



# NEWSLETTER

Issue No 8 November 1992

# Editorial

This issue contains news about conferences, courses and publications, together with reviews and letters. No-one responded to our suggestion that we include 'papers, notes or jottings' so we have not included any! Our idea was that we could inform each other about 'work in progress - helping the process of networking. The offer still stands! We are thinking of anything between 600 - 6,000 words. We would be glad to know what any of you think about this idea. We wonder if people would need to be approached - if you think so too, you could approach each other, so that we make use of parts of the network which are not so close to us.

Unsolicited reviews are always welcome. (Note that they should be quite short - preferably no more than 500-600 words.) Send them to Margaret Whitford. The index of books reviewed in earlier issues appears at the end of the newsletter.

We only received one letter about the issue of men in the society. We also have letters from France and Norway. We are glad to get letters on any subject, long or short.

**Note the deadline for the next issue is 30.4.93.**

Also note that if you have not paid your 92/93 sub (the blue reminder form) that this is the last newsletter you will receive until your subscription arrives!

Apologies:

1. In the previous newsletter, an article by Christine Battersby on feminist philosophy appeared. We made the mistake of retitling this article 'The Oxford meeting of SWIP', which may have led readers to think that the article had been written as a report on the conference, and could have given offence to the organiser of the conference, Meena Dhanda, who was not mentioned, and the speaker who was not mentioned by name, Sabina Lovibond. In fact the article was not a report on the conference; it was written for the THES as a report on the state of feminist philosophy in Britain, and we thought that it would be of interest to readers of SWIP who had not seen the piece when it first appeared. We apologise for any misunderstanding created by the editorial title.
2. This newsletter is rather late in arriving. This is because Morwenna Griffiths found in September that she was to be away during November!

*Morwenna Griffiths  
Margaret Whitford*

# SWIP NEWS AND VIEWS

The next SWIP conference will be at:

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

on Saturday 13 March 1993

Speakers:

Deborah Cameron, University of Strathclyde

and

Nicole Ward Jouve, University of York

The theme of the conference will be:

GENDER AND LANGUAGE

CALL FOR PAPERS : Abstracts (not more than 500 words)

should be sent to : SWIP Conference, c/o Department of Philosophy,  
University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL by 10 December.

## **MEN AND SWIP**

Dear Editors

Regarding the correspondence from your male contributor, (June, Issue 7), I cannot think of a more persuasive illustration of precisely why SWIP should remain SWIP, than the tone and content of his own letter.

Ellen Reynolds  
Birkbeck' College, University of London

# NEWS

## CONSENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

**Consent to health treatment and research: differing perspectives** was the first of eight conferences on consent. Consent is usually discussed within the confines of medicine, law and philosophy. Yet many social science disciplines can also contribute towards enriching the theories and improving the practice of consent in medicine. The multi-disciplinary approaches discussed at the July conference included the following.

General practice As a GP and senior lecturer, Dr Luke Zander questioned how patients' consent to being observed by medical students can best be obtained. He also considered that hospital consultants tend to provide their preferred, non-negotiable treatments; patient choice is a matter of finding an appropriate consultant. In contrast, GPs offering general care over many years to the family are far more involved in negotiating alternatives, and helping patients to make their own choices.

Politics Dr Charlotte Williamson, vice-chair of the York Health Trust, considered interests, power and bias in the health services. She drew attention to conflicts of interests between professionals, health managers and consumers, and how consumers' interests may be repressed or respected. Consumer groups help to change services and to increase the range of acceptable choices for health service users. Yet the growing power of managers to control resources can restrict the time and resources allowed for offering choice to consumers and for respecting their consent.

Sociology The cervical cancer 'trial' in New Zealand, for over 20 years, assigned women with positive smear results to treatment and non-treatment groups, without informing them. Professor Ann Oakley accepted that the 'trial' researched important questions which are still unanswered because of the poor research design. She discussed the contribution of sociology towards clarifying theories, methods and socioeconomic issues in medical research. In order to prevent abusive and useless research, the power discrepancies between senior doctors, research assistants, patients and mediators such as ethics committees need to be analysed and redressed.

History Dr Naomi Pfeffer recounted how in the United States, during the mid-century, stilboestrol was used to prevent miscarriage; it is now associated with cancer in the children and grandchildren of the women so treated. At the same time in Britain, the drug was a known abortifacient, and today is used as the 'morning' after' pill. Researchers' limited understanding of the nature and the effects of drugs, of the international scene, of toxicology, and of the adequate review of outcome, which continues today, is clearly apparent in such historical examples, raising questions about how far patients should be informed about these limitations.

Law Jonathan Montgomery drew on parliamentary and case law examples to demonstrate that, in practice, law in the UK does not enforce high standards of informed consent. Judges accept the standards set by the 'reasonable doctor', in contrast to North American courts' support for more stringent standards set by the 'prudent patient'.

However, the law's reputation, for demanding higher standards than it actually does, exerts a threat and a symbolic force which contribute towards raising standards in medical practice.

Psychoanalysis Although usually discussed as if it is a rational, factual matter, consent is complicated by the subconscious. Georgia Lepper illustrated how doctors and patients are influenced by transference; doctors tend to be seen as wise, kindly parents, and patients as emotional children. Becoming aware of these influences can help to further rational discussion and choice. Increasingly, patients who do not respond to conventional medicine are referred for counselling. While many patients benefit from counselling, some feel that this form of therapy is enforced by doctors, without the willing consent of either patient or counsellor.

In September, the second conference in the series considered **Young people, psychiatric treatment and consent.**

Law Ian Bynoe, legal director of MIND, explained contradictions in legal rights to accept or refuse treatment, particularly of young people under 16 and under 18, and of people deemed by doctors to be incompetent. The recent High Court case of the young woman with anorexia illustrated the legal complexities. Young people's rights will not be recognised until the powers of parents, and the much greater medieval powers of the courts are reduced.

Personal experience Adam McGhie, a young man with manic depression, described being under psychiatric treatment for much of his life, and his hopes for his future. Several attenders also spoke of their experiences. There was concern that so many black young people are likely to be treated in prison hospitals rather than in the health service.

Adolescent psychiatry Dr Geoffrey Brown related the work of the regional adolescent unit where young people enter a therapeutic community voluntarily, after weeks of preparation. The policy of such units is in marked contrast to places where young people are admitted compulsorily and drugs are used more fully during treatment. Patients' consent is much affected by the overall policy of the place of treatment, as illustrated by the case studies described.

Social history Dr Joan Busfield considered changing meanings of psychiatric treatment through time. Madness occupies a shifting position between physical illness on one side, criminality on another side, and normality on the third side. Whether people are diagnosed as mad, sick, bad or normal depends on current beliefs, as well as social position and other factors which influence their freedom of choice.

Sociology and nursing Dr Gillian Bendelow, a sociologist, looked back on her work as a psychiatric nurse and later a hospital and community sister. In one example, as a student nurse she was required to spend a day with a young woman with anorexia, to prevent her from removing a feeding tube inserted through her abdomen. The example illustrated a hierarchy of power, when decisions made by judges or consultants are carried out through persuasion or force by junior staff. The informed, willing consent of the staff relates to the patients consent.

Anthropology Professor Ronald Frankenberg discussed how consent is affected by trust and its perceived betrayal, culture and its perceived inflexibility, languages and their perceived intelligibility and by differential perceptions of time. These are particularly complicated in the responses to adolescents, when this life stage is taken literally to mean 'becoming adult' rather than having its own validity.

Each session was debated by conference attenders from widely differing backgrounds. Future consent conferences will consider issues such as confused elderly people, ethnic minorities, reproductive technologies, AIDS and cancer research. If you would like details of the programmes, or of the published proceedings, please contact: the Consent Conferences Secretary, Social Science Research Unit, University of London, 18 Woburn Square, London, WC1. 071 612 6297/1.

Priscilla Alderson

#### A RUSSIAN VISITOR

Tatiana Klimenkova is a Russian feminist philosopher, currently employed as a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Gender Studies in Moscow. She will be staying at the University of Kent from January 11 - March 12 1993, and during that period wants to visit other universities and hold discussions with women working in Philosophy or Women's Studies. She had published several papers, including one on Feminism and Post-modernism, and this is a rare opportunity to get a local perspective on the problems women in Russia are facing. If you would like her to visit your University, or group and can provide accommodation, subsistence and fares please contact: Anne Seller, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NP. Telephone 0227 - 764000 ext. 7422.

