



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Feminism and Philosophy

Sally J. Scholz, Editor

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## FROM THE EDITOR

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### Sally J. Scholz

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During the last five years, the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* has flourished under the editorship of Joan Callahan. Issue after issue demonstrated the interesting and challenging dialogues occurring among feminist philosophers. Joan's superb work on the *Newsletter* helps to pave the way for ever-new ideas and diverse discussions. I hope to uphold her high standards during my tenure as editor and welcome any ideas, comments, or suggestions. To facilitate the transition between editors, Joan ensured that I would begin my term with an excellent issue ready to be assembled. Joan's guidance and encouragement as I begin my term as editor are invaluable. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to her for her support and for her years of serving Feminist Philosophy so well.

This issue of the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* includes four articles engaging the work of Sara Ruddick, as well as a response from her. Ruddick was honored as the 2002 Distinguished Woman Philosopher, awarded by the Society for Women in Philosophy. In the first article, Linda Martin Alcoff demonstrates the continuing relevance of the epistemological theory developed in *Maternal Thinking* and defends it against criticisms from postmodern perspectives. Alcoff also challenges Ruddick's notion of "reflective thought," questioning its feasibility and importance for maternal thinking. Patrice DiQuinzio focuses on motherhood and the contradictions that arise when one hires a caregiver to undertake some of the tasks traditionally assigned to the mother. DiQuinzio's essay is a thoughtful extension of Ruddick's work on motherhood into different contexts with varying social expectations. Hilde Lindemann Nelson, who also guest edited this collection of essays, reflects on "preservative love" and offers a case study in "holding someone in personhood." She further taps into Ruddick's peace politics by arguing that war is a prime example in which we have a moral obligation to hold someone in personhood. Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich engages practical peace politics and feminist epistemology in her tribute to Ruddick as a "thinking friend." Minnich shows how Ruddick, along with Arendt and Weil, "unfreeze" concepts to challenge hegemonic thinking. Finally, Sara (Sally) Ruddick responds to each of these thinking friends in a thoughtful, gracious manner that also highlights the interconnections between the four articles. Moreover, she demonstrates a willingness to continue the reflective process together, a process that has come to characterize feminist theory as well as feminist pedagogy.

These articles reflect the tremendous impact Sara Ruddick's work has had on feminist epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, peace politics, and social philosophy. They also illustrate, through

their personal stories, the important work of friendship in shaping feminist theory.

Hilde Lindemann Nelson guest edited the collection of essays featured here. I am deeply grateful for her diligent work both in organizing the original APA session and preparing the articles for publication.

The Spring 2004 issue of the *Newsletter* is a book review issue featuring reviews of twenty recent books in feminist philosophy. The *Newsletter* is always looking for more book reviewers, so please consider contributing in this capacity. The Fall 2004 issue will be a special joint issue with the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*. Eduardo Mendieta and I look forward to this collaborative effort and anticipate a lively dialogue on Hispanic or Iberian Feminism, Latin American Feminism, Indigenous forms of Feminism, Latino/a Feminisms, and/or *Mujerista* theological feminism. Please see the call for papers at the end of this issue.

### About the *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*

The *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* is sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). The *Newsletter* is designed to provide an introduction to recent philosophical work that addresses issues of gender. None of the varied philosophical views presented by authors of *Newsletter* articles necessarily reflects the views of any or all of the members of the Committee on the Status of Women, including the editor(s) of the *Newsletter*, nor does the committee advocate any particular type of feminist philosophy. We advocate only that serious philosophical attention be given to issues of gender and that claims of gender bias in philosophy receive full and fair consideration.

### Submission Guidelines and Information

**1. Purpose:** The purpose of the *Newsletter* is to publish information about the status of women in philosophy and to make the resources of feminist philosophy more widely available. The *Newsletter* contains discussions of recent developments in feminist philosophy and related work in other disciplines, literature overviews and book reviews, suggestions for eliminating gender bias in the traditional philosophy curriculum, and reflections on feminist pedagogy. It also informs the profession about the work of the APA Committee on the Status of Women. Articles submitted to the *Newsletter* should be limited to 10 double-spaced pages and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language. Please submit four copies of essays, prepared for anonymous review. References should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**2. Book Reviews and Reviewers:** If you have published a book that is appropriate for review in the *Newsletter*, please have your publisher send the Newsletter editor a copy of your book. We are always in need of book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send to the Editor a CV and letter of interest, including mention of your areas of research and teaching.

**3. Where to Send Things:** Please send all articles, comments, suggestions, books, and other communications to the Editor: Dr. Sally J. Scholz, Department of Philosophy, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19085-1699, [sally.scholz@villanova.edu](mailto:sally.scholz@villanova.edu).

**4. Submission Deadlines:** Submissions for Spring issues are due by the preceding September 1st; submissions for Fall issues are due by the preceding February 1st.

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## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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**Rosemarie Tong, CSW Chair**  
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### Report from the Chair

Over the years the Committee on the Status of Women has benefited enormously from the leadership of a series of outstanding women in philosophy. Most recently the Committee has been served extraordinarily well by Nancy Tuana who is rotating off as Chair, and Laura Duhan Kaplan, Diana Tietjens Meyers, and Charlene Haddock Seigfried who are rotating off as members. We owe each of these women much thanks and several rounds of applause. I am very much looking forward to working with the present CSW Committee: Lorraine B. Code, Sharon Crasnow, Tracy Edwards, Jane Kneller, Marleen Rozemond, Cynthia Stark, Anita Superson, and Georgia Warnke. I am also looking forward to working with the new editor of the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, Sally Scholz. Sally will be replacing Joan Callahan who produced one superb *Newsletter* year after year. Like Nancy, Joan is a hard act to follow, but judging from this issue of the *Newsletter*, Sally is certainly up to the challenge.

During Nancy's term of office, the CSW facilitated excellent panel sessions at each of the division meetings. Making certain that these sessions continue to be as good as they have been in the past is one of my priorities. I inherited an excellent 2003 Eastern Division Meeting panel from my predecessor. Diana Meyers will chair a panel entitled "Women Philosophers, Sidelined Challenges, and Professional Philosophy." The panelists are Charles Mill ("A Critical Race Theory Perspective"), Eileen O'Neill ("A History of Philosophy Perspective"), Virginia Valian ("A Cognitive Psychological Perspective"), and Margaret Walker ("A Feminist Philosophy Perspective"). The Chair of the CSW Pacific Division Panel in Pasadena (2004) will be Lorraine B. Code, and the Chair of the CSW Central Division Panel in Chicago (2004) will be Charlene Haddock Seigfried.

Over and beyond working to see that our programming and *Newsletter* needs continue to be met as excellently as they have been in the past, I intend to work with the CSW to further refine, rethink, and restructure the relationship between the Inclusiveness Committee, a standing committee of the APA, and the Diversity Committees (Committee on the Status of American Indians in Philosophy; Committee on the Status of Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies; Committee on Blacks in Philosophy; Committee on Hispanics; Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People in the Profession; and Committee on the Status of Women). Lucius Outlaw, the present Chair of the Inclusiveness Committee, Michael Kelly, the Executive Director

of the APA, and the chairs of the diversity committees are committed to this important task. We all need to reflect upon the interrelationships as well as tensions between the realities of "diversity" and "inclusiveness" and their near relatives: "otherness," "difference," and "multiplicity."

Another crucial CSW task is using present APA survey data as well as possible, and helping the APA produce even better survey data in the future. Not only women in philosophy but also the philosophers represented by the APA's other diversity committees need high quality empirical data about their status in the profession. For that matter, the APA itself needs this information to pursue funding opportunities; to assure the public it is serving the intellectual, moral, political, and social interests of all its members; and, most importantly, to reassure its membership that it is up to the challenges of a profession that is evolving rapidly, multiply, and sometimes surprisingly. But there is a price to be paid for good empirical data about ourselves and others in the profession. The CSW will be requesting you to motivate your colleagues to fill out forms manually and/or online; to be specific about the kind of information you need; and to answer questions as candidly and forthrightly as possible. Few departments and institutions (if any) have perfect records with respect to meeting the interests of all the philosophers represented by the diversity committees and all the concerns raised by the Inclusiveness Committee. Thus, a measure of honesty about our mistakes and shortcomings will only help us learn how to better serve each other's needs. In other words, transparency needs to be the order of the day.

I view being Chair of the CSW as a major responsibility. I want to work with as many different kinds of women in the profession as possible to meet our old needs as well as some new ones. I know each member of the CSW is committed to doing the best it can to represent your needs, interests, values, and ideas to others in the profession. Please let us know what you think our priorities should be. The CSW will be meeting at each of the division meetings and we would be only too happy to fill our agenda with your suggestions. Please feel free to contact me ([rotong@email.uncc.edu](mailto:rotong@email.uncc.edu)) or any member of the CSW with your ideas. I, and the rest of the CSW, hope to see many of you at the CSW Session, chaired by Diana Tietjens Meyers, in Washington, D.C. It will be held from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on December 28, 2003, in the Thoroughbred Room (Concourse level). It is a good time to be a woman in the profession; but together we can make it an even better time.

Appreciatively,

Rosemarie Tong, Ph.D.  
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## ARTICLES

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### Guest Editor: Hilde Lindemann Nelson

Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

*Editor's note.* The Society for Women in Philosophy bestowed its Distinguished Woman Philosopher award for 2002 on Sara Ruddick. The occasion was marked by a SWIP session at the Eastern Division APA meeting in Ruddick's honor, featuring papers by Elizabeth Minnich, Patrice DiQuinzio, Linda Martín Alcoff, and Hilde Lindemann Nelson, with a response from Ruddick. The revised papers and Ruddick's reply have been assembled for this issue of the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, together with Nelson's opening encomium.

### In Honor of Sara Ruddick

We have come together to praise Sally Ruddick, not to make her squirm, so I will keep these remarks very brief.

Sally grew up in Toledo, Ohio, and then went East, taking a bachelor's degree in literature at Vassar College. She did her doctoral work in philosophy at Harvard, where she met Bill Ruddick, to whom she has been married for many years. When Bill got a teaching job at Dartmouth, Sally followed him, completing a dissertation on Wittgenstein with some difficulty, in a setting where she was neither quite a philosopher nor quite a faculty wife. After four years they moved first to Boston and then to Manhattan. There Sally taught philosophy, literature, and biography at the Lang College of the New School for Social Research, Bill taught—and still teaches—in the philosophy department at New York University, and they reared their two children, Hal and Lizza.

Sally will tell you she overcame a paralyzing inability to write by becoming engaged with feminist politics, and the two volumes she coedited, *Working It Out* (1977) and *Between Women* (1984), reflect her feminist activism. But she has always also been an activist for peace, and it is at the intersection of feminism and peace politics that Sally has done her most creative, original, and important work.

Her feminist politics allowed her to believe that mothering relationships and the work of care were respectable objects of intellectual inquiry, and as she developed a critique of the too-narrow norms of rationality that have dominated analytic philosophy, she came to see that a distinctive kind of thinking was required by maternal practice. Then she examined mothering to see if she could find in that practice the theoretical resources for a politics of peace. Drawing on those resources, she constructed a model of maternal nonviolence that employed thinking infused by passion, love, and care. The result was *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, first published by Beacon Press in 1989 and then brought out in a second edition in 1995.

*Maternal Thinking* has been an immensely influential work. It extended and enriched the ethics of care by providing it with an epistemology that has been taken up even by feminists who have been care ethics' most vocal critics. It took seriously a social practice which, because it was engaged in primarily by women and was assumed to come naturally to them rather than requiring any skill or reflection, commanded no respect and certainly could not be an object of sustained philosophical inquiry. It obliterated the bright line between the public sphere of state-sanctioned violence and the private sphere of the family by insisting that the training required for a politics of peace begin at home, at one's mother's knee. It stubbornly resisted the idea that to talk of mothering was to reinforce sexist

stereotypes, or that feminists have more important things to worry about than child care and the feelings it inspires.

In the 1990s Sally continued to write about war and about the ethics of care, though she gradually retired from Lang College. She has never retired from teaching, though. As many of you in this audience know, if you send Sally a paper for comments and suggestions, what you get back is painstaking, intelligent editorial advice. I codirected an NEH Summer Seminar for College and University teachers a couple of years ago at which Sally spoke so movingly that the participants lifted a phrase from her talk—“resist regret”—and had it silk-screened onto the T-shirt they designed as a souvenir of their summer. Sally is also a wonderfully shrewd and supportive sounding-board for the authors who have written books in the Feminist Construction series, which she coedits with me and Margaret Urban Walker.

As a friend, a teacher, a writer, an activist, and an editor, Sally stands out. But I think her most profound impact on philosophy, the impact for which we honor her, has been her idiosyncratic brand of alchemy. Like a medieval sage in possession of the philosopher's stone, Sally has taken the dishonored dross of the work of mothering and turned it into intellectual gold.

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### Rethinking Maternal Thinking

#### Linda Martín Alcoff

Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Sara Ruddick's work has played a significant role in my life in a number of ways. I first came across her work in the interdisciplinary collection, coedited with Pamela Daniels and published in 1977, called *Working It Out: 23 Women Writers, Artists and Scholars Talk about Their Life and Work*. In fact, for many women I know, *Working It Out* was something of a lifesaver in graduate school, providing real-life confirmation of the difficulties that we were then experiencing, as well as a group of heterogeneous models for how to face those difficulties down. In short, it provided inspiration to keep trying and to hope that things might get better.

