



# NEWSLETTER

Issue No 7 June 1992

## Editorial

The newsletter is again quite long - and the list of subscribers is growing. We hope that you can use it for networking. The 'researching details for networking' section is small this time. Remember to include details, when you send in your form for 1992/3, if you would like to be included.

Many people have commented on how useful they find the reviews section. Thanks to the growing number of people contributing to it. If you, too, would like to contribute, write to Margaret Whitford the reviews editor. But you need not wait to be asked. We also welcome unsolicited reviews. The index of books reviewed in earlier issues appears at the end of the newsletter.

This issue also contains news about future meetings of the society, news from abroad, news of jobs, and some calls for papers. We are glad to get another article about teaching. Any more would be welcome. Again, don't wait to be asked!

We have included some correspondence about the issue of men and the Society. This arose as a result of the very successful Oxford meeting (thank-you Meena for organising it!) - see the extract from the THES. If you have something you want to contribute to the debate about men, please send it to one of the editors. Addresses on membership list at the end of the Newsletter.

Do go on sending in information about conferences, jobs, workshops, lectures, exhibitions, and anything else that might be of interest to women who subscribe to this newsletter. This news is very important because so many of us find that it reaches us belatedly, if at all.

**We expect the next issue to be circulated in November 1992. All contributions by 31 October, at the latest, please.**

*Subscriptions for the 1992/3 academic year should now be paid, if you are to receive the November newsletter. Send it now with the enclosed form, to Kimberly Hutchings at Wolverhampton Poly.*

Morwenna Griffiths  
Margaret Whitford

# SWIP NEWS AND VIEWS

## SOCIETY FOR WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY DAY CONFERENCE

The second SWIP conference in 1992 will be held on Saturday 26 September at New Hall, Cambridge. The day will include two papers, and two sessions of two workshops each. A professional, insured creche will be provided. Lunch and tea/coffee are included, and an evening meal will be available for those who want it (we hope most of you!). The bar will be open too.

- 9.00 am                      Arrival, registration and SWIP business
- 10.00 am                      First workshop session:
- A.                                      B.  
Care and Justice                  Reproduction and Identity
- (each 2 15-minute papers and 1 hour discussion)
- 11.30 am                      Tea/coffee
- 11.45 am                      First paper: Carole Gilligan [we hope]  
(30 minute paper, 1 hour discussion)
- 1.15 pm                        Lunch (Bar Open)
- 2.15 pm                        Second workshop session:
- A.                                      B.  
Philosophy of Religion            Philosophy and Language
- 3.45 pm                        Tea/Coffee
- 4.00 pm                        Second Paper: Gemma Corradi Fiumara [Author of *The Other Side of Language*]
- 5.30 pm                        Tea/Coffee
- 5.45 pm                        Panel discussion
- 7.00 pm                        Supper (Bar open till late evening)

The creche will be organised by Guardians Creche Services, and the cost will be included in the day charge of the conference for everyone. Please let the organisers know as early as possible if you will be using the creche - and numbers and ages of children. Accommodation at New Hall can be arranged on Friday or Saturday nights for those who need it. Please apply well in advance.

We invite offers for short papers in the workshop sessions. If people have ideas they would like to arrange a workshop around, please let the organisers know: we can always have three or more workshops running in each session, provided we book the space in advance . . .

Costs will be approximately £14.00 waged, £7.00 student/unwaged, including lunch. Supper will be £6.50. Please register as soon as possible, sending your name and address by 15th June at the latest, so that we can price the day more accurately (and we hope cheaply). Full programme and payment details will then be circulated. For further information, and to register, please write to:

SWIP Conference Organisers  
c/o Faculty of Philosophy  
Sidgwick Avenue  
Cambridge  
CB3 9D  
Tel: 0223 335090.

[Tear off]\_\_\_\_\_

I am intending to come to the SWIP conference on Saturday 26 September 1992. Please send me further details as and when available.

Name.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

## The Oxford Meeting of SWIP, by Christine Battersby, Department of Philosophy, Warwick University.

### ROARS OF LIONESSES

In Mid March about 70 women gathered in St Hilda's College, Oxford, for the biannual meeting of the Society for Women in Philosophy. The topic for the day, "Feminism and Philosophy", had drawn an unusually large crowd. Since British philosophy is a predominantly male affair, there was a sense of unfamiliarity and excitement at being in a room in which so many women are passionately interested in both philosophy and feminism.

It is Oxford philosophy, above all, that symbolises the conservatism of British philosophical institutions. Hence there was, for me at least, a rather pleasing sense of transgression on this spring Saturday. The beadle who forbade Virginia Woolf to cross the Oxbridge college grass seemed just a second in time away. And so was that other March weekend - the so-called "Women's Weekend" at Ruskin College, Oxford, of 1970 - the occasion which is generally seen to have launched the writings and activities of second-wave feminism in Britain.

Could it be that, 22 years after that first Oxford weekend, this Oxford Saturday is a sign that the changes have reached into the heart of philosophical thinking in this country? The number of students in the audience was certainly encouraging. But my initial celebratory feelings were tempered by noting how few of those who identified themselves during question-time held jobs as professional philosophers in British Universities. Of the older women it was noticeable how many were moonlighting from theology, anthropology, French, education or from humanities and cultural studies departments in the polytechnics. Two of the three speakers were, furthermore, French. Consequently, it was deeply ironic that one of these, Catherine Audard, should have argued in her paper that the situation is worse for women in philosophy in France. There, girls are taught philosophy as a matter of course in schools, but still find themselves at a disadvantage when it comes to professional hierarchy.

Philosophy in France is a completely different subject from the one studied at most colleges in Britain. Spoken from the position of one who identified herself as still "honeymooning" with the analytic tradition, Audard's argument produced vigorous disagreement. For why, if it is the British tradition of philosophy that is beneficial to women, are there so few women in the discipline? Audard conceptualised analytic philosophy as a Rawlsian community of disembodied rational selves engaged in a co-operative, disinterested and "objective" search for "pure" truth, but Foucault's account of differential power relationships might seem more appropriate to analyse the aggressive and adversarial argument-techniques institutionalised in analytic philosophy.

It is in North America that feminist philosophy appears to have impinged most at an institutional level. This is manifest in various ways - in the number of new books and journals put out by publishers in this field (even in a recession), in feminist input to philosophy conferences, in philosophical input to conferences on feminist theory and critique, in undergraduate and graduate courses offered on feminist philosophy, in PhD work, in job-specifications for professional philosophers. In *Jobs for Philosophers* of the American Philosophical Association for October 1991, for example, 12 per cent of adverts for jobs in the United States that mentioned fields of specialisation or competence included reference to feminist philosophy or feminist theory. In Australia,

likewise, feminist philosophy is currently one of the most vital and fast growing areas of the subject.

There are sociological and historical reasons for this divide between Britain and other parts of the Anglophone world. The closedown and retrenchment of philosophy departments in the United Kingdom over the past two decades has been particularly severe. And this has meant that very few of the generation of women (and men) most affected by feminism are lecturers in philosophy in university departments. Indeed, very few women of any age hold such posts. This situation will improve markedly as polytechnics transform themselves into universities, since in many of these philosophy has developed along lines alien to the Oxbridge tradition - and cut off from the old boy networks that have militated against the appointment of women in the established universities. This seems to me, however, not only a sociological issue; but one related to the nature of the discipline itself, and to the fact that analytic philosophy has changed less in Britain during the past two decades than in North America and Australia.

Analytic philosophy is often represented by its practitioners as no more than a style of doing philosophy, rather than a matter content: as simply a matter of of thinking as clearly, carefully, and coherently as possible about the whole range of philosophical issues. But there are, nevertheless, distinctive emphases and limitations on subject matter within that and come from the traditions of intuitionism, logical positivism and "ordinary language" philosophy that fed into it earlier this century. Analytic philosophy progresses via a form of verbal combat: testing, falsifying and slowly - subtly - modifying the "solutions" of those earlier philosophers allowed within its canon.

As such, analytic philosophy incorporates an early 20th century arrogance about the powers of untrammelled rationality: a belief that it is collectively possible to cut all prejudice and dispense with all obscurity, emotion, rhetoric and with merely imaginative uses of language. It sought to break with the philosophical past, and introduce mental, scientific and linguistic hygiene into philosophical debates. It disowned huge tracts of the history of philosophy that could not be seen as harbingers of its own values of deductive logic, "objective" science, "ordinary" language and "common" sense. Its canon also excludes those it dubs "Continentalists": recent philosophers who failed to break with that past along realist and empiricist lines.

By the mid-century, analytic philosophy had become the paradigm mode of philosophising throughout the English-speaking world - although in North America, at least, "pragmatist" traditions remained that tended to preserve older European traditions of philosophical idealism in an altered form. These days analytic philosophy has lost its coherence, since its debates and procedures have thrown up fundamental questions about the very assumptions and methods on which the discipline is founded. Even the notions of "reason" and "objectivity" have been challenged, and the early beliefs about the relationship between language and reality now seem profoundly flawed. In this slow corrosion of the initial Modernist belief in a "value free" enquiry, pragmatist influences operating with analytic philosophy have played a key role. Despite this, analytic philosophy still constitutes the mainstream in the Anglophone world.

It is in Britain that analytic philosophy remains at its most angst-free, although now Essex and Warwick University philosophy departments deal centrally with the conceptual revolutions that have transformed European philosophy in the post-war era. The number of graduate students applying to these departments - not only from polytechnics, but also refugees from Oxbridge and elsewhere - show that change is imminent. However, most analytic philosophers remain comfortably ignorant

about the significance of these developments. Existentialism and phenomenology might register on the fringes of their vision; but there is no impetus to understand the "New French Philosophies", nor any grasp of the links between these and feminist thought. The contemporary debates in gender theory - about feminist epistemology, the history of philosophy (modernity/postmodernity), aesthetics, feminist ethics and political theory - pass them by.

