

# APA Newsletters

Volume 06, Number 1

Fall 2006

## NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

FROM THE EDITOR, SALLY J. SCHOLZ

ABOUT THE *NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY*

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, ROSEMARIE TONG

### ARTICLES

SHARON CRASNOW

“Activist Research and the Objectivity of Science”

CARMELA EPRIGHT

“Praxis and the “F” Word: Young Women, Feminism, Fear”

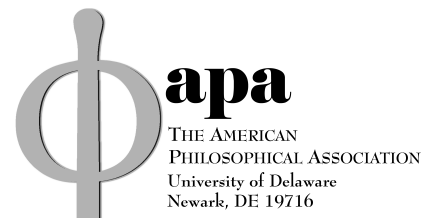
### BOOK REVIEWS

Naomi Zack: *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women’s Commonality*

REVIEWED BY CLEA F. REES

Sharyn Clough: *Beyond Epistemology: A Pragmatist  
Approach to Feminist Science Studies*

REVIEWED BY NANCY M. WILLIAMS



Cassandra Pinnick, Noretta Koertge, and Robert Almeder: *Scrutinizing Feminist Epistemology: An Examination of Gender in Science*

REVIEWED BY SHARYN CLOUGH

Christina Erneling and David Martel, eds.: *The Mind as a Scientific Object*

REVIEWED BY CARMEL FORDE

Elizabeth Grosz: *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*

REVIEWED BY CATHERINE VILLANUEVA GARDNER

Rebecca Kukla: *Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture, and Mothers' Bodies*

REVIEWED BY LAURA NEWHART

Maurice Hamington and Dorothy C. Miller, eds.: *Socializing Care*

REVIEWED BY LAUREN FLEMING

Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs: *Feminism after Bourdieu*

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA SMERICK

Maria Falco, ed.: *Feminist Interpretations of Niccolò Macchiavelli*

REVIEWED BY MINDY PEDEN

Peter Knox-Shaw: *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*

REVIEWED BY MONICA SHORES

Lorraine Code, ed.: *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*

REVIEWED BY JAMEY FINDLING

Jane Duran: *Eight Women Philosophers: Theory, Politics, and Feminism*

REVIEWED BY MAURICE HAMINGTON

Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett, eds.: *The Contradictions of Freedom: Philosophical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir's The Mandarins*

REVIEWED BY ROBIN MARGARET JAMES

Margaret A. Simons, Marybeth Timmerman, and Mary Beth Mader, eds.: *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*

REVIEWED BY DERA SIPE

**CONTRIBUTORS**



---

## FROM THE EDITOR

---

More than one popular media outlet has asked whether feminism is dead. Certainly we know that rumors of its death have been greatly exaggerated. But what some of the queries reveal is wonderment about activism. Activists of every sort—not just feminist—have sought innovative and creative avenues for effecting social change. Protesting has not lost its power, but door-to-door organizing, email campaigns, online petitions and blogs, civic organizations and lobbying, and even legislative initiatives have come to replace some of the in-your-face/in-your-street political activism that characterized earlier years in the feminist campaign. Moreover, as feminist theory continues to make in-roads in theory and practice, activism changes or adapts in order to seek new goals or advance new ideals.

Sharon Crasnow asks about the proper role of activism in scientific inquiry in her article, “Activist Research and the Objectivity of Science.” Contrary to the more common view that activist commitments “impede gathering, interpreting, and evaluating evidence and thus compromise objectivity,” Crasnow argues that “activism is one of the means through which standpoint can be achieved.” She employs the particular case of an anthropologist who, because of her activism with the women of her study community, came to see not just the effects of oppressive practices but also the social structure that maintained it. Crasnow’s article is suggestive on a number of levels. In addition to encouraging scholars to see the practical challenges of their theories, it expands what might be understood as activism. Can our scholarship be seen as activism insofar as it pushes the boundaries of traditional theory or challenges oppressive structures within that theory?

Carmela Epright’s comments in “Praxis and the ‘F’ Word: Young Women, Feminism, Fear” come at an interesting time. A recent article in *Newsweek* magazine featuring a discussion with Linda Hirshman sparked numerous hostile responses.<sup>1</sup> Hirshman had said that women must work outside the home in order to have a political voice. Most of the letters in response claimed that feminism is about choice, and women’s decision to stay at home should be affirmed by feminists rather than disparaged.<sup>2</sup> As one letter writer put it, the view that women must work outside the home “is extremely skewed and goes against the entire concept of what feminism stands for. My understanding of feminism is that it’s the right for a woman to choose the path that is best for her, whether that be working a full-time job or being a full-time mom.”<sup>3</sup> Another indicated that her experiences in parent organizations and community volunteer opportunities gave her the political power and social honor Hirshman claimed was only possible through paid work.<sup>4</sup> These letters might be written off as simplistic understandings of feminism, but that might be a mistake. They offer sometimes

careful analysis of class and race bias in a liberal feminist claim for women’s right or duty to work in the paid labor force. They also reveal a sort of paradox as the goals of feminism appear accomplished to some, while others among us view sexist oppression as well-entrenched and in need of further feminist response.

Epright examines this phenomenon of the paradox of feminism as advocate for personal choice by sharing some of her students’ responses to an introduction to feminist theory class. Epright’s sometimes wry look at how feminism is received by conservative college students adds a subtlety to the analysis, including the students’ own reluctance to recognize how oppression might structure their lives. She argues, “Because feminist theory recognizes that there are contradictory and confusing questions to be asked about women’s experience, embracing feminism *as a way of being in the world*, as opposed to merely viewing it as a way of reading and thinking through texts, would require them to accept more ambiguity and tolerate more complexity than their familial, religious, and cultural conceptions will permit.” As teachers of feminist theory, many of us have confronted the dilemma Epright discusses. Her article offers a helpful way to think through our obligations as teachers, activists, feminists, and philosophers.

The rest of the issue features fourteen book reviews ranging from feminist philosophy of science to maternal bodies and care, from feminist critiques and appropriations of canonical figures to contributions of specific feminist philosophers. Reviewers do us all a tremendous service, and I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who have written reviews for this *Newsletter*. New books continue to come in—a sign of our ever-present activism within the academy—and new reviewers are needed. If you would like to write a review, please send me your CV by email. This is an excellent opportunity for established scholars and graduate students alike.

### Endnotes

1. “Fast Chat: Managing Mommies,” *Newsweek*, (June 19, 2006): 10. Hirshman’s book is *Get to Work: A Manifesto for Women of the World* (New York: Viking, 2006).
2. Letters: “The Mommy Wars Rage On,” *Newsweek*, (July 10, 2006): 26 & 30.
3. *Ibid.*, 26.
4. *Ibid.*, 30.

---

## 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 ten 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 us a copy of your book. We are always in need of book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send 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, Villanova, PA 19085-1699, 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.

---

## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

---

Once again, Sally Scholz has produced an informative and excellent *Newsletter* issue. I always look forward to its publication. I find it one of the best publications available on recent advances in feminist scholarship in particular and gender-related scholarship in general.

This last year the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) was particularly active. We arranged two panels at each of the Division meetings. Tracy Edwards organized a panel on “Ontology of Race and Gender” and a panel on “Pornography Revisited” at the 2005 Eastern Division meeting. Sharon Crasnow

organized a panel on “Women’s Choices: Family Matters in the Profession” and a panel on “Publishing as a Feminist” at the 2006 Pacific Division meeting. Anita Superson organized a panel on “Teaching in a Climate of Conservation” and a panel on “Feminism and Disability” at the 2006 Central Division meeting. Among the co-sponsors of one or more of these panels were the Committee on Inclusiveness, the Committee for the Defense of Professional Rights of Philosophers, and the Committee on Philosophy and Law. The CSW makes a point of collaborating whenever possible with other committees attentive to the voices and interests of women philosophers.

As usual, the CSW focused some attention on (1) structural issues such as the Committee on Committees’ criteria for selection of new committee members and chairs and (2) financial issues such as the size of the annual budgets provided by the National Office to the various standing and diversity committees. In the main, however, the CSW reflected on the fact that despite all the progress women in the profession have made, philosophy remains what may be the most male-populated field in the humanities. According to available APA data, a persistent 75 percent male/25 percent female breakdown seems to be our profession’s continuing fate. Moreover, as Margaret Urban Walker has noted, a “discussive/professional tipping point,” at which women’s ways of thinking, doing, and speaking are just as likely to be the order of the day as men’s, does not occur until a profession is well over 30 percent female, most usually 50 percent female. The profession of philosophy must work harder to attract more women to its ranks, to make gender part of philosophy’s “must-know” critical repertory, and to serve the interests of all women in the profession, including those who work in its margins. Based on considerable anecdotal information (empirical data is in short supply), there is reason to think that a significant number of women philosophers are not tenure track and/or members of the APA. Some of these women have Ph.D.s, but many of them terminated their studies at the MA level. They work in community colleges and in prep schools, or as part-timers at universities and colleges. Some of these women work where they do because it is their choice to do so. Others work where they do because they are bound by their partner’s geography, limited by their funds, and/or burdened by familial obligations. In addition, there are the women who drop out of philosophy, many of whom leave the field because they find it arrogant, competitive, and pedantic.

Over the next three years or so, the CSW will work to encourage more women, particularly women from under-represented groups, to enter and stay in the profession. Please contact me or any other CSW member if you wish to help with this initiative and/or if you had ideas about how to organize it.

Appreciatively to all the women in the profession. It is better for our active presence!

Rosemarie Tong

Chair, Committee on the Status of Women

Distinguished Professor in Health Care Ethics

Director, Center for Professional and Applied Ethics

Department of Philosophy

The University of North Carolina–Charlotte

---

---

## ARTICLES

---

---

### ***Activist Research and the Objectivity of Science***<sup>1</sup>

Sharon Crasnow  
*Riverside Community College*

#### **1. Introduction**

Political activism is often seen as antithetical to the objectivity of science. This is the case even for the social sciences, despite their role in shaping the social world. Although engagement might improve science by increasing its relevance to the needs of the communities under investigation, this usefulness is usually thought to be confined either to the context of discovery or applied knowledge. It is not immediately obvious how activist commitments could be *evidentially* relevant. To the contrary, it is frequently argued that such commitments impede gathering, interpreting, and evaluating evidence and thus compromise objectivity. As a consequence, activist social scientists face professional criticism and experience conflict between their training and their political commitments.

Traditional conceptions of objectivity identify it as a requirement for good science and locate it in scientific methodology. Methodologies that promote objectivity are impartial, neutral, and autonomous; both the research and the researcher are required to have these characteristics.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it is typically thought that an objective methodology will result in an account of the objects and their relationships to each other that is independent of the researchers. I will refer to these two aspects of objectivity as the justificatory and ontological aspects of objectivity.

Activist research challenges at least the first of these and quite possibly the second as well. To do research as an activist is to adopt an explicitly value-laden methodology, and so to challenge the norms of impartiality, neutrality, and autonomy. I sketch an alternative account of objectivity that would not automatically rule out such value-laden activist research as good science. In order to do so, I use resources from a model-theoretic account of science and standpoint theory.

#### **2. Model-based objectivity**

In order to explicate “model-based objectivity,” I will be using an understanding of “model” akin to Nancy Cartwright’s.<sup>3</sup> According to Cartwright, theories do not represent the world directly and models do not constitute theories. “There are not theories, on the one hand, that represent and phenomena, on the other hand, that get represented (though perhaps only more or less accurately). Rather...models mediate between theory and the world.”<sup>4</sup> Models might be physical, scale models, mathematical, conceptual, representations, analogies, drawings, or even narratives. The most important aspect of a model is that it provides a means for our interaction with the world in order to achieve a particular goal. Since our goals are diverse, it is not surprising that there is diversity of models. Ronald Giere has compared models to maps in order to make this clearer.<sup>5</sup> There are many sorts of maps, topological, road maps, trail maps, and others. Each is appropriate for different purposes and yet each accurately captures some key features of the natural world.

How can this model-theoretic approach offer us insight into the objectivity of science and how activism could contribute to that objectivity? Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison offer the

following observation: “All sciences must deal with this problem of selecting and constituting ‘working objects’, as opposed to the too plentiful and too various natural objects.”<sup>6</sup> Daston and Galison suggest a modeling of what they call the “working objects.” I will call these the “objects of scientific knowledge.” A systematic body of knowledge, such as science, requires that we make choices about which features of the complex and multifaceted natural world we will pay attention to and which we will ignore. The results of these choices are the modeled objects of scientific knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Precisely how models are related to the world may vary depending upon the nature of the objects in the world and the goals that we have. It is possible to build models of the objects of scientific knowledge from features of the everyday objects in a variety of ways depending on our needs and interests.

Model building depends on determining which features of everyday objects are relevant. These choices are constrained by previous choices, theory, background knowledge, and interests. We identify characteristics that we believe will allow us to answer the questions before us at any given time. These questions are expressions of our interests, and it is because of those interests that we focus on certain aspects of the world rather than others. The interests themselves are shaped by awareness of particular features of the world, which are, in turn, dependent on background knowledge. The question of whether these features are the “right” ones is a broadly empirical question. Do the models that we construct enable us to do what we want to do in the world? Are we able to intervene as we had hoped? Are we able to successfully meet our goals and address our interests? The answers to these questions constitute further empirical constraint on the objects of scientific inquiry. When models are successful, we have grasped the objects of scientific knowledge in a way that supports our interaction with the world. When models are successful in this way, then they are objective. It is this that I refer to as “model-based objectivity.”

Model-based objectivity provides a way of thinking about how activist research can count as objective, both in the ontological sense and in the justificatory sense. Modeling requires choosing properties of the complex objects in the world (whether they are social or natural). But which properties are relevant depends on interests, values, and background knowledge. The properties of the objects are independent of us (hence ontological objectivity), but their existence alone does not tell us which ones should be important to us. Knowledge in aid of particular political or social goals will be shaped by those interests. The success of the model in achieving the desired goals allows us to determine the objectivity of the model in the justificatory sense.

This brief sketch does not address the vexing issues that arise as we begin to make such judgments about interests and values. In activist research, the interests of the researcher should be aligned with the interests of the community. However, the actual interests of members of a society, culture, or group studied may not be identical with the stated interests of individual members of that group. What should be valued may not be the same as what is actually valued. The question of how to identify interests is a difficult one.

One way to tackle this problem is through standpoint theory. Feminist social scientists advocate designing research projects that begin from the lives of the oppressed. In order to do this, they focus on the experiences and voices of the oppressed, as well as their social location. In addition, the collective statements of the oppressed, such as lawsuits, manifestos, and other political actions, are a means of identifying these interests. Though no one means provides the key, each helps in coming to understand the standpoint of those whom the knowledge serves.

A standpoint is not the same thing as a perspective, and the epistemic privilege that accrues from a standpoint is not automatic.<sup>8</sup> Standpoint approaches require not only adopting the perspective of those studied but also recognizing the social and political structures of everyday life that contribute to that perspective. The objects and circumstances are not modeled from the precise perspective of those who are being studied, but the modeling begins in their lives, with their concerns, their work, and their relationships. However, the model must ultimately reveal the power structures through which their lives are shaped and the relevance of these factors to their lives.<sup>9</sup> Standpoint theory helps reveal which properties of the world are relevant in this way and how the objects of (social) scientific knowledge should be modeled.

### 3. An Example: Models of mothering

Nancy Scheper-Hughes describes herself as a “militant anthropologist.” She claims that her anthropology is “phenomenologically grounded...an *anthropologia-pe-no-chao*, an anthropology-with-one’s-feet-on-the-ground.”<sup>10</sup> Her *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* is an account of life in a shantytown in Northern Brazil, the Alto de Cruzeiro, Crucifix Hill, in a town that she refers to as Bom Jesus da Mata.<sup>11</sup> The book is an account of the ways in which poverty, hunger, and infant mortality are “normalized” in the Alto. Her work is feminist in the following way: “This ethnography...is women centered, as is everyday life in the shantytown marginalized by poverty and set on edge by what I describe...as ‘nervous hunger’. Mothers and children dominate these pages even as they dominate, numerically and symbolically, Alto life.”<sup>12</sup>

Scheper-Hughes began her study with the idea that motherhood is a natural and universal relationship.<sup>13</sup> Given a model of mothering that accounts for the bond between mother and infant as natural, much of the behavior of the women of the Alto is seen as a result of the distortion of that natural relationship. Her interaction with and study of these women ultimately leads her not only to reject the model of mothering as natural but, in doing so, to revise her research questions. Ultimately she models mothering as a social/cultural phenomenon rather than a natural one.

Mother love is anything *other* than natural and instead represents a matrix of images, meanings, sentiments, and practices that are everywhere socially and culturally produced. In the place of the poetics of motherhood, I refer to the pragmatics of motherhood for, to paraphrase Marx, these shantytown women create their own culture, but they do not create it just as they please or under circumstances chosen by themselves. ...The following discussion obviously makes no claim to universality.<sup>14</sup>

Instead of asking how the natural emotional bond between infant and mother is altered in situations of scarcity, Scheper-Hughes asks how those in a culture shaped by scarcity and poverty form the bonds between mothers and children.

If mothering is natural, the primary cause of high infant mortality would be sheer scarcity. Mothers would lose children only because they lack access to adequate food and medical care. It follows that making food and medical care available should decrease infant mortality.<sup>15</sup> Infants who were in immediate danger can be “rescued,” rehydrated, and fed. But, in practice, such “rescues” turned out to be temporary. Frequently, these same infants returned to homes where they died of dehydration or starvation at a later time, even when food and medical care were available.

Scheper-Hughes develops an alternative account that is both consistent with and supports her more radical political ideology, an ideology that is grounded in liberation theology and begins from the standpoint of the women of the Alto. Her analysis identifies a culture of “bad faith” in which none of the participants accepts full responsibility for their part in the “everyday violence” of the society, including, but not limited to, high infant mortality.<sup>16</sup> There is an understanding in the community that many infants will die and that these deaths are necessary so that others may live. This culture of bad faith is one of the causal mechanisms through which infant mortality persists.

Scheper-Hughes had come to see the high infant mortality rate as “normal” when she first lived in the Alto in the 1960s while in the Peace Corps. She came to accept it through participating in the daily lives and struggles of the women of the Alto. When she left, it took her several years to re-establish her sense of outrage. Her subsequent training as an anthropologist made the dual vision of the insider/outsider available to her when she returned to the Alto in the 1980s. Scheper-Hughes writes that after her first year of fieldwork she was confronted by a group of Alto women who informed her that they would not cooperate with her on any future work unless she also joined them in their political struggles. “The women gave me an ultimatum: the next time I came back to the Alto I would have to ‘be’ with them—‘accompany them’ was the expression they used—in their *luta*, and not just ‘sit idly by’ taking field notes. ‘What is this anthropology anyway to us?’ they taunted.”<sup>17</sup> When she returned to continue her fieldwork, she returned as a *campanheira* anthropologist, both an insider and outsider.

