

# Feminism and Philosophy



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## FROM THE EDITOR

Margaret A. Crouch

## ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

## ARTICLES

Catherine E. Hundleby

### *Critical Thinking and the Adversary Paradigm*

Carolyn Korsmeyer

### *Aesthetics: Feminism's Hidden Impact*

Ásta Sveinsdóttir

### *Who's Afraid of Feminist Metaphysics?*

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Elena Duvergé's Blair: Plato's Dialectic on Woman: Equal, Therefore Inferior*

Reviewed by Dana Rognlie

### *Elizabeth Brake: Minimizing Marriage: Marriage, Morality and the Law*

Reviewed by Vicki Toscano

### *Maurice Hamington and Celia Bardwell- Jones (eds.): Contemporary Feminist Pragmatism*

Reviewed by Stephanie Rodgers

### *Jane Moore (ed.): Mary Wollstonecraft*

Reviewed by Devora Shapiro

### *Julie Stephens: Confronting Postmaternal Thinking*

Reviewed by Shelley M. Park

### *Alison Stone: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*

Reviewed by Allison B. Wolf

### *Ewa Plonowska Ziarek: Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism*

Reviewed by Summer Renault-Steele

## CONTRIBUTORS



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Feminism and Philosophy

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MARGARET A. CROUCH, EDITOR

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Margaret A. Crouch

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How, if at all, has feminist philosophy influenced mainstream philosophy? When feminist philosophy became a sub-field of philosophy, integration of the insights and critiques of feminist philosophy into mainstream philosophy was a goal for many. However, feminist philosophy appears to have remained to some extent “marginalized,” as Phyllis Rooney argues in her recent article, [“The Marginalization of Feminist Epistemology and What That Reveals About Epistemology ‘Proper.’”](#)<sup>1</sup> This issue includes invited articles on the influence of feminist philosophy on critical thinking, aesthetics, and metaphysics. They address the question of whether, and to what extent, feminist philosophy has been taken up by non-feminist philosophers in these fields.

Catherine Hundleby argues feminist philosophy has not had sufficient impact on critical thinking but suggests a strategy for increasing its influence by revising the way that critical thinking courses are taught. She maintains that the Adversary Method, identified by Janice Moulton in 1983, is still the dominant paradigm in analytic philosophy, and that, as Moulton pointed out, is exclusionary. Hundleby argues that critical thinking courses, taught as introductory “service” classes in many universities, contribute to the reproduction of this paradigm. These courses are often taught by instructors with little expertise in argumentation theory, from textbooks that accept the Adversary Method as their primary pedagogy. One way of challenging the dominance of the Adversary Method would be to change how critical thinking is taught, taking into account alternatives modes of reasoning and the broader context of critical thinking provided by argumentation theory.

Carolyn Korsmeyer argues that feminist philosophy has had a significant impact on mainstream aesthetics, but that “this influence can be difficult to see because much of the supporting evidence has lost its feminist label.” She finds that, though there may not be many publications in feminist aesthetics, recent anthologies in aesthetics do include articles on the issues that feminists philosophers have emphasized. However, it is difficult to identify what feminism, as opposed to other innovative approaches in philosophy, has contributed. This is true, for example, of “everyday aesthetics.” Korsmeyer also points out that many ideas that feminists brought to aesthetics and other areas of philosophy are now attributed to male theorists, such as Foucault or Derrida. She concludes that feminist insights have been integrated into the general understanding of

culture, but that it is important that feminism be credited with providing many of these innovative approaches to how we think about the world.

Ásta Sveinsdóttir maintains that “feminist philosophy has so far had little influence on what gets addressed under the label ‘metaphysics.’” But this is not because feminists are not doing metaphysics. It is because of the ways in which mainstream metaphysics has been defined, and a reluctance on the part of some feminist philosophers to characterize their work as metaphysics, largely because of this definition. Sveinsdóttir offers a definition of metaphysics to support the claim that feminists indeed do metaphysics, and that metaphysics is necessary to feminist philosophy. She also recommends that non-feminist metaphysicians need a change of methodology, one that incorporates the insights of feminist and other critical philosophies.

These three essays provide much to think about. Should we insist that curricula, especially for graduate students, include explicitly feminist philosophy? If, as Korsmeyer argues, philosophical insights from feminism have become detached from their origins, or attributed to other sources, does this matter? Will feminist philosophy ever be fully integrated into philosophy? Should it be?

### NOTE

1. Phyllis Rooney, “The Marginalization of Feminist Epistemology and What That Reveals about Epistemology ‘Proper,’” in *Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science: Power in Knowledge*, ed. Heidi Grasswick (Dordrecht, Holland: Springer, 2011), 3–24.

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## 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

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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. Newsletter submissions should be limited to ten double-spaced pages and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language. All manuscripts should be prepared for anonymous review. References should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Essays must be sent electronically to the editor.

**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 seeking new 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. Margaret A. Crouch, at [mcrouch@emich.edu](mailto:mcrouch@emich.edu).

**4. Submission deadlines:** Submissions for spring issues are due by the preceding November 1; submissions for fall issues are due by the preceding April 1.

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## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

During the spring of 2012, the APA committee on the status of women (CSW) launched a [stand-alone website](#) that is linked to the [APA website](#). This sight is proving to be very popular. It includes the following items of interest:

- Monthly profiles of women philosophers
- Data on women in philosophy
- The status of women at individual departments with graduate programs
- Information on advancing women in philosophy (hurdles and best practices)
- Sample syllabi for diversifying philosophy courses
- Advice on publishing feminist philosophy
- Information about the role of the APA ombudsperson for nondiscrimination
- The APA statement on nondiscrimination
- The APA statement on sexual harassment
- Posters and merchandise featuring and advancing women in philosophy

- Links to feminist philosophy groups, women in philosophy groups, lists, list-serves, blogs, and wikis

As was announced in the fall 2011 *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, the APA CSW is establishing a site-visit program. The goals of the APA CSW-sponsored site-visit program include:

- Gaining information in a systematic way about the range and variety of women's experiences in philosophy at each level (undergraduate, graduate, faculty/lecturer) that contribute to the ongoing underrepresentation of women in the field.
- Educating departments about challenges women philosophers and other underrepresented groups face, drawing on first-person reports and social-science research.
- Making recommendations based on programs that have been shown to be successful in other departments, both in philosophy and other fields where women are substantially underrepresented.

As of late April 2013, several universities have formally requested that their philosophy departments be visited with several additional universities exploring the possibility. These site visits will begin in the fall of 2013.

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## ARTICLES

### *Critical Thinking and the Adversary Paradigm*

Catherine E. Hundleby  
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

The current status of feminism in philosophy may continue to suffer from an "Adversary Method" of reasoning that Janice Moulton argued back in 1983 constitutes a Kuhnian paradigm in our discipline. The first section of her article on the conflation of aggression and masculinity with success shows how women in aggressive cultures and sub-cultures find themselves in a "double-bind": people *recognized* as women may not have their participation acknowledged unless they behave aggressively; and their ordinary efforts at participation when acknowledged will tend to seem unacceptably aggressive.<sup>1</sup> Moulton hinted that the mechanisms by which the Adversary Method creates problems for women do not lie in cognitive or communicative differences between the practices of men and women or boys and girls. I agree. The ways in which the masculinity of aggression provides privileged spaces for men in a discipline dominated by the Adversary Method can be explained without assuming gendered differences in styles of communication or cognition. One may use recent research in politeness studies and argumentation theory to uncover some of these mechanisms.

Moulton argued that the Adversary Paradigm had an adverse epistemological effect on the discipline of philosophy

by needlessly restricting the sorts of theories that can be considered and questions that can be asked. Because this is still true, resisting the prevalence of the Adversary Method remains important for diversifying philosophy as a discipline and integrating feminist and other liberatory analyses into the mainstream. The pervasiveness and authority of Adversarial argumentation suppresses forms of discourse more available to people who are socially marginalized, regardless of their personal preferences, their comfort levels with different styles of communication, or their cognitive abilities.

Many different techniques may be needed to unseat the Adversary Paradigm, especially as it resonates with the accepted metaphors of argument as war, and with the history in Western philosophy of viewing reason as a battle against femininity.<sup>2</sup> I suggest that changing the standards for philosophical reasoning and fostering inclusiveness at this historical moment in the development of our discipline may be aided by a bottom-up strategy. One of the primary ways in which the Adversary Method is reproduced is through critical thinking courses. These courses are typically taught by people with little expertise in argumentation scholarship, although argumentation has become the main tool for teaching critical thinking in the discipline of philosophy. Improving the standards for critical thinking pedagogy would help to unseat the Adversary Method from its status as a paradigm. Alternatives can be readily found in the textbooks authored by argumentation scholars.

### HOW IS CRITICAL THINKING POLITICAL?

“Critical thinking” can mean any number of things, ranging from descriptive analysis of information (including studies, polls, media, advertising) to the evaluation of arguments, and even personal reflection. It has become a buzzword so broadly applied that it loses any clear meaning. In philosophy classes, the evaluations of beliefs, statements, and lines of reasoning tend to be the central skills taught.<sup>3</sup> How students learn to evaluate reasoning has significant political potential that deserves analysis and evaluation, I argue. Its influence currently drifts on the tide of disciplinary tradition, lacking the direction by up-to-date texts and expert instructors that we find in other areas of philosophical instruction, such as ethics and metaphysics.

The epistemology tacitly taught in critical thinking courses has the same political effect that Linda Alcoff argues epistemology education does generally: it legitimates certain discourses and de-legitimizes others.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the impact on spheres of political discourse may be much greater for critical thinking than for epistemology courses. Critical thinking pedagogy’s explicit aim to influence how students think and argue may give it more practical impact, and the popularity of these courses can make that effect extensive.<sup>5</sup> Many people will share the skills and that can culminate as a cultural standard. Philosophy courses in critical thinking have become ubiquitous in North America over the last few decades and are now cropping up in the United Kingdom too.<sup>6</sup> *For many undergraduate students, critical thinking instruction provides their only exposure to philosophy and general standards of knowledge.* As such, these “service” courses aimed at non-majors can have broad cultural influence. Some social conservatives even fear that critical thinking might undermine traditional forms of authority.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the promise of providing more democratic and inclusive reasoning, which one often finds in the preface, introduction, or publicity material for a critical thinking textbook or course, tends to be empty. It rarely carries through even to the content of the examples and exercises, never mind the types of analysis and forms of evaluation taught.<sup>8</sup> Critical thinking pedagogy currently tends to perpetuate the assumption that deductive logic is the standard for reasoning. The traditional disciplinary prestige of “logic” leads textbook reviewers to expect, and publishers to require, its inclusion and emphasis in critical thinking textbooks. That ideal can be seen even when a textbook claims to focus on the separate topic of argument and argumentation but sets up deductive reasoning as the strongest or best form.

Deductive reasoning provides the central means by which the Adversary Method narrows discourse. Criticism through refutation provides for progress based on a Popperian ideal of falsifiability.<sup>9</sup> Yet, little of our reasoning and even less of our interesting and controversial reasoning employs deduction, or can benefit from the inferential strength of deduction. A better way to teach reasoning is through argumentation, which was a central precept for the informal logic movement beginning in the early 1980s. Argumentation is an exchange of reasons, which may not involve the certainty regarding inferential assumptions on which deduction depends, and may involve more textured and negotiable forms of inference. Admittedly, individual isolated premise-conclusion complexes—however inferential strength is defined—must be part of argumentation. However, the significance of arguments can be more richly understood as part of the larger context of reason exchange. Under such a dialogical interpretation an argument can be understood as an “invitation to an inference.”<sup>10</sup>

Just as epistemology presents itself as “the arbiter of all claims to know,” critical thinking courses in philosophy departments are claimed to teach generally—and even universally—applicable reasoning skills.<sup>11</sup> Yet the content of such courses tends to be governed by a disciplinary culture that neglects the substantial relevant work in methodology, psychology, communication, and rhetoric that provides diverse means for evaluating reasoning and argumentation. The study of argumentation in the informal logic movement was motivated by a pedagogical concern with critical thinking in post-secondary education. Argumentation and critical thinking remain the closest thing to learning the general methodology of philosophy that students receive.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, interdisciplinary argumentation theory—and informal logic as its philosophical branch—has only a minor influence on how philosophers teach argumentation. We seldom demand expertise in argumentation scholarship for instructors of undergraduate critical thinking courses, even when those courses are part of a regular teaching load for a permanent faculty position. Rarely does one ever see “critical thinking” or “argumentation” required as a specialization for a job posting. Instruction from someone who had not even taken an advanced undergraduate course in the field would be unthinkable in a field with comparable disciplinary significance and social impact, such as ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, or the history of philosophy.

Philosophers tend to view critical thinking education as unimportant, except for when we are justifying funding

for our departments. We require no special training for critical thinking instruction because of its low status in our discipline, and often relegate these classes to temporary and part-time faculty, a disproportionate number of whom are women. These instructors seem to have little reason to read up on the scholarship or to direct their research toward the topic. Even the textbook authors are unlikely to have published scholarly papers in the relevant fields.<sup>13</sup> This is not the fault of the individual, but rather points to a systematic irresponsibility regarding critical thinking education.

### THE ADVERSARY METHOD

The Adversary Method, as Moulton describes it, uses deductive reasoning to provide maximal force to objections. A critic aims to provide reasoning with sufficient power to falsify a theory or belief under consideration, often by way of counterexample. That impact is more extreme than just considering conflicts and different than considering alternatives.<sup>14</sup> Two contrasting analyses are treated as in opposition to each other and the aim of eliminating the opponent makes the Method *eristic*. An objective type of support accrues to the surviving view that derives from the uniform severity of opposition.

To facilitate the decisiveness of refutation reasoners narrow the range of discourse, for instance, by granting premises for the sake of argument. We “withhold evaluation for a system of ideas in order to find common ground for debate.”<sup>15</sup> Philosophers “control the number of variables by excising certain orientations and founding assumptions from the discussion,” as Alcoff put it in her APA presidential address.<sup>16</sup>

Moulton explains that, as philosophers, we typically engage others on their terms, but only insofar as defined by pre-established fields of discourse. So, for example, we raise questions about knowledge as epistemologists and not as ethicists, defining ourselves as foundationalists, coherentists, or realists; internalists or externalists; and pragmatists or idealists. While these categories seem to provide clarity to our mutual inquiry and to develop common ground, they can distort the positions under consideration by pressing them into contexts of consideration different from the ones in which those positions originate. So, for instance, we find moral theories addressed to egoists and theories of knowledge aimed at skeptics.<sup>17</sup>

Complex practical questions do not fare well in the Adversary Method, which allows only narrow alternatives to be considered at the expense of examining the larger context of debate. For instance, Judith Jarvis Thomson’s famous argument that the right-to-life cannot be absolute may undermine many positions in the debate over access to abortion, but it provides no guidance about when it might be morally permissible to have an abortion.<sup>18</sup> To facilitate the exclusion of some lines of reasoning, the Adversary Method abstracts positions from the contexts that give them practical significance, which distorts, or at least tends to distort, the motivating concerns.

### FALLACIES, SKEPTICISM, AND THE ADVERSARY PARADIGM

Dependence on the Adversary Method entails that it operates much like a Kuhnian paradigm, allowing philosophers to work

on puzzles regarding our pet theories without ever addressing, never mind assessing, the epistemological foundation of our practice. That philosophers simply assume the Adversary Method and rely on it to the exclusion of other forms of reasoning can be recognized in two characteristic aspects of philosophical discourse (beyond those described by Moulton). Both the typical form of fallacies pedagogy and the role of skepticism as a default philosophical strategy narrow discourse. That practice facilitates the decisive criticism that is emblematic of the Adversary Method and suggests that it continues to operate as a governing paradigm.

