



APA NEWSLETTER ON

Feminism and Philosophy

Ann Garry, Guest Editor

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FROM THE EDITOR

Joan Callahan

Ann Garry has generously served as contributing guest editor of this issue of the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, which focuses on the question of what criticism between and among feminists should (and should not) look like. We all hope that these essays will invite responses from the *Newsletter's* readers.

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

The *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* is sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women. The *Newsletter* is designed to provide an introduction to recent philosophical work that addresses issues of gender. None of the varied philosophical views presented by authors of *Newsletter* articles necessarily reflects the views of any or all of the members of the Committee on the Status of Women, including the editor(s) of the *Newsletter*, nor does the committee advocate any particular type of feminist philosophy. We advocate only that serious philosophical attention be given to issues of gender and that claims of gender bias in philosophy receive full and fair consideration.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of the *Newsletter* is to publish information about the status of women in philosophy and to make the resources of feminist philosophy more widely available. The *Newsletter* contains discussions of recent developments in feminist philosophy and related work in other disciplines, literature overviews and book reviews, suggestions for eliminating gender bias in the traditional philosophy curriculum, and reflections on feminist pedagogy.

It also informs the profession about the work of the APA Committee on the Status of Women. All articles submitted to the *Newsletter* must be limited to 10 double-spaced pages and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language. Please submit four copies of essays, prepared for anonymous review. References should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

2. **Book Reviews and Reviewers:** If you have published a book that is appropriate for review in the *Newsletter*, please have your publisher send us a copy of your book. We are always in need of book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send a CV and letter of interest, including mention of your areas of research and teaching.

3. **Where to Send Things:** Please send all articles, comments, suggestions, books, and other communications to the editor: Professor Joan Callahan, Department of Philosophy, 1415 Patterson Tower, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506-0027 <buddy@pop.uky.edu>.

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

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

of The APA Committee on the Status of Women, January 2001

Communication with the National Office

We would like to thank Richard Bett, Interim Executive Director, and Jerry Schneewind, Chair of the Board of Officers, for their ongoing efforts to support dialogue between the Diversity Committee Chairs and the National Office. Richard and Jerry hosted a meeting for all Diversity Committee Chairs at the Eastern APA. These meetings enable the Chairs to discuss any questions or concerns with the APA Board Chair and the Executive Director, and provide a forum for communication between the Diversity Committees.

We would like to welcome Elizabeth Radcliffe, incoming Executive Director of the APA, who also joined the meeting. We look forward to working with Elizabeth and congratulate her on her new position.

Successful Initiatives

1. Committee on Inclusiveness

Last year, the Diversity Committee Chairs forwarded a motion to the Board of Officers urging the creation of a Standing Committee charged with increasing the diversity of the profession. In response to our request, the Board voted unanimously to establish a new Committee on Inclusiveness in the Profession, and voted, again unanimously, to recommend that it become a Standing Committee, which means that the Chair of the Committee would be a member of the Board.

We are delighted that the proposal has received such overwhelming support from the Board. The Diversity Committee Chairs argued for the importance of such a Standing Committee on the ground that it would make the diversity of the profession a charge of the APA. It is our belief that addressing the problems of underrepresentation in the profession should be a responsibility of the APA as a whole and requires the insights of a Committee who can study the complexities of diversification across the various groups currently represented by the Diversity Committees. This would enable the Diversity Committees, who are already overworked, to focus attention on the specific needs of our constituencies, knowing that issues of intersectionality will be taken up by this Standing Committee. It is also our belief, that as a Standing Committee, this Committee would have more power to effect change and a better understanding of the most effective avenues for doing so. We are also pleased that the charge of the Committee on Inclusiveness includes working in conjunction with the Diversity Committees.

The Charge of the Committee on Inclusiveness is the following: The Committee is charged with increasing the inclusiveness of the profession. It is responsible for assessing and reporting on the status of underrepresented groups in the profession; advising the Board and members of the Association of ways in which inclusiveness can be increased; developing and carrying out its own projects to promote inclusiveness; and working in conjunction with the Diversity Committees.

Because creation of a new Standing Committee requires an amendment to the Constitution, the proposal must be approved by all three Divisions. The proposal will be discussed at each divisional business meeting, and then voted on via mail ballot.

2. APA JobSeeker Database

Another idea that emerged from the first meeting of Diversity Chairs, which the CSW initiated in December 1998, was a website for job searches. The APA responded to this idea by creating the JobSeeker Database. The APA provides the following description of the database:

The JobSeeker Database is designed to give individuals who are on the job market an additional method of promoting themselves to potential employers. It is also designed to give potential employers a means of identifying individuals who may be particularly well-suited for a position, and thereby allow them to inform those individuals about their opening and to invite them to apply if interested. It is not meant to replace the traditional avenues of posting or responding to job listings, but rather to enhance the traditional process.

For more information, take a look at the JobSeeker webpage at <http://www.apa.udel.edu/JobS/index.html>.

Ongoing Initiatives

1. Study of the Status of Women in the Profession

The APA has organized a Committee charged with developing a qualitative and quantitative study of the profession with attention to issues of diversity. This is another initiative supported by the Diversity Committees, who have asked that the study include attention to issues of diversity and an active attempt to gather information from members of the profession, faculty and graduate students alike, and in some cases even graduate students and faculty of underrepresented groups who have left the profession. The Committee includes: Myles Brand, Chair, Jackie Kegley, Bill Lawson, George Leaman, Marcelo Sabates, Naomi Scheman, Teddy Seidenfeld, and Alison Wylie.

The APA has considered making this study a pilot project of the American Academy study of the 63 learned societies in the humanities and is discussing this possibility with John D'Arms, President of the American Council of Learned Societies. Although this study will not be completed as quickly as we had initially hoped, becoming a part of this project would enhance the value and impact of the study.

2. Mentoring Project

Although the APA approved the possibility of developing a website similar to the JobSeekers database to assist in connecting assistant professors and graduate students to appropriate mentors, the Diversity Committees are still discussing the most efficacious method for supporting mentoring.

3. Ombudsperson

In response to concerns about harassment, the Board has appointed an ombudsperson, Leslie Francis. Leslie Francis and I are currently discussing responses to two charges that have been filed with us: one a charge of a sexual assault that occurred at the Eastern APA meetings and another a charge of gender discrimination in a tenure/promotion proceeding.

Unsuccessful Initiatives

1. Staff Person for Diversity Committees

The CSW, together with the other Diversity Committees, requested that a staff person be devoted to the Committees. At the Eastern APA meeting in 1999, and again in New Mexico at the Pacific Meeting in 2000, we were told that the National Office cannot hire such a person because of space and budget limitations, but there was discussion that the National Office might hire a staff person who will deal with data.

The CSW would like to see a yearly effort on the part of the National Office to track information relevant to assessing the standing of women in the profession, including the number of women who participate in the APA meeting programs; the number of women officers throughout the APA; women on program committees and on the boards of major philosophical publications; and so forth.

We were told at the Eastern APA meetings in 2000 that the plans to hire a staff person had been postponed indefinitely, although we were assured that the APA would be putting energy and resources into the study of the

profession and would make sure that the study included resources for regularly updating data.

New Initiatives

1. Workshops on Mentoring

At the joint meeting of the Diversity Chairs at the Eastern APA, we discussed the fact that many well-meaning colleagues of minorities and other underrepresented groups are often uninformed about the problems facing their colleagues and graduate students. We proposed a series of workshops, to be held at the divisional meetings, providing advice concerning issues of diversity and mentoring.

2. Hiring and Retention of Minority Faculty and Graduate Students

Another topic raised at the joint meeting of the Diversity Chairs were problems facing departments wishing to hire, recruit, and retain minority faculty and graduate students. The Diversity Chairs are planning a series of recommendations, perhaps to be posted on the APA webpage, concerning these issues.

CSW-sponsored APA sessions for 2000 and sessions planned so far for 2001

Pacific Division 2000: "What's Sex Got to Do With It?" explored new approaches to sexual harassment and focused on the work of Vicki Schultz, a professor at Yale Law School. It was co-sponsored with the Committee on Law and Philosophy. The speakers were Vicki Schultz, Larry Altman, and Leslie Francis, with Eva Kittay as Chair. This was an excellent session, generating a very lively discussion.

Central Division 2000: "Feminist Ethics: A FEAST" introduced a new organization FEAST (Feminist Ethics and Social Theory). The speakers were Allison Jaggar, Claudia Card, Hilde Nelson, and Diana Meyers, with Eva Kittay as Chair. In spite of its unfortunate timing (on Easter morning), this session drew a very large audience and brought about excellent discussions. It was one of our most successful sessions.

Eastern Division 2000: This session, organized by Martha Nussbaum and co-sponsored with the Committee on International Cooperation was devoted to "Multiculturalism and Indian Women." Speakers included Zoya Hasan (Political Science, Jawarhalal Nehru University), Amrita Basu (Political Science and Women's Studies, Amherst College), Martha Nussbaum, and Uma Narayan, with Eva Kittay as Chair. This was an extremely popular session.

CSW NSF Session, Eastern Division 2000: This session was part of "Philosophical Explorations of Science, Technology and Diversity," an APA project funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation. Speakers included Sandra Harding, Alison Wylie, and Naomi Zack, with Nancy Tuana as Chair. The session drew a large audience and resulted in a lively discussion of issues of science, race, and diversity.

Pacific Division 2001: "Diversity and Its Discontents," will include papers by Victoria Davion, Marilyn Friedman, Diana Tietjens Meyers, Naomi Zack, with Barbara Andrew as Chair.

CSW NSF Session, Pacific Division 2001: This session will be part of "Philosophical Explorations of Science, Technology and Diversity," an APA project funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation. Speakers will include Lynn

Hankinson Nelson and Nancy Tuana, with Linda Martin Alcoff as Chair.

Welcomes

I'd like to welcome Jane Kneller and Georgia Warnke who will officially join the Committee in July.

A Special Thanks and Farewell

Eva Feder Kittay, the outgoing Chair of the Committee on the Status of Women, deserves a special commendation for her vision and insight in directing the committee over the last three years. It was thanks to Eva that the Diversity Chairs began to meet together to discuss common concerns and ways to collaborate around our similarities and our differences. It was also her idea to have these meetings sponsored by the APA, an idea resulting in our regular meetings with the APA Executive Director and Chair of the Board of Officers. For all that she has done to support diversity in the profession, we thank her.