The themes that organized the book are the challenges faced by *women*, in particular, in doing intellectual and creative work. These challenges can include male-dominated styles of work and organizations of the workplace but also the subjective self of women who pursue any non-family-related individual project. The authors talked about such concrete issues as how to negotiate the conflicting needs between domestic and work spaces, and how to find a way to be a creative person in the midst of the lives of constant distraction that most women live. *Working It Out* played a crucial role for so many of us, who lent it around regularly, in making us feel less weird and crazy for our internal monologues of self-doubt and anxiety, and our monologues about having monologues! The book gave us, as consciousness-raising at its best had done, a political context for our difficulties, but without the abstractions of structural analysis or the objective distancing of social psychology. The stories were personal, literary, confessional (before that became a dirty word), and courageous in their honesty. The personal nature of the stories is precisely what made them so useful: reading about Evelyn Fox Keller crying in her parked car brought home in a vivid way the pressures of the academy, and provided a kind of reassurance that no theoretical analysis could provide. I was so inspired and helped by this book that I embarked a few years ago on a similar project for women in philosophy, a collection of twelve essays of senior women's experiences through the changes in the profession that have today made at

least European-American women so much more secure in the field. The working title I am using says it all: *Singing in the Fire: Stories of Women in Philosophy*; it has just been published (November, 2003, Rowman and Littlefield). And like Sally's book, mine contains pictures, in this case old ones! Sally has herself been enormously helpful in this project.

Those of us a little younger than Sally may have trouble remembering the climate of philosophical discourse that dominated the arena when she began her career. There was no feminist philosophy at all, and when her germinal essay "Maternal Thinking" was first published in *Feminist Studies* in 1980, there was still very little. That was a year before Lorraine Code's groundbreaking essay, "Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?" appeared in *Metaphilosophy*—an essay that many take to be the first attempt at doing feminist epistemology *per se*.<sup>1</sup> It was three years before Harding and Hintikka's revolutionary collection, *Discovering Reality*, which really opened up the field of epistemology as a suitable terrain of feminist inquiry.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 1980 was only five years after the infamous government study that, in ranking the difficulty and complexity of various kinds of work, rated midwives as slightly *less* skilled than hotel clerks. Even more astonishingly, the study went on to rate child care attendants, nursery school teachers, practical nurses, and foster mothers as having slightly less difficult and complex jobs than dog pound attendants, mud mixer helpers, and shovelers of chicken shit.<sup>3</sup> This was the philosophical, political, and general discursive climate in which Sally turned serious philosophical scrutiny on the everyday world of mothering.

The field of feminist philosophy has really developed since that time. Feminist epistemology has developed into its own subdiscipline, and there continues to be a steady stream of philosophical attention to ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological questions in regard to mothering, pregnancy, and childcare in general.<sup>4</sup> Also since that time, of course, we have been through numerous stages of the theoretical and political conflicts over difference, essentialism, Eurocentrism, and heterosexism within feminist theory, as well as the turns toward poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction as new theoretical and methodological approaches. *Maternal Thinking* received criticisms from the beginning from those who were worried it would further pigeonhole women into traditional roles, that it ignored the importance of fathers, that it romanticized or even glorified the oppressive conditions of motherhood, or that it simply ignored cultural, racial, and sexual diversity. Since poststructuralism's rise, the kind of approach she uses in the book has been critiqued for essentializing experience. Thus I thought it might be a useful exercise to take a fresh look at this work with the benefit of what we always imagine to be our theoretically and politically superior hindsight (which is what of course I want to call into question). How would *Maternal Thinking* hold up today, in these postmodern times?

This exercise is relevant not just for Sally's work but for feminist philosophy more generally. Feminist philosophy seems to be in something of a retreat. In a recent essay published in the *NWSA Journal*, Robyn Wiegman takes issue with the "return to the 1970s" appeal, and while I do not accept her full argument in every detail, the general account is important to consider. Wiegman argues that the turn toward high theory, especially in the 1990s, replaced a utilitarian attitude toward feminist theory that circumscribed its parameters too severely for effectively open thought. The demand for short-term relevance and applicability, she contends, can sometimes work to foreclose the opportunities for theory to think beyond currently widespread assumptions. I bring this up to underscore that my interest in reassessing Sally's approach is not based on a desire to return to the glory days of 1970's feminism. We are in a very

different time and place, of which Sally's recent work is very cognizant (see her recent paper with Carol Cohn on weapons of mass destruction). Yet the point of reassessment is to raise the question whether some of the current commonly held assumptions of theory have themselves become shibboleths that we might do well to relinquish. As I shall explain, some of those assumptions have mistakenly left behind the kind of approach Sally develops in *Maternal Thinking*.

So first I will give some idea of the argument of the book.

*Maternal Thinking* offers an ethnographic epistemology of mothering work that seeks to uncover and rationally reconstruct its cognitive practices. The first thing to note is that her account is not based on experience or identity; the kind of thinking engaged in by mothers does not occur, on her account, because they are mothers *per se* nor does it flow from the experience of pregnant embodiment and the experience of giving and sustaining life. (In fact, sometimes I think there is too little discussion of bodily matters in the book.) Rather, she is making use of an approach from Wittgenstein and Ryle that focuses on practices themselves. It is the *work* of mothering that holds Sally's interest. This makes it easy for her to answer the charge of essentializing experience or of excluding men—she posits no necessary relationship between women's embodiment, the ability to give birth, and mothering practices. Moreover, her analysis of the cognitive practices in mothering work is governed by her understanding that "thought is social" (15), because concepts gain their meaning from shared practices that are governed by public criteria for intelligibility, validity, and truth.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, thought "does not transcend its social origins" (15). It does not represent some transcendental truth in rough form but is a kind of practice itself bounded by the specificity of its context. Perspective, or the situated locality of thought, is not a limitation but a condition of its possibility. Thus, "the criteria for truth and falsity, the nature of evidence, and the role of faith will vary with the practice, whether the practice be religious, scientific, critical—or maternal" (16).

Sally defines maternal practice as developing out of a response to demands. These are the demands of a biological child but she also understands these demands as necessarily formulated and articulated in a particular cultural context, leaving the door open to the question of their cross-cultural generality. She groups the demands mothers face in our context, then, into three categories: (1) the demand for the preservation of life (I remember that when I used to argue with my son about climbing rocks and skateboarding in the street, I was thinking that my job was to keep my children alive until they were 19, after which they were on their own), (2) the demand for a fostering of their growth, which she calls nurturing, and (3) the demand to train them to behavior that is socially acceptable in the life-world they inhabit. She suggests that if these are defined loosely enough we might apply them across cultures, but in the main her project is wisely to do a very particular ethnography of the maternal practices she herself knows best. She discusses at some length how these demands can be interpreted and practiced in unrealistic and harmful ways, and how maternal practices toward meeting these demands can go seriously awry. There is no romanticization of mothering here, nor is there the idea that mothering practices are exempt from criticism from nonmothers. Her argument is simply against the view of mothering as an innate activity that bypasses the brain. This account is inadequate, she argues, because mothering takes a great deal of thought, we can learn from the kinds of thought it takes, and we can usefully contrast it with other kinds of thought in other practical contexts.

Let me just give a couple of examples of the kind of thought Sally uncovers. In the practice of preservation, mothers develop a "mental habit or cognitive style" that she calls "scrutinizing." "In city streets or at the beach," she explains, "traveling or at

home, mothers are on the lookout for dangers before they appear. Their alert, action-ready glances are often furtive, so that children don't feel observed, and apparently intermittent, so that the mother has enough energy for a chat or a chore" (72). Scrutinizing is a watchful gaze that can become "obsessive or intrusive" but at its best is tempered by a kind of metaphysical humility about what one can actually control. Sally's suggestion is not that this metaphysical humility is unique to mothers or mothering practices, but it is an attitude that the drive toward preservation will have to cultivate if it is to be done well. On her view this wise attitude about the limits of control is not simply innate to the practice, but emerges from a thoughtful engagement in the practice.

Connected to this scrutinizing practice is the work of what Sally calls "protective love" which comes with a distinctive concept of "nature." Her argument is not that women are more natural, or inclined to the natural, but that the task of preserving a growing and changing and self-directing being within a tumultuous, complex, and dangerous environment engenders distinctive attitudes about the recalcitrance of the given, where here "the given" is the will of a child. "To respect [a child's] fury or . . . giddy high spirits or a body that seems perpetually mobile is respecting nature, much as one respects the strength of a hurricane, the rush of a waterfall, or the onset of age" (76). This does not require that mothers adopt a passive attitude toward every natural process. "Nature," she says, "can be thought of as a respected opponent with whom they are watchfully and sometimes antagonistically engaged" (77). But that word "engagement" is key. Nature is not to be overcome, it is a given—rather, it is to be worked with. "Children are nothing before they are natural, and their growing is itself a working of nature. When children thrive, it is nature that thrives" (77). The importance of this is the noncontrolling aspect. I think of it as the contrast between swimming in the ocean and swimming in a backyard pool: in the ocean one must be ever-cognizant and respectful of the forces beyond one's control.

Sally again claims that protective love, like scrutinizing, encourages in mothers what she calls a "cognitive capacity for double focus" (78), that is, the double focus on "last as well as first things," on the "small and great, near and eternal," the banality of the toothache and profundity of the passing of lifecycles. Unlike corporations, which seem ever capable of focusing exclusively on the short term and the quick profit, mothering, as Sally reminds us, maintains a dual awareness that "a child's life is bounded by a birth and a death that place teeth, schoolwork, childhood battles, and thousands of dinners *sub specie aeternitatis*. Birthdays, serious illnesses, first and last days of school, births and deaths of pets, first loves, first jobs, and many other unscheduled events of childhood prompt larger questions of meaning" (78). In other words, the necessarily transitional and teleological nature of the work pulls against a mother's ability to stay always and only at the level of the immediate and short term.

Sally's account of scrutinizing and protective love as both involving a kind of double focus, of furtive glances at potential dangers even while one goes about normal events, and a simultaneous awareness of the near and the eternal, made me think of Simone de Beauvoir's phenomenological description of the condition of the woman intellectual or creator, the woman who needs to maintain a totally exclusive focus on her work but who is undermined by her heightened self-consciousness and her need to be attentive to the everyday requirements of life. De Beauvoir portrays this as an unambiguous feature of oppression: the heightened self-consciousness that comes from not being easy in one's position, and the need for a divided attentiveness because one has the duties of the double day. Sally is not necessarily describing someone who is trying to do creative work while having to

simultaneously keep an eye on the children, yet her accounts provide a new sense that the double focus De Beauvoir bemoans may not be all bad. The ability to write, without a doubt, is undermined and even destroyed by the constancy of interruptions, whether from a child or a ringing phone or those irritating computer pop-up messages that tell you "you've got mail," but the very capacity for a split focus, for a complex rather than singular attention that can take in both short and long term values, may contain some cognitive resources, as well as being simply a necessity in certain situations, rather than something that must at all costs be overcome. If one bemoans the double focus, one may forgo the very attempt to "multi-task" a life of mothering and intellectual work, or may forgo hiring those who do attempt it. Thus, Sally's rational redescription of maternal thought processes provides a reflective awareness that may be enlightening and useful for nonmothers and for mothers alike.

Let me turn now to how we might reassess this book by bringing up a set of criticisms made by Bat-Ami Bar On. In an important but largely bypassed essay entitled "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," Bar On questions the standpoint theorist's claim that the marginalized and oppressed are epistemically privileged.<sup>6</sup> Sally says in *Maternal Thinking* that she counts herself among standpoint theorists insofar as standpoint theory opposes transcendental, nonsituated approaches to knowledge. She also endorses the aim of standpoint theory, which is to "redefine reason and restructure its priorities" so that, in Nancy Hartsock's words, it will be possible to "generalize the potentiality made available by the activity of women" which Sally calls "caring labor." Bar On argues that standpoint theories neglect the negative effects of oppression and she targets both Sally and Virginia Held for romanticizing and idealizing the maternal role of caring and for associating maternity with epistemic privilege. Though I do like Bar On's essay for her elaboration of the genealogy of the idea of epistemic privilege and her articulation of its dangers, I think I can defend Sally from her criticisms.

In the same section where she groups herself among the standpoint theorists, Sally distances herself from claims to epistemic privilege that would link women's standpoint to a decontextualized, non-Wittgensteinian conception of truth. Thus she is uncomfortable with the terminology of privilege and wants rather to argue for a multiplicity and heterogeneity of valid or valuable cognitive styles: her argument is just that the cognitive styles typical of mothering practices have been ignored. She also fears that the tendency of "standpoint theorists or their followers" is to "lose sight of the failures and temptations of the caretakers they celebrate" and even to fall into a dualistic righteousness that might legitimate violence, since it sees itself on the side of the good (135).

Bar On argues that, Sally's misgivings notwithstanding, the practices on which she bases her positive account of maternal thinking are practices that "are related to women's identity as defined within the system that oppresses them."<sup>7</sup> Bar On goes on to argue that "although oppression does not necessarily erase all the practices of a culture that precedes it, the traces of the practices that are left do not retain their original meaning but change through their interaction with the practices of the oppressive system. They are, therefore, necessarily tainted by oppression."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Bar On argues that the claim for epistemic privilege for the marginalized is founded on the Marxist argument, as interpreted by Lukacs, that the working class is potentially capable of seeing through the illusions of fair wages and the like. But she reminds us that the Marxist argument rested on two aspects of the workers' location, not simply one: they are marginal to the processes of hegemony-making under capitalism, and they are central to the point of production. Thus they have direct empirical awareness of how

production actually occurs, and of who does the actual work. The mistake of standpoint theorists, Bar On argues, is to extend the Marxist analysis to ethnic minorities and women, and thus to take marginality alone as capable of yielding epistemic insightfulness.

