

NEWSLETTER

January 1990

This newsletter is later than intended, partly because of our burgeoning activities, details of which follow. It's clear that whatever the demise and demoralization of The Polys and Universities in general, and Philosophy in particular, it's a time of enthusiasm and expansion for feminist philosophy. If only the jobs and finance would follow the interest and activity, shown both in the increasing numbers attending our meetings, and the interest of publishers in our work.

Meanwhile, as it seems to me evident that the exciting work is being done on the margins of, or outside, the official institutions, SWIP assumes an important role in providing a channel for that work into the institutions, and in using the institutions in whatever creative ways we can, to nurture and sustain it despite themselves.

New readers will find a statement of our aims, and a membership form in this Newsletter.

In future issues, we hope to include regular sections on 'Teaching I have enjoyed', and 'Of Special Interest for Graduates'. If you have items for these, as well as books you would like to review, or other news items, please contact Margaret Whitford, Department of French, Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, LONDON. E1 4NS,

01-975-5555 ^{Monday} _{est 3446} *Fun*

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| Next Meeting | WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY | A. Assiter |
| | Saturday 24 February 1990 | |
| | Programme | |
| 10.00 - 10.30 | Arrive, coffee, chat. | |
| 10.30 - 12.00 | <u>'What A Feminist Forum should be like'</u> , workshop introduced by Soren Reader. | |
| 12.00 - 1.00 | Business meeting. | |
| 1.00 - 2.00 | Lunch (sandwiches/hot lunches available from Union bar, or pubs nearby, or bring your own). | |
| 2.00 - 4.00 | <u>'Feminism, Science and Rhetoric'</u> , talk by Hilary Rose, to be followed by discussion. | |
| 4.00 - 5.00 | Tea, talk, networking. | |
| <u>Venue:</u> | University of London Union, Malet Street. | |
| <u>Cost:</u> | Free to members (membership form attached) £5.00 (waged), £2.50 (unwaged) to non-members. | |
| <u>Creche:</u> | Soren Reader is enquiring about the possibility of a roving creche. If you might want to use it, please write to her, giving numbers, ages and special needs of children, at New Hall, Cambridge, CB4 3EH | |
| For copies of papers, please write to Cei Tuxill, 99 Hunterhouse Road, SHEFFIELD, S11 8TX | | |

Autumn Meeting 1990 GLASGOW September 14th 1990

Women in Profile is organising an international conference on Women in the Arts, to coincide with the Glasgow European City of Culture Celebrations, and has invited us to contribute as a group. We plan to provide a variety of workshops and papers, which will include the following:

Hilary Rose: Women and Science.

Esme title to be announced in Aesthetics.

Susan Kozol: Philosophy and Movement:

'A two hour session in which to explore ideas of femininity and masculinity through physical movement and improvisation. Theoretically, the objective is to try to complement a philosophical sensitivity to male and female stereotypes with a heightened physical awareness. More generally, it will be a chance to stretch and move about in a relaxed and friendly environment'.

Plans for this weekend will be firmed up at our February meeting. If you have papers or workshops you would like to offer, please contact: Ruth McManus, Women in Profile, 5 Dalhousie Lane, Garnethill, GLASGOW, Scotland.

Publishing Work in Feminist Philosophy

We received the following letter from: Anita Roy, Editor for philosophy and language, Routledge:

"Feminist philosophy is something we need a lot more of"

This was the view of a reviewer in the latest issue of the Journal of Applied Philosophy; a view shared by those at the last Women in Philosophy meeting and a view shared by at least one philosophy editor in the U.K., me.

Routledge already has a vital and lively current philosophy publishing programme and a strong foundation in our extensive backlist of Methuen, Routledge & Kegan Paul and Croom Helm books.

I am currently interested in developing two projects in conjunction with the Women in Philosophy group. Both address the problem of being a woman studying or, indeed, teaching philosophy in today's academic world.

The first is a series of six books (or thereabouts), each tackling a central philosophical topic from a feminist perspective and written specifically with an undergraduate audience in mind. The topics might include: epistemology, philosophy of language, logic, rationality, philosophy of mind, ethics or moral philosophy.

The second is a dictionary of feminist philosophy. This would involve one, two or three main editors collating together short pieces on a whole range of philosophical terms. Although there are several feminist theory reference books around, I believe that there is room for a volume such as this, which would be a valuable resource for students and teachers within a range of subjects.