Very respectfully submitted,

Nancy Tuana

APA COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, 2000-2001

Chair:

Nancy Tuana (2003)

Members:

Susan A. Brison (2002)

Ann Cudd (2001)

Nancy Fraser (2002)

Laura Duhan Kaplan (2003)

Jane Kneller (2004, incoming July 2001)

Diana T. Meyers (2003)

Debra Satz (2001)

Charlene Haddock Seigfried (2003)

Georgia Warnke (2004, incoming July 2001)

Cynthia Willet (2002)

Ex Officio

Joan Callahan, Editor of the Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy

SYMPOSIUM: INTRA-FEMINIST CRITICISM AND THE “RULES OF ENGAGEMENT”

Introduction: Intra-Feminist Criticism and the “Rules of Engagement”

Ann Garry

California State University, Los Angeles

Both the substance and the manner of conflicts and criticism among feminists have engaged feminist philosophers frequently in recent decades. Sometimes the conflicts concern methods or types of philosophical approach, for example, modern or postmodern, or the possibility and value of analytical feminism. At other times the issues concern style, venue, a “demand for relevance,” other political or lifestyle differences, and so on. Although these discussions sometimes start after one feminist has criticized another in a way that has received public attention, the issues considered always go far beyond a particular controversy. Such discussions have taken place, for example, on electronic lists, at regional meetings of groups such as the Society of Women in Philosophy (SWIP), in essays in anthologies and journals, and on panels sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women and published here in the *Newsletter*.¹

Two workshops featuring panel discussions on intra-feminist criticism were held during 1999-2000. Bat-Ami Bar On led the first at the Feminist Ethics Revisited conference, hosted by the University of South Florida in October 1999. That workshop featured very short informal presentations by a number of feminist philosophers from several generations and valuable free-flowing conversation. The second took place at the Pacific Division of the APA in Albuquerque in April 2000, organized by the Society for Analytical Feminism (SAF) and co-sponsored by SAF and SWIP. The speakers were Marilyn Frye, Ann Garry, Naomi Scheman, and Naomi Zack, with Garry also serving as Chair. Martha Nussbaum was invited to be a panelist, but was unable to attend. Papers from all invited panelists are included in this symposium.

The authors address questions that one would expect as well as expand the discussion in fruitful philosophical ways. Are there any special “rules of engagement” that apply to feminist philosophers that do not apply to others engaged in intellectual exchanges? If so, why is this the case and what are the “rules”? What does the use of this military phrase in a feminist discussion mean anyway? If there are no special rules for feminists, what virtues should any critic exemplify? What special obligations and commitments do feminists have to the field of feminist philosophy and feminist intellectual communities more generally? What epistemological and value assumptions do we make when we take a point of view from which to critique another and

when we see ourselves and our experiences as normative? What does it mean to have respect and self-respect, to be fair, and to examine the meaning and status of a commitment to rationality and reasoned debate?

Naomi Zack believes that the same set of rules should apply to all intellectual criticism and that the problems we face as critics are general moral problems and require the development of intellectual virtues. She proposes an anarchic ideal of the critic (and the philosopher) as *auteur*. Although she believes no subject matter or approach should be prescribed, Zack advocates some ground rules for critics: first, that a critic respect the context in which an author has chosen to work, and, second, that the critic forget about the author's gender or ethnicity, unless she has made it the subject of her work.

Marilyn Frye emphasizes her concern with disengagement among feminists—for example, critique in which we distance ourselves as “good feminists” from the others (too radical, too likely to lose their jobs) and writing that fails to engage or even acknowledge the feminist forbearers and contexts of our work. Frye advocates a sustained and generous published critique that constructs and maintains the feminist genealogy of feminist thought.

Ann Garry, in the guise of Ms. Feminist Philosopher Manners, offers suggestions for behavior that exemplify respect and fair treatment among feminist philosophers and other intellectuals.

Martha Nussbaum argues that respect and self-respect imply that feminists speak candidly and expose our true positions to others for reasoned critique. She explains what she personally has tried to do to make feminist philosophy available to the public outside the academy, to show respect and concern for the seriousness of feminist issues, and at the same time to evaluate feminist philosophers as wrong or misguided when she believes they are.

Naomi Scheman, in an epistemologically oriented essay, argues that Nussbaum has not taken her account of the openness and vulnerability of reason far enough. Scheman advocates that we remain suspicious of our own confidence in our views, assumptions, and feelings about what is reasonable and that we examine how we make choices about which challenges to our beliefs to take seriously. Through examples she illustrates the difficulties in balancing our openness to reasonable argument with our own conceptions of reasonableness when it is precisely the conceptions and standards of reasonableness that others call into question.

We hope that readers will consider the essays in this symposium a springboard for their own thinking about these and related issues. We look forward to responses.

Note

1. See, for example, the essays by Sally Haslanger, Virginia Held and Naomi Scheman in the symposium, “Doing Philosophy as a Feminist,” *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 91:1 (1992), 112-120.

Intra-Feminist Criticism and Intellectual Virtue

Naomi Zack

State University of New York, Albany

I don't think that the rules for intra-feminist criticism ought to differ from the rules for philosophical criticism generally or the rules for interdisciplinary criticism, either within philosophy or between philosophy and other fields, or criticism between any discipline and ordinary life, or even within ordinary life.

I have an *auteur* view of both philosophy and critique, which in crude terms is also a free-speech and free-choice view. I think that philosophy and critique are unruly and a-paradigmatic enterprises and that individuals ought to be allowed to pursue topics of interest to them that they think are of merit, in whatever way they can, which employers, students, audiences and other professionals will (more or less freely) accept. No one should be coerced into following a particular school or a specified line of connection to other endeavors, and no one should be prevented from following what she chooses, or blazing out on her own. This entails freedom from relevance, and I will say more about that soon.

My anarchic ideal of autonomy for humanistic intellectual work is not a state of chaos because I am assuming the formation of interlocking and ad hoc communities for communication and understanding. It is within those virtual communities, which have stated goals of arriving at the truth in a progressive way, or in expressing particular perspectives, or achieving a common practical goal, that ground rules for criticism are necessary.

A primary ground rule is that criticism be contextualized. One ought to criticize the work of others with respect for the context in which they have chosen to do their work, and expect the same treatment for one's own choices. Different contexts create divisions of labor, such as theory, ideology, rhetoric or activism.

I don't think that all academic feminists, or any other philosophical group, necessarily have the obligation to change the world, although they may choose to do so. I am skeptical of broad charges to change the world, because the world can be changed on many levels and it is impossible to precisely time the change that one thinks ought to take place, on any level, especially on a level different from the context in which one works. The world in this sense is like the stock market. You may believe, on the soundest fundamentals that it is bound to crash, as I do (although more on general economic principles than specific corporate fundamentals), but what we do not know is when this will happen. And even though I believe the market will eventually crash, eradicating untold billions of dollars in wealth, I also must allow for the possibility that the contemporary multinational global economy is a new financial order, capable of perpetually creating the type of wealth that will keep the market buoyant. Similarly, I may know that a system of beliefs is right or wrong and likely therefore, to come into history or pass out of it. But this does not mean that it is possible to predict exactly when or how it will happen. I must also allow for the possibility that the system of beliefs in question will have weaker or stronger grounds for adherence in the future, as well as for the possibility that

the context in which the beliefs are relevant will radically change.

Such principles of contextualization apply to intra-feminist critique and, more specifically, to issues of race within feminism. It is not clear from current discussions about essentialism that there is or can be one feminism to represent the ideas, goals and interests of all women. Neither is it clear that all feminisms have something in common. Still, the label is convenient because it signals hopes for liberation and awareness of a history of oppression. Such hopes and awareness would be expected to motivate feminist work, and form a background context for it. It is also the case that as feminists choose their subjects, individually or in groups, acceptable contexts sub-divide and multiply.

How does race enter into these principles of contextualization? I recently edited an anthology, *Women of Color and Philosophy*. The contributors fall into all nonwhite categories and all are women. Out of 15,000 philosophers, I estimate that there are, at most, 30 women of color. I ended up working with 12 for the collection, including myself. I was uncomfortable with the project because its existence may seem to be a claim for special status for women of color who are philosophers. On the other hand, I was personally and anecdotally aware that women of color in philosophy are likely to experience varied kinds of intersectional discrimination and exclusion, on the basis of gender, race and the subjects in which they specialize. I thought that women, as white women, have received attention in philosophy, as have nonwhite men, and that even though the categories of race and gender are fraught with problems as unified categories, it is fair—just, that women of color in philosophy take their place in the liberatory panoply of identity categories. So, that is a context and I think as such it should be accepted so that criticism of individual work is specific to its content. Some of the work currently engaged by women of color in philosophy is irrelevant in terms of social issues. But I don't think that social relevance is a good basis on which to construct criticism in this case because social relevance has not been a requirement for acceptable philosophical work among those who are not-female and not "of-color." It isn't fair to select some people for criticism on the grounds of relevance when others are excused. And it isn't clear, given my *auteur* theory, that relevance is an unqualified good. If someone is committed to her work, I find that enough to satisfy the kinds of things that are supposed to be satisfied by demands for relevance, namely, concern for something of wider benefit than personal advantage. There are harms in imposing relevance on scholarship by minorities. The requirement for relevance may be too finely calibrated with assumptions about short-term political goals. If the broader political context changes, those goals may no longer be desirable. Also, a predetermined standard of relevance makes it too easy for those who do not belong to the disadvantaged group to appropriate the concerns of that group while its members continue to be excluded from the domain of discourse.

Finally, I want to emphasize the general importance of not making individuals the objects of criticism in a way that is irrelevant to the work they do. This is another kind of relevance that is close to contextualization. Hume said be a philosopher but remember to be a man. I would like to say

be a critic, that is, a philosopher, but forget that the *auteurs* of the work you are criticizing are women, or men, or white, or nonwhite, because the context of the work itself should be more narrow than the context of the person. So, as another important ground rule for criticism, I suggest we invert Hume: address the philosopher and forget that she is a woman, or a nonwhite woman—unless she has made that a subject of her work.

Since content is the proper object of criticism, it is very important that criticism be based on a good-faith understanding of that content. When critics willfully misunderstand the work they criticize or present simplified and distorted interpretations of it in order to get their own work going, they are not furthering communication in the virtual communities I mentioned earlier. Distortion and willed misunderstanding are clumsy displays of the fact that all criticism ultimately reflects on the critic. Good work will weather bad criticism and bad criticism not only rents the fabric of a community of communication, but disables the virtues of the critic. At issue are the intellectual virtues.

Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, distinguishes between intellectual virtue, which is the result of teaching, and moral virtue, which is the result of habit.¹ However, there are intellectual virtues that have a moral dimension, because they reflect on one's character and their practice or neglect helps or harms others. In what follows, I will indicate how intellectual virtues, in this moral sense, are relevant to criticism.