## RESEARCH DETAILS FOR NETWORKING

Morwenna Griffiths

Subjectivity, the self; autobiography and epistemology.

Kathleen Lennon

Feminist epistemology, methodology in social science, philosophy of mind.

Anne Scott

I am a research student at the University of Bradford, interested in feminist epistemology and the construction of subjectivity, I am researching the history of the nineteenth century, and also homeopathy and anti-vivisection. I'm hoping and believing these interests will turn out to be connected in a subtle and interesting way!

# CONFERENCES AND COURSES

**MANCHESTER POLYTECHNIC**

**ANNOUNCES ...**

*a new*

**WOMEN'S STUDIES M.A.**

**COMMENCING JANUARY 1993**

**We offer you an inter-disciplinary course with cross-faculty teaching.**

**There are opportunities to take part-time or fast-track routes with day and evening teaching as well as occasional day schools.**

**All students will follow a Core Course which explores key questions and issues for women's studies. There is a wide range of options on offer which include:**

**Equal Opportunities - Which Women Benefit?  
The Politics of Women and Disability  
Psychological Theory and Feminist Practice  
Feminist Criticism and 19th Century writing  
Women and Philosophy  
Lesbian Writing  
Women and Stress  
Women, Race and Class  
Women's History: Concepts, Issues and Debates  
Issues in the Cross-Cultural Study of Women  
Work in Women's Lives**

**Enquiries welcomed from prospective students from all backgrounds. We encourage applications from those with relevant paid/unpaid work/political experience as well as formal qualifications.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT:  
Lorna Hargreaves, Department of English and History, Manchester  
Polytechnic, Ormond Building, Lower Ormond St. Manchester M15 6BX  
Tel 061 247 1732**

## **WOMEN AND WORK CONFERENCE**

The Journal of Gender Studies in conjunction with the BSA Sexual Divisions Study Group is organising a conference on **WOMEN AND WORK** to take place on **Saturday, 20th February, 1993** at the **University of Humberside**.

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Papers are invited under three headings:

- (i) Women and Technology:**
- ii) Women and Power at the Workplace**
- (iii) Care and Service - Paid and Unpaid:**

The Journal of Gender Studies will have first rights to publication of the papers presented at the conference; all papers will be subject to the normal reviewing process. We would like all abstracts of papers, approximately sent to us as soon as possible so that we can circulate them to participants in advance. The papers will be streamed under the three headings and participants will be asked to choose one of three streams. Conference participants will be limited to 90 and numbers in each stream to 30. If one stream is oversubscribed, people will be offered a place in one of the others.

**Accommodation:** The Post-House - Hull Marina has offered a rate of £25 bed and breakfast sharing a twin-bedded room and £33.50 for a single. In addition, a list of bed and breakfast places will be sent to participants who need to stay overnight.

**Admission** to the conference will be £8 waged, £1 unwaged or low-waged, or according to means. Coffee, tea and lunch will be available at the canteen on site. There will be a **creche**. Places need to be booked at least one week in advance.

Low-waged and unwaged members of the BSA may apply to the BSA Support fund for help with costs of travel and accommodation. The address is: BSA, Unit 3G, Mountjoy Research Centre, Stockton Road, Durham. DH1.3UR.

### **Contacts for Conference:**

Sheila Cunnison, Annette Fitzsimons, Social and Professional Studies, University of Humberside, Inglemire Avenue, Hull. HU6 7LU.

Tel.: 0482 440550. x 4214 and 4198.



## WOMEN : A CULTURAL REVIEW

The current issue of *Women: a cultural review* (3/2, Autumn 1992) is a special number on *Gendering Philosophy*. It includes:

The Feminist Philosopher: A Contradiction in Terms?

MARGARET WHITFORD

Philosophy: The Recalcitrant Discipline

CHRISTINE BATTERSBY

The Politics of Identity: The Politics of the Self

MORWENNA GRIFFITHS, ANNE SELLER

From Omphalos to Phallus: Cultural Representations of Femininity and Death

ELISABETH BRONFEN

The Mirror and the Womb: Conceptions of the Mind in Bacon's Discourse of the Natural Sciences

SUSANNE SCHOLZ

plus two articles on 'Theorising Sexuality', 'The Epistemology of Pornography: Between Images and Acts', by Margareta Jolly, and 'True Love: The Metaphysics of Romance', by Catherine Belsey, plus reviews including one of Margaret Whitford on Luce Irigaray by Jan Montefiore.

Because of pressure of space and deadlines we were not able to include all we wished, so we shall have a further issue with a section on Women and Philosophy next year (4/2, Autumn 1993): this will include 'Strange Alliances: Feminism, Post-Structuralism and the Possibility of Affirmation' by Jill Marsden, 'Edith Simcox' by Gillian Beer (to be confirmed), and a reply from a mainstream philosopher to the present issue of *Women*. Other responses to this issue or to particular articles in it, or further thoughts on feminist philosophy, will be very welcome. Please send to The Editors, *Women: a cultural review*, Department of English, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1. Requests for copies should be sent to Journals Subscription Department, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP (Subscriptions for individuals £17.50, single issues £7.00).

## CONFERENCES AND CRECHES

To arrange a creche, the following legal requirements must be met:

1. Insurance cover must be in place. Normally, a creche in a public building will be covered by **Public Liability Insurance**. If, however, the institution insists that it does not have cover for a creche, the organiser should ask to be given a copy of the **Exclusion Clause** in the Policy of that institution. Such an exclusion clause would be one applying to **Persons Under 18**. The organiser can then arrange for extra insurance cover to be in place on the day of the creche, by approaching an insurance broker. The cost of such cover is likely to be low. (The existence of an exclusion clause is in fact unlikely - many institutions claim that they 'are not covered' simply because they do not like the idea of a creche on the premises. So persistence may be needed.)
2. Local Social Services must be **informed** that there will be a creche at that location on that day. The organisers are not required to register the creche, but they must inform social services that it is taking place.
3. The creche should conform to nursery laws on number ratios of children to carers.

A pack giving details of legal requirements can be obtained from the **National Childcare Campaign** (Telephone 071 405 5617). The creche at the last conference was run by **Guardians Creche Services** (Telephone 0223 241725). It was tremendously well-equipped and welcoming - even the most attached baby was instantly intrigued and relaxed when she saw the colourful room. It was reasonably priced, but was underused, perhaps because mothers are getting fathers to do their bit (a good thing, too!), but perhaps also because quality of creches is variable, and mothers felt reluctant to risk it. We feel that a creche should be available, even if only one woman would be excluded by the lack of provision. But we acknowledge that the cost is considerable, and that those responsible for children might feel as well-supported by a generous subsidy for childcare at home. **Guardians** may be willing to run creches away from Cambridge, and would certainly do an excellent job. The great advantage with a good professional creche, is that they do everything, and do it so well, and so nearby, that mothers can really relax and enjoy doing philosophy.

*Soran Reader.*

# NEWS FROM ABROAD

## A letter from Norway

Dear Morwenna Griffiths

I now work as an editor myself - in a Norwegian researcher's magazine called "Nytt om kvinneforskning" (something like "News from the women's studies"), which is the magazine from the Secretariat for women's studies in The Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities.

I am happy to tell you that we are now organising the second Nordic symposium for women in philosophy, to take place in Bergen, Norway 23-25 April next year. Called: "Gender - an issue for philosophy?" Not that original, really . . . but we feel that it is important to raise this question and get to discussions on why we want a network for Nordic WOMEN in philosophy.

I will send you more information on the conference later.

All best wishes,

Elin Svenneby  
NAVF  
Sandakerveien 99  
N-0483 Oslo  
NORWAY

spreading information, by coordinating research on women already in progress, and by establishing cooperation between women researchers across disciplinary boundaries. As part of the secretariat's information activities, brochures have been published giving information about research on women within each of the various branches of research, about personal contacts at each faculty and about opportunities for grants. The secretariat has also published bibliographical surveys of recent Norwegian research on women. The secretariat offers assistance to women researchers, students, journalists and others in finding material and making personal contacts, performing the role of linking organisation.

