

APA Newsletters

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Spring 2003

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Feminism and Philosophy

Anita M. Superson, Guest Editor

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FROM THE EDITOR

Joan Callahan

The current issue of the *Newsletter* includes two articles and a collection of articles in a symposium, guest edited by Anita Superson. In the first article, Henriette Dahan-Kalev tells how her reading of African-American feminism helped her to understand not only her own feminism, but extremely important differences in Israeli feminisms, and how this understanding has influenced feminist activism in Israel. In the second article, Brook Sadler reports on some current figures pertaining to women in the profession, and reflects on why academic philosophy is neither an inviting area of study nor an inviting profession for women. Parts of her discussion anticipate elements of the Symposium, *Feminism as a Meeting Place: Analytical and Continental Traditions*, edited by Anita Superson, in which five feminist philosophers (including Anita Superson) from various feminist perspectives talk across and through the analytic/continental distinction in philosophy and show how important philosophical questions for feminists, such as questions pertaining to the self, can be helpfully addressed by a robust and interactive variety of feminist orientations.

This is my last issue as Editor of the *Newsletter*. I am especially pleased that the Symposium on Analytical and Continental Feminisms centers the issue, since it helps to underscore that the *Newsletter* is meant to forward discussions from all feminist perspectives. It has been a profound privilege and an enormous pleasure to work with so many colleagues on this project over these past few years. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dawn Hartford of the APA, for her patience, goodwill, and expertise in getting out each issue of the *Newsletters*; to Eva Kittay and Nancy Tuana for their superb leadership of the Committee on the Status of Women over my years as Editor; to Barbara Andrew, who so generously took over responsibilities for the *Newsletter* while I was ill during the first months of my tenure; to all the scholars who graciously yielded to pleas for their contributions; to those who have so generously served as reviewers; and to the guest editors who have brought us such excellent issues of the *Newsletter*. I am delighted to pass the torch to Sally Scholz, who will serve us well as the new Editor, and who will, I trust, fully enjoy working with so many wonderful colleagues.

About the *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*

The *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* is sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). The *Newsletter* is designed to provide an introduction to recent philosophical work that addresses issues of gender. None of

the varied philosophical views presented by authors of *Newsletter* articles necessarily reflects the views of any or all of the members of the Committee on the Status of Women, including the editor(s) of the *Newsletter*, nor does the committee advocate any particular type of feminist philosophy. We advocate only that serious philosophical attention be given to issues of gender and that claims of gender bias in philosophy receive full and fair consideration.

Submission Guidelines and Information

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

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

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

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

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Nancy Tuana, CSW Chair

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CSW Members Academic Year 2002-03

Lorraine B. Code (2005)

Marleen Rozemond (2005)

Laura Duhan Kaplan (2003)

Jane Kneller (2004)

Diana Meyers (2003)

Charlene Haddock Seigfried (2003)

Nancy Tuana, Chair (2003)

Georgia Warnke (2004)

Ex Officio: Joan C. Callahan, Editor, *Newsletter on
Feminism and Philosophy* (2003)

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Annual Report of the Committee on the Status of Women 2002-03

The Committee on the Status of Women has continued its efforts to encourage diversity in the profession and has supported its mission of facilitating an understanding of issues of gender and the range of positions represented in feminist theories by sponsoring and co-sponsoring sessions on feminist philosophy at the divisional meetings of the APA and through the publication of the *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*.

1 Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy

Thanks to the superb editorial work of Joan Callahan, Professor of Philosophy and Director of Women's Studies at the University of Kentucky, the *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* has provided members of the APA with substantive information on feminist philosophy and valuable discussions of gender issues relevant to the various topics of philosophical investigation. Her tenure as *Newsletter* editor ends with this issue and the members of the Committee on the Status of Women would like to thank Joan for her hard work and feminist vision.

Issues for 2002-03 have included symposia on "Diversity and Its Discontents," Barbara Andrew, Guest Editor (Fall 2002) and "Feminism as a Meeting Place: Analytic and Continental Traditions," Anita Superson, Guest Editor (Spring 2003).

The Committee on the Status of Women is very pleased to announce that Sally J. Scholz from Villanova University will be the next editor of the *Newsletter*, beginning with the Fall 2003 issue, featuring the symposium, "Society for Women in Philosophy Distinguished Philosopher for 2002, Sara Ruddick," Hilde Nelson, Guest Editor. Sally's editorial experience and knowledge of feminist philosophy will ensure that the *Newsletter* flourishes. All future correspondence about the *Newsletter* should be sent to her at the Department of Philosophy, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19085-1699.

2. Attention to Diversity

The Committee on the Status of Women continues to work closely with the Committee on Inclusiveness to develop programs that will expand and enhance the inclusiveness of the profession both in terms of increasing the numbers and respected presence of persons from groups that have historically been subjected to discrimination and by recognizing and supporting philosophical research, teaching, and professional service and activities pertaining to the concerns of such groups.

3. Committee on the Status of Women Webpage

The Committee continues to develop resources that will enhance the CSW webpage.

4. CSW APA Sessions for 2002-2003

Eastern APA 2002: "Gender, Justice, and Globalization," a session organized by Nancy Fraser, included presentations by Seyla Benhabib, Yale University; Maria Pia Lara, Professor of Philosophy at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa; and Anne Phillips, London School of Economics, with a response by Nancy Fraser, Graduate Faculty, New School University.

Pacific APA 2003: "Gender, Race, and Sex," a session on recent work on social identities, organized by Georgia Warnke, examined the following questions: What do feminists have to learn from race theorists and what do race theorists have to learn from feminists? Is gender related to sex in a way that race is not related to anything and, if so, does this mean gender is less socially constructed than is race? Is sex socially constructed in the way some have claimed? Speakers included Linda Martin Alcoff, Robert Gooding-Williams, and Naomi Zack, with a comment by Georgia Warnke.

Central APA 2003: "Feminist History of Philosophy," a session organized by Jane Kneller, explored the contributions of contemporary feminist approaches to the history of philosophy. Issues that were discussed included the role of feminist theory in interpreting and evaluating the work of canonical philosophers, the impact on history of philosophy of recent "retrievals" of the work of women philosophers of the past, and differences among feminists with respect to their conceptions of the history of philosophy. The session served as a chance to assess where feminist historians of philosophy are now, and directions we might take in the future.

Farewell, Welcomes and Thanks: In concluding this report, I would like to thank Laura Duhan Kaplan, Diana Meyers and Charlene Haddock Seigfried, who complete their terms this June, for their very important work on the committee. I am also delighted to welcome Sharon Crasnow, Tracy Edwards, and Anita Superson to the committee.

Finally, a very warm welcome to Rosemarie Tong, who begins her term as Chair of the CSW in July. It is a pleasure to put CSW in such capable hands.

Very respectfully submitted,

Nancy Tuana

March 2003

ARTICLES

On The Logic of Feminism and the Implications of African-American Feminist Thought for Israeli Mizrakhi Feminism

Henriette Dahan-Kalev
Ben Gurion University

Mizrakhi feminists are all those Israeli women who make sense of their lives via two different narratives concurrently: the Mizrakhi narrative and the Israeli feminist narrative. The Mizrakhi narrative tells the story of those Jews who arrived in Israel, during the first decade of its existence, from Arab and Muslim countries. They arrived in a country where the majority of Jews then living there were of Eastern European decent – i.e., Ashkenazi – and who were, for the most part, secular in outlook, and who were imbued with the vision of creating a “new Jew” who would be worthy of living in the new modern state of Israel.¹ Most of the Mizrakhi Jews were religiously observant and traditional in their approach to life. However, they were encouraged to be ashamed both of their historical past and of their culture and to adopt the modern life style of the “new Jew” of Zionist ideology, formulated largely by secular Ashkenazi Jews. This situation led to many Mizrakhim being immersed into an identity crisis that was aggravated by the fact that most of them occupied the lower ranks of the Israeli socio-economic ladder. The only people who were lower on this ladder were the Arab citizens of Israel.

Most Mizrakhim tend to live two lives. At home they live a life that is shaped by the norms, habits and language of their country of origin. Outside of their homes they do their best to act as Israelis; that is, they try to act as the “new Jew” of Zionist ideology is supposed to act. In living both their lives they experience dissonance. While they might feel safe at home among their own, they do not feel comfortable because they are aware that their private persona at home is not consistent with their public persona outside of home. While outside of home, Mizrakhim tend to feel uncomfortable because they are experiencing the need to play a role that is in conflict with their lives at home. For example, as a young Mizrakhi child I made up stories about my family and myself in order to hide my Mizrakhi origins because at school I was taught to be ashamed both of my Mizrakhi origins and my family. At home I was angry because of who I was, while outside the home I lived a lie by creating a false identity for myself. As a child I felt that something was wrong with me because I was Mizrakhi. Today, I feel angry because I was socialized to feel like that then.²

Feminism arrived in Israel in the 1970s. It was brought there by American liberal feminist activists who immigrated to Israel, as well as by some Israeli women who had spent a number of years studying and/or working in the USA. These women introduced the idea of women’s liberation into Israel and in so doing both placed on the public agenda issues about discrimination and oppression of women and provided Israeli women with concepts which allowed them to include in the narratives of their own lives incidents of discrimination and oppression. I was influenced by the Israeli feminists. However when I first read African-American feminists I experienced an epiphany. Their writings helped me understand not only the situation of African-American women, but also the position of

Mizrakhi women in Israel and my own feelings of being an outsider on the Israeli feminist scene.

One of my principal aims in this essay is to show how the ideas of African-American feminism enabled me to make sense and understand the position in which Mizrakhi feminists such as myself find ourselves. Since I see feminism as exhibiting a certain type of logic, and since I believe that many feminists are unaware of this, I first lay out this logic by saying something about feminist approaches to scientific knowledge and then show how this same logic is expressed in African-American feminism. I then make some general remarks about the logical form of the development of feminist thought. Along the way, I point out the relevance of African-American thought for Mizrakhi feminism. I conclude with examples of how particular pieces of African-American thought enabled me, as a Mizrakhi feminist, not only to understand the plight of Mizrakhi women but also to show me what I might do about it.

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Among the better known feminist discussions of scientific knowledge are those of Sandra Harding³ and Donna Haraway⁴ who, largely under the influence of Foucault,⁵ denied (in their different ways) that there exists a common objective criterion which is agreed to by all and which it is possible to apply in order to verify, or to refute, any scientific hypothesis. This was so, they claimed, because all the traditional and accepted criteria in use either gave expression to, or reflected, only the male point of view. Science, as traditionally conceived, left no place, according to these feminists, for a women’s point of view. Harding even goes so far as to claim that the notion of a woman scientist is often perceived as being one that is self-contradictory.⁶ What is more, she claims that because science is so firmly based on androcentric assumptions, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to show that the notion of a woman scientist is not self-contradictory and that women, as women, can contribute something to science that men cannot.

The political message of theorists like Harding and Haraway is that the attempt, be it conscious, or unconscious, to impose the continuing acceptance of the traditional view of science is a totalitarian move that should be resisted by all who are interested in science, be they women or men. One of the reasons that feminists like Harding and Haraway find postmodernism congenial is that postmodernism, in its various forms, is engaged in exposing the so-called neutrality and objectivity of science as it has been traditionally conceived. What these feminist theorists add to postmodernism is that the work of science is influenced by the point of view of the scientist engaged in it, which in turn is influenced by his or her position in the world, and by his or her life experiences, as well as by his or her knowledge and beliefs. Some feminist theorists add to this something they have gleaned from Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, namely, that it is impossible to perceive the world at one and the same time both from the point of view of the master and from the point of view of the slave. However, instead of using the notions of master and slave these feminist theorists tend to talk about viewing the world either as a member of a social group that is positioned at the center of society, or as viewing it as a member of a social group that is positioned at the periphery or margins of society. In other words, what we take to be true about the world, as well as what science tells us about it, is influenced by who we are, where we are, and who it is that is doing the scientific research. Up until now, most science was done by white European males; hence, what we — both women and men — take science to be, and what we think it can and should do, reflects the white European male point of view. So it is not surprising

that people are blind to what women can contribute both to science and to our notions what science is, and what science can and should be.

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The notion that scientific research reflects the view of those who are doing the research is a particular application of a more general idea that anything that is done somehow reflects the standpoint and the knowledge of the person who does it. It follows from this that the understanding and interpretation of African-American women will be different from the understanding and interpretation of white American women, as their life experiences are different. Two of the most prominent African-American feminist theorists to give expression to this point of view are bell hooks (e.g., in *Feminist Theory*⁷) and Patricia Hill Collins (e.g., in *Black Feminist Thought*⁸). The message of both these theorists is that the different life experiences of African-American and white American feminist theorists lead them not only to understand and interpret situations differently, but that African-American feminists feel themselves unable to give accurate expression to their understandings and interpretations of the lives of African-American women while using many of the concepts that the white feminists use. However, the concepts of white American feminists have an almost total hegemonic hold over the field of feminist discourse. Hence, hooks and Collins, in their different ways, come to the conclusion that there is a need for African-American feminist theorists to construct their own separate field of academic discourse in which they can use concepts that they have fashioned to give accurate expression to their understandings and interpretations of their own experiences.

In *Feminist Theory*, hooks employs the terms ‘center’ and ‘margins’ to explain why some ideas are taken notice of, and why other ideas are not taken notice of, in different social contexts. Her principal claim is that ideas given expression by people belonging to groups at the center of society tend to be taken notice of more easily, and by more people, than ideas that are expressed by people belonging to groups at the margins of society. She then adds to this claim another, namely, that those in the center will not see and understand things in the same way as those situated at the margins. She proceeds to make the Hegel-like claim that it is impossible to grasp at one and the same time the experience of women who find themselves situated at the center of society and women who find themselves situated at the margins. This is her explanation for why white women (and men) who live in the center are blind to, or misconstrue, the experience of women who live at the margins of society. This leads hooks not only to deny that what white American feminists understand about their own situation is applicable to African-American feminists; it also leads her to deny that what white American feminists have achieved for white American women, will, as some feminists have claimed, sooner or later, also be the lot of African-American women. hooks comes down very hard on those, such as Betty Friedan, who claim that all American women suffer equally. In saying this, claims hooks, Friedan was primarily thinking of and expressing the plight of only white middle class American women. hooks also claims that the notion that all American women are somehow united in a sisterhood and are fighting a fight for their collective emancipation is a myth. It is a myth because white middle class American women tend to find themselves at the center of society while African-American women, who are often poor, tend to find themselves at the margins.

Similarly, Ashkenazi women in Israel tend to find themselves at the center of society while Mizrahi women tend to find themselves at the margins. The ideas and the rhetoric that were brought to Israel in the 1970s were the ideas and rhetoric of white middle class American liberal feminists. At that time, the original attempt to transfer feminist ideas from the American context to the Israeli one can be seen to be at once daring, yet naïve and insensitive to those groups of women who were excluded, or at least who thought they were excluded, by these “foreign ideas.” Among these groups, apart from the Mizrahi women, were ultra-orthodox Jewish women (both Mizrahi and Ashkenazi), Palestinian-Israeli women, and newly arrived women immigrants from Russia and Ethiopia. As with white American feminists, the Israeli Ashkenazi feminists talked in terms of a universal sisterhood but specifically addressed problems that were of concern only to largely affluent Ashkenazi middle class women. That is to say, they were concerned with problems such as “the glass ceiling” — equal opportunity to men in business, in politics, in the Israeli Defense Forces, and in academia. Mizrahi women on the other hand, were largely worried about getting enough money to feed their families and worrying about keeping their children in school. Whereas Ashkenazi women wanted parity with men, Mizrahi women would have been more than satisfied to have parity with Ashkenazi women. This is something I only consciously grasped after reading hooks and Collins. Reading their books enabled me to realize that because my life experiences were different from those of Ashkenazi feminists, my social and political priorities were different from theirs.

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Whereas white American feminists understand and define the position of women primarily by their relationships to men, African-American feminists understand and define the position of African-American women both by their relationships to men — African-American and white — and by their relationships to white American women. African-American feminists commonly believe that African-American women stand in certain power relationships both to men and to white women and that these relationships affect both the way they understand the world and the positions they occupy within it. In each of these power relationships African-American women are, according to African-American feminists (in Hegel’s terms) the slaves and not the masters. Underlying this analysis is an assumption similar to that made by Harding with regard to science: namely, that as the plight of African-American women has been studied primarily by whites, the possible input of African-American women to understanding their own position has been largely ignored and so their position has been (mis)understood and (mis)described in concepts which were originally fashioned to understand the plight of white women whose experiences are different from African-American women. It will only be possible to understand the experience of African-American women, so African-American women claim, when they themselves study themselves and forge concepts that are specifically tailored to understanding their own life experiences.

Similarly, whereas Ashkenazi feminists define their position primarily in relationship to men it became clear to me that the only way to define the position of Mizrahi women is vis-à-vis not only their relationship to men — be they Mizrahi or Ashkenazi — but also vis-à-vis the relationship to Ashkenazi women. For example, many Mizrahi women work in the homes of Ashkenazi women as their housekeepers, cooks, and child-minders. This obvious fact virtually went unnoticed even by feminist scholars because they never studied the

Mizrakhi women in their own terms, that is, in terms in which they understand their own lives. Their point of view has been largely ignored because it was denied any worth in terms of the prevailing ethos of Israeli society.