A virtue in the Aristotelian sense is a form of excellence, which is a disposition to act in ways that "have" the virtue. The apparent circularity of this definition results from an equivocation in the meaning of virtue. When an action "has" a virtue or is virtuous, this refers to an ideal in the mind which we see the action as instantiating, or use to label the action. We do the same thing when we say that a person is virtuous in a specific way, for example, courageous. But, Aristotle's point was that there is no substance or quality in actions or people, which are virtues. Rather, our ideals in the mind are correctly applied when people have a disposition to behave in ways that we can judge to be in conformity with the ideals. Courage is a virtue that we can all imagine as though it were some kind of thing, that is, an existent substance or quality. But in reality, someone who is courageous is courageous because she performs courageous actions, and any one of her courageous actions is courageous because it is performed by a courageous person. A courageous person must regularly behave courageously when courage is called for, and each time she does something courageous, she must know that she is doing something courageous, choose to do it for the right reasons, and do the right thing. Indeed, she has become courageous by performing courageous actions in this way, in the past. Thus, one courageous act, no matter how heroic, would not be sufficient to establish the virtue of courage.

Criticism requires virtues in this sense, because quite often there are feelings of anger about views one believes to be wrong, or temperamental dispositions to respond in certain ways to views or actions to which one objects in others. Thus, what Aristotle says about anger as a practical virtue, also applies to anger as an intellectual virtue:

Any one can get angry—that is easy...but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right

time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for every one, nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble.²

Criticism, especially intra-feminist criticism (because critics are often most harsh on those most like themselves), is an opportunity to develop many intellectual virtues. These virtues can be developed as settled traits of one's character, in intellectual contexts, just as in practical ones: honesty, integrity, diligence, fairness, generosity, loyalty, tolerance, consideration, and so forth. Such virtues may build on talents that seem to be "given" in unequal amounts, but generally, a disposition to behave in a certain way that is the result of choices made over a period of time, distinguishes virtues from talents in the required sense. That is, we are responsible for our virtues and for what we do with our talents. (I am trying to make the best of both Aristotle and Kant here.)

Intellectual virtues are especially important for philosophers because disagreement and criticism is an inherent part of the discipline. Because philosophical criticism is public, the virtuous (or vicious) dispositions of the critic become part of her professional reputation as a colleague. It thus benefits a critic to be virtuous. Habitual honesty, consideration, fairness, and so forth, also benefit the critic's colleagues and students. Virtuous criticism could thereby be justified by utilitarian or consequentialist calculations, but the development of virtue is undertaken to fulfill one's own potential for excellence.

Aristotle is not the only moral philosopher relevant to intra-feminist criticism in this sense. Adrian Piper has recently examined the philosophical virtue of rational discourse, in her work in progress on Socratic metaethics. Piper supports Kant's view that theoretical reason can effectively motivate action, and she employs it to explicate the ideal of rational discourse, as propounded by G. E. Moore. According to Piper, the tight job market in philosophy at the close of the twentieth century has contributed to a lack of civility and a "culture of genuflection," where it is often judged perilous to challenge the views of those in power. In this climate, independent and creative thought does not flourish and philosophical discourse is stifled by bullying, bulldozing, a refusal to listen, and evasion of challenges.³ Genuflection to authority, simply because it is authority, can be a form of cowardice if one ought not to agree with that authority, on the basis of its merits. The requirement by some that others genuflect to them is in itself a form of incivility (at best).

To conclude, the vexing problems with intra-feminist criticism are general moral problems. Despite my anarchic view of the critic as *auteur*, I have taken a philosophical approach to these problems. More generally, the important point is that what one does in speech and writing affects others and ourselves in ways that bring rich and serious aspects of our lives into play.

Notes

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book II, Ch.1, p. 952.
2. *Ibid.*, Ch. 9, p. 963.
3. Adrian M. S. Piper, "General Introduction to the Project: The Enterprise of Socratic Metaethics," in *Women of Color and Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Naomi Zack (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 91-132.

Intra-feminist Critique: Modes of Disengagement

Marilyn Frye

Michigan State University

Thinking of the phrase “rules of engagement” in relation to intra-feminist criticism, I remember something said during the Vietnam War. They said that women are unsuitable as combat soldiers in war as we know it, not because we are not tough enough or could not acquire the necessary skills or are not capable of being murderous, but because women would take war too seriously. We would not fight willingly unless we could very concretely apprehend that it was necessary for the survival or preservation of people and things we concretely and profoundly hold dear, and once engaged, on the premise of this necessity, we would not be able to grasp or relate to conventions according to which you can use this weapon but not that, this strategy but not that, or to little vacations like a Christmas Eve cease-fire. War as a rule-governed sport with occasional time-outs would not be a women’s war.

Although this is both hyperbole and over-generalization, it seems to me to frame a tendency feminists have to take our issues very seriously. Unlike my philosophical colleagues, who can be so congenial and sporting about their commitments respectively to internal and external realism, or to phenomenological or analytic methods, feminists tend to think our theories and methods are actually consequential and that getting it wrong can actually harm people, in particular ourselves and other women, and/or actually impede or set back progress toward some much better social order.

But it seems that our seriousness sometimes goes awry. Some of the critiques that provoke us to doing a symposium such as this one are occasions on which it seems like some of us have no sense of proportion, no sense that one might want to recognize some constraints: one might want to pull one’s punches, moderate one’s rhetoric, leave the other woman a face-saving “out,” might find something nice to say, or might not go to the mat in the presence of a voyeuristic misogynist audience. The “totality” of the conflict may seem appropriate to the woman doing the critique because the lives and livelihoods and futures of women are at stake. Mistakes and flaws must be exposed—vigorously, persuasively and finally—and the erring theorist, unless she corrects herself, must be decommissioned so she will not continue to promulgate the wrong theories, to influence others to adopt false ideas and wrong strategies.

The possibility of positioning ourselves thus as soldier guardians and policepersons of theories and theorists is part of our inheritance, I suspect, from the Left, along with its general style of militance. It is useful to examine the value of such a style of militance, and to think concretely about how and why we should be more gentle, restrained and considerate, more willing to stop short of vanquishing the other party, to agree to disagree, even though our differences may be politically and personally consequential. But that is not the only conversation I want to have, because occupying ourselves with thoughts about moderating a basically agonistic encounter, under the military rubric of “rules of engagement” could keep us from getting around to thinking

more re-creatively about what critique can be and how it can work for us.¹

I want to float some thoughts that take off not from the whole figure “rules of engagement,” but from the embedded idea of critique as engagement. It seems almost analytic that critique is a form of engagement, and we rightly give attention to the ethics and politics of what goes on in that engagement and its staging. But I have been concerned about some intra-feminist critiques that appear to be engagements subserving or subverted by disengagements, and situations in which implied critique puts theories and/or theorists into a limbo beyond the access of engaged critique. The discussions after the original panel presentations led me to want to note explicitly that I do not take the term ‘critique’ to mean only fault- or error-finding and rebuttal. No intellectual work is complete or adequate, no matter how brilliant, so the negative aspect of critique is always in the offing. But I understand ‘critique’ very richly, as critical attention, actually a kind of loving attention, which aims at getting into the frame and mode of someone’s thought and figuring out what their insights are and working to articulate the limits or inadequacies of the work in ways which suggest what might fruitfully be done next, by that thinker or by others. I will just post stories of three situations in which it seems to me that critique and engagement are troubled together, and then close with a wish.

1. The first story is very familiar in feminist thought and consciousness-raising experience: I hear from a friend that another woman whom we know only slightly has been raped. We learn a bit more about the incident and find out that the rape was set up by the rapist buying the woman a lot of drinks in a singles bar and then offering her a ride home. My response to this news includes the following thought-pattern: I critique the woman’s behavior, thinking to myself that she shouldn’t go to those bars, should know better than to get drunk with a man she does not know well, and no woman should ever accept a ride with a man she doesn’t know well, especially when they have been drinking. I may give thought to the question of what the woman was wearing, and suspect that she was wearing clothes that normally would be read by men in a bar as advertising her sexual availability. In the background of this familiar victim-blaming thought pattern a phenomenon of dis-association is going on. I am dis-associating myself from the woman who was victimized by this man. I am rehearsing the ways I am different from that woman. I don’t go to singles bars; I don’t drink with men I don’t know well; I know better than to accept a ride with a man I don’t know well; I am very discriminating about where and among whom I present myself in ways that will likely draw sexual attention. I’m not like her. Therefore I am not in danger of being the object of the sexual violence that was done to her. She is a bad woman, a stupid woman, a careless woman. I am good, sensible, careful. By distancing myself from her and constructing her as “wrong,” I can imagine myself to be somehow immune to male predation.

This critique disconnects me from the woman whose values and practices I criticize. I disconnect from her in the service of constructing comforting fictions, which are ultimately self-defeating. By constructing this distance, I imagine myself safe; I imagine that if I am sensible and good, I am safe; I imagine that I can control whether I am safe or

not. And I rationalize and reinforce in myself constraints on my freedom—de facto curfews and dress codes. There are ways, and times, for critically thinking through the semantics of self-presentation and strategies for re-signifying spaces and activities, and there is every reason to include in the discussion this woman who was raped by that man. Such discussion can and should be fruitful. But what I have described here is critique in the service of a disengagement which subserves false consciousness and colludes in my oppression, *and* which is not helpful to the woman whose actions and values I critique.

Many of us think we have figured out that pattern of thought and are no longer prone to replaying it. But I am not so sure we are over it.

When the latest round of active conflict between Mary Daly and Boston College surfaced in the media and on feminist list-serves, some of the discussion seemed to me to repeat this dynamic of dis-engagement. Mary Daly was summarily deprived of the whole bag of tenure rights, and of her livelihood and of the venue of her work as a teacher, without any due process. This action was precipitated by an undergraduate male student, with the support and guidance of a right wing legal firm that has publicly stated its agenda of demolishing affirmative action and wiping out radical feminists (whatever its definition of “radical feminist” may be). The undergraduate objected to and refused to honor Mary Daly’s practice of teaching feminist ethics in a woman-only class. Rather a lot of the critical discussion among feminists about this situation consisted of criticizing the practice of running women-only classes, and critics were lavish in their announcements that they don’t do that and declarations that it is politically wrong to do that because...(with many, many bytes of cyberspace devoted to articulating the reasons). Meanwhile, the issues of her being dismissed without notice, citation of cause, or access to any form of grievance procedure received almost no attention. As it came across to me, many discussants were blaming the assault on the woman who was assaulted, focusing on values and behaviors the critics thought were wrong (bad feminism), and in the background the same thing was going on as went on in the critique of the victim of rape, namely, “This woman’s wrong values and behaviors provoked the attack. I am different. I am not unreasonable and politically in error like that. I don’t exclude men. I am sensible, I am a good kind of feminist, she’s a bad kind. So right wing provocateurs won’t come after me. I am safe. My job is safe. My career is safe. I can control whether I am safe or not.” The critique was distancing and it served up justifications of practices which are, de facto, conventional and law-abiding within the structures of male dominance and female subordination. It also served to bracket or shelve any idea of doing fund-raising to help Mary Daly pay for the expensive legal actions she has to take to challenge the violation of her tenure rights. Which means, by the way, going into denial about the very real consequences the college’s action has for *all* tenured and tenure-track faculty, no matter how correct each one’s politics are.²

There are ways and times for further discussion and review of the politics of creating and occupying women-only spaces, and (by the way) it is appropriate that the discussions I am referring to here were located in woman-centered

spaces and not being aired for the enjoyment of misogynist voyeurs. But they displaced the issue of assault and what we should do about assault, and in their redundancy and energy, the discussions I witnessed seemed to me to be serving a disengagement which subserves the construction of illusions of safety and does not challenge structures of oppression.