The conferences held by the secretariat are arranged with different objectives in mind. Some are intended to initiate and strengthen contact between women from different research institutions. These conferences give the participants the opportunity to meet and get to know each other, to discuss common problems and build up a network of contacts. Other conferences either invite women who represent the same field of research, or they present particular topics to be taken up on an interdisciplinary basis. Projects already in progress are discussed and new ideas aired. Additional conferences have concentrated on the idea of a female perspective in the curricula at universities and other schools and colleges of further education.

The secretariat itself appoints committees to elucidate and report on political questions concerning women and research. In addition the secretariat cooperates with other bodies engaged in the promotion of research on women and equal opportunities. The secretariat may, on its own initiative or on request make official statements concerning women and research and women's general position.

The secretariat receives many applications for support for projects, conferences and seminars. Its resources in this area are however extremely limited.



## Welcome to the secretariat

The improvement of women's situation from an international point of view is also a central concern with NAVF's Secretariat for Women and Research. Inquiries about research on women in Norway would therefore be welcomed, and the secretariat would be happy to facilitate contact with women researchers in Norway. A list of English translations of articles published by Norwegian researchers is available from the secretariat.

We are interested in establishing contact with researchers in other countries who are working on various aspects of women's situation, and we extend an invitation to all interested organisations or individuals to a mutual exchange of information and inspiration.

NAVF's Secretariat for Women and Research  
Sandakervn. 99  
0483 Oslo 4  
Norway  
Telephone 02-15 70 12

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## NAVF's Secretariat for Women and Research



NAVFs Secretariat for Women and Research is an interdisciplinary body operating under the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities (NAVF). The secretariat was established as part of NAVF's policy for strengthening the position of women in research and higher education.

The secretariat operates within the fields of the natural sciences, the social sciences, medicine and the humanities.

Its aims are:

- to increase the number of women in research
- to coordinate and promote research on women.

## Women and Research in Norway

Scandinavia has a long tradition of research into the position of women. But the question of women's position in research and education first came under serious discussion with the growth of the Women's Movement in the 1970s. Women students and teachers protested against the oppressive mechanisms of the institutional research system. They exerted pressure to bring a female perspective into the subjects being taught and into research. From its beginning in students groups and team-work among women researchers, a field of women's studies developed covering a large and varied number of subjects and methods. Their aim was to establish a tradition in research which could both describe the present social oppression of women and its background and contribute to its eradication. So far, most progress has been made in the social sciences, some in the humanities and law, while there has been less activity in the natural and physical sciences or medicine.

Initially, work was done without institutional support, largely through the efforts of women researchers on temporary contracts and grants. Therefore increased involvement has not so far resulted in a corresponding promi-



nence for research on women in college and university curricula and teaching.

Nonetheless some progress has been made in the right direction. Women-orientated subjects have been taught for several years at all the Norwegian universities. As a rule these courses have not formally been official or obligatory parts of the university curricula, but have been arranged on the initiative of a few women lectures and students. Exceptions are the Department of Social Science at the University of Tromsø which has been running a seminar on sex roles since 1974 and the Section for Women and Law at the University of Oslo established in 1978. More recently two new Centres for Women's Research have been established, at the University of Oslo in 1986 - it is interdisciplinary, and at the University of Bergen from 1985, which deals with feminist research in the humanities. The University of Bergen does also have a Centre for Women's Research in the social sciences.

## NAVF's work for equal opportunity

Although women have made their mark in research to a certain extent there is still a long way to go. The proportion of women in research is very small, and only 8 % of senior appointments are held by women.

The equal opportunity debate within NAVF itself goes back to 1973. Since then, various supportive measures for research on women and women in research have been put into operation. The Research Council for Social Sciences (RSF) established a secretariat for research on women for 5-years in 1977. The main purpose of the secretariat was to facilitate and increase contact between researchers in the social sciences. One of the results of this enterprise is an 17-volume series of books under the title «Kvinnerns levekår og livsløp» («Women's Living Conditions and Life Course»), edited 1982-87. The Research Council for the



Humanities (RHF) introduced a separate grants programme for research on women in 1977-79. However, NAVF as an organisation only put the question of equal opportunity in research firmly on its official agenda when the Equal Opportunities Act became operative in the spring of 1979. In 1980 NAVF's board passed a resolution to work actively for the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women. In consequence of this resolution, the various research councils within NAVF approved new rules giving favourable treatment to women in awarding grants and appointments.

## NAVF's Secretariat for Women and Research

In June 1981, when the Norwegian Parliament approved a 5-year plan to promote equal opportunities, the Norwegian Research Council decided to establish an interdisciplinary secretariat for women and research, which would be directly responsible to NAVF. The secretariat has taken over the activities of RSF's earlier secretariat and has expanded to include all the academic fields covered by NAVF. The secretariat consists of one administrative leader, one research director, one senior executive officer and 2 junior executive officers. Its board is made of representatives of researchers and government administration.

### ACTIVITIES

In order to increase the proportion of women in research and to promote research on women, the secretariat aims to encourage and support women by



## A Letter from France

[Note from the editors: Michèle Le Doeuff responds to the article by Christine Battersby on feminist philosophy, published in the previous newsletter. We thought readers would find it helpful to be reminded of the paragraph in that article which specifically discusses Le Doeuff's work. Here it is:

In French feminist philosophy, the debates are different, but also involve a radical re-thinking of the ways that philosophy defines itself as universal only by pushing female difference beyond its scope. Thus, we find a similar contrast between philosophical reformism and radicalism among the French feminist philosophers. Compare, for example, the essentially Enlightenment ideals of Michèle le Doeuff's *Hipparchia's Choice* (1989) with the philosophical terrorism of Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974). Le Doeuff was the other French speaker at the Oxford conference on March 14, and it is perhaps significant that her indiscreet, gently mocking mode of philosophical reformism makes her feel at home in Britain. Irigaray, by contrast, looks to Italy, with its fiercer forms of feminist philosophy. See, for example, Carla Lonzi's "Let's Spit on Hegel" (1970 - in Bono and Kemp, *Italian Feminism Thought*, 1991).].

### BARKING QUESTIONS

I would like to answer Christine's hint that my interest in sexist imagery is "reformist" in the sense that it would pay attention only to a small bit of the problem. It has been sometimes suggested that, according to me, all we have to do is to remove those blunders from philosophical reasoning. This would be reformism indeed, in the humblest sense of the word, a sheer expurgatio of the intellect, a purging of our discursive tradition. But even with that humblest project, the idea of a "reform of the understanding" leads to the demand that the structures of knowledge should be changed. Though not a trifle then, such a project is still inappropriate to feminist philosophizing, for it opens up the possibility of attributing the unreformed way of thinking to some oppressed Other, child, mob, women, etc.

To me, anyway, examining sexist images in a philosophical text is basically a method, because I believe that those images support the main values of a philosophical system. By analysing them, you can show how major concepts are manufactured on the basis of an imagery. It is also a method to stress that, when philosophy pretends to be a purely rational process (and a true mirror of male rationality!), this self-view is a cheat. Therefore, you may laugh twice, once at the sexist images which are always so ridiculous, and then at philosophy's arrogance (rationality indeed!). Such a method is an attempt at building up feminist theory as a (partly) merry knowledge which could help us to stand the bitter knowledge we must otherwise acquire. With a precise aim, come to that. I never changed my mind about the fact that the mainstay of women's oppression within philosophy is transference<sup>1</sup>. Any transference on a male author, be he Rawls, Foucault, Bacon or Deleuze, is just as bad as another one. My method is an attempt to make us all break that type of relationship - through a peal of laughter.