Here I think Sally's version of standpoint theory has an advantage over some other accounts, because there is a way in which one can argue that mothering practices share the two aspects of the workers' location: they have a marginality to the sites of hegemony but a centrality in society. Workers are centrally located in the process of production, and mothers are central still in the process of reproduction. The ideological expressions of concern for family values by the ruling class have lots of empirical counter-evidence in the everyday struggles of mothers, especially of mothers who work outside the home, mothers on farms, lower income mothers in cities, lower income mothers everywhere. The positive resources in the best practices of mothering that Sally draws from are not based on their social marginality, or the fact that they are ignored in the public domain, or the fact that they are undervalued in the economic domain, nor are they based on mothers' epistemic marginality. Rather, the practices have a valid and valuable cognitive role to play, in Sally's view, because of the nature of the practices themselves. And I also wonder whether we can see in the practices that Sally describes the taint of oppression Bar On attributes to them. The double focus, for example, that I mentioned above, is surely ubiquitous across many diverse contexts, whether or not one is engaged in mothering practices under conditions of oppression. It is probably in the sphere of what Sally calls "training" that questions of oppression will mainly arise, since it is here that the aim itself—social acceptability and functionality—rather than the aims of preservation and growth, will necessarily be completely bound up with the kinds of social structures in their given society that reinforce an oppressive status quo. But Sally is also well aware of this. Her most searing critical remarks about the kinds of mistakes possible in mothering practices are contained in this chapter on "training."

In some respects one might argue that Sally's account in this book is not a standpoint account. The cognitive practices she explores do not flow from marginality, nor do they flow necessarily from identity—since she is focusing on practices that could be performed by fathers as well as mothers. She explains, persuasively in my view, that she wanted to avoid the neutral "parenting" adjective in order to honor and remind us of the reality that it is largely mothers who are still engaged in this kind of parenting. She does not hold that better and newer research questions arise from a position of marginality, as Harding argues in the context of science. And she takes pains to argue against a particular political orientation (environmentalism, for example) as following from maternal practice. Even peacemaking, which she does contend is involved in maternal practice, is something she draws out not because mothers are more inclined toward peace in the larger political or global situation but because the peacemaking practices in maternal work can be usefully contrasted to the kind of decision making used in military models of theory choice. Thus, I would argue that her claims are specific to practices, do not romanticize motherhood overall, are independent of oppressive conditions, and have little to do with marginality.

Overall, I believe Sally's work on maternal thinking can play a critical role in the reassessment of our intellectual virtues, and thus show the potential feminist contributions to the development of virtue epistemology. If standpoint theory factors in the *social* as a relevant epistemic consideration, the virtue epistemology approach focuses on the *individual*, but the social can be brought to bear here if one holds that virtues can be cultivated, or not, and that dispositions are always culturally marked (as female or male virtues) and valued accordingly in

society. Feminine characteristics, even when seen as virtues, have played a significant role in women's general epistemic disauthorization. Considered overly sentimental and weak, we are taken to be inadequate to the hard task of pursuing truth. Emotional connectedness makes us disinclined to entertain hurtful hypotheses, passivity makes us slow to defend our claims against opposition, and the tendency toward dialogue, though it may be helpful at times, has no *necessary* purchase on truth-tracking.<sup>9</sup>

To the extent that Sally's work presents us with new descriptions of maternal practice and its epistemic elements, she has helped to discredit the epistemic assumptions behind the disauthorization of women, and helped to open the field of debate about the kind of intellectual virtues most valuable for achieving reliable knowledge. Neither maternal practices nor feminine ways of being in the world are exclusive to women. Nonetheless, the epistemic discrediting of these characteristics has been integral to sexism. A more accurate assessment of these characteristics' advantages should permit those individuals who have them, whether they are male or female, to receive a better epistemic standing.

Some of the critics of *Maternal Thinking* have perhaps been among those feminists who believe that our first battle must be to disengage these associations or to decolonize women by countering their socialization in traditional femininity. Such battles are without a doubt important but also important is to counter the overwhelming cultural denigration of anything and everything tainted with femininity as trivial, subjectivist, irrational, silly, weak, unnecessary, insignificant, and so on. Here, Sally's work is critically important. Her methodological focus on practices is able to effect this reassessment without solidifying the biological or otherwise deterministic association between nurturing and femaleness.

Let me end with one worry about the degree of reflective thought Sally felt was required for avoiding the many errors one can fall prey to in seeking to preserve, nurture, and train children. One of my most important mothering role models, my husband's mother, recently passed away, and in preparing to speak at the funeral I thought about all I had learned from this woman with a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education who never read a child psychology book, read only Harlequin romances in fact, yet almost single-handedly raised three children and raised them very well. What I said at her funeral was that this was a woman who led with her heart, when she took her son's side in his battles with teachers, when she fought with the rabbi to allow him to stay in Hebrew School even though he was constantly arguing against the teacher's biblical interpretations, and when she struggled to maintain peaceful family relations and harmony in the midst of strife. Was I saying that in leading with her heart she was not leading with her head, and thus was I supporting the naturalistic representation of mothering that Sally seeks to debunk? I think what I meant to say was that this was a mother who trusted her feelings. There is no question in my mind that she was a wise mother; she was described by those who knew her best as having a smile and a wisecrack for everyone, thus a woman very much like Sally's description of those with the double focus on both the sweet and the sour of life, the short-term delights and the inevitable long term losses. This is an orientation to life, a mode of being, but is it necessarily the product of reflection? I also said at the funeral that my husband got his union and class politics from her, not because she held the positions he holds and taught him a class analysis, but because his politics come from his heart, and his heart came from his mother. In this sense, the heart is a metaphor for an orientation to the world that values feelings, even in some cases when they are in conflict with thought. In revaluing maternal thought, we need also to reassert the legitimacy and rationality of maternal feeling.

## Endnotes

1. Lorraine Code, "Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?" *Metaphilosophy* 12 (July/October 1981): 267-76.
2. Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Methodology, and the Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983).
3. See Louise Kapp Howe, *Pink Collar Workers: Inside the World of Women's Work* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 236-39.
4. This is occurring in both analytic and continental philosophy: one of my favorite recent papers at a Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy conference was titled "When Dasein Gets Pregnant" by Lanie Rodemeyer.
5. All quotations are taken from Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).
6. Bat-Ami Bar On, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge 1992), 83-100.
7. Bar On, 93.
8. Bar On, 94.
9. I discuss the epistemic value of feminine dispositions in "Gadamer's Feminist Epistemology," in Lorraine Code, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (State College, Pa.: Pennsylvania State Press, 2003).

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## Mothers and Other Care Givers: Moral Dilemmas of 'Distributed Mothering'

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It is no exaggeration to say that if I had not discovered Sara Ruddick's work, I would not have had a career in philosophy. I first encountered Sally's work on mothering when I was a graduate student in the 1980s. At that time I was also the mother of two young sons and I was struggling to figure out how to be a good mother, a good family member, and a good teacher and scholar of philosophy. I was growing disenchanted with philosophy, as the problems I worked on as a scholar grew farther and farther removed from the problems I encountered in my daily life. Discovering Sally's work on mothering showed me that I could close that gap to some extent, and, perhaps more importantly, that the problems I encountered in my daily life as a mother and family member could be a source of important and valuable philosophical thinking. Sally's work, beginning with her crucially important essay "Maternal Thinking" (1980), has been a touchstone for my scholarly work and has deeply influenced my personal understanding of what it means to be a decent person. Over twenty years later, Sally's work, as well as her enthusiastic and thoughtful support of my work, and the work of so many others, continues to inspire me.

So when I was asked to speak on the occasion of SWIP's honoring Sally as a distinguished woman philosopher, I turned again to her work for inspiration, specifically to two essays in *Mother Troubles: Rethinking Contemporary Maternal Dilemmas* (1999), a collection that Sally edited with legal theorist Julia G. Hanigsberg. Sally's work always encouraged us to address even the most difficult questions about mothering, and the essays in this collection are no exception. Two of these essays in particular—Eva Kittay's "'Not My Way, Sessa, Your Way, Slowly': 'Maternal Thinking' in the Raising of a Child with Profound Intellectual Disabilities" and Jennifer Nedelsky's "'Dilemmas of Passion, Privilege, and Isolation: Reflections on Mothering in a White, Middle-Class Nuclear Family"—pose a question that I always found difficult to answer when I was engaged in the daily work of maternal practice, and that I return to as I reflect on my experiences of mothering now that my sons are living on

their own. That question is: what ought to be the ethical guidelines that inform mothers' relationships with those who assist them in their work of maternal practice?

To address this question we need an ethics of family life, but an ethics that recognizes the extent to which people other than mothers or fathers, traditionally defined, often do significant care giving for children in the family, children who are not "their" children in the usual sense of that term. So here I want to explore the extent to which Sally's account of maternal thinking suggests ethical guidelines for relationships among care givers.

Let me begin with the easier version of my question, which deals with unpaid assistance. The most common context in which others assist mothers without pay is family relationships, although friends can also assist mothers in important ways. In contemporary U.S. culture there is a wide range of these sorts of family relationships; they can include situations in which grandmothers, mothers-in-law, aunts, sisters, sisters-in-law, stepmothers, step-grandmothers, and male members of families or stepfamilies provide significant care of a mother's children, or significant material support of these children. Friends can also assist a mother with care giving, and these sorts of relationships may be somewhat more likely in less than traditional families, such as the families of gay and lesbian parents.

One such situation that is especially relevant to mothers of my generation, the baby boomers, is when we turn to our own mothers for assistance with our child rearing. What are our moral obligations to our own mothers, if they significantly assist us in raising our children? Our mothers may be in a position to provide a lot of help in raising their grandchildren because they did not have options, or the same range of options, that we did with respect to careers or other opportunities in life. If women of my generation turn to our mothers for child rearing assistance, and we get it at least in part because our mothers are not now thoroughly immersed in other activities that would prevent their assisting us, are we taking advantage of their earlier lack of options? And if we accept that assistance from our mothers, do we thereby increase our obligations to our mothers, such as our obligation to care for them when they need it? Do we also increase our obligation to assist in rearing the grandchildren that we may have some day? If so, will we be ready and able to do so, given our involvement in work or other activities? If our obligations to our children's children, or the children of other family members, comes into conflict with other obligations or goals we have, what moral guidelines should we follow in resolving these conflicts?

I have argued elsewhere that Sally's account of maternal thinking and practice implies that successful maternal practice tends to reproduce itself, that is, it tends to result in children who are capable of maternal practice themselves (DiQuinzio 1995). I think that similarly, one could argue that morally appropriate relationships of distributed mothering should include a kind of reciprocity of care giving, so that accepting assistance with one's care giving work entails further obligations to provide care when one can. An experience I had with Sally many years ago is an example of what I mean here. Sally gave me considerable personal and professional support at a time when I really needed it. When I expressed my gratitude and wondered how I could ever repay her, she told me, "You don't repay me, you give someone else who needs it the same kind of support when you're in a position to do so." So accepting the care giving assistance of others may entail an obligation to assist either those who assisted us, or relevant others, when we are in a position to do so. It may also entail an obligation to make sure we are in a position to do so.

Looking at family relationships more generally, I think there is the potential for a kind of emotional blackmail in these

contexts—family members asked to assist in child rearing may feel pressure to demonstrate their love for one's children by providing the assistance requested even at great cost to themselves. And it may be easy for a mother to overlook the cost to others of helping her care for her children when she feels desperate to have that assistance. A different version of this dilemma can also arise when family members insist on providing care of children that their mother may find intrusive or inappropriate. A mother may find it hard to refuse such offers of assistance from family members, particularly if she has asked for and received other forms of assistance.

A mother may feel that her authority or responsibility require that she have significant control over the nature and quality of the care given by others. But her trying to exercise that degree of control may mean ignoring the ideas of other care givers about how to provide care, ideas which may be perfectly acceptable, perhaps even preferable to her own. As Sally's analysis of maternal thinking warns, the desire for maternal control and attempts to exercise it can be obstacles to the goals of maternal practice. And this dilemma may be more difficult to navigate in the context of family or friends providing assistance. A mother may feel that she is not in a position to say much about how family members or friends care for her child when they are doing it as a favor or as a kindness to her and the child. Or she may feel that she must exercise control in order to demonstrate her competency or efficacy as a mother to family members whose good opinion of her she desires.

These tradeoffs that I have outlined may be more difficult to negotiate in less traditional family structures. When we become members of other than traditional families, what moral obligations arise to those who assist us in raising our children in these contexts? What are the obligations of mothers to stepmothers, stepfathers, and other stepfamily members when they provide significant assistance with maternal care giving (see Nelson, 1999)? What must members of stepfamilies, families in which parents do not live together, and families with gay and lesbian parents do to ensure that their relationships with those who assist them in their care giving work are informed by values and principles consistent with care giving itself?

The more difficult version of my question is: what are our moral obligations to paid caregivers? This is a question that both Eva Kittay and Jennifer Nedelsky address in their essays in *Mother Troubles*, although they do so very differently. Kittay has clearly struggled with this question in thinking about the choices she has made in raising her daughter, Sesha, who has significant intellectual and motor disabilities. That Kittay could not have cared well for Sesha alone, especially in a social and political context in which communities provide almost nothing in the way of support or assistance for people with severe disabilities, is clear. That Kittay made the best choices for Sesha in seeking the assistance of other caregivers—caregivers whose training and temperament allowed them to care for Sesha in ways that she could not—is similarly clear. But it is also clear, and Kittay struggles with these realities, that her having this assistance is a function of certain social and economic privileges she enjoys and which have involved her in several complicated and difficult relationships with these other caregivers.

Not the least of the reasons why these relationships are difficult is the fact that Kittay is paying most of these other caregivers to help care for her daughter. The relationship Kittay describes with Peggy, who has cared for Sesha on a daily basis for over 20 years, is immensely complicated, almost impossible to categorize. Kittay and Peggy are not friends in any traditional understanding of that term, yet their relationship is not characterized by the degree of impersonality usually typical of an employer/employee relationship. They share a deep and abiding commitment to Sesha, though the different ways in

which they are related to Sesha necessarily shape their experience and expression of this commitment. But they also experience frustration in their care giving work, which sometimes expresses itself as anger at each other. Peggy resents that she is expected to do more for Sesha than "Sesha's own mother," while Kittay resents having to deal both with Sesha's disability and Peggy's resentment (14).