Activism contributed to Scheper-Hughes’s account in a variety of ways. At the most basic level, it provides both Scheper-Hughes’s entrance into the problem (through her early Peace Corps activism and later relationship with these women) and her ability to have access to her “data,” the lives of the women of the Alto, when she returns as an anthropologist. Second, her involvement in the lives of these women (through her activism) enables her to design her project so that it addresses their needs in the actual context in which they have those needs, both understanding their adaptation to the circumstances of scarcity and, at the same time, recognizing the factors that give rise to this adaptation through the dual vision of standpoint. The details of how the women see their children, how they distinguish those they expect to live from those who are just “visitors,” is crucial to Scheper-Hughes’s model of mothering. There is a third way in which activism works here, and that is in the testing of the model. The model is 1) accepted by those it describes and 2) more effective in meeting their goals than a model that holds mothering as natural and so focuses entirely on addressing scarcity.

Scheper-Hughes’s account is not objective according to the standards of impartiality, neutrality, and autonomy. It is not autonomous because it is developed with a particular set of values in mind and the model is intended to serve those values. It is not neutral in that it has value consequences. Whether or not it is impartial is not as clear, however. According to Lacey, an account is impartial if it is assessed in terms of cognitive or epistemic values only. The choices that go into building a model depend on values, the ends for which the model is constructed. But these choices also must be empirically adequate. The epistemic requirements are only met in a way that already incorporates other sorts of values. Attempting to distinguish contextual, non-epistemic criteria from epistemic criteria would be misleading, though if one is clear about the specific features in particular contexts there is a sense in which one might do this. However, to argue that *only* epistemic criteria are being used to

make judgments about which theories are better is misleading because all epistemic moves are predicated on holding particular values constant. The model is deeply contextual and it is the context itself that feeds our understanding of how to use the epistemic values in that context.

#### 4. Conclusion

The discussion of the example above is only a suggestion for how standpoint theory could be understood in conjunction with model-based objectivity. Activism is one of the means through which standpoint can be achieved. In the case of Scheper-Hughes's research, activism was a necessary condition for achieving standpoint because access to at least some of the evidence would have been impossible otherwise. But her activism also motivates her to seek an alternative model of mothering, and it is only in light of that model that particular phenomena become evidence. Additionally, her activism contributed to a better understanding of the role of culture in maintaining the undesirable status quo.

If we hold the model constant, we can still distinguish a context of discovery and a context of justification, but we must be clear that this distinction is conceptual only—not a distinction between two separate moments in the production of scientific knowledge. Consequently, to think of activism as confined to the context of discovery is to fail to recognize the interactive nature of the model as a tool and the role it plays in enabling the researcher to determine which phenomena are to be considered as evidence and which are not.

I have argued that a focus on determining which values, epistemic or non-epistemic/contextual, play a legitimate role in theory choice is misplaced. Values of all sorts play a role in model construction. Determining which models are good cannot be accomplished through determining whether values are used or which ones but, rather, through which models are successful at achieving legitimate goals. Worries about the legitimacy of values and hence the science shaped by them should be directed toward the scrutiny of goals.

Traditional philosophies of science base evaluation of theories on an understanding of justification that takes theories to be linguistic entities. A model-theoretic approach reframes the issue so that the success of the model is evidence for accepting it. Evidential relevance is linked to choices that determine model construction. A model that does not get at the properties of the world that are relevant to achieving goals will be less successful at achieving those goals. Engagement with and commitment to such goals may well be necessary in order to identify relevant properties. Activism can be an important avenue through which such meaningful engagement can occur.

But activism also provides a route through which the effectiveness of the model can be examined. When model-building is in aid of specific goals, the failure to achieve those goals will reveal a lack of fit between the model and the world. Working back and forth between the model and the world in order to achieve desired goals, producing knowledge in aid of those goals, not only supports activism but reveals how activism can be part of objective social science.

#### Endnotes

1. A version of this paper was presented at the 2006 Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable in Santa Cruz, CA. Thanks to the participants for valuable feedback, particularly Paul Roth, Joseph Rouse, Warren Schmaus, and Alison Wylie. Thanks also to Sandra Harding, Sally Scholz, and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments.
2. H. Lacey. *Is Science Value Free? Values and Scientific Understanding* (New York: Routledge, 1999). There are

many ways to characterize objectivity. Lacey's terminology provides one useful way. Other approaches are provided by Heather Douglas, "The Irreducible Complexity of Objectivity," *Synthese*, 138:3 (2004): 453-73; Elizabeth Lloyd, "Objectivity and the Double Standard for Feminist Epistemologies," *Synthese*, 104, (1995) 351-81; and Marianne Janack, "Dilemmas of Objectivity," *Social Epistemology*, 16:3 (2002): 267-81.

3. N. Cartwright. *The Dappled World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
4. *Ibid.*, 179. Other similar understandings of "model" include R. N. Giere, *Science Without Laws* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); M. C. Morrison, "Models as Autonomous Agents," in *Models as Mediators*, edited by M. S. Morgan & M. C. Morrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and D. M. Bailer-Jones, "Models, Metaphors, and Analogies," in *Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Science*, edited by P. Machamer & M. Silberstein (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002): 108-27. A model-theoretic account is not the same as the "semantic view" of theories on which models are formal or mathematical; however, the semantic view is a kind of model-theoretic account (i.e., B. C. Van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980]).
5. Giere 1999.
6. L. Daston, and P. L. Galison. "The Image of Objectivity," *Representations*, 40, Special Issue: Seeing Science (1992): 85.
7. It is with trepidation that I use "construct" here. Let me just be clear that I am not claiming that we construct the world. It is the model that is constructed, and the scientific objects are part of the model.
8. S. Harding. "A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory's Controversiality," *Hypatia*, 19:1 (2004): 25-47; A. Wylie. "Why Standpoint Matters," in *The Feminist Standpoint Reader*, edited by Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2004): 339-51.
9. This modeling does not require that we assume that the interests of everyone within a group to be served are the same. Whether and where there are commonalities is an empirical matter. The success of the model helps us determine this.
10. N. Scheper-Hughes. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 4.
11. The name of the town is a pseudonym; however, the shantytown (Alto do Cruzeiro) is referred to by its actual name.
12. Scheper-Hughes, 1992, 25.
13. Scheper-Hughes (1992) identifies this idea with Sara Ruddick's work on mothering.
14. Scheper-Hughes, 1992, 341-42.
15. This is a simplification in order to highlight the general structure of the argument.
16. She adopts an explicitly existentialist ethics and cites Sartre as a source for "bad faith." Scheper-Hughes, 1992, 209-10.
17. *Ibid.*, 18.

---

### **Praxis and the "F" Word: Young Women, Feminism, Fear**

**Carmela Epright**  
*Furman University*

In this article I will ask more questions than I answer about our obligations, goals, and desires as feminist scholars. I focus here not upon research but upon the teaching of feminist

philosophy across the generations. Specifically, I ask what we can, what we *should*, expect of our students not in terms of their academic work but with respect to their personal and political commitments.

Each term I begin my feminist philosophy course by explaining to my students the multiple goals that such a course must aim to achieve. These include: introducing critiques of the traditional conceptions of gender and sexuality; exploring the myriad and unconscious ways in which these conceptions color and inform our understanding of the world; outlining the systemic subordination of women and members of sexual minority groups; and examining the impact that this oppression has not merely upon the lives of individual women but upon our shared understandings—our language, metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, and conceptions of morality. Pursuing these educational goals is no small task, and I harbor no illusions that my course can or does achieve them all. When preparing to teach this course I also ask myself whether I ought to attempt to achieve another goal, one that cannot be explicitly shared with the students. I wonder whether it is (or should be) my responsibility to not only introduce my students to feminism's alternative approach to thinking through philosophical problems but to encourage my students to become feminist activists and adopt feminist politics. Am I obliged to promote the notion that "genuine" feminism shows itself in action and thus that any study of it requires an understanding of its theoretical tenants as well as adoption of its social and political commitments?

Although I reflect on these questions each time I teach my feminist philosophy course, I must acknowledge (with tremendous embarrassment) that a recent mainstream film—a Julia Roberts' vehicle no less—inspired me to consider these questions anew. Let me explain. I was in Italy with a dear friend, who also teaches applied ethics and feminist philosophy. After days of traveling we were desperate to watch a movie, any movie, as long as it was in English. "Mona Lisa Smile,"<sup>1</sup> was our only option. I will spare you most of the details of the plot. Suffice it to say that Julia Roberts plays Catherine Watson, an art history professor at Wellesley College in 1953. Her students are affluent, tenacious, and smart; they are also completely enmeshed in a culture that views one of the most prestigious colleges of its day as little more than a finishing school. According to the plot, it is openly acknowledged that most Wellesley students are seeking their so-called "Mrs. Degree"—few of them expect to pursue further education or a career outside of housewifery and child rearing. Professor Watson is stunned by this and views it as a tremendous waste of talent and potential.

In response, Watson pushes her young charges and introduces them to "radical ideas" (such as the apparently shocking view that there is artistic value in the paintings of Jackson Pollack), while attempting to convince her brightest students to recognize their own potential and to pursue something beyond marriage and motherhood. According to the film, Yale law school holds three slots open for "Wellesley Girls" each year. (Who knew that affirmative action existed for privileged white people in the 1950s?) In the movie's climactic moment, Watson badgers a particularly gifted student to postpone marriage and pursue a law degree. She even shows up on the student's doorstep in an effort to beg her to fill out the application.

The student blithely informs Professor Watson that *choice* takes many forms. I am, the student seems to be saying, *choosing* to remain subordinate to my husband (who is, by the way, less intelligent and industrious than am I). I am *choosing* to abandon my intellectual potential, and for you to even suggest that this choice is problematic is to abandon *your own principles*. Don't you teach because you believe that young

women should be free? Is not the point to give us choices? Well this is my *choice*. So there.

I am not quite sure what the rest of America made of this little speech about the purported internal inconsistency lurking in the soul of this feminist (and by extension, all feminists), but my friend was ready to chalk the movie up to "bad first wave feminism" and turn in for the night. Yet, as corny as the film was, I was a bit disturbed. Of course, I understand my friend's dismissal—it is not clear whether academic feminists have ever held the stereotypical and flat-footed view that choice constitutes liberation and, thus, that the content of one's choices is irrelevant. Indeed, such criticism—and from such a dubious source—should ring hollow. Moreover, feminist scholarship long ago moved beyond simplistic discussions of personal choice and on to multicultural, post-modern, and psychoanalytic approaches to feminist philosophy. As academics we view feminism as a scholarly, theoretical approach to asking and answering epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical questions—and these are, by necessity, farther removed from (although, most of us would argue, not irrelevant to) personal choices and political questions. Most feminists remain deeply committed to political questions—this is, after all, why most of us started asking philosophical questions in a uniquely feminist way in the first place. Yet feminists now have sessions at the American Philosophical Association meetings (the stodgy Eastern Division, no less). We address complex philosophical questions—and, for the most part, feel little compunction to explain ourselves to Hollywood screenwriters, much less to fictional movie characters portrayed by actresses. Certainly, there remains a disturbing number of fellow academics who do not take feminist scholarship seriously; nevertheless, departments routinely hire feminist theorists and, occasionally, top journals publish our articles.

My purpose here is not to challenge all of us to attend more rallies and do more activism—although I, for one, really should be doing more of this work. Rather, I want to ask how feminist philosophers ought to navigate the continuing dichotomy between theory and praxis—and how we ought to explain this tension to our students. To what end do we teach our discipline? Is my purpose to introduce students to feminism as a philosophical system, an alternative, often better approach to the asking and answering of philosophical questions? Am I to teach Luce Irigaray as I might teach, say, Descartes or Hume? Or am I allowed to hope that the questions raised in my feminist philosophy seminar actually have a profound effect on the lives and the life choices of my students?

Perhaps I should explain my own unique teaching situation. I live in a small southern city that often seems stuck in the 1950s. I teach at a small liberal arts university that *The Princeton Review* once cheerfully referred to as "the most conservative top-ranked liberal arts university in the U.S." My students are overwhelmingly white and wealthy. They are smart, well trained, and academically and politically well connected. Some of them are also fundamentalist Christians—which is to say that they interpret the Bible as the literal word of God, and as the last appeal on any subject be it personal, moral, political, or philosophical. A small minority is so committed to this system of belief that they will, for example, passionately defend slavery because they take it to be true that it is biblically ordained. So too is the subordination of women. Indeed, the inferior status of women and slaves is, these students point out, neatly delineated in a single passage of Ephesians, "Slaves obey your masters. Women obey your husbands. And this is how you obey God."<sup>2</sup> Had I not heard multiple students refer to this passage as a means of defending one or another form of oppression, I never would have believed that nice, well-educated, suburbanite college students could possibly believe such things. Nor would



I have imagined that I could ever refer to the holders of such beliefs as “smart.” However, for reasons that I hope to make clear, I have decided that it is dangerous and naïve to suggest that they are anything less.

Perhaps others do not confront such issues in their classes, but I hardly need to point out that our country is going backward rather than forward with respect to such political commitments. I suspect that all of us will be addressing students with such beliefs in the years to come. From this perspective, my students ought to be viewed less as anomalies and more as the proverbial canaries in a coalmine defined by the rise of religious conservatism and reinforced by a second Bush administration.

In light of my students’ religious and political commitments, it is heartening to note that many of them find feminist philosophy intriguing and intellectually stimulating. I am not merely reporting that my course always fills and that it frequently runs a waiting list; I am saying that they are *really interested* in feminist philosophy. They are engaged and reflective; they write fascinating journal entries on the works of Friedrich Engels, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Simone de Beauvoir, and Mary Daly. They apply their theoretical knowledge to the standard introduction to feminism questions such as the media’s portrayal of women and the social construction of gender, but I have also been treated to papers concerning intersexuality, psychoanalytic approaches to rape trauma, and investigations concerning women’s complacency in their own oppression.

Moreover, my students are required to participate in service learning projects—they tutor the children of battered mothers, answer phones at a rape crisis center, do intake interviewing at Planned Parenthood. I make these opportunities available to students so they may see the connections between the theories that we study in class and the reality of sexism, subordination, and oppression that continues to impinge upon the lives and futures of many women.

Nevertheless, even this engaged scholarship seems to have little effect on these women’s life choices. In the end most report that they are personally affected only by a watered-down version of liberal feminism that carefully leaves open the possibility that they can choose the lives that they were planning to choose anyway—marriage right after college, children, and secondary status in their relationships with men—which includes deference to their husbands’ decisions and careers. I would not have predicted that after careful analysis of Marilyn Frye’s *Politics of Reality* students could walk away believing that commitment to the view that women, like men, are rational beings and thus that they ought to be entitled to autonomy is a radical view. Yet I have frequently had the Julia Roberts experience of standing on the doorstep as a student points out that it was *my* course that taught her that she is entitled to make choices, and thus that my questioning of such choices is condescending and even oppressive. I heard a polite version of this most recently from a former student who graduated with 3.9 GPA and then promptly got married—one week after graduation. She is currently expecting twins. Her most recent email reads in part: “My husband has a great new job, and I’m sure that my degree in psychology will make me a better mom.”

In point of fact, I am sure that the academic training that these women receive will make them better mothers, partners, and housewives. Yet, am I wrong to hope for more for them—to wish that they could pursue a life that is not exclusively devoted to serving their families? Is it oppressive for me to believe that they *should* want what the men in their lives take for granted: a family as well as projects that have meaning, whether or not they served the needs and desires of their family members?

I have come to believe that these students are not afraid of feminist ideas per se; indeed, they seem more than willing to engage even the most radical of these ideas *in the safety of the classroom*, in the work that they share with other class participants and with their professor. Yet most remain unconvinced that these ideas can and should transcend the academic project, and many find it irritating—if not downright offensive—that our discipline insists upon problematizing what they take to be normal and natural gender roles that are not obviously and explicitly abusive or oppressive. Because feminist theory recognizes that there are contradictory and confusing questions to be asked about women’s experiences, embracing feminism *as a way of being in the world*, as opposed to merely viewing it as a way of reading and thinking through texts, would require them to accept more ambiguity and tolerate more complexity than their familial, religious, and cultural conceptions will permit. Embracing feminism as a life project means accepting that one’s relationships are likely to be less clearly defined and thus more complicated, and it requires one to expect and accept the resistance and discontent of family members and friends who wish to maintain the status quo. In short, embracing feminist practice means that one’s life is going to become more difficult. Such a life necessitates an expansion of one’s self past academic engagement and requires one to take a critical stance with respect to traditional—and often comfortable—gender norms, values, and behaviors. It also demands empathy for other women and requires that one take responsibility not just for one’s own life but, as Lisa Maria Hogeland pointed out in “Fear of Feminism: Why Young Women Get the Willies,”<sup>3</sup> feminism requires one to develop the empathy to cross “differences, histories, cultures, ethnicities, sexual identities” and even “otherness itself.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, accepting the system that feminist scholarship offers means embracing one’s own responsibility, vulnerability, and, perhaps most difficult of all, it means embracing an uncertain future. In Hogeland’s words:

The central tenet that the personal is the political is profoundly threatening to young women who do not want to be called to account. It is far easier to rest in silence, as if silence were neutrality and as if neutrality were safety. Neither wholly cynical nor wholly apathetic women who fear feminism fear living in consequences. Think harder, act more carefully; feminism requires that you enter a world supersaturated with meaning, with implications. And for privileged women in particular, the notion that one’s own privilege comes at someone else’s expense—that my privilege is your oppression—is profoundly threatening.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, feminist praxis asks students to consider the ways in which they personally are vulnerable to oppression. As Hogeland points out, violence against women continues to permeate college campuses; nevertheless, most women still believe that women’s equality has been achieved. Surely colleges and universities have achieved a modicum of success over the last four decades in providing women students with more or less an equal education, and this means that young women are less likely to experience overt, first-hand discrimination. But in many cases this modest success contributes to a false sense of security and, more disturbingly, a tendency to attribute sexual discrimination, violence, or harassment to the actions and reactions of the individuals involved, rather than to systemic forces. “Sexism seems the exception, not the rule—and thus more attributable to individual sickness than systems of domination.”<sup>6</sup> For this reason, women may feel encouraged to study feminism as a historical concept,

to think about it as a problem for women who are “not like us,” or to pathologize individual victims or perpetrators than to accept the notion that they too are vulnerable and thus that there are powerful personal reasons to take the questions raised by feminism seriously in one’s own life.