And certainly we have to break it in order to reclaim our independence of thought, to tackle political issues that matter to all women, philosophers or not and to build up a fruitful communication between us, whatever the specific tradition in which we have

been educated. A feminist who has been brought up in the analytical way of philosophizing, and I, who grew up in the French mode, i.e. a mixture of history of philosophy and "general philosophy"<sup>2</sup>, can often speak to each other. I believe this to be a clue that we have both become independent enough from our own backgrounds, and also that feminism to-day is a stronger reference than any academic adherence. Take an all-male philosophers' international conference, with Analytical and Continental colleagues<sup>3</sup>. They will have so little in common that they won't have any cross-cultural debate. It is "each to their own school". Feminist philosophers are much more international than our male counterparts, as long as we have some political loyalties in common. By the way, this is one of the reasons why I think Christine's contrast between ex-polys and Oxbridge colleges earlier in her article is not right, as far as feminist philosophers are concerned. Christine presupposes an adhesiveness of women to the local community they belong to. Now this is precisely what we have begun to challenge. No community owns by right its female members. A nation does not rightly own the body of its female members<sup>4</sup> and I hope no intellectual woman is an utter prisoner of any local form of theoretical practice. We all belong to a community which does not exist yet - which community? this question may well be the site of our future disagreements.

Although any discussion of "philosophical reformism" may seem doomed to breed misunderstandings, I should like to seize the opportunity to question further the monotonous reference to my "reformism", which has been a complaint ever since Meaghan Morris wrote in *I & C* that my work was "reformist" (how many years ago that was!) Perhaps the time has come for some clarification.

From a political point of view, I would not mind being called a reformist by people who know what an effort it is to endeavour to get any legal reform concerning the position of women. You have to find an articulate wording for the legislative change you want - a difficult task already, given the intellectual blocks which have been inculcated in us - and then you encounter such a manifold and downright resistance that you may well suspect that your reform contains some revolutionary meaning, since it obviously challenges received attitudes. And then, when a legal change is secured, after a while it sometimes looks like pure mother's wit! You had said so for half a century, and then people tell you that your struggle is nothing to write home about! Women's right to vote, reproductive rights, an adequate ban on sexual harassment, equal opportunity, etc. are or will become matter-of-course claims after the fact. None of them will look revolutionary when secured. None of our great-nieces will have a fairer appraisal of our present struggles say against rape and/or incest than we have of the women's suffrage fight. My upbringing as a feminist comes from a life-long involvement in activist groups concerned with political issues which do not matter to women philosophers only. There I learned that there is a dialectic between reform and revolution, in the very effort to take all women's liberation further. There also I learned where the trap is. As soon as a legal reform is passed, the social movement which had been actively working for it scatters, and then it becomes just impossible to obtain any further improvements. But mass movements in favour of women's liberation have always been catalysed by one "reformist" demand (the right to vote in the XIXth century, reproductive rights for my generation), and, far from banning other topics, or more global consciousness-raising processes, this collective beacon helped the participants to start wider debates and was sometimes just the priming of a deep questioning of the relations between the sexes. Its

main virtue is to make women come together, talk together, and I mean women from very different social milieux and experiences. Don't we lack something like that those days?

And how could anyone be against "fierceness" or aggression in a political struggle! Christine seems to believe it is either "reformism" or "fierceness". But in the seventies, when we were doing illegal abortions openly, or two years ago when I interpellated the Minister of Women's Rights on behalf of Planned Parenthood you could not have called that "gentle". It is true that I check my anger when I write (as Virginia Woolf recommended, but perhaps for other reasons), but this does not mean to compromise. Moreover it may well happen that a new wave of feminists will surge (perhaps in our life-time?), which will have far more virulence than any previous one. I feel more outraged nowadays against what it is taking place within French society (a frightening backlash at the moment) than I did, say ten years ago, when we could believe that things were improving thanks to us. But then the logic of "gentle mockery" or "fierce revolt" is linked to the global context (hope or despair), and not just to what is taking place within an academic field. Besides, I believe it is a bit pointless to lose one's temper against a past author, whereas it is appropriate to be "fierce" against say a Government or a Supreme Court. And if the new wave I am hoping for does surge, as a wave of activists looking for an intellectual field in which to express themselves, this could well be legal studies more than literature, psychology or philosophy. It is quite likely that they will read (they already do) Catharine MacKinnon more than any of us, for they will find in her works an anger more inspiring in the present dreary days than Le Doeuff's humour or than any mystique of "difference". Serve the powers-that-be right: I gently mock male individuals because I put all the blame on political and/or intellectual structures, but if the next generation goes on the warpath against men (at least *qua* persons in charge of those structures and benefiting from them) let them be welcome. But yet, they will still have to articulate their demands and also to question, hence analyse, relations of power. By the way, what sort of a reading of *Hipparchia's Choice* one must have had not to notice that the book is devoted to a deciphering of power relations?

As a rule, I am called a "reformist" by colleagues who find thus a way to describe themselves as "radicals" through an easy contrast, and with no relation whatever to practical struggles. And who sometimes simply help themselves to my work and then oppose it with an idea which belonged to it. Perhaps they cannot stomach the sort of dialectics I'm making use of and which makes it a bit difficult to spot me. Anyway, I have become suspicious of radical anti-reformism because I have seen so many leftists of my age overbidding each other's theory, pretending to be more "revolutionary" than the right honourable comrade on the same bench, and who are nowadays speakers of the bourgeois ideology's comeback. They have turned directly from an apology of urban guerrilla to a defence of traditional spelling (quite a winning issue in France at the moment), or to a bitter complaints about students having no Greek. When I was younger I had a maoist friend, at the time haloed by a few months in jail, who later did her best to be appointed as an Inspectrice Générale des lycées (a repressive and conservative function in France), because, she said, "standards are falling and someone should do something about it". However dramatic those changes may look, the leftist youngish years and the middle-right middle-aged time have two things in common: a loathing for reformism, in the name of revolution first, later on in the name of conservatism; and a



status claimed by the person, that of being a "lesson-giver", a fore(wo)man in some collective endeavour. Any anti-reformism is stamped by an ambiguity which should at least leave us with a strong suspicion. And although I do not always agree with MacKinnon, at least I respect her works for being a dialectic of revolt and imaginative thought about legal transformations.

Has the ambiguity of anti-reformism nothing to do with our collective story? I wonder. Don't we know women who have claimed a dramatic departure from all forms of (reformist) feminism in the past ("Mary Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir are simply out of date", "those who fought for equal rights were proto, that is to say non, feminists", "reproductive rights are just a liberal view", etc), who also claimed that we had done and finished with male biases such as rationality, or that "she that shall approach theory shall lose her jouissance" and who now take up the most reactionary items you could find among yesteryear patriarchy's leftovers? Christine refers to Irigaray's taste for fierce Italian forms of feminism. Fierce? Perhaps, if you have Carla Lonzi's pamphlet in mind (the title much more than the text itself by the way). But Irigaray's latest books advocate a woman's right to virginity, as constitutive of female identity, and a woman's right to motherhood on the same grounds, and she hails the Virgin Mary (both virgin and mother) along with Hestia (the housewife of Greek Pantheon), etc. I agree this has a strong Italian flavour but in quite a different sense. A quarter of a century ago, Italians had no divorce, no contraception, no abortion, they were recently out of a long fascist period (with a cult of virility, the idea of an utter contrast between the male and the female existence, the praise of large families, etc..) Even to drive a car was not OK for a Roman woman in the early sixties. And of course the absolute power of the Catholic clergy on mores had lasted there longer than fascism. In less than a generation, the legal and political beacons have drastically changed, thanks to the admirable surge of women in the public space. Many Italian women have thrived through this historical change, but many others have not overcome the cultural shock and they have grown, along with a deep guilt for being so different from what their background still considered as acceptable, a belief that they lost a part of their seductive power by becoming "modern". Only a foreign author could give them what they needed: a discourse which could transform their guilt into nostalgia without naming it as nostalgia. What is very cunning in Irigaray's essays written for the Italian audience is that their themes, which remind one of Italy of the 30s, are wrapped in a paper of avant-gardism and also bear the name of a transalpine writer. Had she been Italian, she would have been found out fairly quickly, whereas, as a foreigner, she is perfect as a "return of the repressed in disguise". Yet there are other currents of feminism in Italy, apparently deprived of any sense of guilt or nostalgia. What they have produced recently about the social organisation of time may well turn out to be among the most imaginative ideas of those years.