Philosophy textbooks tend to present fallacies of argumentation in a manner that evidences the Adversary Method. My analysis of thirty textbook treatments of fallacies reveals that twenty-four of them rely on at least three out of four ways of presenting argument analysis that correspond to the techniques of the Adversary Method.<sup>19</sup> The first move is to neglect the possibility of argument repair, to treat an argument that has a problem as unworthy of further consideration or revision. Such categorical dismissal suggests the eristic character of the Adversary Method. The other three signs of the method at work narrow the discourse: short or decontextualized examples; manufactured examples; and an exercise technique in which learners must assume that the arguments under consideration are irreparable, only to have their flaws named. All three cases demand interpretive assumptions, assumptions students often cannot figure out unless they share the cultural background of the instructor or textbook author. Ambiguities of interpretation plague fallacy instruction because most textbooks neglect the intricacies and defeasibility of interpretation.<sup>20</sup>

Fault-finding marks philosophical analysis also insofar as skeptical questioning operates as a default strategy in our discipline, a universal way to engage any consideration, as Rooney recently argued. Even when philosophers have little understanding of a position, they easily jump to an agonistic orientation:

A standard response from [philosophical interlocutor] B . . . involves B pointing out where he finds [speaker] A’s argument less than convincing. A’s initial premise may be questioned, for instance, or B might claim that the premises in one of her subarguments do not provide sufficient warrant for the conclusion she draws from them, or B might provide a counterargument.<sup>21</sup>

This standard practice does allow for the possibility of argument repair, and, as Rooney argues, it adheres to accepted epistemic norms that demand seeking out adversaries. Yet, when one makes an objection and takes on the role of an adversary, one has responsibilities, such as the careful listening needed to appreciate a position from the social margins. Philosophers tend to ignore that and focus on the responsibility of the speaker to answer objections. A common case involves the skeptical questioner holding the speaker accountable to a standard of deductive reasoning from necessarily true premises, even though little of philosophical interest can be formulated that way. That ideal leads the skeptic into a straw person argument that often goes unrecognized because the burden of proof seems to remain with the original speaker. The obligations of the

respondent seem to have been addressed simply by being skeptical and creating room for doubt.<sup>22</sup>

When default skepticism operates in conjunction with the previously narrowed discourse of the Adversary Method, then the play has been rigged against taking broad discursive responsibilities. The game is loaded against anyone who occupies a marginalized position, for example, a woman or person of color, because testimonial biases ensure the application of a harsher standard, as Rooney argues. Bias also raises the bar for any defense of such positions—even if the speaker does not occupy the marginalized perspective. A particular speaker may not be explicitly discounted, but the structure of the canon in its dependence on a privileged social perspective developed almost exclusively by white, upper-class, able-bodied men leaves her out. As a default, skeptical responses serve to restrict the hermeneutical resources of the speaker to whom they are addressed, and yet they seem to need no justification. That disciplinary culture makes skeptical doubt “a convenient and acceptable method to silence, misrepresent, or otherwise discourage those who seek to address inconvenient truths.”<sup>23</sup> As the skeptical default forces the speaker to defend the claim’s plausibility, the hermeneutical resources for supporting the position further narrow, amplifying the speaker’s burden of proof. Should the speaker be a woman, or be otherwise marginalized, the deficit in testimonial authority entails that her position appears as an “astonishing report.”

The Adversary Method need not be implicated in all philosophical questioning, only in default skepticism; nor need it be implied by any fallacy allegation. And yet, it structures the standard presentation of fallacies. Textbooks that encourage and accommodate raising other forms of question, that allow students to defend alternate interpretations of the passages to be evaluated, and consider how to repair an argument come almost exclusively from authors with published research in the field of argumentation.<sup>24</sup> The strong contrast of these relatively few scholarly textbooks against the ubiquity of the Adversary Method suggests that the method operates as a disciplinary dogma, that philosophers presume it without question as part of our practice and culture. It is method, model, and unquestioned ideal—a Kuhnian paradigm.

### ABSTRACT ADVERSARIES AND EXCLUSIONARY POLITENESS

The solution to the dominance of the Adversary Method may seem to be to minimize adversariality through enforcing norms of politeness. That seems to promise a better focus on the cooperative development of understanding that philosophical argumentation serves.<sup>25</sup> However, that strategy assumes an idealized politeness in which abstract arguers have no gender. Idealizing social ontologies and ignoring oppression are two of the problematic tendencies in “ideal theory” identified by Charles Mills. Idealization does not merely abstract from the world to generate an ideal, a form of analysis that may be necessary for philosophy; it constructs an ideal by abstracting from relevant phenomena: “structural domination, exploitation, coercion, and oppression.”<sup>26</sup> Gendered work-cultures affect real philosophical argumentation, and even polite cooperation prevents women from operating as peers among men.

Admittedly, many women love philosophy in part because its adversarial culture provides opportunities for competition and aggressive exchange denied to them in many other contexts.<sup>27</sup> In addition to the adversarial activity itself, the opportunity to transgress gender norms can be part of the discipline’s appeal. Philosophy sanctions participation in the intellectual throw-downs that they relish, and even crave, given their limited access.

Unfortunately, the opportunities are fewer for women than they appear because the culture of philosophy reflects male “homosocial” and culturally masculine strategies for positive politeness. Male homosociality includes the not-specifically sexual bonding between men that may involve seeking, enjoyment of, or preference for the company of other men. Homosociality more generally explains how work environments become and remain gendered.<sup>28</sup> Relationships among people receive support from “positive politeness strategies” that for men include all manner of aggressive play. “Men can take turns insulting and swearing at each other and evidence verbal sparring that is friendly not quarrelsome.”<sup>29</sup> By contrast, feminine strategies for positive politeness function to foster the speech of others. Markers of subordinate status that elicit cooperation include tag questions such as “don’t you think?” and diminutives such as “tiny bit.” Furthermore, euphemisms can be required for women’s politeness in Euro-American cultures.<sup>30</sup> So, occupying masculine or feminine social roles opens up some and closes down other forms of discourse.

The culture of philosophical adversariality receives aid from male homosocial politeness and so cannot operate fully as an alternative to politeness norms that limit women’s authority in adversarial discourse. As Lynne Tirrell describes, there operates a “positional authority” that affects how others interpret a speaker. “The listener’s attribution of femaleness to the speaker will nullify her illocution or reshape the possible illocutions that her speech act might achieve.”<sup>31</sup> While the perceived-femaleness of a speaker may disqualify and shape interpretation in some ways specific to particular contexts, Tirrell argues that it pervades sufficiently to function as a master switch: “male and female speakers are often, in fact, engaged in variant language games, with variant rules, even when this is never made explicit.”<sup>32</sup> The “F-switch” can even trump the authority of expertise, which explains the phenomenon that has become known as “mansplaining,” when men in conversation deny and countermand women’s expertise.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, perceived-female philosophers do not get to operate in the same way as perceived-male philosophers. Women’s participation in adversarial discourse may not even be recognized as such. When women defy gendered standards of feminine, polite passivity, they initially tend to be viewed as merely *requesting* an active, authoritative role—especially in expert discourse.

Male homosociality excludes women, who must operate according to different rules. As Rebecca Kukla argues, what should, by the apparent standards, count as regular participation can count as unacceptably aggressive and rude.<sup>34</sup> “Giving good arguments, speaking with confidence, and otherwise behaving in ways that would count as ‘playing well’ if we were already recognized as playing can come

off as arrogant and off-putting.<sup>35</sup> Such discursive failures of agency that track and enhance social disadvantage, she suggests, amount to “discursive injustice.” A loss of control over our speech acts arises from the inability to mobilize social conventions, such as those of adversarial argumentation, and can result from norms of politeness that deny women—and other subordinates—polite adversarial roles while at the same time granting them to men. When women persist in participating, they receive criticism that men would not for being “brash,” “uppity,” or “demanding.” The effective entreaty for permission to speak undermines our full participation in adversarial argumentation.

### HAVE YOUR METHOD AND LIBERATE IT TOO

Feminism as an oppositional movement needs reasoning strategies for engaging opponents and others whom we want to persuade. The Adversary Method can support, rather than impede, liberatory philosophical projects, so long as we refuse its monopoly. Complementary alternatives already can be found in existing critical thinking textbooks, and appropriate instructional expertise is emerging among a new cohort of philosophers with expertise in critical thinking and argumentation. More of this scholarship can be found in Europe and Canada than in the United States, but a range of Canadian authors provide books suitable for U.S. instruction: Sharon Bailin, Mark Battersby, Trudy Govier, Leo Groarke, Christopher Tindale, and Douglas Walton. Using the innovative textbooks written by argumentation theorists and seeking instructors with real expertise in argumentation or critical thinking pedagogy may be the key to changing the exclusionary and marginalizing discourse of our discipline for the next generation. We can find resources for argumentation theory that are ripe for feminist application and transformation and that can counteract the existing exclusionary climate.

Current textbook presentations of the basics and complexities of argumentation are available from Govier and Walton; Tindale covers fallacies in a fashion that demands that students defend their interpretations.<sup>36</sup> An epistemological focus for “making reasoned judgments” comes from Bailin and Battersby.<sup>37</sup> Tindale, authoring with Groarke, provides a quite comprehensive text that extends to visual argumentation. Attention to diverse modes of argumentation may be especially important to today’s students operating in a culture dense with visual information, and for appreciating the impact of sexist, racist, and other oppressive imagery.

The forces of gendered politeness, male homosociality, and testimonial bias account for part of the dominance of the Adversary Method but perhaps remain too deep in the cultural background to be engaged directly as a whole. Yet philosophers can influence policies and procedures in their own departments and programs to affect the broad influence they have over the long term and the broad culture. Critical thinking pedagogy could transform the discipline, and allow others to recognize multiple forms of agonistic dialogue and attend more directly to the cooperative goals for philosophical argumentation.<sup>38</sup> Whether we teach critical thinking ourselves or hire people to teach it, we can insist it be done well.<sup>39</sup> The critical thinking pedagogy developed by scholars in the field tends to allow for argument repair and to teach the nuances of interpretation. Those skills allow students to resist the temptation to presume the Adversary

Method with its categorical dismissals and dogmatic representations. Students will have broader argumentative options as they become philosophers or trained in other fields. When they work and engage with other people outside the academy they also will influence those external cultures of argumentation.

The more general practice of default skepticism can be resisted directly by turning the practice of doubting towards ourselves, and taking more seriously the burden of proof we take on when we raise skeptical doubts. Sources for learning this responsibility can be found in feminist epistemology, as Rooney argues, but also in argumentation theory. No serious account of argumentation allows the raising of a question to count as sufficient to enforce a burden of proof on the person to whom the question is addressed; some sort of evidence is required.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the long-standing discourse on burden of proof, feminists may find resources in the discussions of dialectical obligation arising out of Ralph Johnson’s *Manifest Rationality*.<sup>41</sup>

Argumentation theory can also help us address the way that philosophers tend to dismiss the available evidence regarding marginalized perspectives. For instance, philosophers’ demand for more empirical data in the face of “merely anecdotal” evidence often functions as a stalling move pressing the burden of proof onto the marginalized perspective, as Rooney suggests.<sup>42</sup> Yet lack of evidence only provides reason to doubt if we have independent reason to expect such evidence to have been forthcoming. That analysis plays a central role in Douglas Walton’s account of the appeal to ignorance, the basic form of presumptive reasoning that underlies all fallacies of argumentation.<sup>43</sup>

Admittedly, argumentation theorists tend to have an idealized social ontology and to ignore oppression, as for instance when they assume politeness as a panacea for aggression and adversarial culture. They pay no attention to how the burden of proof may, in practice, shift according to the speaker’s social status and expertise in argumentation.<sup>44</sup> Yet the ideals it establishes can work in concert with feminist epistemology to realize the ideals, in just the way Mills suggests philosophical abstractions should operate.<sup>45</sup> Argumentation theory tends to be less idealized than many other forms of philosophy, both because of its interdisciplinary orientation and because of its philosophical ties to the pedagogy of critical thinking. Argumentation theorists tend not to assume idealized capacities, for instance, in attending to presumptive reasoning that falls into the sorts of error that have become characterized as fallacies. Nor do they always assume idealized social institutions, and their research provides for criticism of those institutions. Although informal logic still rarely engages questions of oppression and social marginalization, its commitment to real-world problems shows how it can be ripe for feminist and other liberatory interventions. These resources may be key to opening up philosophy from the inside for women and other socially marginalized participants, providing new ways to integrate feminist philosophy into the curriculum.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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who participated, as well as Charissa Varma and Margaret Crouch for input on drafts of this paper.

#### NOTES

1. Frye, *Politics of Reality*; Burrow, "Verbal Sparring"; Moulton, "Paradigm of Philosophy," 150.
2. Rooney, "Philosophy, Adversarial Argumentation, and Embattled Reason."
3. An overview of the history and current range of ways for conceiving critical thinking can be found in Maria Sanders and Jason Moultenbelt's "Defining Critical Thinking: How Far Have We Come?" *Inquiry: Critical Thinking across the Disciplines* 26, no. 1 (2011): 38–46. Analysis of the practical pedagogical controversies can be found in Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair's "Teaching the Dog's Breakfast," *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (2009).
4. Alcoff, "How Is Epistemology Political?"
5. Educators may still be frustrated by a retention problem, that students fail to extend their critical thinking skills beyond the classroom environment to the desired degree, but that may be the case with other skills too.
6. As in North America, people demand more critical thinking education and worry that students do not recognize its importance (Ben Morse, "Why Critical Thinking Is Overlooked by Schools and Shunned by Students," *The Guardian*, September 12, 2012, accessed July 3, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/2012/sep/12/critical-thinking-overlooked-in-secondary-education>).
7. Valerie Strauss, "Texas GOP Rejects 'Critical Thinking' Skills. Really," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 2012, accessed July 3, 2013. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/texas-gop-rejects-critical-thinking-skills-really/2012/07/08/gJQAHNpFXW\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/texas-gop-rejects-critical-thinking-skills-really/2012/07/08/gJQAHNpFXW_blog.html). In the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Peter Wood's alarm over critical thinking appeals to his perception of a "race-class-gender reductionism" at Bates College, dismissing out of hand the possibility that literary analysis could be a basis for critical thinking (<https://chronicle.com/blogs/innovations/some-critical-thoughts/31252>, January 6, 2013, accessed March 1, 2013).
8. One text that provides exercises with content that fulfills that common promise is Peg Tittle's *Critical Thinking: An Appeal to Reason* (New York: Routledge, 2011). I do not include this among the textbooks recommended at the end of this article only because Tittle's expertise derives more from education training than argumentation scholarship.
9. Moulton, "Paradigm of Philosophy," 151–53.
10. Pinto, *Argument, Inference and Dialectic*.
11. Alcoff, "How Is Epistemology Political?"
12. Notable exceptions to the focus on argumentation in critical thinking textbooks are the following: Robert C. Pinto, J. Anthony Blair, and Katherine E. Parr's *Reasoning: A Practical Guide for Canadian Students* (Prentice-Hall, 1993) and Tim Kenyon's *Clear Thinking in a Blurry World* (McGraw-Hill, 2007).
13. Hundleby, "Authority of the Fallacies Approach."
14. Moulton, "Paradigm of Philosophy," 153.
15. *Ibid.*, 155.
16. Alcoff, "Philosophy's Civil Wars."
17. Moulton, "Paradigm of Philosophy," 158.
18. *Ibid.*, 159–60.
19. Hundleby, "Authority of the Fallacies Approach."
20. Hitchcock, "Do Fallacies Have a Place"; Blair, "Teaching Informal Fallacies."
21. Rooney, "Philosophical Argumentation," 320.
22. *Ibid.*, 322, 325–27.
23. *Ibid.*, 330.
24. Hundleby, "Authority of the Fallacies Approach."
25. Govier, *Philosophy of Argument*; Moulton, "Paradigm of Philosophy," 150–51.
26. Mills, "Ideal Theory," 168.

27. Burrow, "Verbal Sparring"; Antony, "Empowerment and Entitlement."
28. Lipman-Blumen, "Homosexual Theory of Sex Roles."
29. Burrow, "Verbal Sparring," 247.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Tirrell, "Authority and Gender," 5.
32. *Ibid.*, 6.
33. Hundleby, "Aggression, Politeness, and Abstract Adversaries"; Solnit, "Men Who Explain Things."
34. Kukla, "Performative Force."
35. *Ibid.*, 11.
36. Govier, *Practical Study of Argument*; Walton, *Fundamentals of Critical Argumentation*; Tindale, *Fallacies and Argument Appraisal*.
37. Bailin and Battersby, *Reason in the Balance*.
38. Goi, "Agonism, Deliberation, and Abortion."
39. Graduate training in argumentation has become increasingly available in recent decades, and a demand for it would stimulate the supply, as students look for programs likely to lead to employment.
40. Walton, "Burden of Proof," 234.
41. Johnson, *Manifest Rationality*, 143–48.
42. Rooney, "Philosophical Argumentation."
43. Walton, *Arguments from Ignorance*; Walton, *Pragmatic Theory of Fallacy*.
44. Hundleby, "Aggression, Politeness, and Abstract Adversaries."
45. Mills, "Ideal Theory," 181.