Among the humanities subjects studied in British Universities, philosophy has perhaps been the slowest to open itself to transformation by feminist methods and theories - which is ironic given the central role that the so-called "New Philosophies" have played in feminist theory over the past decade. This is, at least in part, because analytic philosophers regard their discipline as more akin to science than to a humanities subject. Their reading is frequently confined to a quite narrow scholarly field, with any form of library research regarded as an escape from the hard work of thinking analytically about concepts. As a consequence, most tend to be cut off from contemporary developments in such subjects as film and literary theory, history and cultural studies. Furthermore, work in the "Continental" tradition of philosophy that falls outside the established frameworks of analytic debates simply does not get reviewed in mainstream journals. It is *not* philosophy. The same applies to work on the history of philosophy that is directed away from answering the questions posed by contemporary analytic philosophy.

Mainstream philosophers' attitudes towards feminist theory thus slot into a range of complacencies that occur in a tradition that marginalises any form of profound change. At its most extreme, feminist interventions are viewed as mere "nonsense" that will be dispelled by the simple application of rational, sceptical and critical modes of analysis. For others, feminist philosophy is not philosophy at all, but deals with literary, cultural, sociological issues, or what is scathingly described as "the history of ideas". A third group of conservatives registers that feminist enquiry has thrown up new and genuine philosophical problems; but sees these as confined primarily to the field of applied philosophy (particularly applied ethics), and in ways that do not fundamentally affect the way that philosophical argument should be conducted.

Analytic philosophers have raised key questions about their own activity. However, in Britain their self-directed scepticism only rarely coincides with feminist doubts about the nature of the discipline - about its methods of verbal wrestling, for example, or about its failure to root out the gender prejudices encoded in "common" sense, "ordinary" language "basic" concepts, or "self-evident" intuitions. Feminist philosophers are divided among themselves about the way to proceed in the face of these profound blindnesses. Philosophy has represented itself as the highest and purest form of reasoning, free from any contamination from merely empirical, the sociological or the psychological. However, time and time again, feminists have shown that what has been taken as paradigmatic in philosophical analysis is male life-patterns, aspirations and experiences. Simply adding women to these philosophical frameworks is no simple option.

Some feminist philosophers claim that there is nothing wrong in principle about the way that rationality has been conceptualised, or selves, persons, autonomy, freedom, the public-private divide, objectivity and the like. These - the "liberal" feminists - suppose that what has gone wrong with philosophical argument is just a matter of inconsistency: of failing to extend the analyses in ways that recognise women as falling within their scope. Broadly speaking, liberal feminists are concerned with detecting the implicit sexism of individual

philosophers or philosophical systems of thought. Their feminist opponents - who come in many varieties - feel that it is philosophy that is sick not individual philosophers. For them, philosophical reformism is either a problematic or an impossible strategy.

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).

Mainstream philosophers have been only too aware of the competing conceptions of philosophy that constitute their discipline. But they have been less conscious that the same is true of feminist theory. I am regularly astonished by the confidence with which philosophers close their ears to feminist argument - supposing (without apparently reading any of it) that they know in advance what *all* feminists must say. The naively suppose that *all* feminists want power, or that *all* feminists aim for equal rights for women, or that *all* feminist philosophers are interested in is the issue of sexist thought, language or imagery. The intricacy, complexity and importance of feminist argument is collapsed into the imaginery (terrifying?) figure of a monolithic feminist position.

Asked my view on some particular issue, I'm often asked: "What would a feminist philosopher say?" But any cursory reading of any feminist theory would surely reveal that "a" feminist does not exist; and that "we" argue among ourselves just as much as any other philosophers. Indeed, since feminist philosophy is everywhere still nascent, embattled, marginal, experimental, problematic, tantalising, we are still finding out what it is we want to say. This we attempt to discover via dialogue with each other, not by valorising the type of verbal duelling that constitutes argument in the analytic tradition.

"If a lion could talk, we could not understand him." So, at least, claims Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*: a foundational text of mainstream British philosophy. During the past few years, I have often felt like one of the lionesses who falls through the metaphoric gaps of Wittgenstein's philosophy of "ordinary" language. "If a feminist philosopher talked, we would not understand her." Her words would be transformed into the roar of nature, instead of being understood as emerging from a different (female) language community. For feminist theory to impact on mainstream philosophy, the first necessity is to hear feminist speech as something more significant than a lion's roar.

Christine Battersby  
Department of Philosophy  
Warwick University

**Christine Battersby would be pleased to receive comments on this article.**

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## MEN AND SWIP

Several men who wanted to come to the Oxford conference were turned away at the door. Most of them respected our reasons, but we were challenged by one man - as this correspondence shows. We were reflecting earlier agreements by members of SWIP, as well as our own personal views. However it may be that more debate is needed about the issue. We publish these letters as a contribution.

16 March 1992

Dear Dr Griffiths and Dr Seller,

I was very disappointed to find out that I would not be allowed to attend the one-day conference on feminism in philosophy at St. Hilda's College. I appreciate your informing me of this in a civil manner and I hope you felt that, in spite of the disappointment, I was not uncivil in reply.

There are serious issues at stake in excluding anyone from participating in a philosophy conference solely on the basis of gender. I wanted to write in order to raise some objections to the position adopted for the conference at St. Hilda's. The first explanation I received on the day was that men have been disruptive in the past at such conferences. Clearly this is unfortunate if true, but I would question whether matters of discipline should be handled by excluding all potentially disruptive individuals in advance. Or are you operating on the assumption that men will always and inevitably be disruptive? This is surely unfair. If not, then discipline should be handled by reminding participants (of whatever sex) of the purposes of the conference, the importance of dialogue, the necessity of respect. Any further disturbance could be dealt with appropriately, as at any conference.

I suspect that discipline is not the real issue, however, and that you feel, rather, that it is appropriate and legitimate to exclude men from a conference on women. On the other hand, presumably non-scientists can, if they wish, attend conferences on scientific subjects, and scientists attend discussions of the humanities. I imagine that atheists are allowed to attend conferences on religion and religionists conferences on atheism. If your view were taken to its logical conclusion, then a conference on entomology could only be attended by insects.

What would you say if a woman was excluded from attending a one-day conference on men in philosophy? Is this kind of exclusivity what we need in the current environment or are you simply replicating the old injustices of the gentlemen's club? Surely some dialogue is in order, particularly in a conference of philosophy, which remains a subject committed to arguments, discussion and the love of knowledge, *filo-sofia*. Personally I did not attend in order to disrupt, I wanted to attend to engage with the thoughts of individuals whose work I have read, and I was very interested to hear what the response *by women* would be. Have I got it wrong or should women's books only be read by women, should Michèle Le Dœuff's lectures, to be published by Verso, only be purchased by women and circulated among them exclusively?

You might reply that women have far too long been denied a voice of their own. I agree. But does a voice of one's own imply that you only speak to others of your kind (narrowly defined)? In effect, your goal is the creation of an exclusive space, just for a day, a kind of nuclear-free-zone where male threats will not be felt and a freer atmosphere will obtain. Whatever one thinks of the aspiration, I believe that it is inappropriate to exclude

males when the event was advertised publicly (without noting that the exclusivity of the event), to hold it in a *public* place, and in a university which is co-educational. Your event should not really be called a conference, since conferences imply public and open discussion. It belongs in something like a women's club.

### Replies -

23 March 1992

I am sorry that you were disappointed about the conference. There was obviously a misunderstanding, which was compounded by the fact that we had you down as 'Denice'. The other men who wrote were given the option of getting in touch with each other, and I am sure that Meena Dhanda would include you if you wanted to be part of such a network.

It is clear from your letter that you have not noticed that the conference was set up under the auspices of a Society for Women in Philosophy - not, may I emphasise, a Society for Feminists in Philosophy. Of course it is not surprising if women will sometimes want to discuss feminism, but our day conferences are on a variety of topics. There are other public areas for spoken and written discussion of the issues of feminism and philosophy, where your presence would be welcome. I imagine that you inhabit them already.

Yours sincerely,

Morwenna Griffiths

23 March 1992

Thank you for your letter and taking the trouble to write. We have taken note of your points, and will be careful in the future to advertise our meetings "for women only",

I think that we failed to make it clear that this was a conference of the Society for Women in Philosophy. We do not hold conferences on women, so much as for women in philosophy, in what remains a male-dominated profession. But of course, to reach women, we need to advertise in public places. As I have said, in future we will ensure that these advertisements make it clear that our meetings are for women only.

Of course, we do not only speak to each other. I think that you may fail to appreciate that for the vast majority of our professional lives, we are engaged in dialogue with men. Many of us are the only women in our departments or seminars. It is because of this that we organise regular meetings where we can meet together, hold discussions, and encourage women in the profession. Your desire for a response by women to your ideas shows the problems that we face. Had you attended, no matter how courteous or well-intentioned, such a desire would have been disruptive. To suggest that we open our meetings to men is somewhat analogous to suggesting that the 300 Club, (an organisation of women designed to get more women into public politics) should cater for men as well as women.

I hope that you find women in Oxford who are willing to discuss your ideas with you. Indeed, given the level of interest shown in our discussion on Saturday, I feel confident that you will.

Yours sincerely

Anne Seller

## RESEARCH DETAILS FOR NETWORKING

*Kathleen Walsh*

Women and religion, Women and ethics, Moral agency and women.

*Anne Kerr* (Research Centre for Social Sciences, The University of Edinburgh)

I am writing a PhD thesis and am interested in the question of a feminist science, and am hoping to interview undergraduate science students to tackle several key issues in this area: notably the very real possibility of disharmony between feminist philosophers' visions of a feminist science and female science students' attitude to science; and the role of femininity in a feminist science. I intend to compare the attitude to science; practice of undergraduate science students participating in a traditional science course with those of students whose course involves the philosophy of science, specifically (if possible) a course on feminist epistemology of science.