More than a decade after Hogeland’s article appeared in *Ms.* magazine, I am left wondering if this fear—not of feminist theory, but of feminist engagement—has become more, rather than less, profound. The feminist critique of traditional theory continues to be inspiring, but the commitments that emanate from feminist practice seem even more daunting and demanding—especially for women born under the Reagan regime and raised during the first Bush administration. With respect to my wealthy, conservative students it means not merely rethinking their privilege but perhaps even abandoning their religion, or at least considering the consequences of their religion’s tenants upon oppressed people.

My purpose with respect to this discussion is not merely to share my displeasure about the rise of new conservatism and its effect upon the life choices of young women. Surely I am perplexed and disappointed, but I also think that there is progress to be noted even in light of the dilemma to which I am pointing. For example, in the 1990s numerous scholars lamented young women’s fear of feminism and their tendency to believe that all feminists were lesbians—or, more to the point, that homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgenderism were to be rejected out of hand, as were all critical inquiries concerning the nuclear family. It now seems almost quaint to read articles that worry about the perception that all feminists are man-haters rather than serious scholars interested in critiquing gender privilege in public and private spaces and in our theoretical and philosophical conceptions. More recently, progressive thinkers rejected feminism insofar as it was viewed as the exclusive domain of first-world, middle-class, white women and critiqued for failing to take seriously the privileges and punishments inherent in class, race, and geographic situation. While such objections continue to be relevant and essential, today they are at least *somewhat* less deserved, prevalent, and stinging. They are also less likely to prevent students from taking our classes.

All of this cheery news notwithstanding, with what are we feminist teachers left? Am I to be satisfied with students who will gladly investigate the complex, nuanced questions asked by feminist theory, but who will steadfastly refuse to recognize these questions as personal challenges? While their failure to embrace the praxis of feminism means that students are only getting half of what feminism offers, I may have no choice but to accept this partial answer from at least most of my students. As disappointing as this answer is, there are things that I am unwilling to do to change it. I will not suggest that feminist practice is safe, that taking it seriously as a life commitment demands no sacrifice, no rethinking of values. Nor will I suggest that choice alone—any choice—constitutes a feminist commitment. Indeed, more often than not, feminism requires one to stand opposed to their culture, to be critical of their culture’s benefits and its institutional support. Sometimes—often—it is not in one’s immediate interest to take such a position. But, as Hogeland points out,

We do our best work in “selling” feminism to the unconverted, when we make clear not only its necessity, but also its pleasures: the joys of intellectual and political work, the moral power of living in consequences, the surprises of coalition, the rewards of doing what is difficult. Feminism offers an arena for selfhood and personal relationships but not disconnected to them. It offers—and requires—

courage, intelligence, boldness, sensitivity, relationality, complexity and as sense of purpose.<sup>7</sup>

Despite my disappointment, I have come to accept that being a teacher of feminism means that I will be required to continually plead my case about the responsibilities and pleasures associated with feminist praxis. I have also come to expect that, more often than not, the door will be slammed in my face—even after the woman closing me out has read the literature that I have to offer. The worth of this endeavor, as in all teaching, lies in the students who do come to accept the complexity and the joy inherent in the entire feminist project—the theory as well as the praxis—those who come to recognize their own vulnerability as well as their power to impact their own situation and the situations of other women.

#### Endnotes

1. 2003; Mike Newell, Director.
2. Editor’s Note: Ephesians 6:5 & Ephesians 5:22
3. Lisa Maria Hogeland, “Fear of Feminism: Why Young Women Get the Willies,” *Ms.*, November/December, 1994, pp. 18-21.
4. *Ibid.*, 20.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 21.

---

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

### ***Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women’s Commonality***

Naomi Zack (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005). 224 pp. \$22.95. ISBN: 0-7425-4299-8.

#### **Reviewed by Clea F. Rees**

*University of California–Santa Cruz*, cfrees@imapmail.org

Naomi Zack argues that feminists lack a suitable definition of the term “women,” which prevents truly global theoretical and practical change. If one rejects the idea that all and only women share some inherent characteristic, regardless of social and historical context—as could be assumed on the basis of now discredited biological accounts of exactly two, unambiguous sexes, for example—then one confronts the socially and culturally constructed nature of the category. Given the variety of societies and cultures experienced by different women, one seems forced to choose between a definition that effectively excludes many women and what amounts to a merely disjunctive definition. Earlier feminists, who claimed to speak for all women and to be resisting a common oppression and patriarchy, were soon confronted by the parochial character of their own experiences, shaped as they were by other aspects of their social identities. Not all women are oppressed to the same extent or in the same ways, and the ways in which other factors—class, race, creed, sexuality, health, etc.—affect how they are oppressed is not, as it soon emerged, equivalent to the result of some simple mathematical function of, say, the oppression suffered by a white woman and the oppression suffered by an Asian man. A disjunctive definition is, Zack argues, equally unsatisfactory because it undermines the possibility of speaking and acting as women. Feminist resistance requires a notion of women that reflects something women

share just in virtue of being women. Zack's proposal, then, aims to respect women's differences, without losing sight of what is genuinely shared. She argues that:

An essence can be something that all members of a group have in common, which is a necessary and sufficient condition for membership in that group. In this meaning, all women un-controversially share the same essence that can be defined like this. Women are those human beings who are related to the historical category of individuals who are designated female from birth or biological mothers or primary sexual choice [*sic*] of men. Call this category FMP...[The] relation of assignment to, or identification with, the FMP category is a necessary and sufficient condition for being a woman, and there is every reason to view it as an essence shared by all women. (8)

Although this proposes a shared identity, because it is "not substantive" (8), it is consistent with the reality of diversity. Nevertheless, it provides, Zack argues, a sufficient basis for feminist social theory and politics. Feminist theorists must re-engage with women generally and serve the practical and political needs of a global feminist activism. Because her definition includes all women, Zack argues that it is possible for feminists to develop the sort of inclusive feminist framework necessary for global political change. Zack argues that women remain historically and politically invisible, despite their apparent, if partial, success in so-called First World democracies. Women who have succeeded in public and political life have done so only by accepting androgynous roles within institutions originally organized by men, resulting in serious conflicts with women's, but not men's, non-androgynous private lives. Zack argues that such women are not succeeding *as women*—as individuals who have been categorized as, or themselves identify with, FMP. The reluctance of so-called Third World feminists to advocate such androgyny should not be dismissed or confused with genuinely conservative attachment to "traditional" female roles.

Zack's definition and subsequent discussion of feminist social theory and psychology lays the foundations for her own positive political proposals. Why, she asks, have feminists not suggested women take political power, and ruled instead of men? This is not to deny the existence of formidable obstacles. Zack argues, however, that there is at least some reason to think not only that women's rule is possible but that it is the only hope for humanity. Despite its contingency, the historical and social construction of FMP, combined with their numbers, renders women the only group practically able to challenge the current political and economic system. What is required, however, is not simply that women take the political reins and continue where men left off but, rather, that they do so as women. According to Zack, this requires a "reevaluation"—an undermining of the current capitalist and consumerist system—by distinguishing goods with (mere) price from those with dignity and recognizing the latter as priceless rather than valueless.

Zack's vision is of political change through democratically successful women's parties who attract the votes of many women and some men. Such political parties would put women in power by campaigning on platforms reflecting women's values and concerns.

Women's parties have platforms with policies to implement common objectives of peace, environmental preservation, sustainability of women's work, social services for mothers and children, universal educational opportunities, and universal healthcare. There might be variation in both the forms

of these objectives and in the endorsement of other objectives, such as gay marriage, higher minimum wage, abortion rights, racial integration and affirmative action, legalized prostitution, animal rights, and human population control. The two universal objectives of rule by women would be the end of violence and preservation of natural environments. (164)

Although Zack is correct in claiming that women make up a large enough proportion of the electorate (in many democratic societies with universal suffrage) to elect such women's parties, it is not clear that Zack is entitled to any degree of optimism here. Zack uses the Norwegian political situation, together with examples of women's activism in the so-called Second and Third Worlds, to support her claim that a women's party would promote the necessary revaluing. Although she admits that women elected to Norway's legislature typically vote along (men's) political-party lines, and that many of the examples she cites of women opposing extreme violence, social chaos, and dire poverty aim to ensure continued support for traditional women's roles under patriarchy, she, nonetheless, takes these as offering partial support for the possibility of her vision.

What is especially problematic, in my view, is the idea that women—that is, those who are assigned to, or identify with, FMP—just as women, would form political parties with the sort of platform described. Why should just identifying with FMP—let alone merely being assigned to it—suggest that one values non-violence or ecological sustainability?

Should one really expect most women to vote for such a "women's" party? Zack does not deny that lesbians, African-Americans, etc. are oppressed differently *as women*, but, if that is true, it is unclear what reason they might have to support a party that fails to support—or even opposes—same-sex marriage or racial integration, for example. Unless one thinks that such a party's policies would address injustices they suffer as women (but not as lesbians or members of racially oppressed groups), it is unclear why one would think such a party could represent them. This raises the possibility that what makes Zack's definition inclusive is precisely what renders it unsuitable as a foundation for the political project.

Zack's emphasis on women in democratic societies with universal suffrage is also noteworthy. If global women's rule is truly humanity's only hope, and this is to be brought about through the election of women's parties in such societies, the large number of women not living in such societies must be great cause for concern. To alleviate such pessimism one might turn to a rather different vision for change, suggested by Zack's own examples. In countering the worry that men will not step aside willingly—or peacefully—to make way for women's rule, Zack points to examples of successful nonviolent struggles for justice, including Mahatma Gandhi's independence movement, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights campaign, and women's struggles for suffrage. If one needed further examples, one might turn to the tumbling of the Berlin Wall, Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution, and more. What strikes me as interesting about all these cases is that none involves change via the ballot box. These are cases concerning nonviolent resistance by exactly those groups denied such an opportunity.

Whether or not one finds Zack's proposals satisfactory, their true value may lie in stimulating further reflection on the nature of satisfactory feminist and, ultimately, human, ideals.

---

---

## ***Beyond Epistemology: A Pragmatist Approach to Feminist Science Studies***

Sharyn Clough (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003). 167 pp. \$24.95. ISBN: 0-7425-1465-X

**Reviewed by Nancy M. Williams**

*University of Georgia*, nancymw2@uga.edu

For some feminist researchers, the central tenet of feminist epistemology—that knowledge reflects the particular perspective of the subject—is invaluable for uncovering androcentric bias in scientific theories and methodologies. However, others disagree. On their view, epistemological theorizing and the concept of situated knowledge only invite unnecessary problems to feminist science studies. So argues Sharyn Clough in her recent book *Beyond Epistemology: A Pragmatist Approach to Feminist Science Studies*. According to Clough, “epistemology is not the most effective focus for feminists engaged in science criticism” (2).

Her book is divided into eight chapters. Chapters one and two set the stage for Clough’s negative thesis by identifying the problematic aspects of epistemological theorizing. Clough explains that epistemological approaches tend to focus on abstract questions about normative properties of truth and objectivity. On her view, it is an inquiry motivated by representationalism: a philosophical model that invokes a metaphysical gap between knower (the subjective inner mind) and the known (the objective external world). On this model, scientists, and knowers in general, interpret empirical data through gender or political schemas. Of course, if knowers are mere interpreters of some external world, then it is always possible that one’s belief about that world is inaccurate, biased, or partial. So, in order to defeat this global skepticism and bridge the metaphysical gap between knowers and the world, epistemologists attempt to isolate the normative properties that would make their theories “true” or “objective.” Unfortunately, Clough believes that these attempts ultimately fail. As long as representationalism is a given, no amount of epistemological evidence will guarantee that feminist claims about androcentric science are objective. In other words, when feminists critique science from an epistemological perspective, they unnecessarily invite the skeptic to ask: “What is the guarantee that feminist views are not themselves biased or partial?” For Clough, feminists’ ongoing engagement with representationalism robs their views of any epistemological bite: “If we attempt to address the oppressive elements of science at the level of epistemology, then the global skepticism toward which epistemology is directed can be used against our own well-justified claims about the instance of scientific bias and abuse” (29).

In chapters three, four, and five, Clough carefully examines the works of numerous feminist philosophers of science, including Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Evelyn Fox Keller, Sandra Harding, and Helen Longino. In these chapters, Clough examines the problematic aspects of epistemology in general and those that seem to affect feminist versions of epistemology in particular. In chapter three, Clough considers Blackwell’s (1875) criticisms of Charles Darwin’s theory of sexual selection. According to Blackwell, Darwin’s claim about inferior “feminine” traits was not based on objective empirical measurement but, rather, on his “extra-empirical” commitments to sexist Victorian norms. Blackwell argued that feminist critics of science must be critical of the fact that (subjective) worldviews and experience *filter* our access to the objective world. Yet, unlike Darwin’s theory, Blackwell insists that her particular view (that women

and men have different but equal mental capacities), accrued by virtue of her experience as a woman, is objective. But Clough is right to point out Blackwell’s inconsistency here: If worldviews and experience *filter* and *bias* the facts, then why accept Blackwell’s view as an objective claim about the epistemic privilege of women’s experience? Clough’s analysis goes on to show that Blackwell’s epistemological argument relies on overgeneralizations and elements of feminist essentialism when she assumes that her own experiences (as an educated, white, American woman) are representative of other women and that there are experiences that all women share. But Clough is mostly concerned about Blackwell’s representationalist tone and how it ultimately undermines her criticisms of Darwin’s sexist theories. After all, within the epistemological framework, the skeptic can still ask, “What is the guarantee that the facts about sex selection can ever be accessed directly, unfiltered by feminist worldviews?”

Chapter four is devoted entirely to Clough’s analysis of biologist Evelyn Fox Keller’s early works (before 1985). Clough focuses on Keller’s reliance on psychoanalytic theory and her attempt to develop the idea of “dynamic objectivity.” Clough explains that “dynamic objectivity” is based on psychoanalytic object relations theory, which explains the differences in men and women’s cognitive styles in terms of their differences in psychosexual development. Generally, dynamic objectivity refers to feminine ways of knowing where one utilizes a mode of perception that is based on loving attention and engagement. It emphasizes a two-way interaction between scientist and her object of study. On Keller’s view, this non-hierarchical approach is superior to “masculine” ways of knowing, since it does not express a neurotic need to maintain an independent self by dominating the object of study. But for Clough, since object relations theory entails biological determinism, Keller’s latter claim that anyone (male or female) can develop dynamic objectivity is inconsistent. Keller’s characterization of feminine ways of knowing and the masculine gendering of male scientists also causes Clough to voice concern, “because Keller’s theory requires the use of these overgeneralizations...her representationalist attempts to champion objectivity and defeat relativism continue to be unsuccessful, and her thesis is considerably weakened as a result” (76-77).

In chapter five, Clough argues that the early epistemological theories of Sandra Harding (works before 1993) and Helen Longino (works before 1990) encounter similar problems. Although both theorists promote a conceptual midpoint on the epistemological continuum between objectivism and relativism, Clough insists that they remain uncritical of the representationalism that underwrites the debate. Consider Harding’s notion of “strong objectivity.” Because she argues that all beliefs have a social filter, Harding disavows the claim that standpoints of women will produce true or objective beliefs. Instead, she introduces a new epistemological position called “strong objectivity.” Strong objectivity encourages scientific researchers to include the examination of background beliefs into theories in the hopes of maximizing objectivity. But on Clough’s view, Harding’s proposal remains representationalist. When knowers are conceived as interpreters with social filters, no amount of strong objectivity will defeat skepticism and its variant epistemological relativism. Hence, according to Clough, “the important goals of feminist science studies are best met not by addressing (unanswerable) epistemological problems, but by focusing back on local, empirical research” (5).

Clough develops her positive thesis in chapters six and seven. As she sees it, a Richard Rortyan interpretation of Donald Davidson’s philosophy of language will afford feminist critics of science with a nonepistemological and more effective option.

Clough explains Davidson's theory of language as a pragmatic model for belief and meaning, one that considers beliefs or values not as filters through which empirical data passes but as important strands in one's (empirically-based) web of other beliefs. Interbelief comparison is where all justification happens on this model. So, there is no metaphysical gap to bridge and no need for independent epistemic criteria from which to judge all theories and beliefs. A statement's veracity is based on the background of other beliefs, which arise from "a triangular causal relationship between three naturalized entities—ourselves, other speakers, and our shared environment" (108). In this way, Davidson's model of meaning and language is both nonepistemological and nonrepresentational. Unlike other critics, Clough does not think of Davidson as a coherence theorist since "[He] makes the holistic point that empirical data plays a causal role in establishing the content of *all* beliefs" (110). So, the belief that women are oppressed is ultimately supported by empirical evidence (i.e., documented cases of women being excluded from science and other cultural institutions).

Because it responds to local, changing, and complex realities, Clough suggests that Davidson's pragmatic alternative will liberate feminist science studies from theoretical inconsistencies and rigid (sex) categories. To illustrate this point, Clough considers Margie Profet's scientific theory about the evolutionary function of menstruation in chapter eight. Utilizing Davidson's philosophy of language, Clough effectively shows that feminists can detect certain strains of androcentrism in this case but without the burdens of global skepticism. She also suggests that pragmatic contributions may explain why Profet's innovative arguments for menstruation have been met with very little critical response in the scientific community.

Clough's feminist pragmatism is a valuable contribution to the feminist critique of science. Although her argument is compelling, I suspect that some readers might question Clough's suggestion that Harding and Longino are representationalists. That is, one could argue that they, like Clough herself, understand beliefs not as mere filters that conceptualize data but as background assumptions necessary for making inferences from data to theory. Nevertheless, I enjoyed reading her book and recommend it to anyone who is interested in understanding the complex relationship between beliefs, values, and scientific facts.

---

## ***Scrutinizing Feminist Epistemology: An Examination of Gender in Science***

Edited by Cassandra Pinnick, Noretta Koertge, and Robert Almeder (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003). ISBN: 0-8135-3227-2 (pbk).

### **Reviewed by Sharyn Clough**

*Oregon State University*, sharyn.clough@oregonstate.edu

The rhetorical direction of the essays collected in *Scrutinizing Epistemology* is exemplified by a two-part claim spelled out by the editors, Cassandra Pinnick, Noretta Koertge, and Robert Almeder, in their short introduction to the text. First, they claim, philosophers of feminism have begun to have a substantial impact within epistemology and philosophy of science. Second, now that philosophers of feminism have some institutional power, these philosophers are refusing to allow their views to be subject to critical scrutiny (2-3). Hence, conclude the editors, the importance of their book, which claims to offer an antidote to the current situation.