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## Aesthetics: Feminism's Hidden Impact

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By now feminist scholarship has accumulated a forty-year history. It is clearly a recognized subfield of philosophy, as yearly job postings for faculty with that specialty indicate. I think it safe to say that it is a generally tolerated and often even respected area of study. But the question remains, have feminist perspectives actually had an impact on the field, such that current research shows influence from its critiques, proposals, and revisions? From the start, feminists challenged some fundamental presumptions of philosophy, being among the first critics to observe that the discipline, previously presumed to be "universal," needed some prompting to recognize its own blinders, not only with regard to gender but also to racial and national categories, body types, unorthodox desires, and other "markers" of identity that problematize the notion of general human nature. Perhaps enough time has passed now to ask: Have feminist critiques and revisions really affected the field as a whole, as they first promised to do? Or have they dwindled after a brief flame, leaving standard ways of thinking more or less intact? How should one assess current scholarship in order to answer these questions?

When I began to draft this essay with the specific target of the field of aesthetics in mind, I was inclined to point out the ways in which feminist scholarship remains isolated and relatively overlooked by the "center" of the discipline. However, as I thought through the question more thoroughly, I found that

this half-empty glass began to fill. For on reflection, I do think that feminism has had a significant influence in aesthetics, as it has in philosophy generally. But this influence can be difficult to see because much of the supporting evidence has lost its feminist label. I offer here some tentative suggestions as to how and where we can locate a legacy of feminism in current philosophy, particularly in philosophy of art and aesthetics.

First, a point of comparison, a base line if you will. Almost three decades ago I attempted, along with four colleagues, to assess the impact of feminist scholarly perspectives on five disciplines: history, anthropology, education, literature, and philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

The result was a book that attempted to find some common measures by which we could gauge the relative inroads of this brand of politically informed scholarship in our various fields. At that time, philosophy already had a fairly vigorous set of feminist voices, chiefly in philosophy of science, political theory, and ethics; epistemology was rapidly gaining ground. Some of this work appeared in anthologies and in publications devoted to feminist scholarship, and a bit appeared in major journals such as *Ethics*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, and *Philosophical Forum*. Rather perplexingly, aesthetics was almost entirely absent from view. Despite the fact that related fields such as literary studies and art history had developed noteworthy feminist perspectives that were being widely read, philosophical aesthetics lagged behind in publishing on parallel subjects. In fact, in this early study, "aesthetics" does not even appear in the index. That lag was to continue for the next fifteen years, as a later remark from 1995 indicates: "In light of twenty-five years of rich and stimulating feminist thought on the arts—feminist challenges applicable to the foundations of philosophical aesthetics—we ask, 'Why, in the 1990s, are feminist writings still rare?'"<sup>2</sup>

This quote comes from an anthology that grew out of a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* that Peg Brand and I co-edited, inviting submissions on the subject of "Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics." The topic generated a lot of interest, and we hoped that it would serve to stimulate more work in the field. But it did not. This particular journal keeps a running record of submissions by topic, and since then it has received only a handful of papers that are feminist in orientation. What is more, shortly beforehand Hilde Hein and I had co-edited a special issue on feminism and aesthetics for *Hypatia*; and thirteen years later Peg Brand and Mary Devereaux co-edited another.<sup>3</sup> Both these issues received a healthy number of submissions. But *Hypatia*, though devoted to feminist philosophy, publishes relatively little in aesthetics, and I presume receives proportionately few submissions. Few, of course, does not mean none, and to be sure one does find some work in aesthetics and philosophy of art in that journal, just as one finds some feminist work in the generalist publications in aesthetics. But I think it fair to say that none of these special issues opened floodgates or even primed pumps. If increased submissions on relevant topics in scholarly journals is the measure for feminist influence in aesthetics, there has not been a lot. Of course, a focus on generalist journals presents far from a complete picture; it is, in fact, a fairly conservative way to measure impact.

Now we are into a new century, and things do finally look a bit different. Out of curiosity, I recently conducted a rough and ready survey of the coverage contained in ten books that were at hand on my shelves, using similar benchmarks as we had done in the early project mentioned above. I chose books published since 2003 that present the field as a whole, a mix of monographs and anthologies that are suitable for undergraduate teaching. I turned to them with low expectations, and half of them confirmed my pessimism, for they had no entries related to feminism, to gender, or to subjects such as race or social diversity in the tables of contents. But half of them did, and seven had index entries, some of them indicating fairly substantial discussions listed under “feminism” or “gender.” Those with the most extensive treatments of these subjects also included entries under race, though I found fewer of these; and attention to gay issues in aesthetics still is relatively rare in overall presentations of the field.<sup>4</sup> Most important from my little instant survey (unscientific but I think not irrelevant), the most recent publications usually integrate discussions of sex, gender, race, social position, and so forth into the context of other discussion.<sup>5</sup> Thus these complex matters are recognized by their very placement to be pertinent to a general cultural understanding.

Looking beyond publications that are designed to present the overall field (the books one often uses for teaching), one finds a good deal of recent work that opens directions of inquiry that are new and innovative for aesthetics. This work also indicates the changes that perspectives loosely clustered under the label “feminist” have undergone. And in fact, it now becomes more difficult to be confident about the influence of feminism. It is surely present, but partnered with many other innovative ways of thinking as well, such that distinguishing the part that feminism exclusively contributes is impossible.

From its inception, feminist scholarship shifted interest from the public worlds (traditionally “masculine”) to consideration of so-called private lives, including domestic life and quotidian experience. A similar direction of attention describes the relatively new area dubbed “everyday aesthetics.” Like feminism, everyday aesthetics presents a fundamental challenge to the conceptual distinctions that characterize much traditional thinking. For example, the standard perspective in the field, perhaps on the wane but still notable, places the concept of art—often with fine art as the paradigm—at the central point from which the concept of the aesthetic is best formulated. This approach, explicitly or implicitly, tends to separate the worlds of art (where detached aesthetic sensibility may freely range) from ordinary life, a life filled with work, family, household, cooking, eating, and domestic details. Theorists of the “everyday” not only examine the aesthetic elements of such quotidian phenomena, but in so doing they question the very frameworks that sustain the art-centered tradition.<sup>6</sup> Since so many elements of everyday life are domestic (traditionally “feminine” space), focus on the everyday must foreground hitherto neglected aesthetic characteristics: neat/messy; clean/dirty; singular/routine; pristine/ disgusting; and so forth. In short, everyday aesthetics shifts attention away from contexts that are special and isolated from ordinary life, as concepts of fine art sometimes mandate, and directs it to the real circumstances in which one lives.

Obviously, attention to everyday life is not exclusively feminist, but it is unequivocally supportive of feminist explorations, that is to say, of investigation into the aspects of daily life that are neglected by traditional concepts of art and appreciation. In turn, this direction of interest has opened the way for ruminations on such subjects as the aesthetic elements of motherhood in all its many facets—a topic that has bloomed in philosophy under the aegis of feminism.<sup>7</sup> Birth, child rearing, nurturing, managing—all domestic and parental tasks—are not the first subjects one thinks of that bear aesthetic value. Yet in fact all do, and the literature on motherhood and parenthood generally represents a zone where perspectives on aesthetics, ethics, and social theory converge.

Another region impacted by feminism concerns the heightened philosophical awareness of physical bodies—both as objects of aesthetic attention and as providers of appreciative response. Philosophical turn to “the body” is evident in lots of areas, and it doubtless also has multiple sources, including studies in psychology and cognitive science. In aesthetics, at least two issues are illuminated by considerations of bodies: aesthetic norms of physical appearance, and physiological aspects of aesthetic appreciation.

Obviously, beauty has always been a big topic for aesthetics. For most of philosophical history, however, the idea of beauty investigated was of an abstract sort—form, composition, harmony, or just the back-stopping *je ne sais quoi*. While the aesthetic qualities of bodies were not overlooked, the subject was often considered less philosophically significant than beauties of music, art, or poetry. Think of Diotima’s advice from the *Symposium*, where physical attraction is the first rung of the ladder on which one ascends to the Form of Beauty itself, leaving erotic attachment further and further behind. Although few philosophers followed Plato’s full theory, it is still the case that in modern aesthetic theory, the beauties of human bodies are regarded as appealing to physical appetites rather than to purer aesthetic sensibilities. Recent work in aesthetics, however, investigates bodies and their appearances, substantially expanding philosophical treatments into areas that have not hitherto had much play in the field.<sup>8</sup> Attention to “the body” has indisputable roots in feminist thinking, though this is by no means its only source. Of equal weight are examinations of the racial overtones of early aesthetic theory, not to mention other critiques of the aesthetic norms promulgated by culture at large.<sup>9</sup>

The body provides not only objects of aesthetic attention (i.e., other bodies) but also modes of aesthetic apprehension by way of the physiological changes that signal appreciation or understanding of art. The chief examples of this would be found in emotional responses, where mind and body interconnect in various and intriguing ways. (Emotions represent an area where, in my view, feminism has had a great deal of unrecognized influence that stems from its fundamental critiques of the emphasis on rationality that characterizes so much Western philosophy.) Here aesthetics has significant parallels with other fields, such as ethics and philosophy of mind, for all have newly vigorous analyses of emotions and their roles in grasping the value qualities of objects and events. In art, emotions are now recognized as indispensable to register the valence of plot, design,

harmony, pace, narrative. As a result, somatic, emotional, and even sexual responses are no longer screened away from pure “aesthetic experience.”

Consideration of bodily reactions as aesthetic responses has brought about some interesting reconsideration of earlier feminist thinking. “Gender” used to be the common focus of earlier scholarship, leaving “sex” behind as biologically more intractable than social gender norms that prescribe conduct. But now erotic responses are more widely recognized as forms of apprehension and appreciation of certain artworks. While traditional theory maintains that true appreciation is free from physical gratification, the undeniable erotic appeal of certain artworks founders on this ideal. This observation first spurred a fairly widespread rejection among feminists of one of the staple concepts of aesthetics: the idea that aesthetic appreciation is “disinterested,” that is, free from personal interest, including the satisfaction of appetites. Many still hold this view, though others now argue that precisely because of art’s occasionally erotic sway it is a mistake for feminists to abandon the contentious notion of “disinterested” aesthetic attention, along with the ideals of normativity of judgment that it fosters.<sup>10</sup> This is by no means a settled issue, and I anticipate that with more and more work being done on topics that include eroticism and pornography there will be renewed debate over concepts involving objectivity of appreciation and disinterested assessment.

Only some of the work mentioned in the latter paragraphs is overtly feminist. In many respects, feminist perspectives have been widely absorbed and in the process have become labeled something else. I suspect that feminism in general has had an impact on philosophy at large that is seldom explicitly recognized as such, insofar as it has prompted the field to consider topics that previously were only scantily recognized for their philosophical interest. I certainly do not want to claim that feminism was the *only* contributor to such shifts of interest. Both other social movements and other philosophical revisions are important factors. Yet I continue to be struck by an insight articulated by Susan Bordo in her Afterword to Janet Kourany’s edited collection, *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*. While feminists have made enormous contributions to the understanding of culture, she observed, their work is frequently read as pertaining mainly to gender and related issues. It is theorists such as Foucault and Derrida who are given major credit for understanding social power and postmodernism, often to such a degree that feminists themselves credit these thinkers for ideas that in fact had an independent origin in feminism itself.<sup>11</sup> I think this is exactly right, and the minute I read it I realized that was precisely what I myself had done in my own contribution to that volume. Alas, the book was already in print, and it was too late to eat these words:

The roots of feminist theories of pleasure are eclectic. From Foucault comes an understanding of pleasures as occupying a site where power relations take their initial form. From deconstruction comes the suspicion that the meanings of cultural products reside as much in what is absent from a text or artifact as in what is apparent.<sup>12</sup>

Well, it does help to have Foucault and others as allies, but that is emphatically NOT where “we” got the idea about the absorption of pleasure and the distribution of power, because that was a direct insight of the politics of early second-wave feminism, summed up in the old mantra, “the personal is political.” One second of reflection made me realize this—to recollect it in fact—and I was sharply irritated with myself for falling into the habit of needing some kind of external validation outside of feminist theory to lean on. I mention this incident because I believe that it is all too easy to sell short the impact that ideas from feminism have had on culture generally, including the various philosophical perspectives that ensue from feminist theoretical reflections when they are seen as part of a stream of changes that occur within a field.<sup>13</sup>

Another factor that enters into the apparent disappearance of a feminist imprint in aesthetics might be that there is no particular label to mark our work. I think of a contrast with ethics, where an “ethics of care,” for all its controversies, continues to carry the history of a feminist origin. But many people who early wrote in aesthetics resisted the label “feminist aesthetics,” and for good reason. Although the term can be used to refer to aesthetic theory conducted from a perspective informed by feminist ideas, it also carries a risky ambiguity, since it could imply a specifically feminist or even feminine style, a way of doing art (and so forth) that few scholars were comfortable endorsing.<sup>14</sup> From the start, many feminists writing in aesthetics insisted that any label that suggested unity or even much commonality that would describe female artistic creativity would be false, distorting as it does the demonstrable heterogeneity among women. A consequence of this perfectly reasonable caution may have been that feminist perspectives were introduced into aesthetics in a somewhat piecemeal way—some on the nature of appreciation (the gaze, disinterestedness), some on creativity (critiques of genius), some on the nature of art (expansion of field to include domestic crafts), and so forth. All of those critical perspectives, which joined like-minded arguments from theories of globalism and race, have been quite successful at opening the field. In the process they have often lost the designation “feminist.”

Does it matter if the ideas that feminism engendered no longer carry that label? In some ways it does not, for such insights enhance our understanding of culture in general. But it would be an unfortunate misunderstanding of the legacy of feminism if we were to lose sight of this fruitful source of philosophical change.<sup>15</sup>

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**NOTES**

1. Ellen Carol DuBois, Gail Paradise Kelly, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, Carolyn Korsmeyer, Lillian S. Robinson, *Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).
2. Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer, eds. “Introduction,” *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics* (State College PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 2. This volume began as a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 4 (1990).
3. “Feminism and Aesthetics,” ed. Hilde Hein and Carolyn Korsmeyer, special issue, *Hypatia* 5, no. 2 (1990); “Women, Art, and Aesthetics,” ed. Peg Brand and Mary Devereaux, special issue, *Hypatia* 18, no. 4 (2003).

4. For an interesting argument that a gay aesthetic influences modernist sensibilities in art history, see Whitney Davis, "Queer Beauty: Winckelmann and Kant on the Vicissitudes of the Ideal," in *Beauty Unlimited*, ed. Peg Zeglin Brand (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013): 96–125.
5. For example, Theodore Gracyk, *The Philosophy of Art* (Polity Press, 2012).
6. Some examples of everyday aesthetics include Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Saito's work is also informed by Japanese aesthetic traditions. See also Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Broadview, 2012); Sherri Irvin, "Aesthetics of the Everyday," *The Blackwell Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Stephen Davies, Kathleen Higgins, Robert Hopkins, and Robert Stecker (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 136–39.
7. Sheila Lintott and Maureen Sander-Staudt, eds., *Philosophical Inquiries into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering: Maternal Subjects* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Sheila Lintott, ed., *Motherhood-Philosophy for Everyone: The Birth of Wisdom* (Blackwell, 2011).
8. See the two volumes edited by Peg Zeglin Brand, *Beauty Matters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) and *Beauty Unlimited* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). The authors in these volumes represent numerous disciplines and global perspectives.
9. Monique Roelofs, ed. "Aesthetics and Race: New Philosophical Perspectives," *Contemporary Aesthetics* Special Vol. 2 (2009), <http://www.contempaesthetics.org>. See also Roelofs, "Race and Aesthetics," *The Blackwell Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Stephen Davies, Kathleen Higgins, Robert Hopkins, and Robert Stecker (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 489–92.
10. Anne Eaton argues that in fact it is sex and erotic appeal that need analysis for the power that they wield in art forms of various kinds. She claims that art eroticizes gender hierarchies, thus molding preferences and desire and making sexuality and its forces ineluctable features of the appreciation of certain works of art. A. W. Eaton, "Feminist Philosophy of Art," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 5 (September 2008): 873–93.
11. Susan Bordo, "The Feminist as Other," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*, ed. Janet Kourany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 296–312.
12. Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Perceptions, Pleasures, Arts: Considering Aesthetics," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*, ed. Janet Kourany (Princeton University Press, 1997), 161.
13. Ewa Ziarek develops some parallel points in her study of the pivotal influence of women writers in the development of modernism. See *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
14. See, e.g., Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
15. For a fuller bibliography of feminist writings in aesthetics, see "Feminist Aesthetics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.plato.stanford.edu>.

metaphysics gets practiced? In changes in subject matter? Are these always easily distinguished?

