

# APA Newsletters

NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

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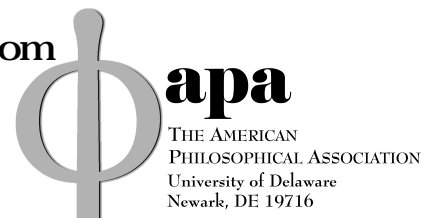
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## FROM THE EDITOR

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Feminist philosophers have long recognized the need to address, engage, or embrace issues of race and critical race theorists certainly recognize the need to address, engage, or embrace gender issues. We all, however, continue to struggle with the ways to respond to those needs. The articles in this issue offer some intriguing proposals. Two of the essays address teaching about race and gender privilege. Nancy Holland uses Heidegger's notion of authenticity to think about how better to understand privilege and responses to privilege. Gail Presbey offers a description of her Introduction to Philosophy course and in the process raises a number of questions about how to challenge students to think about philosophy and how to challenge the profession of philosophy. Presbey also offers a discussion of the philosophy reader she co-edited. This sort of critical reflection on the texts we teach as representative of the field of philosophy also characterizes Alison Bailey's article. Bailey co-edited, with Chris Cuomo, a new reader on feminist philosophy. She describes their efforts to gather articles that revealed both the history of feminist philosophy and demonstrated the feminist philosophical challenge to traditional philosophical methodology. As Bailey puts it, feminist philosophers have not yet sufficiently wrestled with the implications of intersectionality. Heeding the variety of philosophical presentations—in narrative as well as argument, for instance—gets us somewhat closer to seeing the possibilities of intersectional thinking. She calls us to attend more to the lived experiences and ambiguities of real women within our feminist courses and research. In the final essay in this issue, Naomi Zack revisits the arguments she made in *Inclusive Feminism* and responds to objections. Zack challenges intersectionality with her notion of inclusive feminism and calls for women to assume positions of power.

Together, these articles invite us to think about how race and gender affects every aspect of our professional lives. Whether we are teaching courses, editing books to be used in teaching or scholarship, or writing articles and books to advance our research aims, we confront challenges that push us to examine the ways we reinscribe relationships of domination even as we attempt to challenge them. I hope you will find these articles thought provoking and useful.

I have also included a number of book reviews in this issue of the Newsletter. The books range from feminist political theory, to philosophy of mind, to existentialism and phenomenology. These reviews offer a crucial service to the reading audience and the author or editor of the subject books. They also offer valuable insight into some of the subfields. The reviewers lend their expertise, often revealing some of the most interesting issues or debates within the span of a few short pages, while assessing a particular text. I am confident you will

find something of interest and perhaps you will be so inspired to read more from our feminist colleagues.

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## ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

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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 reflect 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.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

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**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 essays electronically to the editor or send four copies of essays via regular mail. All manuscripts should be 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 seeking new book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send the editor a CV and letter of interest, including mention of your areas of research and teaching.

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

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

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## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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The CSW has been busy, as usual, putting together interesting sessions for the various Divisional meetings of the APA. At the 2007 Eastern meeting we had a session on “Women and Terrorism,” one on “Philosophy: Our Way of Changing the World,” and one on “Standpoint Theory: From Different Standpoints.” Coming up at the Pacific meeting are a session on “Feminist Perspectives on Vice” and a session on “Strategizing Changes in the Culture and Ideology of Philosophy.” At the Central meeting there will be a session on “Reflections on Being a Woman Philosophy Student: Lessons for the Profession.” At the Eastern meeting in 2008 there will be a session on “Philosophical Perspectives on Female Sexuality” and one on mid-career issues faced by women. There will be panels on mid-career issues organized for the Central and Pacific meetings in 2009 as well. We welcome your ideas for future sessions.

We are also involved in a project with the National Office to gather membership and job placement information so that we can get more information on the status of women in the profession. We look forward to reporting more on this information in the future. We are pursuing the possibility of developing a position of an ombudsperson to handle complaints and concerns related to diversity issues.

When the committee met in December we did some brainstorming on our priorities for the next few years. The following emerged: continue pursuing the data on hiring and APA membership, make sure we go beyond organizing panels to produce concrete benefits and improve the future, keep up with Chris Bellon’s list of women/feminist friendly graduate programs, find ways to make the information we have more accessible (blog?) to APA members. If you have ideas related to any of these issues, or want to add to the list please contact a committee member.

The CSW will welcome three new members in July: Lisa Schwartzman (Michigan State University), Sharyn Clough (Oregon State University), and Elizabeth Hackett (Agnes Scott College). Nominations are now open for an Associate Chair for the CSW. Consider nominating someone you know (including yourself) for the committee.

Sally Scholz continues to do a great job editing this Newsletter. She has one more issue of the Newsletter to produce before she moves on to other ventures. Chris Bellon has been appointed the new editor of the Newsletter. She and Sally will work throughout the summer to ensure a smooth transition.

Erin McKenna

Chair, APA Committee on the Status of Women

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## ARTICLES

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### *“I Sent You a Duck”: A Heideggerian Rethinking of Race and Gender Privilege<sup>1</sup>*

Nancy J. Holland  
Hamline University

In a stage adaptation of short stories by science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem, *Pilot Pirx* is about to take off on an ill-fated mission when a duck flies between his spacecraft and the rising sun, an omen of disaster so dire that one crewmember suggests aborting the flight. Pirx, however, is too focused on the money to be made on the mission to take the omen seriously and continues the launch.

The flight is beset by strange maladies and malfunctions. At the end of Act I, Pirx discovers that the renamed ship is in fact that same space vessel in which a whole crew died during an earlier voyage. Later, in an attempt to understand the fate of his ship and crew, Pirx conjures up the ghost of Mommsen, the navigator of that previous doomed flight.

“Why didn’t you warn me?” an anguished Pirx asks the ghost.

“I sent you a duck,” the ghost replies.<sup>2</sup>

This response, unexpected even in context, struck me as a good shorthand for a different way to think about the nature of race and gender privilege. This conceptualization, loosely based on the work of Martin Heidegger, might be characterized as marking, not the obvious difference between people who see the duck and know it has been sent and those who do not see it at all, but the more subtle difference between those who do not see it and those who, like Pirx, act as if they do not because they choose to ignore its obvious implications.

Recent discussions of the concept of white privilege, for instance those by Naomi Zack and Alison Bailey in Chris Cuomo and Kim Hall’s collection on Whiteness,<sup>3</sup> make it clear that this concept, and the closely allied concept of male privilege, are overdue for fuller philosophical exploration. In this paper, I offer one attempt at such an investigation, suggesting that race and gender privilege can be understood and lived in more complex ways than is immediately obvious. To do this, I draw on a similar complexity I find in Martin Heidegger’s concept of inauthenticity. First, I briefly review the concept of privilege as it is detailed in Peggy McIntosh’s classic article, “White Privilege and Male Privilege.”<sup>4</sup> Then I summarize the argument for two senses of inauthenticity in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*<sup>5</sup> and argue that, despite the important differences between the two projects, an analogous double understanding of male privilege and white privilege can be useful in our thinking, and our teaching, about gender and race.

#### I

McIntosh understands white privilege by analogy with what she, as a feminist, recognizes as male privilege. She believes that men’s refusal to recognize the “advantages that men gain from women’s disadvantages” protects male privilege from “being fully recognized, acknowledged, lessened, or ended.”<sup>6</sup> Examples of this denial are not hard to find. Consider this story of a new faculty seminar at a mid-size university. During a discussion of concerns raised by women and faculty of color about possible bias in teaching evaluations, a white male participant declares that students tend to “see women faculty as bitchy” and suggests that his female colleagues must just “live with it.” As McIntosh suggests, this assertion presents student

bias against female faculty as an irreducible “fact” rather than an attitude that could be addressed as part of the educational process, conceals the corresponding privilege white male faculty have of taking basic fairness for granted, and tacitly rejects the possibility that such bias might be taken into account in consideration of teaching evaluations. Thus, “obliviousness about male advantage” serves, as McIntosh says, to “maintain the myth of meritocracy.”<sup>7</sup>

McIntosh’s work on white privilege rose from the recognition that a similar obliviousness about white privilege is “kept strongly enculturated in the United States” to maintain not only the myth of meritocracy, but also the more insidious myth that “democratic choice is equally available to all.”<sup>8</sup> McIntosh believes this obliviousness also explains why white women can be “justly seen as oppressive [by women of color], even when we don’t see ourselves that way.”<sup>9</sup> She describes her own white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious.”<sup>10</sup> Her article includes an extensive, but necessarily incomplete, list of such invisible assets, from the color of Band-Aids to the freedom to ignore the perspectives of those of other races,<sup>11</sup> and goes on to generate a similar list of items that constitute heterosexual privilege. But the real question about any such privilege for McIntosh is, “Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?”<sup>12</sup>

She goes on to question the use of the word “privilege” for the aggregate of such assets because its positive connotations convey the idea that it is something desirable, “Yet some of the conditions I have described here work to systematically overempower certain groups.”<sup>13</sup> This leads her to make distinctions between earned and unearned privileges, and between positive privileges that should belong to everyone and negative ones that “unless rejected will always reinforce our present hierarchies.”<sup>14</sup> She believes that, since the invisibility of both male privilege and white privilege is an important part of how they work to benefit some and disempower others, bringing them to light is a necessary first step to dismantling the oppressive systems they help to perpetuate.

## II

So defined, the concepts of race and gender privilege bear little similarity to the concept of inauthenticity in Heidegger’s work. What I want to explore, however, is a structural parallel between the two concepts that complicates the dichotomies between privilege and its lack on the one hand, and authenticity and inauthenticity on the other. I would argue that looking at race and gender privilege in this more complex way can connect those concepts more directly to our lived experience and make them more useful.

While there is some disagreement about the point among Heidegger scholars, this more complex account of inauthenticity can be seen in *Being and Time*. Heidegger initially defines authenticity and inauthenticity in terms of the fact that Dasein “can ‘choose’ itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself, or only ‘seem’ to do so.”<sup>15</sup> Individual Dasein can choose to understand ourselves in our existential truth or we can “lose” ourselves in the collective beliefs and practices of our social world. Heidegger terms this impersonal way of existing the “They” because one does what “they” do, thinks what “they” think, etc. This immersion in the They lends one’s life the illusion of necessity, meaning, and intrinsic worth. Heidegger goes on to say that “even in its fullest concretion Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity—when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment.”<sup>16</sup> This means that inauthenticity is a permanent possibility of Dasein not only in the sense that we can choose to fall back into the They when full existential awareness becomes too much

for us, but also in the sense that we can involuntarily fall back into it under circumstances such as those he lists.

Conversely, authenticity is acceptance of the absolute contingency of our situation as self-defining beings whose actual lived experience is the sole source of the meaning and value of their existence. Heidegger argues that we must remain authentic while living out our lives totally in the publicly available realm of the They, fulfilling the socially defined roles we are thrown into at birth and projecting a meaning for our actions into a future that can, at any moment, nullify that meaning, and even our own existence. To live life knowing its intrinsic meaninglessness and ultimate nullity while at the same time fulfilling our chosen and assigned roles with complete conviction is the delicate, if not impossible, balance that drives other existential thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Beauvoir to parable and story-telling.

And what drives most ordinary people who catch a glimpse of authenticity to flee immediately back into the refuge of the They, into explicitly chosen inauthenticity. This internal division within inauthenticity is created by the experience of existential anxiety. Such anxiety “takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself...in terms of the ‘world’ and the way things have been publicly interpreted. . . Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its Being-free for...the authenticity of its Being, and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always [already] is.”<sup>17</sup>

That is, anxiety pulls individual Dasein out of our immersion in average everydayness and reveals to us our freedom to choose between authenticity and an inauthentic re-entry into the They. Without the experience of this anxiety, even the possibility of authenticity remains hidden in average everydayness, just as in the play it was only seeing the duck that raised the explicit question of whether Pilot Pirx should continue with his mission, despite several earlier signs of impending disaster.

All of this seems to suggest that a distinction can be made between actively chosen inauthenticity, the topic of most of Heidegger’s account, and inauthenticity as an undifferentiated immersion in “average everydayness” that remains a possibility even for authentic Dasein. The parallel between this and the analysis I am offering of race and gender privilege, however, is not based on the content of the concepts, but on a structural analogy. Moments of existential anxiety and uncanniness, for instance, are clearly not necessary to seeing race and gender privilege, as they are to authenticity, nor are opportunities to confront our privilege (unfortunately) as rare. I want to argue instead that a parallel understanding of how such privilege works might help those with race or gender privilege move to a more positive, less harmful relationship to it and to those who do not share in it. We will return to this later, but first I want to emphasize that the analogy with inauthenticity suggests a way to clarify at least one problem theorists have raised about the concepts of race and gender privilege.

If a case can be made that inauthenticity has an internal duality that complicates the moral judgments we tend to make about it (although Heidegger himself insists that authenticity and inauthenticity are not ethical categories), perhaps a similar division within race and gender privilege can explain some of the moral distinctions that we would like to make there as well. For instance, we might want to put the white male faculty member in the new faculty seminar referred to above into a somewhat different moral category than another white male member of the seminar who might merely have nodded in unthinking agreement. Such a listener might accept the inevitability of student bias against female faculty as a simple fact, based on his colleague’s claim, but without also endorsing the speaker’s statement that female faculty just have to live

with such bias. He might, for instance, think administrators should take the bias into account in their evaluation of junior faculty, rather than believing, as the speaker seemed to, that male faculty are entitled to fairness in teaching evaluations whereas female faculty are not. It is this sense of entitlement that I believe creates the complexity in the concepts of race and gender privilege, and marks the difference between not seeing the duck, as it were, and seeing it but not acting accordingly.

### III

The word “entitlement” has become more common in discussion of race and gender issues over the last few years, and has many of the same problems as the word “privilege.” Neither has what Naomi Zack calls a “philosophical history” that can be invoked in their analysis,<sup>18</sup> and both can be understood in a positive sense. The word “entitlement” seems to imply, on the one hand, what McIntosh calls “earned” privileges, that is, those that we come to by some specific achievement of our own.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the word still carries the sense of having come to something through one’s birth that lies in its link to titled nobility. These disparate connotations taken together, however, reflect fairly accurately the state of mind that I wish to call a sense of entitlement—the idea that one has earned a certain privilege by being born to it. For instance, white male applicants for teaching positions sometimes convey the impression that they feel entitled to the job. Should someone else be hired who is equally qualified but lacks race and/or gender privilege, the person hired may easily seem less qualified to them, simply because s/he does not belong to the privileged group, and so they label it “reverse discrimination.” In this case, they are not merely relying on their race and gender privilege—they are invoking it as a “qualification,” as a reason they should be hired.

What such a quasi-technical concept of “entitlement” allows for, as does the dual understanding of inauthenticity sketched out above, is a third possible stance beyond the dichotomy between privilege and its lack. Just as one can make a distinction between undifferentiated average everydayness and chosen inauthenticity, one could make a distinction between those who live their privilege because they are unaware of it and those who assert and experience that privilege as an entitlement. This leaves the bearers of such privilege with three possible paths in life.

The first path would be to live out one’s privilege without full awareness of its existence, without seeing the duck, as it were. This is the state, I would suggest, of many of my students in the Upper Midwest with regard to race. Seldom having to deal face-to-face with the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow, they see both as something that happened long ago and far away, something that has little to do with their comfortable situations in life. This is a provisional path, available only so long as they avoid any exposure to knowledge about the pervasive racism in American society and how that racism directly benefits them in the myriad ways McIntosh refers to in her article. Explicitly laying this option out as a way in which white privilege can be experienced, however, has the advantage of allowing our students their pasts without making negative moral judgments. What needs to be emphasized, rather than the pointless guilt Zack links to the concept of white privilege,<sup>20</sup> is the fact that after they become aware of their privilege this path is closed to them. Once they encounter “racist anxiety,” as it might be termed, through a college course or, as in the 1960s, through watching film of law enforcement personnel turn dogs and fire hoses on children, they must choose between the other two paths.<sup>21</sup>

One of these paths is to develop the sense of entitlement described above, to embrace race and/or gender privilege and

consider it both earned and a result of one’s heritage. In the face of this, it is tempting to think that the other path is to disown one’s gender or race privilege. But such privilege is given by society as a whole, based on certain supposedly perceptible traits of the human body. This is a function of the impersonal They, not of individual human action, and just as one doesn’t choose to have male privilege or white privilege, one cannot simply choose to deny it entirely.

The only alternative to entitlement is to avoid the exercise of such privilege where one can and, where one cannot, to adopt and use one’s privilege, to the extent possible, in ways that benefit, or at least do not harm, those who do not have it, as McIntosh and Alison Bailey suggest.<sup>22</sup> One can teach about race and gender privilege; one can lend the power of that privilege in specific situations to those who do not have it; one can support anti-sexist, anti-racist political candidates and social programs that benefit those without such privilege. We cannot be entirely free from race and gender privilege in a sexually and racially hierarchical society, as one of my colleagues often says, but those who have such privilege can use it to act against sexism and racism.