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Despite important differences between them, African-American feminism and white American feminism both display the logic of feminism. That is, they both embrace the view that what passes for knowledge is based on a criterion that is partially constructed. White American feminists claim that the theories used both by scientists and the general public to understand the position of women are flawed because they fail to take seriously what women can contribute to the knowledge of their own position. African-American feminists, while accepting this view of white American feminists, add to it the claim that white American feminists cannot speak for *all* women, nor even for *all* American women, for their life experiences make them blind to the plight of those, such as African-American women, whose life experiences are further from the center than are their own. Now one thing that white American feminism and African-American feminism do share is the notion that the first thing that feminists have to teach women to do is to *unlearn* what is accepted to be the objective truth about both their positions.

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African-American feminists point out that African-American women are excluded from science not simply because they are not part of the scientific process, but because their lives are not generally *the* object of scientific study. On even those rare occasions when African-American women are studied by science, their lives are still not the center of the study. That is, the lives of African-American women are studied usually not for their own sake but for what, in comparison with them, it is possible to learn about *other* people. Hence, what emerges about them from these studies is a one-sided, warped, and partial picture of their lives. Science, in other words, does not view the African-American woman as worth studying in her own right and this implies that for science the lives and activities of African-American women are uninteresting and of less value than other people's lives, which are the objects of scientific study. Thus, the claim is made by some African-American feminists that science has a racial bias that expresses the views both of the scientists and of their public. Now, because science has the status that it does, it directly affects what is on the public agenda. Add to this what is implied by the attitude science takes towards African-American women, namely, that their lives are not worth studying for themselves but only, if at all, for what they can illustrate by way of comparison about the lives of others, it follows that science functions to strengthen the position of marginality in which African-American women find themselves. And so it is that, although science claims to be objective, the picture it paints of the lives of African-American women is far from objective. Therefore, the first thing that needs to be done is that science must change its attitude to African-American women. This means that scientists will need to see value in their lives and take what African-American women themselves have to say about their own lives as valuable and what is central for understanding them.

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This task is not an easy one to accomplish even by an African-American woman scientist who is studying African-American women. This is because such a scientist is caught in a bind: on the one hand, as a scientist she has been educated by and initiated into the norms of the scientific community, which is dominated by white European males, and so she finds herself,

however reluctantly, espousing those norms. On the other hand she sees herself as belonging to the group of women she is studying and so feels, at the least, that there is something wrong with the attitude toward these women displayed by science. Now, what the African-American scientist studying African-American women “feels” here is different from what even a white American woman scientist would feel while studying African-American women. The African-American woman scientist has also been educated and initiated into the norms of male-dominated science and so she feels that women's position has neither been accurately understood nor accurately described. However, the African-American scientist feels that her white American colleague is not sufficiently sensitive to the differences in the life experiences between white American women and African-American women. It is this difference in “feeling” that African-American feminist theorists such as bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins attempt to express in their theoretical works.

In general, while all feminists claim that women generally have been unfairly treated by science, because science has simply looked at things from the white-male point of view, African-American feminists claim that white American feminists are blind to the special experiences of African-American women. Hence, the task for African-American feminist epistemology (or the task of the epistemologist adopting the African-American woman's standpoint) is to uncover the forms of bias and oppression that are expressed in the norms both of science and culture as well as in political policies, social practices, and everyday linguistic expressions, that together reinforce the position of marginality in which African-American women find themselves. In doing this they often find themselves pointing out that their white-American sister feminist theorists are often unaware of the special position of African-American women. This is especially so when white American feminist theorists start talking about a universal sisterhood. That is, African-American feminist theorists claim that the talk of a sisterhood that puts all women (or even just all American women) in the same boat is simply misdescribing what is the case. More specifically, their claim is that white American feminist theorists who claim that all women are in the same boat are making a similar mistake that is made by men who claim that all people (men and women) are in the same boat and so what is good for one is necessarily good for the other. While it is true that all people — men and women — are people, it does not follow from this that what is good for one person is necessarily good for another. Similarly, while all women are discriminated against because they are women, it does not follow from this that all are discriminated against in the same way. And so from the premise that all women are discriminated against it does not follow that the same policies will result in overcoming their discrimination.

The first Israeli feminists also talked in terms of a universal sisterhood. We are Israeli women, they claimed, we are all in the same boat. This talk of sisterhood at first blinded me to the differences between the largely affluent Ashkenazi leadership of the Israeli and Mizrakhi women like myself, who came from families who barely could put food on the table. Reading bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins allowed me to see that while all Israeli women may be in the same Israeli boat, some are occupying 1st class cabins while others are in 2nd, 3rd and even 4th class cabins.

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To overcome the situation described above, the scientist studying African-American women, even if she herself is an African-American woman, must start by studying herself and

becoming familiar with the biases and norms she brings to her work, whether she brings them from her home, from her parents, from her scientific discipline or from her teachers. In doing this, every scientist must look at himself, or herself, as if he or she were someone else. If this is successful the scientist will come to see things in a new light. What he or she once thought was objective will not now necessarily seem to him or to her, to be so. This is so because the scientist was taught that he or she must keep himself or herself out of his or her scientific work. Feminist (and other critical) theorists argue that this is impossible. That is, they have taught us that scientists cannot be separated from their scientific activity. Given this, the scientist should, to the best of his or her ability, become consciously aware of who he or she is and see how this influences the scientific work he or she is engaged in. Such an awareness results in a type of reflexivity that undermines the traditional view of objectivity as some fact that stands alone, in the sense that it is completely separate from the person who is aware of it. When an African-American woman comes to this conclusion, she is able to see that many things previously thought to be objectively true about her subjects are simply not so. From her new standpoint, which involves seeing both herself and the object of her study in a new light, she is able to correct many misconceptions and misunderstandings. A similar thing happened to me when I suddenly realized that many things that I had been taught about Mizrahim, and especially about Mizrahi women, were simply untrue. On realizing this, my journey to understanding the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi relationship began. I suddenly saw myself, and my Mizrahi sisters and our history and our culture in a new light. I questioned the shame that I felt towards the norms that were practiced at home. I also questioned the shame I felt towards the Mizrahi girl who I thought I was and where I had come from. I still inquire into my past as a Mizrahi girl and woman who was largely constructed and socialized by the educational system of Israel.⁹

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African-American feminist theorists have drawn attention to the fact that understanding the situation and plight of African-American women requires a lot of *unlearning*. Hence, the scientist must unlearn many things about scientific work and about science itself. Many of these things center around the concept of scientific objectivity — that the scientist should keep himself or herself out of the work, that science is neutral and that there is but one absolute correct objective point of view about each issue. Feminist theorists have denied or challenged all of these traditional beliefs. What African-American feminists add to this is that science as traditionally conceived is but another instrument used to keep African-American women in their place. That is to say that science sometimes functions as a vehicle of oppression. Not only this but the ideology of “scientific objectivity” that goes along with it both hinders scientists from seeing that they are engaged in acts of oppression as well as hinders the people they are studying from seeing that they are being oppressed.

This oppression takes the form of denying that African-American women comprise a distinct social category. Mizrahi women suffer a similar type of oppression. That is, social scientists tend to ignore their existence as a separate social category. For example in his classic study of Mizrahim, *Lo Nehshalim Ela Menuhshalim*¹⁰ (literally *Not Naturally Inept But Socialized To Be Inept*), Shlomo Swirski challenged the explanation given by the Israeli sociological establishment that the ineptness and the lack of success of Mizrahim is a direct result of their coming from Arab and Moslem countries. Swirski argues persuasively that the so-called ineptness of Mizrahim

is a direct result of institutional arrangements and discriminatory policies. In doing this, Swirski was the first sociologist to give expression to the Mizrahi view of Israeli society. However, while Swirski makes some perceptive comments about the position of Mizrahi women, he believes that his explanation of the ineptness of Mizrahi men applies equally to Mizrahi women. He does this because he is simply gender blind. That is, he believes that all Mizrahim, men and women alike, are in the same boat, and because they are in the same boat, the inequality within that boat is negligible. This is similar to the claim that all women are in the same boat and that the inequalities between them does not affect their positioning within the boat. Mizrahi women are not simply women who happen to be Mizrahi and Mizrahim who happen to be women. Being identified as a Mizrahi woman is not simply the result of a social arithmetic function which claims that ‘a Mizrahi woman’ = ‘a non-Mizrahi Ashkenazi + a non-man’. The identity of women is not simply a function of the fact that they are not-men. Rather it is a function of the fact that they are constructed as women in a patriarchal world at a certain time and place. Swirski is blind to this fact because he refuses to recognize Mizrahi women as a distinct social category. In this sense he, too, is insensitive to their particular plight even though he is sensitive to the plight of Mizrahim.¹¹

While traditional normal science may sometimes be an appropriate method to adopt for studying the lives of normal white American women and of discovering objective truths about them, it is inappropriate for uncovering the objective truth of African-American women. These women, in comparison to the normal lives of white American women, live abnormal lives. Hence, it is difficult to believe that the methods of traditional science can be used to uncover the objective truth about their lives. Traditional science itself is part of the problem. What has to be done is to take the “abnormalities” of the lives of these women and to change them into sources of power for them. Women’s power comes from understanding and accepting the real truth about themselves. The truth that African-American women need to uncover is often lost within themselves and must be recovered. This is a struggle of *memory* against forgetfulness. In this struggle memory is not assured victory as in the Marxist story, where in the long run we are promised that alienation will be overcome. African-American women must struggle to bring to consciousness a painful chaotic tale, whose repression from consciousness enabled those who suffered to survive on the basis of false myths and false hopes. Bringing these memories to consciousness is again further complicated by the fact that later generations who had some inkling of their parents’ past often preferred to turn their back on it because of the shame they felt on behalf of, and because of, their parents.

African-American feminists try to understand this situation and to see it for what it is, namely, part of a power game of oppression and exploitation. Those African-American women who have come to this realization have come to understand that the shame that they felt for their parents is unjustified and this has led to those who have internalized this to feel empowered and liberated from the yoke of so-called objective scientific views, which they now realize contribute to their marginalization. Similarly, Mizrahi feminists who have come to understand the situation in which we find ourselves have done so by coming to understand the history of our oppression and exploitation. We no longer feel ashamed of our parents and we feel liberated from the scientific fairy tales that claim we were primitive, backward and culturally deprived.¹²

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Central to the distinctive stance of African-American feminist thought is that the notion that all women are somehow united in a sisterhood is a dangerous illusion that has been propagated by white American feminists and that this illusion itself contributes to the oppression and exploitation of African-American women. As I have already indicated, the claim that all women belong to a sisterhood was mistakenly taken to imply that all women suffer the same type of oppression and so can be equally helped by the same type of policies. As all women are sisters in oppression, it makes no sense, so it was argued, to distinguish between them because of their skin color. What is more, it is claimed that to distinguish between women along the lines of skin color is a form of racism.

However, African-American feminists hold that the above claim is itself a form of racism, for it is used to cover up *real* differences in the *real* life experiences of *real* women of different races in American society. More specifically, the claim is that those feminists nearer to the center of American society, namely white middle class feminists, employ the notion of sisterhood in such a way that it implies the false claim that all women in America suffer just as they do. This, African-American feminists point out, is simply false. Hence, the talk of sisterhood, while perhaps being the expression of a conscious attempt to overcome racism is itself an expression of a form of racism because it denies the different real life situations of women of different races and different skin color in American society. In much the same way, the claim made by Ashkenazi feminists that all Israeli women are in the same boat is a form of racism, for it plasters over real differences between them and their Mizrakhi sisters, not to mention the other groups of women in Israeli society, such as Arab women, ultra-orthodox women, and women immigrants from Ethiopia and the former USSR.

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When feminist theorists talk about oppression they do not necessarily (or even primarily) talk about physical oppression. The physical oppression of women is, unfortunately, a fact of life. However, what feminist theorists usually talk about when they talk about oppression is the mind-set of the oppressor — that is, the way he or she sees the world, which allows him or her to engage in acts of oppression without being aware that he or she is doing anything wrong. Specifically, what feminist theorists do is to draw attention to the ways of talking and thinking that allow people to oppress women without their being aware that they *are* engaged in acts of oppression. What feminist theorists hope to accomplish in doing this is to empower both the oppressor and the oppressed by supplying each of them with the knowledge they need to help them understand what is really going on. What African-American feminists have added to the understanding of oppression is furthering our knowledge of its variety and extent. African-American women, they point out, are oppressed not just because they are women, but also because they are African-American, and also because they are largely poor. Because they experience these three different types of oppression simultaneously, the oppression experienced by African-American women is total and devastating. White American feminist theorists often fail to understand and appreciate this. They fail to understand and appreciate this because they themselves are largely middle class. Then again, their talk of “a sisterhood of all women” gets in the way of their understanding and appreciating the real plight of most African-American women. Hence, some African-American feminist theorists (bell hooks, for example) look upon some white American feminist theorists as part of the problem of African-American feminism

Similarly, I and other Mizrakhi feminists tend to see the Ashkenazi feminists in Israel as part of the problem of Mizrakhi feminism. The Ashkenazi feminists are simply blinded by their own rhetoric. They seem to believe, for example, the fact that women now are not automatically excluded from the pilots’ training program is a great advance for Israeli women. They find it very difficult, if not impossible, to see that for an unemployed single Mizrakhi mother living in a development town, this means next to nothing. They talk in terms of doors that are open for all Israeli young women. But this is simply cheap rhetoric. What doors does it open to a poor, undernourished girl from a development town who left school early in order to help out with the family income? Is it realistic for her to think that she can become a pilot one day?

One of the most poignant examples of Ashkenazi feminists’ blindness to the position of Mizrakhi women is their practice of organizing feminist meetings on Fridays. As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, most of the Mizrakhi women are religiously observant and traditional in their approach to life. This means that, for them, Fridays are devoted to cleaning the house and cooking for the Sabbath. Hence, in holding feminist meetings on Fridays, Ashkenazi feminists are in effect excluding most Mizrakhi women from participation.

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In *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels write that: “The separate individuals form a class only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class: In other respects they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors” (85).¹³ That is, class analysis can only be used to explain but a part of any person’s life, namely that part of his or her life in which he or she is in conflict with members of other classes. In other aspects of their lives, members of one class are in competition with one another. Similarly, feminists have drawn attention to the fact that men have dominated, exploited, and oppressed women. This domination, exploitation, and oppression finds expression in all areas of human society and culture. What African-American feminist theorists have added to this is that not all women are similarly placed with regard to men. Thus, while in some sense all women are oppressed by men, in other respects women are in competition with one another. In just this way, what is good for white middle class women is not necessarily also good for poor African-American women.

What women share is the fact of oppression; but knowing this is not knowing how any particular woman is being oppressed. To know how any particular woman is oppressed one must come to know her concrete situation — who she is, where she is placed, and where she comes from. Different women with different histories and in different situations will, as a rule, suffer from different forms of oppression. To say that they are all sisters in oppression is to say no more than that they are all women.

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The logic of feminist thought is such that it progresses by pointing out that there are important differences within groups where only a unity was previously perceived. It began when feminist theorists pointed to the fact that talk of humanity masked an important division in society that allowed members of one sex to dominate, exploit, and oppress members of the other sex. African-American feminist theorists pushed this logic further and showed that while all women are oppressed they are not all oppressed in the same way. This lesson has been absorbed by many non African-American feminist thinkers who are now able to see that while different groups of women may have a common enemy and so a common need in one area of their lives, in other areas of their lives they are in competition with each other. Some see in this development

the beginnings of the break up of the feminist movement. I however, see it as feminism coming into its own maturity.

*

I began this essay by saying that the writings of African-American feminists enabled me to better understand the position of Mizrakhi women in Israel as well as my own position vis-à-vis other Israeli feminists. After reading African-American feminist literature, it was clear to me that the position of Mizrakhi women in Israel is similar to — note I say ‘similar to’ and not ‘the same as’ — African-American women in the United States. The similarity rises from the fact that both tend to be situated on the margins of their respective societies. Most active Israeli feminists are not poor Mizrakhi women; rather they tend to be middle class Ashkenazi women. Whereas the prime concerns of the middle class Ashkenazi feminists are with issues like breaking the glass ceiling, most Mizrakhi women are worried about finding some decent employment and getting some decent education for their children and for themselves. While Mizrakhi and Ashkenazi women live in one country, most of them live in two completely different worlds.¹⁴

I was not alone in my feeling of being alienated from my Ashkenazi feminist sisters. A number of other Mizrakhi feminists also had similar feelings. At the annual conference of Israeli feminists in 1994, things finally came to a head. At that meeting, a number of Mizrakhi women disrupted the conference and demanded to put issues that worried us on the agenda. In the following year a number of Mizrakhi women established our own feminist association in order to pursue those issues we believe are most important to us and to other marginalized groups of women, such as Palestinian women. This is not the place to relate to the history and politics of the Mizrakhi-Ashkenazi split in Israeli feminism.¹⁵ But I have wanted to show here the relevance of African-American feminist writings for helping Mizrakhi feminists like myself understand the position in which we find ourselves. I have done so in broad strokes all through this essay. I shall conclude this by taking two pieces of African-American feminist writings to show how they helped me understand particular aspects of problems faced by Mizrakhi women, and to realize that priorities of Mizrakhi feminists are different than those of our Ashkenazi sisters. The two examples are both from bell hooks’s *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*.