*Deborah Fitzmaurice* (Department of Philosophy, Essex University)

I am Research Fellow in Philosophy on Human Rights at Essex, and am finishing up a PhD on the foundations of liberal political Theory, in which I argue against the ideal of the neutral state - and consider the significance for liberalism of autonomy as a conception of the good. I am interested in Teaching Philosophy in Eastern Europe and will be running a summer school in Krakow, Poland next summer.

## PUBLISHING

CUP wrote to the newsletter, saying that there are now two philosophy editors in the Cambridge office of Cambridge University Press, that they were both women, and they would like to know more about SWIP. The address is: CUP, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 2RU.

# TEACHING WOMEN/ TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

## Ethics, Politics and Education

'Bizarre,' said my colleague. 'On this whole reading list there are only books by women. You can't run a course with just books by women.' But he was wrong.

This one-term course grew out of a casual conversation with the convenor of our Women's Studies MA. I had told her that in tackling ethical and political issues in education I was finding increasingly that I was drawing more and more on the work of women philosophers. Not for any ideological reasons but simply because they (eg Annette Baier, Martha Nussbaum, Amelie Rorty, Carole Pateman, Carol Gould, Amy Gutmann, Sissela Bok), it seemed to me, were raising the relevant issues. Out of this grew a philosophical module in our Women's Studies MA which introduced non-philosophers, for the most part, to work on democracy, political education, justice within the family, parents' rights, a conception of personal and social education as virtues education and the education of the emotions.

One regret was that with these rich topics we did not get on to the Evil and Wickedness which was to have been our last topic. That was a pity because one of my tangential interests in teaching the course was to ponder, as we studied the topics, why there was a flurry of interest by women philosophers in certain topics, like for instance participatory democracy and evil. Perhaps the explanation for participatory democracy is that it is the other side of domination. But evil and wickedness? Is it from the idea of women as alleged perpetrators (eg witches) or as victims that the interest in exploring this topic arises?

I found it exhilarating to teach and I look forward to teaching it again. My main problem, as I come across more and more papers I want to include which illuminate topics already in the course or open to new ones, will be what to leave out.

Were then Rawls, Williams et al. really not mentioned at all? They were there from time to time but ... how shall I put it? ... they were marginalised.

*Patricia White  
Research Fellow in Philosophy of Education  
Institute of Education University of London  
April 1992*

# NEWS FROM ABROAD

## Report from America

My initial reaction to being asked to write a short piece on the current concerns of US women in philosophy was that there would be no way I could do justice to their considerable volume and variety. By way of illustration, the most recent American SWIP newsletter announces no less than eight conferences, seven calls for papers, and the formation of two new feminist philosophy associations. The *Society for Analytical Feminism* and the *Society for the Study of Women Philosophers* (please contact Margaret Whitford for further information).

My own particular view of the current concerns and debates (as a PhD student at New York's New School for Social Research), is unfortunately partial and limited. This year a Gender Studies Colloquium has been instituted for the first time, under the auspices of new appointee Seyla Benhabib, and a Gender Studies MA is planned for next year. It has only been a result of activism and pressure from certain quarters that this late recognition of the importance of feminist work in the fields covered by the New School (philosophy, political science, sociology and anthropology) has come about, and many graduate students and professors seem to be still "finding their feminist feet" (or fortifying their anti-feminist enclaves), in a context which owes much, historically and ideologically, to Frankfurt School Marxism.

There is one issue, however, that continues to be the common thread running through the feminist-philosophical discussions I have been involved in here, and it is that of "difference". Theorists are still grappling with the challenge of talking about women and their perspective, of prioritising a specifically feminist politics, without doing injustice to the many differences among women. This in practice means not universalising the experience of white, heterosexual, middle-class, Western women; but how is this to be achieved (especially by philosophers who tend to fit snugly into the above categories)? Is simply situating oneself sufficient? Ought one also attempt to bring in the standpoint of women in different positions? Or work at creating circumstances and opportunities for the diversity of women's voices to be heard? Is one forced to abandon the category "woman" altogether? Or are we left clinging to assertions of the universal status of empirical truths? These questions, of course, have brought the critique of essentialism to the fore - required reading here seems to be Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (Routledge, 1990). Work which seems to me to do a very good job of rethinking practical feminist politics in light of such a critique includes Nancy Fraser's *Unruly Practices* (University of Minnesota Press, 1989), Patricia Williams's *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Harvard University Press, 1991) and *Beyond Accommodation* by Drucilla Cornell (Routledge, 1991).

These writers share the feature of being actively engaged with practical challenges in public and legal spheres in their work, as well as dealing brilliantly with ethical and metaphysical issues. I think this constitutes an encouraging development for philosophy as a whole (whose death warrant many seem all too ready to sign) in that it reveals its importance and centrality for the solution of everyday, bread and butter problems. Can feminist philosophy really bring back the funding? We'll have to see. In the meantime debates continue to rage within feminist psychoanalytic theory, feminist ethics, feminist

epistemology and philosophy of science, and other fields, which can all more or less be framed in the distinction between the project of both uncovering and constructing a lost, silenced and devalorised perspective specific to women, and the impossibility of so doing without also hiding and silencing the perspectives of women of colour, lesbians, working-class women and non-Western women (and of stepping outside a world in which both masculinity and femininity are defined by men: the problem of the "authentic female voice"). There actually seems to be a new openness to French feminisms, even among ostensibly more traditional scholars, as being able to provide a means for negotiating this more or less ubiquitous problem, but perhaps this is just the wishful product of my partial perspective.

A wider perspective on the many issues and concerns of US women in philosophy can be gained not only from the SWIP but from the American Philosophical Association's (APA) *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*. To give some idea of the infrastructure we have in place, the APA contains a Committee on the Status of Women which is currently dealing with issues such as child care provision in the APA bureaucracy and hiring practices, and is generally keeping tabs on the perceived and actual status of women in philosophy. It also sponsors the twice-yearly *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* which provides a forum for discussion of feminist transformation of the curriculum, feminist teaching practices, work and study place issues such as sexual stereotyping, sexual harassment, difficulties in obtaining acceptance of dissertation proposals on gender topics, etc., as well as intellectual exchanges, book reviews and bibliographic resources. This is obviously an important space for the exchange of views and information, and subscription is possible without APA membership. To subscribe send \$10 payable to the American Philosophical Association to Diana Wells, APA, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716. For full membership contact Janet Sample at the same address; this includes subscription to APA proceedings as well as the *Newsletter*, and the cost is assessed according to a sliding scale ranging between \$25 and \$105 a year.

Another major resource is SWIP-L, a free electronic mail list for feminist philosophers. In theory, all you need to do to subscribe is to send the following one-line message to LISTSER V@CFRVM or to LISTSER V@CFRVM.CFR.USF.EDU: SUBSCRIBE SWIP-L <YOUR FULL NAME>. To post messages on the list send them to SWIP-L@CFRVM or to SWIP-L@CFR.USF.EDU. (However, I haven't been able to verify this yet.). The list is used to share information about SWIP and other feminist philosophy meetings, calls for papers, jobs for feminist philosophers, etc., as well as to engage in more substantive discussions related to feminist philosophy.

## CALLS FOR PAPERS

Some of the topics up for discussion in future APA *Newsletters* are, Pornography and Obscenity (submission deadline June 1, 1992), Is There a Feminist Philosophy? (deadline January 1, 1993) and Feminism and Peace (deadline June 1, 1993). *Hypatia*, the quarterly journal of SWIP, solicits for papers relating to all aspects of feminist philosophy, but forthcoming special issues include Feminist Philosophy of Religion (deadline Sept 15, 1993) and Feminism and Peace (deadline March 15, 1993). *Feminist Perspectives on Death: a multidisciplinary collection entitled Connections and Disconnections: Mothers, Daughters and Death* is asking for papers focusing on the experiences of an adult daughter when

her mother dies, written from the vantage point of gender and with an eye to women's growth through the testing of the mother-daughter connection (deadline June 30, 1992). For further information and address please contact Margaret Whitford.

Lastly, two new series of books are forthcoming from American presses: the "SUNY Series in Feminist Philosophy" and "Re-reading the Canon" from Penn State Press. The first intends to reflect the diversity of feminist philosophers, by covering feminist ethics, social philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of science; the history of women philosophers and feminist readings of the history of philosophy; texts of women's language, writing and desire. Queries and manuscripts to: Jeffner Allen, Editor, Department of Philosophy, SUNY, Binghamton, NY 13901. "The second will be a series of volumes, each devoted to a broad variety of feminist reinterpretations of a major figure of the Western philosophical tradition, and containing extensive bibliographic information. The series will begin with a volume on Plato edited by Nancy Tuana. Other early volumes will focus on Aristotle, Locke, Marx, Wittgenstein, De Beauvoir, Foucault, and Derrida. Inquiries to Professor Nancy Tuana, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Texas at Dallas, Box 830688, Richardson, TX 75083-0688.

I do hope that I've managed to convey an adequate sense of the kinds of activities that are going on among US women in philosophy, and if British SWIP members take advantage of the information that I've been able to provide here I'll feel I've done my job. If people were inspired to make use of that information to begin instituting some of the kinds of resources and structures in the UK, that would be even better! I realise that Americans do have numbers on their side, but the means for increasing numbers lies precisely in creating more arenas for communication and in the exchange of ideas on how exactly to alter curricula and institute other measures to make philosophy a more attractive and relevant option for women students.