Caring for Sesha is Peggy's paid employment, so whether she can continue to care for Sesha and how she does it may not be entirely in her control. Kittay imagines that "Peggy can think of leaving, of quitting. I cannot." But she also recognized that 'quitting' may be no more realistic an option for Peggy than for herself, given Peggy's commitment to and long history of caring for Sesha. Peggy imagines that Kittay enjoys in her work an escape from concern about Sesha. But, as Peggy puts it, "Sesha is my work" (14-15).

I find particularly striking the analogy Kittay confronts in trying to think through her relationship to Peggy. She writes:

Sometimes I feel that my relationship to Peggy vis-à-vis Sesha is like the patriarchal relationship of husband to wife vis-à-vis their children . . . Whenever and each time I see the analogies, it makes my feminist and egalitarian flesh creep. And yet I can't see my way out of this. I cannot function without this privilege, and yet I despise it. I cannot see how to live my convictions. Of course, even this dilemma is a great luxury. Other mothers with children like Sesha have to make much more difficult choices. (15)

In her essay, Jennifer Nedelsky also recognizes this dilemma as she describes the child care arrangements she made when her children were young, including full time nannies and additional paid help with housekeeping. Nedelsky writes:

At one level, I have always been quite happy that I was able to figure out what I wanted in terms of paid help with the multiple daily demands of household and child care. . . . But even though I was able to get that help in relationships that were characterized by mutual warmth and respect, and a kind of social equality, the understanding we worked out together could not solve the deeper problem of inequality that sits at the base of the nanny relationship. . . . What I wanted, and basically got, was made possible by a privilege that I would not want to justify. (317-318)

Nedelsky recounts "the shock of being caught in an unconscious contradiction" (318) when the disparity between her beliefs about the importance of physical care taking and the fact that she hires others to do most of her family's physical caretaking work is pointed out to her. But, judging by her account of her relationships with the two nannies who worked for her, Nedelsky seems to me to have missed the mean when it comes to balancing the needs and interests, perhaps even the rights, of all of those involved. In describing her experiences with these nannies—Merilyn and Nancy—Nedelsky puts so much emphasis on her own needs and desires that it becomes unclear whether she thinks there are any other significant considerations that one ought to take into account in one's relationships with paid caregivers.

Before I elaborate on these points, however, I want to make clear my hesitancy to criticize another woman's choices, in part because this woman's professional circumstances were so different from my own. But in Nedelsky's essay, I was nevertheless struck by a lack of consideration of paid child care workers as persons with complex needs and desires. While she recognizes the inequality that grounds the nanny/employer relationship and says that this inequality is unjustifiable,

Nedelsky again and again ultimately justifies the choices she made in arranging care for her children in terms of her own needs, desires, and interests. These choices “suited my needs,” “got me what I wanted,” or provided “solutions that were vitally important to me” (318, 319, 320). When her older child entered first grade and her younger one started nursery school, she asked her second nanny, Nancy, to “take over the housecleaning as well as the child care, laundry, cooking a weekly dish...and daily tidying of the downstairs” (317). She even asked her first nanny, Merilyn, to walk the family dog, which she mentions only to lament that, while this saved her time, it cost her a connection with the dog (320).

Nedelsky acknowledges “the importance of routine physical care taking for forming basic bonds of connection,” recognizing that “the dominant culture of North America treats virtually all forms of care taking with contempt” (320, 321). She argues that we need to transform the way we think about success in terms of successful people’s time being too important for mundane tasks of physical care taking in order to change this culture of contempt for care taking. But she concludes:

I regularly treat some things as merely mundane, such as laundry, cleaning the house, and much of the cooking. Sometimes I wish that I had time to do this work myself, but mostly I feel grateful that I can afford to hire someone else to do it. I continue to buy time by treating physical caretaking as something to be farmed out to others. The only way I know how to do my job and have some fraction of the time I want for my family is to participate in what I see as one of the most destructive features of our culture. (322)

I suspect that part of what is at work in the way Nedelsky represents this aspect of her experiences of motherhood is a desire to resist the traditional image of the entirely self-sacrificing mother. And in resisting this self-representation, she is doing important work, for I am quite certain that the image of the self-sacrificing mother will not yield much that is useful for helping us sort through the moral dilemmas raised by relationships of mothers and other caregivers. I also see in Nedelsky’s essay a dilemma that feminist academics may be particularly susceptible too, namely, that of being unable to live one’s theoretical commitments in one’s life. This is a difficult problem, for it is part of our work to imagine ways of life that don’t yet exist or are not yet common. I agree with Nedelsky, and Sally, that the mundane work of physical caretaking is an important locus of the constitution of relationships of care. And I see a fairly clear-cut difference between hiring caregivers to provide life-sustaining care to one’s severely disabled child, and hiring someone to do the physical work of caring for one’s healthy children, cleaning the house, doing laundry, making meals, and walking the dog so that one can ‘have time for’ one’s children. I further question the distinction of time spent doing mundane housework and other physical caretaking and time spent with one’s children. One of the best ways to spend time with children and to teach them the value of mundane caretaking work is to include them in these tasks and do them with one’s children.

But my point is not really to criticize Nedelsky’s choices. Rather my point is that Nedelsky’s essay further convinces me that we need some ethical guidelines for conducting these relationships in morally responsible ways. So what are some of the dilemmas that arise in relationships with paid caregivers? First, there is the dilemma of wanting to resist the commodification of caregiving when one also wants to treat paid caregivers fairly and responsibly. There are also the conflicting desires of wanting paid caregivers to do their work in ways that are consistent with one’s own goals as a mother, and wanting to respect the autonomy of paid caregivers, as one way of respecting them as workers/employees.

There is the further difficulty of making what feel like compromises with respect to the care of one’s children in order to achieve other goals or meet other moral standards. For example, home care by a nanny may be better for a particular child than a daycare center, but from the point of view of a paid child care worker, a daycare center may be a better workplace than a private home. On the other hand, the structure of a daycare center may obscure the cash nexus that links the parents who pay for this care and the workers who provide it, making it harder for parents to know whether the daycare center employees are making a decent salary or experiencing respect and autonomy in their work. And as both Kittay and Nedelsky describe, there are the painful difficulties that occur for mothers and children when the employment of paid caregivers must end.

I do not have any fully developed solutions to these dilemmas. But I will suggest how some elements of Sally’s account of maternal thinking could be helpful in addressing them. First, there is the matter of respecting the personhood of paid caregivers, which would include recognizing and accommodating their other needs and interests. The capacity for recognizing the personhood of another seems to me something like Sally’s notion of attentiveness to children—to their needs, interests, distinct personalities and characters. The virtue of attentiveness may be a necessary element in maintaining ethical relationships with paid care givers as well as children.

Next, there is the matter of the structural socio-economic inequality that enables some but not all to pay others for care giving services and that may disempower paid caregivers in relationship to their employers. So an adequate ethics of care giving in paid contexts must take very seriously this structural inequality and this imbalance of power. I have argued elsewhere that Sally’s analysis of the goal of raising acceptable children can be further developed to include fostering the autonomy of those for whom one cares and thereby transforming this relationship into one of greater mutuality and reciprocity (DiQuinzio, 1995). I think that such a goal might be an important element of an ethical approach to paid caregivers. One could evaluate one’s role in such a relationship by asking to what extent the caregiver one is paying for is empowered by the relationship.

A related matter is the one of honesty on the part of those who employ caregivers. I think there is a minimal obligation here not to delude ourselves about the extent to which there can be social equality in these relationships. Too many economically privileged women are too quick to resort to the refrain of “she’s like family!” when they speak of the caregivers they employ. My concern here is that this belief may blind us to real inequalities in the relationship—inequalities we might be able to rectify or minimize were we aware of them.

Finally, there is the matter of the degree to which one ought to limit one’s reliance on paid caregivers. Could one argue that mothers have an obligation to do at least some of the physical caretaking of their children, if doing so forges the kinds of bonds that Nedelsky and Sally describe? Would this argument apply to assistance from family members or friends as well? Or could one argue that family members or friends themselves have some interest in forging bonds with one’s children, whereas paid caregivers do not, except as a condition of their employment? I take seriously Nedelsky’s call for a shift in the values of the dominant culture with respect to physical or mundane caretaking. Thus I believe that all of us, especially those of us involved in raising boy children, are obliged to do some of this work and to teach our children its value.

These very brief and sketchy ideas about how we might begin resolving, or at least acknowledging, some of the

dilemmas that arise in practices of distributed mothering are largely inspired by Sally's work on maternal thinking and practice. I will be forever grateful for Sally's attention to these questions and problems we never thought we would see addressed by scholarly work in philosophy.

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## Holding Someone in Personhood

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In *Maternal Thinking*, Sally Ruddick wrote publicly about a supposedly private practice, and in doing so, revised socially misshapen understandings of motherhood, thinking, and war.<sup>1</sup> One important theme of the book is a practice of mothering that she calls preservative love—the maternal response to a child's need for protection. Preservative love involves keeping a child safe from harm, whether this takes the form of baby-proofing the house, teaching the child not to accept rides from strangers, or guarding the child from the mother's own destructive impulses. It can be laden with such passionate feelings, she writes, "that onlookers, accustomed to distinguishing thought from feeling and work from love, can barely recognize amid the passion either the thinking or the work" (67). And because "feelings cry out for thought," she argues that "reflective assessment of feeling is a defining rational activity of mothers" (70).

I have been interested, recently, in a special kind of preservative love, one which I call holding someone in personhood. As my contribution to this issue honoring Sally's work, I will explain what I mean by that term, describe one context in which holding someone in personhood might not be morally required, and then move to another context where, arguably, it is.

## Personhood

The language of 'persons' and 'personhood' is perhaps employed more often by philosophers than by less peculiarly educated people. In ordinary conversation we typically talk, not of persons, but of sisters, strangers, citizens, consumers, pedestrians, children, human beings, and so on. Implicit in these terms, however, and common to them all, is the complicated set of reactions and attitudes that both express and sustain what is fundamentally a particular kind of moral relationship.

To elucidate this relationship, we might begin with Wittgenstein's observation in the *Philosophical Investigations* that "the human body is the best picture of the human soul."<sup>2</sup> All of the section containing this remark deals with how we recognize and respond to people's so-called psychological or mental states, what we tend to think of as people's inner lives. It is by paying attention to their bodily postures, gestures, and expressions that we can tell whether they are excited, puzzled, or interested; whether they are praying, fearing, or intending. And it is our ability to read these states off human bodies that allows us to see human beings as personalities rather than as furniture, plants, or pets.<sup>3</sup>

What is to be recognized—or misunderstood—is the changing procession of sensations, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, wishes, misgivings, and other mental states that cross a human consciousness. The capacity to generate selected items in this procession has been taken by some philosophers to be either necessary or sufficient for personhood, but if we take seriously, as I believe we must, that these states are socially mediated and that persons too are essentially social, then, rather than tying personhood solely to capabilities and competencies residing within the individual, we have to see it as partly also an interpersonal achievement.

The construction and maintenance of a personal identity is an integral part of this achievement. It is through the stories I weave around my personal characteristics—meaningful events in my life, relationships that matter to me, abilities or disabilities that make a difference, important things I have done or left undone—that I arrive at a self-conception, an understanding of who I am from my own, first-person perspective. And it is through the stories *other* people weave around my personal characteristics—the things about me that matter most to *them*, even if they aren't the things I care about—that they arrive at their third-person sense of who I am. Both sets of stories, many of them borrowed from narratives that are widely circulated and socially shared, interact in complicated ways to form my personal identity. Identities function as counters in our social transactions in that they convey understandings of what those who bear them are expected to do. And they make intelligible to us not only how *other* people are supposed to act, but how *we* are supposed to act with respect to them.

Pushing Wittgenstein's "picture" remark one step further, I propose that our socially mediated psychological states, their bodily representations, others' narrative recognition of these representations, and the treatment based on that recognition all play a part in the formation and maintenance of personhood. Put more precisely, my claim is that personhood just *is* the expression on a human body of the feelings, thoughts, desires, and intentions that constitute a human personality, as recognized by others, who then respond in certain ways to what they see. *Recognition* includes establishing a personal identity by engaging in the narrative activity that constitutes our sense of who the person is. *Response* includes the attitudes and actions we take toward the person, what we do to or for the person and what we expect from the person, on the basis of that identity-constituting, narrative activity. The bodily depiction of the succession of mental states and the uptake of that depiction by others in the form of recognition and response make up what

might be called the social practice of personhood, the practice on which all other social practices rest.

### Holding in Personhood

The practice of personhood, which is unreflective, reciprocal, and as common as breathing, can be distinguished from the practice of *holding* someone in personhood, which is often equally unreflective, but one-sided, and far less common. It is done by recognizing and responding to someone who cannot, for some reason or other, engage in practices of personhood herself. It typically involves the thought and passion and work that characterize other forms of preservative love.

One important context in which individuals are held in personhood is the family. It has happened in my own. In 1953, the year my sister Carla was born, not much could be done about hydrocephaly, a neural tube disorder in which spinal fluid builds up in the brain, exerting pressure that interferes with cerebral function. The intracranial pressure caused by Carla's hydrocephaly was so severe that she could not lift her head, turn over, sit up, speak, swallow, or grasp objects. I do not remember that she ever smiled, though she could cry and be comforted. Holding her was like holding a doll, only better, because she breathed and was warm, with curls of red hair feathering her head and a gaze that she could fix on one's face. Her physicians predicted that she would live for many years, warning that once she grew past infancy it would be too difficult for my mother to care for her and she would need to be institutionalized. It never came to that. When she was eighteen months old, the part of the brain that regulated her bodily temperature succumbed to the pressure and ceased to function. In May 1955, two months before my eighth birthday, Carla died of a high fever.