I won't simply speak to the actual effect feminist philosophy has had on metaphysics, but also to the potential effects; why metaphysics needs feminist philosophy, and why feminists need metaphysics. I'm going to be speaking about analytic philosophy written in English and I will be somewhat America-focused, since that is where I live and work most of the year these days. I will be a bit speculative at times. This is especially true when it comes to certain claims about the sociology of the discipline. After all, this is the beginning of a conversation.

### LET'S THINK ABOUT CONTENT FIRST

Feminist philosophy has so far had little influence on what gets addressed under the label "metaphysics." I think this is for broadly two reasons.

The first is that conceptions of what constitutes metaphysics that have been prevalent among feminists and nonfeminists alike until quite recently have meant that a lot of work which to my mind is properly classified as metaphysics gets done under other headings.

Secondly, but relatedly, metaphysics as a subdiscipline of philosophy was a discipline *non grata* for a good part of the twentieth century. The title of this paper speaks to the fact that, for a good deal of the twentieth century, "metaphysics" was a dirty word for feminists and nonfeminists alike. To say to a philosopher, "you are doing metaphysics," was almost as bad as accusing her or him of being irrational, or into the other kind of metaphysics, the occult.

During this time, metaphysics was kept alive in the Catholic schools. Now metaphysics has come back with a vengeance, but some of its practitioners seem to be in a deeper conversation with Scotus and Aquinas than with contemporary thinkers.

It is time to talk about what I think metaphysics is, so that I can flesh out what I have said so far. This will be very rough, but will nevertheless rule out some conceptions of metaphysics, and this will be useful as we think about feminists' and nonfeminists' relationship to metaphysics and about the history of the practice of metaphysics in the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

### CONCEPTION OF METAPHYSICS

I like to think of metaphysics, generally speaking, as the study of what there is and what it is like—the study of existence and the nature of that which exists. So understood, ontology is a subfield of metaphysics concerned with existence, but there is a fair amount of unclarity in the use of "ontology" around, and sometimes it seems to be used synonymously with "metaphysics."

### WHAT THERE IS

The "what there is" side of metaphysics has a special name—"ontology." "Ontology," in this sense, is a discipline of study: the study of what there is, what exists. Linked to that usage of "ontology" is the ontology of a person or theory. This is a set that contains everything that a person believes exists or is

## Who's Afraid of Feminist Metaphysics?\*

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### INTRODUCTION

The theme of this issue of the APA newsletter is the status of feminism in philosophy. I am going to speak to this theme as it pertains to feminism and metaphysics. You might expect my paper to be exceedingly short. After all, how long does it take to say "feminism has had little impact on metaphysics"? But things are actually a little more complicated than that. And they are complicated because our seemingly simple question is quite complicated. Are we interested in how

posited by the theory in question. There are views on how to make sense of differences in ontology in this sense, that of Quine being perhaps the best known.<sup>1</sup> According to Quine, you translate all your beliefs into logical form, containing only predicates, variables, and quantifiers. Then you see what the positive existential quantifiers have to range over in order for all your beliefs to be true. The set of those values is your ontology. You and I may differ in our ontologies. I may allow for elves, you for UFOs. Such a difference is of the same order: elves and UFOs, if they exist, are first-order objects. But our ontologies may differ in other ways. You may believe in virtues and vices, those mysterious second-order objects. I may like lounging in the desert with Quine.

But difference in existential commitment is not exhausted by the difference in membership of the sets of things we believe in. Here we may want to part company with Quine and say that it is also captured by the stance we have towards that set. Or, if we switch to talking about theories, we can distinguish among different stances we may take towards a theory. For our interest in adopting a theory need not be the stereotypical realist interest in finding a theory that maps truly or correctly onto an already individuated independent reality. In particular, we may be interested in the practical upshot of adopting a certain theory, with certain ontological commitments. If we adopt a theory that posits quarks, what can we explain, what predict?

So, we have to attend to what is posited by a theory, what an individual person's ontology is, but also to the stance towards the theory and the degree of commitment on the part of the person. To put the matter slightly differently: beliefs, existential or not, aren't on or off, but come in degrees. This brings out that the ontology of a person or theory is partly characterized by the epistemic commitments of the person or theorist.

### **WHAT IT IS LIKE**

Now I come to the other side of metaphysics. It is a more heterogeneous sub-subfield. I said that on this side was the study of what the existing thing is like. That locution is vague enough to encompass both questions such as, "what is causation?," "what is knowledge?," and "what is justice?" and questions such as, "what kind of thing is a number?" The traditional "what is X?" or "what is the nature of X?," for any X, is a metaphysical question, and all philosophers, no matter their subdiscipline, are intimate friends with it. A subset of those questions is such that no other philosophers except metaphysicians are interested in them, but that is a smaller set than you might think.

When we ask the other question, "what kind of thing is a number?," we are not primarily concerned with existence, but what that thing is like. You and I may both allow elves into our ontologies, and both may harbor the same high degree of commitment to them, but I may think elves are on a par with humans and cats; you may think that crazy, that elves are reified projections of human fears, dreams, and aspirations; or intentional entities posited to make sense of the happenings of everyday life. Similarly, we may both allow the number 6 (and other numbers for that matter) into our ontologies, but I think that they are hobnobbing in the third realm with other Fregean abstract objects; you, that they are constructions of the human mind. And perhaps closer to

the feminist heart, many of us will allow that there are such categories as gender and sex, but differ in our opinions of their status. Are they natural or social? If social, how created and sustained? Dependent on what, exactly? Are they value-laden, and if so, how? It is precisely when we ask about the nature of something that the question whether it is value laden can come up, and in particular, the question whether it is gendered in some way.

Now, after these broad strokes, we can talk about the metaphysics that a certain theory or theorist has. This would not be necessarily something the theorist had explicitly addressed or carved out, but the metaphysical assumptions that were made (both concerning what there is and what it is like). Understood in this way, every theorist has a metaphysics, even Hume, for he makes assumptions about the kinds of things that can be an object of knowledge and about what we directly perceive that underwrite the view that unfolds.

### **RESISTANCE TO METAPHYSICS**

In our critical engagement with the canon of Western philosophy, feminist philosophers have addressed topics such as the self, sex and sexuality, mind and body, nature, essence, identity, objectification, and social construction, among many others. Most of this work has not been done under the heading "metaphysics," even though it clearly is, if you accept my characterization of metaphysics above. But feminists themselves have been reluctant to use that label, and I've come across a certain amount of suspicion of metaphysics in feminist circles.

I think there are some historical, as well as methodological, reasons for this. I take it that the historical reasons have to do with the philosophical climate around metaphysics when most senior feminists came of age, as well as the conception of metaphysics prevalent at the time. I have in mind here both commitments to empiricism (and perhaps to a verificationist theory of meaning) on the one hand, and post-Kantian qualms about theorizing in absence of a critical stance to the theorizer on the other.

Then there is the way metaphysics came back. It did so largely through semantics (Kripke, Lewis, et al.), and empiricism and the verification theory of meaning were direct targets in that development. And as I said earlier, a certain way of doing metaphysics had been kept alive in the Catholic schools where there was a continued conversation with medieval scholars. This is, however, often done as if Hume and Kant (not to mention Hegel and Marx) had never existed. It is very understandable that feminists be wary of metaphysics done in that way, since a central feminist methodological commitment is to attend to the situatedness of our knowledge gathering and our theorizing, and such concerns are ignored by most of those whose conversations are directly linked to medieval metaphysics.

Conversely, I think that many metaphysicians have ignored feminist philosophy, not only because of the stigma that the feminine always seems to bring, but also because the chief concerns of many of those thinkers have tended to be different and decidedly pre-Humean. For feminist philosophy to have more influence on the rest of metaphysics means a shift in methodological commitments

for metaphysicians, where the situatedness of our theorizing is fully acknowledged. This kind of shift is not only needed for us as feminists, but as metaphysicians generally. There is thus much that metaphysicians can learn from feminists that would yield better metaphysics.

### DO FEMINISTS NEED METAPHYSICS?

As I said above, many of us are already doing metaphysics. A rose by any other name . . . There certainly are feminist projects where it seems perfectly fine and intellectually responsible to ignore metaphysics altogether. But there are many projects where the aim is precisely to show how value-laden a certain phenomenon is, where it has been thought, or claimed to be value neutral, or where the value in question has been thought to not be gendered in any way. I have in mind here not only claims that something is socially constructed, but also that certain standards, methods, and procedures privilege men or masculinity. Often these claims are themselves metaphysical claims; they concern the nature of these phenomena. Making these claims rests on a metaphysical framework. What is it exactly to say that a category is socially constructed? How exactly is that kind of claim supported by a theoretical framework? And when we ask for such a framework, we ask for a metaphysics. But we don't all have to do metaphysics. To have a metaphysics underlying one's project is not the same as offering a metaphysics. There is division of labor among philosophers and other theorists. But I think that people who do metaphysics have something to offer other feminists. Not that other feminists need adopt wholeheartedly one's favorite metaphysical framework, but some of what is on offer can be useful, and some is downright necessary. But as I hope is clear from above, various possible stances towards the underlying metaphysics can be taken.

### THE PRACTICE OF METAPHYSICS

I have mostly talked about the content of metaphysics. Let me now say something about the question whether feminist philosophy has changed the way metaphysics is practiced, for I think it has, even if indirectly. Among the women who are in graduate school, and recent Ph.D.s, there are now more women in metaphysics, and although most of them are not doing feminist work, there seems to be a change of culture in metaphysics circles. A number of these younger scholars, both men and women, expect there to be women among speakers at conferences and are attentive to both conversational dynamics and to external constraints that play a role in whether speakers can participate in conferences, such as the availability of child care, wheelchair access, and so on. These changes in the culture, even at a minuscule level, are important and they are indirect consequences of work in feminist theory of the last forty years. Feminist theory is not alone here, of course, as theorists of race oppression and other forms of oppression such as disability and sexuality play a large role in this development as well. We are natural allies and many of us work actively on many fronts.

I want to conclude on a more sobering note, and a more general one. I mentioned the stigma of the feminine—that as soon as something gets to be associated with women or femininity, its status diminishes. We see this at work in the wage gap, in the feminization of certain professions, in the relative prestige that subdisciplines of philosophy enjoy. Even when the conference at which this paper was

originally delivered and which had the theme “Has Feminist Philosophy Changed Philosophy?” was announced in the Icelandic newspapers, the headline was “Conference on Women’s Philosophy,” as if there was a special thing called “Women’s Philosophy” just like there would be a special thing called “Women’s Poetry” or “Women’s Art.” But feminist philosophy is not just for women. It is for all of us. Many of the changes that have occurred already in philosophy have done so despite this stigma. Not all, but many. But trying to show that something doesn’t deserve the stigma that is associated with it is never going to be enough. Feminist philosophers know this and it is palpable in much feminist philosophy and in other feminist writing and activism. And many feminist politicians know this too. Since we are taking examples from Iceland, it is worth mentioning that the Women’s Alliance was a feminist political party that had seats in the Icelandic parliament from 1983 to 1995, and later merged with the center-left Alliance in Iceland. The theorists of the party were very influenced by American cultural feminism and unabashedly embraced “soft issues” onto their political platform. They embraced and held high the soft feminine, and, yes, stigmatized, values, instead of distancing themselves from them like earlier feminist politicians had done.

Now, I am not advocating going back to cultural feminism or to what gets called “essentialism.” But, most of the time, my experience in the discipline of philosophy reflects a discipline that hasn’t been through that moment and where difference still has to be hidden, not celebrated. Real change requires that the stigmatized be embraced, with its stigma, not despite it. And that change is hard and that change is slow.

\*This paper originated as a talk at the conference of the Nordic Network for Women in Philosophy (Has Feminist Philosophy Changed Philosophy?) at the University of Iceland/EDDA in September 2012. The conference was organized by Sigríður Þorgeirsdóttir, Eyja Margrét Brynjarsdóttir, Salvör Nordal, and Ásta Kristjana Sveinsdóttir.

#### NOTE

1. W. V. O. Quine, “On What There Is,” *Review of Metaphysics* 2 (1948): 21–38.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Plato’s Dialectic on Woman: Equal, Therefore Inferior*

Elena Duvergès Blair (New York: Routledge, 2012). 250 pages. \$125. ISBN 978-0-415-52691-3.

Reviewed by Dana Rognlie

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Here is a book that provides a comprehensive analysis of Plato’s philosophy of woman. Elena Duvergès Blair provides a scholarly account conversant with, and exceeding, current and past scholarly literature, as by the author’s own claim, despite feminist resurgence of interest in the topic, “no comprehensive work identifying [Plato’s] position on the subject has yet appeared” (ix). Advanced scholars of Plato and feminist philosophers alike (though the two are certainly not mutually exclusive!) will find Blair’s work a valuable

resource. However, her book may well prove inaccessible for beginning scholars, such as undergraduates, given that much of her argument relies on advanced knowledge of Plato's works and the secondary literature on them, as well as familiarity with Attic Greek. The merit of *Plato's Dialectic on Woman: Equal, Therefore Inferior* is that it attempts a coherent and objective discussion of the issue of woman within Plato's philosophy, taking into account his entire oeuvre. Many contemporary feminist philosophers, however, may find the suggested positive project offered at the end of the book metaphysically suspect.

The structure of the book is a bit over-divided, as it has three parts with varying numbers of sub-chapters, as well as three introductory sections that do significant work. So really, there are four parts to the book. The introductory part is composed of a preface, introduction, and prologue: the preface provides a typical overview, the introduction discusses the literature claiming that Plato contradicts himself when discussing woman, and the prologue establishes the methodical rule for the book. That method is to distinguish between where woman is treated as such and when she is utilized analogically, metaphorically, or in similes to clarify a point. In an attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff, if you will, Blair seeks to isolate those texts of Plato where his philosophy of woman is explicitly developed from where she is invoked for the sake of a different argument. The first of the three articulated parts of the book does this work by identifying and discussing those texts where woman only appears dramatically or rhetorically to illustrate a point. The second part, composed of six chapters, is where the bulk and strength of Blair's argument lies. In the final section, Blair attempts to make her discussion of Plato relevant to contemporary feminist concerns, and though this may well be the weakest part of her book, it does not much hinder the scholarship of the second section.

Even those who disagree with Blair's well-defended method of separating rhetorical from the philosophical and dialectical discussions of woman will find resources in the first section comprehensively discussing the rhetorical usage. Though the rhetorical usage might indicate the ancient cultural opinion on women, Blair believes Plato's view of woman is radically distinct from these concepts. So the work that is really done in the first section is to clear the way for a discussion of *Meno*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws* where woman is treated as such.

The thesis of the second section, and indeed of the book as a whole, is that Plato thought the souls of men and women to be equal, but that, with Plato's theory of reincarnation, women had bodies morally inferior to men, though they might be reborn in the next life as a man. She argues for this by first discussing Plato's debt to the historical Socrates on the point of woman, namely, that Socrates believed that human excellence both intellectual and moral was shared in common between the sexes. Plato, on the other hand, believed that it might be possible for both sexes to be equally virtuous at some point in their lives, but that their capacity for virtue was different. That is, women are born into morally inferior bodies—their starting point is of moral inferiority, but they might eventually attain virtue equal to men (especially men of diminished virtue) within their lifetimes. A brief discussion of Aristophanes' creation myth

in *Symposium* follows this discussion, but the real argument begins with Blair's discussion of the *Republic*.

