will also apply to finks: Steinberg (2010), Contessa (2013), and Gebharter and Fischer (2021) have all argued that their solutions to the problem of masks can also solve the problem of finks. I prefer to keep the two phenomena separate, however, as distinguishing between masks and finks will be necessary to overcome Dembroff's objection.

²¹ Lewis (1997) calls this the 'simple conditional analysis' (SCA) of dispositions. The SCA is ordinarily attributed to Ryle (1949), Goodman (1955), and Quine (1960).

styrofoam would prevent X from breaking, rendering the counterfactual conditional on the right-hand side of the above biconditional false. The analysis thus incorrectly yields the conclusion that the glass is not fragile.

Solving the problem of masks generally involves appealing to some ideal circumstances. On conditional analyses, this involves introducing an ‘ideal circumstances’ clause of some kind into the antecedent of the counterfactual:

X is fragile iff, if X were dropped *in the ideal circumstances for its breaking*, then X would break.²²

The glass with the styrofoam support is not in the ideal circumstances for its fragility to manifest, so such a case does not present a counterexample to this analysis of dispositions. Much of the literature on the subject since Mumford (1998) proposed this strategy has involved spelling out exactly what ideal conditions are non-trivially: if ‘ideal conditions’ simply means ‘the conditions under which the stimulus would bring about the manifestation’, the analysis can be restated as follows:

X is fragile iff, if X were dropped under the conditions in which being dropped would result in X breaking, then X would break.²³

But this analysis is trivial. Avoiding triviality requires giving an account of what masks are. Steinberg (2010) has argued that providing a single account thereof is impossible, and that we should instead merely add a ‘*ceteris paribus*’ clause to the antecedent: all else being equal, a fragile glass will break when dropped. Others, however, have argued that masks can be analyzed. Gebharter and Fischer (2021) have argued that masks are phenomena that would cancel out the

²² ‘Ideal conditions’ is Mumford’s (1998) preferred qualifier.

²³ This objection is Fara’s (2005: 51). See Steinberg (2010: 327-328) for further discussion; Steinberg points out that beyond being trivially true, this analysis would render it true that *everything* has a disposition—if a sheet of paper were placed in the ideal conditions for its breaking (i.e. an environment with a very low temperature), it would break when dropped.

causal influence of the stimulus on the manifestation: the presence of an internal styrofoam support negates the effect of being dropped on the glass, so the styrofoam support is a mask. Elsewhere (Turyn, 2021), I have argued that masks are phenomena which either reduce the probability of the stimulus bringing about the manifestation or reduce the degree to which the manifestation appears: a styrofoam support might reduce the chance that a glass will break when dropped or might prevent a glass from shattering while still allowing it to crack slightly; in either case, the styrofoam support is a mask.²⁴

Consider how my view of masks would apply to the problem of social costs. Social costs might reduce the probability that a genderqueer person will act in the ways associated with being genderqueer or might decrease the degree to which they act in these ways. But the fact that social costs have this effect does not mean that genderqueer people lack these dispositions: it merely means that their dispositions are masked. If we wanted to know what dispositions a person has, then, we can appeal to how they would act in cases in which their dispositions are not masked. If we want to determine whether someone has the disposition to sincerely identify as genderqueer, we should consider what they would do if they were prompted to say what their gender is *and* if there were no social costs to doing so.

Dembroff's objection, of course, is that appealing to cases in which there are no masks present will still get the extension wrong: if there were no social costs to identifying as genderqueer, some people who are actually men or women would come to identify as genderqueer and engage in the behaviors relevant to being genderqueer (including sincerely

²⁴ My full account is as follows:

M masks *X*'s disposition to *A* as the result of stimulus *S* in *C* at time *t* iff:

- (1) If *X* were exposed to *S* in *C* at *t*, and if *X* retained the property in virtue of which *X* is disposed to *A* while remaining in the presence of *M* until some later time *t'*, then *X* would *A* less than if *M* were not present;
- (2) *M* is present at *t*;
- (3) *M* plays a causal role in *X*'s decreased *A*-ing (2021: 11881).

publicly identifying as genderqueer). As such, Dembroff argues, we cannot make use of the concept of masking to address this problem. In the following section, I will argue that such cases involve *finkish* dispositions.