That philosophers of feminism have had a substantial impact within epistemology and philosophy of science is, of course, an empirical claim, but the editors offer no quantitative data to support it. For example, the editors claim that feminism as applied to science and the philosophy of science is being "embraced" in academic settings (2), a development that has led to "course revisions, additions in academic departments, and establishment of special courses in newly created academic departments—women's studies or gender studies" (2). No data are given to support these informal observations, certainly nothing that would support the claim that feminist approaches in epistemology and philosophy of science are being "embraced." Against such an informal, anecdotal account, philosophers incorporating feminist approaches in their work can marshal their own contrary accounts regarding their troubles with tenure, curriculum review committees, and editorial boards. Clearly, more formal data is needed to make any clear claims one way or the other.

Unphased by the lack of data, the editors of *Scrutinizing* also note an "increased tendency" to include feminist viewpoints within "traditional philosophy and philosophy of science classes" (2). The evidence the editors provide for this claim is a list of four philosophy of science readers that include sections on "social constructivism" and "feminist dimensions" (2). I think the editors' claim about the "increased tendency" to include feminist viewpoints is probably true, but on its face the claim does not tell us much. It certainly does not tell us whether the viewpoints are being presented first rather than second-hand, whether the viewpoints are being featured as positive contributions to the philosophy of science literature, or are, instead, tucked into the back of a textbook never to be covered in the average semester-length class, and/or accompanied by discussions of "relativism" that dismiss the feminist contributions through guilt by association. In one of the volumes referenced by the editors, Robert Klee's *Introduction to Philosophy of Science* (Oxford, 1997), the ninth chapter of ten, called "The Politics of Epistemology," references the work of Sandra Harding, Lynn Hankinson Nelson, and Helen Longino but also discusses the anti-feminist contributions made by Pinnick and Koertge and is followed by a final response chapter titled "The Actual Way Things Really Are." In Jennifer McErlean's introductory volume *Science, Reason, and Reality* (Wadsworth, 2000), referenced by the editors, the penultimate chapter covers feminist issues but also includes essays by Pinnick and Koertge that argue against a number of claims made by feminists. In the third text cited by the editors (S. George Couvalis, *The Philosophy of Science*, Sage, 1997), the discussion of feminist issues in science comes in the sixth of seven chapters, following a discussion of "Relativism and the Value of Science." Janet Kourany's text (*Scientific Knowledge*, Wadsworth, 1998) is the only one of the four cited by the editors that includes feminist themes as positive contributions to each of the sections on traditional subject areas. Of the fifteen or so philosophy of science collections I have been sent by publishers over the last few years, Kourany's is the *only* text that does this. I would be pleasantly surprised to hear that my collection of texts is unrepresentative in this respect.

Of course, when gauging the impact of feminist approaches on the field of philosophy of science and epistemology, it is also important to discuss the presence of feminist content in key national conferences. But here, of course, the editors are silent as even they cannot point to any but the most token presence of feminist discussions of science in any *Philosophy of Science Association* (PSA) meetings over the last decade (the most recent 2004 PSA meeting marked a slight increase in this respect), or in the field's leading journal, *Philosophy of Science*. At her session of the 2002 PSA meeting, Noretta Koertge

claimed that, during her tenure as editor of the journal, there had been a lack of good feminist work available to publish, as well as a lack of philosophers willing and/or able to review such work positively. It is important to note also that the only discussion of philosophy and feminism at the 2002 PSA meeting was Koertge's own panel, devoted to criticizing feminist science studies. This observation, along with the inclusion of anti-feminist commentaries in the philosophy of science textbooks cited by the editors, contradicts the editors' claim that criticism of feminist science studies has been kept from philosophical discourse by the academic policing of feminist philosophers.

Of course, there have been a number of smaller specialized conferences over the last decade that have focused positively on feminist approaches to science and the philosophy of science (e.g., "The Women, Gender and Science Question" conference in 1995 at the University of Minnesota; the "enGendering Rationalities" conference in 1997 at the University of Oregon; the "Feminism and Naturalism" conference in 1999 at the University of St. Louis at Missouri), but here it is impossible to ignore the internal critical engagement with, and examination of, feminism, epistemology, and science evidenced in the programs of these meetings. Very little is taken for granted at these conferences. The same feminist scholars that Pinnick et al. claim are unwilling to question "the feminist story" (3) spend much of their time doing just that.

So much, then, for the sloppy and unsupported arguments about the influence of feminist philosophy of science that are provided by the editors in their introduction to *Scrutinizing*. The essays that make up the rest of the book offer little to improve the quality of analysis. I should note that a number of insightful and fairly detailed reviews of these essays are already available online,<sup>1</sup> so I will continue with more general and thematic comments.

The essays are divided into four sections: 1) The Strange Status of Feminist Epistemology; 2) Testing Feminist Claims about Scientific Practice; 3) Philosophical and Political Critiques of Feminist Epistemology; and 4) Future Prospects of Feminist Epistemology. Five of the thirteen essays are reprints from Susan Haack, Christina Hoff Sommers, and Pinnick. Koertge contributes two original essays, as do philosophers of feminism Kourany and Sharon Crasnow. Of the original contributions to the collection, these latter two stand out, as both philosophers make a valiant effort to stem the tide of sloppy, *ad hominum* argumentation that characterizes most of the other essays. In the end, however, Kourany and Crasnow are overwhelmed by the company they keep. One expert on the feminist science studies literature, Alan Soble (who knew?) contributes an original essay about Evelyn Fox Keller's work on Barbara McClintock, though only if one means by "original" something like "contains critical arguments made better, elsewhere, by other feminists, ten years ago." (More on the lack of originality below.) The collection would definitely have benefited from the inclusion of essays by Harding, Longino, and Keller, whose work is criticized in a number of the essays in *Scrutinizing*. These three prominent feminist theorists have responded to these sorts of criticisms before and have modified their views in important ways over the last ten years. None of this is obvious from the way that their work is treated in this book.

The first section of the book is clearly the most important. As the editors emphasize, the essays it contains "lay out the groundwork for the more detailed critiques that follow" (6). The reader will be dismayed to discover, then, that the editors' introduction to the section begins with a characterization of feminist epistemology that so misses the point of what feminists have been up to that any remaining trust the reader might have in the expertise and competency of the editors is bound to be badly shaken.

The editors begin: "Epistemology is the study of the acquisition and structure of knowledge. Feminists advocate the rights of women. But what might a 'feminist epistemology' be?" (4). The editors offer two alternatives. The first is that, perhaps, feminist epistemology is that sort of epistemology that "will help liberate women in a much more direct and efficient way than will traditional accounts of knowledge" (4). The second is that, instead of informing the content of the epistemology in question, perhaps feminist epistemology is that sort of epistemology that has been practiced, historically, by philosophers who were animated by feminist political goals (4). The editors decide that it is probably a mix of these two.

Unfortunately, the main project of feminist epistemology is not captured by either of these descriptions but is rather best expressed something like this: "Feminist epistemology focuses on a particular failure of objectivity, namely, sexism, and aims to rearticulate epistemological guidelines, and notions of objectivity, that would guard against this failure." Is this not what it is all about? How could the feminist interest in, indeed impassioned focus on, objectivity, and various failures to achieve it, not feature in a description of feminist epistemology?

Perhaps the failure to acknowledge the feminist focus on objectivity is related to the fact that so many of the authors in this text accuse feminist epistemologists of embracing relativism. I happen to agree that many feminist epistemologists end up with some version of relativism<sup>2</sup>, but the reason that I have bothered to make this observation is because I know that it has incredible normative force with the very feminists I criticize. All of the feminist philosophers discussed in *Scrutinizing* are committed to objectivity. Responsible criticisms of these feminist projects need, at the very least, to acknowledge that these projects share the goal of objectivity, even, or perhaps *especially*, if the criticism is meant to highlight their failure to achieve this goal. Crasnow's essay "Can Science be Objective?" is one of the only contributions to this collection that gets this right.

I conclude my review with a brief discussion of the essays that comprise this foundational, first section of the book. The section begins with a reprint of Haack's "Knowledge and Propaganda: Reflections of an Old Feminist," first published in 1993, reprinted for her own collection of essays in 1998, and resurrected here. Given that *Scrutinizing* promises to give us "the first systematic evaluation of feminist epistemology," the reasons for reprinting Haack's essays here are unclear. Similarly for the second essay, a reprint of Pinnick's 1994 essay, "Feminist Epistemology."

Perhaps the editors mean to offer a systematic evaluation of feminist epistemology from the 1970s and 1980s, but, then, theirs would be by no means the first. Many feminist philosophers have critically and systematically examined work from this earlier period and found it wanting. And while the editors of and contributors to *Scrutinizing* might want to claim that feminist philosophers "embraced" by the academy have been busy keeping these internal feminist criticisms from being published, the facts say otherwise. The very journals that have been supportive of feminist science studies have been the site of a number of critical debates (recall, for example, the special issue of *Signs* debating the details of Nancy Chodorow's object-relations theory<sup>3</sup>; the debates about the problems of essentialism in feminist standpoint theory collected in a special issue on the topic<sup>4</sup>; and also the criticisms of standpoint theory, in favor of feminist empiricism, in Longino's comprehensive literature review<sup>5</sup>).

In this first section of the book, reprints of these (or any) critical works by feminists within feminist science studies would have been a welcome inclusion. Indeed, the absence of this sort of critical engagement with the very literature about which

the editors and contributors claim to have expertise informs my main complaint with the book as a whole.

#### Endnotes

1. E.g., Elizabeth Potter's review is available at <http://www.wellesley.edu/WomensReview/archive/2004/10/highlight.html#potter>; and Elizabeth Andersen's review is available at <http://www.personal.umich.edu/~eandersn/hownotreview.html>
2. See, e.g., Sharon Clough, *Beyond Epistemology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
3. *Signs*, 6:3 (1981).
4. *Signs*, 22:2 (1997).
5. *Signs*, 19:1 (1993): 201-12.

---

## ***The Mind as a Scientific Object***

Edited by Christina Erneling and David Martel Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). \$98.50. ISBN: 0195139321

### **Reviewed by Carmel Forde**

*Dalhousie University*, [cforde@dal.ca](mailto:cforde@dal.ca)

This well-crafted book considers two rival theses about mind's basic ontology, (1) that mind is the same as brain, and (2) that mind is a product of culture. Traditional cognitive science disciplines have had little success in reaching a satisfactory understanding of mind, in part due to reliance upon cognitive scientists' "improved" Cartesianism and Kantianism, which ironically thwart their projects. This is the thematic setting for the collection, divided into seven sections, each treating significant questions in cognitive science. The chapters comprise a diverse and innovative collection by thinkers at the forefront of their disciplines, which encompass linguistics, history of medicine, philosophy, and psychology, as well as biology, cognitive science, and neuroscience, all pivoting around the question whether mind is a scientific object.<sup>1</sup> The volume swells with interesting chapters, covering secondary altriciality to heterophony, genetic altruism to hermeneutics, all in the main accessible to specialists and non-specialists alike. This is an unusually cogent book, whose editors look beyond the accepted disciplinary structures of cognitive science to the environment and human culture in order to examine "mind." Erneling and Johnson succeed admirably in exploring the alternative of the cultural approach to mentality, whilst recognizing the significance of neurophysiology.

It is unfortunately impossible to review each section thoroughly; all raise important philosophical issues. Part One transforms the position that "psychology is dead" into the recognition that a particular form of psychology built upon the Cartesian/Kantian framework is bankrupt. How ought psychology to alter? This section contains history and background for major issues treated in the collection, covering prior "solutions" such as behaviorism and structuralism, and bringing forward questions developed from controversial issues. How is psychology different from other domains of inquiry, and upon what sort of inquiry should psychology as a science be modeled? Harré's careful review of the distinctions between *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*, delineating options for psychological studies, exemplify the clarity and accessibility that Johnson and Erneling prize. Limitations of the experimental method in psychology are carefully examined (e.g., Dror on the neglected study of emotions in cognitive science). "The idea that mental activity is brain activity has retarded research in

neuroscience," Leahey quotes from Gaffan (69). Further, Leahey argues mind can be "socially constructed" and be an object of science. Just as other social constructs (he cites "money") can be causally significant in human lives, so too can mind.

In a chapter from Part Two, entitled "Psychology as Engineering," Leahey claims a strong connection between psychology (correctly conceived) and post-Darwinian biology. He argues an engineering perspective is better able to accommodate the normativity of psychology than is the natural science perspective (140). Olson's critique of Stent's epistemic dualism (with use of the metaphor of "complementarity" in physics to suggest the "twoness" of human beings) notes that Stent has still not considered cultural influence on mind, and the temporal stages through which anyone passes in order to become "full members of a particular cultural group" (123). We "become" rational animals.

Writers in Part Three agree eliminativism is false, emphasizing different errors and solutions. The nature of "true believers" (Henderson and Horgan) and connectionism comprise the most technical aspects of the book. Von Eckhardt argues that should brain be found to operate along connectionist lines (which supports a view of cognition as decentralized, a bottom-up approach) the "truth" of eliminative materialism would still not entail the falsity of folk psychology. Residual weaknesses in cognitive science's study of linguistic knowledge emerge, focusing upon propositions that many philosophers have critiqued as simplistic and unrepresentative of human knowledge (e.g., "dogs have fur"). I juxtapose Johnson's suggestion that "practitioners of...cognitive sciences need to find means of taking careful...account of sophisticated expressions of culture" (401).

Is "mind" just another name for what the brain does? Erneling refers to metaphors used by Dror and Thomas for two ways of studying the mind, privileging the second. "Pinocchio" and "Frankenstein" are respectively "ghost in the machine" and "the mind as a result of material design." Mind is not a unitary entity but a complex system, divided into subsystems such as memory, attention, vision, and reasoning. However, acceptance of the Frankenstein metaphor is not necessarily rejection of the problems inherent in dualism. Promethean Frankenstein's body parts are obtained from graveyards. (At least the Attic Prometheus was living flesh!) An important sense of living biological humans is missing here. The relations between *Leib* and *Körper* will be useful to future considerations. Mental activity is presented in ways that go beyond the biological brain and neural activity, yet all authors of Part Four accept a no-center view of the mind, for which Johnson provides a compelling critique (7), and which both editors reject.

Erneling introduces Part Five on evolutionary theory and its relationship to the science of mind. Human cognition is not the usual scientific object. Shanker and Taylor argue some nonhuman animals communicate like infants but clearly distinguish animal and human cognition. Gardenfors presents a "ladder of human cognition" with interesting insights on the "detachment of thought." While one might dispute the ladder's order, his argument is clear and readable. Hattiangadi's fascinating discussion of aberrant CPGs and their relationship to qualia, the significance of rhythm for consciousness, and how illusion proves better than perceiving reality, is intriguing. Lumsden advances the view that sociobiology can study subjective experience *objectively*.

Johnson notes regarding Part Six that "the claims of Brockmeier (and Bakhtin) [that mind is a set of linguistic entities] need not be irrelevant to science after all, because...it is both possible and legitimate for sciences like psychology, linguistics and biology to take account of cultural factors like

meaning, language, obligation, past experience and history” (400). For Bakhurst, mind is a social phenomenon, and he recognizes much psychological research has ignored the *sociopolitical* context in which it is conducted. He is, to my knowledge, the only writer who mentions politics (413). An advocate of strong culturalism, he recognizes the changes within academia that welcome situatedness.

Van Gelder argues in Part Seven that the fundamental mistake in mind/body treats the mind as ontologically homogeneous and simple. Jarvie’s discussion of workshop rationality provides structure for the atmosphere of future debate.

Erneling and Johnson’s dexterous and authoritative writings, and editing, do not directly acknowledge feminist concerns. Yet many features of this collection overlap with feminist interests and queries: on the corporeal, on “becoming,” accounting for subjectivity, avoiding constructive idealism, giving accounts of situatedness, dealing with reductionism, and acknowledging normativity in sciences (admittedly a partial list). As cognitive science is a recent development in philosophy of mind, there is reason for a smaller literature on these connections. This work will be an excellent resource for feminist philosophers of mind, of psychology, of evolutionary theory, as well as accounts of science studies,<sup>2</sup> and presents concerns that can open new dialogue between cognitive sciences and feminist philosophies, which can benefit mutually from interactions. Feminist accounts of experience can offer grounds for a stronger and more developed conception than the book provides: Joan Scott’s writing on subjects as constituted through experience is relevant here (incorporating the political), as is Lynn Hankinson Nelson’s work on experience in epistemological communities, to mention only two.

Although the text often disjoins dichotomous accounts, it is not underwritten by an either/or logic but is informed by a more comprehensive both/and logical structure. The editors avoid oppositional approaches to nature and culture, for example. Johnson views mind as intellectual invention, rather clearly a culturalist position on mind; he considers that cognitive sciences do not uncover information about mind itself. Erneling claims “the mind and mindful activity are much too diverse to be...accounted for in terms of one underlying mechanism, either biological or cultural,” (513) and her voice is powerful. Since mind is “ontologically heterogeneous,” neurophysiology becomes increasingly important as a center for cognitive science. Feminist investigations are expanding in biology; Elizabeth Wilson writes on neurological sciences and feminism, suggesting an examination of the neurological body might be useful to feminist accounts of the body.<sup>3</sup>

Cognitive scientists often rely on atomistic ontology and taxonomy, which they ought reject (517). Sue Campbell’s work on memory is insightful in its account of links between emotion, recollective memory, and politics and social life. “In particular, while memory is sometimes experienced as a feature of our interiority, human remembering takes place through action, narrative, and other modes of representation in public space and in the company of others.”<sup>4</sup> Transformed sciences of mind centering on culture and brain (and corporeality, I believe) can only benefit from developed interactions with feminist philosophy. I look very much forward to future collaborations by Erneling and Johnson.

#### Endnotes

1. Many chapters began as conference papers for the 1996 York University conference by the same name.
2. Nancy Tuana’s forthcoming book *Philosophy of Science Studies* is to include investigations of cognitive science.

3. See Wilson’s *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (New York: Routledge, 2004) and *Neural Geographies, Feminism and the Microstructure of Cognition* (New York: Routledge, 1998).
4. Sue Campbell. “Our Faithfulness to the Past: Reconstructing Memory Value,” 2005, unpublished paper.