Blair responds to criticism that Plato's discussion of woman in Book 5 of the *Republic* is inconsistent and out of place. She does this by examining the (dis)similarity of structure between the city and the soul, ultimately discussing three significant differences, or "three waves," between the two. Even though she relies on these three waves early in the book, the full explanation does not come until late in chapter four. Nevertheless, they are as follows: (1) an individual soul belongs to one sex, whereas the city has two sexes within it; (2) the aggressive aspect of the soul is dedicated to the good of the whole individual, whereas the aggressive aspect of the Guardians may be diverted away from the good of the whole city, and towards the Guardians' individual families; and (3) an individual soul is (or ought to be) governed by reason, whereas in the city, "practical" non-theoretical persons are often thought to be more competent at governing (78). It is Blair's claim that Plato must resolve these tensions before his argument can proceed in Books 2-9. So Plato, or Socrates, must prove that the status quo ancient State is a perversion, and that "a really natural State would (1) not have separate roles for women, nor (2) contain nuclear families, nor (3) be governed by anyone other than a philosopher" (79). It is the first and second waves of difficulty that are most relevant to the topic of discovering Plato's philosophy of woman, and so that is where Blair focuses her attention.

It is in the fifth chapter of the second section that Blair seeks to resolve the first wave of difficulty—that an individual soul has one sex, whereas the city has two. She does this by looking to Socrates's question of whether female human nature is capable of sharing all or even some of the tasks of the male sex, or perhaps some but not other women are capable of sharing such tasks (96, see *Republic* 453a). Blair first emphasizes that when Plato discusses nature, he is discussing a person's *individual* nature rather than the nature of a genus. So, even if woman is an inferior class, it might be possible that individual women would be capable of civic duties. She proceeds to examine the argument in great depth, ultimately concluding that Plato conceives of the soul as asexual and the base of human equality, though its virtue is determined by the stages of "its mythical pilgrimage from body to body, until it frees itself definitively from all bodily life" (120). So women are equal to men in kind in that the soul is not sexed, but their bodies differ qualitatively—women are born morally inferior to men. This is confirmed in the sixth chapter when Blair looks to the metaphysics and myths in *Timaeus*.

In the final chapter of the second section, chapter 7, Blair looks to *Laws* to address especially the claimed inconsistency between that text and *Republic* on woman and the family. She finds continuity, though shifts in focus, between *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws* and says that *Laws* marks "a magnificent display of [Plato's] capacity for developing, over a lifetime, a coherent and noncontradictory conception" (175). And that final conception, efficiently summarized in the second chapter of the third subsection, is as follows: The soul is asexual, so there is no essential difference between the souls of men and women. The bodies of women, however, mark an inferior position in the steps of reincarnation, and their souls are thus inferior to men in virtue alone, but this can be

overcome. Their bodies differ from men qualitatively only in that they are weaker, as judged from the male standard, and have a pro-creative function. This, however, does not apply to the soul. That women's bodies mark a position in the cycle of reincarnation that is morally inferior to men does not mean that all individual women are inferior—for there might be a woman who is bettering her position in the reincarnation cycle and a man who is worsening his own position. So she might be better qualified for civil service than a particular man. That women are inferior though capable of overcoming their position is all the more reason why the contemporary ancient sequestering of Athenian women is problematic and is a diversion from nature (198-199). The *Laws*, though retaining nuclear marriage, seeks to fully incorporate women into civic life, overcoming issues of the second wave of difficulty—the difference between *Republic* and *Laws* being primarily the difference between an abstract theoretical discussion and a more concrete discussion (166).

Blair's work in the second section is an enormous resource to ancient and feminist scholars alike, as it clears much of the brush developed over the course of the history of philosophy on this issue. Blair provides extensive footnotes and citations throughout her argument, and ends each chapter with thoughtful consideration of previously made arguments in the secondary literature. Even those who may disagree with Blair's scholarship will find a useful review of the literature to gain a foothold in the discussion. Feminists, especially, will find here a coherent articulation of Plato that makes clear that his metaphysics assumes a male standard, making critiques in the vein of Luce Irigaray all the more salient.

But herein lies the problem of Blair's feminism for the twenty-first century. The influence of Luce Irigaray is clear and explicit in the last section of the book (201). Those who find Irigaray's metaphysics problematic will only be disappointed in Blair's suggestion that feminists should look to Aristotle so as to better articulate "principles for a metaphysics of woman" (205). Blair takes issue with Plato's dualism between the asexual soul and the sexed body in the way familiar to most feminists. The soul is not actually asexual, but rather accords to a male standard. Her proposed solution to overcoming this dualism is to conceive "the being of woman metaphysically as a unified whole of mind and body" (204). René Descartes offered a similar solution to Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia in their correspondence, but conceiving of a unity of two parts is still dualistic. Blair here ignores the ample critiques both of dualism as well as Aristotelian metaphysics provided by existential-phenomenologists, particularly Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir. Moreover, her discussion seems oblivious to the debates that continue to rage, for example, between Irigarayan feminists, seeking to articulate an ontological woman-as-such, and Beauvoirian feminists, who find such metaphysical projects bankrupt and instead articulate a phenomenological position.

Though the third section of Blair's book reveals an underlying feminist position that many will disagree with, it does not seem that this invalidates the core of her scholarship in the second section. And even if it might be proved that it influences her development of Plato's position, her work would still stand as a useful resource, literature review, and reading of Plato's philosophy on woman.

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## *Minimizing Marriage: Marriage, Morality, and the Law*

Elizabeth Brake (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 240 pages. \$24.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-977413-5.

Reviewed by Vicki Toscano

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In this book, Elizabeth Brake calls for extensive reform of marriage law. At a time when the United States is in the midst of re-examining the relationship between marriage and the state, Brake takes us far beyond the typical popular and legal debates. She argues against reforms that merely extend marriage rights to same-sex couples, and against reforms supporting total abolition of state-sponsored marriage. Instead, Brake supports "minimal marriage," according to which "individuals can have legal marital relationships with more than one person, reciprocally or asymmetrically, themselves determining the sex and number of parties, the type of relationship involved, and which rights and responsibilities to exchange with each" (157). In this book, Brake defends two main claims: (1) that marriage as an institution is not morally valuable in and of itself, and (2) that a liberal political state cannot justify sponsorship of any marriage relationship "thicker" than minimal marriage. Ultimately, I believe she strongly supports point number one above, and insightfully argues for point number two, conditioned on her philosophical commitment to a Rawlsian liberal political state.

The first half of her book examines whether marriage in its current form has unique moral status. Brake starts this section by examining the question of whether the wedding vow, with its typical pledge to love, honor, and cherish, can be seen as a promise. She concludes that wedding vows cannot be seen as creating a promise, regardless of the spouse's intentions, since one cannot promise what one cannot do, and one cannot control love. Instead, she claims, the best way to understand marriage is as commitment to a rational "self-binding" strategy. Brake says, "These self-binding methods tie us into a course of action to prevent us from giving into intense or cognitively distorting short-term preferences, just as Ulysses tied himself to the mast of his ship to hear the Sirens sing without succumbing to their call" (56). In this light, marriage may not be the most rational way to accomplish the goal of long-term satisfaction for many people given the diversity of satisfactory relationship forms, many of which conflict directly with traditional marriage. She further notes that even for those who choose to have a long-term monogamous relationship, marriage may not be the most rational strategy as it disallows revision and burdens exit in ways that might work against one's long-term interests, especially in situations of abuse or where one's original preferences alter over time. Partly by utilizing feminist insights about the reality of marriage inequality and violence against women and children, Brake debunks the claim that marriage as commitment is a morally valuable institution in and of itself.

Brake next examines three influential philosophical arguments for why marriage is morally valuable: (1) Kant and Kant-inspired

views, (2) the new natural law arguments, specifically John Finnis's version, and (3) Roger Scruton's claims that marriage contributes to human flourishing. Brake claims that all three arguments require the assumption that marriage transforms a relationship by altering the psychological and emotional states of those who enter into it. She argues that marriage is neither necessary nor sufficient for this supposed act of moral transformation. Institutions, Brake explains, "cannot transform agents' internal psychological states simply by entry into them" (71). Her final argument against these views foreshadows the second half of this book, which is grounded in political philosophy, in that she argues that a politically liberal society cannot justify its institutions based on moral claims such as these.

Brake next explains her own view regarding what might be said to be morally valuable about marriage—it fosters adult caring relationships. However, the states' privileging of traditional marriage as the sole form of acceptable adult caring relationship also fosters "amatormativity," she argues. Amatormativity "consists in the assumption that a central, exclusive, amorous relationship is normal for humans, in that it is a universally shared goal, and that such a relationship is normative, in that it *should* be aimed at in preference to other relationship types" (88-89). Amatormativity actually threatens the important value of caring in that it elevates one type of potentially caring relationship above all others which, in turn, creates both material and symbolic discrimination against those not participating in the privileged form. She spends some time discussing care ethics and arguing that a morally valuable perspective, while including care, cannot exclude justice. Ultimately, though, she holds that caring relationships themselves are morally valuable as "generators of morally supportive motives and opportunities for fine-grained moral action" (87). This insight helps to morally ground the main assertion in this book, that marriage should not be abolished, since the state should promote caring adult relationships.

Brake starts the second part of the book by detailing feminist critiques of the institution of marriage that focus on the claim that marriage contributes to the systematic oppression of women through a variety of means, including creating conditions conducive to intimate violence through economic dependency and exit penalties, as well as creating a gendered division of labor that is harmful to women in many ways. Brake also details critiques of marriage that focus on the specific harm it does relating to perpetuating racial injustice and socioeconomic class discrimination. Nonetheless, Brake argues that marriage itself is not an inherently unjust institution if properly reformed. In fact, she claims that the state can be used to combat mainstream views of amatormative marriage that would remain virtually unchallenged if abolished, since then marriage would be ceded to private individual and other institutional control. Thus, she begins to lay the groundwork for her later claim that marriage should be retained, but without the amatormativity implicit in current marriage today.

Chapter six is extremely important philosophically in that it lays out her assumptions about the best political state. She begins by asking what the purpose of marriage can be in a liberal political state. Her definition of such a state is borrowed from Rawls—she says, "Political liberalism prohibits policy

and legislation, at least in important matters of justice, from being based on controversial moral or religious norms—they also must be justifiable in public reason" (135). Public reason requires giving reasons that citizens with different comprehensive moral, philosophical, or religious doctrines could accept. From the perspective of a liberal political community, she examines two different candidates for the definition and purpose of marriage: (1) marriage's purpose is to regulate adult, voluntary relationships, or (2) marriage's purpose is to regulate reproduction and safeguard child welfare. Brake argues that legal marriage's purpose should not be (2). Here, she offers insightful arguments to support her conclusion that we should separate our legal frameworks regulating adult caring relationships from our frameworks regulating parenting. In regard to (1) above, Brake argues that once we accept this as the purpose of marriage law, we must also recognize that no definition of marriage that limits it to amorous dyads can explain this limitation without appealing to particular comprehensive moral or philosophical doctrines. As she says, "defending the restriction of marriage to a cohabitating, financially entangled, sexual, monogamous, exclusive, romantic, central relationship also depends upon a view justifiable only from within comprehensive moral doctrines—amatormativity" (144). The obvious question this argument raises is what rationale for state sponsorship of marriage can justifiably be given at all, given the constraints of public reason in a political liberal state.

Chapter seven takes up this challenge, namely, creating an argument for state-sponsored marriage that does not rely on any comprehensive moral doctrine. Her argument utilizes Rawls's political theory once again. She argues that certain kinds of goods, including adult caring relationships, are primary goods. Primary goods are "all-purpose goods that people are assumed to want whatever their plans" (173). However, she notes that for Rawls, only social primary goods, which are goods capable of distribution by society, must be distributed according to just principles. Although caring relationships themselves are not social primary goods, in that they are not capable of state distribution, Brake argues that, "the social bases of caring relationships are social primary goods" (175). By the social bases of caring relationships she means "the social conditions for their existence and continuation" (176). In other words, the legal frameworks regulating caring relationships are social primary goods and must conform to principles of justice. Given the diversity of caring relationships, minimal marriage, she argues, is all that can possibly be supported by public reason, and, thus, all that can be supported by the state. She defines minimal marriage legally here as well. She says, "In an ideal liberal egalitarian society, minimal marriage would consist only in rights that recognize (e.g., status designation for third parties, burial rights, bereavement leave) and support (e.g., immigration rights, care-taking leave) caring relationships" (160). Individuals would voluntarily assign these rights to whomever they wished and even to more than one person so long as the person/people agreed to accept such rights. In chapter eight, Brake explains that she would assign a few other rights to minimal marriage transitionally in order to address concerns regarding the potential harm of marriage reform in a nonideal society such as our own. It is also important to remember that minimal marriage is not meant to describe the legal frameworks governing dependent care relationships, like parenting, which would no doubt require a

different and more extensive host of rights, responsibilities, and protections. She does not attempt to define in detail what these frameworks would look like here, but does suggest that previous proposals for state regulation of caretaker/dependent relationships, such as Martha Fineman's, can exist side by side with her proposal. Rather than abolish marriage and only protect dependent care relationships though, Brake proposes a separate legal framework that supports minimal marriage alongside other legal frameworks designed to support dependent care relationships.

From a liberal perspective, Brake's biggest challenge in this work is finding a way to defend state-sponsored marriage at all instead of simply arguing, as many others have before her, that state-sponsored marriage should be abolished. Interestingly, although Brake professes to resist abolition, her concept of marriage in this proposal bears so little resemblance to what is known as marriage today that the only thing retained seems to be the name "marriage." Brake herself seems to acknowledge this in chapter seven, where she admits that her proposal could easily be called "personal relationship law" (185). Nonetheless, she argues that calling it marriage is a direct approach to "rebrand" marriage in order to rectify "the heteronormative and amatonormative discrimination of current marriage law" (187). The question remains, then, whether her proposal is really a call to abolish marriage in every way but in name.

Nonetheless, I do believe Brake makes a compelling argument for why the state should be involved in regulating legal frameworks affecting adult caring relationships beyond relegating them to personal contract law regardless of what they are called. Although there is certainly room to question her assertion that adult caring relationships must be seen as primary goods, she offers other supporting claims as well. She argues that state recognition of the diversity of caring relationships beyond traditional marriage signals their equality under law, further combating amatonormativity. She also argues that the state is indispensable to ensure that entitlements necessary to maintaining caring relationships are provided by the relevant institutional entities, like care-taking leave and immigration eligibility, and are not distributed unjustly through third-party discrimination against certain relationship forms. Brake's most important contribution in this book, however, may be in provoking conversations regarding whether she has ultimately succeeded not only in arguing for minimal marriage but also in arguing for the belief that a liberal political state is the best political state, even given feminist concerns. Here she presents a reasonable alternative to traditional marriage that arguably goes a long way to debunking the claims that political liberalism is incapable of addressing and correcting for historical systems of oppression.

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## Contemporary Feminist Pragmatism

Maurice Hamington and Celia Bardwell-Jones, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2012). 279 pages. \$110.50. ISBN: 978-0-415-89991-8.

Reviewed by Stephanie Rodgers

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We are not yet so temporally or ideologically distant from Charlene Haddock-Seigfried's 1991 article, "Where Are All the Feminist Pragmatists?," that we may discuss the intersections of feminism and pragmatism without framing it in terms of an answer to her clarion call. *Contemporary Feminist Pragmatism*, an anthology edited by Maurice Hamington and Celia Bardwell-Jones, provides a resounding choral response, and as the introduction's title proclaims, "We're Here. We're Here." This volume asks the question, "What does feminist pragmatism have to offer to reflections on contemporary issues and ideas?" (1). True to the spirit of both feminism and pragmatism, the work focuses on present and pressing problems, ranging from racial identity to education to environmental concerns.

To lay the foundations for the essays that follow, the editors identify several interrelated key commitments of feminist pragmatism, which (following Erin McKenna in "Pragmatism and Feminism: Engaged Philosophy") they understand to be a philosophical method of inquiry (2). The first of these commitments is to the importance of experience, which is itself informed by context and social situatedness. That is, oppression based on sex, race, class, and sexual orientation creates a diversity of social experiences, and these experiences must be incorporated into theorizing in order to reveal the spatial and temporal backgrounds where meanings and modes of valuation form. Without a critical analysis of the experiences of women and other marginalized groups, the operative power structure remains unchallenged. This understanding also reveals the second commitment of feminist pragmatism: a focus on "the relationship of politics and values and the production of knowledge and metaphysics" (3). Attention to the background that gives rise to meaning and values highlights biases and prejudices creeping into epistemological and metaphysical enterprises. Feminist pragmatism emphasizes the role of the investigation's context in inquiry, theorizing, and knowledge production. If feminist pragmatism "revitalizes the social dimension" of these enterprises, then, it "necessarily engages in questions concerning the nature of community" (4). Following from an emphasis on experience and context, and thus on pluralism, dialogue among differently situated social groups and openness to the revisions of theories are both required for the development of a community. This process of dialoguing and a fallibilistic approach to theory constitute the third commitment cited by the editors. The fourth and final commitment of feminist pragmatism "underscores the belief in transformation and reconstruction of society" (5). Such a belief does not constitute a starry-eyed idealism or unfounded optimism on the part of feminist pragmatists but instead acknowledges the possibilities represented by an engaged, communicative citizenry that participates in "meaningful activism" (5).