2. The second scenario I want to lay out is one to be found in a book about painting, art culture, and women artists by Mira Schor.³ The author reviews the careers of women artists and finds a pattern: Early in their careers, before they start getting “recognized” (in the art-world sense), they pay a lot of attention to women artists and their art, and are much influenced by both. Then, when they just start to get some recognition, they and the art critics who take an interest in them begin focusing only on whatever influences by successful male artists can be discerned or imagined in the woman’s work, and give no attention to influences by women artists. When the woman artist is recognized, then, she is recognized as someone in the sphere of influence of this or that Big Man. This gives her a sort of placement in the symbolic order of the art world for a while, but (1) that placement is subordinate to that man, and (2) the influence of that man really is not very great or very significant within her work, so the connection with him is tenuous and not very interesting or illuminating about what is going on in her work. In a decade or two he is still recognized and nobody knows her, her work, or the actual (and interesting) genealogy of artistic influences in her work. And the value to her of the female “mentors” has in no way redounded to *their* benefit or recognition.

The woman artists who fall into this pattern of “career development” are in effect, I would say, *using* the lives and works of their female mentors, and doing so in a way that neither requires that the latter be recognized nor inscribes value on them—much as the lives and work of women working as mothers are consumed and digested in processes which fail to give them value. This involves, I believe, an implicit critique of the mentors’ works, a critique whose verdict is that the work is worthless except as fodder. It is, particularly, not worth being protected from anonymity and erasure, and not worthy of having heirs, of founding lineage. And this critique, again, serves the critic’s dis-association from the women (whose careers are stories of struggle and erasure) and her quest for a kind of security in the hostile world of male domination.

A dynamic with this general shape occurs, so it seems to me, also among feminist theorists and thinkers. I read other women’s work and soak it up, but go on to do my own work and present it in such a way that it fails to refer back explicitly to theirs, or fails to compellingly invite earnest and respectful critical attention back to their work. By doing this, I implicitly pass judgment on their work as philosophy/thought/theory as not worthy of fully engaged critique and not worthy of preservation by engagement. Later, if my name and my work are known at all, I will be known as a skillful analytic philosopher influenced by Austin and Wittgenstein. How much better placed in history I seem to be in that august Oxbridge lineage, than in a lineage featuring dozens of mimeographed feminist pamphlets authored by collectives, crazy women like Kate Millett, Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin,

minor provincial figures like Claudia Card, Naomi Scheman, María Lugones, Sarah Hoagland, and troubadours like Alix Dobkin and Willie Tyson.⁴

3. The third situation I want to post here, where engagement and critique are jointly troubled, is the hegemony, in the last decade and currently, of a particular account of the history of feminist theory since the nineteen sixties. In various ways a lot of us, myself included, have contributed to this being the Official Story. Here's the story:

In the sixties and seventies there was a great production of feminist thought and theory. It was white middle-class theory, but its authors didn't notice that because they had an essentialist concept of women and therefore thought all women and all women's experience were alike and therefore that their own experience yielded universal conclusions. Then some women of color showed up and told those white middle class theorists that their theory was no good because it excluded women of color. In response to this critique by women of color feminist theory has matured and is now thoroughly social constructionist and pluralist.

This developmental narrative forecloses a variety of engagements and critiques. There is an amorphous universal grand gesture of acknowledgement of the earlier theorists as the later theorists' forbearers, but it has something of the flavor of acknowledging the Neanderthal Man as Modern Man's forbearer. The developmental metaphor's explicit but egregiously quick critique casts the "mothers" as immature, as producers of feminist theory's juvenalia. There is nothing in this story to make it inviting, much less compelling, to revisit those theorists as, for instance, we revisit Descartes even though he was wrong, deeply and dangerously, about absolutely everything. This developmental narrative's gesture tells us there is nothing to be gained by close, extended, generous critical reading of the earlier work. It disengages from those theorists, and in general it recommends engagement with the works of men (non-feminist, anti-feminist, and maybe occasionally pro-feminist).

An even more egregious disengagement effected by this narrative is disengagement by white women from women of color, by middle-class women from working class women, of heterosexual women from lesbian women. All of these "other" women were there, in the sixties and early seventies, integral in troubled modes to that early period of second wave feminist thought. The narrative erases their participation, implicitly critiquing it as not real and not really making any contribution. The narrative also disengages a mainstream of academic feminist philosophy and theory from those writings and speeches and critiques that did in fact bring many white middle-class feminists' direct attention to the axes of race and class. Those works have in fact not received much, if any, sustained, close, generous critical reading. There is, for instance (to my knowledge) no extended critical study of Audre Lorde published and in circulation.⁵ As Amber Katherine has suggested, Lorde served the questionable political purposes of this narrative when she provided an excuse to dismiss all that seventies' white middle-class theory. No need to critically engage Lorde.⁶

I post these three situations, laden with my readings of them, in hopes of provoking more, but different, intra-feminist critique. Though I am concerned about how we conduct ourselves when we *are* practicing critique as a mode of engagement, I am more urgently concerned these days with evasive, or shallow, or merely implicit, critique that forecloses fully engaged intense serious critical scholarship on the work of feminists of all stripes. One thing I hoped for from feminism is some changes in the dynamics of history-making (in Western cultures and in many other cultures) that up to now (and still, right now) create and maintain intellectual genealogy that is exclusively and uniformly *patrilineal*. But, alas, some of the critical practices that are shaping our work are serving to shape it to, rather than to resist, that patrilineality. Earnest, sustained, thoughtful, generous, intelligent, fully explicit and published critique is what would, if anything can, put the intellectual/political, historically extended, community of feminist thinkers on historical maps in which we can place ourselves. That is what would work, if anything can, to construct/maintain/recognize the feminist genealogy of feminist thought. But it will involve us in claiming feminist thinkers (even when they make very consequential mistakes), engaging them, and it will put us out there on the barricades with them in their most disobedient and iconoclastic, their most *dangerous* moments.⁷

Notes

1. I am indebted to Carolyn Shafer for remarks that made me really notice the fact that "rules of engagement" belongs to a military discourse.
2. If we permit any tenured faculty member to be dismissed without a process involving at least citation of a cause and access to a fair grievance procedure, it is consequential for all of higher education and the whole institution of tenure. We might remind ourselves that when tenure is abolished, members of racialized minorities and white women will be, by and large, bigger losers than white men.
3. Mira Schor, *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997). Thanks to Carolyn Shafer for directing me to this book.
4. This is not really a moment of profound confession. I am not the most egregious carrier of this syndrome. I put much of this discussion into the first person to own that I am implicated in all of the practices I here deplore, and to avoid unfairly singling out any other individuals. Also, in case the print medium fails to convey the tone of irony, I must say that the feminist philosophers listed here are neither minor nor provincial.
5. In the version of these remarks that I read at the panel at the Pacific Division meetings, I said I knew of no such study of Audre Lorde. To my chagrin, I was reminded by Naomi Scheman that I do know of such a study, namely, a dissertation by Ruth Ginzberg, available in the library of the University of Minnesota.
6. "A Too-Early Morning": Audre Lorde's 'An Open Letter to Mary Daly' and Daly's Decision Not to Respond in Kind," in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Daly*, ed. Sarah Lucia Hoagland and Marilyn Frye (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2000), pp. 266-297.
7. For fuller discussion of the developmental narrative I criticize here, see my paper "Ethnocentrism/Essentialism: The Failure of the Ontological Cure," in *Is Academic Feminism Dead? Theory in Practice*, ed. The Social Justice Group at the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies, University of Minnesota (NY: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 47-60.

Ms. Feminist Philosopher Manners's Guide to Respectful Critical Sisterly Behavior

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Although no one in her right mind would expect feminist philosophers to agree on every single point of substance, method, and politics, there are nevertheless important issues to address about the manner of, not to mention the manners appropriate for, our conflicts and critiques. Feminist philosophers share a set of values and assumptions with at least family resemblances to each other; we also share a (very wide) range of methods and styles of scholarly interaction. It is perhaps both from our shared values and from our differences that our critical behavior sometimes finds us in hot water with our sister colleagues. One of the shared assumptions is that feminist claims and arguments, in both senses of 'argument,' matter deeply. They matter not only for the reasons that most philosophers think our claims and arguments matter, but also because of their potential impact on social change that aims to improve the condition of humankind, especially its female members. Feminists can thus become deeply invested both in the correctness of our own views and in the importance of showing others to be wrong. However, social commitment and personal investment by no means exempt us from treating each other fairly and with respect.

I suggest below some concrete ways in which we might treat each other with respect and fairness.¹ Many of the suggestions are equally applicable to any intellectual criticism; others will apply primarily to intellectuals whose work presupposes or advocates a commitment to social change. The format will make more sense if the reader visualizes an overhead transparency of Ms. Feminist Philosopher Manners's list of "bulleted" imperatives collected under various topics. As you consider these points along with those of others in this symposium, keep in mind that I am thinking of quite severe, harsh criticism, not the kind of critique that Marilyn Frye writes about at the end of her essay ("earnest, sustained, thoughtful, generous, intelligent, fully explicit...").² I have heard Billie Jean King say, "Pressure is a privilege." Similarly, the kind of critique Frye is speaking of is a privilege—a privilege to receive and a privilege to give. The kind I am speaking of risks being neither.

1. Concerning content and motivation...

- **Do not consider it a career move to criticize other feminists severely in public.**

Ask yourself whether you are seriously interested in her topic for its own sake, or whether you are using a public critique of her work to separate yourself from that kind of feminism. Scrutinize your motives. Marilyn Frye's discussion of "disengagement" speaks eloquently to the same issue.³

- **Read very carefully the work of the person you are criticizing and try to present it in the most charitable light. If possible, ask her privately about an**

interpretation if you are in serious doubt about something.