It is necessary, however, to point out one strong similarity between authenticity and such uses of race and gender privilege, and one even stronger difference. The similarity is that, as already noted, the unexamined exercise of race and/or gender privilege is a permanent possibility even for those who work to avoid it, just as inauthenticity is a permanent possibility even for authentic Dasein. Those with white privilege cannot not be white and so cannot help but act in what Marilyn Frye calls a “whitely” fashion<sup>23</sup> whenever they allow their attention to the sexism and racism imbedded in our culture to slip, “when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment,” as Heidegger says. Thus, even those with race and/or gender privilege who try to do anti-sexist, anti-racist work can find themselves exercising our privilege when caught unaware, by accepting preferential treatment in a crowded store, perhaps, or by enjoying a movie, novel, or television show we realize only in retrospect perpetuates sexist or racist stereotypes. That such incidents are both inevitable and unintentional does not make them okay, but it is also important to keep them in perspective, rather than being immobilized by the guilt Zack argues is a result of focusing on privilege.<sup>24</sup>

The more important difference, however, is that the resolute decision to wield race and/or gender privilege in an anti-sexist, anti-racist way is not yet authenticity in Heidegger’s sense of the term. It is not yet to “free” ourselves from the They in order to choose autonomously how we will act with regard to sexual and racial differences because the very fact that we consider there to be such a thing as a single sexual difference, or racial difference at all, is part and parcel of the social world that makes racism and sexism possible. At this time, in this country, none of us are free with regard to gender or race. The best that one can hope for is to live a life that embodies the attempt to create a radically different social world, one in which race and gender privilege, and the concepts of gender and race on which they depend, will have disappeared and true authenticity will have become possible. For me this means that we must confront others when their words or actions do harm, make it harder for them to do such harm, and work to make them aware of their race and gender privilege. But we must also do so with compassion, whether for friends, colleagues, or students. When it comes to making people recognize their race and/or gender privilege, we can do no more, and we must do no less, than to send them a well-timed duck. That is, I think, what it means to teach.

Endnotes

1. This paper has benefited greatly from discussion with members of the women's studies program at Eastern Michigan University and from the helpful comments of my husband, Jeffrey Koon.
2. "Terminus" by Julian McFaul and John F. Bueche, with excerpts from Michael Kandel's translation of Stanislaw Lem's *Tales of Pilot Pirox* and *More Tales of Pilot Pirox*, produced by the Bedlam Theatre, Minneapolis, Minnesota. (The line about the duck was added to the script by actor Mike Harris, who played Mommisen.)
3. Chris J. Cuomo and Kim Q. Hall, eds. *Whiteness: Feminist Philosophical Reflections* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).
4. Peggy McIntosh. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." In *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995), 76-87. Many others, of course, have written on white privilege, but hers is the articulation of the concept with which I assume most philosophers are familiar.
5. Martin Heidegger: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962).
6. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 76.
7. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 87.
8. *Ibid.*
9. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 78. For a more detailed discussion of this question, see Ellen Armour, *Deconstruction, Feminist Theology, and the Problem of Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
10. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 76-77.
11. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 79-81.
12. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 77.
13. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 83.
14. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 84.
15. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232, translation slightly modified, his emphasis.
18. Naomi Zack. "White Ideas." In *Whiteness*, edited by Chris J. Cuomo and Kim Q. Hall (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 79.
19. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 83.
20. Zack, "White Ideas," 80-81.
21. Among his other helpful comments, my colleague Stephen Kellert suggests another possible path, "giving up and saying the world is unjust and there is no point in trying to change it. I see this, however, as a way of embracing one's privilege, roughly analogous to Pilot Pirox saying of the duck, "if we're doomed, we're doomed" and continuing the flight. The difference between the two interpretations of such "fatalism" can be important from a teaching point of view.
22. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 87; Alison Bailey, "Despising an Identity They Taught Me to Claim," in *Whiteness*, edited by Chris J. Cuomo and Kim Q. Hall (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 98-101.
23. Marilyn Frye. *Willful Virgin: Essays in Feminism* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1992), discussed in Bailey, "Despising an Identity They Taught Me to Claim."
24. Zack, "White Ideas," 80-81.

## ***Teaching about Racism and Sexism in Introduction to Philosophy Classes***

**Gail M. Presbey**  
University of Detroit Mercy

In a philosophy class, we learn to question our assumptions. We learn that reality is not always how it appears to be. We inquire into issues of justice that go beyond the status quo of how things have "always been." We learn to widen our knowledge by stretching ourselves to see a situation from another person's perspective, in an attempt to have a more realistic view of what is really going on. With these as the general goals of philosophy, a concrete project that can help students see the benefits of the philosophical approach is to explore issues of racism and sexism (and along these same lines classist, heterosexist, and ablest presumptions) in contemporary America.

Contemporary philosophers like Charles W. Mills and others have emphasized how the field of philosophy, as with so many other disciplines in the academy, is often taught in an implicitly racist and sexist way by its exclusion of non-white and female voices. He points to the problem of "white ignorance": a problem of holding false beliefs and the absence of true belief about people of color, which presumes that they are "savages" and that whites are civilized. Such a perspective can only be had if one suppresses the history of white brutality and passes over the accomplishments of people of color. This ignorance, Mills argues, is the result of social and institutional systems of power and domination, and not mere lack of correct information.<sup>1</sup> I argue that teaching an Introduction to Philosophy course that includes only white male philosophers in the Euro-American canon teaches racism by continuing white ignorance about contributions from other thinkers and cultures outside of Europe. It presents these thinkers in a vacuum and has the (possibly unintended) side-effect of suggesting that other thinkers cannot think. The exclusion of women from this canon has the same effect as well.

It was in response to this distortion of the history of philosophy that my co-editors Karsten Struhl, Richard Olsen, and myself created *The Philosophical Quest: A Cross-Cultural Reader* in 1995, and I use its second edition in class nowadays. Many of the readings referred to throughout this article can be found in this text. Since our text was published, there have been several other philosophy textbooks (by Larry May, Christine Koggel, James Sterba, and Daniel Bonevac to name a few) that have emphasized inclusiveness in their selections.<sup>2</sup>

I start my philosophy classes with selections from Ancient Egypt, since we have philosophical texts from there that are thousands of years older than any others. "Dialogue Between a Man and his Soul" (from 2200-2050 B.C.E.) demonstrates the philosophical method of dialogue, and explores a philosophical topic, "Why live?" In the essay, a man critiques the injustice of his society and posits (in a personal position that goes against his society's belief that the afterlife is much like this life) that the next world is a place of justice and intellectual clarity (since the body is a source of error—a position that prefigures Socrates' arguments in the *Phaedo* by a thousand years or so). I was first introduced to the philosophical implications of this text by an article by Robert Brier.<sup>3</sup> Another key Egyptian text I like to use is "The Instruction of Any" (from 1550-1305 B.C.E.), in which a father gives his son prudential advice, and the son then, by debating his father, raises the issue: "Can one teach others virtue?" If so, how is teaching virtue like or unlike other training? I was first alerted to the philosophical import of this article by David James.<sup>4</sup>

One reason to use Egyptian texts is to accurately begin at the beginning. The earliest philosophical texts come from what we now call the continent of Africa, just like the earliest humans come from Africa. Ancient Egypt was, according to Chiekh Anta Diop, a Black society, and according to British historian Basil Davidson, a multi-racial society; even the more conservative position of Davidson still breaks through stereotypes of ancient Egypt as an “exception” cut out of the context of Black Africa. Any (in the text mentioned above) explains that Nubians come and learn the Egyptian language and become as fluent as Egyptians. So, Egypt is in communication with other parts of Africa, both through exchange of population and ideas. A good source to help students debunk the idea that Egypt was somehow “white” (therefore explaining its great accomplishments without interrupting the racist narrative of history) is to show them a few minutes of Basil Davidson’s first video in his series *Africa*. Davidson scrutinizes ancient Egyptian artifacts to discover the multi-racial heritage of ancient Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

Including selections from ancient China and ancient India before proceeding to ancient Greece is another way to be inclusive and to fight white ignorance. After ancient Greece, it is crucial to mention the importance of the Arabic language for philosophizing, and how ideas and debates from ancient Greece were continued in Arabic across the Middle East and North Africa as they made their way to Spain and eventually France (see Eric Ormsby’s history of Arabic philosophy for the details).<sup>6</sup> I realize that the inclusion of this broader history does little to discount the sexist nature of the field. Even the ancient Egyptian text *Amy* is a dialogue between a man and his son; however, David James suggests that the son, Khonshotep, refers to his mother’s way of teaching virtue as possibly superior to his father’s way.<sup>7</sup> Confucius’s *School for Young Men* was a radical departure from class-based tutorial education, but did not divert from the perspective that men, not women, should be groomed for public life.<sup>8</sup> When I get to Aristotle I often use Elizabeth Spelman’s feminist critique of his views (included in Sterba’s text). Since I prefer to use primary texts whenever possible, I could suggest that in tandem with Aristotle’s virtue ethics one covers the writing of a Late Pythagorean woman philosopher, Theano II. She lived around 300-100 B.C.E., and her letters were preserved in Theodoret’s *De Vita Pythagoras*. In the letters she outlines women’s wisdom and virtue when dealing with children, husbands, and servants. She has an especially keen sense of moral integrity as lived in relationship with others.<sup>9</sup>

After a cursory look at Medieval debates (one always has the pressure to be cursory in an introductory course), we must, of course, cover the philosophy of Rene Descartes. There is no avoiding Descartes, and no need to avoid him because we can learn a lot from scrutinizing his highly individualistic method. It is certainly good to question our assumptions, and ensure that we “really know” what we think we know. But perhaps introspection has limited use. I follow up Descartes with Charles Sanders Peirce, who suggests the *a priori* method which focuses on rational scrutiny has shortcomings. It proclaims that it is able to transcend subjectivity to find objective truth, but it is still mired in subjectivity. While agreeing with Descartes in eschewing tenacity and authority as good sources for our beliefs (and here you have to warn students not to be waylaid by Peirce’s use of subtle humor when he sings the praises of tenacity), he suggests that only the scientific method can bring us to objective truths.<sup>10</sup> Peirce’s critique is an invaluable step, but it is not the end. It is just a new launching point for the critique of science’s objectivity, a topic discussed at length by Sandra Harding. With Harding’s critique of the assumptions behind the “hard sciences,” and her explanations of standpoint theory, it is time for students to look at Patricia Hill Collins’s

critique of the social sciences. Our textbook includes passages from Harding and Hill Collins on these topics.<sup>11</sup> However, my students sometimes complain about the Hill Collins text. Even my African American women students will say that she is “too angry.” I think that their judgments are due to internalized racist and sexist norms. Sometimes I include Hill Collins, and sometimes I skip her and use the approach outlined later in this article, the approach through humor, not because I think it is more academically sound but because it seems to break through students’ barriers of resistance.

Charles Mills explains how there is a need to break through barriers of individual epistemology (found in Descartes) to see social epistemology at work. Further, discussions of social epistemology that do not refer to factors of race, class, and gender need to incorporate these added perspectives. I think that when Descartes is used as a starting point for such adventures, philosophy can become relevant to students’ lives and teach them life skills that will help them see through ideology and become more objective in various aspects of their lives. According to Mills, the process of cognition involves perception, conception, memory, testimony, and motivational group interest. Firstly, perception is already socialized; to recognize objects in our perceptual field we must draw upon our memory, or background knowledge, which appeals to testimony. When drawing upon testimony we decide which voices to listen to and which to ignore. Our use of language to describe our thoughts introduces social mediation since our languages are social projects. Mills explains, “At all levels, interests may shape cognition, influencing what and how we see, what we and society choose to remember, whose testimony is solicited and whose is not, and which facts and frameworks are sought out and accepted.”<sup>12</sup>

Without being vigilant against the social bias built into our patterns of cognition, we will tend to perceive things which confirm our beliefs and weed out as irrelevant or distrustful any information that would disconfirm the theses we already hold. If we come from a sexist and racist society that is in denial of its unfair practices and touts its “egalitarian” credentials, Mills contends, we will be predisposed to discount or suspect as false any evidence put forward to prove our society’s sexist and racist underpinnings.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, I consider that at this point in the course, it is important to engage students in a discussion of racism and sexism in contemporary America.

Teaching in a racially diverse but primarily white private university located in Detroit, my students are mostly middle class, and many of the younger students seem to have a rosy picture of what life will be like for themselves after they graduate. Sometimes students are surprised that we will study issues of racism and sexism in class because they think that these are old issues and that now racism and sexism have disappeared or at least greatly diminished. I often have women who tell me that their mothers had to deal with sexism but they themselves will not have a problem. I have some African American students as well as white students who think it is in bad taste to raise issues of racism in the class because those old wounds should just be forgotten as they join an open and inclusive society where everyone can succeed. Of course, that is not the view of all of my students; some know only too keenly that racism and sexism permeate society. Certainly, racism and sexism still exist, even if their forms are changing.

Greg Moses explains that the difference between old racism and new racism involves “shifting the weight of supremacy from codes of enunciation to codes of evasion” and that in contemporary times we must pay attention to “erasure, elision, and all the things that don’t get talked about.”<sup>14</sup> If one understands what racism and sexism are, and one is taught to



notice its contemporary manifestations, then one can be more vigilant in protecting oneself from racist or sexist discrimination as well as prevent oneself from reinforcing unfair systems of power.

One way to introduce the topic is to point to statistics which show that women and people of color in the United States are still lagging behind white males regarding income and wealth. Recent studies by United for a Fair Economy have documented the extent of the racial wealth gap, and how the gap is widening. Likewise, statistics about the “glass ceiling” which keeps women out of the top positions of power as well as the “bottomless pit” of women’s poverty (especially single women head of households) dramatize the variety of ways in which they find themselves facing obstacles that many men are not facing.<sup>15</sup>

With many students being success oriented, it is important to challenge the ideas that their success is due primarily or solely to their own individual effort. To the extent that parental wealth helps students pay their tuition, statistics on how wealth in the U.S. is passed from generation to generation primarily through home ownership, and further studies that show how real estate prices and mortgage affordability are permeated by race, will go a long way in explaining why African American parents are often less able to contribute large sums to their children’s higher education compared to white parents. At the earlier stages of public school, elementary and secondary education, lower house prices mean less revenue in property tax and under-funded schools in predominantly African American neighborhoods. Decisions to fund schools from local property taxes rather than other state-wide tax bases is itself a political decision influenced by race, even if whites do not admit that race is a key factor.<sup>16</sup>

Still, large and systemic structures of discrimination might leave a white student feeling that he or she has had no part in continuing racial discrimination in the U.S. After all, this student has not shaped the field of real estate, banking etc. Our cultural emphasis on individual piety and our blindness to systemic problems may leave an individual feeling that he or she is not part of the problem as long as he or she refrains from making racial slurs or showing other forms of overt hostility to members of other racial groups. For these reasons I used Peggy McIntosh’s “White Privilege and Male Privilege” essay to illustrate how many of us can be participating in systems of discrimination by reaping unfair advantages about which we are unconscious or unaware. We do not have to be trying to get an unfair advantage in order to be reaping the benefits of race and gender privilege. Her list of many concrete examples usually helps students to have first-time realizations about the ways in which gender and race distinctions have been at work in their lives.<sup>17</sup>

Since McIntosh’s essay, there have been others who have also addressed this issue of white privilege, such as Anna Stubblefield and Shannon Sullivan.<sup>18</sup> As Blanche Radford Curry points out, many African American scholars have been working on these topics as well.<sup>19</sup> I use McIntosh’s essay because it is readily available in several Introduction to Philosophy textbooks. I also use it because it draws parallels between race, gender, and sexual orientation privilege.

I do find that it is important to emphasize, when using the McIntosh selection, that she is not listing her privileges in order to gloat or brag but, rather, to expose the unfairness of it all. Without explaining this in advance of assigning the reading, it is always possible for students to misunderstand her practice of making her list, since the full explanation is at the end of the article (and students unhappy with the project may not read to the end). I ask students ahead of time to focus on her answer to the question, What should be done about the unearned

privilege? For each, she suggests either extending the privilege to all (and thereby undermining it as a privilege) or prohibiting the practice for anyone (ending the privilege). (For more on the benefits or drawbacks of identifying white privilege in order to stop the practice, see Greg Moses’s article.<sup>20</sup>)

I follow up McIntosh’s study with Laurence Thomas’s essay on the importance of practicing moral deference toward those members of diminished social categories (people of color in a racist society, women in a sexist society, etc.) when they speak in an informed way from their firsthand experience as a member of the diminished group. After all, they are speaking from an experience not available to someone outside the group. If we as a member of the dominant social group do not believe them when they speak from their experience, we are in fact practicing downward social construction, by presuming that they cannot be trusted or cannot be an authority on the topic. Not taking someone seriously is part of how racism and sexism work.<sup>21</sup>

Thomas helps students see that they should not presume they understand another person’s experience just because they can imagine what they think they might feel like if they themselves were in the other person’s shoes. We may in fact be projecting our own experience onto others. The safer bet is to listen to others when they describe their experience. Thomas also draws upon experiences of both race and gender in showing the challenges of trying to understand another person’s experience.

