



# NEWSLETTER

No.1 May 1989

This is the first edition of what we hope will become a regular newsletter, coming out twice a year. The newsletter will be a success if it diminishes the number of times that we say: "I wish I'd known about that." Therefore please send in your items of information about conferences, jobs, calls for articles etc. and never assume that every one knows... We have created this newsletter and society precisely because so many of us are isolated and don't know. The next issue should appear in November. Please send items for inclusion to Anne Seller, Keynes College, The University, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NP, by October 31st 1989.

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## SOCIETY FOR WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY

At our last one-day meeting on 4 March 1989, it was agreed to form a society for women in philosophy; while numbers are still relatively small, we shall try to remain as informal as possible.

### Aims (General)

- To widen the network of women interested in being part of a group of women in philosophy. We should like to include both women students and teachers, in the whole range of higher educational institutions: Colleges, Polytechnics, Universities etc., and also, where possible, interested women who are not formally attached to any institution.
- To provide support and encourage ideas and thought.
- To enable women working in philosophy to benefit from the feminist community and the networks that already exist.

### (Specific)

- To organise one or two meetings a year.
- To circulate a newsletter.

### Organisation

Organisation for 1989-90 has been taken on as follows:

Newsletter: Anne Seller, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury.

Subscriptions: Paula Boddington, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Bristol,  
9 Woodland Road, Clifton, Bristol BS18 1TB.

Organisation of next meeting: Caroline Bailey, French Dept., Queen Mary College, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS.  
 Circulation of papers for meeting: Maureen Eckersley, Corner House, The Square, Pluckley, Kent TN27 0QS.  
 Information (replying to queries etc.): Jean Grimshaw, North View, Dundry Lane, Dundry, Bristol BS18 8JG.  
 Creche: Ruth McManus is inquiring about cost. It turns out to be prohibitive.  
 Mailing list: Anne Seller, Paula Boddington, Maureen Eckersley.

**Subscriptions:** will run from October to October.

Waged: £10; unwaged/student: £5 p.a.

the subscription entitles you to the newsletter and to attend two one-day meetings per year. Non-members will be charged £1 per year for the newsletter and £5 (£2.50 unwaged) per meeting.

Please send your subscription to Paula Boddington.

**Guidelines for organising day conference**

(Provisional guidelines suggested (mostly) by Morwenna Griffiths)

In the morning: discussions led by those working in the field

- call for papers
- work in progress from those in the network
- invite philosophers not part of the network

In the afternoon: discussions led by newcomers to the field (e.g. students writing dissertations) or by feminists working in other fields (e.g. law, literature, psychology, etc.)

Followed by: business meeting: organisation of next meeting; whether there is any (political) action we should be taking as women in philosophy etc.

A presenter should ideally use one of the following formats:

- a prepared paper, with summary available at the session
- a paper in outline, the outline to be pre-circulated
- a discussion of a reading, the reading to be pre-circulated
- notes on work in progress, notes to be pre-circulated

Shared presentations are welcomed.

If we start getting much bigger, we shall need to think about dividing into workshops.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on **Saturday 21 October 1989** at the University of London Union in Malet Street, Room 3B.

Anne Seller and Morwenna Griffiths will speak on Identity/Politics.

Sue Letouze will speak on Marion Milner's epistemology.

Offers of papers: contact Jean Grimshaw, Morwenna Griffiths, Anne Seller or Margaret Whitford.

Offers of venues: would anyone like to organise a meeting outside London?

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**SOCIETY FOR WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY**

Application for Membership 1989-90

NAME: .....

ADDRESS: .....  
.....

DATE: .....

Annual Subscription enclosed: ..... waged £10; unwaged/student £5

Cheques should be made out to 'Women in Philosophy' and sent to Paula Boddington, Department of Philosophy, University of Bristol, 9 Woodland Road, Clifton, Bristol BS18 1TB.

I do not wish to join this year, but I would like to remain on the mailing list.

I enclose £1 .....

Name(s) and address(es) of other women I think would like to receive the newsletter:

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## INFORMATION

### The Women's Studies Network (UK)

The Women's Studies Network is intended to provide a link between the many diverse interest groups now existing all over the country. It holds a one-day conference once a year, and will also hold an AGM which any members are entitled to attend. As a society for women in philosophy, we shall be joining on behalf of this group, and are entitled to send one representative to Council. (Anyone can of course join as an individual.) Membership: cheques payable to The Women's Studies Network should be sent to Eileen Green, Women's Research and Resources Centre, Sheffield Polytechnic, 36 Collegiate Crescent, Sheffield S10 2BP (£8 waged; £2.50 unwaged). There are two newsletters a year. Material for the newsletter (information about meetings etc.) should be sent to Val Walsh, Edge Hill College, Ormskirk L39 4QP.

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### Seminar on 'Right, Virtue and Morality. On Feminism and Political Philosophy'

Organised by the Political Science Department of the University of Amsterdam, the Department of Social Philosophy and Ethics of the University of Groningen and the Department of Interdisciplinary Womens Studies of the University of Utrecht.