The first example:

Attitudes towards work in much feminist writing reflect bourgeois class biases. Middle class women shaping feminist thought assumed that the most pressing problem for women was the need to get outside the home and work — to cease being “just” housewives. This was a central tenet of Betty Friedan’s ground-breaking book, *The Feminist Mystique*. Work outside the home, feminist activists declared, was the key to liberation. Work, they argued, would allow women to break the bonds of economic dependency on men, which would in turn enable them to resist sexist domination. When these women talked about work they were equating it with high paying careers; they were not referring to low paying jobs or so called “menial” labor. They were so blinded by their own experiences that they ignored the fact that a vast majority of women were (even at the time *The Feminist Mystique* was published) already working outside home, working in jobs that neither liberated them from dependence on men nor made them economically self sufficient (95).

Even today I can remember the feeling of excitement that came over me when I read these words. While hooks was writing about “Middle class women shaping feminist thought” in the United States, it was clear to me that what she wrote described the attitude to work of the middle class Ashkenazi women who headed the Israeli feminist movement. I now suddenly realized that this was one reason why I felt an outsider amongst them. For me, and for most of the Mizrakhi women I knew, work was not, and still is not, something we engage in “to get outside the home.” Work was something we did to survive.

The second quotation from hooks:

During the early stages of contemporary women’s liberation movement, feminist analysis of motherhood reflected the race and class biases of participants. Some white middle class, college-educated women... identified motherhood and childrearing as the locus of women’s oppression... Black women would not have said motherhood prevented us from entering the world of paid work because we have always worked outside the home in the fields, in the factories, in the laundries, in the homes of others. That work gave meager financial compensation. ...Historically, black women have identified working in the context of [their own] family as humanizing labor, work that affirms their identity as women, as human beings showing love and care, the very gestures of humanity white supremacist ideology claimed black people were incapable of expressing (133-4).

Again, on reading this passage I also felt that what hooks was writing about described, more or less, the different attitudes to motherhood displayed by the middle class educated Ashkenazi feminist and by lower class Mizrakhi women. However, until I read bell hooks’s words I could not clearly articulate these differences in attitudes. Having the means to express the difference enabled me talk about them to other Mizrakhi women. Through our discussions we came to realize that our mothers’ attitudes to housework, motherhood, and children largely mirrored that of the African-American women as described by hooks. This was what they did, it was central to who they were. Through their housework and their parenting they expressed themselves and their femininity. They did not view their housework and parenting as holding them back, as preventing them from having a career outside home. They needed to work in order to augment the meager incomes that were earned by a majority of their husbands. They worked at menial tasks in order to be able to provide more for their children. They worked not in order to get away from home but because they loved their families. However, their need and willingness to work placed them in a position that was open to being exploited by others. And to this day Mizrakhi women are often exploited by employers who pay them less than the legal minimum wage and often require them to work in unhealthy and dangerous surroundings.

The result of these discussions led some Mizrakhi feminists to set up a Non-Governmental Agency, called *The Year of The Worker Woman*, to help supply legal services and support for poor women working in unskilled, labor intensive, and poorly remunerated occupations. Most of these women are Mizrakhi. This NGO is feminist not simply because it is run by women for women. It is also feminist because it practices feminist style politics. Men’s politics is principally a struggle for offices of power; women’s politics is principally a politics

of knowledge — of making people aware of the position they are in and what it is possible to do for changing that for the better. Feminists take seriously the adage: “Knowledge is power.” It is no accident that this NGO is set up by Mizrakhi women. Even though many of those who set up this organization are successful, well-educated professionals, they still remember where they have come from, and so find it easy to identify with the plight of women workers whom they believe are being exploited.

As I have said, I only came to the awareness that Mizrakhi and Ashkenazi feminists have different agendas because they have had different life experiences after I began to read African-American feminists, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins. For this, I will forever be in their debt.¹⁶

Endnotes

1. Any history of Zionism and/or the State of Israel will spell this out in greater detail. A good standard version which may be consulted is Walter Zeev Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (NY: Schocken, 1976).
2. I have told my story in “You’re So Pretty—You Don’t Look Moroccan,” *Israel Studies 2001* Volume 6, Number 1.
3. Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Womens’ Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).
4. Donna Haraway, 1988 “Situated Knowledge: The Science Question In Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” in *Feminist Studies* Vol. 14 Number 3 Fall 1988.
5. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*; ed. Colin Gordon (NY: Pantheon Books, 1980).
6. Harding, 59.
7. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984).
8. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (NY: Routledge, 1990).
9. See “You’re So Pretty, You Don’t Look Moroccan.”
10. Shlomo Swirski, *Lo Nehshalim Ela Menuhshalim*, (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1981).
11. Swirski is not only an academic sociologist he also is a social activist. He even studies the occupations that employ Mizrakhi women. And yet even he is blind to the specific forms of oppression from which Mizrakhi women suffer. I examine Swirski’s book in more detail in a forthcoming paper, “The Gender Blindness Of Good Theorists: An Israeli Case Study.”
12. I have expanded on this in “You’re So Pretty—You Don’t Look Moroccan,” and examined the phenomenon from a more historical / sociological point of view in “Tension In Israeli Feminism: The Mizrakhi Ashkenazi Rift,” *Women Studies International Forum*, forthcoming.
13. Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (NY: Prometheus Books, 1998).
14. I am making a comment similar to Wittgenstein’s in *The Tractatus*, when he claims that “The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man” #6.43.
15. I have done this in a number of papers in Hebrew and, in English, in “Tension In Israeli Feminism: The Mizrahi Ashkenazi Rift.”
16. This paper is based on a talk that was delivered in Hebrew at a conference on *Gender and Feminism* at Tel Aviv University on 29.11.1998. I would like to thank Rakefet Lefkowitz for originally discussing the issues with me and to Dafna Izraeli for reading and making helpful comments on the penultimate version. I also would like to thank an anonymous reviewer from the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* for many helpful suggestions on two previous versions, and Haim Marantz for helping me with the English as well as for encouraging me to persevere with it.

Women in Philosophy¹

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How women are faring in academic philosophy today is a difficult and complex question, which involves the inquirer in an examination of issues ranging from the history of philosophy (and its heroes, ideas, and ideals), to the practices of academia and beyond, to the general social climate toward women and feminism. In this short essay, I offer some brief reflections on these matters. Brevity necessarily requires oversimplification. Nonetheless, my hope is that my reflections here may offer a broad outline of familiar problems and inspire some concrete responses to them.²

Women Philosophy Students

It seems useful to begin by offering some information about the current situation of women in philosophy, as evidenced solely by the numbers of women in the discipline [see Appendix]. In 1949-1950, women comprised 14% of those awarded undergraduate degrees in philosophy; three decades later (1979-80), that number had increased to 28%; the percentage of those receiving undergraduate degrees in philosophy who were women had doubled—probably a result of the dramatic rise in the number of women entering universities during that time. The most recent figure, from nearly twenty years later (1997-1998), shows only a comparatively small increase in the percentage of undergraduate degrees in philosophy awarded to women: 31%. It seems that the rise toward gender parity (50% of philosophy majors being women) has leveled off.

In 1949-1950, 17% of all Ph.D.s in philosophy were awarded to women; by 1979-1980, that number had grown to 24%. But, in 1997-1998, we were still far from gender parity, with only 28% of Ph.D.s in philosophy going to women.

Women Philosophy Faculty

In 1992 (the most recent year for which data are available and a year in which 23% of Ph.D.s in philosophy went to women), only 13.2% of full-time philosophy instructors were women. An amazing 86.7% of full-time philosophy instructors were men.

The situation is a bit different with respect to part-time instructors of philosophy, where a full 26.1% are women. But this figure, still woefully short of gender parity, is only good news if one neglects to consider that it suggests that women philosophers seem more desirable in part-time positions than in more professionally rewarding and stable full-time jobs. That is, comparing the figures for full- and part-time employment shows that women philosophers are employed part-time at nearly twice the rate at which they are employed full-time. An important further point of comparison: of women with Ph.D.s in philosophy, 19.2% are employed part-time, whereas only 4.6% of men with Ph.D.s in philosophy are employed part-time.

Some Difficulties in Interpreting the Numbers

So those are some numbers. But as we all know numbers say little on their own and I would be among the first to advise caution when making a case based strictly on the numbers. Still, the numbers do serve one purpose fairly well: they help us to see that women are not choosing to pursue philosophy as undergraduates, at least not in large numbers. We can’t say for sure, based on the data I’ve presented—or indeed on any relevant data available—whether women are not choosing to pursue advanced study of philosophy; for it is possible that

many who choose to do so are not admitted, or that there is a high attrition rate among women doctoral students in philosophy. And we can't conclude much about women faculty from these numbers, either. It is *possible* that many or some women with the Ph.D. in philosophy do not seek full-time employment in the discipline. According to an APA survey of hiring philosophy departments, on average 15% of total applications for a job were made by women,³ a percentage substantially lower than the percentage of Ph.D.s awarded to women in any given year, at least since 1980. However, we cannot deduce from this information that some women philosophers must not be seeking employment, since the actual numbers of women applicants (as opposed to the *percentage* of women job applicants) *may* in fact be the same as (or greater than) the number of women Ph.D.s. The difference in percentages may reflect the fact that so many people who already have jobs in philosophy apply for other jobs. If currently employed philosophers are predominately male (which they are), and if a large enough number of them make further job applications, then it is *possible* that *all* women philosophers with a Ph.D. do make (some) job applications, and yet comprise a smaller percentage of the overall number of applicants for any given job. But these are just possibilities; again, the numbers don't give us conclusive evidence either way. However, even if it is true that many women Ph.D.s don't seek full-time employment in philosophy, this may evidence substantial disillusionment with their professional prospects in the discipline or other complaints about the culture of contemporary professional philosophy, rather than their decision to stay at home to raise children or their recognition that they just can't cut it in the hard, analytic world of philosophy—explanations that I have actually heard from (otherwise) respectable male philosophers.

One Obvious Conclusion

Keeping in mind the difficulties in analyzing these data in any conclusive or even particularly helpful way, I want to focus on the one incontrovertible fact before us: undergraduate women, who comprise 50% or more of total undergraduates nationally, still find philosophy unattractive as a major.

Philosophy's lack of appeal seems *not* to be a function of the fact that it is a field in the humanities, a field not necessarily holding out the promise of money, status, or prestige. After all, English Literature and Art History, for example, are now predominately female, and these are not fields renowned for producing fat paychecks or solicitations to appear on the nightly news or the talk-show circuit. In fact, according to the National Academy Press, "Among all the fields in the humanities — History, Art History, Music, Philosophy, English/American Language/Literature, Classics, Modern Language/Literature, etc.—philosophy is the most disproportionately male."

So what is keeping women from studying philosophy in college?

The Discipline as Unwelcoming to Women

The answers here require speculation, anecdotal evidence, and reflection—that's all we've got. So, I now turn away from the statistics to reflections that are more subjective in nature.⁴

The first suggestion is that the lack of women philosophy majors reflects upon the small number of women faculty. Women undergraduates lack women role models and mentors to encourage and inspire them to continue their study; to make vivid the possibility that they, too, can contribute to the search for truth, justice, and knowledge that characterizes philosophical study, and to impart the belief that women, too, can be insightful reasoners and lovers of wisdom.

But the presence of women faculty in the classroom, as crucial as it is, is not enough to explain the low numbers of women students of philosophy. To emphasize this point, I offer one brief anecdote. In my second year of teaching, I had a particularly energetic and engaged group of students in an *Introduction to Philosophy* course. I recall coming in to class one day in the middle of the semester to find students talking in an animated fashion about philosophers, whom they proceeded to characterize as bearded, balding, and socially-awkward men. I was stunned: After all, the one-and-only real, live philosopher these students had EVER encountered was me: neither bearded nor balding (nor male)—albeit with a tenuous grasp of the social graces. The remark I made a moment ago about the importance of women philosophers as visible role models notwithstanding, clearly the presence of a woman philosopher on the faculty and in the classroom is not enough to offset some powerful stereotypes and expectations.

So, a second suggestion is that the discipline itself is unwelcoming to women students in a variety of ways. I'd like briefly to catalogue some of the problems here.

First, often (or, I might say, traditionally) few if any women philosophers are included on philosophy syllabi. To take but one case: As an undergraduate, I recall reading only two texts by women philosophers.

But women philosophers, especially of the 20th and 21st centuries, have produced a rich variety of complex and important works in philosophy in all of its subfields. Sadly, many undergraduate philosophy majors will not be able to name more than two or three women philosophers...Simone de Beauvoir, maybe; perhaps Mary Wollstonecraft; possibly, G.E.M. Anscombe or Martha Nussbaum...and there I suspect the list comes nearly to an end.⁵

Second, the philosophical canon has a poor record when it comes to its discussion of women. Throughout the canonical works of western philosophy, women are thought to be inferior, irrational, even *incapable of reason*, morally weak, incapable of political thought, capricious, untrustworthy, and unphilosophical by nature (not to mention having fewer teeth than men). The list of misogynist remarks, and just plain odd or false observations about women, in the history of philosophy indicts most if not all of the major writers in the canon — Aristotle, Kant, and Nietzsche, to name but a few. There is little here to make a woman undergraduate feel like philosophy is a place where progressive thinking about women is taking place. Surely the literature department or sociology, psychology, or even history will have more interesting and less backward things to say about women...⁶

Third, the philosophical canon fails in another way: it excludes the work of women. Recently, some feminists have attempted to recover women philosophers to the canon, claiming their unfair omission from the list of great thinkers (and paralleling similar projects of recovery in other academic disciplines). Notable among such "recoveries" are Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt, who were omitted from the landmark 1967 *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. These theorists are included in the recent update of the *Encyclopedia*;⁷ but they are still missing from most philosophy curricula. A history of philosophy which ignores the existing contributions of women philosophers may seem just as off-putting to a contemporary young woman as a history of America that ignores women.

Fourth is a more subtle difficulty with the very stuff of contemporary philosophy — its central problems, its guiding concepts and ideas, its mode of inquiry. Feminists have been engaged for several decades now in assessing the discourse

of philosophy itself. There are compelling arguments that suggest that rationality as conceived by thinkers such as Descartes and Kant is essentially a masculinist idea or tradition; that the purported objectivity in epistemology, ethics, or philosophy of science actually masks the biases or particular perspectives of mostly upper-class white men; that the emotions are simultaneously disparaged as both feminine and irrational in a way that discredits them and their role in moral deliberation; that the proper limit of political philosophy, the threshold so to speak, of matters of justice, lies at the doorstep of the family home, with the head of the household, presumably and sometimes explicitly the father; that philosophy is unconcerned with the body, with sex, with reproduction, with children...indeed with women and women's experiences and ways of knowing and understanding the world. These critiques, which may be more or less convincing analyses of the philosophical canon and the ideas it discusses and teaches, may not be ones that undergraduate philosophy students are likely to be able to generate on their own, they are so fundamental. Yet, a prospective woman philosophy student may sense that such ideas do not describe her experience and she might develop an inchoate sense of resistance to the bold and alien, or at least radically incomplete, worldview she encounters in philosophical texts. And so, what could have been a mind engaged with the pursuit of truth, justice, knowledge, and wisdom is turned away to other disciplines which, though perhaps no less susceptible to exactly the same sorts of feminist critiques, nonetheless seem to her to offer more amenable environments on the other counts.

Finally, the area of philosophical inquiry which explicitly engages with these difficulties—in assessing the philosophical canon, recovering women philosophers to the canon, addressing ideas and topics traditionally excluded, and challenging the most fundamental assumptions of philosophical theorizing—is still marginalized within the discipline. At worst, feminist philosophy is still in ill repute among the vigilant old guard; at best, it is tolerated but misunderstood.

Remedies

These remarks, brief as they are, suggest some obvious remedies to our problem: hire women philosophers, tenure and promote them; include women philosophers on syllabi; address the misogynist and masculinist claims in the canon directly; discuss the fundamental assumptions, about rationality, objectivity, reason and the emotions, and so on, that guide philosophical work; promote a greater understanding of feminist texts and incorporate them into the mainstream of philosophical discourse. Each of these solutions requires that today's philosophy faculty, men and women alike, do some homework and take some risks in the classroom, in front of colleagues, on committees. Each solution requires far more reflective consideration than I can begin to give here. But perhaps keeping in mind this broad outline will itself do some good and go some distance toward bringing more women into philosophy. And more women philosophy majors may mean more women Ph.D.s and more women faculty and more women philosophy majors...the cycle must begin with bringing more women into the field from the undergraduate years onward.

Now it might be asked why we should be concerned to bring more women into philosophy at all. To that, I can do no more than make the briefest of suggestions.

First, the pursuit of wisdom seems to require as many perspectives as possible.

Second, without women, philosophy risks becoming an isolated and ineffectual discourse in an intellectual world that is increasingly peopled by women in other fields.