*Emanuela Bianchi, New York, April 1992.*

## News from Germany

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- 1980 Würzburg
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### *Publications of the IAPh*

- *Philosophinnen. Von Wegen ins 3. Jahrtausend* [Concerning Ways into the third Millennium]  
Hg. Manon Maren-Grisebach, Ursula Menzer,  
Mainz 1982, ISBN 3-922902-002-3.
- *Was Philosophinnen denken* [What Women Philosophers Think]  
Hg. Halina Bendkowski, Brigitte Weisshaupt,  
Zürich 198, ISBN 3-250-10012-9
- *Was Philosophinnen denken II* [What Women Philosophers Think II]  
Hg. Manon Andreas-Grisebach, Brigitte Weisshaupt,  
Zürich, 1986, ISBN 3-250-01017-0
- *1789/1989, Die Revolution hat nicht stattgefunden* [The revolution has not yet taken place].  
Hg. Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky,  
Ulrike Ramming, E. Walesca Tielsch,  
Tübingen 1989, ISBN 3-89295-537-9

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## REVIEW SECTION

### *Berg Women's Series*

Renée Winegarten, *Simone de Beauvoir : A Critical View*

Jennifer Lorch, *Mary Wollstonecraft : The Making of a Radical Feminist* £14.95

Donna Dickenson, *George Sand : A Brave Man, The Most Womanly Woman.*

We are of course all interested in our foremothers, and we don't expect our 'famous women' to be paragons any more than 'famous men'. Writers in this series have a delicate path to tread between idealisation and critique, between recognising the achievements while not underplaying the more problematic aspects of the characters of 'great women' who often, it must be said in their defence, moved so far away from what was regarded as proper for a woman in their time as to render understandable, if not excusable, almost any of their shortcomings. The Berg Women's Series employs a sort of 'life and works' formula which is not always satisfactory in the case of women of ideas. What is it like on Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir? (The case of George Sand, a more literary figure, is discussed separately below).

Of the two, Jennifer Lorch on Wollstonecraft is by far the most successful. She is sympathetic to the social constraints of a woman in the eighteenth century - above all, the difficulty of earning an independent living; lucid about the gap between rational mind and emotional impulse (in itself a critique of Wollstonecraft's rationalism); and very good on the development of Wollstonecraft's ideas. Thus she points out that the first reasoned, coherent statement of Wollstonecraft's feminism comes in *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (which I suspect most of us haven't read), and argues quite plausibly that the most sophisticated presentation of Wollstonecraft's feminism can be found not in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but in the unfinished novel *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*. It's not a very far-reaching study (it's not intended to be) but is certainly worth reading.

In contrast, Winegarten's critique of Simone de Beauvoir leaves behind a deeply unpleasant impression. Of course De Beauvoir created a mythology about herself and Sartre, and demythification is certainly needed here. However, the problem of the book seems to me to revolve around the question of bad faith (the Sartrean concept of *mauvaise foi*). Winegarten's central argument is the De Beauvoir aimed for authenticity and settled for bad faith. But what about Winegarten herself? Rereading this book after the last SWIP meeting in Oxford, I was irresistibly reminded of Michèle Le Doeuff's paper on Sartre and De Beauvoir. In order to display the structure of bad faith, Le Doeuff argued, there is always required *another person* to display ignorance or bad faith. It is never admitted to by the phenomenological 'I'. Winegarten adopts the position of the accuser while carefully omitting to make explicit her own position. She is clearly not a feminist, and I suspect, as Toril Moi argues elsewhere, that she is a covert Reaganite. But she never says as much. Ideology is masked as neutrality. In addition, there is something rather suspect about the way in which she attributes *all* of De Beauvoir's ideas

and attitudes to the influence of different men - her father (15), Sartre (4), Nelson Algren, her lover (67), Claude Lanzmann (77). Winegarten's is a mean-spirited and unbalanced account, which one would certainly not want to recommend to anyone.

*Margaret Whitford*

Donna Dickenson asserts that her aim in this introductory study of George Sand is 'to wipe clean some of the worst mud' (p 1-2) which has hidden George Sand's image as a talented writer better known as Chopin's lover than for her work. Her study thus provides an introduction to Sand's life and loves more than to her writing.

The study encompasses a description of Aurore Dupin's childhood, caught in troubled relations between grandmother and mother, and a discussion of whether Sand was the 'French Byron' described by Chateaubriand. It includes a chapter on Sand's feminism. Sand took issue with laws governing marriage, which condemned women to economic dependency, but was opposed to women's suffrage. Dickenson concludes that she was no feminist. She dwells upon Sand's sexuality, counting how many men she reckons Sand slept with. The charge that Sand's relationship with the actress Marie Dorval was lesbian is dismissed with the suggestion that Sand was nearly thirty at this time and 'had not yet been mothered properly' (p 95). A description of Sand's strict work routine and numerous revisions allows Dickenson to combat the myth that Sand was a hack writer. She provides long lists of the many well-known writers impressed by Sand's talent, particularly in Russia and Victorian England. Sand is now little-known as a writer. According to Dickenson, Henry James is to blame for casting Sand's work into obscurity. His unfavourable comments about Sand have been influential, as has censorship by the French Senate. 'Sand's male English-language critics exhorted readers to make a mock of this famous woman' (p.172), she asserts, but, despite reference to Gilbert and Gubar and to 'the aggressive unease' of certain male writers (p.166), she fails to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why this is so. However, Dickenson's study does provide a useful introduction for those unfamiliar with the work and life of George Sand, and makes a sympathetic case for this writer to be given greater consideration.

*Vivienne Liley.*

**Jennifer Birkett and Elizabeth Harvey (eds), *Determined Women: Studies in the Construction of the Female Subject, 1900-90* (Barnes and Noble, 1991).**

This is a loosely linked collection of essays in popular culture, literary criticism and feminist linguistics. An extensive introduction by the editors tries valiantly to unite the disparate elements, but remains at a somewhat general level.

The description of women's consciousness as culturally determined is not simplistic, however. If there is an overriding theme, it is that women are not simply passive receptacles of social conditioning: that collusion and selective acceptance are also common responses. This argument is in line with much recent feminist work on women

writers, notably Dierdre David's study of Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and George Eliot (*Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, Macmillan, 1987), and my own forthcoming *Margaret Fuller: Writing a Woman's Life* (Macmillan).

Several articles in this collection depict women as both resisting and complying with cultural norms of femaleness. Canadian women writers of the past two decades, argues Coral Ann Howells, have rejected the patriarchal element in Canadian nationalism, reworking the nationalist tradition to 'underline the limitations of contemporary women's lives.' Girls in Weimar Germany did not simply imbibe *Backfischbuecher* uncritically: these German versions of *Anne of Green Gables*, tales of wilful adolescents learning to be proper women, also presented attractive alternative qualities of energy and liveliness for girls.

But the sophistication of this revisionist feminism is not always matched by historical awareness. Birkett and Harvey's introduction makes the common and basic mistake of implying that the women's movement only began in the late nineteenth century. This is marginally truer of Britain, but ignores developments in America such as the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848— although the collection includes pieces on both Europe and America. Birkett's otherwise full and fascinating essay on Storm Jameson makes the historically naive claim that Jameson was striving 'to be both woman (wife and mother) and writer) . . . In her day, it was impossible for a woman to be both.' There were plenty of earlier precedents of women who had been both: George Sand, for one— and other women writers of Jameson's own day who managed the double act: Vera Brittain is the most obvious.

My general sense of vague disappointment with what had initially looked a fascinating mishmash was most pronounced when I read Robin Adamson's 'Sexism in French: a Case Study.' Beginning from very large but equally important contentions— that language in *the* 'place in which the social individual is constructed'— this essay also makes some provocative and potentially productive sub-claims. The fact that French can only construe certain professions as masculine in gender— teachers, judges, surgeons, magistrates and engineers— may discourage girls from taking them up, French and Canadian feminists have argued. Do employment patterns in English-speaking versus French-speaking nations show that there *are* fewer women judges and doctors in Francophone countries? Is there any hard evidence to back up the conjecture? I never found out: Adamson leaves this point as mere passing speculation, passing on to a somewhat hackneyed discussion of sexism in French car advertising.

The editors' introduction tries to draw out common themes among the essays— motherhood, for example— but some of the essays really only impinge on the supposed connecting themes very marginally. Birkett and Harvey were obviously aware that the essays needed to be pulled together, and they include a very wide range of themes and concepts in this introduction. But ultimately the book has to stand or fall by the individual essays rather than the preface, and these are too disparate for the introduction's supposed common themes to seem anything but an artificial imposition.

Donna Dickenson  
The Open University

**Drucilla Cornell *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction and the Law* Routledge HB £35 PB £10.99**

Cornell's project is to explore the strategies necessary in order to transform masculine conceptualisations of sexual difference and refigure the feminine Other. This book is interesting in that instead of describing a present state of affairs, it actually attempts to articulate a state which has yet to exist: a positive, non oppositional feminine reality not inscribed within a masculine prescriptive and restrictive framework.

Her theoretical framework is Derridean Deconstruction. Using his assertion that reality exists as textual effect (text here taken to mean a "context of meaning through which we read ourselves" p.108), she argues that in order to transform the "reality" of sexual difference we must deconstruct the figures of Woman which already exist. She considers Derrida's work on the trope of Woman to be affirmative. Cornell's hypothesis rests on Derrida's assertion that the structure of sexual difference is not ontologically grounded but psychological and anthropological. This being so, she sees refiguration as a real possibility, indeed she sees the whole feminist project depending upon this view of sexual difference.

The way in which this refiguration of the feminine and thus sexual difference can be achieved is through the re-metaphorisation of the representation of women since "the feminine 'is' only in and through the letter as it is written and rewritten, circulated and recirculated" (p 3). Cornell writes of the necessity to "take off" from within existing representations in order to be able to move away from these. It is through the writing of French feminists such as Cixous that she sees the direction to take and more importantly the writing strategies formulated by Irigaray. It is Irigaray's formulation of mimesis that provides Cornell with the framework she needs: Mimesis implies an "evaluation of the feminine" together with its "disruptive excess" making refiguration of the feminine possible. Additionally it is indispensable to Cornell's argument because this concept implies an ethical relation to the other and offers a way round the rigid subject/object divide inherent in the masculine representation of sexual difference.