Carla could not participate in the ordinary practices of personhood. It is doubtful that she was capable of forming a self-conception, and even if she did have some sense of who she was, she certainly lacked the ability to express it. The narrative tissue that constituted her personal identity therefore contained no stories from her own, first-person perspective. It was constructed entirely from the third-person point of view. We who were her family, along with friends, neighbors, and the many health care professionals she encountered in her short life, gave her all the identity she had.

Could we have misidentified her? Of course we could. If my father, for instance, had constructed out of equal parts of hope and grief a story about Carla's being just a bit slower to develop than we older children were, the story would not have been a credible contribution to her identity. Nor was her disability the only constraint on the credibility of our stories. Her neurologist could not credibly set her within the identity-constituting narratives of the family down the street. I could not credibly represent her as my older sister. No personal identity is infinitely malleable; all are constrained by facts of one kind or another.

If, however, there are a number of ways for the stories that constitute an identity to go wrong, there are also a number of ways for them to go right. The fact of her hydrocephaly seems to have been the thing about Carla that mattered most to my mother, and indeed she wove many of her stories of who Carla was around that fact. I, on the other hand, seem to have been too young to appreciate the seriousness of her condition, so while it entered into my narrative conception of her, I saw her primarily as a playmate.

Each of us in the family, I daresay, saw Carla in a slightly different light. Acting out of our various conceptions of who she was, we made a place for her among us, treating her according to how we saw her, and in so treating her, making her even more of who we saw. Because I played with her, she was my playmate. Because my mother cared for her at home, she

was a member of the household. There were five of us engaged in the narrative work of forming and preserving Carla's identity, and while many of the stories were ones we shared in common, we all added individual bits and pieces of our own. The more we did this, the richer her identity became. All of us, singly and severally, were contributing to what it meant to be Carla. To the extent that our narratives reflected faithfully who she was within our family, even we children, who were not yet morally competent, were taking part in the creation and maintenance of something morally valuable. We were holding a badly damaged child in personhood.

And this raises a question, namely, whether those who *can* be held in personhood through the narrative recognition of others *must* be so held. On the one hand, it could be argued that if personhood is particularly morally valuable, then we are obliged to preserve it. On the other hand, the fact that holding someone who is badly damaged in personhood could impose a considerable burden not only on her, but also on those who engage in the practice, is a consideration in favor of a discretionary view. A third possibility that deserves careful scrutiny is that the obligation to hold an individual in personhood is authoritative for some people but not for others. I cannot argue here for any of these views, but absent an argument, I do not think we can simply assume that such an obligation exists.

### Annihilation of Personhood

Holding someone in personhood is preservative in that it keeps the individual within the special place reserved for persons inside the moral community. To fall outside that place in the community is to lose one's claim to a particular kind of moral consideration, and that is a serious harm. Personhood is, I repeat, at bottom a moral relationship. As such it commands the particular moral consideration that Kant called respect and the high moral valuation that he called dignity. In Carla's case the ordinary capacities that would have allowed her to participate in the expressive and responsive acts that constitute the practice of personhood were disastrously annihilated by a physical malformation about which nothing could then be done. But in other cases, the ability to participate in the practice of personhood is annihilated deliberately, by human design. Then the preservative work of holding the victim in personhood can require courage as well as thought and passion.

Up to this point, I have talked about the social character of personhood, and then about *holding* someone in personhood, which is a particular way of responding to someone—a response that involves love. Now I want to talk about a third thing, the opposite of holding in personhood, namely, intentionally casting someone out of personhood.

The ability to participate in personhood can be annihilated by interfering with any of the four components of the practice. Shatter the *thoughts, feelings, intentions, and attitudes* of the person, as can be done through trauma or lobotomy, and the body has little to express that could be recognized or responded to. Immobilize the *body*, as can be done by house arrest, incarceration, maiming, or terrorizing, and expression is again extremely difficult. Refuse to *recognize* what is being expressed, as can be done by denying that the person has the social standing to say certain things or to act in certain ways, and the expression gets no uptake. And finally, refuse to *respond* to expressions that are properly recognized, as can be done by ignoring them or covering them up, and once again the person's participation in the practice of personhood is blocked.

Consider, for example, how soldiers are trained to withhold recognition of the "souls" depicted on the bodies of their enemies. They shoot at silhouettes in the shape of human beings, learning to see that shape as a target rather than as a person. They play violent video games that increase their skill in blowing up, smashing, or stabbing the human form. They

engage in unscripted field exercises that involve hunting down actual human beings who must pretend to die if they are caught. Shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks, ABC News reported on a new simulator game for infantry training. “Soldiers take up position in front of a large screen depicting a desert hillside in Afghanistan. Tiny figures emerge from the dunes at a simulated distance of 1,000 feet. As they get closer, they become recognizable as Taliban fighters. Using standard M-16 rifles equipped with laser points rather than bullets, the soldiers target the Taliban fighters.”

Weaponry functions to withhold recognition as well. When longbows were first introduced at the Battle of Agincourt, there was an outcry to the effect that it was cowardly to kill a man from so far away that one could not look him in the face, and the use of airplanes to drop bombs from great heights has certainly exacerbated this complaint. Missiles, torpedoes, tanks, and land mines also render the enemy faceless. And consider the words that withhold recognition of the real persons who are actually maimed or killed in war: it is a long list, but among them are “antipersonnel bombs,” “civilian casualties,” “fatalities,” “friendly fire,” and “collateral damage.”

Uniforms and the discipline that produces a correct military bearing are designed to immobilize the body so that it does not disclose the self. Physical differences are concealed beneath the garb of the fighting unit, and soldiers are drilled to take up a bodily stance that effaces differences in comportment that might reveal something about who the soldier is. Concentration camps immobilize bodies too, as, of course, most literally, do rifles and the other destructive devices of war.

Rape in war can be less a failure of recognition—the soldier surely recognizes that the woman is a person—than a shattering of the woman’s self, a traumatic injury to her sense of who she is. One of the horrific consequences of wartime rape is that all too frequently the woman is shunned by her own people, as is the child, if any, that results from it. Here the ability to participate in personhood is doubly annihilated, first by the trauma to the woman’s self-concept and then by the moral community’s refusal to respond to her as one of themselves.

What does holding someone in personhood look like in the context of war? George Orwell, who fought against the Fascists in the Spanish Civil War, tells of an air raid in which an enemy soldier, presumably carrying a message to an officer, jumped out of a trench and ran along the top of a parapet, half-dressed and holding up his trousers with both hands as he ran. Rather than do his duty and shoot the man, Orwell let him go. He writes, “I had come here to shoot at ‘Fascists’; but a man who is holding up his trousers isn’t a ‘Fascist,’ he is visibly a fellow-creature, similar to yourself, and you don’t feel like shooting at him.”<sup>4</sup> Orwell would not put it this way, but in the language I have been developing, we could say that the soldier expressed, through his bodily comportment, a state of vulnerability and need that Orwell correctly recognized and to which he responded with empathy and compassion. In doing so, he completed the chain of activity that preserved the soldier from being expelled from the practice of personhood.

If, in the case of a severely brain-damaged infant, there can be some question about whether the duty to hold the individual in personhood binds us all, regardless of who we are, this seems to be less true in the case of war. Like severe hydrocephaly, war replaces the standing assumption that personhood is sustained by ordinary practices with a presumption against personhood. But unlike hydrocephaly, war threatens individuals who are already fully developed persons. Moreover, the threat of annihilation posed by war rather than illness is something that human beings have brought about, and which we should be able to stop if enough of us wanted to. Given how eggshell-thin the protection can be that stands between any one of us

and the exile from humanity that is the essence of war, I believe we must all take responsibility for holding in personhood those human beings who by war and other forms of human violence are turned into things.<sup>5</sup>

In *Maternal Thinking*, Sally quotes from Phillip Hallie’s account of how, in the Second World War, the citizens of the French village of Le Chambon held Jews in personhood. They did it, says Hallie, with “lucid knowledge, awareness of the pain of others, and stubborn decision.” As a description for a politics of peace, this list is pretty good. As a description of Sally herself, as revealed by her activism, teaching, and writing, the list is even better.

## Endnotes

This paper draws on my “What Child is This?” *Hastings Center Report* 32, no. 6 (2002): 29-38.

1. Sara Ruddick. *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).
2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd. ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Englewood, Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958) 178.
3. Margaret Urban Walker. *Moral Understandings* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 181.
4. George Orwell, “Looking Back on the Spanish War.” In *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).
5. “Force is that which turns anyone subject to it into a *thing*.” Simone Weil, *Iliad, Poem of Force*.

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## **Thinking Friends, Moral Taste, Public Concerns: For Sara Ruddick**

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Sally Ruddick and I have been thinking friends for a long time. Reflecting about what that means as I prepared for SWIP’s wonderful occasion honoring her reminded me that my teacher, Hannah Arendt, who has been in many ways our shared *inter-est* all these years, spoke of friendship. With its premises of equality and respect, distinguished from love’s intimacy, friendship preserves openness and reference to the world, and is therefore of political relevance.<sup>1</sup> Arendt also spoke, less often, of “moral taste,”<sup>2</sup> and (very often) of the work of thinking as “unfreezing” concepts.<sup>3</sup> Let me think with you about the possible relations among friendship, moral taste, and unfreezing concepts to make more evident some strands of the web that interweave my friendship with Sally, my years of study with Arendt, and my own work through the years (the latter because Sally, typically, asked me/us to “talk about your own thinking”).

Sally’s utterly unforced originality—so usual with her as to be a character trait as well as an achievement—is enabled, among other gifts, by her remarkable ability to unfreeze concepts that otherwise limit, and sometimes utterly block, our ability to respond to “the claim on our thinking attention which all events and facts arouse by virtue of their existence.”<sup>4</sup> She sees what is before her, as Arendt put it, as “though nobody had thought before.”<sup>5</sup> Thus her thinking opens her to the world, and she responds attentively (in Simone Weil’s sense) to the particularities that appear to her. But I should not leave Simone Weil in a parenthesis. She, too, albeit quite differently, has been an enduring interest for Sally and me. All too briefly then, here is Weil on *attention*:

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the

object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains.<sup>6</sup>

What is of interest here is that Weil is describing an experience of thinking, as distinct from knowing, and so offers us what Arendt called “clues...to what thinking means to those who engage in it...about which, oddly enough, there exist few direct utterances.”<sup>7</sup> To think attentively, Weil would have us slow down and abide awhile as we reflect so that we are not “prematurely blocked” by having “seized upon some idea [we already have] too hastily.”<sup>8</sup> Thus we prepare to come into respectful relationship with phenomena as they appear, or occur, to us.

For Weil as for Sally, this willing, thoughtful receptivity to whatever we encounter in the world also, and importantly, opens us to relating to other people in a way that already is moral or, a condition for the possibility of morality. Weil writes, “Those who are unhappy have no need for anything in this world but people capable of giving them their attention,” and this “miracle” requires us, if we would become able to participate in it, to have practiced the discipline of attentive thinking: “Warmth of heart, impulsiveness, pity are not enough.”<sup>9</sup>

Nor, for Arendt, is thinking by and as ourselves enough. To prepare as well as to be attentive, we need to become able to “put ourselves in thought in the place of everyone else.”<sup>10</sup> That is of course impossible, but as a horizontal value practiced through responsible abstraction, it is informed by experiences of as many and diverse others as possible. Sally’s friends know that when she has become puzzled by something she has encountered with her remarkable freshness of apprehension, she reflects further, talks, reads, emails with her friends, writes, and listens to responses. The world then becomes interesting to us as it is to her, and we, too, are called back into a renewed relation with it, through and with her—and thereby also with the thinking friends she respects, the many others to whom she has been attentive (including, crucially, those with whom she deeply differs).

Such broadly engaging, attentive thinking seems to me evidently a moral way of being in the world with others, so it reminds me that Arendt spoke on occasion of “moral taste,” which she saw as “so different from ‘moral principles.’”<sup>11</sup> “Moral taste,” I will then suggest, with Sally, Arendt, and Weil in mind, appears most often and immediately as a complexly personal, impelling, never quite predictable “distaste” for wrongs. It characteristically manifests in a kind of recoil, which is also a stepping back that opens space for reflection, rather than readily informing quick action. Nevertheless, when action must be immediate, moral distaste can turn recoil into direct action and then, sooner rather than later but unavoidably for thinkers, throw them back into reflection. Arendt says that the “political and moral significance” of thinking “comes out” “when everybody else is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in,” because the refusal of thinkers “to join in is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action.”<sup>12</sup> It gifts us with a diverse community that can help us act when we must, because it provides us with exemplars rather than rules, figures of whom we wish to be worthy so we may go on thinking in their good company.

In Sally Ruddick, as in others who are primarily thinkers, moral taste does not activate ideological opposition that submits existence, in its particularity, to preset conventional or theoretical logics, or principles. These, being abstract and general, can

illuminate but can also block attentiveness to particulars. In Arendt’s view, both Truth-anchored certainty and, worse, unanimity (which she distinguishes from persuasive meanings and free agreement) are always destructive of public life, in which differences can and should appear. Moral taste, however, is uncertain, unpredictable, and so disruptive. An expression of how this particular individual, with her thinking friends in mind, is relating to the world as it appears to her here and now, is complexly original and, in an informed way, spontaneous. Thus it renews public life when, through word or deed, it appears in public.