---

---

### ***Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power***

Elizabeth Grosz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). 272 pp. Hardcover: \$79.95, ISBN:0-8223-3553-0, Paperback: \$22.95, ISBN: 0-8223-3566-2.

**Reviewed by Catherine Villanueva Gardner**  
*University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth,*  
cgardner@umassd.edu

Elizabeth Grosz’s *Time Travels* is a collection of essays written over eight years. Together, these interconnected essays form an argument for, and the beginnings of, a feminist philosophy of time. For Grosz, a feminist philosophy of time constitutes a challenge, among other things, to more generally accepted notions of identity, gender/body, and the goals and theorizing of feminist politics. She argues that the feminist questions of, for example, power and identity must be placed within a larger framework that allows for a recognition of the forces of time and the material universe. Feminists may use these forces for their politics, but they are ultimately not theirs to control.

Not all the essays in *Time Travels* deal explicitly with feminist theorizing; moreover, within each essay there are multiple interconnected themes and explorations. The essays that will resonate the most with feminist philosophers are in Part I, “Nature, Culture, and the Future,” and Part IV (the final section), “Identity, Sexual Difference, and the Future.” Given the limitations of space, this review will focus on these essays.

Grosz draws on a variety of philosophical resources, for example, the work of Deleuze and Bergson as well as scientific resources such as the work of Darwin and Kinsey. In her analysis of the two latter figures, Grosz models the approach she advocates for feminist readings of primary texts: an engagement that is grounded on the assumption that each text contains insights that can be brought to bear on feminist politics, rather than a search for the political biases and philosophical flaws of the text. Throughout the whole collection Grosz often takes the approach of asking provocative questions and only supplying suggestions for ways forward. This reflects the way that she sees nature as giving culture a series of challenges, and time as becoming open-ended and offering multiple possibilities.

Part I is an exploration of the Darwinian theory of evolution and its accompanying ontology. In the first essay in Part I, “Darwin and Feminism: Preliminary Investigations into a Possible Alliance,” Grosz lays part of the groundwork for her discussion of time with an in-depth interpretation of the Darwinian theory of natural and sexual selection that continues throughout this first section of essays.

Grosz explores the Darwinian account of natural selection as a dynamic principle, with random chance operating as a central force in the evolution of a species. As such, evolution must also be understood as being a force toward the future. Grosz brings out the way that the forces of evolution can encompass both the biological and the cultural. Culture is not separate from nature, nor is it the end of evolution; rather, it is also the product of species survival. Grosz examines the potential for feminist theorizing of this. She argues that politics can be seen as cultural evolution in that the feminist struggle



itself—a struggle for survival under oppression—is the force that produces self-transformation. Like species survival, this feminist self-transformation is directed toward an unknowable, multiply possible future of political change.

Part II, “Law, Justice, and the Future,” and Part III, Philosophy, Knowledge, and the Future,” build a picture of the conceptualizing of time that forms the basis for Grosz’s feminist philosophy of time. The two essays in Part II, “The Time of Violence: Derrida, Deconstruction, and Value” and “Drucilla Cornell, Identity, and the Evolution of Politics,” explore deconstructive notions of time in the work of Cornell and Derrida. The focus of Part III, “Philosophy, Knowledge, and the Future,” is an examination of Bergson’s philosophy of duration, using the analyses of Bergson from the works of Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty, and William James.

In chapter seven of Part III, “Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and the Question of Ontology,” Grosz’s exploration of the metaphysics of Merleau-Ponty, particularly his work on Bergson, provides the grounding for her provocative claim that there is a need, one that has been more or less unrecognized, for a feminist ontology: an exploration of the real. Grosz argues that feminist theorizing, or any politics of change, cannot move forward without an understanding of the “real,” “the force of events,” the given. In other words, feminism needs to address questions of ontology. We must recognize that matter is resistant to our desires and, as such, generates the invention of solutions: things that do not yet and might not have existed. It is this expansion of future conceptual possibilities, what invention might bring to issues of sexual difference and solutions for oppression, that should be the task of feminism. This is in contrast to the generally held feminist goal that the future is produced through the need to change the present and is thus limited by the present.

Part IV, “Identity, Sexual Difference, and the Future,” contains the most explicitly feminist essays of the collection. These essays explore the interconnections between Grosz’s account of a philosophy of time and feminist theory, in particular, the work of Irigaray on sexual difference. Of these essays, chapter eleven, “The Force of Sexual Difference,” and chapter twelve, “Inhuman Forces: Power, Pleasure, and Desire,” are the most intriguing. Chapter eleven is an argument for a third approach between what has been set up as only two possibilities for discussions of sexual difference: gender and body. Instead, Grosz argues for a discussion of sexual difference as the organization of materiality and what she calls messy biology, even though these concepts have been seen as outside, or even contrary to, feminist knowledge. Grosz argues that sexual difference is a form of an unknowable future. Time must be recognized as a force, rather than conceptualized as the passive result of the causal effects of the present. Time is, in a sense, within objects and is the force that directs their becoming. In chapter twelve, Grosz offers an alternative to the socially constructed identity and sexualities of the subject by calling for an examination of how inhuman forces constitute them. For Grosz, the feminist goal of the removal of the oppression of women must involve a necessary reconceptualization of women as subjects: as evolving multiple subjects that are produced by these forces.

---

---

## ***Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture, and Mothers’ Bodies***

Rebecca Kukla (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). 249 pp. \$27.95. ISBN: 0-7425-3358-1.

**Reviewed by Laura Newhart**

*Eastern Kentucky University*, [laura.newhart@eku.edu](mailto:laura.newhart@eku.edu)

In *Mass Hysteria*, Rebecca Kukla constructs an elaborately detailed, historically based argument for two claims: 1) Contrary to recent trends in the scholarship on maternity, current cultural discourses and medical practices of motherhood do not represent a discontinuity or break from modern treatments of maternal bodies but are rather continuous with the modern project of controlling mother’s bodies; and 2) Feminist theories, like those of Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous, that emphasize and celebrate the fluid, unbounded nature of the maternal body reinforce the oppressive effects of that project.

The theoretical framework upon which Kukla bases her argument consists of the opposing yet mutually dependent relationship between two cultural representations of motherhood, i.e., the Fetish Mother and the Unruly Mother, which have operated in Western civilization at least since Jean-Jacques Rousseau placed the responsibility for transforming the disparate perspectives of a collection of individuals into the general will on mothers’ breastfeeding. Infants, according to Rousseau, would imbibe patriotic values through their mothers’ milk; hence, mothers were obligated to nurse their children and refrain from hiring wetnurses to do it for them. At the same time, anxieties concerning the influence of the maternal body on the quality of the fetus began to arise. Charged with the civic duty of creating good citizens, mothers had an obligation to breastfeed their own children and to control the conditions both within and outside of the womb in order to create citizens of the highest possible quality.

Mothers’ bodies became objects to be surveyed and regulated, i.e., disciplined, and the primary means of doing this was through the iconic cultural figures of the Unruly Mother and the Fetish Mother. The Unruly Mother is the woman who might let her appetites, desires, and even experiences cross over the permeable boundary of the womb and affect her fetus in negative ways. In order to meet her civic obligation, she must be ever vigilant to protect the fetus from her own uncontrollable nature. The Fetish Mother is the nursing mother who forms a seamless, unified whole with her infant whereby the two become one. While at face value these normative figures appear as opposites—one a negative image to be avoided and the other a positive ideal to be pursued—given their common historical roots and the similarities in their effects on pregnant women’s and mothers’ lives, it is obvious that they are flip sides of the same disciplinary project that runs from the beginning of the modern period to the present. Both figures play upon the perceived lack of boundaries and identity on the part of pregnant women and new mothers, and neither lacks support from the medical profession, media sources, and even mothers themselves in disciplining the maternal body to carry out the modern normative project of creating good citizens.

In *Mass Hysteria*, Kukla conducts a genealogical analysis of the contemporary cultural discourses and medical practices of pregnancy and early motherhood much in the manner of Michel Foucault. In her analyses of the disciplinary regimes surrounding pregnancy and breastfeeding, Kukla utilizes a number of Foucauldian concepts including the role of professional medicine as a bridge between the individual and

the state, the panopticon, and the technic as a practice of self-discipline in the care of the self.

Flashes of brilliance are evident in Kukla's historical analyses of contemporary cultural discourses and medical practices of pregnancy and breastfeeding as continuations of, and contributions to, this modern normative project. For example, in her discussion of the *Unruly Mother*, Kukla traces the contemporary notion of the mother and the fetus as two distinct entities presumably at odds with each other to its origin in the thaw of the freeze on dissection and vivisection of the human body that gave rise to modern obstetrics. Kukla's historical survey of various scientific, medical, and cultural representations of the fetus culminates with the work of Leonard Nilsson, whose editorial choices concerning his photographs of the fetus resulted in a historically significant photo spread in *Life* magazine in 1965 and has since come to be recognized as *the* image of the fetus on everything from public billboards to medical informational pamphlets. According to Kukla, this generic fetus has become a celebrity in its own right and now serves to mediate the pregnant woman's relationship to her own fetus. This externalization of the fetus in order to open it up to public view works in tandem with medical technologies, like the sonogram, to abstract the fetus from the maternal body that is then easier to view as a passive receptacle for the fetus. Moreover, it allows the maternal body to be divided into parts to be manipulated at will. It is from this detachable, mobile, public, and generic image of the fetus in the womb in contemporary Western culture that Kukla derives the title *Mass Hysteria*.

Moreover, in her discussion of the *Fetish Mother*, Kukla claims that, in the tradition of Rousseau, the contemporary cultural discourse around motherhood collapses into proximity, i.e., close bodily contact, and proximity collapses into the mouth-breast contact of breastfeeding. One striking example of contemporary cultural discourse where Kukla notes this synecdochic collapse is the American Academy of Pediatrics guide to breastfeeding, which goes far beyond the medical facts of the biological benefits of breast milk for the infant to include testimonial statements from breastfeeding mothers, genuine or contrived, where women claim that their infants know they come first in their mothers' lives because they are breastfed. Another is the relative absence of research and information in the culture concerning methods of getting breast milk to infants other than breast to mouth contact (e.g., breast pumps), which might enable mothers to leave their children for longer periods of time to work or pursue identity-driven projects of their own. Thus, while every other human relationship is premised on the separate identity of the participants where time apart is deemed necessary and healthy for preserving their separate identities, the relationship between the mother and child is not.

Finally, Kukla discusses how contemporary pro-breastfeeding groups like La Leche League International and self-help books for new mothers like *What to Expect the First Year* actually function to constitute the normatively appropriate desires of new mothers, both sexually and otherwise. Kukla tells the story of Denise Perrigo who in 1991 experienced biologically normal sexual sensations while breastfeeding her child. When Perrigo called a hotline recommended by La Leche League concerning these sensations, she was accidentally transferred by the receptionist to a rape crisis hotline, which promptly called the police, who raided Perrigo's home and took her child. Kukla notes that while proponents of breastfeeding often idealize it by comparing it to a sanitized romantic heterosexual union between the mother and the infant, the real feelings of nursing mothers are often foreclosed and even forcibly silenced. Finally, in La Leche League's *The Womanly Art of Breast Feeding*, Kukla reports that new mothers are told that they should be

able to take a nursing baby anywhere they want to go, thereby implying that they should only want to go to places where the baby can go (e.g., the mall, mother-child play groups, etc.) and not places like a library or board room where a baby would not be welcome. *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* also prepares new mothers for their first night out without the baby by warning them that they might miss their baby so much that they will not be able to enjoy it. Such advice suggests that a mother who would enjoy a night out alone is somehow inadequate.

In sum, Kukla's argument is that pregnancy and early motherhood are already times of shifting personal boundaries and a sense of uncertainty concerning ones identity. The medical practices and cultural discourses surrounding them take advantage of the uncertainties of the experience and further diminish new mothers' privacy and agency in their enforcement of the modern normative project whereby mothers are held responsible for the reproduction of civil society.

In the final chapter of *Mass Hysteria*, Kukla finds fault with feminist theorists such as Irigaray and Cixous for their valorization of the permeable boundaries and fluid identities of women in general and mothers in particular.

Kukla warns:

(T)he working mother who feels she has selfishly abandoned her infant if she allows another caregiver to give it a bottle during the day, the expectant woman who looks to the ultrasound monitor to be told the moral meaning of her pregnancy, and the pregnant woman who is scared to take antidepressants that pose only a theoretical risk to her fetus because she is held captive by an image of her risky and permeable womb will not be helped to restore appropriate boundaries and healthy integrity by the postmodern efforts to valorize the fragmented and permeable self. (226)

In the gray, plodding, meticulously detailed manner of the genealogical method advocated by Foucault, Kukla adds thought-provoking subtlety and historical nuance to the exuberance of postmodern feminist celebrations of women's bodies and experience.

---

## ***Socializing Care***

Edited by Maurice Hamington & Dorothy C. Miller. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006). \$28.95. ISBN: 0742550400.

### **Reviewed by Lauren Fleming**

*Georgetown University*, lef6@georgetown.edu

The goal of the edited collection *Socializing Care* is to extend notions of care into the political realm, building on early general work in care ethics, and specifically on Joan Tronto's 1993 book, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care*. Both carefully argued and grounded in empirical research, the essays meet this mandate while remaining accessible to a variety of disciplines. As a collection, *Socializing Care* surveys a broad range of concerns, engaging with a variety of nations and cultures, addressing questions of both theory and practice, looking backward to historical examples as well as forward to policy reform. Provoking thought on such a diverse range of themes seems particularly apt when treating a topic like the role of care in politics, a topic in which the breadth and interconnection of the questions themselves are still being

determined. The component essays are able to remain broad enough to provide further direction for developing a political care ethics, while working closely with the particulars of political life around the globe.

Although one might have wished for more explicit connection of the concepts and tools developed across the component essays, the introduction to this collection does draw out some general themes, attempting to define the socialization of care and briefly arguing for its relevance. In addition, the collection as a whole does an admirable job of situating itself within the relevant literatures, as each essay explicitly develops its position in response to other work in care ethics, broader philosophical camps, and empirical research. One small drawback to each contributor doing this situating work is a slight tendency to repetition, as in the brief discussion of Tronto's definition of "care" that appears in almost every essay. Such repetition, however, may just be an unavoidable side-effect of the admirably evident conversation among the authors and their familiarity with one another's work. In contrast to this repetition, while the positions presented are clearly distinguished from traditional liberal theory, approaches that could have provided a more subtle foil for a political care ethics, such as Aristotelian political theory, are mentioned with surprising infrequency.

In deference to limitations of space, I will only discuss the essay written by Nel Noddings in more detail. As a relatively broad discussion of how to apply care ethics in the political sphere, her work might be considered as a foundation for more narrowly focused essays, and both her strengths and weaknesses seem representative of those found in the collection as a whole. I direct those interested in a brief overview of each of the remaining essays to the editors' introduction, where the quick summary of each article manages to be both succinct and informative (xv-xxi).

In her essay, Noddings expands on her thesis from *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy*, which is that the features of life in "ideal" or "best homes" could inform more humane social policies. Ideal homes are distinguished from other homes, understood as "any group of persons who commit themselves to establishing a shared life under one roof," in two ways (27). In the first place, presumably, ideal homes excel in filling the basic role of a home, i.e., providing shelter, inculcating children to various modes and standards of interaction, and supporting certain sorts of attitudes toward the broader world and the objects in it. Ideal homes, moreover, go beyond basic or average homes because they "provide protection as well as shelter, offer an adequate supply of material resources, encourage growth, have at least one adult who does the work of attentive love, and educate for a form of acceptability that is simultaneously adapted to and critical of the cultural standards in which the home is located" (27). While the items on this list are fairly broad, Noddings notes that the structure of the ideal home is flexible and constantly under construction. Whatever the particular form, she claims, ideal homes are united by their response to expressions of need, which is "I am here."

Although Noddings recognizes the flexible, culturally-responsive nature of the ideal home, her argument seems to proceed by analogy. Thus, she does lay out a slightly more detailed description of the ideal home, the elements of which, she claims, are also present in the humane state. Her brief discussion of the characteristics common to best homes and best societies is generally sympathetic. For example, the best families and the best states will both appreciate the different sorts of contributions individuals can make to families and societies, and recognize that the best parents and public servants are those who are highly-trained, highly competent, and given latitude to make and implement particularistic

judgments. Despite the initial plausibility of the analogy between the ideal home and the ideal state, however, we might worry about the appropriateness of extending this analogy in the first place.

Noddings does recognize that there are important disanalogies between the family and the state. For example, the intimate relationships of the ideal home are not reproducible at the level of the state. She responds that we can follow the ideal home model in a more piecemeal way. But is there a principled way to determine which pieces are applicable to the state? Once we start to pick and choose which attitudes cultivated in the ideal family are to be carried over into the political sphere, how much of the insight is being generated by the concept of the "ideal home"? While the analogy of the family relationship may be enlightening, it seems that a lot of work is being done by the intuitions or other theoretical commitments that we are using to pick and choose which aspects of ideal home life are relevant. None of this, of course, is to deny that the analogy of the ideal home is a helpful one. Rather, the point is that in order to assess the ideal home model, the other philosophical commitments that fill the model out need to be made explicit.

Even if we make the model more explicit, might patterning the state on the ideal home present some ethical concerns? Again, Noddings recognizes that just as problems arise in the best of families, for example, with slightly excessive use of coercion, or doubts as to the importance of members' needs, so these problems will occur when the ideal home model is applied on the social scale. My concern, however, is not with these deviations from the ideal, which will arise on any model of society and, indeed, in any human endeavor. Rather, are there problems that might arise out of the "ideal family" orientation as such? Although raised here with respect to Noddings, this concern seems worth raising with respect to the collection as a whole. The discourse of the state-as-family has been historically tied to oppressive and sometimes violent nationalist movements, with one contemporary example being India's Bharatiya Janata Party. Even when this extreme scenario is not realized, there also seems to be an inherent tendency toward paternalism in this model. If society is a family, the state seems to take on the role of parent, the classic *parens patriae*. Even if the state and its agents perform their role in the best possible way, is this the right way to treat adult citizens? This, obviously, is not a new question, and one key strength of care ethics is its recognition that we are not the fully independent, autonomous agents liberal theory takes us to be. That we need to recognize and cultivate our relationships of dependence, however, does not entail that these interconnections are properly analogized to filial relationships. Focusing, instead, on the general attitude of "I am here" may provide an alternative way of building care into our political lives. The more humane policies that might result from employing the ideal home model could give a sort of consequentialist justification for taking the filial relationship as basic. Nonetheless, a discussion of its potential weaknesses seems necessary to assess fairly the strengths of this model. This explicit treatment of the weaknesses of a care-centered politics seems to be missing from the collection as a whole.