Worse, without women, philosophy may become (or some would say, will remain) the voice of cultural or intellectual hegemony: a discourse and intellectual force that is incapable of offering effective social, political, or cultural criticism or reform in the service of the very notions it purports to defend: truth and justice, above all.⁸

Conclusion

To conclude, I'd like to offer one last observation about women in philosophy. I have suggested that the problems with engaging women students in philosophy that I have identified have some straightforward solutions. But more than being pragmatic solutions to pragmatic problems of recruiting women philosophy majors, the solutions suggest that philosophical theory and practice may be changed substantially by the greater participation of women.

I do not believe that women's ways of understanding reality, of acquiring knowledge, or of deliberating morally—in short, of answering philosophical questions or experiencing a reflective life—are essentially, naturally, or necessarily different than those of men. However, I do believe that we live in a society which is gendered in deep and significant ways. As a result, women may have philosophical insights which are importantly different than those that have been offered by centuries of predominately male philosophers and thus, may advance and augment philosophical *theorizing* and *reflection* in unexpected ways.

Similarly, I believe that because women philosophers have occupied the position of a small minority in the discipline and have often had to struggle for professional recognition, women are perhaps well situated to offer helpful criticism of the current *practice* of philosophy—what goes on in classrooms, at philosophy conferences, and with respect to the institutional frameworks within which philosophers develop and disseminate their ideas. For example, I have heard many women philosophers complain of the aggressive, combative, and competitive way in which philosophical discussions are often conducted, which is not at all to say that women philosophers cannot and do not themselves voluntarily roll up their sleeves and step in the ring, ready to throw and roll with the intellectual punches. But it is to say that philosophical discussion might be more inclusive, and even *more fruitful*, if its goal were collaborative understanding, rather than defeat of the opponent; mutual edification, rather than identification of the superior intellect; creative expression, rather than logical consistency at any price; meaningful dialogue, rather than abstract puzzle-solving; honest reflection, rather than strategic argumentative maneuvering. The forces which have made contemporary philosophy combative go well beyond gender, to include the publish-or-perish demands of the academy and a society which seems to have only so much interest in or room for philosophers. But women philosophers, from their vantage as a minority within the discipline, seem to be well situated to suggest a reform of the practice of philosophy.

Endnotes

1. This paper is an adaptation of some remarks I presented in a panel discussion titled, "Symposium: Women in Philosophy," held at Kenyon College in February of 2002. I would like to thank the other panelists, Louise Antony, Eleanore Holveck, Karen Shanton, and Rebecca Stangl, and members of the audience for their participation and feedback. Thanks also to Victoria Burke and April Farmer for their help in organizing the event.

2. All data are culled from the American Philosophical Association and from the *Digest of Education Statistics 2000* (table #257 and table

#236) published by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

3. See the APA Committee on Career Opportunities' "Responses to APA Questionnaire for Hiring Departments."

4. I will limit my suggestions here to issues within academic philosophy on which we might reasonably hope to make some advances; however, this is not to dismiss or downplay the significance of larger social and cultural factors which may include such things as the negative stereotyping of intelligent and opinionated women.

5. My casual survey of a few male and female philosophy majors supported this supposition.

6. Or, at least, one can imagine undergraduate women adopting this view.

7. This point is taken from "How Feminism Is Re-Writing the Philosophical Canon" by Charlotte Witt, posted on the SWIP web page at www.uh.edu/%7Ecfreelan/SWIP/Witt.html.

8. My point here is purely a rhetorical one; I do not mean to imply any particular position with respect to the debate about the ethics of justice and the ethics of care.

SYMPOSIUM — FEMINISM AS A MEETING PLACE: ANALYTICAL AND CONTINENTAL TRADITIONS

Introduction: Feminism as a Meeting Place

Anita M. Superson, Guest Editor
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A decade ago, a group of feminist philosophers working in the analytic tradition formed the Society for Analytical Feminism (SAF). We were driven by the lack of a forum for presentation and discussion of our ideas. The Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP), the only feminist philosophical organization in existence at the time, and one of which we all were members, was shifting its focus to Continental and other kinds of philosophy. This shift, as I understood it, was due to the rejection of "male" traditions, including ways of doing philosophy. Analytic philosophy was perceived by some as "male," and suspected as being hostile to feminism. Those who held this belief thought it ought to be questioned, challenged, and perhaps even rejected outright.

But some of us who were trained in the analytic tradition believed otherwise. We felt that feminism could be done in an analytic way without "selling out to the enemy." Indeed, we believed that analytic philosophy had much to offer to feminism. The rigors of its method and its emphasis on argumentation, we believed, would prove invaluable to unveiling sexist biases and fundamental inconsistencies underlying them. Analytic feminists have worked and continue to work toward these ends. In particular, SAF, since its inception in 1992, has offered symposia at the meetings of the American Philosophical Association on topics such as: feminist issues in analytic philosophy as presented in Louise Antony's and Charlotte Witt's, *A Mind of One's Own*,¹ problems in teaching feminism, the backlash in the profession to feminist philosophy, the dangers of intrafeminist criticism, and a memorial session dedicated to the work of feminist analyst Tamara Horowitz.

Additionally, papers have been presented on feminist critique in many areas of philosophy, including epistemology, ethics, medical ethics, philosophy of law, philosophy of science, political philosophy, rational choice theory, and social philosophy.² A decade later, some of us were of the mind that the time had come to re-unite with our sisters in Continental philosophy and other traditions. Although our "split" was in no way hostile — to my knowledge, none of us has dropped her affiliation with SWIP, some actively participate in SWIP and its on-line discussions, and many SAF sessions have been co-sponsored with SWIP — we felt that we had been working in different directions and that since we all shared the goal of eradicating oppression, we needed to be apprised of the direction each others' work had taken. To this end, we organized an APA session, co-sponsored with SWIP, "Feminism as a Meeting Place: Analytical and Continental Traditions," for which the papers in this issue of the *Newsletter* were written.³ Our discussion was, indeed, fruitful and enlightening. As will be evident from our papers, feminists in all traditions are attacking the same problems but using methods they prefer. There is much to be gained from a multi-directional attack: each tradition will have to respond to feminist criticism on its own terms and not write off feminist concerns as ones

Appendix for "Women in Philosophy"

Data Prepared by Brook J. Sadler

Degrees Awarded in Philosophy by U.S. Universities (1949-1994)

Data culled from the American Philosophical Association and the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

* Data for 1997-1998 are the most recent available. They are taken from the *Digest of Education Statistics, 2000* (table #257) prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Full-time and Part-time Instructional Faculty in Philosophy (1992)

Data drawn from the *Digest of Education Statistics, 2000* (table 236) prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Full-Time

Percentage by Race/Ethnicity and Sex
Total Number: 8195

Part-Time

Percentage by Race/Ethnicity and Sex
Total Number: 4268

important only to other traditions, and feminists will gain strength from acknowledging their common ends.

One goal of SAF has been “to provide a forum for discussion of issues in feminism by methods broadly construed as analytic.” The organizers of and participants in the “Feminism as a Meeting Place” panel have taken SAF from a forum that merely co-existed alongside other forums for feminist philosophical discussion, to one that is united with them, in pursuit of our common goal. They did it gracefully and respectfully, with an eye toward progress, and for this, as President of SAF, I thank them. Also, I thank Sara Goering from SWIP, who graciously agreed to co-sponsor the session. Finally, I thank Virginia Klenk, the first President of SAF, who organized the Society, and Ann Cudd, who also served two consecutive terms as President after Ginger, for their fine service. I hope we do more joint sessions like this one, since open-mindedness and tolerance are the bedrock of knowledge and progress.⁴

Endnotes

1. Louise M. Antony and Charlotte Witt, *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason & Objectivity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1st edition, 1993).
2. For a complete list, see our Website at www.ukans.edu/~acudd/safhomepage.htm.
3. Thanks to Ann Garry, a founding member of SAF, who suggested this idea, and to Heidi Grasswick for the session title.
4. In addition to Ann Garry and myself, the session organizers included Lisa Bergin, Sharon Crasnow, Ann Cudd, and Heidi Grasswick.

Rethinking Autonomy in an Age of Interdependence: Freedom in Analytic, Postmodern, and Pragmatist Feminisms

Cynthia Willett
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In an era of growing interdependence, the concept of autonomy may no longer anchor our basic human needs. Shifting alliances and enmities across local and global communities carry unavoidable consequences for individuals. These shifts remind individuals of the need to establish the right kind of connections, and diminish (but do not exclude) the relative importance of autonomy. Despite these emerging social practices, feminists in the Anglo-American tradition hold on to autonomy as the central concept of moral philosophy. In fact, the focus on autonomy marks the major distinction that I see between Anglo-American feminists and feminists in the continental and pragmatist traditions. The defenders of autonomy acknowledge that the conventional notion fails to reflect the social embeddedness of the individual, but they also believe that the notion is pivotal for subjectivity and freedom. In the anthology, *Relational Autonomy*, a group of theorists set out to demonstrate how the old concept can be revamped to suit a new world.¹ The editors, Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, argue that a revised concept must acknowledge that the individual is “formed within...social relationships and shaped by...intersecting social determinants.”² And while these editors note that postmodern philosophies aim to cast doubt on this central liberal concept, they conclude that “there is no...critique of contemporary accounts of autonomy from any of these perspectives.”³

I would like to take up their challenge from the insights of postmodern feminism and Black feminist pragmatism. The challenge to analytic conceptions of the individual begins, but does not end, with the multicultural concerns that the analytic feminists articulate. Increasingly, massive forces of globalization shape our economic and cultural world. In competition for global markets, corporations are evolving structures that emphasize communication and relationship-building over individualism. These networks are warped by inequalities based on distribution of social and economic capital. I would not question autonomy as *one* vital dimension of the individual. Emerging social practices, however, cast doubt on autonomy as the *pivotal* feature of the moral and legal person.

I argue that proponents of human rights need to situate the discussion of autonomy within a larger economic and cultural vision. This larger vision would shift the central axis of moral and legal theory from the autonomy/heteronomy dichotomy to the role of social bonds, and the dangers of their violation, for individual well-being.

Reconceptualizing Autonomy as Relational

Despite the importance of autonomy, there is no consensus on its meaning. In order to avoid the excessive individualism of the libertarians as well as the excessive rationalism of Rawls, Mackenzie and Stoljar offer a more nuanced definition. As they explain, “autonomy, or self-determination, involves, at the very least, the capacity for reflection on one’s motivational structure and the capacity to change it in response to reflection. This view is underpinned by the intuition that there is an important difference between those aspects of an agent’s motivational structure that she unreflectively finds herself with and those aspects that... she regards as *her own*.”⁴

Defenders of autonomy argue that their theories can accommodate human sociality. They observe that we are “second persons,” maturing as individuals only through relations of dependency on caring and nurturing others. This is a significant point but it does not capture the full meaning of social connectedness for the individual. Most of the time, relations with others focus on a range of stakes (including claims to status, contests for honor, and a sense of belonging or acknowledgment) that should not be flattened out to the single, quasi-biological dimension of nurturing or care. Later I will return to this richer notion of sociality through feminist conceptions of eros and friendship.

Autonomy theorists also acknowledge that “persons, and hence their characteristics..., are constituted...by the relations to others in which they stand.”⁵ The editors interpret this claim as having two meanings.

First is the psychological meaning. Stoljar and Mackenzie argue that social relations may produce elements of the psychological makeup of a person without compromising autonomy. But then I would wonder if the socially constituted self is not in some vital way heteronomous. Autonomy theorists seem for the most part to restrict these aspects of the self that are inevitably affected by social-constitution to self-trust, and especially, self-esteem. They seem to believe that if the mature individual acquires self-esteem, then she can make choices or otherwise act apart from social norms.

But this view of sociality strikes me as too narrow. Cultural identities, such as those between analytic, continental, and pragmatist traditions of philosophy, reflect the fact that we need, as social beings, to develop our personal preferences through connections with others who share similar habits, training, and perspectives. Without these connections, we would experience emptiness at the core of the self. We do

not want to experience our distinct values alone and without acknowledgment from others. We cannot create our deepest values without drawing upon outside sources of meaning. We may struggle to change our cultures, but we often want to uphold our cultures (including our cultures of philosophy) because we draw significant meaning from these external (not just internal) sources of who we are. Heteronomy nourishes the individual and expands the soul.

Autonomy theorists seem to flatten out the dynamic of the social world (full of hostilities and friendships) into secondary characteristics (such as self-esteem) of the individual. If this is true, then I think it is because of the conceptual limitations of the liberal tradition anchored in Locke and Kant. Isaiah Berlin articulates the two basic directions of liberalism in terms of what he calls negative and positive freedom.⁶ Negative freedom names the need to be free from external coercion. Positive freedom entails the hypothesis that there are true goals that define an ideal self; the individual is free only when the ideal self exercises control over false desires.

Berlin also sketches a third but barely noticed concept of freedom. Social groups enduring subordination from colonization, imperialism, or racism focus less on freedom from external control than on the need to be treated as equal members of a society to which one feels a sense of belonging. Oppressed people conceptualize paternalism differently from liberals, who believe that paternalism is a kind of tyranny. The paternalism that subordinated people endure includes what Berlin describes as the “insult” of domination. I will return to this third concept, or “social freedom,” as both a freedom from “insult” and as a positive need to “belong,” in the discussion of Black pragmatism.

Stoljar and Mackenzie acknowledge a second and, I think, more promising, meaning to the claim that persons are constituted through social relations. While the psychological claim focuses only on the ways in which others may influence our sense of self (or at least our self-esteem), a second, metaphysical charge asks whether social relationships constitute the identity of the person. The editors dismiss this charge as of limited relevance to the debate on autonomy: “After all, the metaphysical question of the essential nature of persons is separate from and perhaps prior to the question of the nature of a person’s characteristics and capacities, including her autonomy.”⁷ I want to argue, however, that an ontology that would center individual identity on social relationships displaces the autonomy/heteronomy dualism from the major axis of moral and political debate.

Postmodern Feminism and Black Pragmatism

Foucauldian analyses of subjectivity developed by theorists such as Judith Butler and Ladelles McWhorter unmask the ways in which the autonomy of the subject is an effect of a panoptican society bent on procedures of normalization.⁸ The “autonomous” subject in fact serves as the docile tool of regimes of power — regimes that imprison the body in the soul, to use Foucault’s phrase. Post-Hegelian feminists, including Luce Irigaray and Kelly Oliver, locate autonomy as a symptom of a narcissistic quest for mastery.⁹ In place of autonomy, Irigaray offers a lyrical vision of a society that acknowledges its debt to mothers, and that cultivates meaningful relationships between lovers. Oliver replaces autonomy with an ethics of witnessing the Other.

These two traditions of postmodernism can be viewed as radicalizing negative and positive conceptions of freedom, respectively. For Foucauldians, negative freedom from external coercion cannot rest on the exercise of choice alone. The

choices of the individual accommodate the norms of society unless one engages in radical practices of transgression or what Butler terms “reiteration.” On the other hand, post-Hegelianists such as Irigaray and Oliver might agree with Kant and Hegel that individuals require positive ideals (or norms) of subjectivity. While Kant and Hegel anchor the ideal self in rational autonomy, Irigaray and Oliver root the subject in the yearning for communication between lovers, or other forms of libidinal connection.

Rather than further investigating the post-Freudian theories of eros at the heart of postmodern feminism, I want to turn to a distinctly African-American contribution to what Berlin sketches as the third meaning of freedom. In *Fighting Words*, Patricia Hill Collins defines as a “visionary pragmatism” a theory of justice that fosters an “intense connectedness.”¹⁰ Along with others, she cites Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved*, as an exemplar of this emerging vision. To bring the novel to the center of normative theory, she draws upon an essay by Audre Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic.”¹¹ As Collins explains, Lorde theorized that oppressive racial systems “function by controlling ‘the permission for desire’ — in other words, by harnessing the energy of fully human relationships to exigencies of domination.”¹² It is this concept of oppression that Collins finds in *Beloved*. As Collins explains, for the characters of Morrison’s novel, “freedom from slavery meant not only the absence of capricious masters...but...the power to ‘love anything you chose’.”¹³

How can we conceptualize the novel’s vision of freedom? Lorde’s essay offers two significant elements of this freedom. First, Lorde locates at the core of the person, not the cognitive capacity for reflection per se, but an “erotic” capacity for creative work and meaningful social bonds. In contrast with the view of the erotic as overly sexualized, Lorde explains, “[t]he very word *erotic* comes from the Greek word *Eros*...personifying creative power.”¹⁴ A liberal theory might focus on the damage that oppression does to the individual’s capacity to reflect and make choices for himself. No doubt oppression can and does inflict this kind of harm, and for this reason, among many it is wrong. But the experience of oppression can also sharpen one’s critical insight into fundamental choices. Lorde focuses on the damage that oppression can do to the erotic core of the emotive self. Oppression renders the individual unable to feel properly, and it is this emotional (not abstract, cognitive) incapacity that defines for Lorde the central threat.