The Civil Rights movement was such a renewal, translating moral recoil into collective action organized by extremely capable practitioners of the arts of politics. I was drawn in early, I have to confess, as much by the fact that racial prejudice *made no sense* as I was by the fact that it was evidently wrong. I was thrown back into thinking, and, as a believer in education, into questioning systems of knowledge that might be complicit with injustice. Later, as feminist scholarship was just (re)beginning, this project, too, seemed to me indubitably fair and just, and, as I thought about why it was resisted, why the need for it was not self-evident, also puzzling. I found myself, then, with a question: given that it was obvious that women, in all our differences, and specific groupings of men were not then (this was in the 1970s) included in courses about subjects that claimed to be about humans, why, in a gender and race obsessed culture, had we—had I—not *noticed* that glaring omission?

In 1990 I published a book, *Transforming Knowledge*,<sup>13</sup> about the conceptual blocks, or frozen conceptualizations, that kept even those who thought they should do so from representing the majority of humankind in their courses. I called the blocks I had found “conceptual errors” (and grouped them as “faulty generalization,” “circular reasoning,” “mystified concepts,” which, together, produce “partial knowledge”), and discerned through them a “root error.”

The root error I saw then as taking a dominant few males to be the inclusive term, the norm, and the ideal for all. Thus a few became “Man,” an abstract, singular, universalized conceptualization that hid, or mystified and perpetuated, the devaluation and exclusion of all others, who, being distinguished from the central defining few, were thereby moved down a scale of reality, significance, worth. Obviously, this root error entailed faulty generalizations (from a few privileged males to concepts of “Man”), which then reinscribed and legitimated themselves through circular reasoning (their art becoming, for example, the definition of Art-Itself that then warranted exclusion of all other arts). The result, not surprisingly, was partial (in both senses of the term) knowledge presented as if it were impartial (mystified as “objective”). This, of course, is why for so long we had History, and then women’s history, and then black women’s history: the more the qualifying, limiting prefixes, the farther from the mystifyingly unmarked, normative center, and the farther down the scale of human significance. The bottom of the scale has been literally rock bottom: nonconscious physical matter, just “above” which have been plants, and then animals. The fiercely defended division between “Man and animal” has done a lot of work to maintain this invidious hierarchy.

What we have inherited, or had imposed on us, is not a racialized dualism of Man/Woman, or Man/Nature. It is a hierarchically invidious monism in which differences from a faultily abstracted, invidiously defined Man cannot but be seen as failures, deviance, markers of “lesser” unto alien being. That all this has moral, political significance in its roping off of groups marked as “kinds” is, I trust, evident.

We need all of today’s new fields to study peace(s), ecologies, women, postcolonialisms, ethnicized and racialized

groups, constructions of “whiteness,” disabled people, Indigenous peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people, and more; and none of these fields should become locked into any singularized, abstract, frozen conceptualizations or theoretical lenses. These fields are ongoing conversations among shifting groupings of individuals and groups, each of which persists (we hope) in falling back often into puzzlement, thence into remembering both the moral, political claim and the necessity for thinking of encounters with particular, plural others. No single analysis, no frozen concepts, no enclosing theory is otherwise, I believe, either effective or, indeed, safe.

So, I am now revising *Transforming Knowledge* to take these rethinking into account. Let me tell you about three of the major changes I am making.

First, I have rethought what I take to be the root error. Before one “kind” could take itself to be the unmarked, inclusive term, the norm and the ideal for all, the notion that humans are divisible into ontologically, epistemologically, morally, politically significant “kinds” had to have been established: *that* is the taproot that still feeds, and stubbornly re-creates, all the other errors.

Let me give you just one, but a very influential, example as a reminder of how deeply inscribed constructions of humans as ranked kinds is in the Western tradition in which science is at the pinnacle of supposedly apolitical, morally neutral, knowledge. In Linnaeus’s (1802) grand and still accepted (in its task and bones, not all its details) classificatory work, *The System of Nature*, we find, under “Mammalia, Order I, Primates, 1. *Homo sapiens*,” and then, as kinds of *Homo sapiens*, the “European,” who is “fair, sanguine, brawny; hair yellow, brown, flowing; eyes blue; gentle, acute, inventive. Covered with close vestments. Governed by laws.” We also find other kinds, including the “African: Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. Hair black, frizzled; skin silky; nose flat; lips tumid; crafty, indolent, negligent. Anoints himself with grease. Governed by caprice.”<sup>14</sup> Being discerning thinkers, you will have noticed that this division of kinds already reflects an invidious ranking that scientifically inscribes prejudicially deformed notions then common in England and Europe. You will have noticed, too, that Linnaeus was thinking about males as the type for all these human kinds. We are still not rid of all that was built on such errors.

Second, I have now added an analysis of how a hierarchically monistic taxonomy in league with political, legal, economic, and cultural systems *privatizes* those moved down the scale. It does so by constructing lower kinds as naturally unfit for public life. Privatization does not mean that domesticated, closeted, house-bound, defined-as-primitively childlike creatures have a private, although not a public, life. It has meant that groups of (differentially) privatized people did not have private lives either; that they were, as Patricia Williams puts it, always subject to intrusion, to violation. Williams writes of generations of African Americans existing in “a world without any meaningful boundaries, and ‘without boundary’ for blacks has meant not untrammelled vistas of possibility but the crushing weight of total—bodily and spiritual—*intrusion*.”<sup>15</sup> Politically privatized “lesser” humans were, as such, made dependent on favors (if any), not rights; on care (if fortunate), not justice; and insofar as they were not “righted” as equals, on protection (if that) as dependents, or property. For example, until recently, there was no such thing as marital rape: husbands were free to “take” their wives just as property owners were free to plow their fields and rape those they enslaved. The disabled had no right to public accessibility; they were, as Simi Linton reminds us, “shut-ins,” “house-bound.”<sup>16</sup> “Homosexuals” were closeted behind doors that opened in but not out. This is what it means to be privatized: to be subjected in every sense.

Third, I now sometimes also call the conceptual errors “psychotic conceptualizations.” I do so because they can and at times have, to deadly effect, functioned collectively as individual psychoses do: they have redefined reality, and defended against disruption by anything contrary to their closed logic. I do not mean to be adding to the burdens of psychotic individuals, who are also among the privatized and un-righted, nor do I mean to be reducing conceptual errors or the moral, political actions they inform to intrapsychic phenomena. On the contrary, I mean to be reminding us that systems set the terms within which we all live, and that they, far more dangerously than individuals, can also “go mad.”<sup>17</sup> Psychotic systems are mad in the specific sense that they make use of a totalized logic, as totalitarianism does, setting out to remake human beings by their prescriptions and not just to control or dominate. Under such a system, “insane asylums” are used not for those who have “lost touch with reality,” but for those who persist in being attentive to it in ways that do not correspond to, and so threaten, The System. Thus people are taught “knowledge” and “truths” in order to keep them from believing any longer in the reality of their own experience, so they will not even think of disrupting the functioning of a system claimed to be at once universal and consistent in itself *and*—insanely—to be real.

An exhibit titled “No Sanctuary” (a precisely apt title when a totalizing system has replaced reality) in which were displayed historical post cards depicting lynchings in the U.S. provides a chilling example. Normal white people attended the lynchings; someone ordinary made post cards from photographs and sold them in public to be, without hindrance, sent through the U.S. mail to other ordinary white people. This is systemically psychotic: perpetrators and observers had become radically out of touch with real murders of real individuals that should have morally repulsed them, and so called them back into thinking, even if abstractions (principles, conventions, dominant knowledge) were available to legitimate lynching. Before such sustained wrongdoing, we (viewing from outside the system) recoiled, saying, “But that is *insane!*”

If we stop there, we will have failed to comprehend how rationality can itself go wrong and become not an antidote to but a source of justifications for evil. It is not that people then are failing in their reasoning, including their ethical reasoning. It is that their reasoning is not troubled by disruptive thinking that dissolves categories, by the attentiveness thinking enables and practices. Moral taste in its unpredictable, non-rule-driven recoils and affiliations is thereby made more rare. Kant (and Arendt with him) speaks of a *sensus communis*, a common sense that fits our other senses together and so gives us neither random sense data nor knowledge, but apprehension of objects and experiences that can be meaningfully communicated to others. Arendt says of this “sixth sense” that it gives us a “feeling of realness,” which we can sustain only through ongoing checking in with others. The *sensus communis* then grounds, as the French put it, “*le bon sens*,” good sense.<sup>18</sup> Arendt writes that, when such good sense has been rendered rare and dangerous by the closed logic that makes its own proof (for example, by defining kinds of people as inferior by nature, and then doing the work of “evolution” or “History” by murdering those who are claimed to be already doomed), “The only valid argument under such conditions is promptly to rescue the person whose death is predicted.”<sup>19</sup>

Not all times are so extreme, but always we need the good sense of thinkers who are practiced in remaining attentively open to the claims of whatever they encounter and to thinking with and in the place of others. Sally has persistently shown us what such thinking, retrieving common and good sense from erroneously rationalized, conventionalized systems, is like. How else, to recur to her early work, was she, living within a thoroughgoing gendering system, able to recognize, name, and

think about “maternal thinking”? The common phrase at the time, after all, was “maternal instinct,” reflecting privatized women’s supposedly greater closeness than privileged men’s to the divide between Man and Animal. To take maternal caring to entail acts of mind, one must have unfrozen dominant conceptualizations, just as Arendt must have unfrozen partial abstractions of supposedly universal “Man, who is mortal,” to have recognized the claim of “natality” on her thinking—and to have seen it as, of all things, the human condition of public action.

Sally’s ability, like Arendt’s, thus to keep thinking against both logics and conventions provides both hope and suggestions for how to cure what Wittgenstein termed “a disease of thought.”<sup>20</sup> Arendt called what she did thinking “without a bannister.”<sup>21</sup> This is precisely *not* reasoning by rules, within traditions, in “methodologically sound” ways. It does not coerce agreement to anything. It provides us with no closed (let alone psychotic, reality-replacing) systems, no rules we can, having once learned them, then thoughtlessly apply. Instead, sharing the insights that are enabled to arise where their thinking has dissolved frozen conceptualizations and closed systems, Sally and Arendt clear space for particulars to appear to us, too, not as categorical kinds or instances of generalizations, but in their unknowable, thought-provoking uniqueness, which we may then try to comprehend, and resist as necessary, in common with our thinking friends among many others.

Today, Sally’s moral taste remains profoundly troubled by the press to anti-political, plurality-denying unanimity in the wake of 9/11. She wrote recently that she found in correspondence between Arendt and Arendt’s long-term friend, Karl Jaspers, “a double warning both against mythologizing ‘the horrible’ and against denying the distinct horrors of what is done and suffered.”<sup>22</sup> With those and other thinking friends, Sally proceeded to think for herself about how to accord specific, real horrors “an appropriate limited place in the ongoing practice of political violence and terror.”<sup>23</sup> This, in a time when “standing together” both defensively and aggressively is being promoted as both moral and patriotic, is a courageous thing to do, but Sally does not do it only because she is brave. She does it because she is interested: because she has in mind, even when she is alone, the worldly space in which we can, if we will, prepare to be responsive to the moral claim of what is before us, as it is, not as it has been prejudged by some authority, subsumed under some “frozen” generalization or principle, or defined within any closed system. That is, she gives *what is* her thinking attention and then, particularly if her moral taste has caused her to recoil, she talks with her friends, re-calling us, too, into thinking that is with and for plural others, with and for the stubbornly particular world we have in common. What she, or we, will then do in the world remains unpredictable: there is no teaching here that we could follow. But it is then more likely that we will resist the madness of unanimity, however dressed up in patriotism, absolutized morality, or conventional clichés, and that is no small thing at all.

For such thinking friends, for the sake of the world, we cannot but be grateful, even while recognizing that gratitude will be, in their view, inappropriate. They are, after all, more, not less, puzzled than others by the world and its questions of right and wrong, and more, not less, aware of their own need for others with whom to worry about those questions.

## Endnotes

1. Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 243. Arendt also speaks of loving her friends (in her “Response to Gershon Scholem”); as always, in making distinctions, she is not drawing divisive, exclusionary lines.
2. Hannah Arendt, “Rosa Luxemburg: 1871-1919,” in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 41.

3. Hannah Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture,” *Social Research* 38:3 (Fall 1971): 433.
4. Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 418.
5. Hannah Arendt, “Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt,” *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, ed. Melvyn Hill (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 337.
6. Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies,” in *Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A. Panichas (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell Limited, 1977), 49.
7. Hannah Arendt. *The Life of the Mind/Thinking* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 12.
8. Weil, “School Studies,” 49.
9. Weil, “School Studies,” 51.
10. Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1964), 136.
11. Arendt, “Rosa Luxemburg,” 41.
12. Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 115-16.
13. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
14. I have this from William Turton’s *System of Nature, through the Three Grand Kingdoms of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals, Systematically Divided into their several Classes, Orders, Genera, Species and Varieties, with their Habitations, Manners, Economy, Structure, and Peculiarities, Translated from Omelin’s Last Edition of the celebrated Systema Naturae, by Sir Charles Linne, Amended and Enlarged by the Improvements and Discoveries of Later Naturalists and Societies*, vol. 1, London, 1802, on a microprint from the History of Science Collection at the University of Oklahoma (1970).
15. Patricia J. Williams. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 164.
16. Simi Linton. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
17. Thanks to Bill Ruddick, who, after discussion of this paper in which Margaret Urban Walker and a few other thinkers I respect questioned my use of “psychotic,” suggested I try “mad” instead.
18. Arendt, *The Life of The Mind*, 52.
19. Hannah Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Co., 1966), 350.
20. Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Zettel*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 69e.
21. Arendt, in “Arendt on Arendt,” p. 336.
22. See *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. from the German by Robert and Rita Kimber (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 69.
23. Sara Ruddick, “The Moral Horror of the September Attacks,” *Hypatia* 18:1 (2003): 212-22.

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## Response from Sara Ruddick

I found it daunting and more than a little embarrassing to speak as a “distinguished woman philosopher.” But I welcomed an occasion to say publicly what I often say to friends: in recent years feminist philosophy—feminist thinking in philosophy and by philosophers—has become for me a source of considerable pleasure and insight.