*Socializing Care* provides a point of departure for further scholarly work in a number of fields, and a language in which to evaluate and critique our current social systems in the interests of policy reform. These essays are understandably focused on putting forth positive pictures of care-based policy, and no doubt some of the concerns raised here can be answered by extrapolating from earlier debates between justice and care perspectives. While these questions will not definitively be answered here, if ever, in order to benefit from the rich and thoughtful work done in this collection, broader questions about

the compatibility of public life and a care-based approach must be addressed.

---

---

## ***Feminism after Bourdieu***

Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). 258 pp. \$34.95. ISBN: 1405123958.

### **Reviewed by Christina Smerick**

Greenville College, christina.smerick@greenville.edu

*Feminism after Bourdieu* brings together a number of mostly British and Australian feminist scholars who are currently working on the intersections and conflicts between Bourdieu's rather inflexible social theory and feminism's inherent call for change. The scholars have independently published quite a bit of work on this topic, and it is certainly to the benefit of the reader that the varying approaches to this topic have been organized into a single volume. In short, *Feminism after Bourdieu* provides a variety of uses, reappropriations, criticisms, and expansions of Bourdieu's social theory.

Given Bourdieu's seemingly notorious failure to adequately address the role or place of gender within his overall theory, the editors of this volume spend some necessary time explaining exactly why feminist or post-feminist scholars of any persuasion should feel a need to (re)engage with Bourdieu's work. The overall apologia is that, first, given post-feminism's move away from "the sex/gender distinction as one of its key objects," a social theorist who does not place gender as central to his work is actually more helpful than one who organizes his corpus around it. Secondly, Bourdieu's social theory is useful, albeit in a limited way, in that feminism (or, again, post-feminism—these terms are used interchangeably throughout the introductions) has moved away from an analysis of class and needs to return to class issues and social theory, rather than continuing to remain located in culture theory alone.

According to its editors, the book is organized according to three distinctions, making the task for the reader a bit easier: gender, sexuality and emotions, taste and culture. These three axes weave in and out of the three divisions under which the essays are organized. The first section of the book seems to be a loose grouping of a variety of approaches to the intersections between class and gender. One essay emphasizes Bourdieu's analysis of class but fails to address gender, thus making it a complicated choice for a book entitled *Feminism after Bourdieu*. The other essays in the first section focus almost entirely upon gender issues and make relatively brief mentions of Bourdieu, usually in summative fashion. For example, Terry Lovell's essay "Bourdieu, Class and Gender: 'The Return of the Living Dead?'" provides a summary of various feminist thinkers and their approaches to capital and gender; she then finishes the essay by bringing Bourdieu's understanding of capital to bear upon questions of culture, emotion, and class. She provides the traditional critique of Bourdieu regarding gender—namely, that he treats it as secondary, and thus it functions as doxic—but the primary thrust of the essay is an examination of feminist theory and its struggle with class. Reay, on the other hand, uses Bourdieu's theory of capital as a model and constructs her own theory regarding emotional capital. It is a solid work, demonstrating the possibilities of using aspects of Bourdieu's theory without embracing it wholeheartedly. Finally, Beverly Skeggs (also an editor of the volume) provides a critique of Bourdieu's understanding of reflexivity, consciousness, and the utter exclusion of agents onto the field, due to class value

differences. The essay demonstrates the adequacy of feminist critiques of Bourdieu by highlighting the limits of his theory to the possibility of change, despite his emphasis upon reflexivity as potentially transformative self-awareness.

The second section of the book, entitled "Symbolic Violence and the Cultural Field," is the strongest in terms of straightforward application of a Bourdieusian analysis or method to gender and class distinctions, particularly in the media. Here the book lives up to its title, as each scholar tackles the way classed women appear in British media. The first three essays—"Notes on 'What Not To Wear' and post-feminist symbolic violence," "Rules of Engagement: Habitus, Power, and Resistance," and "Habitus and Social Suffering: Culture, Addiction and the Syringe"—are particularly disturbing (especially for this American commentator, who is less well-versed in class distinctions due to the tenacity of most Americans in pretending such distinctions do not exist in our country), in that one is confronted by what is very obviously gendered/classed vitriol, which, nevertheless, passes muster with the community at large precisely because of the presence of the middle-class authoritative voice that reinforces class prejudice upon the bodies of the working-class women. Here, we witness the selective use of Bourdieu's theories in order to analyze and reveal the embodiment of class/gender intersections in working-class and middle-class women, and the ways media reinforce the stereotypes of the social field. The last essay, "Mapping the Obituary," deals less sensationally, but intriguingly, with the changes to obituaries in the past hundred years in Great Britain. What is most impressive with this set of essays is the obvious benefit of a modified Bourdieusian analysis—while certainly not exhaustive or the last word, the use of habitus/field and the like to critically examine media, ad campaigns, and even obituaries proves to be a rich methodology.

The final section, "Rethorizing the Habitus," will be most satisfying to those readers, like myself, who struggle with Bourdieu's rather pessimistic view regarding agency, yet who do not wish to abandon his theories completely. Lois McNay lets the conflict between Judith Butler and Bourdieu play out, and then provides a means of transcending or eliding both the cultural v. materialist divide in feminism, as well as the agency-as-linguistic v. agency-as-habitus divide. Lisa Adkins tackles the role of reflexivity in modern culture, challenging common assertions that individualism is on the rise and that subjects are able to reflect separately and objectively upon their gendered roles. This essay, too, brings up the fundamental question: How can/do things change, if both the field and the habitus are dominant in individual lives? Adkins relies heavily upon McNay's work as a foil, thus reinforcing the moments in Bourdieu's thought where change can take place (notably, in the lack of fit between gendered habitus and social field). (However, whether this shift in gender traditions is a product of reflexivity, or whether this reflexivity itself is a habitus, is the unquestioned assumption that Adkins raises here.)

Anne Witz's essay is, in a word, delightful. She goes after Bourdieu with a highly humorous use of sarcasm, which nevertheless manages not to overwhelm the piece, mostly because her criticisms are spot-on—and she uses Bourdieu against himself. Witz manages to correctly label exactly what Bourdieu is doing, and thus demystifies his writings on masculinity by demonstrating that Bourdieu himself, while criticizing the unreflective assumptions of others, nevertheless makes the same mistake, and thus taints his own work. Finally, Elspeth Probyn provides a poetic, if at times confusing, account of the role of emotions and affect in Bourdieu's theory. Drawing beautifully upon her own emotions of shame, she argues for a flexibility in sociology—a willingness to engage

the body in theory without reducing the body to a “screen” or an unproblematic stable field. The essay works well as the conclusion of the book in that it tentatively charts a loosening of the dry binds of social theory and encourages thinkers to be unafraid of ambiguity.

One of the inevitable problems that emerge when creating a book out of a series of essays by various authors is that there is a certain amount of repetition in each of the texts. For instance, just about every scholar presents an encapsulated explanation of “habitus” and “social field,” two central components of Bourdieu’s social theory. While it is certainly worth noting that scholars in general may explain these terms in very different ways, one finds, in these essays, remarkable agreement regarding their definition, if not their usage. Furthermore, since the various essays obviously address similar topics, one is left wishing one could witness a conversation between the scholars, in which their similarities and differences in thought could be brought forward and addressed directly. In other words, the book as a whole lives up to its title—it is certainly a book that demonstrates the various ways in which Bourdieu is approached and used by current British feminist scholars. One cannot help, however, but thirst for a work that engages the scholars more directly with each other, as well as a work that provides the main introduction to Bourdieu’s thought once, rather than many times.

However, this is a minor complaint about an otherwise solid example of postmodern feminist scholarship. What is most satisfying is the refusal of the scholars to accept Bourdieu’s theory as-is and then struggle to work within it. They demonstrate the possibility of critiquing and even rejecting a theory, yet nevertheless finding components of it useful for new thought. Both feminist scholars and sociologists should find the book helpful; feminists should take note of the generous and creative use of a problematic theory in generating new discourse; sociologists should take the examination of class habitus and gender formation to heart in their subsequent projects. Hopefully, the book can reinvigorate discussion about not only Bourdieu but other theorists who have been summarily dismissed due to failures in their theories to properly address sex and gender.

---

### ***Feminist Interpretations of Niccolò Machiavelli***

Edited by Maria Falco (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004). 423 pp. ISBN: 0-271-02389-9.

#### **Reviewed by Mindy Peden**

*John Carroll University*, mpeden@jcu.edu

Niccolò Machiavelli’s work has a breadth of probable interpretations, and “it is no exaggeration to say that almost every day somewhere in the world someone is invoking his name, either as a cautionary plea against some specific political action or as a template for understanding particular events” (2). It is no surprise, then, that an edited volume on the thinker who is seen alternatively as the greatest political theorist of all time and as not a political theorist at all would have a wide range of interpretive essays. The approach to virtù in Machiavelli’s work is a central concern for feminists as it is for most scholars; departing from a rule-based conception of virtue, Machiavelli insists that virtù is contextual and contingent, and is oppositional though only arguably distinct from Fortuna, memorably cast as woman both literally and figuratively. The question of Machiavelli for these thinkers revolves primarily

around the relationship of his active and contingent conception of virtù: if, when, how, and why virtù relates to women. In the most memorable section of Machiavelli’s work (chapter 25 of *The Prince*) the gendered conception of Fortuna turns violent, and it is easy to see how some might think that the question of Machiavelli’s relationship to feminism is hardly a question at all. However, the question of Machiavelli is alive and well. Many of the essays in *Feminist Interpretations of Niccolò Machiavelli* are from established feminist theorists, beginning with an excerpt from Hanna Pitkin’s groundbreaking *Fortune is a Woman*. The roughly twenty years of feminist scholarship on Machiavelli contained in the volume offers the reader a convincing and sophisticated genealogy as well as a perceptive sense of the major theoretical divisions among possible feminist interpretations of this often controversial thinker. This edited volume will be helpful for scholars of Machiavelli who may not be well versed in feminist theory, but, more significantly, it can be of use to feminist theorists developing approaches to politics.

Pitkin’s chapter is taken from her 1984 book, the first systematic feminist treatment of Machiavelli. She argues that Machiavelli’s approach to the political is reminiscent of Aristotle, though, Pitkin insists, “the very metaphors and images he employs to convey his insights repeatedly distort or destroy” the philosophical and political insights (53). While Machiavelli at his best “envisions a free politics of citizens holding themselves and each other to the civil limits defined by their particular tradition, a tradition they recognize to be conventional yet honor or alter as conscious ‘co-founders’” (79), this vision of politics is unable to be sustained even by Machiavelli himself. Coupled with Machiavelli’s defense of republicanism, then, is a “misogynist ideal of manliness” as a basis of citizenship and an inability to think of women as fellow citizens (70). Pitkin’s interpretation forms the starting point of feminist analysis of Machiavelli, which is evidenced by the other thinkers in the volume.

Arlene Saxonhouse’s interpretation, by contrast, emphasizes the central ambiguity of Machiavelli’s politics. She complicates the reading that Machiavelli relied on and reinforced strict gender essentialism and the association of virtù with masculinity by arguing that Machiavelli worked outside of the two models of womanhood he inherited from Medieval thought (Mary and Eve), suggesting that this is a part of a larger transvaluation in his political philosophy. Machiavelli separates the governing spheres of God and Fortuna, signaling “blasphemy” since, “in medieval theology, Fortuna is an expression of divine will” (98). As a critique of what Machiavelli saw as effeminate Christianity, the feminine Fortuna is used as “the exhortation to action, rather than submission to whatever she may bring” (98). In this way “men must...become women in their capacity to be fickle” and, rather than merely fight against and resist the feminine Fortuna, must learn from her (98). She explains that the historical account of women (as conspirators) in *The Discourses* and the fictional account of women in the comedies suggest that for Machiavelli men can become women and women men, as in the case of Lucretia “fit to govern a nation,” thereby transvaluing gender identity (115).

Wendy Brown disputes Pitkin’s connection of Aristotle and Machiavelli by using his allegorical poem *The Golden Ass* to conclude that “hardly a single feature of man is ‘natural’ or makes him fit to govern the natural world” (123) and that politics is not a sign of man’s superiority over animals but, rather, that man “constructs a political world out of his poverty—his vulnerability, passion, and precarious bearing in the natural world” (124). For Brown, gendered constructions of virtù and Fortuna signify a battle between the imposition of form upon matter (136), but they also suggest that for Machiavelli female

power is in part “a mirrored image of man’s inadequacies” (138). Necessity must be perceived in order for men to act with virtù, for their natures incline them to self-destructiveness; politics takes place in “a realm of appearances, as a game, as theater” (140). Order comes about from the perception of necessity and is “a strategy of defeating political alienation with political power.” This is multifaceted because the order “is Machiavelli’s masculine response to fluidity and change, a response that intensifies man’s myopia, inflexibility, and need to self-sufficiency, all of which were what originally produced a threateningly incomprehensible world” (157).

According to Catherine Zuckert, the changeableness of human nature is Machiavelli’s central insight into how to conduct politics. She shows that Machiavelli depicts a woman who is the embodiment of virtù and situates his re-telling of Plautus’ play *Casina* in relationship to the historical character of Lucretia and her importance in the founding of Rome, arguing that Machiavelli reworks the concept of prudence and its relationship to politics. The foresight shown by Machiavelli’s female characters is emphasized; it is the women that understand the basis of politics to be in “their attachment to their own lives, property, and standing in the eyes of others” (210). More reminiscent of Pitkin’s approach, R. Claire Snyder employs a model of a “citizenship of civic practices” to emphasize the role of civic militias in the formation of citizens (214). Locating Machiavelli in the Citizen-Soldier tradition, Snyder argues that “his republican virtues are inextricably linked to a corresponding set of vices” (214) that includes the establishment of the militia into the civic realm of republican self-rule, amalgamating “armed masculinity onto republican citizenship,” and embracing a form of citizenship that is “simultaneously republican and militaristic” (218). Snyder points out that the “constitution of masculine citizens is never fully completed because once the civic republican context is ruptured, men revert back to being self-interested power-seekers” (233). According to John Shin, though, when Machiavelli is talking about women, he is really talking about a masculine ideal as functionality, or the negation of individual life, which “places the abstract needs of the collectivity above all other concerns” (290). The masculine ideal, then, is precisely the opposite of what we often think. It is not uncompromising individuality but total “disposability” (306).

In emphasizing the rhetorical dimensions of Machiavelli’s work, Nederman and Morris reveal that the gendered violence is more than a literary device and “complement[s] rather than undermine[s] a political sphere in which ‘words are enough’ to solve problems” (277). This underscores the radicality of Machiavelli’s break from the tradition of political thinking that assumes that rational discussion is distinct from force and highlights the interpretation that the contingency of the world requires virtù, understood as forceful and masculine. By contrast, Melissa Matthes re-reads the relationship between force and Machiavelli’s republicanism by arguing that in *La Mandragola* the “conspiracy to obtain Lucretia’s ‘consent’ parallels the consent of the people necessary for the founding of the republic” (257).

Like Saxonhouse, Vesna Marcina takes the gender-bending approach to Machiavelli, arguing that his conception of citizenship is less masculine and exclusionary than many feminists maintain. She situates this argument within the “querelle des femmes” literary debate that surfaced following Christine de Pisan’s *Book of the City of Ladies*. Marcina shows how Renaissance defenses of women argued either that women were as skilled as men or by privileging stereotypically feminine qualities, and places Machiavelli’s use of women in his works in this context. She also explains why feminists

should care about Machiavelli. In the first place, his rethinking of submission within the context of civic virtue “can be used to illuminate a genealogical study of submission and dependence, their gendered associations, and their value connotations” (332). Additionally, though, Machiavelli points toward an alternative conception of democratic citizenship that has been useful for many thinkers and may likely be useful to many feminists in particular. As Jane Jaquette puts it, Machiavelli can be “an interlocutor rather than a foil for feminist theory” (338). Her chapter and the one by Andrea Nicki provide broader considerations of the question of Machiavelli and feminism, and both make strong cases for continued study of this important thinker. In addition to being called everything “from protofascist to protoliberal,” (2) in this important volume a complicated Machiavelli emerges, from misogynist to profeminist.

---

---

## ***Jane Austen and the Enlightenment***

Peter Knox-Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 275 pp. \$75.00. ISBN: 0521843464

### **Reviewed by Monica Shores**

*George Washington University*, mshores@gwu.edu

To love an author passionately is, in many ways, to regard her much as one would a family member. There is a tenderness and an intimacy that develops when one temporarily enters the mind of another human being, particularly when that human being is as articulate as Jane Austen. It is with this peculiar and engaging dynamic that Peter Knox-Shaw undertakes the project of recasting Jane Austen as a conscientious and receptive woman of her time, instead of an “arch party-pooper” who longs to return to a time when the Enlightenment had not corrupted Europe with its socially disruptive ideas (3). As a scholar, he is understandably put off by an incorrect reading of her work simply because it is not academically sound. However, as a lover of Austen’s work, he appears more affronted by the trend of criticism, which does her a great disservice personally. The Austen as “nostalgic reactionary” movement does both (i).

Knox-Shaw directs his critical energy primarily against Marilyn Butler, who holds tremendous influence as a contemporary critic. Butler has shaped the current thought of Austen as a woman of “preconceived and inflexible” ideas, and Knox-Shaw wastes no time in outlining the skeptical tradition, housed within the Enlightenment, of which he believes Austen was a part (4). David Hume and Adam Smith are referenced early in this process, and later prove to be critical figures in Austen’s congealing morality, as illustrated in her novels. Other formidable figures are touched upon: William Cowper, William Godwin, Erasmus Darwin. It is increasingly apparent that Knox-Shaw has a tremendous amount of material to contend with. Yet, oddly, it is in this same chapter, “Auspices,” that the book engages an odd diversion from which it never quite recovers.

The book jacket boasts that Knox-Shaw utilizes “archival and other neglected sources,” which is certainly an appealing piece of scholarly bait, but these texts ultimately prove to have more anecdotal appeal than revelations as to definite partisan or religious positions of Austen’s, largely because they are not works of her own. Jane becomes very much an afterthought during this portion, where Knox-Shaw turns his attention to James Austen’s poems and plays instead, written while he, the oldest brother, and Jane were still living in the same household. It becomes easy to recognize how much ink is devoted to this endeavor when it is compared to the rest of the book; the single largest section concerned with James spans twenty pages,

which is equal in length to the chapter on Jane's *Northanger Abbey* and almost twice the length of the book's final chapter.