Giving a charitable interpretation is a fundamental tenet of fair scholarship of any kind—feminist or not. What if you have really blown your interpretation? What if she is kidding or being ironic? Then you look silly or foolish as well as offend her. Obviously you cannot always ask privately. In fact, there may be a generational bias in my even suggesting that a private question is appropriate. Such questions are easier to ask when we consider someone a peer rather than an authority figure. Nevertheless, email has worked wonders to mitigate perceived differences in status.

- **Do not ignore relevant feminist work. If you believe that some work on your topic is wrong, either explain your disagreement with it or in some other way acknowledge its existence.**

To write as if someone has not already published work on a topic is simply not good scholarship. Even if you disagree with someone, you have a variety of appropriate responses: you can acknowledge the existence of the work in a footnote, but say that it is not your approach; you can engage it as a position to criticize (briefly or more thoroughly), and so on.

2. Concerning how you say it...

- **If she were in the room, would you put your criticism in exactly the same way? If you would not, then ask yourself why you want to score points this way and with whom.**
- **Scrutinize your motivation for stating your points in the precise language you choose, especially if it appears to ridicule.**
- **Do not assume in a scholarly talk or classroom that your audience agrees with you, that is, don't take an 'us' vs. 'her' stance in your talk or paper. Instead assume that someone in the audience respects the work of the feminist you are attacking.**

3. Concerning "locations"...

- **Consider carefully where to publish a highly critical essay. Ask yourself what pleasure will it give sexist voyeurs to see feminists "cat-fighting" in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* or *The New York Review of Books*.**

A number of factors obviously go into our choice of a forum. Sometimes it is chosen for us, so we respond to an attack where it is given. But whoever initiates an attack is responsible for remembering the world of anti-feminists out there enjoying the fight. Sometimes our choices may have implications for a group or organization's strategies. Think this through in advance.

- **Consider carefully your own personal "location" with respect to the person you are criticizing. Especially, for example, if you are in the relevant respect a person in the "center" and she is "marginalized," make sure that you are not misguided about your cognitive authority or otherwise overstepping the bounds of prudence.**

Naomi Scheman has discussed this kind of point using examples of transsexuality and transgendered practices.⁴ I wish to take it in a different direction—generational differences. I do not mean simply that a senior, tenured feminist should deal respectfully with an untenured faculty member or graduate student's work in a responding paper at the APA. Of course, she should. We also need to be aware of our different positions in relation to "texts." In the workshop at the Feminist Ethics conference in Florida, a graduate student spoke about her attitude toward criticism of "received" feminist works—they are "texts" to her in the way that Rawls and Wittgenstein are texts. Yes, living women wrote them; however, the texts are part of a body of work, feminist philosophy, which she takes as her field and in which she must make her place. Her position as a critic of these texts is very different from the position of the author of one of them toward the work of the younger feminist.

4. Concerning the woman with "difficult" politics: she claims to be a feminist, but acts in ways that are harming women...

- If you really think she has been co-opted by male power, then it is important to communicate that to her in some way.
- Assume she is a person of good will, and respond in that way, even if you have a hunch that she is not.
- Get friends she relies upon and respects to try to talk her out of a pattern of destructive behavior and to find out why it is important to her to score points that way.

5. Concerning the woman who is just "difficult" herself...

- Keep in mind that what sounds too much like "whining" (or worse) to one of us, may be just the strategy that moves someone else. Remember that there are usually a variety of appropriate responses to injustice.

There are limits, of course; some people simply do whine. If she has overstepped the limits, see the last two points under the woman with "difficult" politics.

6. What if you are the person attacked?

- Consider how to respond in a way that enables you to maintain your self-respect and integrity at the same time you de-escalate the controversy.

It is not a sign of weakness, but level-headedness, to ask for help strategizing in this situation.

7. What if you are asked by a nonfeminist group to speak authoritatively about the "feminist position on"... (where...is a matter of deep feminist controversy)?

- Try to ascertain where the group falls on the spectrum between a sincere desire to know and a setup for ridicule.

At the Florida Ethics conference it became apparent that North American feminist philosophers are asked to communicate with everyone from right-wing radio talk-show hosts to groups of traditional health care

providers who are deeply troubled about issues in their practices that affect women.

• If you believe the group's members are at least reasonably sincere...

- Try to cast what you might, in fact, believe to be a hopeless quagmire of intranecine warfare in some more interesting light.
- Ask yourself whether there is a small set of agreed upon feminist values at the center of the dispute, in light of which the differences can be appreciated.
- If those fail, you can lay out a range of plausible positions and (with moderation) advocate the one you prefer.

8. Finally, Ms. F. Ph. Manners suggests that when all else fails (in any critical situation), remember that feminists have a sense of humor. Use it.

Of course, Ms. M. would like to hear, respectfully, from those who disagree or have other comments.

Notes

1. I was led to some of the points by comments from the workshop at the Feminist Ethics Revisited conference hosted the University of South Florida in October 1999. I have modified other points after the panel jointly sponsored by the Society for Analytical Feminism and the Society for Women in Philosophy at the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division, Albuquerque, April 2000. I've constructed other ideas, alas, in response to my own less-than-stellar behavior. Ms. F. Ph. Manners wishes to add that she's always wondered what it would be like to go mano a' mano with Kant concerning the separation of the 'should' of etiquette from the 'should' of morality.

2. This issue.

3. This issue.

4. This issue.

How Should Feminists Criticize One Another?

Martha C. Nussbaum
University of Chicago

Why is this an important topic? Why don't we feminists just say (as Naomi Zack suggests) that the canons of ethics for feminists criticizing feminists are the same as the canons for all good critics in any field, philosophical or interdisciplinary?

Although in many ways I agree with Zack, I also think that there is something to be said about our topic as a topic with a specifically feminist dimension. Like other subordinated and marginalized groups against whom great injustice has been done, women have good reasons to be concerned with solidarity and loyalty. By falling out among ourselves and turning toward intranecine combat rather than combat with the enemy, feminist academics could all too easily betray those whose interests they are hoping to promote. We might also, it is feared, bring feminism into discredit with powerful people in the academy (or outside) who are all too ready to ridicule and reject it anyway. At worst, the fight might itself become a pornographic spectacle for men who have no real respect for the issues it involves. Look at those cats hissing and spitting at each other, we can imagine men saying: isn't that just what you expect when

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you put a group of women together? And aren't they sexy and wild (in an intellectually low-grade way)?

So our issues are serious issues—as they are, too, for African-American intellectuals who have large and serious differences among themselves and who, nonetheless, agree on the urgent importance of promoting justice for African-Americans and of winning respect for African-Americans and African-American studies in the academy. How should they proceed, if they are not to feed bad stereotypes of the irrational African-American, or divert energy away from shared goals? (I believe that on the whole Skip Gates and Anthony Appiah have found good solutions to these problems, and I find their writings valuable paradigms to consider.)

One bad solution to the problems, where feminism is concerned, was exemplified by a panel I watched about five years ago at a major university, a feminist panel that was part of a larger conference on issues of social justice. The members of the panel were four feminists, most of them from law. They held, I knew, widely divergent views. One was a postmodernist; one espoused a form of care ethics; one was a Kantian critic of both postmodernism and care ethics. One was a radical feminist inspired by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. Surrounded by the powerful and somewhat skeptical males of the law and social-science academy, these women spoke so nicely to one another, with such solidarity and mutual supportiveness, that one could not possibly have discerned what each one really thought and what the disagreements among them were. They gave an appearance of agreement, and they so glossed over their profound disagreements that there was nothing at all to be learned from the exchange. Sitting two seats away from one of the powerful and somewhat skeptical legal males, one who has a habit of talking out loud when other people are talking (if this is a definite description, so be it!), I heard him repeatedly express frustration – for, as it turned out, he had actually read enough of their work to know what we were missing. They're not saying what they think, he said. They are playing at agreement, he said. And finally—This is a political event, not an intellectual event.

Well yes, it was. And a bad political event at that. Behavior like this shows neither respect nor self-respect. Out of a well-intentioned aim to show solidarity and loyalty, these women had failed to give one another the simple courtesy of listening to what each one actually thought and responding to that thought with their own honest thought. The powerful man's reaction shows that behaving this way is not even good politics. For he went away from that conference with less respect for feminism than he had had before, thinking it was all about feeling good and being nice rather than stating and defending a position.

So: I think we must begin with respect and self-respect, saying what we really think and why, and exposing our true positions to the tough criticism of others. As Naomi Scheman mentions, I've long believed that this insistence on reason is a way of making oneself vulnerable and that concealment of one's argument is likely to be linked with a macho determination to prevail and dominate. When you rely on reason, you are, as it were, naked: everyone can look and see what you have. Influence, status, and power don't make a difference: it's all in the quality of the arguments. And you don't know how the argument will come out: it might go

your way, but you can't be sure, because you haven't heard all the arguments on the other side. Openness to the argument brings with it a peculiar vulnerability that can look inappropriate for a dominant assertive male. For that reason, the proud political man Calicles, in Plato's *Gorgias*, tells Socrates that philosophical reasoning is all right for boys, but totally inappropriate for a real manly man. In the *Laws*, Plato continues this theme: the Athenian Stranger comments that reason is a soft golden cord, pulled flexibly by the lure of truth and understanding – unless, he adds, it is rudely shoved aside by the iron strings of envy, greed, and fear.¹ Oddly, then, the behavior of the feminists who rhetorically conceal their disagreements for political effect looks to me like defective macho behavior, little though it was intended that way.

But because, as I said, I do feel that there are serious issues to worry about when we criticize one another, I think that there is more to be done than just to follow the argument. In the rest of this paper I will say very frankly what I think and what I have done—not in order to prescribe, because I think that there are many good responses to the problems I've outlined, and I am certainly not sure that I myself have found the best ones—but just to put my cards on the table in the hope of prompting reactions and further comments from our readers.

First, I think it is important for feminists who criticize other feminists to indicate, at the same time, their concern and respect for the serious issues with which feminism grapples. Even when we are saying that someone has not grappled with those issues very well, it seems to me important to insist on the urgency of the problems, thus indicating as well one's respect for all feminists who have thought it worthwhile to spend their careers engaging with those problems. (I find Christina Hoff Sommers's work, for example, deeply flawed in its failure to acknowledge the seriousness of the problems that feminists tackle; this is only one of its serious flaws.)