A second important contrast concerns the basic direction of the psyche. The liberal view cherishes the capacity of turning inward, to reflect upon one’s motives and beliefs. Lorde does not exclude reflection, but emphasizes different capacities at the core of the person. The individual grows as a person from a creative engagement that begins with, and culminates in, relationships with others. The idea of expanding the self by turning outwards appears repeatedly in American visions from Dewey and Du Bois to Toni Morrison. In *Beloved*, Morrison describes love through the image of a turtle able to stretch its head outside of the “bowl” or shell, described also as a “shield.”¹⁵ As Lorde explains, the Greek term “eros” names, not a turn inward, but a centrifugal pull of the self outwards. The individual grows with, not in distance from, the community.

A liberal, analytic conception of a relational theory of autonomy acknowledges that social relations play a role in individual well-being, but consigns them to the background, as props for the development and maintenance of the self-reflective subject. The primary focus of the liberal subject is on a first-person narrative of self-ownership. A pragmatist

vision of the individual focuses on the social emotions of individual development, and unfolds in a drama of the self in relation with others. Social relationships move to the foreground of the plot.

Lorde's poetic discourse on erotic drive takes us some way towards understanding visionary pragmatism. This ethic of eros, however, will strike the defender of autonomy as sentimental, and in part for good reason. Morrison herself cautions against over-emphasizing the importance of love in her novel. Lorde's essay, written in the cultural climate of the 1970s, articulates libidinal sources of creativity and selfhood, but does not lay out in full the sense of connection that defines the center of Morrison's novel.

In "Home," Morrison explains that the "driving force of the narrative is not love... [but] something that precedes love, follows love, informs love, shapes it, and to which love is subservient."¹⁶ The contrast between love and that which precedes love indicates what is missing from interpretations of the novel that, perhaps, are overly influenced by Lorde. Collins glosses freedom as "the power to 'love anything you chose'"; but Morrison had not written the word "power." Morrison's text reads: "a place where you could love anything you chose...that was freedom."¹⁷ Instead of power, she had written of freedom as though it were a place.

The driving force of the narrative is not love, Morrison notes, or at least not "the fulfillment of physical desire."¹⁸ To be sure, Morrison is echoing concerns of Collins among others: the love that the novel explores is not the sentimental, romantic image that we sometimes oppose to enlightened self-interest. The driving force of her novel is not love, but precedes love, as a "necessity": "the necessity was for connection, acknowledgment, a paying-out of homage still due."¹⁹ The repetition of the word "necessity" indicates a fundamental desire that is itself not a choice because it is not an option. Acknowledgment is a basic human need.

Spiritually, we understand the connections that we enjoy in terms having less to do with the sublimation of libidinal desire, as Lorde's essay would suggest, than with a sense of debt, or homage due. The term 'home' names better than does the term 'love' that sense of connection that compels the self to encounter sources of meaning and commitment outside itself. Place as a sense of origin and belonging names what a people in diaspora may seek.

In order to avoid the excessively physical and sexual connotations of eros, we might name the force that Morrison describes as "social eros." The Greek term fits with Morrison's return to ancient Greek and African cultures in order to articulate the American sensibility that she explores in her novels.²⁰ She explains that "[a] large part of the satisfaction I have always received from reading Greek tragedy, for example, is in its similarity to Afro-American communal structures (the function of song and chorus, the heroic struggle between the claims of community and individual hubris) and African religion and philosophy."²¹

But if social eros replaces autonomy on the central axis of normative theory, then what term best names the harm that oppression does? Morrison meditates on "the concept of racial superiority," and she describes this concept as "a moral outrage within the bounds of man to repair."²² "Moral outrage" is a common translation for the Greek term "hubris." In "Unspeakable Things Unspoken," she points out that the struggles between community and hubris define the plot of tragic drama. In Greek tragedy, it is often the function of the chorus (representing the voice of the *demos*, or the common working people) to warn against hubris.

According to Aristotle, hubris is an "insult," or "a form of slighting, since it consists in doing and saying things that cause shame to the victim... simply for the pleasure involved... The cause of the pleasure thus enjoyed by the insolent man is that he thinks himself greatly superior to others when ill-treating them."²³ Today in the context of both domestic and international politics, we might think of hubris as an act of arrogance, or a crime of humiliation. The ancient Greek *demos* (or working poor) enjoyed moral and legal codes against hubris, and they thought of these codes as ways to control the excesses of powerful elites. The enlightenment philosopher who defines freedom through the needs of the middle class borrows much from classical sources but overlooks the political tools of the working poor and those who otherwise lack the status of the elites. Morrison returns to ancient sources of democracy through her interest in classical tragedy, and, like other moderns, she eschews the ancient male-centered polis based on honor and status. But if the modern liberals were right to reject the culture of honor, they occluded from their vision the social ethos of ancient democracy. Morrison's pragmatic vision awakens the spirit of a different kind of democracy — and what Berlin calls a third type of freedom. The central axis of moral and legal discourse that she explores is not autonomy and heteronomy. Morrison's central focus is on friendships in communities and among diverse peoples, and on the arrogance that tears these bonds apart.

Endnotes

- I am grateful to Anita Superson, Ann Cudd, Donald Koch, and Bill Lawson for very helpful remarks on an earlier version of this essay.
1. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., *Relational Autonomy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
 2. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 4.
 3. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 4.
 4. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 13.
 5. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 7.
 6. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays in Liberty*, ed. Isaiah Berlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 118-172.
 7. Mackenzie and Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy*, 8.
 8. See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies and Pleasures* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000).
 9. See Kelly Oliver, *Beyond Recognition* (Bloomington: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); and Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
 10. Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 188.
 11. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Fremont, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 53-59.
 12. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 182.
 13. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 166.
 14. Lorde, *Sister*, 55.
 15. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 105.
 16. Toni Morrison, "Home," in *The House that Race Built*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Random House, 1998), 7.
 17. Morrison, *Beloved*, 105.
 18. Morrison, "Home," 7.
 19. Morrison, "Home," 7.
 20. Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," in *The Black Feminist Reader*, ed. Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 24-56.
 21. Morrison, "Unspeakable," 25.
 22. Morrison, "Unspeakable," 39.
 23. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985). See especially Irwin's glossary entry for "wanton aggression," which is how he translates "hubris," p. 432.

Hermeneutics or Postmodernism?

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Two continental philosophies have seemed important to feminism: the critical theory of Karl Marx and Jürgen Habermas, and the postmodern or social constructionist approach stemming from the work of Michel Foucault. Marx locates the sources of oppression in capitalist relations of production and Habermas in what he calls “the colonization of the life world.” Postmodernism ostensibly goes further by situating oppression in the very identities we possess as men and women, blacks, whites, Latinas, homosexuals, heterosexuals, and so on. On the postmodern view, the implications of power do not arise only at the level of our social institutions and political organizations but are embedded in who we are, in the way in which our racial, gender, and sexual identities are formed. At the same time, whereas critical theory takes it to be part of its task to indicate emancipatory potentials within existing social relations, postmodernism has been much less helpful. Indeed, if power is located in who we already are, as postmodernists argue, it is difficult to see how it can be overcome. In this paper, I want, first, to review the advance postmodernism makes over critical theory and then, second, to show the advance to be made over postmodernism by introducing a third continental philosophy, hermeneutics, into feminist thinking. While few feminists have thus far sought to mine the resources of hermeneutics, I want to argue that they allow for the sort of criticism and emancipation that postmodernism denies.

For feminists, postmodernism’s important move is a genealogical one. Critical theory attends to the interactions between subjects and asks how they can be made less oppressive and more egalitarian. Postmodernism denies that the subject can be the starting point for reflection, since we have to ask first how the subject comes to be the subject — the racial, gendered, and sexual subject — it is. Rather than asking at the outset, then, how men and women can be equal, we need to ask, first, how the identities of men and women are constructed, how the binary itself, the opposition between men and women, male and female comes to exist and what assumptions, ideas, and expectations it involves. Thus Monique Wittig insists that the category of women is a social and economic one,¹ while Denise Riley looks to the various complexes of concepts and ideas that construct women at various points in history.² She argues, for example, that Medieval Christian theology constitutes women within a vocabulary centered on ideas of nature, the soul, eternal life, and contamination. To be a woman at this time is to have a body in danger of contaminating one’s soul, while to be a man is to possess a soul that is less at risk. By the 18th century, however, the configuration of the gender of women includes their soul. Neither sexuality nor gender are confined any longer to the body in contradistinction to the soul, but, instead, encompass all aspects of identity.

Women are constructed by a different set of issues in the 19th century, Riley thinks. The domain of discourse no longer encompasses the opposition between soul and body but looks instead to that between the social and the political. Women are now identified with a sphere of domesticity that extends to the society as a whole and defines their natures in terms of a concern for social hygiene, education, sexuality, childbearing, and child rearing. This identification of women with the social replaces an identification with nature but also defines women

in opposition to a construction of the political sphere which, in turn, becomes the sphere of juridical and government power. To allow women entry into this sphere would do worse than unreasonably pollute important matters of legislation with feminine questions of housing, illness, and care for working class populations. In addition, it would remake the political sphere as a social one and remake women, defined as they are in social terms, as men.

I think it is important to be clear on Riley’s point here. If the 19th century did not think women capable of politics and the 21st does, or if Christian theology thinks that women are imperfect men while the 18th century thinks women are perfect as the helpmate of men, the two eras do not differ merely in the characteristics they ascribe to women. Rather, they differ in what they take women to be: an imperfect man at one point in history and perfect woman at another, a social being in the 19th and something else in the 21st century. In each case, the substrate, women, is a different substrate, constituted within a different set of oppositions, body vs. soul, nature vs. reason, social vs. political.

From the point of view of other postmodern analyses, the genealogy of identity must go even deeper, from gender to sex, since, not only are our genders as men and women constructed ones, but so are our sexes as male and female. For Judith Butler, for example, sex is the product of power, specifically, the product of a “compulsory heterosexuality.”³ Support for this sort of claim is easiest to find, it seems to me, in medical attitudes towards intersexuals. In cases in which anatomy and biology conflict or in which anatomies are ambiguous, doctors typically assign either a male or a female sex and carve the external genitals and internal organs to create an anatomy as appropriate as possible to that assignment.⁴ But how are such assignments made? In large part they follow the norms of heterosexual sex. Thus, adequate penises are those that are large enough for vaginal penetration and where they are too small they are often refashioned into clitorises irrespective of the infant’s chromosomes. Indeed, in the now famous case chronicled by John Colapinto in *As Nature Made Him*, a botched circumcision led to doctors castrating an infant completely and assigning him a female sex. The alternative, his parents were advised, was that he would be unable to engage in heterosexual sex and would have to “live apart.”⁵ Conceptions about what men and women ought to be able to do, the sorts of sexual activities in which they ought to be able to engage, appear to drive our decisions about their sex. Or as Butler puts the point, “[t]he category of sex imposes a duality and a uniformity on bodies in order to maintain reproductive sexuality as a compulsory order.”⁶

For Wittig, in fact, heterosexual activities define our gender identities so tightly that lesbians cannot be women. Women cannot be women unless they are defined as objects for men and women’s emancipation follows the route of a lesbian identity that allows for emancipation from women.⁷ For Butler, however, lesbians do not escape gender norms as easily, but instead continue to be defined in terms of them, as oppositional, deviant, and the like. We cannot escape a compulsory heterosexuality but are, instead, embodiments of it. Yet, if a compulsory heterosexuality forecloses escape from gendered identities, what possibilities are there for an emancipatory politics? Butler insists that as subjects we are not only produced but also continuously reproduced in practices and discourses. Hence, although we cannot separate ourselves from the identities we are in order to reflect on and alter their oppressive and exclusionary aspects, we are capable of “resignification, redeployment, subversive citation from

within, and interruption and inadvertent convergences with other [power/discourse] networks.”⁸

Critical theorists have wondered whether this possibility is enough, however, since it lacks the normative dimension connected to the Enlightenment conception of social criticism or reflectively grounded action. We can undertake genealogical investigations of the route by which we become the identities we are, but any criticism of these identities is already implicated within the networks of discourse and power that produce them. Likewise, we can resignify, redeploy, and subvert, but we cannot appeal to reasons for doing so that transcend the discursive practices within which a given reason counts as a reason. For Nancy Fraser, these restrictions indicate the limits of Butler’s analysis, since they undermine any capacity to indicate why resignification is good.⁹ If identity is always a product of power, why bother resignifying from one product of power to another? Why not maintain the form of oppressive identity we already possess? K. Anthony Appiah remarks:

It is crucial to remember that we are not simply black or white or yellow or brown, gay or bisexual, Jewish, Christian, Moslem, Buddhist or Confucian but that we are also brothers and sisters; parents and children; liberals, conservative, and leftists; teachers and lawyers and automakers and gardeners; fans of the Padres and the Bruins; amateurs of grunge rock and lovers of Wagner; movies buffs; MTV-holics, mystery readers; surfers and singers; poets and pet-lovers; students and teachers; friends and lovers...¹⁰

This reminder can help to answer the questions I asked above if we use it to move from a postmodernist to a hermeneutic account. For if identities are socially constructed, they are more importantly ways we understand ourselves. If to be a woman or a man, a male or a female, is to be constructed in a certain way within certain discourses of power, it is also to understand oneself and to be understood by others in a certain way. Because of our histories and the contexts of language, action, and practice in which we live, we understand one another in gender and sexual terms among others. We focus on those features of anatomy that more or less compose sexes and we interpret other features of individuals — their activities, gestures, movements, and orientations — in terms of them. But interpretations possess two salient characteristics: they are not hegemonic and they admit of distinctions between better and worse.

Consider interpretations of texts. Such interpretations do not exclude alternatives. We do not suppose that because we can understand Jane Austen’s *Emma* as a *Bildungsroman*, we cannot also understand it as a love story or a story about a would-be novelist who tries to organize the lives of others the way a novelist organizes the lives of her characters. Instead, we take it for granted that a book can be read on many levels, that it can be understood in different ways and that none of these ways necessarily preclude others. Rather, our understanding of a text is keyed to the concerns we bring to it and the questions we ask of it.

An emphasis on the non-hegemonic character of identity issues from similar considerations: to understand others or ourselves as women is not to say that they or we are only women. It is rather to say what they or we are from the perspective of certain questions: those, for example, of equal opportunity, menopause, or shared responsibility for child care. For other questions, gender will be irrelevant. Moreover, the questions to which gender is an intelligible response now may not be those for which it is an intelligible response in the future.

For example, we no longer ask whether Virginia Woolf was “a great literary artist” or a “great woman of letters,” as Philip Rahv did.¹¹ Similarly, in the future we may no longer ask whether an applicant for a tenure-track position is a man or a woman. If the question is relevant now, it may not always be so. Or so we can hope. Our questions about who we are change and so do the answers. Just as we no longer understand people as witches or non-witches except, perhaps, within New Age religious contexts, we can look forward to the day in which we no longer understand people as women or non-women, except perhaps within limited medical contexts.

This analysis goes some way in defining the injustice of sexism insofar as sexism defines certain people as only women. Rather than recognizing the multiple identities people have and the limitations of the contexts in which any one of them is relevant, sexism insists that one of them is always relevant, that women are always women, whether they are giving birth, writing novels, or engaging in athletic activities. Even if we claim that certain people are women or females, however, it makes no interpretive sense to claim that they are only women or females, that they can be understood in no other way. Yet, how are we to distinguish the contexts in which gender interpretations are valid and those in which they are not? A second virtue of hermeneutics, it seems to me, is its insistence on distinguishing between better and worse interpretations. The hermeneutic tradition has typically looked to the circle of part and whole: an adequate understanding of a text is one in which our understanding of each of its parts is consistent with our understanding of others and the whole. We understand how each part has its place in the whole and how the meaning of the whole reflects the fit that each part establishes with each other part. Questions to ask of a text are potentially appropriate when they allow the parts of the text to coalesce with one another in this way to form a coherent whole.

Again, this criterion helps define sexism. Emphasizing the multiplicity of identities indicates that we shall always be able to understand others and ourselves in more than one way. At the same time, if at least part of the merit of any particular understanding of identity depends upon its success in unifying part and whole, then interpretations appealing to gender are sometimes misplaced. Riley offers one example of the difficulty they can pose in noting the contradictory uses British anti-suffragists made of ascriptions of gender: in denying women the vote they claimed that women were too different from men to vote. Yet, if this argument was rejected, they claimed equally forcefully that women were just like men so that giving women the vote would double the burden of counting votes without changing the outcome in any perceptible measure.¹² Here it is difficult to see how the parts — women as both too different from men to vote and too exactly like them to vote — can be unified into any consistent whole. The question, are women sufficiently like but not the same as men that they are suitable for suffrage, is not a question that admits of a coherent answer.

The same incoherence affects contemporary legal and medical understandings of sex. If physicians follow a “compulsory heterosexuality” in performing surgeries on infant intersexuals, courts often seem to deny just this criterion with regard to transsexuals. In the case of *In re Estate of Gardiner*, J’Noel Gardiner, a male-to-female transsexual, sought to inherit the estate of her deceased husband, Marshall Gardiner.¹³ The Kansas Supreme Court denied the petition. It sided with the District Court and reversed the Appeals Court in arguing that J’Noel Ball was not a woman despite her sex reassignment

surgery. Following an earlier Texas case and the Kansas District Court, the Kansas Supreme Court wrote, “The male chromosomes do not change with either hormonal treatment or sex reassignment surgery. Biologically, a post-operative female transsexual is still a male.”¹⁴ Hence, the marriage between J’Noel and Marshall had never been a valid one under Kansas family codes that prohibit non-heterosexual marriage. What happens, then, to reconstructed intersexuals, altered in their infancy by a medical profession eager to render them capable of heterosexual relations, if courts deny those relations legitimacy on the basis of chromosomes? The difference between chromosomes and anatomy and between medical and legal opinion suggests that we have no unified interpretation of sex. Where a unification of part and whole is difficult in cases of textual interpretation, we assume that we are asking the wrong question. We might come to the same conclusion in asking the question of gender in the quite broad contexts of suffrage, surgery, love, and marriage.