If we were to apply Thomas’s insights to the topic of disability studies, we would realize that listening to testimony is the surest way to have insights into what it is like to struggle with a physical challenge. I have my students read Karen Fiser’s essay on “Philosophy and Disability,” an essay in which she shares insights from her struggle with chronic pain and limitation of physical movement.<sup>22</sup> The Fiser essay can be paired with Iris Young’s insights as to how those without disabilities often wrongly assume what life must be like for those with disabilities (because they project their own limited experience onto others and so come to wrong conclusions). Here, the difference between imagining what it must be like, and actually putting oneself in the place of a person with a physical challenge, is a very different experience with different results. Citing a court case in Oregon during which people with disabilities were suing the city for allocating public health care funds in a way that discriminated against people with disabilities, Young notes that the State government, in its defense, had said that it was only responding to democratic pressures. During phone surveys with taxpayers asked how they would like to prioritize their funding of various health care services, the respondents listed health care for people with disabilities last, because they personally thought that they would be better dead than disabled. Young explains that people going through a brief imaginative thought experiment on what it would be like to be blind, deaf, or wheelchair bound, for example, might find the thought so daunting that they would presume they would be better off dead. But, if they were to find themselves with a physical challenge, they would find that, in fact, they would want to live, and would want to learn how to cope with their challenge.<sup>23</sup>

Thomas’s challenge regarding the limits of our understanding got me thinking about those who have experimented with taking on the personae of a person from another race or gender and then experiencing first-hand some of what it is like to be regarded by others as being from the other gender or race. Mixed-race persons have described the ways in which their encounters with others change if the others perceive them to be white or black. Closeted homosexuals note the difference in the ways they are responded to and/or accepted by the

general public when they keep their sexual orientation hidden compared to when they are up front about their orientation. Dramatic differences in treatment have caused some gays and lesbians to stay in the closet, and some African Americans to continue passing for white (an option open only to some). Less frequently, in some cases women have spent their lives passing as men (such as the jazz musician Billy Tipton) so as to have the privileges of career opportunity only afforded to men. Such persons are epistemically privileged by their dual experiences to comment upon the differing treatment they have received based on different perceptions of their identity.<sup>24</sup>

The insights that come with experiencing dual roles have been so enlightening, albeit also very painful, that some individuals have sought to have the temporary experience of belonging to the other group, in order to gain insight. I do not suggest to students that they try this themselves, as many errors can occur: students may erroneously understand what it means to “pass” as someone of another group, there are practical difficulties in being convincing in the role, there are moral problems involved in the deception, and actual physical dangers if the deceptions are discovered. Those who have engaged in these experiments before, however, can provide food for thought for the rest of us. Those who transgress racial and gender barriers often have experiences they find quite shocking when they experience callous discrimination from members of their own group who now presume that they are a member of the other group. The book and later the film *Black Like Me* is an example of a white reporter who decides to disguise himself as black in order to expose the extent of racial discrimination in America.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, the reporter from *Black Like Me*, John Howard Griffin, engages in his experiment because he thinks that white people will have to listen to him, and they will believe his report, even if they have been skeptical when blacks report that they are being treated in a racist fashion. Of course, that is exactly Thomas’s point—Why won’t whites believe blacks when they talk about racist treatment? The tendency to doubt or disbelieve their testimony is exactly what Thomas has pinpointed as part of the racist treatment. To have a white person give first-hand testimony about racism, while the goal is laudatory since it is meant to expose racism, also caters to white racism in giving whites the opportunity to believe a white person, since they will not believe a black person describing racist treatment.

Mills describes whites as having a complicated cognitive relationship with black grievances, “simultaneously believing that they are false and wanting to believe that they are false (which implies a recognition that they are true).”<sup>26</sup> To overcome this hurdle of skepticism fueled by self-interest (not admitted to consciously), a reporter like Griffin, or a “hidden camera” that cannot lie (like reporter Joel Grover’s exposé on racist department store security guards), may be needed to overcome the skepticism.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to note that the film *Black Like Me* does address the problems of “passing” and the limits and moral problems involved in the experiment (as I have outlined above). Also, while persons temporarily taking on the identity of someone from another group could have these experiences of being downwardly socially constituted, as Thomas would say, that would not be the same as having been from that category from birth and having had one’s psyche, or as Thomas calls it one’s “emotional category configuration,” shaped by repeated experiences of racism and sexism. So one still could not say, “I know how you feel” to someone who had been the subject of racist or sexist treatment. But certainly, experiencing such treatment firsthand, even if temporarily, will give one an insight (however partial) that one did not have before.

Often a direct experience happening to oneself, firsthand, makes the most hardened skeptic buckle under the weight of evidence and admit that, for example, there is such a thing as racist and sexist discrimination, and that it does not feel good. The educative role of firsthand experience was part of the motivation behind Jane Elliott’s dividing her elementary school class into “blue eye” and “brown eye” groups to discover the dynamics of discrimination. Each group of students had a chance to experience what it was like to be the favored group, and what it was like to be the group considered second-best or undesirable. They could then reflect upon their own actions of reinforcing the hierarchy in the light of how they felt when they were on the receiving end of the discriminatory behavior. It was then up to each student to understand the analogy to racist behavior.<sup>28</sup>

An alternative to a direct experience can be a film experience, especially since film as a medium has the flexibility to build sympathetic characters and then to use camera angles to give viewers the simulated experience of being situated in the place of that character. Feminist aestheticians and culture critics have long commented on how films often have us play the role of voyeur as film camera angles ensure that we are put in the position of the “male gaze” looking longingly at desirable women.<sup>29</sup> The same techniques, however, can be used to expose racism and sexism.

It is in this context of covering the above readings that I have found it helpful to show students the 1996 film, *The Associate*. I am a bit cautious about suggesting its use after having consulted the careful philosophical analyses of so many philosophy scholars of color: Certainly, it seems a big jump to go from their subtleties and sensitivities to proposing the use of a Disney film in class. I dare to make this segue because I have found that the use of this popular comedy works with students. Its use of humor and its use of the film technique of getting audiences to sympathize with its protagonist help otherwise reluctant students to admit that there is sexist and racist discrimination in our society.

Linguist Deborah Tannen argues that women would be well-advised to use humor while pointing out men’s sexist practices, since direct and serious confrontations (however accurate) often result in increased resistance to the point. In Tannen’s example, when men at a meeting gave a male colleague credit for an idea that a woman colleague had thought of first, the overlooked woman employee said in exaggerated fashion, “Gee, I wish I had thought of that!” Male colleagues laughed, and then admitted that they remembered her saying it first.<sup>30</sup> Somehow, the Goldberg film, by getting students to laugh, opens them to admitting that the scenarios in the film (at least in the beginning before the film takes us on a wild romp of the imagination, where we are required to suspend belief about the realism of certain aspects of the plot, as is the case with most fiction and most films) are believable examples of racist and sexist treatment that still exist in U.S. workplaces today.

Whoopi Goldberg plays an African American stock broker named Laurel Ayers who finds herself passed over for a promotion. She lives in a world where success comes easiest to white males, and when she is too often discriminated against, she takes the radical step of disguising herself as a white male in order to win the clients who refused her talents due to racist and sexist prejudices.<sup>31</sup> By focusing on two women, both Ayers the stockbroker and the secretary Sally Dugan (played by Dianne Wiest), the film shows the intersections of gender and class, and highlights the issue of solidarity among women across race and class lines.

In the film, Laurel Ayers is shown as the brains behind the investment portfolios of her company, but her male colleague

Frank (played by Tim Daly) uses his charm and cunning to get credit for Laurel's hard work. She quits, goes into business on her own, and finally comes to the realization that she will be able to succeed only if she masters all the cultural ways which make men comfortable while talking business, on the golf course, and over card games. At first Laurel is elated to have found a way around the seemingly insurmountable race and gender bias that hampered her chances for success by creating the fictitious male partner "Mr. Cutty." But as time goes on, she resents Robert Cutty's "success" since she knows that she herself deserves the praise. She is, in fact, the genius behind Cutty, but no one will consider a woman of color a financial genius. Finally, she regrets creating him.

Most intriguingly, the film uses camera angles so that we, the audience, can experience what the Laurel Ayers character experiences when she, an African American woman, dons the costume of an elderly, confident, and rich white male. We see the other characters give her all the respect, deference, and adulation that she deserves as the actual author of the ideas and projects that made the millions for her clients. We join her as she waltzes past the "men only" barriers that earlier kept her doing business only in the lobby of the Peabody Club. We also hear the other characters make callous and blunt "insider" jokes to her that we know they would never say to her if they knew she were a woman of color. And, therefore, Ayers has the proof she needs to show that their actions all along were racist and sexist, even though they had denied it. She will find her moment to confront them all with evidence of their prejudices—at the end of the film. Rigid gender identity is also skewered, as a cross-dressing friend of Ayers' helps her to succeed in passing as Mr. Cutty.

The kind of unspoken and denied acts of discrimination against Laurel Ayers are still present in contemporary workplaces. What kind of discrimination do women face these days in careers with a "glass ceiling?" I often quote some of the literature in social science, linguistics, economics, and business to help explain the phenomena witnessed in the film. Students have been so affected by the ideology of America as the land of equal opportunity for all, that without concrete examples of how such high ideals are undermined in practice, they will not be able to see the puzzle pieces that make up gender and race oppression. I also like to point to such literature so that they can be handy "survival tools" for women and students of color as they graduate. In my own case, I did not have exposure to this literature until well after I graduated with my Ph.D. in philosophy.

Economics professor Linda Babcock and writer Sara Laschever, in their book *Women Don't Ask: Negotiations and the Gender Divide*, explain why so many women in careers are paid less, get promoted less often, and in general make hundreds of thousands of dollars less than their male counterparts during their lifetimes. The authors chalk up the difference in rank and pay to both internalized and external expectations based on gender. On the one hand, women will not want to sing their own praises. They will ask indirectly, or not ask for a promotion or larger responsibilities. A much larger percentage of them do not negotiate for a higher starting salary, compared to men. Women feel pressure to put the needs of others first. They consider themselves laboring for "love" not money. Women are unsure of what they deserve. Women's self-worth fluctuates more in response to feedback. Many women are satisfied with less (perhaps because they expect less), so they do not think of negotiating for more. Also, women like to be given a reward without asking. Women (unlike men) are afraid that if they are assertive, they will not be liked.<sup>32</sup>

But the pressures holding women back in the workplace do not only emanate from inside a woman. In fact, women are

penalized for boasting. Women are in a catch-22 situation. The authors cite studies that show that men make worse first offers to women, and pressure women to concede more, while they themselves concede much less. In this context it is no wonder that women feel disincentives to ask for higher starting salaries or more promotions. A simple exercise (cited in Babcock and Laschever's book) that social scientists created to measure gender differences in negotiations asked two parties to split ten dollars between the two of them, any way they wanted, with the only stipulation being that both parties must agree to the split. The only thing the parties knew about their partner in negotiation was the person's gender: Across the board, if the negotiators knew that the other person was a woman, they would offer that person a lower amount of the split and withhold their cooperation until the woman agreed to the unfair split. Women therefore face an uphill battle when they insist on equal treatment rather than being satisfied with less.

Tannen cites studies showing that, in general, men talk more often and longer at meetings in the workplace than do women. If women ask their co-workers what they think about a project (in order to solicit their input), co-workers can think she is exhibiting a lack of confidence. Women apologize more often in the workplace; sometimes their apology is intended to elicit a reciprocal apology but it does not succeed. Women also tend to talk deferentially not only to superiors (as do men) but also when talking to subordinates.<sup>33</sup>

Tannen cites anthropologist Gregory Bateson who explains that women in the workplace are in a double bind. If they apologize a lot and give orders in an indirect way, they are well liked but not respected as competent. If they speak more along the patterns of male communication and give direct orders without apology, they are respected but not well liked, and they may be considered too aggressive and evaluated negatively. She cites Bonnie McElhinny who discovered that women in traditionally male professions such as the police force have a difficult time because if they attempt to assert their authority, they can be interpreted as trying to be masculine.<sup>34</sup>

According to Tannen, some of the ways that women and men communicate are best understood as cultural differences. Women have developed a style of communication and expectations about communication that are different than men's styles and expectations. But in addition to being cultural differences, there are also power differences. Women are expected to talk in a more inquisitive way, asking questions and making requests more than making demands, and if they do not adopt that tone, they are resisted.<sup>35</sup> Gender studies like these, of course, have to intersect with studies of language in relation to class and race as well, and especially how language is used in the workplace. Films like *The Associate* focus students' attention on many of these subtler yet all-pervasive ways in which racism and sexism occur in the workplace, short of blunt assertions by bosses that they will not hire or promote a person of a certain race or gender.

After listing the benefits of using a film like *The Associate*, I do want to list some of its shortcomings as well. The racial discrimination aspect of Laurel Ayers' experience is under-theorized in relation to her experience of gender discrimination. Race is not as directly addressed in conversations, and the film sometimes gives the impression that the race discrimination dimension could have been a last minute add-on topic. The Ayers character is the only main African American character in the film, and her glass-ceiling problem is framed as a case of a person with exceptional talents going unrecognized. She forms an unlikely alliance with her white lower-class secretary possibly because there are no other African American women characters available to be in solidarity with her.

Passages from Patricia Williams's *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor* help to give some concrete examples of struggles of African American women in white-dominated workplaces. Books like *The Agony of Education* share testimonies of African American students struggling to succeed in white-dominated educational institutions, and how such experiences are different than educational experiences in historically black universities. Such passages follow Thomas's strict advice of learning best from listening to the testimonies of those in the position of the diminished social category.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, the "glass ceiling" problem of discrimination against women is not the only form of gender discrimination. Equally pressing and more widespread is the problem called by Tilly and Albelda the "bottomless pit" of poverty: women who head single-parent households and contend with marginal and minimum wage employment, and who have little educational opportunity that could lift them out of their situation.<sup>37</sup> These large problems are not explored in the film. As such, the film cannot be both the beginning and the end of the conversation with students about race and gender discrimination. I consider it a good ice-breaker because many students are career-oriented and so will be especially interested in glass-ceiling discrimination problems. They may not see the "bottomless pit" problems as their own.

Women students, however, should be warned that becoming the single head of a household that includes children (either born out of wedlock or due to divorce) is the biggest factor in even educated women finding themselves in the "bottomless pit" of poverty. This awareness is important, not just as a caution for individuals striving to make it in the current system, but also to increase the perceived need for solidarity of all women to change our economic structures so that they do not unduly penalize (or demonize) women who devote themselves to the important tasks of child rearing. Tilly and Albelda's book is filled with concrete prescriptions (from minor reforms to major overhauls of our economic system) that will support mothers and children and help to end the cycles of poverty.

How does one get students interested in the problems of poverty for large numbers of women in our society, especially when they may be convinced that it will never happen to them? Jane Addams's essay "Charitable Effort" raises the issue in a way similar to McIntosh's "White Privilege" article (Addams was a person of privilege who critiqued her own privilege). Addams explains that as a white middle class woman, she expected to be giving sound advice and practical help to the impoverished women she visited as part of her social work. Instead, she found that the women she met had exemplary characteristics when it came to caring for others, and they had sound critiques of her and her middle class ways. She found herself being judged, not the other way around, and came to respect and admire the women she met who struggled with poverty.<sup>38</sup> That is just the kind of learning situation I try to create for my students—I hope that they will realize that they had things backward: that, in fact, they are to learn from the very people they had earlier dismissed and marginalized.