8th-11th January, 1990, in Amsterdam.

Spoken language: English.

Guest Speakers: Susan Mendus, Jane Rendall, and Ursula Vogel.

One can participate in the workshops of the seminar with or without writing a paper. Candidates who want to write a paper send a short proposition before 1 July 1989. The jury will select 20 papers which will be discussed at the seminar and can be published in English. Additional information may be obtained from drs. R. Voet, vakgroep Algemene politicologie, Subfaculteit Politieke Wetenschappen, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 237, 1012 DL Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

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### Journal of Feminist Philosophy

Routledge is interested in the possibility of a British based Journal of Feminist Philosophy, and are trying to find out how much interest there would be in the project. At the moment they seem to see it as a branch of applied Philosophy, but doubtless this could be changed. Anyone wishing to comment might write to Ruth Chadwick, Philosophy Section, University of Wales College of Cardiff, PO Box 94, Cardiff CF1 3XE.

See also the note on Hypatia under Book Reviews.

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Womens Studies Group 1600-1825

The group meets the last Saturday of the month for discussion and informal presentations of research at 1.30 (1.00 for coffee) at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, University of London, Malet Street.

They have an Annual Symposium and several day schools on such topics as Women and Politics, Appropriations of Power in the World of Men, Images of Women/the feminist/the female, and are calling for papers for these. Further details: Group organiser and Newsletter editor, Dr Yvonne Noble, 53 new Dover Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3DP.

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Did you know:

The law in India (introduced last year) requires all government institutions (which includes Universities) to employ 30% women. If they cannot find an appropriately qualified one, they are required to wait and try again, because women are graduating all the time. And we are told we could never afford such a programme .....

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

The Newsletter welcomes from readers brief reviews of books likely to be of interest to women in philosophy. About 200 words (or less). Here are a few personal recommendations (or otherwise) from MW to start it off.

**Linda J. Nicholson, Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family**, (New York: Columbia University Press 1986), hb and pb.

A historical perspective on certain feminist questions. Scholarly and very clearly argued. Addresses the public/private division via the family as a historical institution rather than an unchanging, timeless form of organisation, and in the process provides a critique of certain assumptions of modern political theory. Nicholson argues for a historical narrative which shows that the divisions between family, state and economy - now an important fact of life for modern Western society - only gradually evolved over time. She thus historicises our political categories. This is valuable for feminists as well as for political theorists. At the same time, she addressed feminism critically. She suggests that 'radical feminism may be right on the issue of pervasiveness, i.e. that women's oppression may extend far back into human history or at least transcend the boundaries imposed on it by Marxism, but that radical feminism (and Marxism) goes wrong in searching for a singular cause ... we might view our own devaluation and oppression of women not only as importantly different from earlier versions but also as generated for different reasons.' Includes chapters on Locke and Marx. Highly recommended.

**Dorothy E. Smith, The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology** (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), hb and pb.

This collection, on the epistemology of sociology, covers Smith's work over a period of years from 1975 to the mid-eighties. The papers originate in the women's movement's discovery that 'as women we had been living in an intellectual, cultural and political world from whose making we had been almost entirely excluded.' Smith sets out to link the subjective world of women with the objective world described by sociologists, by starting from the standpoint of women. The aim is to transform the 'objective' world of male sociology at the same time. 'I have wanted to make an account and analysis of society and social relations that are not only about women but that make it possible for us to look at any or all aspects of a society from where we are actually located, embodied, in the local historicity and particularities of our lived worlds ... [It is] the project of creating a way of seeing, from where we actually live, into the powers, processes and relations that organize and determine the everyday context of that seeing.' The methodology is extremely interesting, whether one is a sociologist or not; it could certainly be applied elsewhere. Highly recommended.

It could usefully be read in conjunction with Sandra Harding, The Science Question in Feminism (Open University Press 1986) or Sandra Harding (ed.), Feminism and Methodology (Open University Press 1987).

**Lorraine Code, Sheila Mullett and Christine Overall (eds.), Feminist Perspectives: Philosophical Essays on Method and Morals** (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), hb and pb.

Lorraine Code was one of the original members of the Women in Philosophy group and is also one of the contributors to our Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy (the overlap in the title was accidental). This Canadian collection of essays is likely to be particularly useful for women teaching feminism and philosophy. As the title suggests, the contributions cover two main areas: methodology, and moral thought. Under 'method', are essays on the following: 'Philosophical methodology and feminist methodology: are they compatible?' (Susan Sherwin); 'Feminism, objectivity and legal truth' (Marsha P. Hanen); 'A Message from Cassandra - experience and knowledge, dichotomy and unity' (Petra von Morstein); 'Credibility: a double standard' (Lorraine Code); 'Feminism, ontology and "other minds"' (Christine Overall). Under 'Morals' are essays on the following: 'Shifting Perspective: a new approach to ethics' (Sheila Mullett); 'Pornographic harms' (Jacqueline MacGregor Davies); 'Women and Moral Madness' (Kathryn Pauly Morgan); 'Gilligan and the politics of a distinctive women's morality' (Barbara Houston); 'Self-abnegation' (Bonnelle Lewis Strickling). An opportunity to discover what Canadian women in philosophy are working on (though it should be pointed out that the book took a long time going through the press, and most of these essays were written several years ago.)

**Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds.), Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance** (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988) hb and pb.

A collection of essays from women using Foucault's analyses of power (but no alternative voice from feminists who argue - like Toril Moi - that Foucault is pernicious and even dangerous for feminism). There are three parts: 1) 'On Initiating a Dialogue', three essays discussing the relation between feminism and Foucault's methodology; 2) 'Discipline and the Female Subject', five essays which draw upon Foucault to talk about feminist issues: anorexia nervosa, the body, authority etc.; 3) 'The Uses of Foucault for Feminist

Praxis', four essays on feminist politics and Foucault. Again this is a book which might usefully be used with students. It might also be helpful to women engaged in trying to think theoretical frameworks for the discussion of certain issues around the body, sexuality, violence against women etc. What it is not really helpful for, except for the first three essays, is thinking about the intersection of feminism and postmodernism. It is too much taken for granted by the editors that this intersection is a productive one. I would have liked to see an editorial line that was more nuance. I got the impression that this was a book that had jumped on a bandwagon before the necessary work had been done. With some exceptions, many of the essays seem to me to depend on a very sketchy analysis of Foucault. Although not uninteresting in themselves, they do not always fulfil the promise of the title. In particular, apart from the first section, there are no essays which tackle directly some of the major problems which Foucault's work raises for feminists: a) its gender bias and b) its eviction of the subject. In using Foucault, are we unwittingly taking on board theoretical presuppositions we do not want? Are his concepts gender-neutral? I thought the editors were not sufficiently aware of this issue, which from this side of the Atlantic, seems to be central.

**Denise Riley, 'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History** (London: Macmillan 1988) hb and pb.

**Caroline Ramazanoglu, Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression** (London: Routledge 1989) hb and pb.

**Feminist Review**, special issue: 'The Past Before Us. Twenty Years of Feminism' no.31, spring 1989

Three books which will help us think through the problems and difficulties of identity politics. Denise Riley offers a historical account of the term 'woman' which aims to show that a concentration on and a refusal of the identity of 'woman' are both essential to feminism. She deals with the problem of the impermanence of collective identities for any emancipation movement based on identity politics. Very elegantly written. Caroline Ramazanoglu also deals with the contradictions thrown up by identity politics, from a sociological point of view. Her book would be ideas as a textbook for women's studies courses. It is very fair and very clear. She argues that we should focus on liberation rather than on oppression. For a wide spectrum of views on the identity politics debate, see the latest issue of Feminist Review.

**Evelyn Fox Keller, Reflections on Gender and Science** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1985) hb and pb.

The title speaks for itself. Just thought you'd like to know that it is now out in paperback at £7.50.

To look out for

**Christine Battersby, Gender and Genius: Towards a New Feminist Aesthetics** (London: The Women's Press, forthcoming July 1989), hb at £12.95

Here is the blurb from the Women's Press Catalogue:

Genius, according to our culture from the Greeks to the present day, has been defined as male. Even with the rise of Romanticism, and the view of the artist as individual creator, creativity

remained inseparable from virility, and in our own century that great feminist pioneer Simone de Beauvoir could not see female geni. In this highly original and exciting book, Christine Battersby argues that women need to build up an evaluative aesthetics that recognises the achievement of women artists in the past as well as in the present.

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### Journals

- (1) Hypatia: This is an immensely useful journal, and often quite difficult to get hold of here. Encourage your libraries to subscribe,

Indiana University Press  
Bloomington  
Indiana  
USA

- (2) Manushi: A Journal of Women & Society: Published six times a year and was recommended to me as one of the best in the field by them as should know. My informant tells me it is read by the general public as well as by academics, available from

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New Dehli 110024  
INDIA



an imaginary constructed by and necessary for philosophy as such: "Philosophical discourse inscribes itself - labels itself as philosophical - by means of a deviation from the mythic, the fable, the poetic and all that is image-making" ... Le Doeuff's project ... is to consider the necessary, indeed constitutive role of these images, this imaginary within the very discipline in which they are considered alien to extrinsic. Her point seems to be that in philosophical systems, where rigour, precision, objectivity and "plain speaking" are considered desirable attributes, and metaphor, allusion or "style" unnecessary or decorative embellishments, the discipline is unable to rid itself of its dependence on images. ... Philosophy establishes its value and validity by distinguishing itself from other kinds of discourse, which may be labelled poetic, visionary, literary, fabulous. Yet it must surreptitiously re-introduce these discourses - even in fragmentary form - as figures or tropes - in order to be able to express what it is unable to say in other terms.'

M.W.