When presented in this scope, the analysis of James's work, which surfaces frequently throughout the entire text, becomes tedious and a distraction from Jane's own pieces instead of a supplement. Even Knox-Shaw himself makes this diminished relevance explicit, usually when he seems to lack a fluid transition back into a discussion of his original Austen's work. For instance, after dedicating four pages to writer Adam Ferguson and how his essay influenced James's circle of friends, Knox-Shaw mentions, "Ferguson may or may not have been among the many historians whom (Jane) read" (67). Yet he is unable to resist including the information, perhaps because of his familial allegiance to Austen's work and, by extension, her family's. These types of vague conclusions stand in stark contrast to the rest of the book's more concrete and well-supported assertions. Using her brother's work to assist in outlining the most influential literary works of the time is an admirable idea, but in practice it is unable to sustain the momentum and import of the rest of the book. Familiarity by association is plausible, although not particularly compelling, and influence as opposed to exposure would be the only basis strong enough to warrant the amount of time given to those related to or simply acquainted with Jane and the work they produce.

Knox-Shaw's writing dramatically comes to life when he allows himself to delve directly into Jane Austen's texts with the mission of poking holes in the Anti-Jacobian interpretations, and he does so deftly, with great confidence and enthusiasm. When he integrates points and ideas of the Enlightenment directly with analysis of Austen's work instead of refracting these ideas through her brother James, his assertions take on great authority. It is in these moments that the real work of the book is done, namely, discrediting Butler as the designated figurehead of the most tenacious "Austen as reactionary" school of thought. On several occasions, Knox-Shaw refutes Butler, to devastating effect, with Austen's own text, such as when he pits Butler's assertion of "the sprightly heroine who renounces her independence of mind in order to conform to a received view of the world" to the final page of *Pride and Prejudice*, which identifies the newly married Elizabeth Bennet as so "lively" when talking with her husband that she induces "astonishment bordering on alarm" in her sister-in-law (95).

Furthermore, Knox-Shaw casts an entirely different light on what has been interpreted as Austen's unforgiving nature when it comes to her characters' indiscretions: "Austen writes about shame unblinkingly, exposing...its power of involving the innocent. She shows that shame...is a rudimentary social force, albeit one that cries out for humane meditation" (99). Within this reading, a socially disruptive action and the negative consequences it invites is a cycle not indicative of Austen's personal sense of justice but, rather, her sense of duty in presenting a realistic social climate. Her insistence that "fictive actions should tally with repeated observations from real life" was so fierce that she "altogether avoided scenes in which men confer together in the absence of women" (22).

Though the book purports to be intimately connected enough with philosophy to have it mentioned under its first Library of Congress categorization, in truth it is at various turns a British history, a biography, and a literary analysis, but never a philosophical work. Knox-Shaw calls upon philosophers only in service of establishing the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment, but an audience of philosophers will undoubtedly find some enjoyment in the crediting of Smith and Hume to Austen's "two-tiered system of morality," which allows her to salvage "social benefits from a range of human energies that had been sunk under the label of vice" (253).

Ultimately, Knox-Shaw's ideas are inarguably well-explicated and convincing, and yet struggle to be experienced as the dominant discourse of the book. His textual analysis and commentary on Austen's work are simply overshadowed by the massive amount of historical background and references within references that bracket every discovery. While this historical density will certainly be of great appeal to some, it is perhaps not in the best interest of his stated thesis that an overabundance of information is provided, particularly when it is not immediately relevant to Austen's work. *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment* is thoroughly researched and impressively woven together, although these facets might have been more readily appreciable had the book been titled *The Enlightenment and Jane Austen*.

---

## **Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer**

Edited by Lorraine Code (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003). 424 pp. \$85.00 cloth; \$35.00 paper. ISBN: 0-271-02243-4.

### **Reviewed by Jamey Findling**

*Newman University*, [findlingj@newmanu.edu](mailto:findlingj@newmanu.edu)

In this volume, part of a series "Re-Reading the Canon," Lorraine Code has assembled a needed but somewhat uneven collection of fifteen essays that deal with Gadamer and feminism. The best of the contributions are certainly well worth reading, but many of the entries fail to engage in genuinely productive ways with Gadamer's work. The intended audience seems to be feminists who wonder whether it is worthwhile, in a crowded intellectual marketplace, to read Gadamer seriously, and most of the contributions here take one side or the other of this question. However, judged from this perspective, the volume is only partially successful. To be sure, readers are exposed to a lively and at times productive debate about the value of Gadamer's work for feminist theorists. But the Gadamer who appears on these pages is far too limited in scope. Readers of this volume who are unfamiliar with Gadamer's work might well conclude that, outside of the second part of *Truth and Method*, he had little of importance to say, at least with respect to feminist concerns. In my opinion, this is a serious deficiency that renders this text far less interesting and relevant than it might have been.

The volume begins with a well-crafted introduction in which Code attempts to account for and respond to some of the reservations feminists may have about reading Gadamer. For the most part, these reservations stem from a perception of Gadamer that has its roots in the well-known debate that took place between Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas in the 1960s and 1970s, in which Habermas represented Gadamer as both conservative and naïve. The former charge was based on Gadamer's attempt to "rehabilitate" the concepts of authority and tradition as repositories of legitimate, meaning-producing *Vorurteile*, or prejudices, while the latter charge held that Gadamer had ignored the irrational and oppressive role of power in the transmission of culture. While these concerns were and are legitimate, Gadamer's replies were generally regarded as successfully showing that they did not substantially undermine the concept of tradition that he had elaborated. Nevertheless, the charges have persisted in various forms and, indeed, have become rather widely accepted. Referring to Gadamer as "conservative" is not likely to raise many eyebrows these days. Hence, a sizable portion of this volume is concerned with various considerations of whether Gadamer's hermeneutic

theory lacks adequate critical resources and, if so, how it might be supplemented. The most representative examples of this line of analysis are the contributions by Veronica Vasterling and by Robin Pappas and William Cowling.

One of the more noticeable aspects of this volume was how many of the authors focus on the question of Gadamer's utility for feminist goals and theorizing. The central issue for these authors is, as Susan-Judith Hoffman puts it, Gadamer's "usefulness...for feminist projects" (84). (For other examples of this type of language, see Fleming, 110; Hekman, 184; Alcoff, 232; Jantzen, 286; Steele, 335.) Without denying the possibility that this approach can be productive (Steele's essay is an outstanding example in this regard), I would argue that adopting such a posture exposes the author to the risk of appropriating and even distorting Gadamer rather than interpreting him.

A clear example of the downside of this risk is the essay by Gemma Corradi Fiumara. In "The Development of Hermeneutic Prospects," Fiumara takes Gadamer to task for giving primacy to "the question," which she calls "one of the most coercive figures of language" (134). The problem with questioning, according to Fiumara, is that it decides in advance what sorts of things can and cannot be said by the one being questioned. She thus contrasts it with the more open and, hence, riskier regard of listening—which has, she says, been almost entirely neglected in the Western tradition. In this way, Gadamer is neatly situated within Fiumara's pre-existing framework, made "useful" as yet another example of how the domineering and risk-averse tradition of Western philosophy has gone astray. Yet this reading itself manifestly fails to listen to Gadamer, inasmuch as Gadamer himself repeatedly warns against precisely the same sort of domineering posture (questioning as interrogation) that Fiumara attacks. In this connection, the essays by Marie Fleming and Robin May Schott also have considerable critical axes to grind but, in the process, unfortunately fail to give Gadamer's work an adequate hearing.

However, even authors who are sympathetic to Gadamer's thought sometimes seem to place their own political agendas ahead of the task of interpretation. In "The Ontology of Change," Susan Hekman draws attention to the ontological dimension of Gadamer's hermeneutics, pointing out that for Gadamer understanding is an ontological event that takes place within the medium of language. Hekman also emphasizes that because the "conversation that we are" is constantly changing, Gadamer's ontology avoids the modernist appeal to fixed, universal standards of truth. But she misses the mark when she says that Gadamer's account "provides concrete strategies to effect change" (195). In the first place, the notion that understanding is an "event" reminds us that it is not the achievement of an individual subject, let alone a process that could be brought under any sort of discrete control. Furthermore, Gadamer himself repeatedly disavowed any notion that his hermeneutics could be read prescriptively as articulating any sort of definite method by which to achieve correct understanding. Finally, as Susan-Judith Hoffman rightly points out in her contribution, Gadamer acknowledges the finite, situated character of human understanding by affirming the "political incompetence" of philosophy. In his view it is a basic misconstrual of philosophy to assign it the task of proposing or promoting specific solutions to social and political problems.

One other issue that is prominent in this volume is Gadamer's dialogical conception of understanding and the related question of the status of the other in hermeneutic theory (see, e.g., the contributions by Kathleen Roberts Wright, Georgia Warnke, Fleming, and Fiumara). This is an important issue and an obvious area for feminist reflection, but, like the discussions of tradition, authority, and prejudice that many of the authors

in this volume frequently return to, this issue is also dealt with almost exclusively on the basis of part two of *Truth and Method*. This exclusivity is unfortunate, since Gadamer has much to say elsewhere that is relevant to these questions (as the work of James Risser clearly demonstrates).

As indicated above, there are a few contributions in this volume that are genuinely rewarding. In particular, Georgia Warnke, Meili Steele, and, to a certain extent, Linda Martín Alcoff find compelling ways to deploy Gadamer's thought within the context of their own respective interests. While it remains slightly misleading to characterize these essays as "interpretations" of Gadamer, at least in the strict sense, these authors are able to "use" Gadamer in ways that not only avoid distorting his thought but, in some instances, even reflect light back on it. Also worthy of mention here is Kathleen Roberts Wright's piece, which provides not only a careful response to a feminist critique of Gadamer by Julie Ellison but also a provocative and forward-thinking suggestion about Gadamer's place in the postcolonial world of the twenty-first century. Finally, Grace M. Jantzen provides an interesting and well-written critique (following Irigaray's critique of Heidegger) of Gadamer's emphasis on mortality to the exclusion of natality in his conception of finitude and historicity.

As I have tried to make clear, the volume's contributors tend to engage with a rather narrow construal of Gadamer and his work that is dominated by the concepts of tradition and alterity as advanced in part two of *Truth and Method*. To be sure, one can appreciate, for instance, the call for a more critical hermeneutics (even if this is not new; see, e.g., the work of Paul Ricoeur or, more recently, Hans-Herbert Kögler), but there is also some redundancy here that a broader discussion would have helped avoid. To mention only a few of the issues that could have been addressed, or addressed more thoroughly: First, the central position of language in Gadamer's thought, and especially his profound engagement with poetry, would seem a promising avenue by which to approach questions of the concrete, embodied character of knowing, inasmuch as poetry for Gadamer expresses a truth that cannot be divorced from the particular form of its expression. Second, Gadamer's extensive work in the history of philosophy provides a firm basis for discussing his conception of tradition. In particular, his radical and unconventional interpretations of Plato clearly show that his notion of tradition has nothing at all to do with dogmatic adherence to the past. Indeed, from this perspective, "re-reading the canon" is as much a Gadamerian concern as a feminist one. Finally, while the relationship between theory and practice in Gadamer's work is complex and not without ambiguity, it is clearly of central importance there, as it is for feminist thought as well. Gadamer's disclaimer about the political incompetence of philosophy needs to be questioned more incisively than it has been, and feminist thinkers, attuned as they are to the often covert practical commitments of theoretical claims, would seem to be among those best positioned for such an inquiry.

In conclusion, there is ample opportunity for future engagement on the part of feminist thinkers with Gadamer's work. One hopes that this volume will be a first step toward an increasingly comprehensive and substantive effort to do just that.



---

---

## ***Eight Women Philosophers: Theory, Politics, and Feminism***

Jane Duran (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006). 328 pp. \$29.95. ISBN: 0-252-07265-0.

### **Reviewed by Maurice Hamington**

*University of Southern Indiana*, mhamington@usi.edu

In “Why So Few Women Philosophers?” historian Gerda Lerner suggests that the dearth of women philosophers through the nineteenth century is due to the systemic educational disadvantage of women, material constraints, and the absence of a robust women’s history.<sup>1</sup> According to Lerner, the history and works of women were often lost or discredited and therefore not available for subsequent women to access and build upon. It is indicative of the precarious position of feminist philosophy that it remains necessary to argue on behalf of the philosophical significance of historical women intellectuals. Feminist theorists continue to be marginalized in certain circles of philosophic thought, and yet, ironically, feminist philosophy is the engine driving some of the most original and transformative work in the field of philosophy. As Robin May Schott describes, although feminist philosophy originally sought rectifying the sexism in traditional philosophy, it “has developed into a field that is reflective about methodology in a way that contributes to making the field of the history of philosophy profoundly philosophical.”<sup>2</sup> Jane Duran’s *Eight Women Philosophers: Theory, Politics, and Feminism* reflects this kind of transformative contribution because in the process of retrieving her subjects, Hildegard of Bingen, Anne Conway, Mary Astell, Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, Edith Stein, Simone Weil, and Simone de Beauvoir, fundamental questions about the nature, methods, and production of philosophy are explored.

A central aspect of Duran’s analysis is a comprehensive reflection on situatedness. She notes that the work of women philosophers has “been even more influenced by context on the whole than that of male philosophers” (11). The introduction to *Eight Women Philosophers* makes it clear that the book will not be encyclopedic presentations of eight independent figures but, rather, tightly woven accounts thematically integrated. Given this approach, I question Duran’s claim that “each chapter is itself a stand-alone work” (x) given that she constructs such a comprehensive comparative analysis. Of course, someone may benefit from reading individual chapters, but this book really should be read as a whole to fully appreciate the streams of examination that Duran runs throughout the text.

Diversity of writing style and genre raises the specter of inclusion—Who gets to be called a philosopher?—a recurrent theme for Duran and a strength of the book. Each of the eight chapters on women philosophers begins with an analysis of the historical figure’s status within philosophy. In some cases, the style and methodology of the thinker has led to her work being underappreciated in philosophy. Neither Hildegard who wrote in a visionary style (21), nor Astell whose political tracts relegated her to “pamphleteer” (77) have received philosophic acclaim. Duran does not merely report philosophical status but investigates the nature of such claims. She notes, for example, that if mystical genres were sufficient cause for ignoring the philosophical nature of Hildegard’s work, then a number of male philosophers should also be excluded (22). Questions of inclusion go to the heart of the definition of philosophy and have implications for whether the field will be robust and relevant or abstract and esoteric.

Every chapter also addresses the relationship of the writers to traditional philosophical categories and approaches. For example, Conway’s metaphysics posits a hierarchy of substances whereby God stands apart from creation and Christ holds a mediating position. Conway viewed the structure of creation as existing in a continuum of connection but each mingling both matter and spirit. In this manner, Conway avoided the problems faced by Descartes’ dualistic metaphysics (51-56), offering philosophy with a “fresh and original air” (52). Accordingly, Duran places each philosopher in conversation with the traditional categories of philosophy whether their work has been explicitly addressed as such or not. This process serves to validate or justify the work as philosophical or worthy of philosophical consideration, but one wonders about a more radical project of reconceptualizing the categories of philosophy.

Another strength of the book is Duran’s research into each figure’s intellectual colleagues and, in particular, women thinkers. In this manner, the reader is exposed to a number of lesser-known intellectuals that might provide serviceable subjects for further study. When addressing Wollstonecraft’s work, Duran introduces Catherine Macaulay, a historian who believed that there were no innate differences between men and women and who had a profound influence on Wollstonecraft (117-118). Better known is author George Eliot, a contemporary, although not an acquaintance, of Harriet Taylor Mill. Eliot and Mill shared a “concern about the individual in a cruel and uncaring world, and the notion that we all, as individuals, can help each other—we have the capacity to alleviate suffering” (149). These connections display the range of Duran’s research for *Eight Women Philosophers*, and, more importantly, they demonstrate that women philosophers are not individual disembodied voices but situated thinkers existing in a social context that included responding to other women thinkers.

Every philosopher’s work is plumbed for its resonance with contemporary feminist theory. Duran is even-handed in her approach and does not force a feminist characterization where it is not appropriate. While she describes Stein as writing on a number of topics of importance to feminist theory and practice, Duran acknowledges, “cast in today’s terms, Stein’s thought cannot truly be considered feminist...because of her reliance on Christian categorization” (179). Duran balances recognition of women’s experience given the gender constraints of a given historical period with an appreciation for language that empowers women through feminist theory and practice. The work of de Beauvoir has been thoroughly treated for its contemporary limitations and essentialist underpinnings. Duran recounts these claims, but she never veers far from recognizing the role of context: “Contemporary feminists who have seen *The Second Sex* only as a flawed precursor to later work are failing to view the work in its entirety” (238). It is perhaps more a tribute to what de Beauvoir set in motion that some of her analysis seems dated. In this manner, Duran fleshes out recent-day relevance for each figure’s work.

Duran thoughtfully problematizes numerous aspects of philosophical context including history, culture, worldview, and religion. One contextual consideration that Duran treats is the nature of philosophical collaboration. Part of the assumption of “philosophic voices from nowhere” is that individuals write theory in a social vacuum. This assumption is instantiated because history records names as forever tied to their work as the one and only “author.” Throughout *Eight Women Philosophers*, and particularly in its conclusion, Duran addresses philosophic collaborations at length, a vital topic given the various connections found among the eight authors considered. Some of these collaborations are explicit

and strong (de Beauvoir/Jean Paul Sartre and Harriet Taylor Mill/John Stuart Mill); others are more muted yet significant (Conway/Henry More). Such collaborations are “modes of inquiry that are different from those pursued by the standard, individual investigator” (255) and, while sometimes dictated by circumstance, they point to an alternative feminist approach that valorizes the power of collective philosophic creation.

Duran also continually identifies themes of resonance and difference among her eight subjects. This is both a strength and a weakness. On the one hand, comparing the various figures, even over the span of 900 years, makes for a richer understanding of each. On the other hand, I was left wondering why these particular eight philosophers. Duran constructs such an integrated whole that one could see the beginnings of a counter-canon: Who gets in the feminist philosophy club? Accordingly, and at the risk of appearing facile, I also wonder if women of color could have been included in this project. Duran addresses the ethnic and class mix of the philosophers considered but, given that this project sought to retrieve the intellectual work of women as philosophers, it would seem plausible to extend it to those marginalized by race. Perhaps this is the task of another project.