Undergirding both the driving question regarding the contributions of feminist pragmatism to contemporary issues and the content of the responses is the intimate relationship of theory and practice. The result of the intertwining of feminism and pragmatism is a methodology that understands the importance of action guided by theory and theory informed by the results of action. In fact, feminist pragmatism, in the tradition of both feminism and pragmatism, rejects a strong distinction between the two. It honors our existence as situated, context-dependent persons for whom theory and praxis become hopelessly entangled, and as the essays of this volume demonstrate, feminist pragmatism posits a self that is engaged in social interaction with others. As a result of its emphasis on the everyday problems of living persons and dialectical relationship between theory and praxis, the contents of this anthology frequently cross disciplinary boundaries, embracing observations and studies from a diverse array of fields.

Three broad topical areas comprise this book. The first section, titled "Community and Identity," addresses issues of community, identity, and intersectionality. Interestingly, three of the five essays make use of Josiah Royce.

Drawing upon his conception of loyalty to loyalty, Shannon Sullivan in "Transforming Whiteness with Roycean Loyalty: A Pragmatist Feminist Account" attempts to move beyond negative accounts of whiteness (and the associated guilt and shame) in order to construct a positive identity of whiteness that self-critically resists racist white superiority but supports a positive solidarity. Celia Bardwell-Jones, in "Border Communities and Royce: The Problem of Translation and Reinterpreting Feminist Empiricism," uses Royce's theory of interpretation to rethink W. V. O. Quine's "recalcitrant experience," creating a theoretical space for feminist border politics, allowing border experiences such as those of Gloria Anzaldúa's *la mestiza* to be understood as a source of knowledge. The third contributor to use Royce is Amrita Banerjee in her piece titled, "Dynamic Borders, Dynamic Identities: A Pragmatist Ontology of 'Groups' for Critical Multicultural Transnational Feminisms." Here, Banerjee uses Royce's idea of "negation" and Mary Parker Follett's work on "betweenness" to establish the ambiguity of border spaces, reconceptualizing the idea of the "group" and developing an ontology of "interactive plurality" for a critical multicultural transnational feminism.

The remaining two essays of the first section concern voices traditionally excluded from or devalued within public discourse. In "The Hostile Gospel and Democratic Faith: Black Feminist Reflections on Rap Music and John Dewey," Denise James applies John Dewey's idea of deliberative and participatory democracy to establish the social importance of some rap music as a "hostile gospel" critiquing the dehumanizing effects of urban poverty. Using Richard Rorty's notions of "ironic redescription" and "argumentation" to confront issues of epistemic exclusion, Susan Dieleman in "Solving the Problem of Epistemic Exclusion: A Pragmatist Feminist Approach" presents ways for feminist activists to challenge the epistemic norms of a community, which she hopes will refigure the hegemonic epistemic imaginary.

The second section of the volume is titled "Political Practice," and it begins with one of several selections addressing issues of sustainability. In "Feminist-Pragmatist Democratic Practice and Contemporary Sustainability Movements: Mary Parker Follett, Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch, and Vandana Shiva," Judy Whipps uses the thinkers Follett, Addams, Balch, and Shiva to establish that a democracy represents "an essential component of sustainable community life" (125). Similarly drawn to the work of Jane Addams, Lisa Heldke in "Community Gardeners or Radical Homemakers?" describes the Intercultural Gardens of Germany, arguing that such community gardening projects, unlike radical homemaking, create a crucible for cosmopolitan patriotism due to the social intercourse between women of diverse backgrounds working side by side toward a common goal. The result of such work—a respect for a variety of ways of life—is also a goal of Barbara Thayer-Bacon's, as she demonstrates in "Education's Role in Democracy: The Power of Pluralism." The way to reach this goal for her, however, is through education, and she draws upon her observations at five collective school cultures to argue that shared responsibility, shared identity, and shared authority in an educational environment model can move us closer to truly relational, pluralistic democratic living.

"Ethics and Inquiry," the third and final section of the volume, opens with "Visionary Pragmatism and an Ethics of Connectivity: An Alternative to the Autonomy Tradition in Analytic Ethics" by Cynthia Willett. She endeavors to problematize the Western ethical tradition that fixates on notions of autonomy, and she draws upon the work of African American feminists Patricia Hill Collins and Toni Morrison to center individual identity on social relationships and reframe the crime of hate speech as an assault on the victim's social being. Cathryn Bailey, the second contributor to this section, also moves away from the Western ethical tradition in "The Revolutionary Fact of Compassion: William James, Buddhism, and the Feminist Ethics of Care." She suggests that Buddhism and the pragmatism of William James, which both embrace the messiness of human life, tolerance, and humility, might better rehabilitate a feminist ethics of care, perhaps turning care into "a poem, a catalog of practices, something else entirely" (197). Also working within the ethics of care, Maurice Hamington in "Hospitality as Moral Inquiry: Sympathetic Knowledge in the Guest-Host Encounter" suggests that hospitality in the guest-host encounter represents a performative species of care, arguing that encounters with unfamiliar others require "sympathetic understanding," and as such, they become exercises in moral inquiry. In "A Methodological Interpretation of Feminist Pragmatism," Claudia Gillberg suggests feminist action research, a research methodology emphasizing participation, collaboration, reflection, and democratization, as an ally to feminist pragmatism in reintegrating action and knowledge creation and in resisting the bureaucratization of knowledge and knowledge simplification.

The final two essays of the volume examine the relationship of humans to animals and the so-called "natural" world through a feminist pragmatist lens. Erin McKenna, in her essay "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Women, Animals, and Oppression," explores the parallels between the oppressive treatment of human women and animals as presented in Gilman's work. Arguing that the subjugation of women

and animals stems from the same source, she calls for contemporary ecofeminists to bring Gilman into their conversations as a genealogical predecessor, and she looks forward to respectful partnerships between men and women and between humans and other animal beings. Rather than relying upon the work of Gilman, Heather Keith uses the work of Jane Addams and Nel Noddings to develop an environmentally engaged ethics of care in her contribution, "Natural Caring: A Pragmatist Feminist Approach to Ethics in the More-than-Human World." Using the concept of relationality found in both of these thinkers, Keith argues that a feminist pragmatist social ethics widens our circle of care beyond the human community, a position that is enhanced by social scientific studies demonstrating the positive moral implications of human interaction with the natural world.

The book contains many elements one would expect and desire of an anthology on feminist pragmatism: a focus on education, calls for inclusivity and pluralism, and an emphasis on incorporating the work of earlier feminist pragmatists. Pleasant surprises are also found: Royce's prominent role in the first section, the thoroughly contemporary nature of the issues addressed, and the interdisciplinary character of many essays. In both its predictable elements and its surprises, the volume's editors and authors provide an impressive depth of analysis. Notably absent from this anthology, however, are selections specifically discussing sexuality or disability. Given the historical marginalization of these voices within both feminism and pragmatism, such an omission must be remarked upon.

As occasionally happens in an anthology focused on a specific topic, the volume suffers a bit from redundancy. Many of the essays argue in similar ways for the suitability of pragmatism to feminist inquiry (or vice versa). Such repetition, though, does ensure that each piece may stand apart from the collection while retaining its persuasive force. Given the diversity of issues and figures tackled, as well as the overall accessibility of the essays in the volume, such independence is in fact a strength, as it ensures that individual selections might be easily assigned in the classroom or enjoyed as one's interests direct.

*Contemporary Feminist Pragmatism*, offering a rich and thought-provoking set of readings, is an exciting contribution to the growing field of feminist pragmatism. The greatest strength of this work lies in its breadth. Not only does the diversity of topics (hospitality, gardening, rap, *Beloved*, the Earth Charter, and Buddhism, among many others) make it a fascinating read, but it also demonstrates the wide applicability of the methodology of feminist pragmatism. In effect, the essays both explain and model feminist pragmatist engagement by grappling with tangible problems experienced by individuals and communities. For scholars in feminism, pragmatism, feminist pragmatism, or pragmatist feminism, this volume offers a window into the discipline's potential to engage in socially transformative discourse aimed at inclusivity and pluralism.

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## Mary Wollstonecraft

Jane Moore, ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2012). 586 pages. \$325.00. ISBN: 978-0-7546-2743-2.

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Editor Jane Moore, in her collection *Mary Wollstonecraft*, provides an impressive array of essays, spanning disciplinary divides as well as decades, and demonstrating the broad-ranging appeal and import of Mary Wollstonecraft's social and political philosophy. This volume is one in a series—the *International Library of Essays in the History of Social and Political Thought*—offering a range of work written on the topic of Wollstonecraft's life and work.

As Moore explains in her succinct introduction, Wollstonecraft was revolutionary in both her self-conception and her intellectual contributions. While Wollstonecraft was not the first to comment on society's perverse tethering of women's intellectual and personal development, her work was exemplary in quality and remarkable in its wide-ranging and long-lasting notice. Moore highlights the continued influence of Wollstonecraft's intellectual presence in the development of social and political thought through both her selection of essays, as well as her effective structuring of those essays.

Moore's collection is arranged in three parts and organized according to what, in "literary-critical terms," she identifies as the mode of early twenty-first-century analysis: "historicist and context-specific interpretations" (xv). She begins in Part 1 with a "Survey of the Work and Reputation" that includes work by notable historical figures, including George Eliot, Emma Goldman, and Virginia Wolfe (xxiii). The more extensive Part II, titled "Contexts: History, Politics, Culture," includes essays published by commentators from multiple disciplines, representing late twentieth-century work on Wollstonecraft (xxv). The final section, Part III, "'Texts' Novels, Literary Reviews, Letters," focuses on essays that specifically address Wollstonecraft's writing and death (xxx).

George Eliot's 1855 article, titled "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft," is a comparative essay that addresses "American author Margaret Fuller's conduct book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*," and, ultimately, defends Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and rehabilitates her much abused reputation (xxiii). Emma Goldman continues in this vein, discussing Wollstonecraft's life and pursuit of freedom, likening her heroine's to her own experiences, and framing Wollstonecraft as a visionary intent on pursuing a life of love in defiance of her oppressive society. Rounding out this historically rich representation of authors is Virginia Wolfe, who shares Goldman's identification with Wollstonecraft's irreverence for propriety and convention, and Wollstonecraft's laudable insistence on continual self-creation.

Moore jumps forward to late twentieth-century work to round out the commentary on Wollstonecraft's reputation and work. She includes material from Regina Janes, Gary Kelly, and Sylvana Tomaselli, all of which seems intended to introduce Wollstonecraft as multiply interpreted throughout

both her own life and into the present day. Of these essays, Janes' "On the Reception of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*" stands out, providing a historical "wake-up call" to those who had characterized the reception of Wollstonecraft's work as scandalous and subsequently damaging to her reputation. Instead, Janes argues that Wollstonecraft's work was scandalized by its author's behavior. More pointedly, Wollstonecraft's work was recast posthumously in the licentious memoir published by her husband, William Godwin. This memoir exposed her sexuality as perverse, revealed her as mother to an illegitimate child from a previous relationship, and painted her as wantonly promiscuous.

Part II of *Wollstonecraft* is further divided under eight headings. The first of these groupings focuses on social, philosophical, and political theory. It begins with a paper by G. J. Barker-Benfield that discusses Wollstonecraft's inclusion in the English dissenting tradition. Simon Swift's paper, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the 'Reserve of Reason,'" elaborates on the unique interplay of reason and sentiment in Wollstonecraft's literary work. Of particular interest to feminist philosophers, however, may be Virginia Sapiro's article, "Wollstonecraft, Feminism and Democracy: 'Being Bastilled.'" This article identifies Wollstonecraft as a "political theorist and a visionary political thinker" on the basis of Sapiro's identification of "political theorizing as a political act" (69). She further asserts that a focus on context is essential to understanding Wollstonecraft's "significance in the two intertwined traditions of democratic and feminist theory" (70).

The second heading of Part II concerns gender and Enlightenment, and features essays by Janet Todd and Sylvana Tomaselli. The former engages literary and historical binaries such as reason/feeling and masculinity/femininity, while the latter discusses the virtue of interpreting women as historically linked to culture, rather than adopting the common assumption of woman as representative of nature.

A grouping titled "Wollstonecraft, Education and Conduct Literature" concerns the use of Wollstonecraft's theories of education and conduct as a means of "down-playing her scandalous reputation" in the nineteenth century, and as important, "because her work spoke to the campaigns undertaken by respectable nineteenth-century women to broaden women's educational and employment opportunities" (xxvi). A chapter from Emma Rauschenbush-Clough's late nineteenth-century, historically pivotal biography of Wollstonecraft is featured here. Rauschenbush-Clough links Wollstonecraft's theory of education to John Locke's epistemology and his related comments about child development and the promotion of virtue. Rauschenbush-Clough asserts that Wollstonecraft's position on children's education can be traced to an acceptance of Locke's *tabula rasa*, along with his theories on the development of ideas from experience. Throughout this chapter, Rauschenbush-Clough shows how Wollstonecraft's adoption of empiricist epistemology leads to an argument for the necessity of children's education, women's education, state-supported mandatory schooling, and, ultimately, for democracy itself. An additional essay in this section by Regina Janes compares the educational theories of Wollstonecraft with those of Mary Astell and provides some long-awaited acknowledgement of Wollstonecraft's female predecessors and influences.

The following two sections—one connecting Wollstonecraft's work to events and writings of the French Revolution, and another discussing Wollstonecraft's and her work's relationship to religion—are predominantly concerned with historical analysis and literary theory. These papers engage with metaphors of revolution, as well as eroticism, and provide necessary discussion of Wollstonecraft's work as an instance of feminism and as disruptive of the religious ideology of her time. Moore provides an additional section representing contemporary analyses of Wollstonecraft's work as an exemplar of the "Romantic" period in literature. Previously mentioned essays in this collection highlighted Wollstonecraft's conscious rejection of sentimentality in the cultural ideology of women's reality in the late eighteenth century. This section contains a direct analysis of Wollstonecraft's relationship to literary Romanticism. The results of this examination point to Wollstonecraft's focus on social and political ideology, as well as her use of narrative and essay, as representative of Romantic literary work.

Moore returns us to theoretical discussions of Wollstonecraft's feminism and feminist philosophy in the penultimate grouping of Part II that she titles, "Wollstonecraft, Femininity/Sexuality/Feminism." Wollstonecraft has long been discussed as a paradoxical figure in the development of feminism and positions on "feminist sexuality." This is, generally, the result of her uncomfortable relationship with her own sexuality and sexual desire, and with her identification of the role of sex in the oppression of women. As a woman who lived an unconventional life, attempting to avoid what she saw as the shackles of marriage, Wollstonecraft noted the trap that women's sexuality laid for them, and saw through the dominant ideology that trained women to desire the self-image of woman as child-like, simple, dependent, and irrational creatures. But Wollstonecraft is also noted for her oft expressed disgust for her fellow women and their guileless acceptance of their own hopeless fate. Further, in her work, she advocates for marriage—a particular version of marriage that is passion-free, based on a companionable union, and largely justified by its role in the protection of children.

Cora Kaplan discusses these paradoxes in Wollstonecraft's life and work, asking the question: "Why is woman's love of pleasure so deeply stigmatized as the sign of her degradation?" (341). Kaplan's essay is wide-ranging and comprehensive in its treatment of Wollstonecraft on sexuality; it provides an excellent overview of the topic. Both Kaplan's essay and the following article by Barbara Taylor raise the issue of Rousseau and the influence of his work on Wollstonecraft's own writings. Taylor's article, however, zooms in on the political theory behind Wollstonecraft's work, the conflicting messages produced by Wollstonecraft's feminism and misogyny, and the contradiction in her simultaneous acceptance and rejection of Rousseau's work.