The understanding of meaning is reciprocal. If we no longer understand Virginia Woolf as a “secondary” figure “in the history of English letters,”¹⁵ it is quite easy for us to see in this assessment the prejudices about women that informed Philip Rahv’s sense of her. By the same token, if we continue to insist on understanding people as either men or women, we can also ask what this understanding says about ourselves. Who are we such that people appear to us primarily in these terms? What does understanding a person as gendered or sexed reveal about our framework of interpretation? Such considerations suggest the route to an emancipatory politics that does not give up on the genealogical insights of postmodernism. Such a politics would demand recognition for the plural and contextual character of identity, emphasizing the variety of ways we can understand who we are and struggling against the reduction of our identity to one meaning. Moreover, it would encourage discussion of which questions to ask in which contexts. Indeed, an emancipatory politics would ask whether certain ascriptions of identity, including gender, are not so frequently bad interpretations that we might as plausibly give up on them as we have on assigning people statuses as witches or non-witches. If interpretations from the point of view of gender are inconsistent and shot through with hypocrisy, if they ruin lives, perhaps we should concentrate on strengthening other interpretations of our identity with more potential. To be sure, postmodernists will be suspicious of any form of identity because of its exclusionary tendencies. For this reason, it is important that we remember that no form of identity can encompass all the different ways we can understand who we are.

Endnotes

1. See Monique Wittig, “One is Not Born a Woman,” in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 265-271.
2. Denise Riley, “Am I That Name”: *Feminism and the Category of Women in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
3. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 18.
4. Individuals with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, whose external genitalia can be those of “normal girls,” often have their internal testes removed. See the case of Jane Carden in Natalie Angier, *Woman: An Intimate Geography* (New York: Random House, Anchor Books Edition, 2000), 29-32.
5. John Colapinto, *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 16.
6. Judith Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism,’” in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, and Nancy Fraser (New York: Routledge, 1995), 35-57, at page 52.

7. Monique Wittig, “One is Not Born a Woman,” 271.
8. Judith Butler, “For a Careful Reading,” in *Feminist Contentions*, 127-143, especially page 135.
8. Nancy Fraser, “False Antitheses: A Response to Seyla Benhabib and Judith Butler,” in *Feminist Contentions*, 59-74, at pages 67-68.
10. K. Anthony Appiah, “Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections,” in *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race*, eds. K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 30-105, at pages 103-104.
11. See Philip Rahv, “Mrs. Woolf and Mrs. Brown,” in *Literature and the Sixth Sense*, ed. Philip Rahv (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1969), 326-330, at page 329.
12. Denise Riley, “Am I That Name,” 67-95.
13. “In The Matter of the Estate of Marshall G. Gardiner, Deceased,” *Kansas Supreme Court*, 85030.
14. Philip Rahv, “Mrs. Woolf and Mrs. Brown,” 330.

Fantasies for Empowerment and Entitlement: Analytic Philosophy and Feminism

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When Anita Superson invited me to participate in the panel for which this paper was written,¹ I eagerly agreed. It was only later that I realized I had no idea what to say. I am an *Ur* analytic philosopher; to call me ignorant of the Continental tradition would be an insult to ignorant people. (I did once try to use “ressentiment” in a paper, but I misspelled it.) I am not an advertisement for intellectual cross-fertilization.

On the other hand, I thought, maybe I’m working with the wrong metaphor. Maybe the session hadn’t been meant to be (or to be only) a display of hybrid vigor. Maybe I was meant to come to this session and just be *me*. Maybe the idea was that some people like me (analytic philosophers) would get together with some people not like me (Continentalists) with the aim of talking about some of our mutual interests and concerns as feminists — that these common interests and concerns might motivate us feminists, at least, to seek connections across those historical and quasi-methodological boundaries that divide our discipline. Sort of like *feminism* provides the *meeting ground* for people from the *analytic* and *continental* traditions.

Duh.

Well, the fact is, I’m a little defensive about how little I know about Continental philosophy, and about how little my own philosophizing has been influenced (as far as I can tell) by work in the Continental tradition. But again, I may be missing the point. Maybe the idea of getting people from different traditions talking together is not to get those different traditions to dissolve or merge into one “super-tradition,” but is rather something else. After all, one of the most prominent themes in feminist writings over the last couple of decades has been the importance of embracing *human difference*. Critical race theorists, anti-colonialists, and queer theorists have joined feminists in decrying the chauvinism hidden within “melting pot” ideals: metaphors notwithstanding, the actual historical processes by which outsiders and newcomers are incorporated into dominant cultures have been anything but gentle meldings. Assimilation is an asymmetrical process — the assimilatee changes, the assimilator does not. The notion of “difference” presumes — not in its logic, as some have argued, but certainly in its use — a norm against which variation is measured.

So maybe the point of the gathering, and gatherings like it, is to see what these different traditions, each in its particular way, have to offer feminism. Or, to be more precise, to see what different feminists have found these different traditions have to offer *their* feminism — to see what analytic philosophy or Continental philosophy looks like through the eyes of a feminist practitioner thereof.

A great many feminist philosophers have written about the “maleness” of philosophy. Back in 1983, Janice Moulton described the “adversary method” that she claimed was the norm for philosophy: it valorized aggression, she contended, and in doing so, promoted a characteristic for which men were praised and women were censured. Apart from the fact that this engendered a double bind for women — be a good philosopher and a bad woman, or be a bad philosopher and a good woman — Moulton argued that the method itself was a bad one for philosophy. It amounted to a kind of trial-by-ordeal for philosophical claims that could not, at its best, establish constructive new truths, but only eliminate falsehoods — and it rarely performed at its best.² Genevieve Lloyd, at around the same time, detailed the ways in which the foundational concept *reason*, has been, throughout a good deal of philosophical history, explicated by means of a method of invidious contrast with traits associated with women and the feminine.³ Naomi Scheman has often argued that standard philosophical preoccupations, like skepticism and solipsism, are artifacts of the distorting processes by which male gender identity is formed.⁴ Lorraine Code has pointed to the prime construct of mainstream epistemology — *S* — the featureless, unlocated knowing subject (and we know what *S* knows: *p*) as evincing a gendered refusal to attend to the actual epistemic concerns and practices of real, embodied knowing subjects.⁵ This trope of disembodiment is played out as well in the very conception of the analytic enterprise: analytic philosophers place considerably less emphasis on history than do our Continentalist counterparts, and when we do read history we often do it “New Criticism” style, in translation, without attention to the cultural or historical context in which the work was produced.

The features of philosophy that draw this kind of fire are, to a very large extent, features that are hallmarks of the analytic tradition. The emphasis on formal principles of argumentation, and the premium placed on precision of expression — a precondition of the ethos of refutation by counterexample, Moulton’s special bugbear — are characteristic of the “linguistic turn,” the founding moment of analytic philosophy. Reason, of course, has been valorized in every Western philosophical tradition at one time or another, but arguably it is the analytic tradition that has tended most towards treating reason and rationality in formalistic, abstract terms. Skepticism — whether Scheman is right or wrong about its origins in male paranoia — has certainly been a preoccupation of analytic epistemology. And Code is right in identifying the assumption that knowers are fundamentally alike as one of the working idealizations of that same sub-field.⁶

Then too, there is the testimony of many women, who report finding philosophy, at least, as it’s done in analytic departments, alienating. The features of the enterprise that such women tend to cite in this context are very similar to the features singled out by the critics as being normatively male. So women say that they find the style of philosophical exchange repugnant: it is contentious and ill-mannered (“you can’t get a word in edgewise”), and the people who prevail (i.e., the *men* who prevail) often appear to be the ones who are willing to shout the loudest and talk the longest — or, at any rate, the ones who are able to pick the most nits. They

feel hamstrung, they say, by the (stated or unstated) rules according to which all discussion must be coolly rational, while emotion and “gut feelings” are *verboden*. They find “thought-experiments” — anemic violinists, brains in vats, veils of ignorance — to be twice as weird as science fiction, with not half the entertainment value. Finally, they find the relentless abstraction both exhausting and pointless — when do we ever get to talk about *real* people in *real* situations? When do we stop playing mind games and start talking about things that matter?

Many feminist philosophers believe that it is just such features as these that account for the dearth of women in our field. Philosophy of this sort, it is said, is tuned to the key of male. I am not convinced that this is the explanation for why so few women enter the field of philosophy — for one thing, most *men* find philosophy alien, and cite, in explanation, the very same features that women do — but I don’t want to argue about that here. I do not even intend to dispute the claim that the various features I’ve mentioned are, in an important sense, *male*. Rather I want to explore the significance of the fact that these particular aspects of analytic philosophy *are* gendered male. I think that there is great potential for feminist growth in adopting the perspective of the analytic philosopher — and some danger of retrograde motion if that perspective is summarily rejected.

I suggest, in the first place, that analytic philosophy affords women excellent opportunities for gender transgression. *Just because* a woman is expected to be everything the analytic philosopher is not, the woman who finds analytic philosophy a comfortable place to be will be regarded as a bit of a freak. It’s not that I endorse transgression for transgression’s sake: I am not pleased that women’s rates of death from lung cancer and heart disease are quickly approaching men’s, even if it does mean that one gender barrier has been irrevocably breached. But I do think that there is an asymmetry between masculine and feminine gender roles that makes female gender treachery a good thing, *prima facie*. I think that men have grabbed a lot of the good stuff for themselves, and that they keep trying to dupe us into thinking that we really don’t want it.

Iris Young, in her essay, “Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics,”⁷ argues that the two eponymous forms of feminism differ, *inter alia*, in the ways they conceptualize sexist oppression. The humanistic feminist holds that the female gender role is *inherently* oppressive — that to succeed in being a good woman is to fail at being a good human being. The gynocentric feminist, on the other hand, holds that there is nothing inherently degrading or debilitating in the feminine role — oppression results from the improper devaluation of normatively feminine traits and behavior. I am, in this respect, a humanistic feminist.⁸ And I contend that the features of analytic philosophy that make it “male” belong to the collection of traits that women have been taught — to their detriment — to disown in themselves.

Let me start with the “adversary method.” When I was growing up, I often got in trouble for arguing with people. I argued with my playmates, my mother, and my teachers. The thing that was wrong with arguing, it was impressed upon me, was that it wasn’t “nice.” I had enormous trouble with “nice,” which I found profoundly boring. (I also discovered that it was possible to be very “nice” and deeply cruel at the same time. Welcome to junior high.) What I liked about arguing, apart from the fact that it helped me think through things that interested me, was the exercise of it — I enjoyed thinking fast, and talking fast, and coming up with new angles and spins. I hated it when the other person would not argue back. The

fact is, there is a certain kind of pleasure to be found in the energy and tension that's generated by opposition, a kind that is not at all present when everyone is being "nice."

I resented "nice." I resented it partly because it seemed to me that, in being told to be "nice," I was being enjoined to tie myself down, to forswear the use of a power that I possessed. Certainly I was given to believe that intelligence, at least for me, was something to keep in check. I shouldn't beat boys at checkers, they won't like me; I shouldn't try to prove the teacher wrong, it's disrespectful; I shouldn't ask Sister such impossible questions, she'll have to send me to see Monsignor again. When I finally took my first philosophy class, I simply couldn't believe it. Here, incredibly, was a place where it was not just all right, but positively ducky, to argue! The more I argued, the happier the professor seemed to be. Prove him wrong? Bring it on! I felt like I'd been released from some kind of straightjacket, like I suddenly had a full range of motion. I felt like I was beginning to find out what it was like to be myself. I was beginning to experience myself as intellectually powerful. And I liked it.

Here I was obviously transgressing a gender norm. Girls are not really supposed to have power in the first place, but having it, they are certainly not supposed to *like* it. But discovering power, and discovering the enjoyment of power is something that I think can happen in the doing of analytic philosophy. If the premium placed on strenuous debate makes analytic philosophy male, it is, I'm suggesting, because men have given themselves permission to take delight in power, and have withheld that permission from us. We ought not to be collaborators. We ought not to be — in Nietzsche's terms — *slavish*, and make milquetoast virtue out of galling necessity, condemning that which we cannot in any case choose to do.

There was another thing in philosophy as I discovered it that spoke to something deep inside me, and that was the idea of the authority of reason. It was a huge *relief* to me to have found a place where *reasons* for things were given and expected, where it was not enough to say "that's just my opinion," and where it didn't matter what you knew or what you'd read or who agreed with you if you couldn't translate all of that into a *reason* that made good logical sense. I guess I had been developing, in reaction to the culture of "nice," my own sort of shadow ethos, according to which it was a minor sin to decline to say *why* one ought to believe a thing, especially if asked. Giving reasons seemed to me to be an admirably human thing to do — it was connected, for me, early on, with sincerity, and with love — how could someone who claimed to love me issue commands and prohibitions for which no good reasons could be given?

Acquiring the tools of philosophical analysis was a profoundly empowering experience for me, and, I've discovered, for many of my female students. In my feminism classes, which always include a unit on nature/nurture controversies, I emphasize that there are *two* ways in which an argument can fail, and that as a matter of strategy, it's usually better to go after the invalidity rather than the false premises. The idea that one can rationally resist an argument's conclusion without having to disprove its premises is an enormously important one, especially in this area, because so many sexist arguments begin with apparently unassailable claims about gender differences — "Men are, on average, bigger and stronger than women. Firefighting requires strength. Therefore, women can't be firefighters." How is this argument invalid? Let me count the ways.

Here again, I found that in valuing my own capacity for reason, I was breaching a gender norm. The images of femininity that surrounded me as an adolescent were those

of flower children and Earth mothers. Women were emotional, intuitive, sensual, mystical. Women were in tune with the rhythms of nature. Women, in short, were not like me. But I'll tell you this: if boys don't make passes at girls who wear glasses, they also don't pay attention to the opinions of people with daisies in their hair. The disalignment of the rational with the feminine is, to my mind, just another form of marginalization — it's a way of reminding us what's really important about us is our physical nature, our ability to enhance the aesthetic and material surroundings of the people who *have* minds.

The notion that women are more connected with the material and the concrete than men are is now, I think, widely held by feminists to be sexist nonsense. I believe that almost all feminists would say that it is a fantasy that men have somehow more transcendent existences, and that this fantasy reflects both a sexist division of labor (and one that has class and racial inflections as well), in which privileged individuals divest themselves of onerous and unpalatable physical work, and also a psychological need to disown unruly bodily appetites and passions. Men's lives are just as conditioned by their physical existences — and by their gendered bodies — as women's lives are. It is not true, as Rousseau asserted, that "men and women are unequally affected by sex. The male is a male only at times; the female is a female all her life and can never forget her sex."⁹ But it does not follow from this acknowledgement that the ability to slough off certain material constraints is not in fact a kind of privilege. The fantasy of disembodiment and unlocatedness that I have conceded to be rife within analytic philosophy is, or can be, a productive fantasy, and it is one that women too rarely have been allowed to indulge.

Every feminist parent complains about the dearth of children's books with female protagonists. But the problem, in my mind, is not just that there aren't many girls in the stories, but also that the girls who are there are rarely permitted to venture outside the female gender role. Mrs. — the mouse renamed "Mrs. Brisby" in the animated film *The Secret of NIMH* — is smart and profoundly heroic, but her heroism is driven by maternal instinct, not principle or — heaven forbid — sheer love of adventure. Girls, for the most part, are not allowed to go on quests. Even otherwise positive female characters such as Philip Pullman's Lyra in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy tend to pick up male partners as they proceed — partners who morph into either big brother figures or love interests.

I'm suggesting that the ability to imagine oneself and one's possibilities as *not* determined by the physical details of one's body, as *not* necessarily dictated by the historical contingencies in which one finds oneself, is part and parcel of feeling *entitled* to take on projects simply because one finds them compelling. The attachment of the feminine to the world of concreta is a way of saying to women that they as persons are essentially tied to their material natures, in ways that must dictate their aims and their motives. (I believe that Sartre had something to say about all this; and I think it's no accident that that eminent scholar of existentialism, Iris Murdoch, so frequently adopted the voice of a man in her novels of love and freedom.) What analytic philosophy did for me was to allow me to forget for a while that I inhabited a female body, in ways that men (at least some men) have historically been allowed to forget that they inhabited a body at all. And I was and am glad of it.