#### Endnotes

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11. Sandra Harding. "Is Science Multicultural?" and Patricia Hill Collins, "An Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology." In *The Philosophical Quest*, edited by Gail Presbey et al., 84-104
12. Mills, "White Ignorance," 24
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14. Greg Moses. "Unmasking through Naming: Toward an Ethics and Africology of Whiteness." In *White on White, Black on Black*, edited by George Yancy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 50
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19. See Blanche Radford Curry, book review of Shannon Sullivan's *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* in *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* 07 (Fall 2007): 10-14
20. Greg Moses, op. cit.
21. Laurence Thomas. "Moral Deference." In *The Philosophical Quest*, edited by Gail M Presbey et al., 565-76
22. Karen Fiser. "Philosophy and Disability." In *The Philosophical Quest*, edited by Gail M Presbey et al., 580-89
23. Iris Marion Young. "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Mentality." *Constellations* 3/3 (1997): 340-63; see esp. 343-44
24. Diane Wood Middlebrook. *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton* (Boston: Peter Dawson/Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

25. John Howard Griffin. *Black Like Me* (New York: Signet, 1964). Film directed by Carl Lerner and starring James Whitmore, 1964.
26. Mills, "White Ignorance," 5.
27. Read about Joel Grover's 1991 report for KSTP in Robert Lissit, "Gotcha!" *American Journalism Review* (March 1995).
28. PBS/Frontline documentary, "A Class Divided" (1985), about Jane Elliott's 1968 experiment. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html>
29. Griselda Pollock. "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity." In *Aesthetics*, edited by Susan Feagin and Patrick Maynard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Graeme Turner. *Film as Social Practice*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 1988), 116-18.
30. Deborah Tannen. *He Said, She Said: Exploring the Different Ways Men and Women Communicate* (Barnes and Noble Audio 2004), booklet, 56.
31. *The Associate* (1996) starring Whoopi Goldberg. Walt Disney Video. The film is an American remake of a French film. About *L'associé* (the 1979 French film that was the precursor to *The Associate*) see: <http://www.vh1.com/movies/movie/1854/plot.jhtml>
32. Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever. *Women Don't Ask: Negotiations and the Gender Divide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
33. Deborah Tannen, *He Said, She Said*.
34. Tannen, *He Said, She Said*, 50-52, 60.
35. Tannen, *He Said, She Said*, 61.
36. Patricia Williams. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Joe R. Feagin. *The Agony of Education: Black Students at a White University* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
37. Randy Albelda and Chris Tilly. *Glass Ceilings and Bottomless Pits: Women's Work, Women's Poverty* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1997).
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## ***The Feminist Philosophy Reader: Notes on Intersectionality and the Possibility of a Feminist Critical Race Philosophy***

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In putting together *The Feminist Philosophy Reader* (2008)<sup>1</sup> Chris Cuomo and I wanted to assemble a collection of readings that would introduce philosophy students to feminist theory, and feminist readers to philosophy—one that would spark readers' imaginations not only by introducing them to the now classic essays in the field, but also to newly emerging lines of inquiry. The collection had to be theoretically and topically diverse, but it also had to be an honest representation of the state of feminist philosophy today. And, the reality is that feminist philosophy is still very white and very Western. This proved to be our biggest challenge. In reviewing essays to include in the collection we were continually struck by the amazing amount of powerful and insightful work generated by feminist philosophers over a relatively short period of time. In the space of less than two generations, feminist philosophy has generated a delightfully unruly corpus of work and has ushered in a generation of students eager to read, embellish, and critique this emerging and diverse canon. Yet, philosophy is decades behind other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences when it comes to questions about the ways race, ethnicity, and

colonialism shape our intellectual traditions. The fact that the majority of feminist philosophy is still being done in English by white women is an artifact of the discipline's history, and this demographic continues to shape the contours of feminist philosophy. If philosophical "best practices" have been crafted primarily by European cultural frameworks and methodologies, and if white feminists are trained to understand these as doing philosophy pure and simple, then we have inherited the master's toolbox.

Philosophers have continually set aside, swallowed, distorted, essentialized, or redirected women of color's writing by labeling it "not real philosophy." We wanted to problematize those distortions by marking the central contributions women of color have made to feminist philosophy. Technically, that meant including work from "outside" the discipline, but in putting together a thorough anthology of feminist philosophy, the philosophical quality and significance of the work, rather than who was or was not trained as academic philosophers, was most important. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa's poetic *mestiza* narrative offers us a new metaphysics. Oyèrónké Oyewùmí's scholarship on Yorùbá epistemologies challenges the dominance of visual metaphors that characterize Western epistemology. Kimberlé Crenshaw's attentiveness to intersectionality in law compels us to consider a pluralist ontology. Andrea Smith's observations about sexual violence and the U.S. government's orchestrated genocide of native peoples challenges traditional white feminist thinking about rape solely as a tool of patriarchy. Women of color's contributions to these conversations not only makes the whiteness of the feminist canon visible but also serves as a reminder of the work remaining to be done in the discipline of philosophy.

Another challenge we faced was to bring in the voices of notable feminist philosophers who are continually marginalized despite their broad appeal outside of the discipline. For example, we could not think of one collection in feminist philosophy that included Mary Daly's or Angela Davis's work. Both were trained as philosophers and were groundbreaking feminist theorists, but their contributions are rarely engaged by academic philosophers. Mary Daly's work is all too frequently dismissed as essentialist or an outdated artifact of the radical movement (1967-1975). More recently there have been efforts to re-write her into the canon, and to re-examine her writings in light of recent developments in philosophy. It was also important to us to include Davis's note about the prison industrial complex in the section on transnational and postcolonial feminism. Transnational corporations rely on penal systems as sources of profit through the privatization of prisons, using inmates as a source of near-slave labor. Like the military industrial complex, the global prison system generates huge profits through social destruction. Feminist philosophers need to be attentive to this dimension of global capitalism.

The process of selecting readings for our anthology got me thinking about why philosophy has been so resistant to the intersectional methodologies driving most feminist theory outside of the discipline. Kimberlé Crenshaw first introduced the term into legal theory to call attention to the ways rape, domestic violence, and employment discrimination experienced by women of color were distorted by white feminists' tendencies to generalize about these issues based on their own experiences.<sup>2</sup> These approaches have been an integral part of scholarship in gender studies, the social sciences, critical race theory, and international work on women's rights for almost two decades. Thinking intersectionally renders homogenous identity categories politically suspect by situating individuals within networks of relations that complicate an individual's social location. They offer powerful, often historically based accounts, of how race, class, and gender and sexuality come into

existence in and through relation to one another in contradictory and complicated ways. Intersectionality makes the relations between multiple oppressions visible, and it clears space for marginalized groups to articulate new realities and ways of knowing that more accurately reflect their lives and highlight women's diverse social experiences. The paradigm has the additional virtue of demonstrating how privileges traverse and mitigate some people's experiences with oppression: white privilege attenuates gender oppression; class privilege takes the edge off race oppression. The fact that intersectional methodologies are, at once, so central to the political work of women of color in the United States and so neglected by philosophers puzzles me.

If feminist philosophers are aware of these relations, then why haven't they been more central to our inquiry? The fact that philosophy has not taken these questions more seriously leads me to believe that there is something about the culture, history, and demographics of our discipline that make intersections thinking difficult. Men of color and all women have been virtually invisible throughout the history of philosophy, and academic philosophy has never been particularly welcoming of the issues we bring to the table.<sup>3</sup> Centuries of exclusion have not only erased these contributions, they have fashioned a culture in which the concepts, methodologies, perspectives, and puzzles that form the core of the canon have been generated without a scrap of attention to our experiences. In a recent interview Charles Mills explained that

[t]he pretensions of philosophy are to be addressing the human condition in general, describing our interaction with the world and prescribing for a better world. Unfortunately...those descriptions and prescriptions are too often overtly or tacitly predicated on the Euro- and European-American experiences of the world. This demographic whiteness generates a conceptual whiteness, thereby generating a self-reproducing dynamic that tends to perpetuate itself.<sup>4</sup>

White European ways of knowing, ontologizing, being, evaluating, and doing politics have been presented to us as doing philosophy pure and simple. Histories of philosophy ignore the relations between cultures by foregrounding European male thinkers' contributions. We trace our origins directly and narrowly through Europe (particularly England, Germany, and France) to Greece in ways that erase North African and Middle Eastern influences. Philosophy departments continue to be white social spaces where the overwhelming majority of professional philosophers in the United States are white men. Unless they have a progressive agenda people with gender, race, and class privilege are unlikely to find intersections thinking useful. If you believe that your experience represents the human experience, that your ways of knowing count as knowledge, and that your definitions count as universal then your world is already visible. There is no reason to complicate it. Intersections thinking will not make your experience more conspicuous; if anything it will have the awkward effect of making apparent just how your ontologies, epistemologies, and methods supervene on the erasure of nonwhite ways of being, knowing, and doing.

Even now it is disappointing but not remarkable, that most academic feminist philosophy remains conceptually white-centered and Eurocentric, and that almost all feminist theory done by women of color is done outside of philosophy departments. Feminist philosophers are almost exclusively white and we have done very little to invite scholars of color into the profession.<sup>5</sup> Although white feminist philosophers are not entirely to blame for the whiteness of philosophy we are partly responsible since we have not helped the situation, given

our feminist goals.<sup>6</sup> Critical race feminism, for example, would never have arisen had it not been for the significant increase of women of color entering the legal academy at the end of the last century and raising questions about legal language and practices and black women's experiences. Philosophy has not had parallel influx, but this should not prevent us from borrowing, building, and expanding on the insights of critical race feminism as we work toward a critical race feminist philosophy. Philosophy and law are close cousins. We have similar complaints about exclusive categories and definitional polarities, clear taxonomies, transcendent and ahistorical truths, abstract individualism, and pure methods and procedures that are standard in each of our disciplines.<sup>7</sup>

Next, I think intersections work is conceptually difficult for many philosophers because it threatens the rigor and purity of the discipline. We are caught in a double-bind of our own making: moving to the level of abstraction means that we lose sight of the material conditions of women's lives on the ground, and when we begin in the lives of women of color we are all of the sudden told that we are no longer doing philosophy. So, philosophy continues to be driven by arrogant perception, or the idea that arrogant eyes skillfully organize the world and its contents with reference to the desires and interests of the arrogant perceiver and what s/he thinks are interesting and important philosophical issues, puzzles, texts, and problems. Our reputation for clear argumentation and well-orchestrated abstract thinking are routinely offered as evidence of our immunity to bias. Soundness and validity are understood as evidence of impartiality and fairness rather than as strategies for erasing the differences that complicate subjectivity. Truth, validity, goodness, rightness, and the standards for good arguments and what counts as actually "doing philosophy" are measured by how well they match the experiences and lives of those working in the discipline. Philosophers are theory huggers: we are more comfortable talking about ideas than we are about people. We hold concepts so tightly that our love for them often replaces our love for one another. Many of us would rather cling to familiar concepts than to move out of our comfort zones and engage unfamiliar ways of making meaning. Tight arguments rarely spring from theorizing in murky spaces where we are required to look at something different and outside of our own experience. Starting philosophical inquiry at the intersections of race, gender, class, caste, and sexuality demands some level of comfort with ambiguity—the idea that identities are never fixed and that their meaning must be constantly won.

Developing a critical race feminist philosophy requires white feminist philosophers to examine the concepts we cling to and why we value them. We must name the ways our "best practices" confine us to white realities, logics, and epistemologies and erase women of color's contributions to the issues we are fond of pondering. Too often we value certainty over ambiguity. We privilege Western knowledge and favor analytic writing styles over memoir, poetry, or narrative. We are suspicious of spiritual practices as sources of knowledge and favor visual metaphors. White feminist philosophers working in coalition with women of color to articulate a feminist critical race philosophy must be mindful and critical of our disciplinary inheritance and dare to proceed not by reason and argumentation alone. What would it be like, as Gloria Anzaldúa once said, to "[t]hrow away abstraction and the academic learning, the rules, the map and compass. Feel your way without blinders. To touch more people, the personal realities and the social must be evoked—not through rhetoric but through blood, pus, and sweat."<sup>8</sup> Would we still be doing philosophy if we did this? Does it matter?

Our failure to embrace inquiry at the intersections is also the product of the spaces we inhabit. White feminists' philosophical attention to racism often takes place in safe theoretical spaces where whiteness is centered: classrooms, conferences, workshops, and roundtables. As a result these conversations fail to challenge directly the irreconcilable material differences between women of color's lives and our own. White feminist philosophers cannot recognize our interdependency with women of color in any genuine way if we confine ourselves, our conversations, and our writing exclusively to academic spaces where we feel comfortable and reassured. We need to ask ourselves: Do our writing styles mirror the inaccessible styles of our male counterparts in the discipline? Is our writing inspired exclusively by texts we have read and papers we have heard at conferences? How often are women of color part of our real or imagined audiences when we think, write, and speak? Does our knowledge about lives of women of color come exclusively through books and articles? For white feminist philosophers to make valuable contributions to what Anna Stubblefield calls "a post-supremacist philosophy" we must go outside of the spaces and texts we feel comfortable in and relocate ourselves out of the disciplinary, literary, political, and other environments that encourage the white solipsism of living (and doing philosophy) as if only white people and our worlds existed or mattered.<sup>9</sup> This means having the courage to go outside of the discipline for a new set of theoretical tools. It means getting off campus and into the community.<sup>10</sup> It means ignoring the voices in our heads that tell us that we're "not doing philosophy."

Now I do not mean to suggest that white feminist philosophers can lay the blame for our lack of engagement with concepts that women of color have found useful entirely at the foot of the discipline. For members of dominant groups entertaining ontological pluralism has a strong personal dimension. For white feminist philosophers it requires that we confront some very deep fears about the fragility of the feminist canon in philosophy. Feminists have worked hard to introduce issues of sexuality and gender into the discipline and our attempts have not always been met warmly. In the 1970s Marxists and other progressive male scholars responded to feminist work by arguing that all people were oppressed in some way and concluded that gender oppression was either nothing special or that it could be explained in terms of class.<sup>11</sup> So, there was a time when "everyone is oppressed in different ways" responses were hostile to our projects. There may be a lingering fear that we cannot do race without losing our feminist edge. This fear runs even deeper when we realize that white feminists have yet to name the frequently unseen ways in which whiteness functions in the relatively new canon we have struggled so hard to create. When white feminist philosophers think about race we tend to forget both our own complexity and our relationships with women of color: We turn inward to examine ourselves: we unpack the invisibility of privilege, interrogate white guilt and shame, articulate the social construction of whiteness, address the harms and habits of whiteness, or theorize ways to be traitorous. Lives of women of color are present in these accounts, but only as dim reflections.

To avoid the charges of solipsism that mark our willful ignorance about peoples of color's lives a critical race feminist philosophy must theorize white privilege and supremacy intersectionally and relationally. Thinking both intersectionally and relationally means that white feminists must learn to see ourselves as multiple: that is, we need to also learn to see ourselves as only nonwhite people can see us. For many white folks there is a deep personal discomfort around having to reimagine ourselves as plural subjects. It forces us to consider that the way we understand ourselves, the world, and how

we come to know it, might be context dependent. As María Lugones puts it:

It is not that [people of color] are the only faithful mirrors, but I think we are faithful mirrors. Not that we show you as you really are. What we reveal to you is that you are many—something that may in itself be frightening to you. ... You block identification with that self because you are afraid of plurality. Plurality speaks to you of a world whose logic is unknown to you and that you inhabit unwillingly.<sup>12</sup>

Seeing ourselves as plural also means acknowledging privilege and resisting the traps that keep us turning inward and focusing on ourselves and our disciplinary habits rather than on our relations with women of color. It makes visible other ways of meaning and knowing that challenge our accepted ways of making sense.

The legacy white feminists inherit from the discipline combined with the struggle to understand ourselves as plural makes intersections work challenging, but not impossible. Working toward a critical race feminist philosophy requires that we keep pointing to our own complexity as white women doing philosophy. And, it requires that we not do this alone. We might begin by building intersectionality into the questions we ask.<sup>13</sup> We can also join scholars of color in interrogating the philosophical canon and clearing ground for new approaches to philosophical inquiry. We can recognize and engage the work done by feminists of color in philosophy. It is our hope that *The Feminist Philosophy Reader* will encourage our students and colleagues to continue these conversations that women of color have begun and that these discussions will eventually have an impact on the discipline.

#### Endnotes

1. Alison Bailey and Chris J. Cuomo, eds. *The Feminist Philosophy Reader* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).
2. Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43:6 (1991): 1241-99.
3. Sally Haslanger. "Materials Concerning Women and Minorities in Philosophy. Symposia on Race, Gender and Philosophy." Available at <https://wikis.mit.edu/confluence/display/SGRP/Materials+concerning+women+and+minorities+in+philosophy> [Accessed: July 25, 2007]. For more on this point see Linda Martin Alcoff's edited collection *Singing in the Fire: Stories of Women in Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), Sally Haslanger's "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone)" (Forthcoming *Hypatia*, Spring 2008), and Charles Mills's "Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African American Experience," *Teaching Philosophy* 17:3 (September 1994).
4. Ginger Carter. "Interview with Dr. Charles Mills." *The Exponent*. 1 April, 2004. Available at <http://media.www.uahexponent.com/media/storage/paper462/news/2004>
5. Naomi Zack identifies thirty women of color in the discipline—only ten of whom have written on race. She notes that the academy in general and philosophy departments in particular have had even less success with racial integration than the wider society. See Zack, "Can Third Wave Feminism Be Inclusive?" In *The Blackwell Guide to Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Linda Martin Alcoff and Eva Feder Kittay (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 200.
6. Naomi Zack. *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 15, and "Can Third Wave Feminism Be Inclusive?" p. 200.
7. Patricia Williams. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 8-9.