Second, I think that if we're going to spend time saying critical things about some feminists, it becomes all the more important to seek opportunities to publicize and give prominence to the feminist work that one thinks good. The major media do a terrible job of covering feminist books and issues. They don't give any coverage to feminism most of the time, and when they do so it is likely to be coverage of popular journalism, or other less than serious work. But sometimes a concerted effort can help bring good work, even philosophical work, to a wider public. I've tried hard to get major media for whom I write to let me review some good feminist books—sometimes with success (reviews of Susan Okin's *Justice, Gender, and the Family*² and of Antony and Witt's *A Mind of One's Own*³ (in *The New York Review of Books*⁴), sometimes with no success (a review of the Virginia Held collection on care ethics that I wrote for Robert Silvers and then spent a year and a half struggling to get a revision we could both accept, until we agreed that it was hopeless), sometimes with an uncertain outcome (a new piece on Eva Kittay's fine book, written for Silvers and under revision now in response to his comments). I've also tried to make sure that the work I did at the World Institute for Development Economics Research, and the books edited there⁵ gave prominence to good feminist work, including the work of feminists from other nations, such as Margarita

Valdés, Roop Rekha Verma, and Nkiru Nzegwu. My new book, *Women and Human Development*⁶ is mostly about the work of feminist activists in India and their academic colleagues, most of whom, even the most distinguished (for example, Bina Agarwal, Zoya Hasan) are undeservedly unknown in U.S. academic, and even feminist, circles. Similarly, when I wrote the Presidential Address for the Central Division, knowing that some in that audience would think of me as the critic of Judith Butler, I made a major effort to give credit to the tradition of philosophical feminism for having made what I called the most creative contribution in this century to political philosophy, something I think absolutely true.

Third, I also think that when work of feminists has been caricatured and misrepresented by critics of feminism, it's good to spend some time correcting those misunderstandings in the public media, if one has the opportunity to do so. Thus, despite some serious disagreements with Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, I do think their work, which is of major importance, has been caricatured in a ridiculous fashion by the misogynist media, both academic and popular. In my teaching and in my writing, both academic (the paper on "Objectification" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*⁷) and popular (the review of Andrea Dworkin's *Life and Death in The New Republic*⁸) I've tried to articulate their positions carefully and accurately, so that people can see what they are really up to. I also devoted a chapter in *Cultivating Humanity*⁹ to rebutting charges made against women's studies programs by Christina Hoff Sommers and others, and a chapter in *Sex and Social Justice*¹⁰ to rebutting other charges made by Sommers. (This material originated as a review of the Sommers book written for *The New York Review of Books*; but by the time Silvers got round to giving me his suggestions for revision it was a year later, and the book was already being remaindered. So we agreed that it was not worth publishing a review of it at that late date.)

At the end of the day, however, I do think that there is also a time for saying of some work that it is simply bad work. And that is what I did with Judith Butler.¹¹ I had several different points to criticize. Her obscurantism and cultishness seem to me subversive of the Socratic and democratic character of philosophical inquiry, a point that I've made throughout my career against any thinkers who strike me as either hierarchical and cultish themselves, or enamored of hierarchical practices of reasoning.¹² (It's a theme in my reviews of Allan Bloom¹³ and Alasdair MacIntyre,¹⁴ and in a different way in my critical review of Alexander Nehamas's book on aesthetic self-fashioning.¹⁵) I also had substantive criticisms to make both of Butler's attack on ethical norms and of a more general quietism about the possibility of political change that substitutes a politics of gesture for a type of politics that might actually improve people's lives. I feel that Butler's positions on these questions are both inadequate intellectually and somewhat perilous for political practice, so I said both of those things. The parts of her thought that I found promising and valuable I also found rather underdeveloped, and more derivative than many had given them credit for being—derivative, I thought, from work that had done more to develop them adequately. Finally, I thought some parts of the work just sloppy and badly

done: her use of Austin, her treatment of First Amendment legal materials.

However, I spent a great deal of time with the work before saying all this, far more than I do with most books I review, and far more than I could demonstrate in a brief review piece in a journal that avoids detailed textual references.¹⁶ As with my critical reviews of Bloom and MacIntyre, I'd be prepared to stand up and argue page by page with anyone about my account of the work, and indeed I agreed to do so with Butler herself through a mutual friend who proposed the idea, on condition that we would really talk about the ideas and try to figure out what the right account of the issues was. (Butler apparently didn't like the friend's proposal, since I've heard no more about it.) I also made sure that in the review itself I included praise of good feminist work (Nancy Chodorow, Catharine MacKinnon, and others), and good work in queer theory (David Halperin),¹⁷ and that I followed up that negative piece with a positive review (initiated by me), also in *The New Republic*, of Michael Warner's *The Trouble with Normal*,¹⁸ a book that is related to Butler in the sense of being part of the general "queer theory" movement, but one that I find clearly written and argued, insightful about human life, and valuable both in its theoretical analysis and its recommendations for practice.

Obviously I may be wrong about many of these things. I think it would have been very productive to have had an exchange on Butler (whether with her or not) in which people who have learned from her work would actually try to show me that I had gotten something wrong, or that the ideas I found good in her work were less derivative, less half-baked, and more illuminating than I believe. Among the letters received by *The New Republic*, and later published as an exchange, there was one, by Drucilla Cornell¹⁹ which did this sort of thing very well. I admitted in that exchange²⁰ that Cornell was correct: the contrast I drew between MacKinnon and Butler/Foucault, and thence between material and symbolic politics, was in one respect too simple, because there is an important symbolic element in MacKinnon's thought that might with profit be compared to elements in Foucault's thought. I thought that the other letters were disappointing because they either missed the points I was making or failed to engage with them altogether. I hope that at some point there will be an opportunity to explore these issues more thoroughly.

In our symposium here, Naomi Scheman's comments about Ruth Ginzberg seem to me another example of a constructive and valuable response to a critique. I'm not sure we'll get too far adjudicating our differences, because Ginzberg's piece²¹ is very brief and cryptic. I think perhaps to those who know her work in a more general way her intention was clear, whereas to me, who had read only that one piece, the surface meaning of the piece looked like what I said it was. We'd have to go back and see. But in any case, I'm grateful for the response, and if I ever republish that piece, as I might in a collection of reviews, I'll rethink that bit of it.

Notes

1. See Martha Nussbaum, "The Softness of Reason: A Classical Case for Gay Studies," *The New Republic* 207 3/4 (July 13/20, 1992): 26-35 for further development of these images.

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2. Martha Nussbaum, "Justice for Women!" review of Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, *The New York Review of Books* 39/16 (October 8, 1992): 43-48.
3. Martha Nussbaum, "Feminism and Philosophy," review of Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt, eds., *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, *The New York Review of Books* 41/17 (October 20, 1994): 59-63.
4. My earlier review of Jane Roland Martin's *Reclaiming a Conversation: the Ideal of the Educated Woman* ("Women's Lot," *The New York Review of Books* 33/1 [January 30, 1986]: 7-12), the first piece I ever wrote for *The New York Review of Books*, was written at the invitation of Robert Silvers, and not at my own initiative. As this note reveals, writing for *The New York Review of Books* is a long and sometimes grueling process, in which one waits for long periods of time to get comments, and simply doesn't know what the final outcome will be. Often the time elapsed between the submission of a draft and the appearance of the piece is over a year. I have recently preferred to write for *The New Republic* because its editorial policies are so much more helpful and straightforward, and they usually let me write what I want to write, making changes of a straightforward editorial nature rather than rewriting the piece completely.
5. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, eds., *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover, eds., *Women, Culture, and Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
6. Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
7. Martha Nussbaum, "Objectification." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 24 (1995): 249-91. Reprinted with revisions in Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
8. Martha Nussbaum, "Life and Death: Utopian Writings on the Continuing War Against Women," review of Andrea Dworkin, *Life and Death*, *The New Republic* 217 6/7 (August 11, 1997): 36-42. Among my reviews for *The New Republic*, about half are instigated by Leon Wieseltier, the other half by me. The Dworkin review came about in the following way: because he had no intention of commissioning a review of the book, Wieseltier gave the bound page-proofs to me as a free book, when I was in his office one day. I read it and reflected, and convinced him that I should review it.
9. Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
10. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*.
11. Martha Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody—The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler," review of Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech, The Psychic Life of Power, Bodies that Matter*, and *Gender Trouble*, *The New Republic* 220/8 (February 22, 1999): 37-45.
12. This distinction is necessary because some who are enamored of cultishness and hierarchy do not write that way themselves: thus Nehamas, as I stressed, is a clear and quite democratic arguer, although he seems to love figures who draw attention to their own personalities as the center of a cult of the person. MacIntyre defends a picture of philosophy in which first principles will be handed down by authority; but since he thinks that authority is the Pope, he does not argue in an authoritarian way himself.
13. Martha Nussbaum, "Undemocratic Vistas," review of Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, *The New York Review of Books* 34/17 (November 5, 1987): 20-26.
14. Martha Nussbaum, "Recoiling from Reason," review of Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* *The New York Review of Books* 36/19 (December 7, 1989): 36-40.
15. Martha Nussbaum, "The Cult of Personality," review of Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, *The New Republic* 220/1 (January 4/11, 1999): 32-37.

16. One slight drawback to working with *The New Republic* is that they don't permit footnotes, and remove all page references to the work under review, whereas *The New York Review of Books* encourages a more academic style, with page references and footnotes.

17. See David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1989), and *Saint Foucault* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). To get that one sentence on Halperin's work into the review involved a two-stage struggle with my editor Leon Wieseltier, who took it out twice as irrelevant. My concern that I would be mistakenly read as condemning all work in queer theory was exacerbated by the fact that *The New Republic* had published, several months before, a review of Halperin and others by Lee Siegel that I thought snide, ill-argued, and not illuminating.

18. Martha Nussbaum, "Experiments in Living," review of Michael Warner, *The Trouble With Normal*, *The New Republic* 221/1 (January 3, 2000): 31-36.

19. Drucilla Cornell, Letter in Exchange about Nussbaum," Review of Judith Butler, *The New Republic* 220/16 (April 19, 1999): 43-44.

20. Martha Nussbaum, Replies to Letters about Review of Butler," *The New Republic* 220/16 (April 19, 1999): 43-45.

21. Ruth Ginzberg, "Feminism, Rationality, and Logic," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 88:2 (March 1989): 34-39.