Cornell is unashamedly utopian in her thinking: she sees this as the only way of breaking the present snares which hold femininity and any attempt to transform it. Utopian thinking provides her with a way of envisaging the unrepresentable. Cornell's arguments are well written and clearly presented. She anticipates her critics, providing responses to charges of essentialism, utopianism and inauthenticity through detailed engagements with Kristeva as well as West and MacKinnon, which incidentally provide a good background into the current debates in feminist philosophy.

I felt at times that Cornell is over-reliant on Derrida, whom she presents as an uncomplicated friend to feminism, if not a feminist himself; she even asserts that those feminists who rejected Derrida have misread his work.

Derrida's work on metaphor and Woman relies on Kantian categories mediated through Saussurean linguistics and is itself a limited and limiting view of the way metaphor works. Cornell ignores the tendency in Derrida's work to make of Woman yet another supplementary other.

This should not detract from what I think is an optimistic approach, translating Irigaray's strategies into an Anglo-American context and injecting vitality into the problematic of sexual difference.

Claire Kenney

**Moira Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy*, Polity Press, 1991. Paperback £8.95**

Gatens' book is structured around three themes. The first is that "much previous feminist theory" - Gatens herself uses this rather vague term - engages with sexism only at the "socio-political level", whilst implicitly assuming that metaphysics, epistemology and theories of human nature are sex-neutral. This results in such theorists using structures of argument and categories of thought which "predispose their studies of society and politics towards conclusions that are prejudicial to women". In particular, Gatens identifies "the latent commitments in much feminist theorising to the dualisms of modern philosophy" as a key example of this practice. Exposing feminist commitments to dualism becomes a major undertaking of her book.

Her second theme is that we do not necessarily have to choose between advocating sexual equality within society (women as 'honorary men') or advocating a pre-social, essentialist, sexual difference. Both choices, she argues, derive from adopting paradigms which do not question deeply enough the gendering of philosophical concepts. Her third theme is that we can move beyond these models of thinking to develop non-dualistic feminist theories and accounts of the human subject and being. She identifies psychoanalytic theory as being particularly helpful for this.

The book is structured rather awkwardly. Gatens uses the first three chapters to illustrate her point that a feminist approach that treats sexism in political and philosophical theory as something superficial, which can be eliminated leaving the theory fundamentally intact, is philosophically mistaken. In each of these chapters she juxtaposes a male theorist with a (failed) feminist attempt to render his theory "sex-neutral". Thus Rousseau and Wollstonecraft, Mill and Harriet Taylor, and Sartre and De Beauvoir are addressed.

In the following two chapters, she sets up another set of juxtapositions. Thinkers who try to extend philosophy by eliminating its sexual biases are represented by Janet Radcliffe Richards and Carol McMillan, whilst Dale Spender and Mary Daly are wheeled out on behalf of those who reject "traditional" philosophy for a "woman-centred" approach. The two positions are further differentiated, Gatens claims, in that the former views language as (potentially, at least) sex-neutral and says that a fact-value distinction is sustainable, and the latter does not. Gatens spends most of the two chapters showing why neither position is tenable, before positing her own position which is that the idea of an "essential human nature" which precedes the socially-constructed and gendered human subject is conceptually flawed.

These two chapters are rather muddled, and their effect is to diffuse the momentum of the earlier part of the book. Gatens does raise some potentially interesting questions (such as relation of the public/private dichotomy to our conceptions of space and time)

but fails to address them with any real depth or originality. Her characterisation and juxtapositioning of thinkers seems to be done more for convenience than for serious intellectual insight (she manages to make Carol McMillan sound like Barbara Cartland), and I would have been more interested to see McMillan as a 'conservative essentialist' compared with Daly the 'radical essentialist' than lumped alongside Radcliffe Richards. The result is a slightly scrambled and superficial skip through very familiar arguments.

In the final third of the book, Gatens regains her stride. She gives a brief but sympathetic account of psychoanalytic theory, and in particular its interaction with French feminist philosophy, before concluding, somewhat predictably, that we need to move beyond the difference/equality paradigm, and find new ways to think about sexuality, the human body, the human subject, the political and the social.

Overall, this book provides a helpful if simplistic overview of feminist philosophy from the eighteenth century to the present day. It enables readers to locate different strands of feminist thought, both within a 'history of feminist ideas', and in relation to philosophy as a whole. The book is written in rather textbook-like language, and it seems to me to be most useful as a 'secondary text', to be read in conjunction with the 'primary texts' Gatens addresses, or as an introductory textbook.

*Antonia Bunnin*

*Hypatia Special Issue: Feminism and the Body* ed. Elizabeth Grosz, Vol 6, No 3, Fall 1991.

This is a most engaging document, for a number of reasons. Not least of these is the variety of ways in which the female body can be brought into a rapprochement with philosophical thought (and the body under discussion here is most definitely that of a woman, although great pains are taken in handling the question of how to articulate this). The contemporary impetus for bringing the body to the centre of the philosophical stage can be said to stem from feminism. Yet this gives particular importance to the vexed issue of essentialism and antiessentialism, and it is on this note that the journal begins, with a fine article by Vicky Kirby on the complicity of these two stances. Kirby's intervention, along with articles by Carol Bigwood (appropriating Merleau-Ponty's theory of the body) and Lois McNay (renegotiating Foucault) are variations on a theme. The attempt in all these papers is to develop a notion of the body which escapes the double-bind of essentialism and antiessentialism. As such, they highlight the fact that because the impetus to retheorise the body stems from feminism, it is one which challenges the reduction of female body to its biological and reproductive aspects whilst insisting that these aspects are not elided totally: there must be a place for all of women's lived experience of embodiment in theory.

These papers suggest the complexities of 'defining' the body as an object of philosophical enquiry. An attendant theme is that of language and representation. This issue itself divides into two strands: firstly how we might articulate the body, as explored in articles by Elsbeth Probyn and Robyn Ferrell, both of whom are concerned with the opportunities and challenges which including the body opens up for feminist research; secondly how

the body has been 'written' by women. This latter strand is discussed in articles by Margaret Whitford (who offers an unusual angle on this in her analysis of the images of the female body in Irigaray's work and the debate they have generated amongst women), Karin Cope (in a well-crafted piece on Wittig's linguistic strategies to do away with the category of sex in 'Le corps lesbien') and Anna Antonopoulos (on the life and writing of Saint Catherine of Genoa as *écriture-féminine*).

Ethical implications of reintroducing the body are explored in articles by Rosalyn Diprose (re-reading Antigone and Hegel to present an instance of the exclusion of the female body and of sisterhood) and Catherine Vasseleu (using Levinas to move away from Lacan's account of the mirror stage, and Irigaray to read Levinas in the development of an ethics of alterity around the notion of touch). The ethical questions are given their most brutal twist by Kathryn Pauly Morgan in her article on elective cosmetic surgery.

As will by now be apparent, the resources drawn upon in these articles include feminist philosophers and male thinkers from within the tradition of Continental philosophy, often brought into productive exchange. As Elizabeth Grosz points out in her introduction, this raises questions of feminist strategies of reading. This Special Issue of *Hypatia* is rich, suggestive and thought-provoking, valuable as much for the questions which the authors leave unanswered as for those they explicitly address.

Sarah Chatwin  
University of Essex

## TWO REVIEWS OF AN IMPORTANT NEW BOOK ON EPISTEMOLOGY

Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, Open University Press, 1991.

In her very welcome latest book *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* Sandra Harding extends and develops the concerns first articulated in her earlier work *The Science Question in Feminism*. Whilst the broad framework adopted is similar to that of the earlier work, the arguments are pushed further in the new book, and they are very obviously informed by several years of work on the issues.

Harding's overall framework is a strong commitment to the thesis that all knowledge is a social and cultural product: she is no post-modernist, yet she is influenced by post-modernist claims. The social identity of scientists, she argues, is important to the method and the results of science. Scientists are not "inquiring minds" but individuals and social agendas. Science should be "read" as a text - the metaphors deployed by practising scientists are as important to the final result as the "objective" methodology.

Science as a whole, whether it is physics, biology or sociology displays an androcentric bias. This bias is evident not just in the paucity of numbers of women scientists, in the androcentric context of some evolutionary biology, for example, but also in the choice of research methods, the selection of problems. The idea that science can be objective, value-free and that scientists are disinterested seekers after the truth is an illusion. Scientists tend to be male, white and privileged, and these biases will enter their science

in any or all of the ways described.

Harding considers the three feminist positions that have been advocated by those who have taken on board some or all of the above claims. These are: feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory and postmodernist feminism. Feminist empiricism basically argues that bias results from bad science: if scientists practised their traditional methods better, then better, less biased science would result. However, Harding argues, feminist empiricism actually undercuts "traditional" scientific reasoning. For it argues that the "standpoint" from which one begins matters. This leads us, then, to Harding's own position - feminist standpoint theory. This is a reiteration of Harding's earlier viewpoint, but one which is informed by a serious consideration of the arguments that have been deployed against the position.

Three kinds of objection have been put to this kind of "standpoint" thinking. One is put by Jane Flax. She argues, in post-modern vein, that there cannot be a *single* way that "patriarchy" has permeated thinking. She finds problematic the idea of a feminist standpoint which is more true than previous (male) ones. None of us can speak for women because no such person exists except within a specific set of (already gendered) relations . . . She thinks that feminist theory more properly belongs in the terrain of Post-Modern philosophy.

The second kind of difficulty with feminist standpoint theories is articulated by Harding herself. She points out that some observers of African and Afro-American social thought have posited an African world view which, they imply, could be the origin of a successor science and epistemology. As Harding puts it: "What they call an African world view is suspiciously similar to what in the feminist literature is identified as a distinctively feminine world view" (Harding, *The Science Question*, p165). These theorists argue that, for example, the "rational economic man" of neoclassical economic theory is, in fact, *only* European. One writer, Vernon Dixon, (quoted in Harding) locates the key difference between the two world views in the "man to object" -v- the African "man to person" perception of the relationship between the "I" or self (Man) and everything which differs from the I or the self . . ." (Harding *ibid*, p168). In the Africanised world view, as in the "feminist standpoint" world, there is no gap between the self and the phenomenal world. African epistemology turns out to look just like feminine epistemology.