Moore's final grouping in Part II addresses Wollstonecraft's use of slavery as a metaphor for marriage, and includes just one paper, "Mary Wollstonecraft and the Problematic of Slavery," by Moira Ferguson. Ferguson discusses the revolutionizing use of slavery as an analogue for women's oppression in marriage and argues that Wollstonecraft's use of slavery is responsible for "fundamentally altering the definition of rights and paving the way for a much wider cultural dialogue" (418). This paper offers a somewhat

controversial suggestion in its thesis, and I suspect the paper itself would be very useful in generating productive conversations in the classroom.

In the final section of the book, "Part III: Texts: Novels, Literary Reviews, Letters," Moore offers a collection of papers discussing the literary contributions of Wollstonecraft, providing analyses of her novels with regard to sentimentalism, discussions of Godwin's influence on her work, and suggestions for political readings of Wollstonecraft's novels. Discussion of Wollstonecraft's letters centers on the interplay of the public and the private in her philosophy, and discusses the influence and importance of her use of autobiography and narrative. The final paper of the section, and thus of the collection, is Vivien Jones's fascinating account of Wollstonecraft's death. Jones identifies a feminist narrative reflected in the choices Wollstonecraft made for the delivery of her second child, and recounts the sequence of events that led to Wollstonecraft's death from puerperal fever ten days later. The essay is compelling and serves as a well-chosen end-point for Moore's collection.

Overall, this volume serves as an impressive resource for scholars and students of Wollstonecraft, as well as those interested in Enlightenment history and theory. Moore's selection of papers represents a wide range of disciplines and interests in the work of Wollstonecraft and, for this reason, helps to illustrate the importance of her life and work. The collection is effective in demonstrating, as well, that Wollstonecraft's influence extends beyond her notability as a woman writer, and shows the importance of her political and social theory, generally. The inclusion of additional comparisons between Wollstonecraft's work and other women theorists of her historical period would have added to this collection; the focus on male philosophers' influence on Wollstonecraft's work is nicely elaborated, but the inclusion of additional essays connecting her work to that of other women would have served to improve the recognition and inclusion of women philosophers into the canon of intellectual history.

Also of note, though, is Moore's thoughtful attention to structure, reflected in her prominent choice of essays highlighting the context of Wollstonecraft's compositions. One result of this volume's focus is that the influence of context and history on Wollstonecraft's work—a woman's work—is exposed. As Moore makes clear, with each changing narrative that accompanies Wollstonecraft's work, the importance, acceptability, and entire meaning of her reflections changes. This highlights how Wollstonecraft's unique situation as a woman theorist becomes extraordinarily influential in the reception of her work and reminds us, once again, that historically, a woman's intellectual work, like her identity, is constructed as dependent rather than objective, and embodied in her time rather than timeless. Viewing Wollstonecraft and her work in this way opens new avenues for research in the history of philosophy and reminds us how important our evaluation of context must be for *all* intellectual figures—not *only* those who were women.

## Confronting Postmaternal Thinking: Feminism, Memory, and Care

Julie Stephens (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). 208 pages. Paper: \$27.50; Cloth: \$89.50. ISBN 978-0-231-14921-1.

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In *Confronting Postmaternal Thinking: Feminism, Memory, and Care*, Julie Stephens explores the causes and consequences of (and forms of resistance to) a decline in maternalist thinking in both public and private life. The intellectual touchstone for Stephens' book is Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*. In a February 2013 interview with *Feminists for Choice*, Stephens reveals that she had originally intended to examine how the concept of maternal thinking had been developed in the decades following the publication of Ruddick's groundbreaking work. However, her research findings suggested an "absence of maternal thinking in the public domain" and, moreover, "the active presence of something else, a widespread cultural unease about the values associated with the maternal (nurture, care, and protection) and also with dependency in any form."<sup>1</sup> This widespread cultural anxiety about care is a central premise of her book; it opens by recounting an interview she overhears on the radio while driving:

I was struck by an odd discussion of a book [*The Etiquette of Illness*] that promised to teach the skill and etiquette of how to be "kind and compassionate in a moment of illness." The author, Susan Halpern, offered advice about how to be at ease with a loved one who is gravely ill and identified the emotional challenges posed by visiting a seriously sick friend. The expertise required to manage such a situation was presented as something we needed to relearn. Apparently we once knew how to respond with care and attentiveness to illness, but now we are in danger of making serious mistakes. (1)

At the heart of Stephens' work is an interesting argument about cultural forgetting and remembering and its consequences for feminist maternalism in the neoliberal global era. In particular, Stephens is concerned with three specific instances of cultural amnesia: (1) our cultural tendency to forget human vulnerability and interdependency and, hence, to forget the need for care; (2) our failure to remember the important role that ideals and practices of care have had in feminist history; and (3) a tendency to forget the gendered nature of care, i.e., that care work has been and still is typically relegated to women. Stephens argues persuasively that all of these are cases of "active forgetting" shaped by neoliberal ideologies, policies, and practices. Unlike the kind of forgetting that is a mere inability to remember the past, forgetting the need for and ideals of care are not random losses of memory. Instead, they are best understood, she contends, as memory losses essential to the formation of neoliberal subjectivities "built on ideas of self-sufficiency, autonomy, rationality and independence" (10). "Shared silences" about nurture, care, and dependency

are culturally produced in order to make room for changed relations of power that cannot admit human vulnerability and women's historical role as caretakers.

Chapter one focuses on what Stephens terms the "unmothering" of society, exploring the ways in which the celebration of market individualism has resulted in a "world turned upside down" (21). Stephens reminds us that shame has not always been associated with dependency; in the preindustrial era, dependency was viewed as "normal" while independence was viewed with suspicion (23). With the emergence of capitalism, dependency becomes pathologized, but with an important exception: the mother-child relation continued to be considered "a 'natural' dependent relationship and immune from stigmatization" (25). Under neoliberalism, however, such immunity disappears (consider the now familiar trope of the welfare mother as a lazy, good-for-nothing who threatens the social order). According to Stephens, these shifting meanings of dependency highlight "a complex process of cultural forgetting [including] a forgetting of the fact that those who 'stand on their own two feet' are often being propped up by a network of invisible (female) labor" (24). I am sympathetic to her claim that there are large ideological stakes here. That neoliberal ideologies and practices depend on "keeping the 'shadow world' of dependency out of sight" was vividly illustrated by the vilification of President Obama in 2012 for his suggestion that those who had achieved economic success "did not get there on their own," but were helped by mothers, teachers, and others. The flap over Obama's remarks reveals a deep and widespread cultural investment in denying the seemingly obvious fact that all of us are dependent on caregivers for much of our childhood, may become physically dependent again as we age or become ill, and stand in relations of social and economic interdependency during much of our adult life. This ideological investment has serious consequences for both those who require care and those who provide such care.

Chapter two turns our attention to the active forgetting of significant strands of feminist history. Cautioning us not to hold feminism "responsible for women trading maternity for work," Stephens also warns against dismissing such criticisms of feminism as a mere "backlash" against feminist ideals. Public denunciations of feminism, she suggests, reveal "a deeply shared cultural anxiety about the maternal" (43). Stephens illustrates how these anxieties are implicated in both our collective cultural memories of feminism and intergenerational conflicts about feminism by examining several published feminist accounts of mother-daughter relationships. In these accounts, prefeminist mothers are frequently portrayed as emotionally toxic, leading second-wave feminists to imagine themselves as "motherless daughters" forced to give birth to themselves (53-54). Although we might think that the third-wave daughters of second-wave feminists would have different remembrances of their mothers, they too often portray their mothers as less than nurturing. (Rebecca Walker's portrayal of her mother in the memoir *Baby Love* is but one obvious example.) What should we make of this? Stephens suggests that our failures to remember ourselves as the recipients of maternal care help to construct the neoliberal self:

Actively forgetting the nurturing mother . . . smooths the transition for a new self—defined by its separateness—to come into being. This unfettered self reinforces the current dominant meanings of care and dependency. Care-related activities are represented as a burden, and dependency is somehow shameful. (60)

The tendency of feminists to forget the nurturing mother, Stephens argues, is shaped by collective cultural memories of feminism that are, at best, selective. As a corrective to revisionist feminist histories, in chapter three Stephens explores the oral histories of mid-twentieth-century Australian feminists, presenting a "memory mosaic" that resists cultural scripts characterizing second-wave feminists as myopic, anti-child, careerists who aided and abetted the ascendancy of neoliberalism at the expense of supporting an ethics and politics of care (76). Oral histories reveal a "buried maternalism" invoked in feminist campaigns around domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and child care (87-88), recounting the cooking of meals for women and children in refuges and other acts of care as a critical component of feminist politics. Some of these recorded interviews also express feminist ambivalence about careers and forward a portrait of motherhood as enhancing, rather than detracting from, one's professional life and sense of self. Stephens notes the significance of affective resonance, as well as content, of the oral histories she examines.

These oral histories are . . . stories of passionate attachments, . . . loss . . . rivalries, of anxieties, angers, and disappointments. If these affective dimensions of the women's movement are culturally forgotten and absent from public discourse, then there is little wonder that popular representations of a career-obsessed feminism take hold. (87)

This strikes me as a fundamentally important point that deserves greater development in a book focused on cultural processes of forgetting and remembering. As memory theorists have long argued, memory formation, retention, and retrieval is enhanced by emotion. At the same time, our memories of past emotions are malleable and vary with our current beliefs and identities.<sup>2</sup> It would be interesting to further explore the affective dimensions of care under neoliberal regimes with attention to the role affect plays in both developing and reshaping our memories of care.

Chapter four focuses on feminist resistance to postmaternal thinking. Stephens begins by reminding us of the limitations of earlier forms of maternalism, which often invoked traditional gender roles and forwarded uniform standards of motherhood privileging white, middle-class women. Against this backdrop, Stephens examines the maternal thinking involved in three contemporary reconfigurations of maternalism: mothers' online communities and advocacy networks, maternalist peace activism in the United States, and a 2008 collection of mothers' writings. Online mothering communities, she notes, "challeng[e] the distinction between private and public motherhood" (100), but may also romanticize motherhood and uphold neoliberal ideas of self-sufficiency—a fact that no doubt reflects, in part, the middle-class status of most participants. Stephens' harshest criticism is aimed at selected essays in *The Maternal is Political*. In

particular, a contribution wherein a D.C. mother worries about the illegal status of her Bolivian maid and nanny is described (accurately, I would contend) as an “uncomfortable mix” of “individualism, maternalism, narcissism and romanticism” (121). Far from unusual, Stephens contends, this example of maternal thinking reveals a more widespread “discomfort produced by the introduction of market relations into the home” and highlights the tensions between maternalist and postmaternalist politics as the line between “work” and “care” becomes blurred and the work of caring gets “outsourced” to transnational subjects who are forced to leave their own children behind in order to work for economically privileged families in the United States (121-22). Stephens is most hopeful about the neomaternalist politics of peace activists. “[C]ampaigns and movements, like CODEPINK or the activism of Cindy Sheehan,” she states, “signal the possibility of unlinking maternalism from nationalism and developing quite different political configurations around peace, nurture, and care” (118).

In the book’s brief concluding chapter, Stephens reflects on the shortcomings of what she terms a “degendered feminism” and the potential of ecofeminism to “regender” and “actively remember” the maternalist impulses of an earlier era while intersecting with contemporary peace activism and online mothers’ movements. I agree with her claim that a gender-blind approach to care risks forgetting that caregiving is an embodied activity that has been and continues to be relegated primarily to women. At the same time, I am left uneasy by some of Stephens’ (too) quick conclusions. It is not clear to me that feminism needs to be regendered (although perhaps I am simply unfamiliar with strands of Australian feminism that she may have in mind here). Moreover, given the wide variety of feminist and queer theoretical analyses of and practices around embodiment, it is unclear to me why ecofeminism is suddenly introduced at the book’s conclusion as *the* antidote to gender-blind approaches to care.

Stephens seems drawn to ecofeminism, in part, because of its care ethic and, in part, because of its attention to embodiment. To be sure, women who choose domesticity over corporate career tracks—staying home to raise children, produce their own food, and reduce their carbon footprint—represent a manifestation of care that resists “market driven, commercial processes and notions of identity” (138). At the same time, as Stephens notes, these practices are linked to affluence, requiring access to land (143) and, I would add, the luxury of not having to engage in wage work as a means of survival. (I have similar concerns about the practices of intensive mothering that Stephens defends as exemplary of a commitment to care in chapter four. Only certain women can afford to be stay-at-home mothers and provide children with a vast array of enrichment activities.) This raises the following question: Can we view such practices as a paradigmatic form of resistance to postmaternalism *without* reiterating the classism of earlier forms of maternalism? Perhaps, but our focus would need to be on examples of more co-operative living.

Similarly, we might ask whether (or how) to use ecofeminism to address the embodied (gendered) nature of care. Stephens voices concern about our failures to remember the marked materiality of motherhood for women who have recently

given birth, bemoaning the ways in which breastpumps have disconnected care from its fleshy elements. (“One wonders,” she says, whether “we will look back at the vision of all of this feverish pumping with . . . abhorrence” (135).) Here Stephens comes dangerously close to claiming that some maternal practices (e.g., breastfeeding) are better than others (e.g., bottle-feeding) by virtue of the fact that they are more “natural”—again risking a reinvocation of traditional gender roles and uniform standards of motherhood. This is unfortunate, as it is unnecessary to her argument against postmaternalism. We need not imply that all women should breastfeed in order to critique, as Stephens justifiably wishes to do, the neoliberal commodification of care and the corporate supply of lactation rooms in place of more generous maternity leave policies.

An identification of women with nature also risks romanticizing motherhood as a “natural” and thus essential identity. Stephens is aware of this risk—she addresses essentialism both in her introduction and her conclusion, pre-empting my objection by suggesting that “perjorative accusations of essentialism have ‘closed questions of women and nature and feminism and pacificism’” (142) and, worse yet, that feminist queasiness about essentialism may work to “silence debate about care and justice in the social and political sphere” (13). But I don’t think this is true. Throughout her work, Stephens follows Ruddick in emphasizing mothering as a *practice*, rather than an *identity*. This is a good way to avoid gender essentialism (providing we don’t uphold some practices as “natural” and suggest others are deviant). I would contend, however, that Stephens’s emphasis on mothering as a practice seems a better fit with a postmodernist feminist or queer understandings of gender as a *performance* than it does with an ecofeminist focus on nature. Using such a postmodernist or queer approach, we might view mothering as a specific type of gendered performance of care, thereby avoiding both essentialism and gender-blindness in our accounts of caregiving. Maternalist politics, in turn, could be viewed as a gendered performance of the politics of care. Interestingly, this seems an apt rendering of, for example, the peace activism of CODEPINK that Stephens discusses sympathetically in the previous chapter:

Exaggerated gendered symbols of motherhood or female sexuality (pink slips and underwear) are employed in parodic, playful ways when marching in the streets or confronting opponents. These expressive elements create what the authors call “maternalism with a wink” and “traditional femininity with a wink.” (116)

Maternalism “with a wink” is preferable, I think, to a maternalism that invokes traditional gender roles and uniform standards of motherhood. That said, despite my disagreements with Stephens’ conclusions, I find her analysis of the causes and consequences of postmaternalism both provocative and timely.

**NOTES**

1. “Julie Stephens Talks Postmaternal Thinking,” *Feminists for Choice* (February 6, 2013), <http://feministsforchoice.com/julie-stephens.htm>.
2. See, e.g., Linda Jane Levine, Heather C. Lench, and Martin Safer, “Functions of Remembering and Misremembering Emotion,”

*Applied Cognitive Psychology* 23 (2009): 1059–75; Jane M. Richards and James J. Gross, "Emotion Regulation and Memory: The Cognitive Costs of Keeping One's Cool," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 3 (2000): 410–24.

## ***Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity***

Alison Stone (New York, London: Routledge, 2012). 194 pages. Hardback Price: \$130.00. ISBN: 978-0-415-88542-3.

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Can a woman simultaneously be a mother and a subject in contemporary Western culture? Is there a possibility of a distinctly maternal subjectivity? These are the questions that motivate Alison Stone's scholarly, innovative, analysis in *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity*. In this work, Stone demonstrates that the pervasive presumption in Western culture—that achieving full subjectivity requires complete separation from the maternal—must be rejected for at least two reasons. First, it harms mothers by actually impeding their ability to develop their unique subjectivity. Second, the assumption is false; contra the dictates of Western tradition, one need not completely separate from the maternal body and space in order to become a full subject. In fact, Stone shows, a uniquely maternal subjectivity exists and it requires *connection* with the maternal rather than separation from it.