5. Finkish dispositions

The problem of finks, like the problem of masks, was initially introduced as a kind of counterexample to the conditional analysis of dispositions. Martin (1994) pointed out that the stimulus condition for a disposition might be the same thing that would cause the disposition to change or disappear and introduced the notion of a finkish disposition to capture this phenomenon: dispositions are finkish if their stimulus conditions would bring about changes to the dispositions themselves. Lewis (1997) memorably illustrated this phenomenon with a case in which a sorcerer grows fond of one of his fragile glasses and decides that he would cast a spell changing the glass into rubber if it were ever dropped.^{25,26} Though the glass is fragile, the stimulus for its disposition would not bring about its manifestation. Such phenomena thus present counterexamples to the simple conditional analysis of dispositions because the *analysandum* (the glass is fragile) is true but the *analysans* (if the glass were dropped, then it would break) is false.²⁷

Entities can also have *finkish lacks of dispositions*: dispositions that they would acquire if the stimulus conditions for those dispositions came about, but which they do not currently have.

²⁵ Lewis does not specify that the sorcerer would turn the glass into rubber; he merely states that the sorcerer “will cast a spell that changes the glass, renders it no longer fragile, and thereby aborts the process of breaking” (1997: 147). But putting it as such runs into the problem of antidotes (cf. Bird 1998); if the sorcerer casts a spell administering a shockwave to the glass such that the shockwave cancels out the effect of the drop, then the same effect will be achieved. By specifying that he changes the intrinsic structure of the glass to rubber, we can avoid this charge.

²⁶ For a slightly more realistic example, we can imagine a glass sitting on a very high table which is located over an extremely hot surface. If the glass were ever dropped, it would melt before striking the ground. Though the glass is fragile, it would cease to be fragile if it were ever dropped because it would melt.

²⁷ Finkish dispositions are not solely a problem for conditional analyses of dispositions: any analysis of dispositions must explain why a disposition’s stimulus might sometimes fail to bring about its manifestation. I focus on conditional analyses here only because it is within the literature on conditional analyses that this debate has primarily taken place.

Suppose that the above sorcerer grew tired of a piece of rubber and decided that he would turn it into glass if it were ever dropped: though the piece of rubber is not fragile, it would break if it were ever dropped because its dispositions would change.

While Martin argued that the problem of finks rendered dispositions irreducible, Lewis was more optimistic. Lewis argued that the conditional analysis could be reformed to overcome the problem of finks by the addition of a time index:

Something x is disposed at time t to give response r to stimulus s iff, for some intrinsic property B that x has at t , for some time t' after t , if x were to undergo stimulus s at time t and retain property B until t' , s and x 's having of B would jointly be an x -complete cause of x 's giving response r (Lewis 1997: 157).

Some intrinsic property is an x -complete cause of r , for Lewis, if it is the only property of x relevant to r . On this view, something x has a disposition to r as the result of s just in case x would display r as the result of s in the nearest worlds in which x does not lose the property in virtue of which it is disposed to r .²⁸ Though Lewis (correctly) called this analysis an “unlovely mouthful” (1997: 157), it avoids the problem of finks. For some glass G that is fragile, this analysis yields the following:

G is disposed at time t to break as the result of being dropped iff, for some intrinsic property B that G has at t , for some time t' after t , if G were to drop at t and retain property B until t' , being dropped and G 's having of B would jointly be a G -complete cause of G 's giving response r .

Suppose that G is the above-mentioned sorcerer's favorite glass. While the simple conditional analysis yields the verdict that the glass is not fragile, given that the glass would not break if it were dropped, Lewis's reformed conditional analysis yields the verdict that the glass is fragile: in determining whether the counterfactual on the right-hand side of the biconditional is true, we must consider what would happen if the glass were dropped and did not lose the chemical

²⁸ There is significant disagreement about whether this analysis of dispositions succeeds as an analysis of dispositions; see Busck Gundersen (2017) for an overview of the literature on Lewis's analysis. For some objections to conditional analyses of dispositions more generally, see Fara (2005), Vetter (2015), Contessa (2016), and Hájek (2020).

structure in virtue of which it is fragile. Because the glass would break if it were dropped without losing its chemical structure, the glass is, in fact, fragile.