Elizabeth Minnich, borrowing from her teacher Hannah Arendt, speaks of friendship as preserving “openness and reference to the world.”<sup>1</sup> In a profession that seems careless of, if not invested in, making others feel “stupid,” friends who think together sustain each other partly by providing the recognition and response that affirms a self-identity as someone who thinks.<sup>2</sup> These thinking, worldly friendships are not a luxury for Arendt, or for me, or for Elizabeth. “Human beings,” Arendt says, “are dependent on one another not only because of their having a body and physical needs but precisely for their mental faculties.” “Company is indispensable for the *thinker*.”<sup>3</sup>

In her essay for Linda Alcoff's new collection *Singing in the Fire*, Alison Jaggar recalls:

Attending the biennial SWIP meetings, often accompanied by babies, became one of my highest priorities in the 1970s...SWIP provided indispensable support and intellectual community for women and feminist philosophers who frequently felt insecure and marginalized. Without SWIP...feminist philosophy would never have emerged.<sup>4</sup>

I find it particularly gratifying to be honored by the group that provided for women the company indispensable to thinkers and created the conditions for doing the feminist philosophy that so pleases me today.

On the night before our Philadelphia meeting, Linda's paper arrived, a gift I had not imagined, a reading of *Maternal Thinking* that was stunning in its care and generosity. The papers from Patrice, Elizabeth and Hilde came less dramatically, preceded by conversation. But each still remains for me a surprising, warming act of friendship.

Linda writes about the concept and content of "maternal thinking" better than I could or anyone else has. I am delighted to refer you to her paper in order to take up a question she raises at the end of her essay. Does the idea of maternal *thinking* accord too little value to feeling, too much to maternal reflectiveness? Linda remembers her mother-in-law, a splendid mother who "trusted her feelings" and "led from the heart" a metaphor for an orientation to the world, a mode of being, that values feelings. How will this woman, this orientation, fare among maternal thinkers?

Linda speaks of the "epistemological elements" of mothering, a useful phrase. These elements include "cognitive styles," "metaphysical attitudes," "patterns of mood," and "Ideals" or *conceptions* of virtue.<sup>5</sup> Many mothers will express in speech or behavior some of these elements—a "double focus" for example—without identifying them or thinking *about* them. Some mothers will be reflective, because of their temperament or because of troubles with their children. But a capacity for reflection, for second order meditation on the meaning of maternal practice and thinking, is not required by maternal thinking.

Looking back at *Maternal Thinking* after reading Linda's essay, I was therefore surprised to see how often I praised reflectiveness, especially in relation to feeling. "Reflective assessment of feeling is a defining rational activity of mothers," "feelings demand reflection," "cry out for thought."<sup>6</sup> It is as if feelings without reflection were incomplete, almost dangerous. Yet I meant to respect feelings, epistemologically and practically, as Linda means to respect them now. Today, writing about just war theories I find it right and necessary to repeat what I said when writing about mothers. Feelings are instruments of knowledge; we depend upon feelings to know ourselves, our enemies, and people we care for; one indication of the effectiveness of an action or policy is the feelings it produces.<sup>7</sup>

I also still believe that in military practices and maternal practices feelings cry out for thought. Military thinking is "shot through" with feelings—avowed, disguised, genuine, and fabricated. I have no doubt these feelings should be subject to reflection from within and outside the practice. I also believe, albeit less urgently, that maternal reflection, though not an element of maternal thinking, or a requirement for it, should be welcomed, even actively created.

Many mothers find their feelings confused and overwhelming as I did. More important, mothers have considerable power in their children's lives. They may feel, and indeed usually are, powerless in many ways in the world and at home, including in relation to their children whose friendships,

projects, taste, and attitudes they cannot control. Nonetheless they have the power to hurt children physically or verbally, by individual acts or long range policies, cruelly or unwittingly. Some mothers should trust their feelings, but others trust their feeling to their children's distress and often ultimately to their own despair.

I envision reflective maternal conversations made up of gossip, analysis, second order questioning – many modes of story telling. Someone like Linda's mother-in-law who rightly trusted her feelings could tell lively stories about questioning authority, fighting for her son, or making peace amidst strife – the stuff of maternal nonviolence.<sup>8</sup> A neighbor might find herself able to talk about the way she caves into teachers whose judgment she fears. Still another could tell a funny story about her reactions to the tattoos and pins that cover and pierce her daughter's body, bringing up for air feelings which in fact keep her awake at night. Reflective maternal conversations would ideally be compassionate and realistic – virtues I ascribed to the stories mothers and children share.

These reflective conversations are idealized speech situations. But they are not so different from what I remember or what many mothers long for. They are no more fantasy ridden than the conversations of "defense intellectuals" or most discussions in analytic philosophy. I would like to see them modeled, developed and then compared to other ideal speech situations by people closer to mothering, and gifted in narrative, or the social construction of emotions that can be named and shared.

Patrice brings this fantasy to earth with a specific question: What obligations does a mother have to those who assist her in her work? She first considers a mother's relation to family members and friends who take care of her children, often so that she can do something else. This discussion of the complex relations between mothers and people who help her is poignantly familiar and illuminating. I rush on to the more politically charged issue of paid caregivers, but want to note the value of the discussion Patrice has initiated.<sup>9</sup>

There is already a considerable literature on the relation between mothers and people, usually women, whom they pay to assist them. This literature speaks of the inevitable inequalities of the relation and of indignities that are more painful because they occur in a familial space involving children's feelings – affection, arrogance, entitlement, guilt, and more.<sup>10</sup> Before offering guidelines of her own, Patrice contributes to this literature a reading of two personal essays by Eva Feder Kittay and Jennifer Nedelsky, both from an anthology, *Mother Troubles*, which I coedited with Julia Hanigberg.<sup>11</sup>

Eva hires a paid helper to share the work of caring for her severely mentally impaired daughter whom she deeply loves. Peggy lives with the family for over 23 years, eventually becoming part of a team of helpers. She shares the love which is part of but exceeds the demands of the work. Her words, "Not My Way, Sessa, Your Way, Slowly," give the title to Eva's essay. Jenny hired in turn two women who lived elsewhere and shared housework as well as childcare with her and her husband until her younger child was in school. Neither Eva nor Jenny gives us the details of their economic arrangements; each emphasizes that they have resources other parents do not; each finds her child care arrangements of great value though each recognizes the inequalities at the heart of the relationship.

Patrice suggests the rich complexity of Eva's relation with Peggy, pointing readers the way to this remarkable memoir. She is respectfully but seriously critical of Jennifer Nedelsky's relationships with the women she employs and of the way she talks about these relationships. For example, Jenny requires too much housework of someone employed to care for children; in talking to her employees and writing about them

she distinguishes too sharply between “mundane physical work” and “child care.” One valuable way of caring for children is to do household work with them. In general, according to Patrice, Jenny talks about her interests and needs, and rarely of her employees’. I believe we learn more about the employees’ histories and interests than Patrice suggests, but the story is told by Jenny and is about her.<sup>12</sup>

Jenny’s aim in writing is not to offer ideas about childcare but to break collective and personal habits of maternal silence. The topics about which Jenny has been silent range from feelings about genetic testing, to her astonished love for her first infant, to an emotionally intense but practically distant relation to political work. She gives many reasons for her own and other mothers’ silence, among them guilt for having options other mothers do not have, inability to acknowledge or sort through feelings, and the high probability of causing pain, anger or disapproval. Her child care arrangements, now many years in the past, serve as one example of the intense, contradictory feelings that keep mothers from speaking.

Jenny still “lives with the distress of having chosen solutions vitally important to me but which rested on unjustifiable structures of inequality.” But she would choose these solutions again. They were *vitally* important to her *and* they depended on unjustifiable inequalities. In a similar vein, she tells us that her attitude toward housework is “the most acute” of the many contradictions she speaks (or is silent) about. But she acts out the contradiction: paying others to do much of the work she wants Western culture to value.

Mothers are not alone in needing to tell stories that are honest and also consistent and morally passable. Jenny calls for “communities of judgment” in which mothers test and enlarge their thinking. If these communities are analogous to the maternal conversations I imagine and remember, their survival depends upon a willingness to hear stories like this one that let moral confusion and contradiction stand.

Although Kittay and Nedelsky made their choices many years ago, we read about them amidst massive inequalities in mothers’ lives. While some mothers need moral guidance in dealing with assistants, others are demoralized by “unhelpful even exploitative case workers who refuse to offer help or guidance.”<sup>13</sup> Some mothers observe their children in their daycare centers by computer hook-up, others have no access to a phone during their shift and so cannot find out if their child arrived home safely.<sup>14</sup> Some are blamed for “leaving their children for work”; others for “staying home.” Some of the stay-at-homes should be learning to earn minimal wages; others should be pursuing the career they prepared for. The moral quality of individual relations between caregivers and employers matters; we should be grateful to Patrice, Jenny and Eva for thinking openly about them. But good relations depend on a politics of care that includes “vigorous pursuit of justice for women workers”<sup>15</sup> wherever they work and respect for mothering work whoever does it. This is a politics to which we hope *Mother Troubles* contributes.

For some time I have looked for values that could inform an *oppositional* ethics of care; values which originate in caring relations but that can be made to stand against public abuse. “Holding someone in personhood,” a concept that Hilde Nelson has been constructing in several papers, seems such a critical value.

“Personhood” in Hilde’s account is a relationship—not a characteristic someone has or lacks but a practice in which people engage. In practicing personhood people recognize and respond to *each others’* procession of thoughts, feelings and other mental states as these are expressed in or represented by their bodies. Recognition includes establishing personal identities through stories people tell about themselves and each

other, borrowing from and also creating narratives current in their culture. Response includes the attitudes they take toward each others’ identities as well as, more directly, toward their bodily expressions. Personhood is at bottom a moral relationship. It requires and bestows “the particular moral consideration that Kant called respect and the high moral valuation that he called dignity.”

In this essay the illustrative example of someone held in personhood is Hilde’s sister Carla who had hydrocephaly, a neural tube disorder. Carla is watched, held, cries and is comforted. When she dies, she is mourned by her mother as someone who contributed to the relationships in which she was held: “we learned so much from her about love, compassion and patience.”<sup>16</sup>

The idea of personhood is entwined with the hierarchies Elizabeth Minnich laments, most evidently “the fiercely defended division between man and animal.” The idea of “holding” is associated with the “good enough mother,” a *woman* who provides or fails to provide, the “holding environment” an infant requires. Hilde joins the concept of personhood, with its associations of dignity and respect, to a protectiveness that knows no rank and which is enacted by several people, including a seven year old child.

According to Hilde, normal practices of personhood are “unreflective, reciprocal and as common as breathing.” “Holding” is exceptional, required only for someone who is unable to express, recognize, or respond. I take issue with Hilde’s distinction between normal and exceptional in ways relevant to the usefulness of *holding* in personhood as a critical value. It would be foolish and cruel to minimize the differences between Carla and healthy children. Moreover, Hilde is taking on a philosophical ethos that does not count infants like Carla as persons. To imagine their personhood enacted in relationships represents a conceptual and moral shift. Nonetheless I do not distinguish sharply the exceptional from the normal.

Exceptional relations cast light on more typical ones. Carla’s relation with her family may lead us to see differently a parent whose mind is failing because of Alzheimer’s<sup>17</sup> or a friend who becomes inexpressive and unresponsive because of depression. These cases, still atypical, may help us identify typical efforts of a mother to protect with dignity her infant and his four-year-old sister who is smothering him with love, or a nurse holding in respect a “soul” “pictured” by an increasingly incontinent and inexpressive body.

The opposite of holding is casting out, an “exile from humanity” that can be accomplished by destroying any of the four aspects of personhood: shattering mental life; rendering the body inexpressive; refusing to recognize expressions; or failing to respond to what is recognized. Hilde takes the practices of war as her illustrative example of “casting out.” In these passages she elaborates an opposition I have tried to create throughout my writing, first between mothering and military practices and then, more generally, between care and violence.

In closing, Hilde compares deliberate casting out to the force that turns a person into a thing.<sup>18</sup> I too now speak of “force”: I am drawn to the abstract indeterminacy of the noun that guards against selecting one kind of violence but which must be spelled out in each case with concrete particularities. Force “renders human beings as human beings totally superfluous,”<sup>19</sup> makes of a person an “object of property,”<sup>20</sup> someone who “counts for nothing,”<sup>21</sup> a “throwaway person.”<sup>22</sup>

I want to close with some remarks on knowing, thinking, and their relation to force drawn from the richness of Elizabeth’s paper. In her extensive work on knowledge,<sup>23</sup> which she distinguishes from thinking, Elizabeth identifies “conceptual errors” which block the

representation of the majority of humankind as knowers, itself an act of force. An error that she now believes is the taproot which feeds all errors is the idea that humans are divisible into kinds and therefore ready to be divided. This ready-to-hand divisibility serves the practice of war and its theoretical justification. Divisibility into kinds is a concept that Arendtian thinking would first identify and then “unfreeze.”

As I read Elizabeth, I found myself combining her thinking, Arendtian thinking,<sup>24</sup> and “attentive thinking”<sup>25</sup> to produce a mode of apprehending the world which is opposed to force. In “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” Arendt describes thinking as “the habit of examining and reflecting on whatever comes to pass”; a “soundless solitary dialogue...between me and myself...in which we examine what we say and do”; a “resultless” “quest for meaning” that “relentlessly examines anew all accepted doctrines and rules,” and like the “veil of Penelope undoes every morning what it had finished the night before” leaving you “fully awake and alive” but “with nothing in your hand but perplexities.”