These African studies suggest that there may be a multiplicity of "standpoints" - Caribbean, Asian, Cypriot, lesbian and more - from each of whose perspectives, the "Enlightenment" world is the world of the dominant other. And it does, of course, render doubtful the claim that there is specifically *feminist* epistemological standpoint. What it suggests is that there may be certain epistemological features shared by any "standpoint" that emerges from a collectivity that traditionally has stood in the position of "other" in relation to a dominant oppressor.

Even this weaker perspective, however, is rendered questionable by the third type of criticism of feminist standpoint theory. According to this criticism - articulated by, amongst others, Jean Grimshaw - there are plenty of white male "oppressors" in the history of philosophy who have articulated philosophical views that stand in opposition

to the Enlightenment humanisms. The criticism runs thus: with regard to almost any position that has been described by feminists as a "masculine" viewpoint, there are white male philosophers who have criticised it. Therefore, it is no more possible to speak of a "masculine" epistemological or ethical or aesthetic standpoint than it is to refer to a "feminine" stance. "Masculine" types of philosophy are multiple and varied.

In her earlier work Harding does, in the chapter headed *In & After The Enlightenment*, attempt to deal with some of these objections, but her responses are somewhat unsatisfactory. Thus, she points to the fact that many standpoint theorists have been active in anti-racist struggles. No doubt this is true, but it does not overcome the fact that it is difficult to articulate the commonalities amongst women that give rise to a standpoint. She insists on the claim that standpoint theorists articulate the view that true, as well as false beliefs, are socially situated. And she describes the "post-modernist" tendencies in standpoint theory - the fact that standpoint theorists believe in situated and embodied rationality. None of these claims, however, circumvent the difficulties with standpoint theory.

In *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* Harding emphasises that standpoint theory is not about women's *experiences*, rather it is concerned with taking a "scientific" stance on women's lives. Taking the standpoint of "the dailiness of women's lives" will lead to different sciences and an alternative epistemology. However, this notion just does not ring true as a description of the lives of many western women today.

The true originality of Harding's latest book, I believe, lies in the chapter *Strong Objectivity* where she argues persuasively that "objectivism" - dispassionate, value-free science - is just the mirror image of epistemological relativism. Instead, she suggests, *true* objectivity requires both cultural relativism, and maximally liberatory social interests. "Objectivism" operationalises objectivity both too narrowly and too broadly - it is too narrow in that its "value-free" character perpetuates sexist, racist, classist values. Its "value-free" nature encourages a blindness about these values. But it is also too broad in that it requires the elimination of all social values and interests. However, she argues, not all values have the same bad effects on the results of research. *True* objectivity must involve the examination of *all* the possible causes of human beliefs, including the values of the believer. Strong objectivity, she argues, must extend the notion of scientific research to include powerful background beliefs.

This thesis is a tremendously powerful one. Yet, in my view, it sits uneasily with Harding's "standpoint theory". I continue to have two main reservations about the latter. First of all, the idea that there is *a* women's standpoint, however characterised, seems to be wholly implausible. Furthermore, the notion seems to suffer, like the Lukacsian Marxism from which it arises, from the problem that one needs to take up the position of the "woman" before one can see the "truth" or approximate truth of the theory it hypostatizes. However, some people are unable to take up the perspective; are therefore unable to see its plausibility, and will remain caught up in their previous biased outlook. Habermas' view of viewpoints being guided by interests, rather than the identity of the knower, seems to me to be much more helpful for Harding's overall aims. Harding, indeed, in the very interesting last section of her book, argues not only that a woman's standpoint includes that of African women, lesbian women in general,

working class women etc but also that it incorporates men who have adopted the view. I sympathise very strongly with her reason for wanting to uphold this latter stance - namely that despite the fact that all knowledge is socially situated, one should be able to decide the validity of a knowledge claim apart from who speaks it. The subject of knowledge, she says, is "multiple and contradictory". But this surely is one more reason for rejecting the idea of a standpoint. Indeed, it renders the idea nonsensical.

There is one final point I would like to make. Harding provides fascinating and deeply thought-provoking material on African science that challenges the Western story of the origins of modern science. She constantly encourages all of us to think about the other; to take up the stance of "the other". Yet one stance she does not explicitly recognise as her own is the very distinctly *American* vantage-point from which she writes. Most of her "others" are American "others" - African Americans, "European" Americans and American lesbians. The only chapter where she explicitly describes herself as a white, privileged, American woman is the one where she talks about "real" African science. This point, I think, must be made, because one "other" which is rarely mentioned is the contemporary European - maybe white and male - relative to the similarly placed white, male American. The white, female professional, academic American is privileged in all sorts of ways relative to her European counterparts - as European feminists are just beginning to recognise.

I do, therefore, have some reservations about the book. Reservations apart, however, I strongly recommend it to anyone who has the time to read it.

*Alison Assiter*  
*Polytechnic of North London.*

*Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* is very much a development of Sandra Harding's previous book, *The Science Question in Feminism* (OU Press 1986). As in the earlier book, here she provides a lucid assessment of various feminist epistemological positions, (mainly feminist empiricism and standpoint epistemology); and much of the subsequent discussion centres as before on the political and epistemological imperative to counteract *all* kinds of oppression and marginalisation, rather than focusing on gender alone.

The book also covers new ground, however. She develops much more fully, for example, her idea of "strong objectivity" - the placing of the researcher in the same critical frame as the object of research in order to gain reflexive awareness of the social values at play. But the most important departure is her revised stance on standpoint epistemology. (Those who were looking forward to a development of her "feminist postmodernism", therefore, may be disappointed by the concentration on standpoint, although there is a brief discussion of the ways in which standpoint theory is capable of meeting sections of the postmodernist agenda.) Having formerly charged standpoint theory with essentialism, Harding now defends it, arguing that it contains both progressive and regressive tendencies and that the important point is to encourage the one while blocking the other. The fact that this defence of standpoint theory takes place in the light of her former opposition to it renders her new argument all the more compelling, for she endeavours to leave no stone unturned in the defence of her position.

However, my reservation about Harding's rapprochement with standpoint theory is

that, while she undoubtedly displays a detailed appreciation of the said 'regressive' (essentialist) tendency, her arguments for the benefits of sticking to the progressive tendency do not achieve a genuine vindication of standpoint theory as an epistemology, since the core issue of essentialism remains *theoretically* unresolved. It remains unclear, for example, precisely how the sometimes contradictory standpoints of women of different race and class are to be "progressively" reconciled in the proposed standpoint of women, however much this standpoint is an abstraction from actual lives. (And precisely what kind of "socially mediated" abstraction is it?) It is not that she fails to defend her claims, but rather that she chooses not to explore the epistemological nitty-gritty, which I personally felt could have strengthened her position.

The material is well organised, and the chapters are designed to be self-sufficient enough to be read singly. This is a virtue which suits the busy reader, though it does have the consequence that, if one wishes to read the book as a whole, the argument becomes slightly reiterative. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* manages to be accessible to those unfamiliar with feminist arguments in epistemology and the philosophy of science without sacrifice to the complexity of the issues: a very worthwhile book for anyone interested in or studying feminist philosophy and research methodology.

Miranda Fricker  
Wolfson College, Oxford.

**Louise Levesque-Lopman, *Claiming Reality: Phenomenology and Women's Experience*. Rowman and Littlefield. p/b**

This book sets out to explore the possibility of a feminist phenomenological sociology. It discusses in some detail the basis of phenomenological sociology (the transformation of the ideas of Husserl in the work of Alfred Schutz), and the critiques that have been made of this discipline, before considering whether phenomenology is as such irredeemably rooted in male perspectives, or whether this is a contingent feature of phenomenological method and subject-matter. It then goes on to consider the possibility of developing a sociology which would do justice to women's experience and perspectives. The second half of the book provides a phenomenological account of the author's experience of childbirth. The hinge between the two parts is in chapter 6, where Levesque-Lopman defends a feminist methodology in which "the feminist researcher's own experiences are an integral part of the research and should be described as such" (19). Although this is now a fairly well-known aspect of feminist sociological research, I was a little startled by the implication which Levesque-Lopman appears to draw from this postulate, namely that feminist sociological research should focus on specifically female experiences, such as childbirth, menstruation and menopause. "There is no sociology of birth and yet it is of birth that we must theorise" (97). I think we could recognise that birth might be a legitimate area of sociological inquiry, without restricting inquiry into women's experiences to issues around reproduction. I suspect that Levesque-Lopman probably confuses methodological with substantive issues.

The readers most likely to gain something from this book are those interested in feminist standpoint theory. Since sociological versions of standpoint theory (e.g. Dorothy Smith) are influenced by ethnomethodology, and since ethnomethodology owes a lot to phenomenology, it could be helpful to have these links clearly and methodically spelt out. However, I found it a conscientious but somewhat dull book which never really got off the ground.

Margaret Whitford  
QMW, University of London.

## FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY IN NORWAY

Eva Mark and Annika Persson (eds), *Proceedings of Nordic Symposium for Women in Philosophy*, Nordic Network for Women in Philosophy No.1 (ISSN 1102 5468)

As Elin Svenneby reported in the last newsletter, women philosophers in the Nordic countries met together in October 1991 to set up a network. The present volume contains 1) the lectures given at the symposium; 2) an account of the meeting which set up the Nordic network; 3) a list of network members. The book is in English.