Openness, Vulnerability, and Feminist Engagement

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"To follow reason in the Socratic way requires a form of vulnerability and even passivity. It means dropping the pose that one is always adequate to any occasion, always on top, always hard. It means letting reputation and mastery wait on the outcome of impersonal logic and factual discovery; searching with humility for the truth that will refute what one holds most dear."¹ Martha Nussbaum thus articulates (with all the sexual allusions obviously intended) the incompatibility between serious and searching intellectual honesty and a common "norm of manliness." While agreeing with her exposure of cocksure sophistry masquerading as reason, I want to suggest that she doesn't take the critique far enough. Logic and facts are, after all, the paradigms of the "hard": what justifies exempting them from the ideal of openness and vulnerability? How might we think of reason if we thought of it as soft and yielding all the way down?

The objections are immediate and legion, especially if the context of discussion is feminist. Openness and vulnerability are hardly new virtues to urge on *women*: they have typically been demanded by the norms of femininity that are the counterparts to the norms of manliness Nussbaum discusses, and as such they have set us up for exploitation and abuse. We hardly need to be urged to disarm ourselves further, to drop the hard-earned and far from fully won right to reject ideas that fail to make logical sense or to square with what we know to be the facts. Furthermore, how might *anyone* reason responsibly without some touchstone for soundness and validity? How else, if not by appeal to logic and the facts, can we distinguish between good and bad arguments, between what ought and ought not to persuade?

That these questions are *epistemological* is an obvious point that tends to get lost in the discussions about (to use a piece of shorthand) postmodern critiques of modern conceptions of reason. Postmodern critics argue against *epistemological* objectivity via the rejection of a metaphysics of Truth and Reality, while defenders of modernity like Nussbaum typically reply by defending a realist metaphysics as though doing so were epistemologically efficacious. The epistemological argument, however, ought to concern not the existence of mind-independent facts, objective truths, or metaphysically necessary laws of logic, but rather the epistemological role such things might play—and how they might play it. Are they, to use Wittgenstein's image (from another context) "part of the [epistemic] mechanism," or are they like "a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it"?² Appeals to epistemological notions like self-evidence, obviousness, and conceivability fail to account for such a role in providing impersonal bedrock, since such appeals are either unnecessary (if those to whose arguments we leave ourselves open share our conceptions of what is self-evident, obvious, and so on) or question begging (if both they and we claim to have bedrock under our own, differently placed feet).

Epistemologically, whatever one's metaphysical commitments, we are—to use Neurath's image via Quine—forever at sea on a raft that floats not because of some privileged planks but because of the connections among the planks. Some of us may be certain that particular planks are irreplaceable, but if some of our raftmates see as rotten one of the planks we think of as most essential to our seaworthiness, what then can we appeal to? It's fine to insist that the truth of the matter is not reducible to the terms of the power struggle between us, but what do we *do*? The claim that logic and standards of argumentation transcend our practices gets its apparent support precisely from its being unchallenged *in practice*, or—what comes to the same thing—being challenged in ways and by groups that *in practice* "we" manage not to have to take seriously. How do we balance our openness to reasonable argument with our own conceptions of what, specifically, reasonableness is, when it's those conceptions that our raftmates are calling into question? And how, specifically, do we as feminists engage with other feminists when notions of rationality and reasonableness are at stake between us?

Here are two stories, real ones:

1. Some years ago a woman student on my campus went to the university police to report that she was being stalked. After speaking with her, the police concluded that the alleged stalking was not, in fact, happening, and they declined to pursue the matter further. The student then went to the sexual violence center and reported both the stalking and the dismissal of her complaint by the police. The student and staff advocates at the center believed her story and organized protests over the refusal of the police to take it, and her, seriously. I was asked, as a women's studies faculty member, to speak at a rally in her support. I was suspicious of the woman's story, for rather amorphous reasons that I do not now recall, but I agreed to speak at the rally, as an ally of the sexual violence program and as someone who taught about the importance of believing women who spoke out about violence and abuse.

I spoke, in fact, about my own incredulity, putting it down (in both senses) as due to my having been a "good girl," one whose views of the world accorded with, and hence got sympathetic uptake from, the adults nearest to me. (That they happened to be my socialist parents has allowed me to pass in the wider world as much more of a rebel than in my soul I am.) I spoke about my need, as a feminist, to learn not only to trust my own voice, but, paradoxically, to learn when *not* to trust it, when not to listen to my gut, when to cultivate the suspicion that I had an overly "civilized" gut, one trained to digest patriarchal pablum and to choke on the hard truths uttered by those who lacked my privileges.

As you may have guessed, the story the woman told turned out not to be true; she was not being stalked. The police were, "factually," right not to believe her. The hard part of my story is to figure out what its moral is: should I have trusted my gut, listened to the inner voice that told me not to believe her? I don't think so. For all I know, the police fully realized that even if she was not being stalked, something was seriously wrong; they may well have treated her kindly, and urged her to get counseling. But she could have heard such urging only as patronizing, as dismissive of the complaint that she needed to have taken seriously in the terms in which she was able to frame it. It was the "factually" misplaced trust of the sexual violence center advocates that created a context within which her sense of the threat of male predation could be acknowledged as valid without needing to be tied to a specific man, committing specific acts of stalking. I have learned from theorists such as Diana Meyers, Sue Campbell, and Danielle Bouchard to think about the ways in which perceptions of abuse can be too inchoate, given the available resources of intelligibility, to be expressible except through assimilation, consciously or unconsciously, within culturally comprehensible narratives—leading to stories that turn out not to be true, but which can reveal the truths they encode to those who extend to the tellers what in literal terms might well be "mistaken" trust.

The moral I took from the story is this: My own ability to weigh evidence, to judge the likelihood that someone is telling me the literal, factual truth, is in certain, systematic ways faulty. But, rather than succumbing to uncritical credulity, what I need to do is to establish trusting relationships with others whose epistemic capabilities and liabilities are different from mine, and to build with them contexts within which we can cultivate trust and extend that trust to others, contexts within which difficult truths can emerge and become articulated. Such contexts help to extend the terms of intelligibility beyond what the privileged want to hear and want others to be straightforwardly able to say. Discursive resources—the ability to make sense, to report the facts in ways that make logical sense—are as unequally distributed as are other sorts of cultural capital, and determining what passes the tests of "impersonal logic and factual discovery" is, in practice, not a matter best left to each individual reasoner.³

2. I was invited to give a talk to a conference designed to bring together gender theorists with clinicians who treated children diagnosed with "gender dysphoria."⁴ I agreed without having any idea of what I could talk about. In particular, I was stuck at trying to understand what male-to-female transsexuals could mean by saying that they had an

inner sense of being women. Like Hume in search of the Cartesian ego, I rolled my eyeballs inward in search of such an inner sense, reasoning that I too must have such a thing, some mark of gender identity unconnected to the two things mtf transsexuals clearly did not share with me: a body unambiguously female since birth and the unwavering ascription of femaleness by those around me. And like Hume I came up empty-handed. I *wanted* to understand the claim to be women, wanted not merely to pay lip service to transsexual identity claims but to find them intelligible—but I couldn't.

The breakthrough came from my realizing (with the help of Leslie Feinberg and local activist/theorists who participated in a serendipitously earlier conference at the University of Minnesota on relationships between feminist and transgender communities) that I had been doing what not only my feminist politics but my Wittgensteinian proclivities should have warned me against: I was taking myself as unproblematically normal, not in need of explanation, transparently intelligible—and finding the other, by contrast, mysteriously opaque, incomprehensible. It was by shifting my attention to an identity of my own—secular Jew—that makes no sense within the currently prevailing norms of intelligibility that I was able to return to my puzzlement about mtf transsexuals with the Wittgensteinian lesson that I was finding one phenomenon (their gender identity) intractably puzzling precisely because I was not finding another phenomenon (my own gender identity) puzzling enough. The lesson is, of course, the one that most white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied and otherwise privileged feminist theorists had, and have, to learn and relearn—not to take ourselves as the unproblematic center of feminist discourse, the paradigm examples of womanhood, the ones with respect to whom others are variously different, and in relation to whom others need to be understood.

What I learned, and continued to learn through multiple drafts of the essay that the talk became—helped by Jacob Hale's astute criticism and supportive anger—was the need to balance my own critical faculties, my intellectual autonomy, against the recognition of the systematic epistemic liabilities of privilege—in this case the privilege of being normatively, intelligibly gendered.⁵ For someone who still identifies as a "seventies feminist," it hardly comes naturally either to see being gendered female as a form of privilege, or to question the centrality to political consciousness of finding one's own voice and trusting one's own feelings. But such re-examinations are crucial to grappling with how some of us are privileged at the expense of others whose allies we claim and conscientiously want to be. In particular, when we encounter disagreements over the facts, or over the logical implications of the facts, there is nothing we can appeal to that will do any real work over and above how we and our interlocutors understand those things. Not to leave ourselves open and vulnerable to alternative understandings when our own come in part from locations of discursive privilege is to close ourselves to the possibility of learning from others whose social locations on the borders of intelligibility equip them precisely for dismantling the structures we may deplore but cannot ourselves see beyond—since they are, for those of us who are intelligible in their terms, the "limits of our language."

The moral of both these stories is that I (we) need to recognize and acknowledge the unjust distribution of discursive resources, of the ability to make straightforward sense, to use a common language to describe, in literal, factual terms, one's life, perceptions, experiences. Not (of course) that the privileged are always models of lucidity, but by and large the language is available to them, to use or abuse, to reveal or conceal what they are thinking, feeling, and doing. When they need neologisms, their access to the media helps to ensure that their inventions will catch on, and when others fail to understand them, they can usually be confident that it is those others who will bear the brunt of the failure. When, on the other hand, the privileged fail to understand their subordinates, that failure is held not against those who do not understand but against those who are not understood: "I don't understand" has as one of its common meanings, depending on how the relations of privilege are lined up, "You're not making sense." "Sense" is, by definition, what the discursively privileged make and what others make in their terms; to be incomprehensible on those terms is to be incomprehensible *tout court*—at least within the precincts of academic and other mainstream discourse.

Consider, for example, the use of rhetorical questions, those that presuppose a taken-for-granted ground of agreement between the author and her, presumptively "reasonable," interlocutors. In discussing Judith Butler's use of drag as liberatory practice and trope, Nussbaum writes, "But what is going on here? The woman dressed mannishly is hardly a new figure. Indeed, even when she was relatively new, in the nineteenth century, she was in another way quite old, for she simply replicated in the lesbian world the existing stereotypes and hierarchies of male-female society. What, we may well ask, is parodic subversion in this area, and what a kind of middle-class acceptance? Isn't hierarchy in drag still hierarchy?"⁶ Well, yes and no: diverse transgender practices call into question the meanings of the signs of gender and the encodings of hierarchies, not, as Nussbaum would have it, solely (or, I suspect, primarily) out of excessively privileged apolitical narcissism, but out of attempts to deal with the pain of one's own unintelligibility.