- 8 Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, Second Edition (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 2002), 192.
- 9 Anna Stubblefield. "Meditations on Post Supremacist Philosophy." In *White on White, Black on Black*, edited by George Yancy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Shannon Sullivan. *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of White Privilege* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 10.
- 10 María Lugones once told me that white women will never understand women of color because understanding requires that we leave the academy and spend more time in the community, and most white women see that as extra work, claim that we are too busy, and will never make the effort.
- 11 Marilyn Frye wrote "Oppression" in response to this phenomenon, in *The Politics of Reality* (New York: Crossing Press, 1983): 1-17.
- 12 María Lugones. "On the Logic of Pluralist Feminism." In *Feminist Ethics*, edited by Claudia Card (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991), 42-43.
- 13 For example, instead of asking "How are patterns of racial management structurally similar to patterns of gender management? we can ask, "How are gender relations managed under white supremacy?" Or, "How is whiteness deployed to regulate the bodies of men and women of color?" Or, "What role do racialized gender norms play in the maintenance of white supremacy?" Or, "Are white women's possessive investments in whiteness the same as white men's?"

very tentative, due to economic and political disparity. Within the United States, differences in race and class seem to preclude a common feminism. Nonetheless, women can understand themselves in a general way as those human beings who are assigned to or identify with the category of female birth designees, or biological mothers, or primary sexual choices of men—Category FMP. To be a woman, it is not necessary to have an identity based on all or any of the FMP disjuncts but, rather, to identify as, or be identified with, FMP as a whole. That is, what women have in common is the relation of having been assigned to or identifying with Category FMP. This is a real relation and an essence. But it is not a substance in the sense of any thing genetic, structural, functional, or behavioral, that is present in all women.

### Women, History, and Politics

As critical theory, feminism not only describes the condition of women, socially and psychologically, but should generate an ethics and politics capable of changing human history, by balancing or overcoming the ruling power of men. It is not enough to create moral and political theories that can be enacted only within the lifeworld ruled by men. Women need an historical identity of their own. The modern Western political and economic technologizing project, or history as we know it, continues as though its most influential participants are simply the heirs of their colonialist forebears. We cannot know beforehand whether women would succeed in redirecting men's trajectory if they became an historical force. But women are the last hope for such redirection at this time because the Western corporate juggernaut has little difficulty in defeating or co-opting men in other cultures, and it encounters no resistance from the natural environment, except for its accelerating morbidity.

We do not know what sexuality is, but we do know what heterosexuality has been, the sexual desire of human males for human females, sometimes reciprocal, which has the reproduction of the human species as its most general aim and value. But this does not happen on its own. Human beings require social systems and learned gender differentiation to reproduce. Human reproduction has two parts: first a new member of the species is created, and second that individual is encultured so as to contribute to its own acts of biological creation. However, human children are not automatic replicas of their parents, biologically, socially, or culturally. The social reproduction of culture through deliberate, albeit traditional, practices could result in different cultures in the future. That is, human beings create human beings and they could create them in different ways, as well as create different kinds of human beings.

Because Category FMP distinguishes women from men, via roles that are antithetical to political power as we know it, rule by women allows for a kind of rule without the aggression, violence, exploitation, and destruction that have attended rule by men. Feminists might view extant political power as the medium for that aspect or part of the construction of manhood, which individual men find it convenient to disavow in public, where "public" means not only "out of the house" but "known by all." The task of a practical feminist politics is for women to evaluate the destructive gendered political constructions of men, and try to change them. Women are qualified to do this, not because they are more peace-loving, altruistic, or nurturing, but for two more superficial reasons: First, they are not men, and, understood as Category FMP, are not generally afflicted with the dark side of masculine gender constructions. Second, women now have suffrage on a worldwide basis. There could be an interlocking global system of women's political parties, representing more than 50 percent of the electorate

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## Problems with Inclusive Feminism and Rule by Women

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I think it is possible to provide a universal definition for women as a basis for political action (even given intersectionality). I think women should rule the world on the highest levels of government (although men might continue in other positions of power and authority). In presenting these ideas at philosophical conferences and considering responses to my 2005 book, *Inclusive Feminism*, two main problems have emerged: skepticism about reliability of women who rise to top leadership and a desire to change the existing gender system.<sup>1</sup> I appreciate this opportunity to present an informal overview of my positive claims and consider the problems.

### A Definition of Women

In the United States, politically successful women have presented themselves as androgynes. This is not a matter of personal style, but of women's interests that they have failed to effectively represent. In the third world there are many politically effective women's groups that advocate for the well being of their families, precisely through their traditional roles as mothers and wives. And in Norway it has been a requirement since the 1970s that members of parliament be 40 percent female, a policy based on the belief that women's political interests are inherently different from men's. Major democratic nations other than the United States have had female heads of state in recent decades, while before 2005 or 2006, it was not considered feasible here.

Many American feminist theorists have successfully revealed the bias against women in actual rule by men and traditional political theory. Globally, plans for women to unite for common goals despite their differences have thus far been



in democratic countries. Such a political shift along the axis of gender would be a fundamental historical change.

Written history has been an account of past events, peoples, nations, individuals, institutions, and ideas. As a discipline, history includes what is already presumed to be important in a specific regard. Regarding leadership and power, which are already important to men, historians, who have usually been men, have focused on men and their public and official achievements. This results in the history of women, as well as men. When women's achievements are reclaimed, it still does not change the fact that men have ruled. From a feminist perspective, it is not sufficient to include women in history. Rather, they need to be relocated as the equals of men in those public and official achievements that women, as well as men, recognize to be world-shaping. No rewriting of the past can accomplish this. For that reason, a feminist history at this time must address the future.

And why not? History, generally, is an understanding of times different from our own, and one of its purposes is to improve our understanding of the present. But if feminists are to do more than speculate about the future, it is necessary to have a theory of history, which explicitly includes the future, in addition to, or even in place of, the past. One way to surpass mere speculation and get beyond crystal-ball type wish lists is to have a link between the past and the present, and a link between the present and the future. The link between the past and the present has already been constructed by second wave feminists in critical work about male dominance in the present, together with genealogical work about its ideological and material antecedents in the past. That historical project explains how and why women have thus far been omitted from history, not just as a matter of exclusion from the record, but as not having been permitted to do the kinds of things that have been considered important historically. This feminist historical project about the link between the past and the present is robust across many scholarly disciplines, and its paradigm continues to yield knowledge that is relevant, interesting, and instructive. But the feminist historical link between the present and the future has not yet been constructed. One possibility is a Sartrean existentialist approach, whereby imagining a better future becomes a springboard for changing the present.<sup>2</sup>

### Political and Economic Implications

Although it is possible to provide a universal definition of women, based on their shared relations of identifying with or being assigned to Category FMP, this does not mean that women are a social class. In fact, women are only vaguely analogous to a social class because social classes, as understood within Marxist theory, are defined by their relation to the dominant means of production in a society. Each class owns different kinds of things or furnishes to the economy different kinds of labor, which have prices. Much of women's labor, such as biological reproduction, domestic chores, child rearing, family work, and so forth, has not been priced. And, yet, it is an invisible asset for other workers who benefit from it when they return home, so that they can continually report to work outside the home. Because so much of this social reproductive labor is performed without pay, it is not part of the economy. Therefore, women cannot be an economic class in Marx's sense. (There are paid house cleaners, social secretaries, baby sitters, sex workers, nannies, surrogate mothers and egg donors, clothes cleaners, and meal makers. But their "service work," even when performed according to legal contracts, which is not always the case, is not considered an important part of contemporary post-industrial "First World" economies. Often, it is routinely purchased by the affluent only.)

Under capitalism, the ruling classes are those who own the most in a hierarchy of classes because ownership is directly related to political power and authority. Racial hierarchies intersect with class hierarchies, but within each race, class, class sector of a racial group, or racial sector of a class, women are the ones who identify with or are assigned to the FMP category, and there is a division of labor between men and women. Thus far, women have had the class status of the men in their race/class groups because for so long it was the men in such groups who had their work priced, or owned property or capital. Because so much of women's work enters the economic system indirectly, their work does not qualify them to be leading participants in class, or race-class systems. The inclusion of women in professions and other priced sections of Western economies, has thus far been accompanied by an androgynization of women in the workplace, rather than economic power for women, as historically understood, which could be translated into political power for women. The workplace androgyny of women does not destabilize the power and authority of men. And despite their workplace androgyny, many women are still expected to perform unpaid women's work in a "second shift." In fact, many choose to do exactly that.

According to Marx (roughly speaking), because human beings have to produce the materials to sustain their existence, they are motivated to acquire and possess those things. In modern capitalistic society, material goods are economic goods that are represented by money. Those who have large amounts of money, or who can get it and use it to make more, have capital—they are capitalists. Capitalists require that individuals who do not have capital repetitively sell them their labor in exchange for wages that enable their physical and social survival. The wages allow the workers to live and "reproduce" their labor (or have it reproduced freely by others) so that they can continue to work. The ideological implication of the Marxist analysis is that the profits of owners should belong to the workers, or that the workers should be owners.

The feminist critique of the Marxist analysis has been that women have furnished domestic, social, and biological unpaid reproductive work to both male capitalists and workers. Its ideological implication is that women should be paid for their reproductive labor. Suppose they were. Women would still not be able to acquire wealth or become capitalists, as a basis for political power; because women's work, *per se*, does not result in products that can be exchanged for stored capitalist wealth. Family social work, gestation, and child care are interactions between specific individuals, from which workers cannot be alienated without defeating the goals of such work. A woman who performed such work for high pay could not employ other women to perform the work for her; without radically changing the nature of her work. Women's work, except for repetitive drudgery, is personal work. Generally, women's work is supposed to be accompanied by commitments and emotional attitudes that have what Kant called "dignities" rather than "prices." Women are expected to perform their women's work out of love, or something that "no amount of money can buy." More to the point, even fully autonomous women choose to do this work from such motives. In recognizing the value of some core of women's work, which a feminist ethics of care does do, it seems morally wrong to put prices on parts of this core, such as the love of mothers for their children. Nevertheless, others might view women's work as gender slavery that should be abolished, and still others might advocate its performance by trained professionals, such as teachers, counselors, mediators, and in the biological realm, sex workers, egg donors, and tenders of artificial wombs.

However, whether women's work ought to be priced, or not, or should be abolished or replaced, or not, the political-economic implication is the same: Given our current system, the basis on which women could be a social class, with economic interests transferable into political power, would not likely be their work as women. To consider human rule on an axis of gender; rather than material production, requires thinking beyond a standard Marxist analysis of history and social class, beyond economics, and beyond how people contribute to a priced material system. There is nothing intrinsic to women, individually or en masse, that requires them to be a social class in a Marxist economic sense. If they are to be a distinctive social class in some other sense, it could be based on their external identification as human beings assigned to Category FMP, and the striking fact that they are at least half of the human population. That should be enough to ground women as an historical force, given a theoretical link between the present and the future.

We need to be aware that in post-industrial consumer societies, material objects have symbolic as well as direct utilitarian value, and they become signifiers of status according to race, class, gender, age, occupation, and myriad other social machines that maintain human hierarchies, and distribute power. As a result, it is virtually impossible to define what people need and what is in reality scarce on a global scale because many of the myriad economic machines of capitalist technology do not obey laws of distributive justice or fairness. Needs appear to be pre-emptive over desires, but the desires of some appear to determine what others need. For example, is state-of-the-art medical care a need, or are conditions of life that would render much of it unnecessary a need? Is animal protein a human need or do human beings just need generic protein that could be obtained from organisms lower in the food chain? And how much of the world should we consider in identifying scarcity? Does the fact that some populations experience famine establish that there is a scarcity of food, or is the real problem a failure to distribute available food equitably, or protect pre-industrial economies? Neither standard Marxism, nor its derivatives, is capable of providing grounds for judging what human needs are, and which of those needs cannot be fulfilled for everyone, owing to a final or absolute scarcity. If there is to be a significant alternative to rule by men as they have been historically constructed, and if women are the only group that could provide this alternative—because there are sufficient numbers of women and they are not men—then the alternative would have to be envisioned, if not implemented, before such judgments about need and scarcity could be made. Part of that alternative is a revaluation of the unpriced and perhaps unpriceable components of our material and psychic lifeworlds.

### **Problems with Category FMP and Rule by Women**

Many feminists do not think in terms of common political goals for women. They assume that women are too different, depending on their locations in social, racial, and economic hierarchies. But these “difference feminists” are amenable to the idea that the second shift and lack of access to top government positions are commonalities. Once it is clear that FMP is a definition that associates women with the historical human groups that have made feminism necessary, that a person need not be a mother, birth female, or male heterosexual choice, to be a woman, and that male-to-female transsexuals are women according to FMP, then there is little theoretical objection to FMP as a formal definition. However, there are two deeper differences in perspective that I cannot as easily address with the ideas I have set forth:

1. Rule by women may be no better for women in the population than rule by men. There are examples of women leaders (for example, Margaret Thatcher) who have been insensitive to the values assumed in unpriced women's work. So how could a gender change in top leadership guarantee either better lives for women or preservation of the natural environment?

My answer is that many women leaders rise to the top and survive there by playing the men's game. What is needed is worldwide women's political leadership, through women's political parties. This is more than a question of a “critical mass” making a difference, than of women being able to rule based on their historical identities and ongoing interests as family-makers.<sup>3</sup> This answer leads right to the second problem.

2. Why should we accept the historical sex-gender system that divides human beings into two sexes or genders? Instead of just flipping over who oppresses or dominates whom, why not devote theoretical and political work to abolishing the entire male-female system? Once the virtues, vices, and negative constructions of both genders are properly critiqued and obliterated, all leaders will be less aggressive and governments less supportive of exploitation.

I repeat that Category FMP is a descriptive and not a normative definition of women. Beyond that, I do not have a clear or easy answer to this question. I confess that I lack a passion of opposition to the male-female gender system as an organizing/sorting/labor-dividing mechanism. This system has evolved not just for human beings, but for other mammals also, and it has provided basic social organization in every known human society. Without a strong motive, I do not see why it would be worth the effort to try to abolish it. We do not know it could be abolished. The great majority accept their man-woman/male-female gender assignments, actively choose and relish them, even. But, and this is really quite amazing given the abuses of the system, that same majority is quite receptive to different emphases at different times. If the last were not true, second wave feminism would not have had the great success it did for women entering the workforce (in conjunction with a silent inflation that made it impossible to maintain certain living standards if only men worked outside the home). The dual gender system has huge ranges of liberatory and oppressive practices; conceptually and in practice it can accommodate a wide range of sexual and gender minorities and exceptions. More reasons than gender inequality, heterosexism, homophobia, rigid gender role assignment and identity, as well as other practices based on substantialist gender essentialism, would have to be forthcoming because all of these ills can be corrected within the system. Indeed, some who suffer from these ills may require the system as a foundation, or a backdrop, to develop their own sex/gender identities. The sex-gender identities of the vast majority are associated with distinct biological structures and functions, although, at the same time, those for whom that is not the case deserve every consideration and overall respect. Significant changes to the man-woman/male-female taxonomy are more likely to originate from the lives of those whom the system does not fit, than from theoretical imperatives. Some may believe that such change is already here, but I think this should be viewed as a huge empirical question to be answered by very broad investigation.

For the time being, the man-woman/male-female system is a stable taxonomy. It seems reasonable to pursue deep political change on an understanding of the shared historical identity of the half of our species that has not yet had ultimate power. If this women's identity is in itself inherently unpowerful, then women in positions of ultimate power will have interesting effects on that power itself.

Endnotes

1. The ideas in this paper are largely from Naomi Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), particularly chapters 1, 7, and 8. A more scholarly presentation of this material appears in my "Can Third Wave Feminism be Inclusive?: Intersectionality, Its Problems and New Directions," in *Blackwell Guide to Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Linda M. Alcoff and Eva Kittay (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

Since 2003, I have received highly useful responses from audiences to the ideas summarized here. I am grateful to the members of the audiences at: DePaul University (April 2003), The American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting (March 2003), Fall SWIP meeting at the University of Oregon (Nov. 2003), Pacific APA (March 2004), Philosophy Dept. at the University of Oregon (April 2004), Spelman College (May 2004), Linfield College (Dec. 2004), Seattle University (May 2004), University of North Carolina, Charlotte (March 2007), Washington and Lee University (March 2007).

2. See Zack, *Inclusive Feminism*, 121-40.
3. See Zack, *Inclusive Feminism*, 151-2, for discussion of this issue, and sources.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### *Feminist Politics*

Deborah Orr, Dianna Taylor, Eileen Kahl, Kathleen Earle, Christa Rainwater, and Linda López McAlister (eds.) (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007). 274 pp. \$29.95. ISBN: 0-7425-4778-7.