In addition to finkish dispositions, this analysis accounts for finkish lacks of dispositions. Recall the sorcerer's hated piece of rubber that he would turn to glass if it were ever dropped or struck. The piece of rubber is not, as currently composed, fragile, yet it would break if it were dropped. Lewis's reformed analysis again asks us to consider whether the piece of rubber would break if it were dropped *and* if it did not lose the chemical structure in virtue of which it is not fragile, and thus again yields the correct result.

6. Social costs as masks and finks

Recall that Dembroff objects to the strategy of appealing to masked dispositions on the grounds that it would still get the extension of the category of genderqueer wrong: under ideal conditions, some men and women would come to identify as genderqueer. As such, some people who are in fact men and women would wrongly be counted as genderqueer. We are now in a position to see where this objection goes wrong. If the proper stimulus conditions for the dispositions associated with being genderqueer are ideal conditions, then what this means is that some men and women *finkishly lack* the dispositions associated with being genderqueer. A woman who would come to identify as genderqueer if there were no social costs to doing so has a finkish lack of the dispositions associated with being genderqueer: she would acquire a new set of dispositions if the stimulus conditions for those dispositions ever came about. Further, her feminine dispositions—those in virtue of which she is currently a woman—are finkish: if the proper stimulus conditions for those dispositions ever came about, she would lose those dispositions, but that fact does not mean that she currently lacks those dispositions.

If I am right that these are cases of finkish dispositions, then whether a strategy like Lewis's succeeds at providing a metaphysical reduction of dispositions in terms of counterfactual conditionals that overcomes the problem of finks is irrelevant: even if dispositions cannot be analyzed in terms of counterfactual conditionals, entities with finkish dispositions actually have those dispositions. A woman who would come to identify as genderqueer if there were no social costs to doing so is a woman regardless of whether her dispositions can be analyzed in counterfactual terms. Philosophers (e.g. Martin 1994; Vetter 2015) who argue that dispositions cannot be reduced to counterfactual conditionals do not deny that entities with finkish dispositions lack those dispositions: for Martin, it is precisely because such entities have these dispositions that the conditional analysis should be rejected.

It is clear, however, that there is some relationship between dispositions and conditionals. If the relationship is not a matter of metaphysical reduction, then perhaps it is epistemic: evaluations of counterfactual conditionals guide our determinations of whether something actually has a particular disposition.²⁹ Regardless of which of these options one selects, it is clear that a strategy similar to Lewis's that also accounts for masks can direct us towards the correct counterfactuals. Rather than examining simple counterfactuals such as 'If *X* were prompted to identify as belonging to a gender, *X* would identify as genderqueer', we should examine complex counterfactuals such as 'If *X* were prompted to identify as belonging to a gender while not in the presence of a mask, and if *X*'s dispositions did not change, then *X* would identify as genderqueer'.³⁰

²⁹ See Choi (2005) for discussion of this point. Choi argues that our attributions of dispositions are guided by what he calls 'the conditional test' and 'the nomic duplicate test'.

³⁰ Again, note that this does not require a commitment to a metaphysical reduction of dispositions to counterfactual conditionals. It might well be the case that the relationship between this complex counterfactual and the disposition to which it corresponds is merely correlative or epistemic.

To see precisely how this strategy would overcome Dembroff's supposed counterexamples, let us consider two cases. First, consider a possible individual, Sarah, who identifies both publicly and privately as a woman but who would come to identify both publicly and privately as genderqueer if there were no social costs involved in doing so. While Dembroff is right that under ideal conditions, Sarah would identify as genderqueer, what matters, on this strategy, is how Sarah would identify if there were no social costs to identifying as genderqueer *and* if Sarah's dispositions did not change. If the antecedent of this counterfactual (if Sarah were prompted to say what her gender was under conditions in which there were no social costs to identifying as genderqueer *and* if Sarah's dispositions did not change) were true, the consequent (Sarah would sincerely identify as a woman) would also be true.