There is another way in which the myth of the "view from nowhere" (to adapt Susan Bordo's phrase) was empowering for me. When I started college, I had had very little experience of the world outside of my small rural high school. My mother was not very well off, and I had not traveled in Europe, or

even visited a major US city, as had a large number of my new college acquaintances. My high school curriculum was very limited, and I felt deeply ignorant next to fellow students who had taken calculus, economics, psychology — even philosophy — in high school. Although my politics were by no means clear to me, I was beginning to see that with respect to both political and religious values, I was on the verge of a great break with the traditions in which I had been raised, in a process that had already left me feeling alienated from and rejected by my hometown community. (I often wonder how many contemporary communitarians grew up in a small town.) It was therefore extremely valuable to me to discover a subject in which my background did not matter, in which I was encouraged to think that I could — and should — construct myself according to my own deepest understanding. The idea that I was entitled to autonomy was a notion that I had to work hard to absorb — it was not my birthright. It is an oft-cited aspect of the experience of marginality that the marginalized person is not permitted any individuality, but is instead taken as an exemplar for the group — individuality, the privilege of constructing oneself — is one of the prerogatives of privilege. Analytic philosophy, I submit, in encouraging a fantasy of unlocatedness, confers this privilege on everyone.

There is a great deal more I'd like to say about the ways in which the "male" aspects of analytic philosophy facilitated my own development as a feminist, and simply as a person, but I'll forebear. Let me just conclude by acknowledging two things: first, that power and freedom are hardly uncomplicated things, and hardly unequivocal goods. I insist only that they are goods of some sort. Second, I recognize that the fantasies I've been describing *are* fantasies. I know that reason does not always prevail, and I know that the vicious often claim it, with impunity, as their own. Finally, I recognize that all cognitive activity — because all activity — is materially located, that we cannot literally leave our bodies behind. I insist only that it is a sort of tyranny to maintain that one must remember this fact in everything one does.

Endnotes

1. "Feminism as a Meeting Place: Analytical and Continental Traditions," joint session sponsored by the Society for Analytical Feminism and the Society for Women in Philosophy, American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division Meeting, Seattle, March 2002
2. Janice Moulton, "A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method," in *Discovering Reality*, ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka (Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel Publishers, 1983), 149-164.
3. Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
4. See, for example: Naomi Scheman. "Though This Be Method, Yet There is Madness in It: Paranoia and Liberal Epistemology," in *A Mind of One's Own*, ed. Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2nd edition, 2001), 177-205.
5. Lorraine Code, "Taking Subjectivity into Account," in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1993), 15-48
6. I discuss challenges to this assumption in my "Embodiment and Epistemology," *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. Paul Moser (forthcoming from Oxford University Press)
7. In *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).
8. After making this quite useful and accurate distinction, Young goes on to commit humanistic feminists to another claim that I do not endorse, namely that male gender roles ought to be normative for everyone. This hardly follows from the first commitment, nor does it follow from the claim, which I do accept and argue for in what follows, that certain elements of the masculine gender role are more

appropriate as norms for human persons than the complementary elements in the feminine role. If one doesn't believe this, then one will have difficulty making out the case that occupants of the feminine role are oppressed at all, and Young does, indeed, struggle with this question.

While I'm clarifying my position, let me say, too, that I accept the label "humanist feminist," but not the label "liberal feminist" — the two are often used interchangeably, but this practice blurs important distinctions. "Humanism" signifies one's conception of the relation between gender and personhood, viz., that gender is an accidental property of persons. The term "liberal" can signify a variety of things, including one or more of the following: one's commitment to the fundamental importance in political theory of individual liberty, one's commitment to a set of fundamental civil and personal rights to liberty, or one's commitment to a capitalist system of ownership and exchange. Frequently these commitments are taken to form an indissoluble package, but they do not. I am committed to the centrality of autonomy, but not to capitalism — my politics are broadly socialist. (Indeed, I'd be prepared to argue that a proper understanding of autonomy *leads* to socialism.) The possibility of a position like mine is thus obscured by the term "liberal."

9. Excerpt from *The Emile of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. and trans. William Boyd (New York: Teachers College Press, 1962); reprinted in *Philosophy of Woman*, ed. Mary Briody Mahowald (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 3rd edition, 1994), 90

Revising Philosophy Through the Wide-Angle Lens of Feminism

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Introduction

What I want to look at is how feminism, conceived broadly as the consciousness of sexism and other hierarchical systems of oppression, whether coming out of analytic or continental traditions, has revised philosophical discourse.¹ Feminism questions, criticizes, and subverts the main fields of philosophy. Philosophical feminism is now itself a field — there are courses, textbooks, and job ads that go by its name — but it is a field rather on analogy with existentialism, not philosophy of science or ethics. That is, philosophical feminism is a pervasive worldview, a system, not just a topic. Thus, like existentialism (or materialism or many other isms I could name), feminism provides a lens for the revision of the entire philosophical project. Although philosophical feminism is still a marginalized field in philosophy, there can be no reasonable doubt that it has made its permanent marks on the discipline.

There are those who doubt that feminism has had such an effect on philosophy, however. Colin McGinn, in an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* that was supposedly assessing the effect that feminism has had in various disciplines, claimed that "feminism now has a place in many philosophy departments, for good or ill, but it has not made any impact on the core areas of the subject."² Although I think that the claim is so clearly false as not to be worthy of response, the rest of this paper constitutes, as a by-product of its main aim, a rebuttal. I will begin with the assumption that feminism has made very significant alterations in the terrain of philosophy and show how the dialogue of analytic and continental traditions within feminism has been fruitful in making these revisions. Analytic and continental traditions may debate the ownership of feminism as well as the ownership of philosophy generally. Yet, within this debate we can locate contributions from both sides not only to philosophy generally, but to almost any understanding of feminism.

In this paper I will illustrate some of the revisions of philosophy that feminists have created and point to ways in which the two traditions have complementary or converging views. As I see it, there are four main categories for the revisions that feminism makes in substantial issues of philosophy. First, feminism revises the questions that are approached philosophically. That is, feminism adds to the canon of interesting questions, and perhaps has shown some to be uninteresting, as well. What is a woman? This is a whole different question from Locke's question: what is a man?³ Second, feminism sets the terms in which some debates can be carried out. A simple example: one cannot use sexist language anymore without appearing to be picking a fight. But perhaps one will say that is not so much a philosophical point as a political one. Then consider: sex/gender, marginalization, standpoint epistemology, intersectionality, gynandry, phallocentrism, the gaze, embodiment, care, dependency, and on and on. These are all words that have been added to the philosopher's professional vocabulary by feminism. Third, feminism revises the criteria of adequacy for theories. Theories of justice, ethical theory, and philosophy of science that once looked plausible have come to be seen as implausible for what they leave out, for answers that they cannot provide or questions that they cannot address. And fourth, feminism affects the answers that are considered acceptable in philosophical debate. A sexist conclusion is no longer acceptable in any but the most isolated and praetorian philosophical community. Accounts of autonomy, objectivity, justice, or beauty can no longer assume the superiority or centrality of maleness without being rejected for that reason alone. In the rest of this essay I will take up examples in the first three categories (which also provide examples of the fourth) to illustrate the dialogue of continental and analytic feminist philosophy.

Questions

Here I shall take as my example the following question: How does our bodily existence define (at least in part) the self? This is not a question completely unknown to philosophers before feminism, but it was surely relatively unexplored territory on the frontier before feminists began to investigate the question of personhood. To take one influential feminist on this issue, Sandra Bartky has given us a continental-inspired analysis of bodily existence and sexual objectification, and the resultant shame that accompanies female selfhood.⁴ In doing so she has helped make bodies, particularly women's bodies and how they affect women's self-understanding, a primary topic of philosophical concern. In her article "Narcissism, Femininity and Alienation,"⁵ Bartky argues for a feminist understanding of the concept of alienation, which is typically in women a kind of self-estrangement or self-oppression. We in the contemporary Western world do that through our participation in and the internalization of the "fashion-beauty complex," which inspires in women the idea that we must be ever busy improving our looks, which are never good enough. Bartky writes:

I must cream my body with a thousand creams, each designed to act against a different deficiency, oil it, pumice it, shave it, pluck it, depilate it, deodorize it, ooze it into just the right foundation, reduce it through spartan dieting or else pump it up with silicon... There is no "dead time" in my day during which I do not stand under the imperative to improve myself.⁶

This imperative that we feel creates and reinforces in us the idea that we are inferior bodies, that we (unlike men) need to pay constant attention to our looks in order to be acceptable.

Feminine narcissism just is, according to Bartky, "infatuation with an inferiorized body."⁷ The result for women is a pervasive sense of shame, which Bartky sees as the dominant emotion in most women. Shame pervades our sense of ourselves; it is the ever-present feeling for the female-embodied subject. Bartky's theory of shame shows us how a predominant emotion can color our deepest sense of self.⁸ To understand the self, then, we must look to what our particular form of embodiment means in our cultures.

While Bartky draws largely on psychoanalytic and existentialist traditions for her penetrating analysis of female embodiment, Susan Brison's work on the effects of physical violence on the self draws mainly on work in cognitive and clinical psychology. In *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, Brison writes about her survival of a brutal rape and attempted murder.⁹ Through the retelling of the event and its psychological aftermath, she assesses the Lockean theory of personal identity. According to Locke, a person is a set of continuous memories through time, so that when the prince's memories are placed in the cobbler's body, the resulting person is the prince. Brison's study of the effects of violence in part affirms the possibility of a different person coming to inhabit the body. Even though the body is continuous with the body before the attack, the person who is a victim of trauma is inalterably changed. After a traumatic event, that is, an event in which one feels helpless in the face of what is perceived as life-threatening force, victims often lose their memories of both the event itself and of previous events in their lives. She writes, "Not only are one's memories of an earlier life lost, along with the ability to envision a future, but one's basic cognitive and emotional capacities are gone, or radically altered, as well."¹⁰ Even if they regain those memories, as often happens, victims often feel as if they are no longer the same person, or that they are only the shell of a person. These reactions are so typical that they are part of the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, a recognized psychological disorder with recognized biochemical underpinnings. (Prozac turns out to be a helpful drug for many victims of post-traumatic stress disorder).

Now to the extent that the person really has changed through loss of memory and other cognitive and emotional capacities, Locke's theory has some validity. But where Brison clearly differs from Locke is in seeing how physical, bodily trauma effects these changes in the self. Brison shows that the body is inseparable from the person just in the sense that if we violently traumatize the body we change the person by significantly altering the chemical and neurological bases for personhood.

Although the traditional personal identity debate pits the body theory against the mind theory, feminism asks deeper questions about the way that embodiment affects the whole being of the person, so that the divide between the traditional theories of personhood are no longer viable. Bartky's analysis shows us that our embodiment (within a social context) causes our deepest sense of self to be in a particular affective mode. This belies the traditional thinking of mind theories of personal identity, in which it is only the cognitive that matters. Brison's analysis further shows us that under the pressure of bodily trauma the mental life of the self changes utterly.

Terms of the debate

Feminism has given us the sex/gender distinction, the most profound clarification by philosophers of the 20th century. The distinction was first formulated and clarified as the distinction between sex, conceived as natural or biological fact, and therefore not constructed by social context, and gender,

conceived as the socially constructed veneer on top of sexual difference. De Beauvoir's famous statement at the beginning of Book II of *The Second Sex*: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."¹¹ is often recognized as the first explicit statement of this distinction. However, like that equally profound mind/body distinction, feminists are also critical of it. Judith Butler, another continental feminist, argues in *Gender Trouble* that gender is effectively determined by sex, so the categories are not really distinct.¹² Furthermore, sex is socially constructed in part, as well, in that it is determined to be a dimorphic category by the social significance invested in reproduction and normative heterosexuality.

Although Butler makes an excellent point about understanding sex/gender as a purely biological vs. social distinction, feminists have found that there is more to "gender" than her analysis allows. Sally Haslanger, in her "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" argues that gender is primarily to be understood as a hierarchical system based on presumed sex.¹³ That is, if someone is presumed to be male then he is accorded the status of dominance vis-a-vis one who is presumed to be female. Hence, what the category gender adds to the apparently neutral biological sex distinction is the notion of hierarchy. Uncovering gender now is uncovering injustice.

Feminists from both analytic and continental traditions have created new meanings for the terms "sex" and "gender," and have shown that these terms are essential elements of debates about justice as well as sex.

Criteria of adequacy

Traditionally, justice has only to do with public spheres of politics, the courts, and the marketplace. This is as true of theories of justice of Kant, Hegel, and Habermas as it is of those by Mill and Rawls. On the traditional view, the private spheres of home and intimate relationships are to be kept separate from those of civic, political, and marketplace and relations within the former are not to be judged by rules of justice, which apply to the latter. Feminists from both the analytic and continental traditions have challenged this view and established justice in the family as a primary test of the adequacy of any theory of justice.

Susan Moller Okin, in *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, argues that if we understand justice as fairness along Rawlsian lines, then it is clear that there is a great deal of injustice in families.¹⁴ This injustice is systematically suffered by women, who are trapped in the domestic sphere, often as their second or even third shift, by their lesser power within marriage. Women have less power in marriage for several reasons, all of which stem from traditional norms about women and femininity. Since these are due to impersonal and morally arbitrary forces, they are unjust by liberal standards. Hence, a liberal theory of justice cannot be adequate unless it attends to matters of justice in family structures. There is yet a further argument for this conclusion that Okin provides. Families, she points out, are the place where children develop their moral and social capacities. If they must learn about justice and morality surrounded by unjust relations among family members, then they may well come to mistake such relations for inevitable, natural, loving, or perhaps even just relationships. Thus, a theory of justice that ignores family life is likely to be undermined by the moral development of those who follow it.

Eva Feder Kittay, in *Love's Labor*, makes what she calls the "dependency critique" of Rawls.¹⁵ Kittay argues that dependency is a ubiquitous feature of human life, and all persons will be dependent for some period of their lives. Thus,

society must create ways for the dependent to be cared for. In our society, as in most others, women are the primary caregivers of the dependent, and women of lower social status are even more likely than other women to spend much of their lives giving care. Furthermore, caregiving is accorded low status, as symbolized in our society by the fact that it is either unpaid or low paid labor. Women do this caregiving labor because they have been socialized to see it as their place and their role, and because they have been trained to have the emotional capacities and cognitive capacities necessary for competent caring. Kittay argues that because caring is inevitable and ubiquitous, all persons should be capable and obliged to care for others, and that this is a matter of justice. The capacity to recognize need and give care is as basic, she argues, as the two Rawlsian capacities of moral personhood: the capacity to have a sense of the good and the capacity to form a rational plan of life. In sum, Kittay has shown that the fact of human dependency cannot be ignored by any adequate theory of justice.

Cynthia Willett takes up the theme of the development of moral and social capacities and their connection to justice from a continental, psychoanalytic perspective in her book, *The Soul of Justice*.¹⁶ Here, and in her earlier book, *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities*,¹⁷ Willett argues that psychologists have demonstrated that human infants need human, physical touch and face-to-face encounters. Human touch seems to be so important that infants who are denied this often wither and die. Physical, cognitive, and emotional development can only be secured by adequate contact with other human bodies. This physico-social contact begins with the fetal-maternal bond, and develops as the baby is born and cared for in its early infancy and beyond. By treating this essential contact as primitive and pre-social, Willett argues, caregiving labor is devalued. Appropriating the language of the psychoanalyst, Willett calls these bodily, physical attachments "erotic" and "libidinal." Yet she clearly distinguishes her use of these terms from earlier Freudians. She wishes to capture a notion of physicality and sensuality that is not sexual or even quasi-sexual. Rather, it is the physical basis for sociality, and thus at the very root of our ability to interact morally. She writes:

The cradled baby yet unable to focus on the face of another is driven by the desire to be rocked, caressed, and held against the flesh of those who enjoy its warmth in return. The deprivation of touch, perhaps more so than the other forms of sensory engagement, hinders the libidinal development of the person. The infant who is deprived of touch can become excessively withdrawn or even violent, and incapable of sustaining social bonds in later life.¹⁸

Willett's work beautifully exemplifies the revision of philosophy through feminist sensibility. She brings embodiment into discourse about justice, and shows how human animality is the source, not shame, of our humanity as the traditional fathers of philosophy have taught us. We can, I think, infer two points about the criteria of adequacy of philosophical theories from this work: first, that a theory of justice that does not take human physical need for touch and personal, physical care into consideration is inadequate; and second, any philosophical theory that ignores the body or treats it as shameful is inadequate as a theory for human beings.

Conclusion

I want to close with one additional category of change that feminism is effecting in philosophical discourse, and that is in the manner of philosophical discussion and debate. Now it is

not true to say that feminists cannot be as strident in advocacy as their philosophical forefathers. Recall the subject of the last panel at American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting that was sponsored by the Society for Analytical Feminism and the Society for Women in Philosophy, in which we discussed the “rules of engagement” for feminists, against the backdrop of Martha Nussbaum’s vigorous critique of Judith Butler.¹⁹ But the fact that we debated whether that sort of attack was legitimate is itself evidence that feminist philosophers are adding the issue of the manner of debate to the philosophical agenda. The panel for which this essay was written carries that debate forward. In creating this panel we hoped to bring out the meeting points of differing philosophical traditions, traditions that have been pitted against each other in ugly and unproductive ways. Although I was trained in graduate school by and mentored in my early career by philosophers firmly wedded to the analytic tradition, and jealous of any proposals by continentalists, since beginning to work on philosophical feminism I have begun to recognize the contributions that other traditions can make to my work. I thank feminists of all traditions for this continuing lesson in philosophy and community.