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As with other liberatory projects of the modern period, feminism grew at least partially out of the refusal to allow women's identities to be governed by the cultural ideal of femininity, or, rather, the range of cultural ideas about femininity, centering on maternity, domesticity, sexuality, and child-rearing. Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" crystallizes the feminist denial of an ahistorical, natural, and thus immutable identity based on sex, and instead lays claim to the possibility of self-determination.<sup>1</sup> The issue then becomes what content will replace the patriarchal notion(s) of femininity, and that debate has continued for most of the twentieth century. Many feminists have questioned the assumptions that seem to be built into the very notion of identity, in the critiques of essentialism that have flourished for the past thirty years or so, but others have asked what cohesiveness and political efficacy feminism can have without at least some strategic form of essentialism. Even more broadly, what are the implications of the simultaneous fluidity and stability of the self—its fragile integrity—for political activism?

This anthology represents a cross-section of contemporary reflections on what is at stake for feminists in questions of identity and difference. Along with the collection *Beliefs, Bodies, and Being*,<sup>2</sup> the collection emerged out of the eighth International Association of Women Philosophers/Internationale Assoziation von Philosophinnen (IAPH) Symposium in 1998. As noted in Deborah Orr's introduction, the essays have been updated since their presentation at that conference to incorporate changes in

the political discourse around identity. The essays are written by a diverse array of authors, who have done research or teach in the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Israel, Australia, and the United States; and, the range of approaches to the issues concerning identity are correspondingly multifaceted.

In large part, these debates are still guided by reactions against the liberal assumption that particular aspects of identity are ultimately insignificant in comparison to a universal nature shared by all human beings. The two most prominent reactions within feminism have been a turn to essentialism and the postmodern rejection of a unitary subject or gender identity. Many of these essays reflect continuing concerns about the adequacy of these alternatives: essentialism has long been pilloried as a reification of sexual difference that erases differences between women, and postmodern feminism has been criticized for undermining the possibility of political activism. Therefore, a search for new ways of articulating the significance of identity dominates this collection. For instance, Deborah Orr's chapter argues that forms of Cartesian dualism continue to pervade feminist theorizing, sometimes subterraneously, and that this way of conceptualizing the self generates theoretical and/or practical problems that should lead us toward a more holistic alternative. The fact that she looks to the third-century Buddhist monk Nagarjuna as well as Wittgenstein for resources in formulating such an alternative speaks to the intellectual pluralism of this anthology.

A second line of concern about trends within postmodern feminism involves its rejection of pre-discursive or extra-discursive materiality, or Nature. Jutta Weber's chapter attempts to disentangle what she calls a critical denaturalization from dematerialization. While the former deflates the politically suspect gesture that justifies the differential treatment of women by reference to a natural, universal, and immutable difference, she describes dematerialization as an excessive reaction to this history on the part of postmodernism. She advocates resisting the impulse to devalue matter: "We have to find ways to speak of nature, not to deny our relationship to it—without ever being able to know its character" (47). Such a quest also seems to animate Marlene Benjamin's essay about her struggle to speak from an integrated self—"from my lived, and living body"—through her experiences with tuberculosis, breast cancer, and prophylactic surgery for ovarian and uterine cancer (104). Her reflection on bodily experience is a political and philosophical critique of the continuing medical and analytic commitment to Cartesian dualism and its attendant hierarchies, and the particularity of her narrative serves as a model for how to write as a situated philosopher as well as an articulate rejection of the universalist conceit.

Many of the chapters describe a vision of identity that is neither static nor infinitely mobile—that is, one that both avoids capturing us within fixed identities and retains a center of gravity for the individual, on the basis of which solidarity might be forged. Morwena Griffiths rejuvenates the term "authenticity" to describe how a plural and changing self can still maintain integrity—a concept of a "patchwork self" that she sets in dynamic relation to María Lugones' playful world-traveling, Donna Haraway's trickster subjectivity, and Martin Heidegger's notion of authenticity. Against the excesses of playful pluralism, Alison Bailey reminds us that "race traitors"—those who attempt to overturn racial hierarchy—can only ever occupy a different relationship to white privilege, rather than leaving behind the identity of "insiders" altogether. Marla Brettschneider appeals to Talmudic methodology to conceptualize the mutually constitutive nature of different elements within one's identity, as opposed to the relative simplicity of an Aristotelian hierarchy. In these essays and others, the authors reach beyond the binarism of unified, static identity and complete fragmentation.

A prominent characteristic of the collection of essays lies in its focus on the concrete political implications of how we understand and negotiate identity. Two essays in particular highlight the way in which feminist concerns function in relation to national or cultural identities and conflicts: Marie-Claire Belleau's discussion of feminist strategic coalitions across the divides within Canada, and Sigal Ben-Porath's analysis of how militarism in Israel has affected conceptions of gender and how this effect might be countered by feminist pedagogy. Both essays emphasize the need to call attention to and challenge the subordination of feminist goals to a national or cultural struggle. A concern with political activism also governs Cathryn Bailey's description of third wave feminism, often criticized for its political quietism; instead, she claims, young feminists are critical consumers of pop culture. She convincingly argues that as the line between politics and culture blurs, "visible cultural images are simultaneously politically significant" (89). She acknowledges, however, that feminist ideas and images are easily co-opted by popular culture, and that more traditional forms of political engagement—including a critique of consumerism itself—are a necessary element of feminist activism.

The collection ends with two essays that advocate understanding feminist politics without relying excessively on assumptions about gender identity. The continuing debate between ontologies of gender leads Amy Baehr to propose feminist contractualism as an alternative that does not make claims about who women fundamentally are, but rather focuses on forging political arrangements that can be accepted by all, along Rawlsian lines. Dianna Taylor analyzes the political scene within the American Left after September 11th to draw lessons against the impetus toward conformity and unity. Instead, reading Arendt and Foucault, she proposes a "weak nonidentitarian politics" that takes identity as a significant political factor but does not constitute a stable, normalized, or homogeneous ground for political action (250).

The breadth and diversity of this volume is both its strength and a shortcoming: it faithfully reproduces the refusal to present a monolithic conception of identity or feminist politics by offering a variegated collection of current scholarship on these issues, rather than a synopsis of this intellectual territory. A reader looking for an introduction to feminist politics will not find it here; instead, this text is aimed at an audience already familiar with the basic framework of the relevant debates. For these readers, it provides a glittering array of divergent perspectives, in terms of the philosophical figures the chapters refer to, the wide range of questions that surround identity, the spectrum between a focus on the individual and on mass politics, the geographical and cultural contexts within which such ideas and politics play out, and even writing style. The chapters are consistently thought-provoking and timely, and the book as a whole challenges us to recognize the complexity of contemporary feminist theorizing and the pressing need for liberatory praxis.

#### Endnotes

1. Simone de Beauvoir: *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1989), 267.
2. Kathleen Earle. *Beliefs, Bodies, and Being* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

## *Queering Freedom*

Shannon Winnubst (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006). 253 pp. \$55.00 U.S. (cloth); \$21.95 U.S. (paper). ISBN 0-253-34707 (cloth); 0-253-21830-6 (paper).

### Reviewed by Shelley M. Park

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In *Queering Freedom*, Shannon Winnubst deconstructs modernist notions of freedom in order to recuperate other meanings and practices of freedom, emphasizing the need for a non-reductive account of sexuality in explicating the interplay of joy, pleasure, and eroticism with freedom. The "field of sexuality," Winnubst contends, is the "most effective site in...late modernity for intervention into fixed concepts of subjectivity and freedom. But we cannot reduce such an insight to a claim about identity" (19). Indeed, Winnubst is explicitly critical of the identity politics that characterize, for example, affirmative action policies and the movement to legalize same-sex marriage, arguing that "categories of identity narrow our field of vision, and subsequently our fields of resistance" (17). Seeking to historicize categories of identity and demonstrate how their continued use perpetuates (rather than subverts) systems of domination, Winnubst draws on Foucault's archeological method and Bataille's method of thinking in "general (i.e., non-reductive) economies."

Part I of *Queering Freedom* represents the archeological portion of Winnubst's project. It consists of three chapters, exploring some of the specific ways in which bodily spaces of domination have been demarcated by a modernist politics of freedom. Chapter 1 traces a dominant notion of freedom (as the ability to express one's power) to Lockean liberalism and its conception of the self as delimited by its utilitarian labor and accumulation of property. Chapter 2 turns to an exploration of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, arguing that Lacanian ocular metaphysics explains how we come to view bodies as separate contained units demarcated by the boundaries of their skin and yet ultimately renders "Lacan's authoritative ego," like Locke's liberal individual, operative "within an economy of scarcity that is grounded in a model of desire that can never find any external satisfaction" (76). In Chapter 3 Winnubst explores Irigaray's model of touch as a method for reorienting feminine embodiment, suggesting that her tamed versions of homoerotic desire express the same logic of containment that Irigaray critiques, as evidenced by the eventual return to heterosexism in Irigaray's texts.

Some of the critiques of these texts will be familiar to feminist readers—Winnubst is not the first to critique Lockean individualism, nor Irigarayan heterosexism, for example. Yet Winnubst takes these critiques in a new direction, focusing on the ways in which norms of "phallicized whiteness" (the norms produced by "interlocking epistemological and political systems of domination" such as sexism, heterosexism, and racism (10)) arise in similar ways in seemingly disparate texts. Central to her analysis is Winnubst's emphasis, throughout Part I, on the "logic of the limit," a logic that characterizes a dominant understanding of difference, and thus also of subjectivity and freedom in cultures of phallicized whiteness. This logic, she contends, is the foundational problem plaguing most attempts to think about (social, political, psychic, or sexual) freedom: "Whether the carving of the liberal, neutral individual out of the state of nature through its demarcation of private property, the racializing of bodies according to their visual epidermal

delimitations, or the suppression of sexual difference through the logic of containment, a logic of the limit is at work in the classing, racing, and sexing of bodies” (114).

Part II of *Queering Freedom* turns to the challenge of imagining concepts and practices of freedom not constrained by a logic of the limit. In Chapter 4, Winnubst argues that conceptualizing freedom as “freedom from prohibition” upholds a logic of containment and thus fosters the politics of colonialism and tolerance (119-22). In desiring to transcend the very limitations that define them as “Other,” the raced, classed, and sexed bodies produced by those boundaries serve to “keep the dominant subject position in power” by allowing phallicized whiteness to erase their difference and “swallow them up” into itself (123). This is at the heart of Winnubst’s critique (a critique with which I agree) of the same-sex marriage movement, as contained in the brief epilogue to her book: Same sex marriage will not free gays and lesbians; instead, it represents the co-optation of lesbian and gay resistance by absorbing the “good queers” into the “white-identified, patriarchal, Christian-centric middle-class” (202).

If freedom is not liberation from prohibitions, then what is it? To queer our notion of freedom, Winnubst suggests, is to orient ourselves toward pleasure (rather than desire) and eroticism (rather than sexual identity). These reorientations require us to abandon a notion of the (desiring) self that “projects itself into the future” and thus they require us to queer the ways we inhabit space and time (140). Having already outlined how spatiality functions in cultures of phallicized whiteness (by containing us in raced, sexed, and classed bodies viewed as discrete social units), Winnubst turns in Chapter 5—the chapter which I found most pleasurable—to explicating “the temporality of whiteness.”

Temporality has been an important tool of colonialism (with white concepts and practices of time functioning as a regulative ideal against which other ways of inhabiting time are judged). Again, this is not a new idea; yet, Winnubst’s analysis of it is provocative and illuminating. Explicating the temporality of phallicized whiteness by sketching Lacan’s notion of “the future anterior” and Bataille’s “mode of anticipation,” Winnubst notes two interlocking difficulties with these modes of temporality: first, they locate “the psychological horizon of desire” at the “horizon of the infinite”; secondly, they “embed us, unconsciously, in two sets of socio-psychological values that ground cultures of phallicized whiteness: utility, and thereby capitalism with its concept of pleasure as satisfaction and convenience; and white guilt, with its enactment of the Protestant work ethic and the myth of Progress” (152). The temporality of the future anterior leads us to desire that which “will have been,” (e.g., “I will have traveled to Venezuela”) while the temporality of anticipation leads us to endlessly defer pleasure in favor of incessant planning for the future (e.g., reading travel brochures throughout one’s journey). Neither permits us to live in the present—which is only regarded important insofar as it plays a role in the attainment of useful ends (e.g., compiling a record of one’s travels). Moreover, these modes of temporality undergird an endless cycle of guilt-and-apology (166), in which whites desire to erase the sins of their past, progressing toward salvation via the work of confession itself (e.g., Bill Clinton’s apology for slavery)—without ever engaging past suffering (172-74).

Resistance to oppression, Winnubst concludes in Chapter 6 requires remembering “lost pasts” and learning to think and live “without a future.” By reframing our experience “through a temporality of ‘what might have been,’ rather than the dominant ‘what will have been,’” we open ourselves up to the forgotten violences of our past (e.g., the history of slavery; AIDS) “not out

of guilt, but out of political commitment to open our practices of pleasure onto more sustainable practices of freedom” (such as the pleasures of unregulated eroticism between uncontained selves) (190-99). In queering freedom, we radically suspend the future, abandoning desire and courageously experiencing pleasures with no foreseeable utility—including the pleasure of having “no fixed idea of who or what [we] may become” (199).

Of course, Winnubst cannot quite perform what she advocates. As she indicates, “the attempt to write concretely about such a politics of resistance... involves us in some strange contortions” (186). How does one queer a scholarly book? One can attempt, as Winnubst does, to avoid prescriptive injunctions. And yet one cannot avoid the expectations of one’s audience that the book “make sense” and forward “useful” ideas in a scholarly language that establishes one’s “cultural capital.” I have here explicated *Queering Freedom* as a unitary text with a progressively linear argument—an argument couched in a language which will be most accessible to feminist theorists trained in contemporary continental philosophy, but which has considerable utility for all feminist, anti-racist, and queer theorists and activists engaged in various struggles against oppression. And, to some extent, this is an accurate portrayal of the work (reflecting the limitations under which scholars—even queer theoretical scholars—must write and publish books). At the same time, my explications and assessment reflect the boundaries and containments of the modernist project of the book review itself (it is the role of a reviewer—even queer theoretical reviewers—to explicate the central arguments of a text and indicate to whom the text may be useful). If I were, however, to assess this work merely in terms of the queer pleasures it has to offer, I would recommend that the reader not turned on by the work of scholarly exegesis (some are, some aren’t) or who doesn’t find joy in conversations with Lacan and Irigaray (some do, some don’t), simply abandon her professional work ethic and skip straight to the second half of the book, where one’s imaginings are provoked by examples, autobiographical anecdotes, and theoretical meanderings that are a genuine source of pleasure—pleasures which the boundaries of this review contain to a mere mention.

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### *The Situated Self*

J.T. Ismael (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007).  
248 pages. \$65.00 ISBN 978-0-19-517436-6 ISBN 0-19-517436-4

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From the very moment one’s eyes scan the bold colored symbol of self-location on the cover of J.T. Ismael’s book *The Situated Self*, it will be quite evident that this book would be an exciting read because it is a fresh and vivid challenge to dualist and physicalist views about the mind, language, and the self.

In this book J.T. Ismael rigorously argues for her view of mind, defined thus: “in favor of a view of the mind as a mapkeeper that stores the information coming through the senses in an internal model of self and situation that it uses to steer the body through a complex and changing environment. This view of mind makes self-representation one of its principle tasks and accords central role in the intrinsic dynamics of the body” (201). Ismael is committed to clarifying the cognitive and epistemic gaps (111, 134) that one confronts when attempting to understand how the “coordination of experience across minds” (109) is possible in a structured world of physics. Ismael

takes on the challenge that has confronted philosophers for centuries: how human subjective experience relates with the physical universe. Therefore, Ismael's book is not just another philosophy book—it is feminist scientific theory in the making about mind and language. Alison Jaggar and Sandra Harding in their respective seminal books *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* and *The Science Question in Feminism*, opened our eyes to other ways of understanding the world, that is, understanding it through a non-dualistic lens.<sup>1</sup> A feminist method of inquiry—whether political or scientific—must recognize the human organism as being a part of an organic whole with its social and physical world. Ismael's work is an example of one who embraces this method of inquiry for the interpretation of the self's mind-world relationship within the physical universe.

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the book. Thereafter, the book is divided into three well-organized parts. Part I, "The Situated Mind," is comprised of six chapters entitled respectively as "Traditional Representation," "Confinement," "The Dynamical Approach," "Self-Description," "Context and Coordination," and "Self-Representation, Objectivity, and Intentionality." Each chapter expounds on the notion of the mind as being part of a complex dynamic system and addresses various aspects of Ismael's theory and her criticisms. Chapter 2 starts off with a discussion about the Fregean Model of Thought and its continuous influence. In succeeding chapters, Ismael discusses why we must move away from a representationalist approach and more towards dynamical interfaces which confront thought. She presents her view of the dynamical relation of the mind-world relationship she advocates; the dynamical relation emphasizes not the mind-body relationship, but instead the mind-world relationship. It is first in chapter 4, where Ismael defines mind: "We treat the conscious mind—its introspectively accessible component, which I'll refer to elliptically as 'the mind'—as part of a larger dynamical system and focus on the interfaces with other parts of the system; that is experience, on the incoming end, and action or volition, on the outgoing end" (37).