Second, consider another possible individual, Sam, who identifies privately (i.e. to themselves and to others in genderqueer-friendly spaces) as genderqueer, but publicly (i.e. to others in genderqueer-hostile spaces) presents themselves as a man. Though Sam might typically display the behavioral dispositions associated with being a man, the reason that they do so is that their dispositions are *masked* by the presence of various social costs. The reason that Sam does not publicly identify as genderqueer is because Sam worries that they will be punished in some way for doing so: they might lose their job, be shunned by their family, or be assaulted. If Sam were not worried about these negative repercussions, they would identify publicly as genderqueer. If Sam were (for instance) asked questions about their gender identity and if Sam did not worry about social repercussions (i.e. under ideal conditions), Sam would respond in a manner consistent with their gender identity (e.g. by affirming that they are genderqueer). Where Sarah's dispositions are finkish, Sam's dispositions are masked: they have the disposition in question, but

the disposition does not manifest under its stimulus conditions because of an external force that interferes with the normal causal chain.³¹

By accounting for both masks and finks, we can circumvent Dembroff's dilemma. By appealing to ideal conditions while holding fixed an individual's psychological properties relevant to their gender identity, we can examine the most relevant counterfactuals for determining how a person would act if there were no social costs to engaging in the behaviors associated with their gender identity.³² The problem that Dembroff raises for the extension of the dispositional view, of course, is only one of the problems that Dembroff raises for the dispositional account. The second problem that Dembroff raises is the problem of the significance of the dispositions associated with being genderqueer. If being genderqueer is solely a matter of linguistic convention—having the disposition to sincerely assert that one is genderqueer—then there seems to be little reason to prefer a dispositional view to Dembroff's own. In §8, I will argue that elements of Dembroff's own proposal can be used to strengthen the dispositional view against this objection. First, however, I will consider objections to my contention that understanding social circumstances as masks and finks allows us to avoid Dembroff's worry about the extension of the category of genderqueer.

³¹ Many similar cases can be constructed, of course, wherein people's gender identities would change if social structures changed: a person who is in fact genderqueer, for instance, might come to identify within the gender binary if there were no unjust social structures in place. The approach presented here can account for further such cases provided that the relevant adjustments are made.

³² A further consideration with respect to ideal conditions arises here. In their dispositional account of sexual orientation, Dembroff (2016) discusses an 'ideal conditions' view of the dispositions associated with having a particular sexual orientation. They raise two issues: first, that ideal conditions vary across societies; second, that an individual's dispositions would change under the ideal conditions, however they might be spelled out (e.g. if there were increased sexual opportunities, one's desire to engage might increase or decrease). The latter issue, in my view, is the problem of finks; the former view can be addressed with an adequate account of the way in which the relevant dispositions are extrinsic, but requires further development than can be given in this paper.

7. Necessarily unjust social structures

If the unjust social structures that prevent genderqueer people from exercising their gendered dispositions serve as masks and finks, then Dembroff's first objection to the dispositional view fails. Determining which of the dispositions associated with gender a particular person has requires that we examine more precise counterfactual scenarios than what they would do in the absence of unjust social structures: we must consider scenarios in which there are no unjust social structures *and* in which they retain the properties that constitute their dispositions. Doing so will allow us to circumvent cases of finkish dispositions and masked dispositions alike: because there are no social costs to identifying as genderqueer, there are no masks in such cases, and because we stipulate that their dispositions are held fixed, individuals who are in fact men and women will not be included in the category of genderqueer. One might argue, however, that because gender is necessarily unjust, such counterfactual scenarios are impossible or inconceivable. In this section, I will consider two objections related to this point.