I agree with Christine when she criticizes analytic philosophy for "disowning huge tracts of the history of philosophy". I am always so surprised at British colleagues who are unfamiliar with Hegel, Rousseau, Bacon, Thomas More, Hannah Arendt or some of my favourite Pagans. But I was no less taken aback one day at a formal meeting of the two dozen French specialists of 17th-18th century British philosophy. When I mentioned Mary Wollstonecraft's name, my colleagues all cried out "Mary who?". I explained. They made quips. Perhaps those are not the philosophical references that Christine finds lacking in the Oxbridge curriculum, but at least we may agree on the fact that there

is a disowning, which leads people to read and discuss a fairly small number of authors. By the way, this was the definition given by Bacon of schoolmen, "their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges". Alas, the same phenomenon has been growing in France for ten years at least. "The School" here is Husserlian/Heideggerian, but the pattern is the same: our Schoolmen (and women, I'm afraid) claim that students would be better off without Locke, Hume and sometimes Hegel. They cannot stomach Aristotle except with a Heideggerian sauce (and this implies that two thirds of Aristotle's words are dismissed), they sometimes go so far as to doubt whether Spinoza was a real philosopher, etc. Our times are becoming keen on enclosures again, and I just wonder if the same phenomenon is not taking place in institutionalised women's studies. Look at a feature of many books on feminist theory: as a rule, they assume that no relevant philosophising has taken place before, say, the onset of the (possibly French) "avant-garde", except perhaps the works by the three grandfathers of that avant-garde, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud. Or, alternatively, that nothing has taken place before Carol Gilligan. And then, the stakes of the discussion are indeed to draw a line which will cut nice and neatly a frontier encompassing "acceptable authors" (the legitimate reading list?), and those are sometimes very few. So few indeed that sometimes neither Beauvoir nor Kate Millett appears in the index. By contrast, I had rather be a Renaissance person, hating enclosures and restrictions in reading, loathing anything that could be like the authoritarian limits of any School. We have to resist "schoolmanism", but we have a form of it within women's studies.

The main feature of academicism is to turn one's attention away from the situation of the oppressed and the vile results of social conflicts. The main feature of bourgeois literature is, according to George Sand, not to mention anything sensitive about family relationships, the state and social upheavals. There may well be a space within institutions for an academic feminism, utterly indifferent to the material basis of the relations between women and men, indifferent to the long-sought-for equality, reproductive rights, physical integrity, personal confidence and dignity etc. Should we call "feminism" a way of reasoning which would not be concerned at all with those questions? You can add, of course, plenty of other questions, but you cannot ignore the socially-based agonies of women outside as well as within our little world. George Sand was right: it would be pointless to be a woman philosopher if we were to prove just as unable as our male counterparts to tackle burning issues. Those are not her words, of course, but when she produced the concept of "practical philosophy", this is what she meant, I believe, and I hope there are some women who understood her. And I believe that either you broach burning questions from time to time, along with the theoretical ones that a feminist standpoint requires (if only to reason adequately about those issues), or you choose to put "distressing" questions apart, focus on "dainty" ones only, that is to say academically respectable themes, and then you will end up, I believe, with the "barking questions" of school(wo)manism. For either we are committed to a common though diversified fight against patriarchy (within and outside the walls of the Academy) or we are trying to build up an enclosed field - a discipline with its borders and codified practices, in which case of course the main fight will be "internal": we shall argue about what the orthodoxy in this field should be, and then of course we shall have monstrous altercations amongst ourselves.

PS I should like to thank again the SWIP friends for the St Hilda's conference.

The reason why I love coming over to Britain is that there are alternative philosophical groups and meetings there. One has to feel grateful indeed for the mere existence of SWIP!

## NOTES

1. "Women and philosophy" (1977), now reprinted in *The Philosophical Imaginary*.
2. The French philosophy which is exported is like a result without its background. Take all the famous Parisian philosophers of the sixties onwards. All of them were brought up in the same place and the same way, with a highly codified approach to the history of philosophy, plus the demanding exercise called "general philosophy". And most of them have been remarkably competent teachers in the same line. You sometimes hear that no one was ever as good as Althusser to prepare you for the "agrégation", except perhaps Gilles Deleuze. That Foucault was a most competent examiner at selecting students for the Ecole Normale Supérieure in the rue d'Ulm, etc. Perhaps we are slightly schizophrenic on that account with, on the one hand, an involvement in academic efficiency (responsibility to the students plus a genuine liking for the demands of the trade), and on the other hand, a rebellion against it in our published work, but a rebellion which presupposes skills that had been acquired tell me where. You may call it a dialectics, if you like, or a creative instability.
3. I once attended a conference with only male speakers, male respondents etc. In the audience, a handful of wives and even fewer women philosophers, who remained steadily silent.
4. The Maastricht Treaty refers to a declaration of the rights of Man (*sic*, at least in the French) which states that any nubile woman has a right "to get married and found a family according to the national regulations of that right". This means that, whereas the rights of Man are internationally guaranteed, as something transcending every national legislation, women's rights and lives strictly belong to the nation. Hence, if a nation wants to ban abortion, contraception and/or divorce, they are welcome. And how could you contemplate challenging clitoridectomy when such a strong European assumption is around?

Michèle Le Doeuff  
CNRS, PARIS  
written in English by the author.

## Christine Battersby comments

How different things seem when read against a French, rather than a British, political context! In Britain there is no insult implied in allying an author with "philosophical reformism", rather than "philosophical terrorism". And no criticism was intended! Indeed describing Michèle Le Doeuff's style as involving "gentle mockery", rather than

"fierceness", was meant as a compliment. Obviously, this was not how it was heard. Michèle's "barking" response to my reference to her work within an article on the failure of feminism to fundamentally disturb the practices of established British Philosophy Departments and journals (which is what *The Higher* commissioned me to write) has persuaded me that "gentle mockery" is not, perhaps, the most appropriate label for her philosophical style.

More seriously, I believe that both philosophical terrorism and radical reformism are strategies that have to be employed in order to expose and dislodge the gender-blindness at the heart of philosophical methodologies and knowledges (both "analytical" and "continental"). In this short piece, I concentrated mostly on the "sins" of analytic philosophy, since this is what is most relevant in a British context. My article should not be supposed to imply, however, that the solution for feminists is to simply to seek out some "continental" master (or mistress), or that British feminists haven't done sterling work revising the analytic tradition from within. Change is happening . . . *at last!*.

Unlike Michèle, I do not believe that "the mainstay of women's oppression within philosophy is transference". A training in analytical philosophy was (at least at the time I underwent it), a training in "Enlightenment" in a Kantian sense - a "freedom from self-imposed tutelage". It was not, however, a training that enabled me even to begin to see that I might be describing and evaluating the world from a perspective that takes the male body and mind as ideal and/or norm. My *Gender and Genius* (Women's Press, 1989) was an attempt to provide historical grounding for the difficulties of women philosophers/writers/artists who set out to challenge such a perspective, and that book also includes some of my own "gently mocking" solutions for conceptual change. Thus Michèle should not think that just because I reject her diagnosis of the ills of philosophy, we might not share strategies for disturbing its complacencies.

## REVIEW SECTION

The newsletter has received a review copy of the following book. If anyone would be interested in reviewing it, please contact Margaret Whitford.