Part II consists of three chapters, respectively entitled "Jackson's Mary," "Inverted Spectra," and "Grammatical Illusions." Frank Jackson's arguments for dualism are analyzed using the thought experiment about Mary's encounter with the tomato and the fact she is supposed to learn and what it is like to see a red thing like a red tomato (96-97); Ismael takes this very simple appearing example and transforms it into thought-provoking activity for the reader; the terms "intrinsic architecture," "incomplete content," and "inexpressible content" are also introduced (94-95). Ismael challenges the idea that physical knowledge sufficiently supplies us with all we need to know about something. Ismael writes it thus: "It comes down to the question of whether any communicable body of knowledge could be complete" (95); and she uses this argument to confront both the dualist and the physicalist (94). Ismael describes how to view the problem about epistemic and cognitive gaps: "The problem is not one about knowing how to map our own experience into a shared description of a common world; it's a problem about knowing how to establish specifically internal relations between the properties exemplified in disjoint domains" (113). In her exposition about "coordination of experience across minds" (109), Ismael makes us aware of the epistemic and cognitive gaps that need to be accounted for saying

The problem is not that properties exemplified in either your visual experience or in mine cannot be identified in terms of their role in the production of behavior or causal relations to features of the external landscape, it's that once we've identified the intrinsic properties

of my experience by their causal relations to the environment and their role in the production of my behavior; and identified the intrinsic properties of your experience by their causal relations to the environment and role in the production of your behavior; this tells us nothing about the internal relations between properties that play parallel roles in our respective functional architectures. It tells us nothing, in short, about how the kind of experience you have when you see red relates qualitatively to the kind that I do when I see red. And this is a quite general problem. It goes not just for color; but for all of the qualities exemplified in experience: tactual, auditory, gustatory.... (111)

In the final part of the book, "Selves," Ismael focuses on the identity and individuality of selves; throughout, reference is made to Anscombe, Descartes, Frege, Kant, Locke, Parfit, Strawson, and others. Chapter 11 surveys the views of no-subject theorists, theories of the self, criteria of identity, problems with identity over time. Chapter 12 is devoted to an extensive exposition on Dennett and covers the self as intentional object, the stream of consciousness, and the inner monologue. The final chapter concludes by saying how the mind implements and depends upon "self-description to bridge the gap between its properties and what they represent in precisely the way a map uses self-location to bridge the gap between its parts and what they stand for" (230). Therefore, the epistemic gap could be explained by "reflexive structure" and "self-locating sentences" (231).

The book's greatest strengths are in Ismael's systematic approach in articulating her theory. The book is certainly well organized and therefore efficient for teaching purposes. I was quite pleased with the organization of the material and design of each chapter. For those trained in both the scientific and philosophical disciplines, like myself, this work will only enhance our traditional understandings of the self while confronting physicalist objections. Ismael's writing is a detailed exposition of how the self comes to find its place in the physical world, observing, interacting, and continuously self-locating and self-describing itself within its physical environment. The book has few weaknesses. This elaborate work deserves a more detailed index—in particular if it is to be used by students—especially in light of the consistent and substantial use of terminology that Ismael uses to expound her dynamic theory. Ismael's writing style is geared toward the philosophical academic audience and it is not necessarily a book for students new to philosophy of mind or philosophy of language. However, it is certainly a book for advanced students. Even though much of the book tends toward analyzing language and self-description, this in no way has limitations for those who seek to work exclusively in philosophy of mind; because of its constant thought-provoking content, it is certainly one that all philosophers of mind—feminist or not—ought to read, especially if they seek out a fresh approach to non-traditionalist views of the mind-body and mind-world relationships. Moreover, *The Situated Self* is certainly a book for those advanced students who crave reading a profound text of scientific theory focused on language, subjectivity, and philosophy of mind.

Dynamic, thought provoking and innovative is the only way to describe J.T. Ismael's *The Situated Self*. It is a definite must read for those wanting to get their heads into a serious scientific theory driven work in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language.

#### Endnotes

1. Sandra Harding *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); and Alison Jaggar *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanhead Publishers, 1983).

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## ***Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment***

Bonnie Mann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). 208 pages. \$24.95. Paper ISBN: 978-0-19-518746-5.

**Reviewed by Karin Fry**

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Bonnie Mann's *Women's Liberation and the Sublime* focuses on issues surrounding postmodern approaches to feminist critique. While Mann is clearly sympathetic with various aspects of postmodern theory, she worries that the linguistic turn inherent in certain forms of postmodernism and the aestheticization involved in this approach has led feminist theory to be entrapped in discussions of a world of signs that fail to address the real issues that face women today. Mann believes the postmodern approach can be encapsulated in some of the ideas of the sublime. The task of postmodern theorizing itself promotes a feeling of terror and frenetic exhilaration that aestheticizes the experience of feminist liberation that occurs within theory (ix). For Mann, this leads to alienation from both the real problems of women and from nature because it ignores the notion of dependency in favor of a world in which all humans are adrift in a world of signs that can be altered and controlled. Ultimately, Mann proposes a way for feminists to take back the notion of the sublime in order to recapture the more realistic feeling of dependency that some types of the sublime promote.

The introduction and first four chapters of the book seek to describe the traditional concept of the sublime and relate it to problematic issues concerning feminist theory. Mann thinks that the linguistic turn in postmodern thought that began in the 1980s with thinkers like Judith Butler turn feminist problems into issues concerning language. The greatest feminist linguistic problem is essentialism that transforms feminist freedom into the possibility of creating new modes of thought that emancipate individuals from essentialism. Mann argues that even though debate concerning essentialism is important, feminists misunderstand freedom when they equate it with the defeat of essentialist concepts because it replicates the Euro-masculinist devaluation of nature and turns feminism into an abstract conceptual enterprise that fails to address material injustices on the ground (9).

Mann then explains Kant's theory of the sublime that involves a feeling of pleasure and pain arising from the magnitude and might of a phenomena that fails to be understood through universal concepts. Mann turns to Kant's sublime because after the linguistic turn, the boundaries between life and art break down as reality becomes a type of text to be read. Relying upon Luce Irigaray's essay "Paradox a Priori," and Lyotard's *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Mann describes Kant's sublime as a process that replaces the so-called reverence for the natural world with a reverence for human reason and the "...free, autonomous and sovereign Euro-masculine subject..." (34). For Mann, the shattering of the subject that seems to occur in the sublime when reason and imagination violently clash ultimately allows for a reunification of the subject above or beyond the spatio-temporal world, allowing the European masculine subject to project nature onto women and people of color in order to transcend dependency on nature through civilization.

Mann's critique of the Kantian sublime is extended to Jean-François Lyotard's politics that are based upon the Kantian sublime. According to Mann, Lyotard has made the linguistic turn by asserting that the basis of reality is the phrase. For Mann,

Lyotard is correct in criticizing the cognitive phrase regime for wrongly claiming to be a meta-narrative of knowledge, but she is skeptical of the potential of his politics. She argues that the subject is lacking a place from which to stand and bear witness to injustices. Lyotard's subject is stuck in a sublime and linguistic world that exceeds language and therefore has no place from which to act (64). Unfortunately, what Mann fails to discuss is the fact that Lyotard does not believe in political action in the traditional sense.<sup>1</sup> To assert that there is a political actor who makes political choices would assume that language could be wielded freely and that politics concerns autonomous agents. Lyotard's prescription of listening to *différends* is not an intellectual decision based upon free will in order to construct a more just political realm, but is based upon a primordial feeling of obligation, which, for Lyotard, is the sublime. Mann rightly criticizes Lyotard's politics for lacking a robust theory of action, but Mann's claims would work better if she attacked Lyotard's theory of action head on, rather than asserting that he ignores the importance of place and exteriority.

After laying out some problems with the sublime, Mann returns to the relation between postmodernism and feminist theory. Mann argues that a postmodern feminist approach actually undermines the goals of feminism because by foreclosing the possibility of essentialism, feminism disavows the realm of necessity and concerns itself with dismantling essentialist meta-narratives rather than promoting political action (79). Once again, the place from which to stand is lacking since one must argue from the space of the foreclosure of the essence, which Mann links to the sublime, leading to nature itself being foreclosed (81-82). Thus, postmodern feminism theorizes a subject who does not have a relation to the natural world and turns exteriority into a text to be read. Real problems are turned into problems about how to speak and think about feminism, leading to inattention to actual material, social, and economic inequalities (85).

Chapters 5 and 6 introduce examples of contemporary feminist issues that are negatively influenced by theories of the sublime, namely, the pornography debate and discussions of the body. Postmodern feminists like Linda Williams and Laura Kipnis see the liberatory potential of pornography as a new form of a text, promoting a new way to create different gender identities and sexualities. For these thinkers, pornography is like a sublime experience in which new pleasures can be enjoyed and oppressive gender signs can be challenged through transgressing them. What this approach ignores is the material inequality of the women and children who are part of the porn industry. Similarly, by focusing primarily upon language, postmodern feminist theories promote a discursive theory of the body that does not address the material and corporeal nature of the body. Mann recommends Merleau-Ponty's theory of the reversible body-world relation as a place to start to bring back exteriority and nature (114). Rather than a disembodied consciousness inhabiting a textual world, Mann argues for a theory of the subject that is dependent upon nature, upon other people, and embodies a physical place in the world.

Finally, chapters 7-9 seek to reclaim a positive theory of the sublime for feminist concerns that prioritizes the relation with other people and the natural world. The first type of feminist sublime is the liberatory sublime, which is "...the experience that pushes one to the limit of closed 'I-centered' world," and involves experiencing common space with others, who are people rather than as discursive functions (156-57). This aesthetic experience breaks open a space for feminist practice and orients us towards issues of freedom and justice. The second type of the sublime is the natural sublime, which concerns the relation to the natural world and the intersubjective dependencies of humanity (161).



The natural sublime gets rid of the feeling of triumph over nature and honors the dependency that all humans have upon nature, allowing for new feminist practices that address necessity and the work required to sustain humanity (169).

Overall, Mann's criticisms of postmodern feminism are important and her explanation of the positive feminist use of the sublime breaks new ground. For these reasons, it is a very important new text. However, the book ambitiously covers a great deal of territory and one is not fully convinced by some of her claims, even though reading about the issues she is worried about is certainly beneficial nonetheless. The weaker sections concern the negative critiques of the Kantian sublime and the criticism of Lyotard's work. Many argue that the sublime is not an area of mastery at all, but at least Mann points to an interesting analysis of the abjection of nature that occurs in many types of philosophical thought that may be better explored against the entirety of the tradition, rather than merely through the concept of the sublime. Mann's claims concerning the failure to address dependency and the worry concerning the overly intellectual orientation of postmodern feminism are convincing and important in a general sense, but those criticisms could be made without adopting a critique of the sublime, as many thinkers, including Lyotard, assert that the sublime is not exclusively about thought, but concerns the point at which thought breaks down and emphasizes feeling above anything else. Perhaps Mann's positive discussions of the feminist sublime are not a radical break with the traditional sublime, but with the philosophical tradition as a whole. Yet, her concerns with postmodern feminism generally, and its seeming disregard of nature, are extremely beneficial for any reader who is interested in feminist concerns. Mann's proposal of the two types of the feminine sublime show a great deal of potential and hopefully will be explored in even greater length in her future work.

#### Endnotes

1. Jean-François Lyotard and Gilbert Laroche. "That which Resists After All." *Philosophy Today* 36.4 (1992): 402-17. See page 409.

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## *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir*

Emily R. Grosholz (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). 200 pages. \$29.95. ISBN 0-19-926536-4 (paperback).

### Reviewed by Ada S. Jaarsma

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This new edited collection emerges out of a conference commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and contains a well-balanced range of essays that are both richly personal and critically passionate. As Emily R. Grosholz asserts in her editor's preface, this collection is therefore in part "homage" (xxiv), seeking to recognize *The Second Sex* for its specifically philosophical significance. The essays included examine the text's position in the canon and its challenge to philosophy as a methodology for achieving actual social change. At the same time, however, several thinkers raise innovative possibilities for reading older philosophical texts in light of *The Second Sex*.

One strength of the collection is that many of the contributors are well-established Beauvoir scholars. Michèle Le Doeuff, Toril Moi, and Nancy Bauer each advance arguments based on previous work, and consequently they offer the

reader insights into the specific challenges of undertaking sustained study of Beauvoir.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Le Doeuff asserts, in her essay "Towards a Friendly, Transatlantic Critique of *The Second Sex*": "The interest of an ongoing interpretation of a text lies in the fact that what must be explained in the text changes from generation to generation" (23). There is a cultural and historical context to those questions which emerge as urgent, problematic, or in need of new clarification. Le Doeuff's own suggestive observation is that feminist philosophy will benefit from interrogating nationalist approaches to the study of *The Second Sex*, which read it, for example, as essentially a French text, pointing instead to transnational exchanges which have played important roles in the development of feminism.

Along similar lines, Nancy Bauer revisits the claim that she makes in an earlier text that to assert the philosophical importance of *The Second Sex* is at the same time to undertake one's own act of philosophical appropriation, "grounded in the reader's own investments and concerns" (2001, 3). According to Bauer, Beauvoir's distinct way of appropriating the philosophical tradition is recognizable only when it itself is taken up and reappropriated (2001, 4). Bauer's point—which is a challenge to contemporary feminist philosophers—is admirably put into practice throughout the essays in this collection. Exegetical analyses of Beauvoir's texts are combined with strong reflexive thinking about the task of philosophy itself, as the essays attempt to grapple with the multiple *Second Sexes* which emerge from a commitment to taking seriously not only the arguments outlined by Beauvoir but also the lines of thought which extend beyond.

One way that this is carried out is through the inclusion of arguments by several early modern scholars, including Grosholz herself, who seek to situate Beauvoir's thought within the history of philosophy. Especially worthy of note is Susan James's "Complicity and Slavery in *The Second Sex*," which focuses on the animating question of *The Second Sex*, namely: Why do women choose to be complicit with their own subordination? Rather than examining the question in light of Beauvoir's contemporaries, the most prevalent hermeneutical strategy among Beauvoir scholars, James makes the convincing case that a much longer historical assessment is needed—in this case, establishing the relevance of seventeenth-century discussions of social hierarchy and the affects of admiration and contempt. Focusing on Malebranche, James argues that "the acceptance of social subordination is to be explained by the ways in which differences of power are embodied, and therefore shape the way we understand ourselves, the way others understand us, and what we can do" (83). James's approach not only excavates the term complicity by identifying its roots in early modern conceptions of bodily affects and psychic interpretations but also models a successful methodology for incorporating Beauvoir within the history of philosophy.

In contrast, Claude Imbert's essay "Simone de Beauvoir: A Woman Philosopher in the Context of her Generation" offers a particularly rich exploration of the post-war intellectual environment in which Beauvoir and others, including Simone Weil, Merleau-Ponty, and Lévi-Strauss, were striving to rectify the apolitical abstractions of philosophy by attending to concreteness and situatedness. Imbert argues that what makes Beauvoir's contributions unique concerns the "double bind" of *The Second Sex*: its commitments as a philosophical project to interrogating a canon whose terms and methods are ultimately incapable of answering Beauvoir's central question, "Whence comes this submission of women?" This point echoes Grosholz's description of Beauvoir's text as reflective and iconoclastic—identifying the internal limits of the discipline of philosophy while expanding its reach and methods.



On the one hand, as Imbert's essay makes evident, Beauvoir is capable of being understood as a thinker who called existentialism into radical question, exposing the limitations of the ontological premise of radical freedom by describing the compulsions of the situations which women must negotiate; according to this approach, there is thus a need to either thoroughly revise existentialist concepts and methods or move on entirely. In the most extreme example of this line of thought, Imbert calls existentialism a "cul-de-sac" (16) which evaporated during the sixties. We must end oppression by critiquing male pretensions to universality and turn instead to concrete social problems. On the other hand, essays like those exemplified by Le Doeuff argue for the affirmation of the impartial and universal powers of rationality while at the same time committing to the critique of totalization. Similarly, Catherine Wilson emphasizes the normative commitments of Beauvoir's text, explaining that given Beauvoir's shared commitments with Kant, "we are obliged to cultivate the material conditions under which social dignity is universally attainable" (100). One of the ways in which this collection is most valuable is in the internal debates it stages about Beauvoir's precise role in transforming philosophy.