First, one might object to the position I have developed here on the grounds that on McKittrick's account, the dispositions relevant to gender are extrinsic dispositions. As discussed above, some dispositions, such as weight and safety, are extrinsic: two identical individuals on different planets might weigh different amounts. If the dispositions relevant to gender are extrinsic dispositions, then in the same way that one's weight is different on Mars than it is on the Earth, one's gender in a society without cisnormative social structures—social structures built around the assumption that all individuals are men or women, and that whether one is a man or a woman is determined entirely by the sex one was assigned at birth—might be different than one's gender is in a society *with* cisnormative social structures. Appeals to cases without the

same gender norms and social costs might thus be appeals to cases in which different genders exist.³³

Second, and relatedly, one might object that gender is inherently unjust, and that any cases in which there are no social costs to identifying as genderqueer are cases in which there are no genders at all. On this line, the social structures which I have argued constitute masks and finks—threats of punishment for people who identify outside of the gender binary—are essential properties of gender itself. If the unjust social circumstances that prevent genderqueer people from acting as they otherwise might are necessarily components of the social structures that constitute gender as a social phenomenon, then if those unjust social circumstances did not exist (i.e. the ideal cases I have argued we ought to examine), gender would also not exist.³⁴

Both of these objections are significant, and either, if correct, would undermine the response that I have developed here. It is clearly false that no one has a gender identity, and examining what gender a person might have if things were different does little to help us determine what gender a person actually has. Yet there is a route available to the dispositionalist that can avoid both of these objections. To this point, I have assumed that the masks and finks present in the cases of interest here are the social structures themselves: unjust social circumstances mask genderqueer people's dispositions, and if just social circumstances came about, the just circumstances themselves would act as finks and change some men's and

³³ An analogous worry can be raised with respect to weight. Suppose that, contingently, scales could not function on Mars because of a yet-undiscovered electromagnetic field that interfered with scales' reading instruments. Clearly, if we wanted to know how much an entity weighed on Mars, it would be unhelpful to weigh the entity on a different planet (such as Earth) and interpret that result as the entity's weight on Mars. This worry stands regardless of whether we understand weight as an extrinsic disposition or weight-on-Mars as an intrinsic, relationally specified disposition.

³⁴ Again, an analogous worry can be raised here with respect to weight. Suppose that we were trying to get at the truth of what an entity's weight actually is on Earth. It would clearly be unhelpful to examine a case in which there are no gravitational laws; in such a case, the entity in question would not have a weight at all. While it might still produce a certain reading in response to making contact with a scale, it would be wrong to say that the reading produced tells us what the entity's weight *actually* is. Again, this worry stands whether we understand weight as an extrinsic disposition or weight-on-Earth as an intrinsic, relationally specified disposition.

women's dispositions. But this is not the only way to understand what the masks and finks present in these cases are. Rather than view the social circumstances themselves as masks and finks, we can view certain intrinsic states of the individuals in question as the relevant masks and finks.

Recall Sam, who identifies privately as genderqueer but publicly presents themselves as a man. The reason that Sam refrains from publicly presenting themselves as genderqueer is because Sam is afraid of the social repercussions of identifying as genderqueer. They worry that they will be targeted, discriminated against, fired, or assaulted. Because the reason that Sam refrains from publicly identifying as genderqueer is that they fear repercussions and believe that they will be subject to repercussions if they do so, one might hold that the mask present here is not the unjust social structure itself, but is instead some set of Sam's mental states.

Intrinsic states sometimes function as masks or finks. Consider a power strip with a built-in surge protector: the power strip is normally disposed to conduct electricity.³⁵ If there were ever a power surge, however, an intrinsic part of the power strip—the surge protector—would remove the power strip's disposition to conduct electricity. In some sense, then, the power strip is disposed to conduct copious amounts of electricity during power surges in virtue of its intrinsic structure, yet one of its intrinsic parts would act as a fink and remove that disposition if there were ever a power surge.³⁶

³⁵ This is to be distinguished from Martin's (1994) example of finks because the surge protector is an intrinsic part of the entity the dispositions of which it finks, whereas Martin's electro-fink is not.

³⁶ There is some disagreement as to whether intrinsic masks and finks are possible. Choi (2005, 2012) and Handfield (2008) have argued that they are conceptually impossible; rather than say that the power strip would lose its disposition to conduct electricity if there were ever a power surge, they argue, we should simply say that the power strip is not disposed to conduct electricity during the power surge. I think that this approach is mistaken; while a full defense of intrinsic masks and finks is beyond the scope of this paper, it seems clear that something is needed to distinguish between a power strip with an intrinsic surge protector and a piece of cardboard, for instance, that would *never* conduct electricity. Conceiving of such cases as instances of intrinsic finks is, in my view, the best option.