**Janet Folina, *Poincaré and the Philosophy of Mathematics*, Macmillan, in association with the Scots Philosophical Club, h/b £40.**

Jules Henri Poincaré is recognised as the greatest mathematician of the late nineteenth century. Although his conventionalist philosophy of science is well regarded, his philosophy of (number-theoretic) mathematics generally is not. Poincaré criticised the paradigms of logicism (e.g. Russell) and axiomatic set theory (e.g. Zermelo) because he thought both programmes were incorrectly claiming that mathematics does not require any special intuitions (i.e. intuitions other than logical ones). He, like Kant, believed that we need mathematical intuitions, both to do (and create) mathematics, and to connect mathematics to the real world. Many have regarded such remarks by Poincaré as idiosyncratic and based upon a misunderstanding of logic and logicism. This book argues that Poincaré's critiques are not based on a mere misunderstanding. Rather, they are based on two desires: to find a sound philosophical foundation for mathematics; and to avoid both the contradictions of logicism and the triviality of strict constructivism. To these ends Poincaré adapted Kant's theory of the synthetic *a priori*, and argued that the theory, so adapted, was correct. He then used the theory to argue against the competing paradigms. By interpreting Poincaré as a defender of some form of Kantian epistemology, his scattered remarks can be seen to express a coherent and viable anti-realist alternative in the philosophy of mathematics. [Publisher's blurb]

**Else M Barth, *Women Philosophers: A Bibliography of Books through 1990*, Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0189. h/b**

In her acknowledgements, the author/compiler (a distinguished professor of philosophy at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands) writes that in 1976, giving a paper to the Women's Group in the Philosophy Department of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, she pointed out that one could set up a complete doctoral programme, featuring only books and articles published by women, and that this could be done without lowering the "male" standards in any way - it could even raise them. This book, representing many years' work, is the practical demonstration of her claim. Its objectives, as described in the preface, are threefold: 1) Incorporation - to show that women are writing philosophy in all of the available fields, and that there is no reason to put women's books into a separate section or ghetto, marked "women"; 2) Visibility - to make it difficult for anyone drawing up syllabuses to claim that they don't know of available work by women or don't know where to find it"; 3) Variety - to undermine claims that women are "different" and have a specific women's "voice" and "writing", by showing that women are writing philosophy of all kinds.

It includes PhD dissertations (where information was available), but not, as far as I could tell, articles. The coverage varied, but it does include works from the USA, many

European countries, including Britain, and English-speaking countries outside Europe. I'm not sure what the chronological range is. It ends in 1990, and most of the references appear to be twentieth-century, but there are a few from earlier centuries. It's a book that would be a really invaluable addition to the library. It's an indispensable reference work, and I think we will be wondering how on earth we ever managed without it.

Margaret Whitford  
QMW, University of London

**Claudia Card (ed), *Feminist Ethics*. University Press of Kansas 1991. p/b £12.95.**

Claudia Card's *Feminist Ethics* is an impressive and inspiring collection. It is accessible to those new to the subject, and makes a decisive case for the fertility and promise of a feminist approach in ethics, which looks at issues that have been wrongly marginalised, and transforms issues that have been too narrowly approached. "Feminist ethics", Card tells us, "is born in women's refusals to endure with grace the arrogance, indifference, hostility, and damage of oppressively sexist environments" (p.4). Where once feminist ethics was seen as marginal, an applied ethics that examined the implications of canonical theories and principles for women's issues, it is now acknowledged to be "a family of approaches to ethics at all levels of theory, no more marginal than Kantian ethics" (p.6). The articles do not share a theme: topics commonly associated with feminist ethics, such as care or mothering, are not dominant. The book came together out of the mutual inspiration that meetings of the Midwest SWIP over two decades made possible (a heartening precedent for us, in British SWIP . . .).

There are three sections: "Context, History and Method". "Character and Moral Agency", and "Women's Voices and Care". In Part I, interactive theorising is defended (Maria Lugones), and an autobiographical method of writing is explored (Joyce Trebilcot); the idea that what lesbian women need is *ethics*, is viewed with suspicion as the upshot of a (disempowering?) wish to be "good" (Marilyn Frye), postmodernism is explored and shown not to be a threat to ethics (Christine Pierce), and Alison Jagger looks over the varied range of views and issues in ethics which have been identified as "feminist"; and argues that some are less promising than others.

In Part II there is an exploration of the effects of terrorism on agency (Bat-Ami Bar On); a defence of philosophy as having a useful contribution to make to our survival as agents (Ruth Ginzberg), and an exploration of the nature, role and possible value of bitterness as an outlook (Lynne McFall). The self as a social being is considered in terms of its utility for feminist ethics (Marilyn Friedman), and in terms of its effects upon integrity in cases of radical transformation or the deep identity conflicts in women.

Part III considers the extent to which women's voices do yield the family of approaches to ethics which Claudia Card confidently proclaimed in her introduction. Carol Gilligan's assumption that it is appropriate to use women's experiences as caretakers as data for ethical thinking, is interrogated. It is claimed that this masks the diversity of women's voices (Michele Moody-Adams). The *recipient* of women's care is made focal by Elizabeth Spelman, who also reminds us of the importance of attention to points

where women in fact do not care, and the effects this has. Can women trust each other where they are oppressed?, asks Annette Baier. The model of care based on mother-child binding is compared with other models, opening up the question of the nature of care and its relation to femininity (Sarah Hoagland).

What is most striking about feminist thinking in action, is the courage of a woman thinker who approaches a question that comes, as it were, covered over with patriarchal labels telling us "This is the question" and "These are the issues in play" and "This is what matters here, and only this, talk of anything else is *frivolous*". The brave woman thinker says in the teeth of all that "Let's see what is going on here", and starts from scratch, from the minutiae, the background, producing a new, and initially disconcerting picture of the question. The language is strange, apparently alien to theoretical discourse, and the account can feel dangerous, as if futility and banality and barminess are being risked all at once. Such an approach takes courage - and it is only when it really works, that cowards (like the rest of us) dare to see the point of it. In our anxious conservatism, we are very critical. "Why Terrorism is Morally Problematic," by Bat-Ami Bar On, certainly works. It refers to the substantial literature on the ethics of terrorism and torture, and comes up with a new account of these evils, by a painstaking, detailed phenomenological excursion through the experiences of terrorisation and torture, that sees both perpetrators and victims. The attentive precision, the insistence that detail matters, experience matters, that the way questions have hitherto been set up is inadequate - all these are hallmarks of a profound feminist analytical approach. They shift the ground. I was moved, as one should be, when one comes across a new and deep truth, and is privileged to see how it has been reached. I don't want to say that Bar On's was the best article in the book - nor that it is the greatest philosophy. But it spoke to me most directly, and made me feel (as did all of the collection, in more or less powerful ways) that feminist ethics is worthwhile, and will enable us to see and do more than we ever could without it.

*Soran Reader*  
*New Hall, Cambridge*

**Elizabeth Fraser, Jennifer Hornsby, & Sabina Lovibond (eds) *Ethics: A Feminist Reader* Blackwell 1992. P/b £12.95**

**Browning Cole & Coultrap-Brown (eds) *Explorations in Feminist Ethics*, Indiana UP 1992 p/b £10.50.**

There is hardly an area of feminist concern that is not also an area of ethical significance. The ending of sexual oppression is a moral imperative for feminists. Not surprisingly many of the concerns of feminists have scarcely figured in the construction of classical ethical theory, hitherto largely a male preserve.

In recent years ethics as a branch of philosophy has come under more systematic scrutiny from feminist philosophers, who have exposed the androcentric biases and assumptions which underlie most of its elements, and from the mid-eighties talk of "feminist ethics" has become more common. The two volumes considered here provide

a valuable introduction, showing that feminist ethics is not a particular application of ethics, but that the whole field of ethical theory is the concern of feminism which can, and must, transform ethics.

The twenty-six readings, from a wide range of feminist perspectives within and beyond academia, which make up *Ethics: A Feminist Reader* are divided fairly evenly among the three sections of the book. The first presents readings - from Wollstonecraft, Hamilton, Sanger, Friedan, Delphy, Dworkin and Coward - each of which has contributed in its own way and time to a clearer understanding of "woman's condition".

The second section outlines the ways in which earlier feminists (Goldman, Woolf and de Beauvoir) and more recent writers (Lorde, Jordan, Rose, Williamson, Benhabib) have grappled with issues raised when claims to equality, where equality assumes sameness, are made by those who are clearly different. It is of course in this area of "ethics and gender difference" that feminists particularly disagree. But it is precisely in and out of the debate over the nature, extent and significance of women's different moral knowledge, values and reasoning that feminist ethics is emerging.

The final section - with readings from Kollontai, Goldman, Rich, Soper, MacKinnon, Wilson, Parsons, Petchesky, Ruddick and Jeffries - draws together and advances many of the ideas and attitudes raised in the previous sections. These readings have been selected because they set out to make a feminist contribution to ethical theory either by clarifying "what would be of moral importance in a post-patriarchal world" (p.14) or by showing how ethical theory must change if it is to help bring about such a world.