Perhaps as a result, the collection contains impassioned directions for further study. To highlight an example, several essays take up the question: What does it mean to be engaged philosophically? This is not simply a descriptive question about Beauvoir's approach in *The Second Sex* but rather reflects a commitment to enacting the kind of philosophy that makes a difference, philosophy that contrasts with what Grosholz describes as philosophy that leaves us unmoved and indifferent (xxiii). In Anne Stevenson's essay, committed writing involves practical deliberation, modified through experience, praxis, and dialogue. Similarly, Bauer makes the stakes of engaged thinking explicit, directing philosophers to come back to the real world (116). While nearly every essay in the collection undertakes challenging analyses of the nature of engaged philosophy, the text itself does not include specific examples that would model how Beauvoir's commitments to studying the "drama of woman" can equip us with productive tools for carrying out urgent critique today—critique, for example, of racist ideology or of class-based forms of subordination. There is, however, a clear directive to us as Beauvoir's readers—that to study Beauvoir is also to commit to a kind of philosophy that seeks to overturn social injustices.

In some ways, this reflects the self-expressed intention of the collection to pay "homage" to Beauvoir: As such, the text should prove to be of considerable interest to feminist philosophers, as it signals important new directions for continued research on Beauvoir: The book also highlights an important reminder about Beauvoir's neglected status in the discipline of philosophy, the most obvious sign of which is the severely limited English translation of *The Second Sex*. Toril Moi's essay "While We Wait: Notes on the English Translation of *The Second Sex*" expands upon the extensive critiques already issued against the translation, the first and most influential of which is by Margaret A. Simons.<sup>2</sup> Moi clearly documents the philosophical shortcomings of Parshley's translation, pointing out its ideological assumptions which have served to undermine the philosophical value and perpetuate misinterpretations of *The Second Sex*. For example, Moi identifies numerous technical terms which are either completely absent or thoroughly obscured in the English translation, including such key concepts as authenticity, existence, subjectivity, and alienation. Bauer also takes up this theme in her essay, and in a footnote, she invites readers to join her in demanding of the publishers Knopf and Gallimard that they at least permit, if not support, a new scholarly edition of *The Second Sex*.

Especially for scholars and students reading Beauvoir in English translation, the collection will serve as a convicting reminder of the limitations of the Parshley translation and can serve to expose for students the constructed and fallible nature of the production of the philosophical canon. Indeed, the text should lend itself wonderfully to the classroom, with its threefold emphasis on the historical, literary, and philosophical contexts of *The Second Sex*.

#### Endnotes

1. Nancy Bauer. *Simone de Beauvoir; Philosophy, and Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Michèle Le Doeuff. *Hipparchia's Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing 1991); Toril Moi. *What is a Woman?: And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Toril Moi. *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1994).
2. Margaret A. Simons. "The Silencing of Simone de Beauvoir: Guess What's Missing from *The Second Sex*." *Women's Studies International Forum* 6.5 (1983): 559-64.

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### ***Simone de Beauvoir: Diary of a Philosophy Student, vol. 1, 1926-27***

Edited by Barbara Klaw, Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir, and Margaret Simons, with Marybeth Timmermann (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006). 374 pages. \$40.00. ISBN-13 978-0-252-03142-7.

#### **Reviewed by Sally J. Scholz**

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The second volume in the Beauvoir Series published by the University of Illinois Press, *Simone de Beauvoir: Diary of a Philosophy Student, vol. 1, 1926-27*, is an admirable example of careful translating and editing. The footnotes alone tell a story of arduous research and painstaking attention to detail that is rare even in academic circles. Every name Beauvoir mentions, every book she reads, each painter she critiques is explained and placed in context. Barbara Klaw and her associates paint a vivid picture of the social and historical context within which the young student Beauvoir reflected on her life. The two introductions, one by Klaw and one by Margaret Simons, connect the diary to Beauvoir's later works. They see some of the seeds of her more famous ideas taking root in these early writings, but they also notice those places where the ideas in her novels or her philosophical treatises depart significantly from the diary notes.

The diary itself is just what might be expected of an eighteen-year-old girl writing in the early part of the twentieth century. Although there are only a few passages that contain anything that is strictly philosophical in a traditional sense and even fewer signs of the woman who would later write *The Second Sex*, the text is not without interest.

The diary opens with a threatening exhortation from Beauvoir: "Nothing is more cowardly than to violate a secret when nobody is there to defend it. I have always suffered horribly from every indiscretion, but if someone, anyone, reads these pages, I will never forgive him. He will thus be doing a bad and ugly deed" (53). Needless to say, I read on but I could not help but feel a little guilty for doing so. The eighteen-year-old Beauvoir tried to work out some of her most private anxieties in these diaries. As a reader, I was full of both curiosity and hesitancy; I wanted to respect her privacy but, like so many

others, I wondered how different I would find the Beauvoir at eighteen than the woman I knew through reading her other texts.

Although they clearly bear the mark of the early twentieth century in their timidity, there are a handful of intriguing elements in the diary. Most of the prose deals with one of two things: her love for her cousin and its numerous vicissitudes, and what she was reading, studying, or attending in her late teen years.

It is widely known that Beauvoir had anticipated marrying her cousin Jacques and these diaries chronicle that time period. What is more interesting is how she seems to characterize love. Page after page, we read of conversations between Beauvoir and Jacques wherein they seemed to share an “understanding” or “intimacy” which isolated them from so many others around them. Jacques read to her and introduced her to new books, new authors. The salacious details that characterized many of Beauvoir’s later letters are entirely absent from this diary, no doubt because they were absent from her existence. Beauvoir’s relationship with Jacques unfolded under the watchful eyes of her parents, especially her mother who is likely the target of that opening exhortation against reading the diary.

Later in the diaries, toward the end of the second of two notebooks, Beauvoir develops a close friendship with Maurice Merleau-Ponty. She briefly contemplates him as a replacement for Jacques. Whereas Jacques inspires suffering and anxiety, Merleau-Ponty inspires joy and lightness. Beauvoir interprets this as simplicity, even immaturity, on Merleau-Ponty’s part, while Jacques is portrayed as complex and sophisticated. An entry on September 6, 1927, offers her conclusion regarding the comparison between the two men: “I am strong enough forever; no fear of losing myself. M.P. would be peace, simple, and sure affection; Jacques; the difficult steps towards the other; work that is never completed and always to do; anxiety. Thus, it is Jacques who must definitively be chosen; confident enough to rest my happiness in his hands...” (311). This somewhat counter-intuitive decision is interestingly read through her work in the *Second Sex* on the woman in love. Indeed, the introduction by Klaw discusses the Jacques relationship in this light and Beauvoir’s subsequent written reactions to it.

Like most teenage diaries perhaps, Beauvoir comments at length on her boredom. Often, these spring from long periods of Jacques’ absence from her life. One of my favorite such passages is in the November 24, 1926, entry, which begins “Boredom! Boredom!”:

It’s horrible not to have any desire for perfection or use anymore, horrible to try to sleep my life away until he makes life possible for me because I no longer expect anything except from him, whom I don’t currently like, for whom I have no tenderness. And will I see him again? And when?

I am bored! Such emptiness that does not even make me dizzy...such grayness, such drabness, all these hours that I am not living that I try to evade. (186-87)

There is a subtle recognition there—Beauvoir seems both to know that she cannot look to another for her life but yet desperately resigned to do so. There are also pages and pages of her crying and almost as many entries on her happiness—often accounts of boredom or despair are followed by entries on her supreme happiness. Her teenage angst reveals her relative privilege just as her social reality reveals the limitations imposed on her gender in the early twentieth century.

One of the most striking features of the diary is the extent to which Beauvoir discusses the soul—hers and others. The

soul is described as the truth, nature, the real person, and, most prominently, the inner life. In the early part of the diary, she describes two selves, an interior self and an exterior self. As she says in September 1926, she spent long hours trying “to focus on [her] soul, filled with wonder at the discovery of inner life” (85). This inner life is the lens through which she processes literature, music, and painting. It is also the life that ties her to Jacques. In many ways, one gets the impression that Beauvoir was wrestling with some perennial philosophical problems: the nature of the self, the duality of existence, the relation to the absolute, and the nature of love. Though, of course, some caution is in order here too lest we try to read too much into her private thoughts regarding her life and relationships.

Reading the diary, one is struck by how frequently Beauvoir read and reread and reread again her own notebooks. The footnotes make ample mention of her marginal comments written at a later time (for the second notebook, these comments appear to be written in 1929 and even refer to Sartre in response to diary entries). But even beyond the marginalia, Beauvoir frequently mentions that she has gone back and reread what she has written in the notebook, often noting how right she was or how much she loves herself as she reveals herself in the notebooks. Knowing this and knowing that she also read her diaries again in the writing of her autobiographies, one cannot help but be struck by the sort of self-reflective, or perhaps self-referential, life she led. Read next to the *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, as Klaw suggests, one might find some insight in Beauvoir’s reinterpretation of her relationship with Jacques and early friendship with Merleau-Ponty. Similarly, alongside her short story collection, *When Things of the Spirit Come First*, one can see Beauvoir grappling with themes that inspired her early fiction.

This volume provides an additional tool for scholars. The diary presents an opportunity for opening an avenue of Beauvoirian scholarship in aesthetics. She renders judgment on a great deal of art, literature, and music. Little has been written on her aesthetic judgment and this volume of her diaries might invite scholars to explore that aspect of her thought more systematically.

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### ***Feminist Interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty***

Dorothea Olkowski and Gail Weiss (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006). 290 pages. \$35.00 ISBN 0-271-02918-8

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Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s reconceptualization of the subject as an embodied subject has inspired many feminists to engage with his work. The focus on the role of the body serves as the ideal framework for feminists to theorize the relevance of sexual differences. Arguably, his work has spawned an entirely new area of feminist philosophy. Admittedly, poststructuralist theories were already addressing the body, but the framework in poststructuralist theories following the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault concentrated on the social construction, disciplinary, and, consequently, constrictive aspects of embodiment as demonstrated in the early works of Judith Butler and Susan Bordo. These works still inherently, if not absolutely, adhered to rigid philosophical dualities of mind and body, subject and object. Merleau-Ponty’s work

inspires phenomenological explorations that theorize the body as integrally related to subjectivity and engagement with the world, challenging feminists to creatively reconceptualize being in the world.

*Feminist Interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, edited by Dorothea Olkowski and Gail Weiss, is a collection of more recent engagements with the work of Merleau-Ponty. Through many original and a few reprinted pieces, this collection demonstrates that there still remains much to explore and develop with and against Merleau-Ponty's corpus. As a collection of more recent works, some familiarity with Merleau-Ponty's work and the initial feminist engagements with his work (i.e., the critical writings of Butler and Luce Irigaray as well as the early explorative essays by Iris Marion Young) should prove helpful for a thorough appreciation of the force of these articles. Clearly, the audience for this anthology is not comprised of students in an introductory class on phenomenology and the body, or of feminist interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's work, nor of philosophers beginning to familiarize themselves with this area of philosophy.

The anthology does not place the twelve articles under any subheadings; I take the liberty of making the following groups. Sonia Kruks and Beata Stawarska's articles address the role of anonymity or generality in perception and one's being in the world in Merleau-Ponty's work. Interestingly, the two refer to this anonymity and reach completely opposite conclusions as to whether such anonymity makes seeing difference possible. Kruks believes the anonymity makes seeing difference possible, whereas Stawarska (consistent with Shannon Sullivan's criticism of Merleau-Ponty's work) argues that such anonymity obfuscates the possibility of seeing difference. Jorella Andrews and David Brubaker explore how ethics might develop within Merleau-Ponty's work through the ethics of ambiguity and the ethics of care, respectively. Three articles by Judith Butler, Vicki Kirby, and Ann Murphy defend Merleau-Ponty's work from Irigaray's criticisms in her book *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Johanna Oksala's article defends Merleau-Ponty's work from Butler's early searing criticism in her article, "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description." The remaining articles seem to be in categories unto themselves. Dorothea Olkowski's article critically addresses Merleau-Ponty's earlier works on child psychology. The remaining three articles by Helen Fielding, Gail Weiss, and Laura Doyle develop and apply Merleau-Ponty's work into relatively new subject areas: the perception of color, the cityscape, and the prison cells of torture survivors.

The articles in the anthology range from being primarily impressionistic to sustaining systematic arguments. An excellent article and an example of a sustained argument is Judith Butler's "Sexual Difference as a Question of Ethics: Alterities of the Flesh in Irigaray and Merleau-Ponty." I have been for some time now wary of Irigaray's criticisms of Merleau-Ponty's last text, *The Visible and the Invisible*. As such, I was pleased to read three articles effectively defending Merleau-Ponty's theories from Irigaray. Admirably, Irigaray concentrates on the role of alterity; she situates the ethical relation in the moment of incommensurability. She carefully attends to always making possible open questions and not completely knowing others. With these concerns, Irigaray contends that Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh totalizes and closes off the possibility of asking about the "never yet known, the open future" (115). To challenge her contentions, Butler begins by denying Irigaray's claim that flesh, as that which composes all sensate experience, is maternal. Rather, Butler asks, "[W]hy does the maternal figure that origination, when the maternal itself must be produced from a larger world of sensuous relations?" (121). With this denial, Butler explains that Irigaray's position that the flesh

totalizes relies upon a psychoanalytic theory, in which "[t]he mother becomes for him the site of a narcissistic reflection of himself, and she is thus eclipsed as a site of alterity, and reduced to the occasion for a narcissistic mirroring" (119). Hence, denying that flesh is the maternal, Butler disagrees with Irigaray's claim that Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh is narcissistic or totalizing. Butler writes, "[i]n what is perhaps the least persuasive of Irigaray's arguments, she suggests that Merleau-Ponty not only repudiates this 'connection' with the maternal in classic masculine fashion, but that he then reappropriates this 'connection' for his own solipsistic theory of the flesh" (119).

Denying that the flesh is totalizing, Butler quickly points out that Irigaray unconvincingly depicts the role of alterity in ethics as sexual difference. Under such circumstances, Butler asks: "[C]an there even be a relation of fundamental alterity between those of the same sex?" (116). Butler suggests replacing Irigaray's infinitely open question with the question of "how to treat the Other well when the Other is never fully other; when one's own separateness is a function of one's dependency on the Other" (116). Butler refuses Irigaray's framework that ethics lay in the moments of incommensurability. Butler, in agreement with Merleau-Ponty, invites conceptualizing the ethical moment as arising from being "implicated in the world of flesh of which he is a part...to realize precisely that he cannot disavow such a world without disavowing himself, that he is abandoned to a world that is not his own" (123).

Laura Doyle's article, "Bodies Inside/out: Violation and Resistance from the Prison Cell to *The Bluest Eye*," is an example of an impressionistic article that explores a few quite startling ways of thinking through Merleau-Ponty's theories, especially the relation of reversibility. She draws quite remarkable examples of the chiasmatic relation "to understand this paradoxical dynamic in which bodily vulnerability forms the ground of resistance" (183). Doyle explores two prison testimonies (Lena Constante, in *The Silent Escape* and Jacobo Timerman, in *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*) and Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*. Focusing on the prison testimonies, I find quite striking the following three of Doyle's descriptions of the chiasmatic intertwining and reversal: our relation to our body passageways, our relation to things, and the relation of space and time. First, in regards to our body passageways, Doyle describes the event of the "Dirty Protest," making sense of the experiences and actions of the Irish prisoners in Long Kesh during the early 1980s. She writes, "[i]f the guards turned the prisoners' bodies inside out by making them squat over mirrors while they searched their anuses with metal instruments, the prisoners carried this logic further by turning their cells into anuses replete with shit-covered walls. A guard entering the prisoner's cell in effect was forcibly made to enter the hole he had forcibly probed" (185-86).

Second, in regard to our relation to things, Doyle challenges too simplistic an understanding of our relation to things. In our modern day capitalistic society, I had too easily dismissed any attachment to things as driven by consumerism. But Doyle explains that for prisoners, things have meaning beyond the act of purchasing and ownership. Things serve as an "organic tie between life and death" in their promise of a future (192). She writes, "[t]hrown as we are into the world of space and a future, normally things anchor us. They can do so because things survive beyond us; we live from their power of sustained presencing" (193). And precisely because of this function of things, prisoners are especially vulnerable to their seizure. Moreover, the case of Timerman's torturer wearing Timerman's watch and using his wife's lighter demonstrates that things can betray their original owners in their capacity to continue to

function for others. In this sense, Doyle describes the doubled, reversible relationship of human beings with things.

Third, Doyle explicates a quite remarkable reversal between space and time. For Timerman, locked in a cell without light and, consequently, no sense of a spatial horizon, but with endless time, "'Time'...become[s] dimensionless, obliterating" (197). Doyle describes that "[s]o fully intertwined is the body with its surround that collapsing the external surround closes off the body and an opening of the surround likewise relaunches the body" (197). Contrary to the usual affiliation of infinity and potentiality with the future of time, deprived of a spatial horizon, Timerman does not experience time as opening to the future. Evoking Merleau-Ponty's theoretical framework and yet exceeding the reaches of his work, Doyle utilizes his analysis to good effect with unusual subject matters.

Feminist Interpretations of Merleau-Ponty definitely provides much to think about and demonstrates, as Weiss writes, "new ways of doing philosophy" (164).

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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