On this view, rather than considering cases in which unjust social structures do not exist, we should consider cases in which the individuals in question lack the particular psychological properties that mask their dispositions to, among other things, engage in forms of resistance and publicly identify as genderqueer.³⁷ If Sam's dispositions were not masked—if Sam retained all of their dispositions relevant to their gender identity but did not fear the repercussions of publicly identifying as genderqueer—then Sam would openly identify as genderqueer.

This understanding of the relevant masks and finks is able to overcome Dembroff's objection without falling prey to either of the worries raised above. Because the social structures themselves remain fixed in the different cases that we will consider, we do not run the risk of examining different genders. Further, because the inherently unjust social structures surrounding gender remain unchanged, the cases considered will not be cases in which gender does not exist.

Despite the success of this approach, I nonetheless prefer the strategy of taking social structures themselves as masks and finks for two reasons. First, I am not convinced that either of the objections discussed here is entirely successful. Even if gender is necessarily unjust, it is still possible to examine certain counterfactuals pertaining to cases in which unjust social structures are not immediately relevant. Rather than consider a case in which gender itself is different, for instance, we can examine a case in which unjust social structures do not immediately come to bear on an individual's dispositions. We can, for instance, consider how people would act if they

³⁷ One might object that changing one's intrinsic properties violates the constraint put in place to address finkish dispositions. Attempts to address finkish dispositions, however, such as Lewis's (1997), do not require that *all* of an entity's properties remain unchanged: only the individual property that constitutes the disposition in question must remain unchanged. In Lewis's case of a sorcerer and his glass, other properties of the glass, such as its color and size, could be changed without the causal base of the glass' disposition changing. Fears about the repercussions of acting in accordance with one's gender identity, while clearly related to gender identity, are not the same dispositions as those that in fact constitute gender identity, and can thus be changed in appeals to other cases.

were entirely comfortable discussing their gender identities: cases in which they are speaking to individuals whom they trust entirely, for instance.³⁸

Second, understanding the masks and finks present in these cases as social structures rather than intrinsic states provides a more unified explanation of the cases at hand. It is far easier to explain the phenomenon at hand if *all* cases in which genderqueer people fail to manifest their relevant dispositions are cases in which they are subject to the same masking social structures and if *all* cases in which men and women would come to identify as genderqueer if the social costs to doing so were alleviated are cases in which they are subject to the same finking social structures. There is more explanatory unity to be found here than there is if we understand the masks and finks as fears in some cases, worries in other cases, and beliefs in others. The explanatory disunity does not present a challenge to the view that intrinsic states function as the masks and finks: the phenomena which mask and fink other dispositions such as fragility share no underlying characteristics, yet we still recognize that tinkering sorcerers and sheets of bubble wrap alike can interfere with fragility's manifestation.

Both of these approaches—holding that social structures are masks and finks and holding that intrinsic psychological states are masks and finks—have their own advantages, and I believe that a combination of both will ultimately make for the best reply to Dembroff's first objection. With respect to certain dispositions, it might be best to say that social structures serve as masks; with respect to others, it might be best to say that intrinsic psychological states are masks; with respect to others yet, it might be best to say that *both* social structures *and* intrinsic psychological

³⁸ This approach to the problem would fit nicely with Manley and Wasserman's (2008) account of dispositions. Manley and Wasserman present a view according to which dispositions according to which we should examine sets of cases to determine whether something has a particular disposition. A glass that is dropped onto a soft surface is still fragile because in a suitable proportion of cases, the glass would break if it were dropped: some of the relevant cases would be cases in which the glass is dropped over concrete or over hardwood, and in those cases, the glass would break if it were dropped. In this case, we might say that a person is still genderqueer when they do not publicly identify as such certain social circumstances such as their workplace, but that they are still genderqueer because they identify as such in a range of cases in the actual world.

states serve as masks. Despite the explanatory unity and simplicity that one approach by itself might offer, the dispositionalist about gender need not commit solely to either. All that is necessary for a successful dispositional reply to this objection is the diagnosis that the cases that Dembroff identifies are cases of finks and masks and the adoption of some account of dispositions that is able to overcome these problems.