In response a publishing sub-group has been set up, consisting at the moment of: Morwenna Griffiths, Judy Hughes, Alison Assiter, Margaret Whitford (other volunteers welcome).

If you are working on relevant research topics, or would be interested in writing/editing a book for a series, contact a member of the group.

If you would like to discuss your research plans with someone who knows the field or would like to submit drafts of work in progress with a view to approaching Routledge at a later stage, contact one of the members of the sub-group, whose current brief is to investigate the possibility of "networking", i.e. putting new researchers (especially graduates and newcomers to the field) in touch with specialist advisers.

Graduate students embarking on work in this area are especially encouraged to discuss at an early stage the prospects of eventual publication.

Women teaching in philosophy and related areas are asked to look out for graduate work in the field. Manuscripts sent to Anita Roy from the publishing sub-group are likely to be dealt with more promptly instead of getting buried under the weight of unsolicited manuscripts.

Organisation 1989-90

Newsletter: ^{Us} Anne Seller, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent. CT2 7NP

Organisation of March meeting: ^{check} Alison Assiter, Thames Polytechnic, School of Humanities, Wellington Street, LONDON, SE18 6PF

Circulation of Papers for March meeting: ^{check} Cei Tuxill, 99 Hunterhouse Rd, Sheffield, S11 8TX

Information, queries, & offers of papers: ^{check} Jean Grimshaw, North View, Dundry Lane, Dundry, Bristol, BS18 1TB

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

Mailing list: Margaret Whitford, Dept. of French, Queen Mary College, Mile End Rd, London, E1 4NS

Creche: Soran Reader, New Hall, Cambridge

Publishing sub-group: Judy Hughes, 18 The Drive, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Morwenna Griffiths, Oxford Polytechnic, Oxford; Alison Assiter (as above); Margaret Whitford (as above); Anne Seller (as above); Lucy Frith, 37 Rookfield Avenue, LONDON N10 3TS

Hospitality: Judy Hughes (as above)

Our aim is to be able to offer hospitality (including over-night accommodation) to visiting feminist philosophers, especially from overseas. If you have a spare bed, and would enjoy meeting such women, please send Judith your name, address and telephone number.

*Research in Process: Mo Griffiths, Oxford Polytechnic.

Please let Mo know, in 50-100 words, what research you are engaged in. She will store the information, and put people working in the same areas in touch with each other.

A Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP)

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.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: will run from October to October.

Waged: £10; Unwaged/students: £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, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Bristol, 9 Woodland Rd., Clifton, Bristol. BS18 1TB.

SOCIETY FOR WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY

Application for Membership 1989-90

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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DATE:

Annual Subscription enclosed: Waged £10; Unwaged/Student £5

Cheques should be made out to 'Women in Philosophy'

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:

Teaching I have Enjoyed

It was not a promising situation. The University of Newcastle had decided that it could do without its Philosophy Department and our last students were approaching finals. There were no first or second years to maintain an air of normality, and the staff was exhausted by years of slander and betrayal as the perpetrators of the crime engaged with uncommon enthusiasm on the game of Blame the Victim.

Something Had To Be Done. Half of the students seemed to find it difficult to appear much before lunchtime most days and finding time to fit in their revision sessions looked impossible. I thanked heaven for my gruelling years in Adult Education and told them cheerfully that we'd meet on Monday evenings at 7 p.m. The next problem was how to avoid a long dull evening with me droning on about Descartes, Berkeley, Locke or Kant, hoping that I was touching on the things they needed to think about. The obvious thing was to get them to do the work, but they had to be encouraged to do it in a way that was enjoyable as well as productive. It was their hearts as well as their minds that needed nurturing.

Problem solved. It had to be different each time and they had to be active participants. So we began with a debate. Not my favourite way of doing philosophy but it was a structure they knew. The motion was 'That this House believes that "there are real objects without us"'. The catch was that the main speakers had to be Locke and Berkeley and everyone was expected to speak from the floor as Russell, Wittgenstein, Descartes or whoever. The best moment was when a shady character from the back of the chamber denounced the previous speaker as an imposter. The most surprising aspect was the delight in which students, used to a uniform of ragged jeans, donned their gowns and strutted down the makeshift chamber.

We followed the debate with wine and cheese. Every student, every member of staff, every available retired member, every past graduate still in Newcastle and our secretary, Moira, attended that night as they did on all the other occasions. We had a public enquiry into 'is' and 'ought', a declamation and a Question Time. Each was followed up by a seminar to which students found they could come after all.