Feminism is not only alive and well in philosophy—it is revising philosophy. Some non-feminist philosophers may attempt to drag their feet, and backlash is certainly not unknown, but as Anita Superson, (chair of and organizer of the panel for which this paper was written), has put it elsewhere, “The tide is coming.”²⁰

Endnotes

1. Originally presented to a joint session of the Society for Analytical Feminism and the Society for Women in Philosophy, “Feminism as A Meeting Place: Analytic and Continental Traditions,” American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting, Seattle, March 27, 2002.
2. Colin McGinn, “Feminism Revisited: A Symposium,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 March 1998, 13. Other philosophers have argued not that feminism has made no inroads, but that feminism has been a pernicious influence. In his address as chancellor of Boston University and host of the most recent World Congress of Philosophy, philosopher John Silber attacked feminist philosophy as “an assault on reason.”
3. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), Chapter XXVII.
4. Sandra Bartky, *Femininity and Domination* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
5. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 33-44.
6. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 40.
7. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 40.
8. See “Shame and Gender” in Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, 83-98.
9. Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).
10. Brison, *Aftermath*, 50.
11. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 301.
12. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Gender and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
13. Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?” *Nous* 34 (2000): 31-55.
14. Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).
15. Eva Feder Kittay, *Love’s Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
16. Cynthia Willett, *The Soul of Justice, Social Bonds and Racial Hubris* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
17. Cynthia Willett, *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
18. Willett, *Maternal Ethics*, 216.

19. Martha Nussbaum, “The Professor of Parody,” *New Republic*, 22 February 1999, 37-45. The panel was held at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting, April 7, 2000.

20. Anita Superson, “Welcome to the Boys’ Club: Male Socialization and the Backlash against Feminism in Tenure Decisions,” in *Theorizing Backlash: Philosophical Reflections on the Resistance to Feminism*, ed. Anita M. Superson and Ann E. Cudd (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 89-117, especially page 112.

Liberating the Self from Oppression: A Commentary on Multiple Feminist Perspectives

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The four preceding powerful papers on the contributions of feminism to philosophy span the spectrum from continental philosophy, postmodernism, pragmatism, and hermeneutics, to analytic philosophy. There are points of similarity, and points of difference. One common theme that constitutes our “meeting place” is a feminist conception of the self, particularly as it relates to women’s oppression, which will be my focus in this concluding paper.¹

Cynthia Willett challenges the notion of the self defended by autonomy theorists, who she classifies as liberal philosophers from the analytic tradition. This notion of the self includes libertarian versions that focus on freedom from unnecessary interference in the exercise of choice, Rawlsian versions that focus on the capacity for rational self-legislation, and modified versions such as that discussed by Mackenzie and Stoljar, who take the core of the self to be “the capacity for reflection on one’s motivational structure and the capacity to change it in response to reflection.”² The idea of the latter, more developed, view is that only those preferences we find ourselves having that survive a test of autonomous reflection are the ones that are our own, and that define the self. This theory of the self can be seen as responsive to oppression, for if our preferences are ones we come to have due largely to the influences of patriarchy, a promising way to eradicate or modify these heteronomous, deformed preferences is through rational reflection, such that those remaining will be ones that constitute the core of the autonomous self.

Willett notes that the autonomy theory of the self has been criticized as being too individualistic, and not sufficiently sensitive to and reflective of a person’s social connectedness. Autonomy theorists have responded to this charge by claiming that persons and their preferences are, indeed, constituted by their social relations. According to Mackenzie and Stoljar, they typically have cashed this out as a psychological point about how a person may understand her identity. In particular, they believe that only certain elements of the psychological makeup of a person, namely, those relating to self-esteem and self-trust, are produced heteronomously by social relations. In other words, care and nurturance from others are needed for a person to develop self-esteem and self-trust, and once she acquires these skills or attitudes, she can go on to make autonomous choices, and determine her preferences in a way that enables her to reject patriarchy’s influences. One obvious problem with this view, which I believe Willett acknowledges, is that our very notions of self-esteem and self-trust might be infused with patriarchal influences such that, even when they are supplemented with rational reflection, they might not screen out deformed preferences. Willett finds this view

problematic also because it fails to account for the much deeper ways in which we are socially embedded. She favors a metaphysical view of what constitutes a person's identity that is reflective of cultures that in part define us. Her view of the self acknowledges that preferences regarding who we love and how we form friendships are heteronomously formed, which is not necessarily bad in her view, but at the same time it retains autonomy at its core.

Willett offers an insightful, visionary, American pragmatist view of the self that is embedded in relationships. Drawing from the work of Patricia Hill Collins and Audre Lorde, Willett elucidates two features at the core of the "social" self. First is an "erotic" capacity for creative work and meaningful social bonds, which is not grounded in libidinal desire as the term suggests, but in a sense of debt or homage due (I take it, to one's ancestors and others in a culture). It is a "love" that "compels the self to encounter sources of meaning and commitment outside itself," but at the same time is critical of social conventions, since otherwise it would be patriarchal love. As Ann Cudd points out in her discussion of Willett's other works, social bonding begins with the fetal-maternal bond, and extends to the bond between caretaker and infant and beyond.

The second feature at the core of the "social" self is its expansion into relationships with others. In contrast to autonomy theorists, who take the core of the self to be a cognitive capacity for an inward reflection on one's preferences, Willett describes the core of the self as going beyond one's desires by forming social bonds, which turn the self into a "whole" individual. She puts the self's social development ahead of its capacity for internal reflection.

Along with the change in the core of the self comes a shift in how oppression threatens the self. Autonomy theorists believe that oppression threatens to damage one's autonomy by damaging one's capacity to make reflective choices. The worry is that if a person's preferences are so influenced by patriarchy, she can never alter or shed them, and replace them with those more conducive to her well-being. The autonomy theorist's response to oppression is to mount ways (e.g., rational reflection) to keep a person's choices autonomous, and her preferences her own. But for Willett, the harm of oppression is that it renders the person unable to feel properly, which is to turn outward and form (meaningful) relationships, and to celebrate the ways in which she finds herself connected to her community (e.g., through her ancestors). Willett calls the harm of oppression a "moral outrage," or a "hubris," or a way that the privileged think of themselves as greatly superior to their subordinates, which tears apart social bonds among diverse people, and thereby maintains the status quo. The appropriate response to oppression, then, is not for the individual to change her self, but for us to eradicate social and political hierarchies and return to ancient democracy, which provides a context for creating and sustaining bonds of diversity.

Georgia Warnke rejects the postmodern view of the self for the same reason that Willett rejects some liberal views of the self, namely, that we cannot adequately critique our notion of the self as it is deformed by patriarchy from within the very system of oppression in which we find ourselves. Warnke offers an even more radical view of the self, or way of critiquing our identities, than Willett's, one emanating from hermeneutics, a branch of continental philosophy. Like Willett, I believe that Warnke would favor the eradication of social and political hierarchies, particularly as they are reflected in our notions of gender. Indeed, more radically — and, I believe,

correctly — she suggests that it is plausible to get rid of gender identity. Let's see how she reaches this exciting conclusion.

Warnke takes as her starting point the postmodernist notion that oppression exists in our very identities as gendered, racialized, and sexualized beings. Using postmodernism's insightful query into how our identities come to be structured, Warnke traces the ways in which women have been constructed differently throughout history, being identified with the body rather than the soul, with nature rather than reason, and with the social rather than political. Her example of how intersexuals are constructed by the medical profession according to the norms of heterosexual sex, is telling. The problem Warnke sees with postmodernism is that it doesn't allow us to escape our gendered identities, but to resign ourselves to their embodiment. Power — or oppression — significantly defines our selves, and even if we can "resignify, redeploy, and interrupt" these identities, as Butler says, since we cannot separate ourselves from our identities in a way that allows us to assess critically patriarchy's influence on them, the postmodernist view of the self is hardly emancipatory.

Warnke's goal is to offer an emancipatory view of the self. She takes her cue from Anthony Appiah, who argues that our identities lie not only with the race we have, but with many other features about ourselves, including our religion, whether we are siblings, our occupations, our hobbies, and the like. In short, our identities are interlocking, and non-hierarchical. They are interpretative, too. Ideally, we would interpret ourselves just like we interpret books, from a multiplicity of perspectives, with no one interpretation being favored over another — being a woman would be just as important to one's identity as being a Bears fan or a philosopher. Our interpretations would vary according to our purposes and the context we are in.

But Warnke points out that due to our histories and social context, we have, unfortunately, understood ourselves and others in racial, gender, and sexual terms. She notes that sexism amounts in part to our interpretations of the self as gendered: women are always and fundamentally women — and, I would add, women are the *traits* associated with women — no matter what they are doing. Warnke is critical of the gendered interpretation of the self on the grounds that it does not go any way toward unifying this part of the self with the whole, and to understanding the whole. For instance, if we see women professors as primarily or solely women, we will not be able to understand them as whole persons (or as professors!), and we are likely to judge them on teaching evaluations according to whether they are good women rather than good professors. Further, Warnke criticizes interpretations of gender because they have varied across contexts in ways that suit the needs and interests of the dominant group, yielding inconsistencies that ought not to be at the basis of our conception of the self. I believe that the real problem is not so much the inconsistency between these contextual interpretations of gender, but what these inconsistencies reveal, namely, the interests of the dominant group. Since we cannot critique the identities we come to have under oppression from within the system of oppression, and since our identities as gendered persons are determined by the interests of the dominant group, Warnke concludes that we ought to favor a plural, contextualized notion of identity over gender identity. Stated otherwise, one step we have to take to overcome women's oppression is to prevent the group in power from constructing our gender and thus our conception of our self as it is tied to gender, and we can do this by eliminating gender identity altogether. The self, then, is not (solely) a gendered (or sexed or raced) entity.

Louise Antony picks up on the theme of the oppressive nature of gender identity. Quite interestingly, she believes that an excellent way for women to transgress their gender identity is to engage in analytic philosophy!

Antony believes — and here her view is even more radical than Warnke's — that the female gender role is *inherently* oppressive. When women conform to the female gender role, they are denied opportunities for empowerment, are not allowed to develop their intellect to the same extent as men, are marginalized, and are constrained by their alleged material natures. When women are forced to conform to the female gender role, they are denied autonomy. All of these limitations contribute to women's oppression. And oppression manifests itself partly by patriarchy's teaching women not to be "male" or to engage in "male" pursuits, and by reflecting and perpetuating the view that women exhibit "feminine" traits. One cause of women's oppression, then, is forcing them to conform to and not transgress the female gender role. Antony believes that, in spite of feminist critiques of the "maleness" of (analytic) philosophy, one way women can transgress the female gender role they have been assigned to under patriarchy is to engage in analytic philosophy.

Antony describes three features of analytic philosophy that have come under fire from feminists. First is its adversarial method — the challenging, defensive Platonic style that rewards those who are quick on their feet. Engaging in the adversary method is a way of going against stereotypical traits and expectations traditionally assigned to women, including having to be "nice," having to keep one's intelligence in check, not beating the boys, not having power and not liking it when one does. Women are, by nature, it is claimed, and certainly are supposed to be: nice, not as intellectual as men, submissive, and subservient. But if women are to transgress these stereotypes and "ward off" their oppression, they will serve themselves well by engaging in analytic philosophy instead of collaborating in their own oppression.

The second feature of analytic philosophy is the authority of reason. Antony argues that giving reasons rather than opinions or commands is empowering, and necessary for overcoming women's oppression. For instance, reason is needed to show that the fundamental arguments that are used to foster women's oppression (e.g., those asserting that women necessarily have certain traits and thus ought to be restricted to certain roles) are bad ones. Further, women need to use arguments just to be paid attention to or taken seriously by their male counterparts. Identifying reason with maleness is a form of marginalization since it puts women into the role of aesthetic object (sex object?) for men, suggesting that their physical nature is more important than anything intellectual they have to offer. When women engage in analytic reasoning, they buck this stereotype and resist their marginalization and oppression.

The third feature of analytic philosophy is its disembodiment and unlocatedness. Under patriarchy women have been identified with the material and concrete, or, as bodies. The stereotype of women as bodily and not intellectual beings has been used to dictate women's aims and motives and so denies their freedom: if you are essentially a body but not a mind, then you should be a prostitute, sex object, baby machine...but certainly not a philosopher. Antony describes analytic philosophy as a kind of fantasy in which we — at least, men — can become disembodied beings. This promotes autonomy: not being determined by one's body is to feel "entitled" to take on projects simply because one finds them compelling." One is not hampered by the body when engaging in analytic philosophy; it's a mind game. Antony wants women

to be granted this same autonomy-promoting privilege that men have been granted all along, which will go some way toward overcoming their oppression, and to bucking the "material" stereotype.

A view of the self emerges at the end of Antony's paper. Philosophy, she claims, allows one to be entitled to autonomy, to construct oneself according to one's own deepest understanding. The self, then, turns out to be an autonomous being who is empowered to choose her roles instead of having to submit to those society sets out for her, and thus to construct her own identity. There is no social critique of this self similar to those offered by Willett and Warnke. So what is to ensure that this autonomous being would choose roles that would resist the stereotypes and help ward off her oppression? Perhaps — and this is adding to Antony's account — engaging in analytic philosophy would take us very far in this regard. Engaging in it not only bucks female stereotypes, but its emphasis on argumentation might provide a more substantial critique than mere Rawlsian reflection does. After all, philosophy should be about progress, not steadfastness in indoctrinated beliefs.

Finally, Ann Cudd nicely elucidates a number of different ways that both continental and analytic feminism have significantly revised "the entire philosophical project." Thus, while *engaging in* philosophy might transgress gender, philosophy itself should not. Gender issues infuse philosophy. Feminists have aptly demonstrated that the body can no longer be ignored or rendered less important than the mind in philosophical conceptions of the self. Cudd cites Sandra Bartky, who has brought the body to the philosophical table by claiming that we come to understand the self by looking at what embodiment means in our culture. Women in our culture have internalized the "fashion-beauty complex," according to which they inferiorize their own bodies, engage in often harmful behaviors whose aim is to achieve an unachievable standard of beauty, and cultivate a sense of shame for falling short.

Susan Brison's work on physical violence challenges traditional views of personal identity. For Brison, a person who is a victim of trauma often loses her memories of the traumatic event and of events she had prior to it — she becomes a different person. Brison's view differs from the Lockean view of personal identity grounded in memories in that it establishes in a concrete way the fact that the body is inseparable from the person, since if the body goes through a traumatic event, it changes the person by altering her chemical and neurological makeup, and the person's mental life. Both Brison's and Bartky's views challenge the traditional mind/body dualism: the self is both. I would imagine that this view of the self would lead its defenders to say that any attempt to overcome oppression would have to acknowledge the fact that all persons are both bodies and minds. Otherwise, physical assaults on women could be dismissed as not genuine assaults on the self. Cudd chastises as inadequate any philosophical theory that ignores the body or treats it as shameful. This would include philosophical theories of the self.

All of these accounts of the self are progressive in that they attempt to overcome women's oppression. Ideally we could have them all, with any internal conflicts among them ironed out. I propose taking as our focal point Antony's idea of the self as one who is entitled to be autonomous, to choose her roles, and to construct her self according to her own deepest understanding. I add the friendly amendment that the social critique involved in this notion of the self should come from analytic philosophy. This view of the self allows a person to construct her self in a way that incorporates Willett's

idea of forming and maintaining social bonds. Presumably philosophy will show us that forming bonds of diversity, and not merely rational reflection on one's preferences, is essential to fighting off oppression. This view of the self allows a person to construct her self in a way that frees herself from gender and its negative associations, thereby accommodating Warnke's worries. She will not be determined by the interests of the dominant group, but by her own choice, as that is informed by reason and good arguments. Finally, she will be able to construct her self in a way that recognizes that the body is essential to the self. But she will not render this connection with the body in a gendered way that fosters oppression; instead, she will include the body in ways that can help overcome oppression, as Cudd, Bartky, and Brison suggest. Feminist philosophical reflections on personal identity would provide the relevant arguments. Thus feminism finds a way to unite continental philosophy, pragmatism, hermeneutics, and analytic philosophy through our shared goal of overcoming oppression. Our meeting place is a place of progress. All philosophers welcome.

Endnotes

1. This paper was originally presented as a commentary at "Feminism as a Meeting Place: Analytical and Continental Traditions," joint session sponsored by the Society for Analytical Feminism and the Society for Women in Philosophy, American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division Meeting, Seattle, March 2002.

2. Cynthia Willett, "Rethinking Autonomy in an Age of Interdependence: Freedom in Analytic, Postmodern, and Pragmatist Feminisms," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, this issue, citing Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds., *Relational Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Bioethics Conference

9th Australasian Bioethics Association Conference 3-6 July 2003. Theme: 'Virtue and Vice in Bioethics' Venue: Copthorne Hotel, Queenstown, New Zealand. For further information please contact Pat Johnston, Dunedin Conference Management Services pat@dcms.co.nz or visit the ABA website: <http://www.australasian-bioethics.org.au/>.

2. FEAST

The Association for Feminist Ethics and Social Theory, will hold it's 2003 Conference at Clearwater Beach, FL on October 19-, 2003. Please see the FEAST website for the conference program and registration information: <http://www.afeast.org/>.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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