The theme of the symposium was Identity-Autonomy-Language. There were four papers. 'Reason and Identity' (Raili Kauppi, Finland) is concerned with the meaning of education. It identifies the task of philosophy as that of seeking an adequate concept of reason, and the object of education to find the self. Yet, "it seems clear that one generally is as such neither human in the sense of rationality nor oneself in the meaning of real self" (16). The gap between the idea and the actual is where education situates itself. "Philosophy - A Voice without Identification" (Kristen Klercke, Denmark) argues that "philosophy isn't socially accepted, because it isn't socially acceptable, if it is real philosophy" (20) while "the price for being socially accepted is to submit the philosophical voice to another object than its own" (24). Philosophy as conceptual therapy (e.g. applied ethics) or as holism (e.g. New Age movement) misses this essential dimension, which should be retained. The 'homelessness' of this conception of philosophy raises a question for the feminist philosopher (a question which is not discussed here). "I speak - Thus I Act?" (Elin Svenneby, Norway) puts forward quite an existentialist account of speech as action, where the difference of audience (female rather than male, say) makes a difference to the nature of the action. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, Svenneby questions the distinction between the life of the mind versus the life of action: "Either one is a philosopher (= contemplative) or one is not (conclusion: No feminist is a philosopher!)" (35). But if speech may (sometimes) be action, then what feminists discuss with each other may become political. And since politics is not about agreeing, but about differences, it is essential, Svenneby concludes, to know who one is if one wants to participate politically in discussion. "Praxis, hexis and habitus" (Ulla Holm, Sweden) wants to defend Aristotelian terms of "praxis" and "hexis" to talk about women's practical capacities and competences such as mothering. In order to talk about the metaethics of care, Holm argues, we have to call into question the modern ideal of autonomy, because of its blindness to gender, class, culture etc. and take seriously concepts like Bourdieu's "habitus" (which one could describe as "second nature") or "hexis" where the skills and practices are more consciously acquired; we have to consider the problems which both unconscious and conscious learning processes pose for notions of autonomy, particularly as far as the differences between boys and girls are concerned

The next symposium will be held in Trondheim, Norway in Spring 1992. For information contact Elin Svenneby, Nedre Beskvej 13, Nesset, N-1400 Ski, Norway.

Margaret Whitford  
QMW, University of London

**Biddy Martin, *Woman and Modernity: The (Life)styles of Lou Andreas-Salomé*, Cornell University Press p/b, £9.95.**

This is a fascinating book about a remarkable woman, and it does not fail to interest, even if Lou Andreas-Salomé seems a bit tangential to one's main concerns (not a feminist, not a contemporary figure etc.), because Biddy Martin *makes* her continuously interesting. Although it contains quite a bit of biographical information, it is basically an intellectual biography: "What interests me about Salomé is how she figures 'woman' and herself as woman in the effort to open up the conceptual, and for her social possibility of intellectual exchanges that were irreducible to the false alternatives of submission to men or imitation of them" (2). Martin reads Salomé's work as "the search for a speaking position that neither effaces nor remains caught within sexual difference" (171).

What I found both unnerving and fascinating was the way in which the debates of nineteenth-century German women - as described by Martin - seemed so similar to our contemporary debates. Are we really still oscillating endlessly between the same two poles, the demand for emancipation and equal rights which regards the claims of difference as dangerously complicit with patriarchy, versus the assertion of women's difference which regards the claims for equality as a dangerous masculinisation in the direction of the single (male) sex? It sounds just like an earlier version of the *Feminist Issues* collective versus Luce Irigaray. Salomé's analysis of the sacrificial basis of the social order, and her focus on the imaginary underpinning of theory - a preoccupation even before she met Freud and became involved with psychoanalysis - makes the new French feminisms seem much less novel and much more like the repetition of historical precedents than one might have imagined.

Martin's theoretical model is Foucauldian, but unobtrusively. (She is much easier to read than Judith Butler, for example, with whom she shares some of her theoretical basis.) And her remarks on the difficulties for women of friendships with men, on the conflicting claims of intellectual and sexual/affective life, and on the problems which arise when one idealises a real person rather than what they symbolically represent, offer ample material for reflection on the dilemmas of contemporary women. Highly recommended.

*Margaret Whitford*  
QMW, University of London.

Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*, Basic Books. £8.95 p/b  
Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press.  
p/b.

I'm really not the best person to be reviewing these two books, but since I haven't received review copies, I haven't been able to ask someone more suitable to review them.

I think they are both important and interesting, however, since feminist discussions in the wake of Carol Gilligan have been dominated by the "ethics of care" perspective with a concomitant suspicion of "justice" approaches, and it was certainly time someone tackled a feminist account of justice.

Okin's argument is that "until there is justice within the family, women will not be able to gain equality in politics, at work, or in any other sphere" (4). The institutionalisation of gender difference leads to a "justice crisis" in contemporary society. Yet most contemporary theorists of justice do not discuss gender as a justice issue. With the clarity that we remember from her earlier book, *Women in Western Thought*, Okin tackles the work of theorists like John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer and Robert Nozick. I felt that her critique was rather stronger than her positive proposals, which seemed to me somewhat inadequate. However, her argument in chapter 5 that the distinction between an ethic of justice and an ethic of care results in the polarisation and reinforcement of existing unjust gender divisions seems a step in the right direction.

Iris Marion Young's book is more ambitious and attempts to examine the implications for political philosophy of the claims of new social movements - not only feminism, but also Black liberation, Native American movements and gay and lesbian liberation. She argues that conceptions of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression, rather than focussing on distribution as a paradigm, which tends to assume a rather static conception of society. She points to a discrepancy between the language and concepts of contemporary philosophical theories of justice, and the language, concepts and claims of new social movements, such that political philosophy has not caught up with social change. Unlike Okin, Young has thoroughly absorbed modern critical theory, and brings many of its insights to bear on the questions that social change poses to questions of justice. e.g. in her critique of concepts such as impartiality, the general good and community. It is a much more substantial book than Okin's and will hopefully give rise to much substantial debate and discussion.

*If there is any reader who has worked on justice and/or care perspectives, and who has strong views on either of these books, the newsletter editors would be grateful for a brief 'position' paper setting out the issues and controversies.*

Margaret Whitford  
QMW, University of London.

***Women and Moral Identity*, Elisabeth J Porter, Allen & Unwin, 1991 p/b £10.95.**

In response to a radical critique of the existing parameters of ethical discourse, Porter's project is to reconceptualise the field in a way which will properly include women. Her perspective is explicitly feminist but the attempt to construct a "developmental concept of personhood that emphasises human mutuality" is intended to make feminist moral theory obsolete. In contrast to the certainties of male post-Enlightenment philosophy which take the self of moral agency as given, Porter emphasises a dynamic view of moral identity, the self-in-relations. Rejecting the notion of an oppositional element, she posits a dialectical relationship between self and other in which the middle ground is delineated as the site of a gender-inclusive morality.

While Porter's wish to avoid privileging the feminine in a way that merely emphasises polarities and flirts with essentialism is laudable, her own approach, despite the declared intention, never really moves beyond a dualist nature of thought. The very notion of a continuous dialectic presupposes opposing forces, and her aims is to reconcile rather than deconstruct them. And in an over-emphasised concern with material relations at the expense of discourse analysis, that ideal synthesis seems predicated more on wishful thinking than critical insight. While she flags the postmodern concern with the instability of all categories, and has much to say about difference, there is no mention of *differance* and its implications for a feminist ethics. Clearly she cannot conceive that the caring and connectedness between embodied selves on which she stakes her feminist virtue ethics could find a place in the deconstructionist agenda.

The difficulties that Porter skirts, the fragmentation of the subject and the implication of extreme relativism, clearly do pose enormous problems. Nonetheless her refusal of the problematic seems not so much provisional and strategic as uncomprehending. Postmodern fluidity is seen in almost exclusively negative terms and she retreats swiftly to the safety of narrative accounts, unified subjects, the value of experience and controlled multiplicity. What Porter fails to recognise is that to stress the radical provisionality of something is not to say that nothing can be constructed around it. While she is right to insist on the need to challenge the material guarantors of power, an adequate feminist ethics requires too that we should contest and change the discursive basis of authority. Porter has given us a starting point, but not, I think, a thorough reconceptualisation.

Margrit Shildrick  
University of Warwick

**Jennifer Ring, *Modern Political Theory and Contemporary Feminism : A Dialectical Analysis*. State University of New York Press, \$49.50 and \$16.95.**

In this very interesting and well-argued book, Jennifer Ring puts forward a concept of "minimalist dialectics" : "Minimalist dialectics is an effort to salvage some central traditional philosophical concepts for feminist theorists, an insistence that feminist theory need not invent the wheel, but can make use of significant work that has already been done in an effort to understand the world." (20) At the heart of minimalist

dialectics is the idea that conflict is not only inevitable but that it is essential, the motor of understanding. Ring thus takes issue with feminist epistemologists such as Jagger, Harding and Fox Keller, on the grounds that all three minimise the role of conflict, and fall back too quickly on a desire for harmony between subjectivity and objectivity. Against postmodernism, Ring intends to keep the terms "objectivity" and "subjectivity", while examining the variety of conceptions that these terms cover, but her dialectical account does not see the two as separable, set over against each other. Rather their encounter and conflict is the site of the epistemological drama.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the shortcomings of Mill and his empiricist epistemology from the point of view which she is adopting. Mill's empiricist methodology, she argues, will not allow for the kind of radical political change that feminism requires. Chapters 5 and 6 represent an attempt to use the dialectical *methods* of Hegel and Marx while not necessarily accepting their *substance*. Inherent in their methods, she thinks, is the idea of risk or danger - the possibility that once you put your ideas and arguments into play against someone else, you risk the total loss of self-certainty. "The true enemy of dialectical method is the inability to live with anxiety, that is, with the absence of certitude" (145). "Dialectical knowledge is a *process*, calling for challenge to the stability of all the subject regards as secure" (146). "Moments of terrible uncertainty . . . are the very core of dialectics" (170). Thus she is critical of both Hegel and Marx when they betray their own method, by assuming certainties (about women, or nature, for example) at crucial points. "The radical potential of dialectics is that it cannot anticipate necessary substantive outcomes" (161).