8. Toward a dispositional understanding of genderqueer identities

I have argued that a dispositional account of gender identity can avoid the inclusion problem that Dembroff raises. By holding fixed the dispositions in virtue of which individuals have the gender identities that they in fact have, we can address the problem of masks without getting the extension of any gender categories wrong. Yet if this response succeeds, Dembroff's second challenge still stands: the precise behaviors that constitute being genderqueer require further examination. Dembroff argues that there are no behaviors in which all and only genderqueer people engage other than the behavior of sincerely identifying themselves as genderqueer. But if this is the behavioral disposition that constitutes having a genderqueer identity, there is no substantive difference between a person who is genderqueer and a person who is not: the sole difference is a matter of linguistic convention, and genderqueer identities are effectively trivialized.

With an account of dispositions that addresses masks and finks, we can look at more substantive behavioral dispositions than just the disposition to sincerely identify as genderqueer. The dispositions in question, I contend, can be drawn from Dembroff's own account of critical gender kinds, and drawing on Dembroff's work as such can help elucidate a clearer understanding of the dispositional account of genderqueer identities. A dispositional account of genderqueer identities can focus around the disposition to engage in existential destabilizing:

roughly, those who are disposed to engage in existential destabilizing are genderqueer. As discussed above, Dembroff offers the following account of critical gender kinds:

Critical Gender Kinds: For a given kind X, X is a *critical gender kind* relative to a given society iff X's members collectively destabilize one or more core elements of the dominant gender ideology in that society (Dembroff 2020: 12; Dembroff's emphasis).

Dembroff further distinguishes between principled destabilizing, which “stems from or otherwise expresses individuals' social or political commitment regarding gendered norms, practices, and structures,” and existential destabilizing, which stems from “individuals' felt or desired gender role and/or categorization” (Dembroff 2020: 13). With respect to genderqueer identities, Dembroff offers the following:

Genderqueer: *Genderqueer* is a critical gender kind, such that its members have a felt or desired gender categorization that conflicts with the binary axis, and on this basis collectively destabilize this axis (Dembroff 2020: 16; Dembroff's emphasis).

What constitutes destabilization? In contemporary Western societies, a non-exhaustive list can begin with the following:

1. Using gender neutral pronouns
2. Presenting oneself in ways that violate cultural gendered expectations
3. Asserting one's gender categorization
4. Queering personal relationships
5. Eschewing sexuality binaries
6. Space switching (Dembroff 2020: 18)

What these behaviors have in common, Dembroff argues, is that they all can—at least in some contexts—undermine assumptions about gender and violate ‘rules’ for gendered behavior. Some of these forms of behavior might not succeed at destabilizing the gender binary in any way, yet success, for Dembroff, is not a criterion for successful resistance.

Suppose that Dembroff is right that the behaviors listed above form the beginning of a non-exhaustive list of behaviors that constitute destabilizing. If this is so, then a dispositional view of gender has somewhere to turn other than the disposition to sincerely assert what one's

gender is. Rather than reducing genderqueer identities to a matter of mere linguistic convention, a dispositional account can grant genderqueer identities the gravity that they warrant by focusing on the behaviors that Dembroff identifies as forms of destabilizing. With Dembroff's account of critical gender kinds and the behaviors that Dembroff identifies as central to destabilizing in mind, consider the following dispositional account of genderqueer identities:

Genderqueer as an identity (Dispositional): Some individual X is genderqueer iff X is disposed to engage in practices that serve to destabilize the dominant gender ideology in X's society, where X's behavior stems from X's felt or desired gender categorization.³⁹

By adopting an account of dispositions that can overcome the problems of finks and masks and by centering destabilizing, rather than sincerely avowing what one's gender is, as the relevant form of behavior, this account avoids both of Dembroff's objections. Further, because Dembroff's goal is not to analyze the individual property that makes a person genderqueer, but instead to analyze the *kind* genderqueer, this account is consistent with Dembroff's overall project.⁴⁰ However, Dembroff's definition of critical gender kinds can also be amended to account for the fact that the properties in question are dispositional. Consider the following account of genderqueer as a critical gender kind that recasts the position in dispositional terms:

Genderqueer as a gender kind (Dispositional): *Genderqueer* is a critical gender kind, such that its members have a felt or desired gender categorization that conflicts with the binary axis, and on this basis *are disposed to* collectively destabilize this axis.