The first part of the book lays the theoretical groundwork for Stone's arguments in the latter part of the book detailing the nature and requirements of maternal subjectivity. She begins by situating her questions and theoretical response to them in the literature on maternity and mothering by detailing some of the struggles new mothers face. Stone then connects those struggles to psychoanalytic and philosophical accounts of the requirements of subjectivity and motherhood and the ways in which they are employed in the parenting industry to discipline mothers. Though Stone describes the ways in which current thinking on mothering and subjectivity fail to focus on the mother's feelings and experiences, portraying a view of mothering that is unrealistic and reflects patriarchal ideas of mothering, Stone is most concerned with the presumption of the necessity of matricide for full subjectivity.

In chapter two, Stone focuses her attention on this issue, exploring how Freud, Irigaray, and others presume the necessity of matricide—the necessity of a complete break of the child with the maternal—in order to develop into a subject. Here, Stone introduces a distinction that will become essential in her account: separation versus differentiation. This sets the stage for her third chapter, where Stone uses Donald Winnicott's and Jessica Benjamin's work to reinterpret Kristeva's concept of the *chora*, the space of where mother and infant interact, as one of differentiation between infant and mother, and not one where the infant learns only to separate from the mother. For Stone, the *chora* can be understood in terms of Winnicott's concept of potential space, or the space where interaction between the mother and infant occurs in

the form of bodily movements, gestures, and play, to show the mother's essential role in helping the infant differentiate and grow, thus challenging the assumption of the necessity of matricide for child development.

Once she opens the possibility for reinterpreting core ideas that have grounded the presumption that subjectivity requires a separation from the maternal, Stone spends the rest of the book delineating a view of the conditions for a distinctly maternal subjectivity. Even though I recognize the intellectual rigor of the first three chapters of the book, particularly the reinterpretation of Kristeva's work in chapter three, in my judgment, the last two chapters are the most intellectually exciting and innovative. After using chapter five to establish that the maternal subject position emerges insofar as the mother manages to reclaim her maternal past and re-integrate it into her present experience of mothering, in chapter six, Stone faces the obvious question: How do you do that when we do not actually remember our "archaic maternal past"? In an intellectually interesting and rigorous way, Stone begins with Freud and then moves through various contemporary figures in psychoanalytic thought who work with the idea of "infantile amnesia" in order to show that, despite past ideas and current assumptions, we do make and retain memories as babies. The difference, Stone explains, is that our systems of making memories and recollecting them after ages six through eight differ from those we use to make and access memories prior to that age. In the former case, we make and access memories in a way that places them into a narrative and we can access them through conscious thought. By contrast, our memories of young childhood are embedded into the body, for example, via smells, feelings, and tastes. We cannot access these through our normal channels; we can only access these via living similar experiences and experiencing those same bodily sensations. As adults, however, most of us do not relive sufficiently similar experiences through our relationships and activities (which is why Stone suggests that men do not remember their archaic maternal past). The exception is when a woman becomes a mother to her own infant. In that interaction, the new mother is experiencing similar interactions and sensations, except that she is occupying a different position in the dynamic. Put differently, the new mother is reliving her archaic maternal past through her interactions and participation of the *chora* with her own child. Using Kristeva, Stone argues that in these moments, two conceptions of time—eternal or unchanging time and linear time—are intersecting in a way that intermingles the past and the present; the past, present, and future are simultaneously occurring in the interaction, are altering each other, and, in the process, are creating what is known as "maternal time." As Stone says:

If past, present, and future comprise an organic unity, though, then it seems after all that the maternal past *does* become incorporated into the present, as that past is reproduced in the present-day mother-child relation. Although archaic and pre-verbal, bodily and affective, the past is reproduced in the present-day mother-child relation as a largely non-verbal, bodily relation. (146)

In other words, the mother's archaic past with *her* mother is reproduced in the relationship she has with her own child.

The mother is then living simultaneously in the past, present, and future.

How does this revelation relate to maternal subjectivity? Stone suggests that this experience is what makes the maternal subject position possible. She says: "This subject-position rests on the mother's placing herself back within the maternal body relations into narrative and render them meaningful" (147). The mother will be able to create her distinct subjectivity as a mother when she can reintegrate her early experiences with her own mother and reinterpret them as part of her life story. This process requires mourning.

In her final chapter, Stone appeals to Freud's concept of mourning (discussed in chapter four) to explore the ways in which two types of loss and mourning are inherent to mothering: mourning the loss of her relationship with her mother as an infant and mourning the loss of her own child as she continues to differentiate and grows into her own self. The problem for the new mother is that, because the pre-verbal memories are inaccessible to her, she confronts that she has, in effect, lost her own archaic maternal past. Stone says:

Mothers undergo the loss of the maternal past, then, both in that they can only re-create that past in a new form and in that, when prompted by this re-creation to try explicitly to remember their past, mothers only become the more aware that it is no longer accessible to them. Here the mother is losing her maternal past for the second time. (156)

What this does, according to Stone, is lead the new mother to lose her mother again. This, in turn, will prompt her to feel the way she did the first time that she separated from her mother as a young infant herself and gives her the opportunity to grieve this loss. Because she is conscious of the loss, however, she can mourn it in a way that is productive and generative of her subjectivity, rather than fall into melancholy (the experience of someone who has sustained a deep loss but is unconscious of what or whom she has lost) as she likely did earlier in her life (92). It is through this process, in other words, that the woman becomes a subject in her own right; it is not by separating from the mother that she becomes a subject but rather by connecting to her.

Stone shows, then, that mothers become subjects in their own right when they connect to their maternal past, recognize its significance in their lives, and mourn its loss in ways that allow them to author their own experiences with intention and awareness. In the process, she illuminates why the pervasive Western presumption of the necessity of psychical matricide for subjectivity prohibits maternal subjectivity from developing—the assumption denies the integral connection between subjectivity and the maternal past in a way that makes it significantly difficult for the new mother to access the time and space needed to become a subject and shows the significance of the maternal for achieving full subjectivity. As a result of Stone's work, a major error in scholarship is corrected and mothers can gain an understanding of their struggles while being offered a way to overcome them.

Stone may have stopped short, however. There are new therapies developing that allow people to gain access to

pre-verbal memories. If this is the case, the possibility of maternal subjectivity as Stone describes it becomes even more genuine, as new mothers would be able to access the maternal past and reconcile it into their narratives in ways that Stone suggests.

Despite my excitement about Stone's project and its implications, it would be greatly strengthened with a deeper attention paid to the effects of race on the maternal experience and the philosophical traditions in which she is operating. Feminist theorists of color have a significant literature on identity and subjectivity that would enhance Stone's insights in interesting ways. One place this is clear is in Stone's distinction between separation and differentiation. María Lugones developed a nuanced account of the various meanings of "separation" (one that implies a complete break and the other, "curdled separation" that implies a continued intermingling of the elements that separate from each other) in her 1994 *Hypatia* article "Purity, Impurity, and Separation." At minimum, a discussion of the similarities and contrasts between differentiation and curdled separation is warranted. While Stone could respond that she cannot incorporate all relevant thinkers, given that a major strength of her work is the way she brings together a wide array of theorists (Freud, Winnicott, Benjamin, Chodrow, Irigaray, Kristeva, etc.), her lack of attention and incorporation of feminist theorists of color working in fields that are so clearly relevant is glaring and it detracts from the work.

Similar points could be made with respect to discussions of the ways that the Western tradition itself is raced. Aside from ignoring key theories, these omissions make it difficult to accept the idea that there is a singular concept of maternal subjectivity; more likely there are multiple maternal subjectivities (not just in the way that those subjectivities are expressed but also multiple spaces and theoretical constructions of maternal subjectivity). I think that this would be a fruitful place to expand Stone's inquiry.

Despite these critiques, Stone's work gives a strong philosophical response to a problem haunting many new mothers. In the process, she offers an intellectually rigorous and innovative approach to the question of maternal subjectivity and its nature. Those engaged in feminist psychoanalysis will no doubt encounter stimulating hypotheses and new paths for further investigation.

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## *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism*

Ewa Plonowska Ziarek (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). 288 pages. \$29.50. ISBN: 978-0-231-16149-7.

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*Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism* seeks to push feminist aesthetics beyond the prevailing critical postures that currently define the field. Ewa Plonowska Ziarek summarizes these postures as belonging to one of two orientations: either feminist aesthetics is concerned with

the political conditions of women's artistic production, or feminist aesthetics is concerned with the gendered, raced, and classed conceptual apparatus of traditional aesthetic theory. While these two critical approaches have made (and continue to make) important contributions to feminist aesthetic thought, Ziarek insists that critique by itself is no longer sufficient. Neither, however, is she content to build upon positive theories of feminist aesthetics that advance a universalized female identity, or a uniquely feminine mode of expression. Thus, the ambitious objective of *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism* is to generate a radically alternative feminist approach to aesthetics. Terming this new approach a "feminist aesthetics of potentiality," Ziarek proposes to explore how it is that female artists and activists have transformed their respective histories of exclusion and oppression into inaugural aesthetic practices and expressive possibilities.

Given her expertise in literary modernism and, in particular, modern women writers, Ziarek draws on the oeuvres of both Virginia Woolf and Nella Larsen to begin articulating the feminist aesthetics of potentiality. With attentive analysis, Ziarek demonstrates how each of these writers—in her own way—explores the possibility of women's aesthetic innovation despite the smothering legacies of sexist and racist oppression. While Woolf touches on imperialism, women's poverty, and the gendered division of labor in England, and Larsen's writing is haunted by the legacy of slavery and continuing racist and sexist violence in America, both communicate the death of the feminine in the midst of their respective "cultural renaissances" (76). What this suggests, Ziarek observes, is that "cultural rebirth" in the modern era takes place through the exclusion and violent oppression of women, and with them, the possibility of their artworks (76). Thus, taking her cue from Woolf and Larsen, Ziarek aims to address how it is that women of early twentieth-century England and America were able to speak at all from these destructive junctures. She examines, that is, how women's innovation unfolded through, in spite of, and in response to women's exclusion and oppression in both political and artistic spheres.

Developing her meditation in a uniquely interdisciplinary way, Ziarek's studies of Woolf (chapter three) and Larsen (chapter six) are spliced with historical, political, and philosophical interventions, all advanced in the service of articulating the feminist aesthetics of potentiality. Dealing in turn with the history of radical British suffragettes and hunger strikers (chapters one and five), Arendt's theory of revolution and Adorno's aesthetic theory (chapter one), the psychoanalytic work of both Freud and Kristeva (chapter two), and, finally, Agamben's biopolitical theory (chapter four), the book's disciplinary transgressions and unorthodox juxtapositions somewhat mirror the radical aesthetic Ziarek calls for. Indeed, in attempting to summarize Ziarek's approach, it is helpful to recall Woolf's own words from *A Room of One's Own*: "First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence. Very well, she has every right to do both these things if she does them not for the sake of breaking, but for the sake of creating" (81). This is not to say that Ziarek's prose resembles the literary experimentalism of Woolf or Larsen's writing, or even features "broken" sentences, but Ziarek does refashion conventional sequences and associations in productive and compelling ways. In this sense, Ziarek's book might be

said to salute Woolf and Larsen's experimentalism with an experimentalism all its own.

For example, in chapter one, Ziarek draws upon Arendt's 1963 *On Revolution* and Adorno's 1970 *Aesthetic Theory*—two books that emerged from their own specific historical, cultural, and theoretical junctures—to theorize the British women's suffrage movement from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. What appears *prima facie* to be a disparate conglomeration of political theory, aesthetic philosophy, and British women's history is rather a chapter tightly bound by Ziarek's sustained focus on articulating the feminist aesthetic of potentiality. The questions at stake throughout this chapter are how British suffragettes managed to transform their own history of exclusion and oppression into an inaugural expressive possibility, and how that might bear upon or connect up to the aesthetics of modern women writers. What we find is that Arendt and Adorno both assist Ziarek in developing a rich response to this line of inquiry.

The chapter begins with a description of the women, groups, and events that played a role in the suffrage movement, focusing particularly on militant polemics and acts. Among others, Ziarek quotes Teresa Billington-Grieg, founder of the Women's Freedom League, who reflected: "our revolt itself was of very much greater value than the vote we demanded [. . .] Militancy is not the mere expression of an urgent desire for the vote, but . . . an aggressive proclamation of a deeper right—the right of insurrection" (quoted in Ziarek 23). Ziarek seizes upon Billington-Grieg's strange formulation, how is it that the demand for women's right to vote could also be construed as an instantiation of women's right to revolt? Is it not the case that claiming a "right" to "revolt" is in itself contradictory, given that rights are generally conferred by the state, and revolt implies an aim to destroy the state? Here, Arendt's formulation of the revolutionary event delivers insight into Billington-Grieg's puzzling assertion.

For Arendt, the revolutionary event consists of two essential components: a radically new beginning and an effort to preserve what has begun. At the beginning of the revolution, these two movements are not opposed, but as a state begins to grow and mature in the wake of a revolution, the two become retroactively separated. "The two sides," Ziarek explains, "are repeatedly disavowed in order to preserve social stability and to prevent the irruption of new revolts in the present" (36). Thus, the suffragette claim of a "right to revolt" points back to this forgotten but necessary opposition at the heart of the body politic. Rights come from an inaugural revolt, and the fruits of revolt can be preserved in the form of rights. Therefore, ironically, continued revolutionary struggle is inherent to the expansion of state-bequeathed rights. Billington-Grieg's strange formulation of the "right to revolt" thus defines militant suffragettes as the legitimate bearers of political innovation in the life of the state.

In order to connect up the innovative politics of suffragettes with the innovative literary expressions of Woolf and Larsen, Ziarek calls upon Adorno's notion of the heteronomy of art. Drawing on Adorno allows Ziarek to think the politics of suffrage and literary modernism together, without sliding into the prevailing critical postures of feminist aesthetics noted above. This is because the heteronomy of art neither posits

art as the direct product of material political conditions, nor as entirely autonomous from them. As a force that “originates in history and then is separated from it,” modern artwork simultaneously reproduces and yet also departs from the capitalist division of labor (Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 227). Ziarek proposes that inaugural possibilities for female expression in the modern period (be they political or literary) germinate in this twilight heteronomous ambivalence: between material conditions of oppression and the possibility of freedom, between damaging repression and radical subversion.

Despite the use Ziarek finds for Adorno’s aesthetic theory, she also rejects and revises other parts of his work. This is yet another example of standard sequences “broken” in the name of creation (a kind of intervention that Adorno might very well have endorsed, writing in *Prisms* that “Defiance of society includes defiance of its language” [225]). The first major point of revision hinges on Adorno’s blinkered conception of the political sphere, which Ziarek asserts, “focuses on labor but ignores gender and race” as categories of political analysis (43). The second major point of revision, which is perhaps the more controversial, hinges on the very plausibility of appropriating the heteronomy of art for thinking about inaugural feminist expression in the first place. For, as Ziarek explains, Adorno understands the rhetoric of “the new” as a symptom of increasing commodification, rather than as authentic revolutionary discourse. Adorno writes, “Since the mid-nineteenth century and the rise of high capitalism, the category of the new has been central, though admittedly in conjunction with the question of whether anything new has ever existed” (quoted in Ziarek 45). Thus for Adorno, aesthetic novelty bears an uncanny similarity to commodity fetishism. The only way aesthetic novelty may point beyond such fetishism is to provoke a “shudder,” deliberately bypassing any comfortable feelings of “consumer satisfaction” on the part of the viewer or listener (45-46). Despite this, Ziarek insists that, “if we read Adorno against the grain of his main argument,” as well as “the dominant interpretations of his work,” we can still detect the “inaugural force of transformation” in Adorno’s heteronomy of art and use it to think about the feminist aesthetics of potentiality (46).

Indeed, it is not Ziarek’s project to replicate capitalist fetishism in philosophical terms. And, in fact, this appears to be part of why she insists upon marshalling so many fields of study and thinkers in her articulation of the feminist aesthetics of potentiality. For without this intersection between historical accounts of political struggle and aesthetic philosophy, psychoanalytic theory and biopolitics, it is all too easy to dismiss the feminist aesthetics of potentiality along with any other rhetoric of “the new” as a symptom of the aestheticization of politics or the commodification of art (20). Developing her account across disciplines is how Ziarek manages to take this risk while still conveying the genuinely transformative force of women’s inaugural aesthetic practices and political expression in the modern period.

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