The aim of the salvage operation is to separate epistemological method from political substance, so that dialectical method can be put to feminist purposes. Ring's argument is that method rather than substance is the more pressing need for feminist theory. "What is the structure of knowledge that will most effectively encourage political change?" (57). The point about change is that it is unforeseeable and unpredictable in its outcome, and this is why feminism needs an epistemology adequate to this understanding. I found this a challenging and exhilarating account of epistemological method; for me, in its stress on the inevitability of conflict and uncertainty, it was more appealing than the more militant accounts of feminist standpoint theory, and certainly a challenge to other feminist epistemologies. Highly recommended, whatever your epistemological stance.

Margaret Whitford  
QMW, University of London.

**Jana Sawicki: *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body*, Routledge, London, 1991. £30 h/b; £8.99 p/b.**

In the section "Personal Reflections" that begins this book, Jana Sawicki offers a brief classification of feminist appropriations of Foucault: there are those, she argues who use his analysis of power in order to highlight the ways in which women's bodies and subjectivities are disciplined and thus dominated by particular technologies of power; and there are those who turn to Foucault in order to show how "individuals who are the targets of this power can play a role in its constitution *and* in its demise" (14). Sawicki

places herself in the latter category. Her main focus, therefore, in *Disciplining Foucault* is on discourses and practices of struggle and resistance. In attempting to outline the radical political implications of a turn to Foucault, Sawicki promises a development of Foucault's scattered and somewhat diffuse comments on resistance. What appears, however, is less a systematic exposition of Foucault's thoughts on resistance than an application of those dispersed remarks to particular feminist struggles in order to show that a Foucauldian feminism can still be a liberatory feminism. It is here that I have some problems with Sawicki's choice of language.

Turning to Foucault means that resistance is necessarily posited as historically and contextually specific; as requiring contingent judgement rather than "a priori theoretical pronouncement" (43), and that any consequent reforms are always susceptible to reabsorption by the dominant ensemble of power relations. It clearly does not imply liberation or emancipation in the traditional sense - as freedom from power - but simply transformation within relations of power. Sawicki, however, continues, unhelpfully I think, to use the vocabulary of emancipation and/or liberation to describe this process, and in so doing introduces ambiguity into her argument. Resistance and genealogy may indeed lead to radical, pluralist politics, but not, I think, to emancipation in the traditional sense.

Aside from these qualms about vocabulary, on the whole I was persuaded by Sawicki's account about the potential of a Foucauldian feminism, and in particular, of the critical facility of such a feminism. For me, one of the strengths of Foucault's work is its problematisation of dominant modes of understanding and practice. The application of this criticality to feminist debates was one of the most positive features of *Disciplining Foucault*. (See chapter four on feminist and new reproductive technologies especially.)

One final point: the most persistent criticism that I have of this book concerns its format. It consists of a number of essays which often overlap quite considerably in both content and argumentation, giving an overall impression of lack of synthesis. The worst excesses of this can be found in chapters one and two where the same material on the American feminist debates on sexuality recurs. In this regard, it is perhaps a volume to read selectively, rather than systematically. It is, however, definitely worth dipping into.

Moya Lloyd  
Wolverhampton Polytechnic.

**Nancy Tuana, *Woman and the History of Philosophy*. Paragon Issues in Philosophy Series, Paragon House, New York. \$14.95**

Tuana is concerned with the marginalisation of feminist theory in philosophy; she provides analyses of eight canonical philosophers to show that we cannot deal with the gender bias of philosophy by simply "adding women", since gender bias is woven into the very categories of philosophy, and a discourse of exclusion is at work even when the philosopher does not mention the topic of woman.

Chapter 2 compares Plato and Aristotle to show that they have two different methods for defending the premise of women's inferiority. Despite their differences, they both share two central tenets, firstly that the male is the true form of humankind, and secondly, that woman is intellectually deficient. Chapter 3 compares Descartes and Rousseau to show that whether the conception of reason excludes the emotions or includes them, rationality is still conceptualised as male. In Descartes's case, this was despite his explicit intentions, whereas in Rousseau's case, "to remove the sexism from Rousseau's thought we would essentially have to revise his entire philosophy" (45). Chapter 4 compares Kant and Hume to show that women are viewed by philosophy as inferior moral agents. In Kant's case, this is because he defines woman in such a way that she is incapable of acting morally. In Hume's case, the moral person is also in practice gendered male, but Tuana argues that Hume's view of women is not inherent to the structure of his moral theory. Chapter 5 compares Locke and Hegel to show that philosophy desires to confine women to a subordinate role in the state, essentially secondary to the husband. In Locke's case this led to inconsistency with his arguments for consensual political authority. In Hegel's case, despite his difference from Locke in other respects, the conclusion is similar : women should be confined to the family.

This book synthesises feminist work of the last two decades on the major figures of the European philosophical canon. Each chapter is followed by suggestions for further reading. It would be a most useful coursebook for feminists teaching "feminism and philosophy" in fairly traditional philosophy departments.

Margaret Whitford  
QMW, University of London.

Paragon House is also bringing out a collection entitled *Feminism and Philosophy: Essential Readings in Theory, Reinterpretation and Application*, ed. Nancy Tuana, and *Philosophy and Feminist Criticism*, ed. Eve Browning Cole (in the Paragon Issues in Philosophy Series). Nancy Tuana's book *Misbegotten Man: Scientific, Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman's Nature* is forthcoming from Indiana University Press.

## LETTERS TO EDITORS

Dear SWIP Newsletter Editors,

Perhaps you could print, in your next Newsletter, the enclosed correction version of my review of Margaret Whitford's book. As printed it was quite unintelligible! Apologies from me to Margaret and readers for being so late with the review that I sent it in in handwriting. May I also make a gentle suggestion that the Newsletter might be proof-read before printing? It is otherwise excellent, and many thanks for the hard work of the Editors.

Yours sincerely

Kathleen Lennon  
University of Hull

**Margaret Whitford *Luce Irigaray, Philosophy in the Feminine*, Routledge 1991. 241 pp.**

Margaret Whitford's book on Irigaray was published this summer. I, amongst many I would guess, have found Irigaray's work daunting to approach, and eagerly awaited this book to ease the path. Hopefully this newsletter will receive other discussions of the book from readers who can agree with or take issue with Margaret's interpretations from their own reading of Irigaray herself.

For those readers who come from a very different philosophical tradition from her own, there are two main hurdles which have to be overcome in confronting Irigaray's writing. One is her language, which is metaphorical and in its own way mythical. This use of language is central to her philosophical project, and there is no way of neatly and literally reconstructing her positions into the orderly argument form some of us cannot help but be attached to. The second hurdle, for those unused to its background, is her use of a psycho-analytic model to interrogate philosophical positions. What Margaret's book helps us to see is the inter-connectedness of these two aspects of Irigaray's project.

Central here is the distinction between, and interdependence of, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The Imaginary is, most minimally, the realm of unconscious phantasy (although the book alerts us to richer and more complex uses of the term). The Symbolic is the conceptual and theoretical framework in which we articulate our philosophical, and other, views. To uncover the Imaginary informing our Symbolic requires attention to the language, images etc. with which a position is articulated. An example here would be Irigaray's discussion of Plato's cave. We tend to assume that we can purify this and other philosophical accounts, of their imagery, re-articulate their theories of, e.g., the sensible and the conceptual, and then, independently of their expression, assess their validity. Irigaray, however, uncovers the imaginary underlying such philosophical positions, on which they remain dependent: the association of the sensible with the female, the residue which is left behind on the route to the transcendent, the invisible condition of its possibility. She also opens up the possibility of a transformation of this

imaginary with new images and new myths, which carries with it the possibility of a re-articulated symbolic, e.g., sensible and embodied transcendent subjects displaying a rationality which is fertile and embracing a model of knowledge which is "connubial", rather than "predatory" and "grasping" (p219). It's almost unnerving to see how this method can work in producing new positions within the symbolic realm.

"Irigaray is dealing with a single problem, in its multiple aspects; the absence of and exclusion of woman/women from the symbolic/social order, and their representation as nature" (p.170). In this she shares a starting point with Lacan who sees 'woman' in the symbolic order as characterised in terms of a 'lack' or an absence, the residue which culture transcends, that which lies outside of discourse. Irigaray, however, unlike Lacan, does not regard the symbolic order as closed. She wants to reclaim "woman" for women, real women who do, of course, appear in the social order and utilise the symbolic one. She therefore sees the urgent task as the transformation of 'woman' in the symbolic order; to enable women to speak as women. This change in the symbolic requires a corresponding female imaginary: new myths, ideals and images. It is in the context of this project that we can place her use of the imagery of the female body to suggest new ways of relating between women and women, and women and men. It is not, however, a project that she can promote alone. It must be a collective endeavour.

It is an endeavour however which insists on sexual difference. In this respect Irigaray has gained many critics, and been regarded as essentialist for insisting on a distinctive female imaginary, and a distinctive voice for 'woman' within the symbolic. Within the interpretation of this book, however, Irigaray is neither a biological or psychic essentialist. The woman's voice on which she insists is something to be created rather than uncovered. Contemporary moves away from the masculine subject to multiple subjectivities are however resisted. They simply by-pass the possibility of woman as subject. This position in the symbolic order has to be established before multiplicity can be celebrated - otherwise women have simply been silenced again.

Irigaray's project, as presented in this work is an exhilarating one, even for those of us who may accept less of the Lacanian account of our current symbolic order than she does. This book is informative and challenging and will lead to a much wider discussion and appreciation of Irigaray's work. Don't miss it!

*Kathleen Lennon  
University of Hull*

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Jean Graybeal *Language and "the Feminine" in Nietzsche and Heidegger* Indiana University Press.

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