Arendt describes thinking as soundless in its solitude but in contrast to “attentive feeling” it is a clattering internal mono/dialogue. Attention is quiet, a deliberately empty-headed but focused respectful reception of things as they are. Attention is a corrective to “fantasy” or projection which spoils the efforts to take another’s good as one’s own. An attentive person asks a child, a friend, “What are you going through?” then waits for, rather than gives, the answer. Positively, attention, as Elizabeth puts it, “allows us to come into respectful relationship with phenomena as they appear.” Weil sometimes suggests that the proper object of attention is only the pain, not the pleasure, of others.<sup>26</sup> If attention is to undercut the cognitive habits of force it must be receptive to lives in the fullness of their frustrating eccentricities, annoying virtues, pomposities and doubts, of their happiness and sorrow.

Thinking, as Arendt describes it in “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” is solitary. I take thinking to be preeminently social even when it pretends to be individual, corrected and inspired by the presence of listeners. Putting “ourselves in thought in the place of everyone else” depends upon real listeners. My illustrative example is the reflective conversation of mothers, rather than the solitary reader with her book.<sup>27</sup> But I began with Arendt: “company is indispensable to the *thinker*.” I give her “the final word”: “I do not share the opinion...that one should not doubt once one has convinced oneself of something. In [thinking] this is impossible. *Our mind has a natural aversion to it.*”<sup>28</sup> Again quoting Kant, adding her italics as I have added brackets, substituting “thinking” for pure philosophy. This careful, respectful and free-spirited use of someone else’s words seems characteristic of Elizabeth’s thinking, as of her teacher Hannah Arendt.<sup>29</sup>

Thinking and attention “interrupt all doing,” allowing what Weil called “that moment for pausing from which alone our consideration of our fellow proceeds.”<sup>30</sup> It later leaves you “fully awake and alive” but “with nothing in your hand but perplexities.” If one wants to undermine the closed, certain and enthusiastic rationalities that invent and justify force, this ending is a beginning.<sup>31</sup>

I have taught and thought about Arendtian thinking; attention was central to my presentation of maternal thinking. The idea of “moral taste” is new to me and not initially attractive. But when I hear of “an impelling, never quite predictable, distaste for wrongs,” a “kind of recoil,” I feel in the presence of

an idea I will someday use. Elizabeth’s description of root conceptual errors as “psychotic” was also initially disturbing. But as she has clarified it, the concept psychotic now seems to contribute to an accurate vocabulary of condemnation. Without judging the mental life of individuals, she catches the helpless claustrophobia of being caught in lies so brazen, schemes of domination so public, that we are rendered speechless.

“Systems set the terms in which we all live . . . they, far more dangerously than individuals, can also go mad.” “Rationality can itself go wrong and become not an antidote to, but a source of justifications for, evil.” In Nancy Hartsock’s words, the “proper order of things is inverted”; the concrete realities of everyday life with its “varieties of connections with the human and natural world” are destroyed.<sup>32</sup>

I am mixing Elizabeth’s words with Nancy Hartsock’s early feminist standpoint theory. However neither “stand” nor “point”, nor for that matter “theory” seem appropriate to the contrast I have wanted to draw between “care” and “force.” Care is an activity filled with conflict, change, injustices to be righted, pleasure, celebration, mourning . . . holding. The “rationality of care” is a mode of apprehending the world no more stationary or unified than the activities from which it arises.

“Force” has its varieties of “casting out.” “Fear and terror,” Simone Weil wrote, “are well-nigh mortal poisons” and then she lists varieties of force: “whether they [fear and terror] be caused by the threat of unemployment, police persecution, the presence of a foreign conqueror, the probability of invasion, or any other calamity which seems too much for human strength to bear.”<sup>33</sup> The protection that stands between any of us and “exile from humanity” is, in Hilde’s words, “eggshell thin.” As we see more accurately and lovingly the activities of care, the varieties of their violation will stand more sharply in relief. We will recoil.

Instead of theory, which is at least premature and perhaps forever inappropriate, I will end with two contrasting verbal, moving “pictures,” a metaphor of which Hilde is fond. Next to ordinary activities of care I place Simone Weil’s account of a factory worker’s ordinary day. These pictures are exemplary. Their opposition *should* hold us captive.

Each of us in the family,  
I dare say, saw Carla in  
a slightly different light . . .  
Acting out of our various  
conceptions of who she  
was, we made a place for  
her among us, treating her  
according to how we saw her,  
and in so treating her,  
making her even more that  
person we saw.  
It is as though someone  
were repeating in his ear at every  
passing moment and  
with all possibility of reply excluded:  
Here you are nothing  
You simply do not count.<sup>34</sup>

The cliché “I am indebted to too many to name” is in this instance true. Amelie Rorty has brought me and my writing into public philosophical discourse. Sally Scholz greeted the last several versions of this reply with patience, useful

suggestions, and heartwarming encouragement. Email conversations with Elizabeth Minnich have taught me what it means to have a “thinking friend.” Hilde arranged the APA panel and put together these papers with skill, tact, and firm direction. For Hilde “holding someone in personhood” seems indeed as “normal as breathing,” issuing in an attentive loving concern from which many benefit and on which I have come to depend.

## Endnotes

1. I will refer to the panelists' papers without reference. Where they refer to other texts, as Elizabeth refers to Hannah Arendt, I will let their references stand.
2. I am using Hilde Nelson's terminology which she introduced in *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).
3. Genevieve Lloyd is citing Arendt's "Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy," delivered in 1970 at the New School. Arendt cites Kant's remark that company is indispensable to the thinker. Genevieve Lloyd in "Feminism in History of Philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, ed. by Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Session two, edited by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); *Kant Reflexion zur Anthropologie, #763*, italics added by Arendt.
4. Alison Jaggar, "Freethinking?" in *Singing In the Fire*, edited by Linda Alcoff (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).
5. I mean by conceptions of virtue what counts as "success" or "failure" as well as conceptions of the characteristics a mother should have or acquire in order to be "successful," for example "Resilient Cheerfulness" as contrasted with both "despair" and "cheery denial." I take the idea of "mood" from Sandra Bartky's "Shame and Gender." Bartky takes it from Heidegger. On my understanding of Bartky, "moods" have a cognitive element; mode of being, an orientation that valued feeling could be a "mood." Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination* (New York, Routledge, 1990).
6. *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, 2nd edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), pp. 67-70.
7. Carol Cohn and I talked briefly about the epistemic status of thinking in "A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction," forthcoming in *Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). We expand on this topic in "Just Wars, Smart Weapons, and Women's Lives," a work in progress.
8. See chapter 7 of *Maternal Thinking*, also chapters 8 and 9.
9. In her chapter in *Mother Troubles*, "Always Connect: Toward a Parental Ethics of Divorce," Hilde wonders why moral philosophers have not attended to a phenomenon which has affected so many. A similar question could be asked of helping relations among mothers, family members and friends.
10. Judith Rollins. *Between Women: Domesticity and their Employees* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985); Mary Romero. *Maid in the USA* (New York: Routledge 1992); "Who takes care of the Maid's Children?" In *Feminism and Families*, ed. by Hilde Nelson (New York: Routledge, 1997); Julia Wrigley. *Other People's Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); and two articles in *Hypatia*, 17:2 (Spring 2002) are essential readings: Joan Tronto, "The 'Nanny' Question in Feminism" and Gabrielle Meagher, "Is It Wrong to Pay for Housework?"
11. Eva Feder Kittay, "'Not My Way, Sessa, Your Way, Slowly': 'Maternal Thinking' in the Raising of a Child with Profound Disabilities," and Jennifer Nedelsky, "Dilemmas of Passion Privilege and Isolation: Reflections on Mothering in a White, Middle-class Nuclear Family," both in *Mother Troubles: Rethinking Contemporary Maternal Dilemmas*, edited by Julia Hanigsberg and Sara Ruddick (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).
12. I resist the urge to defend Jenny, a 'thinking friend' whose work I admire and who wrote at my invitation. Jenny may well have respected the autonomy of her employees. (She speaks several times of having the kind of honest conversation Patrice admires.) She may have provided "empowering" employment for the second nanny and for the first until the birth of Nedelsky's second child. But the relationship is troubling to her as it is to Patrice.
13. Nancy J. Hirschmann. *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.153 includes a provocative discussion of welfare.
14. Carol Sanger, "Leaving Children for Work" in *Mother Troubles*.
15. Gabrielle Meagher, "Is it Wrong to Pay for Housework?" *Hypatia*, 17:2 (Spring 2002).
16. Hilde Nelson, "What Child is This?" *Hastings Center Report*, 32:6, 37.
17. See Hilde Nelson, "On the Mend: Narrative Repair," unpublished manuscript.
18. Simone Weil, "The Iliad or The Poem of Force," in *Simone Weil Reader*, edited by George Panichas (Mt. Kisko, NY: Moyers Bell Limited, 1977).
19. Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence 1926-1969*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner (New York: Harcourt Brace and Janovich 1992), 166, and *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1958 edition.
20. Patricia Williams, *Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).
21. Simone Weil, "Factory Work," in *Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George Panichas, 56.
22. I got the phrase from Claudia Card who attributed it to Carl Wellman.
23. Elizabeth Minnich. *Transforming Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
24. I know of Arendtian thinking both through Elizabeth and through "Thinking and Moral Considerations," which I taught repeatedly before reading *Thinking*, vol. 1 of *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1978). All quotes are from "Thinking and Moral Considerations," *Social Research* (1971) 417-446. I am shortening and omitting most of Arendt's argument but have kept what I myself find useful as an antidote to "Force."
25. Attention as developed by Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch in *Sovereignty of Good* (New York: Schocken, 1971), and now by Elizabeth Minnich. I read Weil through the lens provided by Murdoch. Although I find her words indispensable, I find many of Weil's ideas quite alien. I have found *The Need for Roots* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1953) to be Weil's most useful book and her most important essays "Iliad: Poem of Force"; "Factory Work"; "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies"; "Human Personality"; "The Love of God and Affliction," all in the *Simone Weil Reader*.
26. For example, where I say an attentive person asks a friend, a child, "What are you going through?" Weil asks it of "a king three-quarters paralyzed by the most painful wound." The king is the keeper of the Grail; Weil goes on to speak of asking "our neighbor." "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies," Panichas, 51. I am grateful to Chris Cuomo for reawakening my interest in Simone Weil. See her *Philosopher Queen: Feminist Essays on War, Love, and Knowledge* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). In *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), Nel Noddings offers criticisms of Weil that I found quite compelling.
27. I allude to Wallace Stevens: "The House was Quiet, The World was Calm." I write against my temperament, whose fantasy is the solitary situation Stevens depicts. I and people like me would still treasure and learn in solitary moments but thinking with others would have epistemological priority.
28. "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 425.
29. For Elizabeth's relation to Hannah Arendt see *Between Women: Biographers, Novelists, Critics, Teachers and Artists Write about their work on Women*. I share Elizabeth's desire, though not her ability, to actively think respectively through the words of others. I undertook *Between Women*, which I coedited with Carol Ascher and Louise de Salvo partly to explore this relation to the minds/words of another.
30. Arendt, "interrupts all doing," "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 423; "Pause," Weil, *Iliad*, in Panichas, 162.
31. The classic writings on military rationality are Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs* (1987) and "War, Wimps, and Women" in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. by Miriam Cooke and Angela Woolacott (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

1994). See also Cohn and Ruddick, "A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction."

32. "The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," in *Discovering Reality*, edited by Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983). I also profited from *Politics and Feminist Standpoint Theories* edited by Sally J. Kenny and Helen Kinsella (New York: The Haworth Press, 1997). Linda's discussion of "maternal thinking" as a feminist standpoint seems just right. I now reject many of standpoint theory's fundamental assumptions, but Nancy Hartsock's continues to frame or haunt my thinking.

33. Simone Weil. *The Need for Roots* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

34. Weil on Factory Work, p.56

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**Sara Ruddick** is emerita Professor of Lang College at the New School University where she taught for many years. She is the author of *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (second edition, Beacon 1995) and the coeditor of three anthologies. Linda Alcoff described *Working It Out* (Pantheon 1977). *Between Women: Women Biographers, Novelists, Critics Teachers and Artists Write about Their Work on Women* (Beacon 1984, second edition, Routledge 1993) addresses, among other questions, what it means to think through the thoughts and words of another woman, as both she and Elizabeth Minnich have done. Elizabeth contributed to the anthology an essay on her relation to Hannah Arendt. The personal essays by Eva Kittay and Jennifer Nedelsky which Patrice DiQuinzio discusses serve as 'bookends' to *Mother Troubles* (Beacon 1999), a collection of essays primarily by legal theorists. The aim of the collection is to take a political stand on behalf of mothers suffering assault from policies of the US and to a lesser extent Canadian governments while at the same time recognizing that there are "no easy answers" to the dilemmas that mothers and their advocates face. ruddicks@newschool.edu

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, in conjunction with the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* edited by Eduardo Mendieta, invites submissions for a special joint issue, Fall 2004. Papers may be on Hispanic or Iberian Feminism, Latin American Feminism, Indigenous forms of Feminism, Latino/a Feminisms, and/or *Mujerista* theological feminism and its lessons to philosophical feminisms.

Please send two copies of your paper to:

Sally Scholz  
Associate Professor  
Philosophy Department  
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(610) 519-4099  
sally.scholz@villanova.edu

Electronic submissions will be accepted.

Deadline for submissions is February 1, 2004. Please limit essays to 4000-6000 words and include a word count on the first page.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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**Patrice DiQuinzio** is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Women's Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA. She is the author of *The Impossibility of Motherhood: Feminism, Individualism, and the Problem of Mothering* (Routledge, 1999) and coeditor with Iris Marion Young of *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy* (Indiana University Press, 1997). She is currently working with Sharon Meagher on *Women and Children First*, a collection of essays on feminism, rhetoric, and public policy, and she is a member of the advisory board of the Association for Research on Mothering. diquinzi@muhlenberg.edu