Overall, *Eight Women Philosophers* is an insightful exercise in applying feminist theory and methodology, not merely as analysis of history but because of its implications for the present. Duran recognizes that there is an “unfortunate truth” that over a half century after de Beauvoir declared that “being different from man, who sets himself up as the same, it is naturally to the category of the Other that woman is consigned”<sup>3</sup> that feminist projects of retrieval must continue (268); nevertheless, the process is well worth it. All who are interested in the history of feminist philosophy should read *Eight Women Philosophers*, and it makes an excellent text for upper division undergraduate or graduate level feminist philosophy or feminist theory courses.

#### Endnotes

1. Gerda Lerner. “Why Have There Been So Few Women Philosophers?” In *Presenting Women Philosophers*, edited by Cecile T. Tougas and Sara Ebenreck (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 9.
2. Robin May Schott. *Discovering Feminist Philosophy: Knowledge, Ethics, Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 40.
3. Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 69.

---

### ***The Contradictions of Freedom: Philosophical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir’s The Mandarins***

Edited by Sally J. Scholz and Shannon M. Mussett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). 244 pp. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 0-7914-6560-8.

**Reviewed by Robin Margaret James**  
*University of North Carolina–Charlotte,*  
jamesrm25@yahoo.com

Situating the themes and questions addressed in Simone de Beauvoir’s novel *The Mandarins* in the context of her philosophical projects (most often, *The Second Sex* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*), Scholz and Mussett’s collection is a valuable addition to Beauvoir scholarship, which also speaks to broader political, philosophical, and aesthetic concerns. Although *The Contradictions of Freedom* is a collection of essays by eleven different authors, a handful of common and

frequently interrelated issues run throughout the book. Many of these issues relate in some way to the idea expressed in the title (a phrase from Iris Murdoch’s 1956 review of *The Mandarins for The Nation*), namely, that for particular individuals situated concretely in precise historical moments and social contexts action can never be completely free or unquestionably ethical.

The editors’ introduction summarizes the plot and some of the main themes in the novel; this summary is complete enough to ground a reader not immediately familiar with *The Mandarins*. As it also references some of Beauvoir’s autobiographies and letters to provide insight into her thoughts on and purposes in writing the novel, the introduction is valuable for readers familiar with *The Mandarins* because it situates the novel in its historical context and in the context of Beauvoir’s personal life and philosophical career. Of particular interest is the editors’ research on the various reviews and critiques of the book in both the European and American press. The introductory essay shares with many of the other articles the conviction that, in spite of its uniquely insightful portrayal of a specific moment in twentieth-century history, *The Mandarins* is relevant to contemporary concerns—if for no other reason than the world of French intellectuals in the 1950s is not so different from that of American intellectuals fifty years later.

While most of the essays draw comparisons between 1956 and 2006, this is the explicit focus of William L. McBride’s essay, “The Conflict of Ideologies in *The Mandarins*: Communism and Democracy, Then and Now.” Although there are some notable differences, McBride argues that the issues faced by Beauvoir’s characters—American cultural and economic imperialism; a new, seemingly interminable “war”; European unification—continue to be pressing concerns today. Moreover, contemporary political discourse is largely shaped by what McBride insightfully claims is the fruition of the mandarins’ nascent worries about the reach of American ideology: “The major historical development of the past half-century has been, in fact, the realization of one of the future possibilities envisaged by a number of the book’s characters, namely, the triumph of American hegemony” (41). Insofar as the “contradiction” between Cold War superpowers has largely been resolved and American neoliberal capitalism is unilaterally colonizing the globe, the “freedom” which it claims to spread is, McBride concludes, “false” (37).

The personal, political, and theoretical contradictions experienced and addressed by (public) intellectuals are the main concern of contributions by Ursula Tidd (“Testimony, Historicité, and the Intellectual in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Mandarins*”), Karen Vintges (“The Return of Commitment: Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Mandarins* Revisited”), Gail Weiss (“‘Politics Is a Living Thing’: The Intellectual’s Dilemma in Beauvoir’s *The Mandarins*”), Sally J. Scholz (“Sustained Praxis: The Challenge of Solidarity in *The Mandarins* and Beyond”), and Sonia Kruks (“Living on Rails: Freedom, Constraint, and Political Judgment in Beauvoir’s ‘Moral’ Essays and *The Mandarins*”). Each of these essays addressed the contradictions emerging from how the exigencies of concrete human existence sometimes require the compromise of one’s ideals in order to take needed political action, how intellectual engagement requires compromise in personal and political relationships, and how personal relationships change the significance of political and intellectual ideals. In response, Tidd and Vintges read Beauvoir through Foucault to suggest that intellectual speech is a “practice of freedom” (Tidd, 87) or “ethical-political (self) creation on the individual and collective level” (Vintges, 112). Weiss describes this ethos as a regard for politics as a “living thing,” so that “the intellectual’s response to these

dilemmas requires that she passionately embrace the ongoing demands of communal life” (131). McWeeny’s account of these “contradictions” is particularly insightful. Noting “the male characters’ blindness toward the notion that the impasse between intellectual theories and political practice must be reconciled with particular human lives” (165), McWeeny argues that these “impasses” are only viewed as such if one (wrongly, from a very privileged perspective) assumes that one’s concrete situation is never a barrier to political participation or intellectual analysis (i.e., that one is “just a person” and not, say, “a Desi” or “a dyke”).

Although it also addresses political questions, the second half of the book is more historically oriented. Shannon M. Mussett’s “Personal Choice and the Seduction of The Absolute in *The Mandarins*” and Thomas W. Busch’s “Simone de Beauvoir on Achieving Subjectivity” read *The Mandarins* in the context of French existentialism and Merleau-Ponty; Jen McWeeny’s “Love, Theory, and Politics: Critical Trinities in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Mandarins*” and Eleanore Holoveck’s “When a Woman Loves a Man: Ownness and Otherness in *The Mandarins*” address Beauvoir’s critiques of Hegelian and Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Peg Brand’s “Salon-Haunters: The Impasse Facing French Intellectuals” is the only essay to address *The Mandarins* in terms of aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Even though the editors’ stated intent is to address the philosophical (as opposed to literary) aspects of the novel, because Brand’s essay sits at the end of the collection (like a straggler) and is the only essay to explicitly address aesthetics, it seems as though the collection discounts the extent to which aesthetic concerns are themselves philosophical concerns.

Although the relationship between aesthetics and political philosophy is directly addressed in only one essay, there are two such themes which the essays in this collection address indirectly: the philosophical significance of the novel’s style, and the relationship between “frivolous” and “serious” intellectual activity. The editors, Tidd, and Kruks address feminist or methodological issues related to the novel’s style. Though the first concern appears to be purely stylistic in nature, the longstanding stereotype that women can create only on the basis of experience and not from abstract concepts makes this a feminist issue. Thus, we can see why, as the editors remark, Beauvoir “adamantly refuses to agree with those who claim that the book is nothing more than surreptitious autobiography” (16). However, roman a clef need not be un-philosophical; the above criticism of Beauvoir’s novel is not only misogynist but based on a false dichotomy between concrete experience and abstract concepts. Arguing that the relationship between the novel and Beauvoir’s own life demonstrates a necessary “reflexivity of the intellectual’s role” (88) or “self-critical intellectual metacommentary” (88), Tidd demonstrates that autobiographical reflection is an essential part of a sound and ethical intellectual life. For Kruks, *The Mandarins* addresses the seeming contradiction in writing a philosophical novel. Kruks claims that Beauvoir rejects the philosophical or “thesis-novel” because “it contradicts the actual intent of a novel: ‘[A] novel is about bringing existence to light in its ambiguities, in its contradictions’ [1979b, 447]” (67). Like Beauvoir’s more explicitly philosophical texts, *The Mandarins* demonstrates that the human condition is fundamentally ambiguous; thus, theories that would deny this are invalid and unjust.

The second theme follows from the dilemma faced by several characters: whether to pursue intellectual activities for political ends, or for aesthetic ones. Scarrassine views it as a zero-sum game, where one has time for either politics or theory; Henri struggles with his desire to disengage from public life and write solely for (his) pleasure; Nadine worries

that she will be “taken for a society woman who writes for housewives” (Beauvoir 536; cited Brand, 221); Brand claims that Beauvoir “worr[ies] that her writing might be judged as an example of aestheticism—lighthearted and pleasant—and not humanism” (221). Throughout the collection, authors follow Beauvoir in dichotomizing political activity and “private” aesthetic/theoretical work. For example, in their introduction, the editors describe how Henri’s “foolish plans to write a ‘light novel’ with no political significance give way to his true feelings about the role of literature” (13) without problematizing the assumptions behind Beauvoir’s characterization. No one addresses the falseness of this dichotomy and the feminization of this “lighthearted and pleasant,” “privatized” endeavor. Although Kruks reads *The Mandarins* as a critique of Kantian disinterestedness (70-72), no one questions the ways in which the feminization of pleasure mirrors Kant’s gendered distinction between the beautiful (“lighthearted and pleasant”) and the sublime (virile, rational). Just as *The Second Sex* claims that femininity is the “inessential” to the masculine One, is not art here being feminized as “inessential” to the Absolute of public life/freedom? Is not one of the “contradictions of freedom” the need to balance political and aesthetic concerns?

In spite of these few criticisms, the various essays work with and against one another to create a valuable scholarly text, not just a textbook-like guide or companion to *The Mandarins*. The range of interpretation and analysis is one of the strengths of this collection because, as a whole, the book works to raise questions for further scholarly inquiry and to perpetuate interest in Beauvoir’s novel.

---

## ***Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings***

Edited by Margaret A. Simons with Marybeth Timmerman and Mary Beth Mader (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004). 351 pp. \$40. ISBN: 0-252-02982-8.

### **Reviewed by Dera Sipe**

*Villanova University*, [dera.sipe@villanova.edu](mailto:dera.sipe@villanova.edu)

The Beauvoir Series is an earnest endeavor to pull Simone de Beauvoir out from behind the veil of Sartre’s shadow once and for all. This series is the most ambitious of many recent attempts to persuade the philosophical community to take Beauvoir seriously. The need for such a series is great; as Edward Fullbrook rightly points out, “Until quite recently, getting anyone to read a Beauvoir text for its philosophical content was nearly impossible. And reading one with a view to finding in it philosophical originality was deemed laughable. Beauvoir the philosopher had been erased from existence” (34). Through the use of fresh translations and by directing our attention to the philosophical import of overlooked texts, this series calls on the philosophical community to add Beauvoir’s name to the overtly patriarchal canonical registry. Time will tell whether the series is able to fully succeed in its goal, but the value of this project can already be ascertained from the first book.

The series begins with *Philosophical Writings*, a collection of Beauvoir’s lesser known, mistranslated, or previously untranslated philosophical writings, to be followed by translations of her student diaries, a war diary, several fictional works, as well as literary, political, and feminist essays. In her introduction to the volume, Simons argues that Beauvoir’s “unique philosophical methodology” (5) requires that we consider her formal philosophical essays as well as her fictional

pieces, political articles, and even personal journals and correspondences. This is, in part, because Beauvoir forces us to curb the inclination to judge a philosopher on the basis of a magnum opus. A just reading of her work requires that we resist the temptation to assign her the sort of tidy conspectus often distilled from philosophical systems; indeed, an accurate understanding of her philosophy demands that we resist the urge to systematize it at all. As Simons points out, “Beauvoir argues that philosophy should reflect the ambiguities of actual life” (2)—in line with this belief, her efforts to write philosophy are not always done in treatise form.

With a few exceptions, *Philosophical Writings* focuses primarily on Beauvoir’s essays but is structured such that the methodology indicated by Simons is never ignored. Various distinguished Beauvoir scholars aid this project with their contextualizing introductions to each selection (Kristana Arp, Nancy Bauer, Debra Bergoffen, Edward Fullbrook, Sara Heinämaa, Eleanore Holveck, Sonia Kruks, Shannon Mussett, Hélène N. Peters, Margaret A. Simons, Karen Vintges, and Gail Weiss). The introductions lend intelligibility to the pieces, situating them biographically and in relation to other texts. However, due to their (perhaps necessary) brevity, the critical commentary included in each introduction often comes across hurried; this is vexing particularly when the author is making controversial claims about the status of Beauvoir’s work in relation to that of Sartre. In such cases, the reader is pulled to investigate the subsequent texts for validation of the commentator’s arguments. To some extent the task of an introduction is to awaken interest in a text, so in this sense even the occasional hyperbolic claim does a service for Beauvoir. Still, the reader is left a bit dissatisfied at times. It is unfortunate that the introductory sections are not full essays in themselves.

The contents of the book span from 1924 to 1947, ranging from an essay written when Beauvoir was only sixteen to her defense of existentialism. Situated chronologically, the volume reveals both the coherence and the subtle progression of her philosophical inclinations. While a system proper should not be outlined from Beauvoir’s anti-systematic corpus, central philosophical themes are traced by the book’s commentators.

The earliest piece, “Analysis of Claude Bernard’s *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*,” is probably the least philosophically interesting, though it does provide rough evidence that themes from her later work may be traceable to her pre-Sartre schooldays. Simons and Peters point to three such themes in their introduction to the essay: the “valuing of philosophical doubt,” the “rejection of ‘scholasticism’, ‘immutable truths’, and philosophical system-building,” and the “valuing of the discovery of the external world” (18). The identification of particularly the latter two of these themes sets the stage for the rest of the volume.

To demarcate Beauvoir from Sartre, subsequent commentators continuously stress Beauvoir’s understanding, further developed throughout her life but present in nascent stages early on, of situatedness and the accompanying ambiguity of the human condition. As early as *She Came to Stay* (1938), Beauvoir’s philosophy explores the ambiguity of embodied consciousness and the self/other relation, though, unfortunately, she presents these solipsistically in the novel.

This matured a bit as Beauvoir cultivated an existential ethics rooted in ambiguity, entering into what she termed her “moral period.” *Pyrrhus and Cineas* (1944)—translated into English for the first time here—is representative of this period. Written approximately six years after *She Came to Stay*, *Pyrrhus and Cineas* evidences Beauvoir’s growing consideration of alterity. Debra Bergoffen introduces the text, situating *Pyrrhus*

and *Cineas* within the context of what Bergoffen finds to be the general trajectory of Beauvoir’s thought and highlighting the growing inclusion of intersubjectivity into Beauvoir’s existential ethical scheme. Though in *Pyrrhus and Cineas* Beauvoir clings to a somewhat Cartesian distinction between inner and outer, she takes steps anticipatory of her later works toward a phenomenological understanding of human freedom as ultimately situated in the world and necessarily involving others. Here, Beauvoir posits a notion of human freedom as supported through reciprocal recognition: “Our freedoms support each other like the stones in an arch, but in an arch that no pillars support” (140). As Bergoffen points out in her introduction, even the radically free subject must appeal to others so that her projects might be realized in the world (85).

The works of Beauvoir’s “moral period” begin to broach the topics of situatedness, ambiguity, and intersubjectivity, but they do not quite go far enough; she has yet to fully situate the human in a socio-historical world. Beauvoir’s later works will develop these themes further, eventually abandoning the inner-outer distinction for a more developed notion of embodiment that better accounts for the ambiguity of our condition. This development can be identified in a text published just one year later, Beauvoir’s review of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). In her introduction to the review, Heinämaa complicates the question of influence by exploring how Beauvoir’s notion of subjectivity is actually more in line with that of Merleau-Ponty than that of Sartre. Beauvoir seems to prefer the former’s description of consciousness as “‘engorged by the sensible’...not a pure for-itself...but rather ‘a hollow, a fold’” (163). Beauvoir’s laudatory review of Merleau-Ponty’s text indicates that her own philosophy has moved further in the direction of situatedness. This development is apparent in subsequent pieces included in *Philosophical Writings*, particularly “Eye for an Eye,” but the reader must look outside of this volume to find the most obvious indications of this turn—namely, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), of which only an earlier published portion of the first chapter is included in *Philosophical Writings*, and to *The Second Sex* (1949).

Thus, while this first volume works to affirm Beauvoir’s place as a prominent philosopher in her own right, it should not be read with the assumption that a comprehensive understanding of Beauvoir’s philosophy can be garnered from even a close examination of these texts in isolation. Rather, *Philosophical Writings* should be read as an auxiliary text that provides the English reader with trustworthy access to Beauvoir’s work on the periphery of her larger, more familiar texts.

Fortunately, despite the suggestion indicated by the title, the editors do not propose that this first volume’s aim is a complete presentation of Beauvoir’s philosophical ideas. Simons offers simply that the volume compiles “diverse elements of Beauvoir’s philosophical work, ranging from metaphysical literature to essays on existentialist ethics, and highlights continuities in the development of her thought” (6). This volume accordingly does Beauvoir a necessary justice on several fronts. Most importantly, it does not merely speculate as to *why* Beauvoir has not been taken seriously as a philosopher (a topic which has taken up too many disheartening pages already)—it goes beyond that, providing a forum for a conversation about just *what* Beauvoir’s philosophy might be if we decide to take her seriously.

If the selections were chosen for this volume with the intent of setting Beauvoir up as an independent thinker, the goal was not met. Rather, the selections only amplify the problem of influence: we see Beauvoir in conversation with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Bernard, Husserl, Heidegger, Hegel, Kant, Descartes, Camus, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Bergson, and Fouillée. However, is this not the mark of a good philosopher,

especially a philosopher of intersubjectivity, of ambiguity, of situatedness? That Beauvoir was never taken seriously as a significant interlocutor in the philosophical conversation is what is remedied with this book. The problem of influence—a “problem” perhaps rooted in a patriarchal understanding of what it means to engage in philosophy—should not be such a problem for us if we truly endeavor to understand what Beauvoir advocated. Given her philosophical convictions, Beauvoir would have demanded nothing less than to be recognized as a vital member of an engaged philosophical community.

---

---

## CONTRIBUTORS

---

---

**Sharon Crasnow** is an associate professor of philosophy in the Department of Arts, Humanities, and World Languages at Riverside Community College, Norco Campus. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Southern California (1980). She has published in *Hypatia* and *Philosophy of Science*. Her current research includes work on objectivity, realism/antirealism, and evidence in feminist philosophy of science, with particular emphasis on the social sciences. Sharon.crasnow@rcc.edu

**M. Carmela Epright** is an associate professor of philosophy at Furman University, where she teaches courses in ethics, bioethics, and feminist philosophy. In addition, she serves as a clinical bioethicist and ethics consultant to numerous medical and social service entities, including the South Carolina Medical Association, the Greenville Hospital System, and SpringBrook Behavioral Health Care. She has published articles on bioethics, moral theory, political philosophy, and moral psychology. Her current research focuses upon the legal and moral implications of psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. carmela.epright@furman.edu