The last occasion had to be very special. It would never happen again. I stuck my neck out and told them that we would finish with a celebration; a celebration of our subject, our great heritage, each other and ourselves. With a few invited guests we all gathered quietly and each spoke for a few minutes on a thought or a question or a moment which had been of personal significance in our own philosophical journeys. I looked at them and thought how far they had come since that first rowdy debate and, listening to their gentle testimonies, I felt at home.

Of course, they had the last word. After their graduation ceremony when we hugged and said goodbye, they told me they would never forget. I know they will, but I had to grin when it was not the poignancy of that last meeting that they vowed to remember, but the truth too often hidden from them by those years of politicking; that Philosophy is fun.

Conferences & Calls for Papers etc.WARWICK JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

The Warwick Journal of Philosophy is planning a special issue devoted to feminist philosophy.

We invite articles from women working in all areas of philosophy. Papers and reviews to reach the Journal by 25 January 1990.

Where possible, send a copy of a computer disc, with information indicating type of programme and computer. Alternatively, send two copies, typed on A4 paper and double spaced. Articles should be under 8,000 words in length (include a 150-word abstract).

Send to: Karen Davison, Feminist Reading Group, (Warwick Journal of Philosophy), University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL

OUT OF THE MARGINS: WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE NINETIES

A conference to be held at Coventry Polytechnic, 7-8 July 1990

CALL FOR PAPERS

The third Women's Studies Network (UK) conference will focus on the development of Women's Studies out from the margins of higher education, and explore its current impact upon mainstream teaching, research and publication, and its current impact upon mainstream teaching, research and publication, and its prospects in the 90s. It will also be concerned with previously marginalised areas within Women's Studies itself, such as Black Women's Studies and lesbian studies, and consider their developing significance for the subject as a whole. Plenary addresses, papers and workshops will be divided into four strands, to run throughout the 2-day conference. The issues explored in each strand will be:

- A. Making a Difference - the impact of women's studies and feminist research upon higher education
- B. Publishing Women's Studies - its growth, its prospects, and its influence upon mainstream academic publishing and research
- C. Black Women's Studies
- D. Lesbianism and Women's Studies

Papers or proposals for leading a workshop, are invited from those working in the field: please contact Jane Aaron at the Department of English, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH. Tel: 0533-522630 or 0533-701443.

Creche facilities will be available. For further information on the hosting of the event, contact Susanne Haselgrove, Centre for Women's Studies, Coventry Polytechnic, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB. Tel: 0203-838336.

Dayschool on Feminist Philosophy

Saturday 27 January 1990

10 am - 4.30 pm

Alderson House, Humberside College of Higher Education

Speakers

Rosie Braidotti, University of Utrecht
'Trends in Feminist Epistemology'
(with financial assistance from the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Hull)

Margaret Whitford, Queen Mary College, London
'Luce Irigaray: Feminist Utopias'

Morwenna Griffiths, Oxford Polytechnic
'The Politics of Identity/The Politics of the Self'

Workshop/Discussion Sessions

Cost: £5 (full salary) £1 (others)

ALL WELCOME

Bookings are useful for planning purposes but are not essential. For advance booking, send the completed form to: K. Lennon, 27 Salisbury Street, Hull, HU5 3HA. Tel. (0482) 46840/465618. **BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL IF YOU REQUIRE CHILD CARE OR OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION.**

Name:

Address:

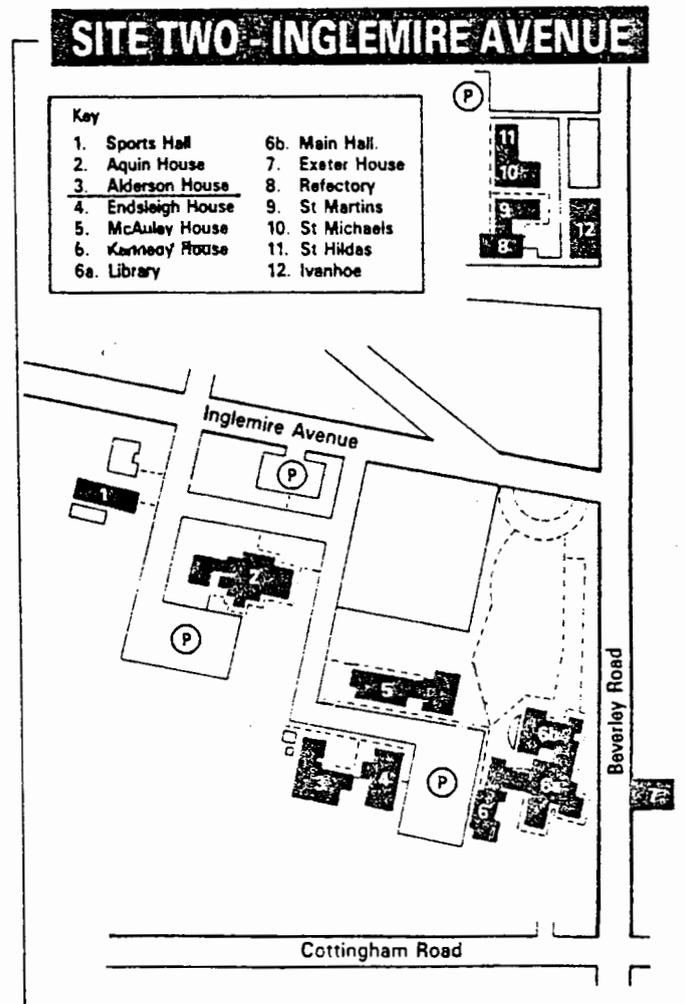
Tel. No.:

Childcare YES/NO

Accommodation

Age(s) of child(ren)

Friday YES/NO Saturday YES/NO



Book Reviews

Review of Ann Fergusson: Blood at the Root, Pandora, 1989

Blood at the Root is a sophisticated defense of socialist feminism. It analyses motherhood and sexuality as well as the economic position of women. Fergusson develops the concept 'relations of sex/affective production' to describe the various ways there have been, historically, of 'organising, shaping and moulding the human desires connected to sexuality and love.' (p.72) She argues that it is partly through these systems that domination is reproduced. Others have created similar concepts but, Fergusson argues, a central limitation of all previous theories is that their authors see their 'systems' as being distinct from the economy. This, Fergusson avers, is wrong.

A great strength of the book is the way in which Fergusson links her personal experience (particularly as a lesbian and a mother) with theoretical analysis both of the historical development of these concepts and of their political role in the USA in the eighties.

Overall, then, I think that the book is an important and useful one for feminist philosophers and socialist feminists.

Alison Assiter, October 1989

North American Philosophy

Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy, ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall. London & Boston: Unwin Hyman 1989

Although almost everything in this collection is a reprint, I think it could be a very useful book for students and teachers in feminist philosophy. Not everyone can keep up with all the work being done now, especially the journals, and this collection brings together some very good pieces. It is divided into seven sections as follows: Methodology, Metaphysics, Theory of Knowledge, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Religion, with three pieces in each (except Philosophy of Language). Some of the pieces come from well-known collections: Discovering Reality, Beyond Domination, Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy, Feminist Perspectives: Philosophical Essays on Method and Morals, but there are other less familiar sources: the Canadian Science, Morality and Feminist Theory (Hanan and Nielsen), Gender/Body/Knowledge (Jaggar and Bordo), Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience (Andolsen, Gudorf and Pellauer), and also journals that not all of us have ready access to: Signs, Hypatia, Nous.

If you already have the first three or four of these (Discovering Reality etc.), then it's probably not worthwhile getting a personal copy - order it for the library instead. But if you are just starting out and want a good general collection to start with, then this looks like a useful introduction to the preoccupations of North American feminist philosophy. My main reservation is the fact that it is more or less exclusively North American. Although Genevieve Lloyd's early article 'The Man of Reason' from Metaphilosophy (1979) is in, the good Australian collection Feminist Challenges

(Pateman and Gross) is not represented, and the only representative of our (British) collection is Lorraine Code who is working in Canada. Not that North American women in philosophy are not doing interesting work. But they can sometimes make us feel as though no one else is. Speaking from within my own competence, I find it insular, for example, that a not especially interesting piece by Andrea Nye on French feminism has been included while the excellent work of Elizabeth Grosz (Australia) has been left out.

However, it is rare for a collection to satisfy at every moment; it is in the nature of collections to provide for a range of interests - and this one does do that.

M.W.

Recent books in continental philosophy

The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy, edited by Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. H/b and p/b. Available from Compendium.