There are theoretical advantages to using dispositional terms to define genderqueer both as a property and as a critical gender kind. First, note that one's social circumstances might be such that they are unable to engage in any kind of resistance, no matter how liberally the notion of engaging in resistance is spelled out: even if we include small acts of resistance, there might be contexts in which genderqueer individuals do not engage in any such small acts. If our definition

³⁹ While this characterization focuses on behavioral dispositions, it is important to note here that cognitive dispositions are also centrally relevant. The reasons for which one acts are key determinants of whether one's actions are manifestations of their gender identity.

⁴⁰ See Dembroff (2018) for further discussion of analyzing the individual property of gender identity.

of genderqueer identities and critical gender kinds reflects the fact that to be a member of a critical gender kind is to be *disposed* to engage in resistance, then such cases can be explained as masks just in the way that I have proposed here. An individual might still be a member of a critical gender kind if they do not engage in resistance due to social pressures, and defining gender critical kinds in a way that does not require that one actually engage in resistance will allow for the inclusion of such persons in the category of critical gender kinds.⁴¹

9. Conclusion

I have argued that Dembroff's objection to the dispositional account of gender fails. On a sufficiently reformed analysis of dispositions such as Lewis's, a dispositional account of gender can capture the extension of genderqueer identities without reducing the property of being genderqueer to the disposition to sincerely assert one's own gender. Further, an account such as Lewis's, if correct, can bolster Dembroff's own positive view: by understanding critical gender kinds as gender kinds the members of which are *disposed* to engage in various forms of resistance, we can avoid the worry that the problems that Dembroff raises for McKittrick's view can also be leveled against Dembroff's own view.

Because the dispositional account of gender is able to account for genderqueer identities, the prospects for a dispositional view of gender deserve further consideration. Though a full defense of a dispositional view that can account for genders *within* the binary requires further

⁴¹ Dembroff addresses a similar worry (2020: 19-20) to this one. Their project is not that of analyzing the individual property of being genderqueer; instead, it is that of analyzing the category genderqueer. As such, it is consistent with Dembroff's view that any particular individual can be genderqueer without actually engaging in resistance, provided that genderqueer people collectively do so. Dembroff offers an analogy to sports fandom: an individual San Francisco Giants fan who lives in Los Angeles might never engage in the various social practices associated with sports fandom out of fear of retaliation from Dodgers fan, yet they can still identify as a member of the group 'Giants fans' provided that the group collectively engages in those relevant behaviors. For Dembroff, however, "small acts of resistance" (2020: 20) still constitute the kind of external expression of destabilizing relevant to being genderqueer and as such, even those who hold that some form of expression is necessary for being genderqueer, this objection does not stand. While this objection might, in part, undermine the motivation for a dispositional view, a dispositional view is still well-suited to address this problem. Rather than say that someone can be a Giants fan without ever engaging in Giants-supporting activities, the dispositionalist can say that Giants fans' dispositions to engage in such activities are masked by social circumstances.

consideration than can be offered here, the fact that the dispositional view is able to account for genderqueer identities provides *prima facie* reason to pursue such a project. If my replies to Dembroff are successful, then the dispositional view should be taken as a serious contender for a metaphysical account of gender identity.

Though I have focused on the relationship between masks, finks, and gender identity here, the arguments that I have advanced can be generalized to allow for dispositional analyses of other phenomena, including other social identities, to succeed. Finkish dispositions remain a thorn in the side of dispositional analyses, but getting clear on how we can account for them will allow for metaphysical progress in this and a number of other related debates.

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