The editors' introductions to the readings situate them socially, historically and in relation to other contributions to the particular debate. There are two bibliographies: the first and much longer contains references to books and articles by women who share a feminist commitment. The second lists some of the major works within the male canon of ethics and includes some which, in their time, furthered the cause of sexual equality, and others which reveal the misogynist tradition in philosophy. The titles and introductions give an adequate description of the contents of each reading, but there is no index.

Unlike the first volume, the names, and writings, of the contributors to *Explorations in Feminist Ethics* will be largely unfamiliar to a general feminist readership in the UK. The themes treated however, largely coincide. In this collection there are seventeen papers, (one by a man), divided among five sections. The first four consider and contribute to 'The Care Debate' sparked off by Carol Gilligan's research at the beginning of the eighties. The second group of essays, under the heading of 'Comparison Across Theories' suggest ways in which much existing & diverse theory - from Pythagoreanism to Existentialism and Communitarian ethics - can be utilised by feminist ethicists.

In "Constructing an Ethical Life", the readings focus on questions of self-knowledge, or moral vision and of the emotional work needed for responsible moral agency. The fourth section "Working Within a Feminist Ethic" has two essays, the second of which, on the way in which a feminist ethic of collaboration may be applied in the workplace, is by the five-member Canadian Feminist Ethics Theory Group. The final section offers, as the title indicates, "New Directions in Theory" and includes essays on maternal



thinking and peace (Ruddick), on lesbian ethics, on feminist moral epistemology, and on the need for a "Global Perspective on Feminist Ethics and Diversity".

The papers in this collection were originally presented at a conference on feminist ethics in Minnesota in 1988, and the contributors are all North American college and university teachers. There is a ten-page bibliography of (largely North American) feminist ethics, and an index.

These volumes came as I was making final preparations for a course entitled "Meanings, Morals and Women's Experiences". I wish they had come earlier.

*Kathie Walsh, CEMS: Birkbeck*

**Gemma Corradi Fiumara, *The Symbolic Function: Psychoanalysis and the Philosophy of Language*, Blackwell. p/b £12.95.**

When I reviewed Gemma Corradi Fiumara's wonderful book *The Other Side of Language* in the newsletter a few issues ago, the editors inexplicably cut out my evaluative comments (which were all expressive of admiration). So I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to review another book by the same author, and to say again how exceptionally interesting I find her work.

Corradi Fiumara has been deeply influenced by psychoanalysis as a model of the mind ("mentation" is the word she prefers, to indicate a process rather than an entity). This is one of the most enlightening psychoanalytically-informed philosophical studies I have read. It is not centrally "about" psychoanalysis, but its understanding of the processes of cognition is psychoanalytically-informed, and the result is extraordinary - philosophically rich, exciting and rewarding to read, once one has got past the barrier of Corradi Fiumara's rather Italianate English, which gets easier to follow as one gets further into the book.

Its main thesis is that cognition and affects cannot and should not be separated. Thus although the book is about the symbolic function in human linguisticity, it has implications which in my view make it a major contribution to epistemology.

Corradi Fiumara extends Kuhn's idea of the paradigm to symbolisation. What holds us back from communication and growth may be a hypostasis of meaning embodied in symbolic paradigms that we are not aware of using, and yet to which we are deeply affectively attached. To threaten someone's symbolic paradigm is to threaten them with something like primal loss. Thus she argues: "the capacity to evolve seems more rooted in an affective disposition to endure losses than dependent on any set of cognitive contingencies" (21). Creation is dependent on our willingness to accept "death", either real or symbolic. The capacity for symbolisation allows one to let go (to "die" mentally) and let new thoughts be born. (79). She is concerned above all with the degradation not so much of our environmental habitat as of our symbolic habitat (98). One of the most thought-provoking chapters in the book is on pseudosymbolic language, and the way in which sophisticated symbolic systems or languages - such as those developed in

philosophy - can be used to destroy, immobilise and prevent communication. "It is not justifiable to accept tacitly at the outset that linguistic games represent forms of healthy life . . . They equally determine forms of madness and extinction" (62). She introduces us to symbolism which is metabolic (sets change in motion, expands and enriches our symbolic universes) and that which is dia-bolic, which immobilises and in fact impoverishes us when it insists, for example, that there is only one language or description appropriate to a given situation, or when it always gives cognitive priority to the standard vocabulary of literal language. There is also a challenge to the view that we are always and inevitably "spoken" by language. Corradi Fiumara reintroduces an account of agency and creativity in language use.

Although, as in her earlier book, feminism is not explicitly discussed, her stress on the marginalised extra-philosophical discourses which put pressure on the paradigms has a clear connection with feminist discourses. It also enables us to see how feminist discourses can both be metabolic or become in their turn dia-bolic. This is a cogent and persuasive philosophical account of creative language use (and its opposite) which has reverberations both for philosophy and for feminism. It might be a bit difficult for undergraduates perhaps, but it would be worth the effort. Highly recommended.

*Margaret Whitford,  
QMW, University of London.*

**Elizabeth F Kingdom, *What's Wrong with Rights? Problems for Feminist Politics of Law*, Edinburgh University Press, £25 h/b.**

From Olympe de Gouges during the French Revolution to Luce Irigaray in the 1980s and 1990s, two hundred years later, the appeal to the rights of woman has been a persistent feminist call to arms. Elizabeth Kingdom explains in this book some of the pitfalls of rights discourse. Although, pragmatically, she recognises that this discourse can sometimes be effective, and that frequently in any case, feminists are obliged to struggle on terrain that has already been defined as that of rights, she argues that rights discourse needs to be reconceptualised - particularly in terms of capabilities, capacities and competencies - if feminists are to use the law as an effective instrument on women's behalf.

It's quite a technical book, but worth the effort. The cases (e.g. abortion law reform, reproductive technology, cohabitation contracts) are particularly illuminating for the non-specialist reader with a feminist interest in social change and how it might be achieved. Kingdom is wary of any general theories about what law is and what its effects are. She prefers to examine, with reference to concrete instances, not what rights are, but rather how they are constructed, and what happens in practice when they are claimed, countered or refused. For example, she points out that the claim to a right will normally lead to the invocation of a counter-right; maternal rights will call forth paternal rights. But "there is no agreed way of ranking competing rights . . . Historically, competing rights claims have been settled by various forms of force majeure and by political struggle" (62). In addition, an appeal to a women's right can be transformed into a general right with somewhat conservative effects: "If feminists claim that a woman has the right to reproduce, there is no obvious reason why that right should not be claimed to men too" (79) - but this comes perilously close to the husband's traditional right to his

wife's body and services, and its feminist implications are swallowed by the more general right, so that the appeal to the right to reproduce, for example, "can turn out to be something of an ideological Trojan horse" (84).

Because of her argument that there is no one rationale either for equal rights or for specific rights (for women), and that the law is a highly complex and specific domain whose effects are not always predictable in advance, Kingdom is quite critical of feminist philosophical work on equal rights: "even apparently feminist philosophy can have detrimental effects on the development of feminist policy recommendations. This is because it effectively reduces policy to questions of moral values and in so doing deflects attention from the analysis of material social conditions" (128-9).

She concludes that it is possible to construct the materials of feminist politics of law without using rights discourse.

Cogently and precisely argued, well-informed and well-documented, this book is worth ordering for the library.

*Margaret Whitford*  
*QMW, University of London*

**Tasmin E Lorraine, *Gender, Identity and the Production of Meaning*, Westview Press 1990. p/b £9.95.**

In this closely argued and earnest study, Tasmin Lorraine sets out to explore the way in which the production of meaning is always a self-constitutive act mediated by what she calls gendered self-strategies. Her thesis, based on a not altogether convincing reading of Lacan, as modified by Irigaray and, more surprisingly, by object-relations theory, is that masculine self-strategy can be characterised as privileging separation and self reflection, while the feminine is organised in terms of fusion. Where the former adheres rigidly to the Symbolic Order, and is motivated by "the desire to repeat self/other positioning" (110), the latter, having less stake in the Symbolic, tends to subvert, and "is concerned with maintaining receptive responsiveness to a desire of the other" (111).