A collection of essays of which about half are reprints and half new articles: two essays on Simone de Beauvoir, four on phenomenological topics, one on Derrida, one on Cixous and Foucault, one on Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, another one on Kristeva, one on Wittgenstein. The essays are mostly reasonably accessible and raise essential critical issues, from a feminist angle, about twentieth-century French thought. I would recommend them to students for their accessibility. The collection lacks coherence, but, as the blurb says, it is a useful book for courses in feminist theory and philosophy/modern French thought.

Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes: The Origins of Modernity by Dalia Judovitz. Cambridge University Press, h/b only, about £25.

This book is hard going, but it's also brilliant - a post-modernist look at Descartes. I will simply quote from the introduction, so you can see what to expect: 'In this study, representation will be in question as the concept that governs axiomatically the conditions of possibility of all the representations as objects. As a schema, representation defines how the subject comes to know the world, by describing it according to its norms. The truth of representation will be shown to emerge as a result of adequation, not between ideas and the world, but rather, between ideas and the conventions that define the validity of those ideas. The ambiguity that haunts Descartes's definition of subjectivity, its paradoxical emergence as subject of truth, as well as empiricism, will emerge as the expression of the problematic character of representation. The traditional humanistic account that confuses the birth of man with that of the subject will be at issue. ... The efforts to go beyond these terms [subjectivity and representation], as postmodernity has tried to do, imply more often than not the preservation of their metaphysical underpinnings. Although postmodernism is posited as the overcoming of subjectivity and representation, upon closer scrutiny it becomes clear that its critiques do nothing more than reinforce the contradictions of their original articulation, etc.'

Anyone working in 'postmodernism' - Derrida, Foucault and Co. - ought to read this. I'm not sure what Descartes specialists would make of it.

Sexual Subversions by Elizabeth Grosz. Sydney: Allen and Unwin. H/b and p/b.

I highly recommend this book, so it is a pity that you have to order it from Australia. There is an introductory chapter on contemporary French thought, followed by two chapters on Kristeva, two chapters on Irigaray and one chapter on Michèle Le Doeuff. There is also a useful glossary. The author writes that the book 'was conceived as a response to problems that emerged in teaching feminist theory to undergraduate students'. It is written to be accessible to undergraduates, and achieves the remarkable feat of being both clear and accessible, and also theoretically extremely sound. The feminist implications are spelt out as well. The chapters on Irigaray - whom I now know quite well - are excellent.

Michèle Le Doeuff is less well-known because not translated, but her first book, The Philosophical Imaginary is forthcoming from the Athlone Press this autumn, and her second book (see below) is being translated immediately by Blackwell, so should be available in about 18 months. Not much has been written about Michèle Le Doeuff compared to the other two, yet in many ways she is much more accessible and familiar, and can be more readily accommodated within the intellectual traditions that most philosophers in this country are happy with. So it's useful to have a chapter on her works as well. PS: Unwin are going to publish in Britain.

Elizabeth Grosz also has a feminist book on Lacan coming out with Routledge shortly (after Christmas). This will be worth looking out for, if she can make Lacan as clear as she has made Kristeva and Irigaray.

L'Etude et le rouet by Michèle Le Doeuff. Paris: Seuil. 140F

How can one be a woman and a philosopher? This book starts with this question. It is divided into four parts. In the first part, Le Doeuff discusses the relationship between women, philosophy and feminism, and the difficult speaking position of the woman/feminist speaking as a philosopher. In the second part, she discusses the issue of sexism in philosophy. The question she asks is whether sexism in philosophy comes from the method of philosophy itself. This section is a defence of philosophy which is seen as ideally non-sexist, non-racist etc. In the third part, she tackles the question of the relation between philosopher and philosophy. She argues for a conception of philosophy as process which needs to take into account that which any individual philosopher cannot think. In the process, she casts doubt on the pretensions of philosophy to be a kind of master-discourse which cannot itself be put into question by any other discipline. The fourth part is an essay in practical philosophy, and is concerned with the relationship between the theoretical and the concrete - the real situation of women in France.

Highly recommended and very enjoyable to read. Look out for this when it comes out in English in a year or two.

To look out for: The Philosophical Imaginary, by Michèle Le Doeuff (forthcoming from the Athlone Press). I quote from Elizabeth Grosz: 'It is [Le Doeuff's] argument that there is not just an imaginary registered in philosophy - a set of images which the discipline cannot admit is central to its functioning - but that there is a specifically philosophical imaginary,