Lorraine is clear that in principle each self-strategy is open to either sex, but that the reality of differential engagement hinges on the conceptual barrier posed by one's particular version of gender categories. In pursuing this line of reasoning, she turns to examine the texts of three male philosophers - Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Sartre - in which the speaking 'I' strives to maintain masculine identity. Each makes various assaults on the notion of a pre-given unified self, but the implicit defence of the masculine 'I' blocks incorporation of any feminine self-strategy of connectedness and fails to rethink the position of the 'other' in/of the text. In consequence the theoretical content itself is limited by gender considerations.

Despite some new insights into the limitations of the specific texts, I'm not sure that Lorraine's contention that "every theorist will speak from a position that is gender informed" (201) adds anything to existing feminist critiques. Clearly she has focused on

Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Sartre because each explores the possibilities of a new subjectivity, but it is difficult to see how an analysis of the relationship between the speaking 'I' and the production of certain classic texts advances her aim of developing theories that promote social change.

Lorraine is very far from proposing the whole of "reality" as text, and I felt that her reading strategy was insufficiently integrated with the rest of her analysis. The new kind of subjectivity that she calls for, and which Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Sartre fail to deliver is one in which (we) must be both responsive to the desire of the other and clear on (our) own parameters" (197). But what this really means, it appears, is that we are back to the classic give and take of the liberal imagination in which the brave new self turns out to be just a combination of the inadequate, gendered old selves. And though Lorraine is careful to stress that she is not proposing a uniform self-strategy for all human beings, but wants a multi-perspectival approach to identity, she does nevertheless finally admit, rather alarmingly, to the desire for a new worldview. Haven't we had enough of that already from the boys?

Margrit Shildrick  
University of Warwick

**Rita C Manning, *Speaking From the Heart: A Feminist Perspective on Ethics*, Rowman & Littlefirle, p/b \$14.95.**

In this book, Rita Manning defends an ethic of care, on the grounds that it is a) an adequate moral philosophy and b) a feminist moral philosophy. She turns away from an ethics grounded in principles towards an ethics grounded in experience. Her model is explicitly based on her experience as a woman, a teacher and a mother, rather than on her training and experience in moral philosophy: "Over the years, my students have convinced me of the barrenness of standard ethical theories" (61). Successive chapters discuss issues such as caring for different categories of persons (children, the helpless, one's peers, those with whom one is in a mentoring relationship), and caring for animals.

Everyone who is working in the area of "ethics of care" will probably feel they ought to have a look at this book. However, those who are not primarily concerned with this field will probably find it less than essential. I had a lot of problems with it. It is lively and heartfelt; the many examples from the writer's personal experience (including her relationships with her dogs and horses) make it very readable; but the assumptions on which it is based seem to me both unargued-for and debatable. The appeal to experience, for example, is completely untheorised; one cannot put experience into question if it is the sole basis for one's moral theory. And its discussion of caring teachers open to dispute. Manning argues that one of the tasks of an ethical theory is to develop guidelines for living morally decent lives (8); this leads her to speculate: "I have often wondered if taking a class in moral philosophy was the best way for students to become sensitive to moral concerns. It seemed to me that a better way would be to have students work in soup kitchens or shelters for the homeless" (62).

Her heart is in the right place, and her dogs and horses were fortunate to have her an owner, but I'm not sure I'd want to be in her moral philosophy class. Her narrow focus

and rejection of theory makes this a deeply unsatisfactory book, while her final claim: "I want to practice magic" (136) will only convince the already converted.

*Margaret Whitford*  
QMW, University of London

**Diana T Meyers: *Self, Society and Personal Choice*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989. £13.50 p/b.**

The impetus for Diana Meyers' study of autonomy came from her desire to probe the common claim that women are typically less autonomous than men and that this deficiency contributes to their continued subordination. In Parts 1 and 2 of her book, via a critical discussion of the extensive Anglo-American literature on autonomy, she offers an account of personal autonomy which understands it as "the successful exercise of a competency - a repertory of coordinated skills which enables people to control their own lives" (p 135). She then draws on a wide range of psychological and sociological material in Part 3, "Obstacles to Autonomy", to consider what might affect a person's attainment of full autonomy and, specifically, how the different ways in which boys and girls are brought up might enhance or diminish autonomy and what parents, other caretakers and schools might do to promote the autonomy of all those in their care. In a final section, aware that autonomy is not an unchallenged good, Meyer argues, against the critics of autonomy, that "medial autonomy" (for Meyer recognises that there can be degrees of autonomy) is a personal good insofar as it enhances self-respect and that depriving people of it constitutes an injustice.

An enormously useful aid to one's consideration of the book's arguments is Meyers' admirable cross-referencing system whereby each discussion is linked by an explicit reference in a bracket in the text to cognate discussions. I particularly appreciated this because I found that Diana Meyers had the happy knack of provoking me to think about all kinds of issues cropping up along the way in her treatment (Eg., is it the case that the truly autonomous person doesn't typically suffer from regrets? Is the notion of the authentic self totally cashed in the idea of the self who exercises autonomy competency? Must autonomy involve life planning?) and I could then easily trace the argument back.

The topic of autonomy is cropping up all over the place these days, not only in ethics and politics but in medical ethics, philosophy of education and, not least, feminist philosophy. Diana Meyers' clear and impressively wide-ranging treatment of this topic offers a well-stocked intellectual larder which can be raided for judicious discussions of the philosophical treatments, telling examples and highly relevant empirical material.

*Patricia White*  
Institute of Education, University of London

# OBITUARY

## Deborah Fitzmaurice

Deborah Fitzmaurice died on 20 August in Krakow, Poland, where she was running a summer school in Political Philosophy and Human Rights which brought together younger scholars from Eastern and Western Europe. Her philosophical career was short, intense and lived with a passionate commitment and concern, which brought her the affection as well as the admiration of many students, colleagues and friends at Essex, and far beyond.

Debbie was born in 1954 and was the only daughter of Joyce and Eric Howarth, and sister of John Howarth. She was educated at Manchester High School for Girls and took a first in Philosophy and Literature at the University of East Anglia in 1976, then entered secondary teaching and taught both in state and independent schools. When she returned to philosophy at the University of Essex in 1984 she was a seasoned teacher, and after a distinguished MA taught a wide range of philosophy courses at Essex and at Open University summer schools.

In 1990 she was appointed Baring Fellow in Philosophy and Human Rights and played a vital part in building up the interdisciplinary Centre for Human Rights and its highly successful MA programme, which links law, philosophy and political theory. Debbie revelled in this work: she was as perceptive and effective in dealing with the administrative strains of a rapidly growing Research Centre as she was in teaching the very diverse students who came eager to understand what political philosophy can and cannot establish about Human Rights.

Despite these heavy commitments, Debbie's philosophical writing grew both in scope and ambition. She had begun by working on a PhD within the confines of contemporary liberal political philosophy, in which she sought to find a better articulation of the demands of toleration and of feminist concerns. She moved on, as others have in the last decade to argue that liberal politics cannot be based on moral neutrality but must be based on an adequate account of the human good, and in particular of the good of human autonomy.

Her work became quite distinctive when she concluded that the accounts of autonomy developed in much current political philosophy are inadequate, and set about offering a better account of autonomy, and its value in human life, in which certain institutions and practices are not merely means of satisfying preferences, but constitutive conditions of truly respectful human relations, hence of human autonomy. While her writing took this strenuous philosophical path, she never lost sight of its relevance to current politics, and took an active part in many debates, particularly on human rights abuses, the limits of toleration, and education for autonomy. All of this was achieved in concentrated work over a short time: she leaves behind a number of essays in press and a sustained and virtually complete work which would have been both an exceptional PhD thesis and her first book.

Debbie Fitzmaurice's commitment to the University of Essex was exemplary, and fittingly her funeral ceremony took place in Wivenhoe Park on 4 September in a billowing tent, which reminded all present of her deep love for the countryside and sailing. The University community expressed its deep sympathy with her family and with her Partner, Jay Bernstein. Debbie will be long and fondly remembered as an outstanding and demanding teacher, a good philosopher who took no short cuts, a colleague of unerring good sense, and as a truly excellent and generous friend and companion.

*Onora O'Neill*

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