Nussbaum's invocations of the "hungry, illiterate, disenfranchised, beaten, raped" women whom she takes to be the appropriate objects of feminist concern serve to create a monolithic body of reproachful others. Thus, she urges us to work on "building laws and institutions, without much concern for how a woman displays her own body and its gendered nature"; we should be "working for others who are suffering."⁷ One need not underplay the urgency of privileged feminists' attention to women who are economically and politically oppressed to be uneasy with the way in which such women are ritualistically invoked. And one thing those who are working on building alliances across lines of privilege are constantly relearning is just how hard it is to listen to, hear, and interpret the voices of women who are geographically, culturally, economically distant: not even physical hunger speaks unequivocally. And one thing that is needed is precisely an openness to the possibility that one simply does not understand, an openness that Nussbaum seems confident she does not need to cultivate in the case of those whose sexed and gendered bodies are unintelligible in the terms she presumes us all to share.

A similar problem arises for me in relation to a more personal and long-standing disagreement I have had with Nussbaum: In her *New York Review of Books* review of Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt's anthology *A Mind of One's Own* she gave an account of feminist arguments that the essays she discussed were concerned to counter, arguments that call into question prevalent Western philosophical accounts of reason and rationality.⁸ Ignoring the essays in the volume (including mine) that laid out a range of such arguments, Nussbaum gave an account of what she took these arguments to be, an account in which many of us presumably representative of the position she was discussing failed to recognize our own ideas. Her references were minimal and hardly representative, but one received particular attention: an essay of Ruth Ginzberg's in the *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* in which she relates her experiences teaching logic to students many of whom (disproportionately, she notes, women of all races and men of color) reported that *modus ponens* did not reflect how they themselves reasoned.⁹ For Nussbaum Ginzberg's commitment to taking these students seriously meant that she doubted the validity—in general or “for them”—of *modus ponens*, that she took their claims not to “think that way” to be literally true and that her task as a teacher, and by extension as a feminist philosopher, was to recognize the legitimacy of other forms of argument that did not rely on *modus ponens*.

This reading of Ginzberg's paper is uncharitable, but it follows from the assumption, implicit in the quote from Nussbaum with which I began this essay, that what's involved (*all* that's involved) in opening oneself to another's argument is admitting the cogency of facts and of inferences from them that might run counter to one's own cherished beliefs. On such a conception, Ginzberg's willingness to take her students seriously when they claimed not to use *modus ponens* does indeed look irrational: how could she possibly have evaluated such a claim according to the rules of “impersonal logic”? The only possible conclusion, on Nussbaum's terms, was that Ginzberg had abdicated rationality altogether and descended onto the perilous terrain on which might made right and truth was nothing other than an expression of power—terrain on which, far from being empowered, her students would be eaten alive, with no recourse to logic or the facts. But Ginzberg nowhere says or implies that in taking her students seriously she was taking them to be speaking the literal truth about the relationship of *modus ponens* to their own thinking. Rather, she describes her efforts to understand what they were—imperfectly, inchoately—telling her about their estrangement from institutionalized norms and the oppressiveness of the ways in which those norms had been enforced in their lives.

To open oneself to such voices is to place oneself on a raft on the open sea, with no assurance that any of the planks is unsinkable and nothing to appeal to beyond the cooperative efforts of one's raftmates, many of whom one has no good reason to trust. Given the choice, one might reasonably opt for the security of “impersonal logic and factual discovery”—but the choice is an illusion, and it is one of the epistemic liabilities of privilege to fall for it. However committed one might be to practice-independent conceptions of logic and facticity, such metaphysical commitments simply do not translate into epistemology.

Epistemology is unavoidably about what we do, how we do it, and how we judge the doing of it. We cannot, therefore, avoid attending to just who “we” are and how we decide when we, or our interlocutors, have yielded enough, when what “turns our spade” is a shared foundation and when it is part of a structure built on the backs of others. Epistemology cannot, that is, claim for itself some ground metaphysically guaranteed to be politically uncontestable.

There is a further problem that is evaded by the call to lay oneself open to all challenges, a problem summed up by the t-shirt slogan, “So many arguments, so little time.” Since the subject of epistemology is actual human practice, we need to have something to say about how we choose—and, normatively, how we ought to choose—among the myriad challenges to our beliefs. Epistemic promiscuity—opening ourselves to every passing argument—guarantees that we give no argument the time it needs to actually have its way with us. All of us pick and choose, as we must, which challenges to our own beliefs we will seriously entertain. Feminist argumentative ethics come into play in calling on us to examine how we make these choices: in what venues, for example, do we try out our ideas; to whom do we make them intelligible; whose critiques do we especially try to understand and respond to; whom do we read; where do we look for ways of thinking that might shake us up? And, crucially, whose trust do we cultivate so as to make genuine critical exchange possible? As Nancy Potter has argued, the burden of establishing trustworthiness falls disproportionately on the more privileged:¹⁰ whom do we trust enough to listen to, and to whom do we want to be trustworthy enough to be listened to?

In her eloquent argument for the importance of gay studies to a liberal education, Nussbaum writes that “far from requiring the abandonment of logic and standards of rigor, as some conservatives charge, this [Socratic] critical posture of the mind rests precisely upon logic and a respect for standards of argumentation—a point that some anti-traditionalists on the left have not always sufficiently grasped.”¹¹ Though there are no doubt theorists who have affirmatively rejected (or self-defeatingly claimed to have affirmatively rejected) logic and standards of argumentation, those of us whose arguments Nussbaum rejects without really addressing are urging precisely the openness and receptivity she urges—with specific others, attentive to differences in power and privilege, in connection with the building of trust as the ground for respectful alliances. The extent to which reason is vulnerable to practice, held in place by what we do, how we do it, and whom we do it with, may seem (it is) terrifying. But serious critical engagement— intra-feminist or otherwise—starts with an acknowledgement of that vulnerability rather than an attempt to evade it through an ultimately impotent display of just the sort of cocksure bravado Nussbaum rightly deplores.

Notes

1. Martha C. Nussbaum, “The Softness of Reason: A Classical Case for Gay Studies,” *The New Republic* 207 3/4 (July 13/20, 1992): 26-35.
2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953): § 271.
3. For a discussion of the circumstances under which one ought to distrust one's own doxastic impulses, see Karen Jones, “The Politics

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of Credibility," in *A Mind of One's Own*, 2nd ed., ed. Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, forthcoming).

4. The conference, "Sissies and Tomboys," February 1995, was at the CUNY Graduate Center, sponsored by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies. My subsequent essay, "Queering the Center by Centering the Queer: Reflections on Transsexuals and Secular Jews," appeared first in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Tietjens Meyers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997, pp. 124-62) and was reprinted in the volume from the conference, *Sissies and Tomboys*, ed. Matt Rottnick (New York University Press, 1999).

5. For a summary of what I learned, see Jacob Hale, "Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans _____," at <http://sandystone.com/hale.rules.html>.

6. Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody—The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler," review of Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech, The Psychic Life of Power, Bodies that Matter, and Gender Trouble*, *The New Republic* 220/8 (February 22, 1999): 37-45.

7. Ibid.

8. Martha C. Nussbaum, "Feminism and Philosophy," review of Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt, eds., *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, *The New York Review of Books* 41/17 (October 20, 1994): 59-63.

9. Ruth Ginzberg, "Feminism, Rationality and Logic," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 88:2 (March 1989): 34-39.

10. See Nancy Potter, "Giving Uptake," *Social Theory and Practice* 26: 3 (Fall 2000), and "The Severed Head and Existential Dread: The Classroom as Epistemic Community and Student Survivors of Incest," *Hypatia* 10/2 (1995): 69-92.

11. Nussbaum, "The Softness of Reason."

FEMINISM

1. SPECIAL NEW BOOK SERIES—Philosophy and Women

Rodopi Press announces a new special series within its Values Inquiry Book Series program on "Philosophy and Women." This special series is particularly appropriate for anthologies based on conference proceedings, and for books of specialized scholarly interest. For information about the series and about manuscript submission, please contact Dr. Laura Duhan Kaplan, Department of Philosophy, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte NC 28223, <LDKaplana@email.uncc.edu>.

2. FEAST: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory

(a) October Conference

Feminist Ethics and Social Theory:

The First "FEAST"

Clearwater Beach, Florida: October 4-6, 2001

Please celebrate with us the first international meeting of FEAST, October 4-6 at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort in Clearwater Beach, Florida. FEAST is a professional organization dedicated to promoting feminist ethical perspectives on philosophical, moral, social, and political life, including law and public policy-making. Our aim is to enhance the visibility and influence of feminist ethics, as well as feminist political and social theory, and to provide support to emerging scholars from diverse and underrepresented populations.

The first FEAST conference will be devoted to a wide array of feminist ethical, social, legal, political, aesthetic, and cultural theories and issues. We are also interested in agendas for future writing, research, and activism.

Keynote Speakers: We are very pleased to announce that Cheshire-Calhoun, Iris Marion Young, and maria Pia Lara will be our keynote speakers.

For more information as it becomes available, please subscribe to the FEAST listserv.

Wendy Lynne Lee
Associate Professor
Department of Philosophy
Bloomsburg University
Bloomsburg, PA 17815
(lamp@bloomu.edu)
Deadline: May 1, 2001.

(b) FEAST listserv

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(c) For more information on FEAST

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3. CALL FOR PAPERS—Feminist Virtue Theory and Ethics

Spring 2002 APA NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

Andrea Nicki, Guest Editor

Possible topics include: moral development and virtues, emotions and virtues, virtues and social roles or identities, virtues and oppression, vices, alternate conceptions of virtues, virtue ethics and care ethics, virtue ethics and practice. We welcome papers from any philosophy tradition. Submissions must be limited to 10 double-spaced pages. References should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Please submit 3 copies of manuscripts, prepared for anonymous review to:

Andrea Nicki
Department of Humanities
Springfield College
263 Allen Street
Springfield, MA 01109

Deadline for receipt of submissions: August 1, 2001.

For more information, please contact Andrea Nicki at anicki@spfldcol.edu.

4. CALL FOR PAPERS—Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy Special Issue on Feminist

Epistemology

In the last two decades, the work of feminist epistemologists has been one of the major forces contributing to the development of more “social” epistemologies. What began as criticism of and reaction to more traditional forms of epistemology and their lack of attention to gender has now developed into a rich and vibrant field of positive inquiry. As feminist epistemologists continue to develop new ways of understanding the social in knowing, they also negotiate their way through the normative demands of a critical epistemology, remaining committed to the need to provide critical accounts of our current knowledge practices. For this issue, we invite paper submissions that explore the influences of feminist epistemology on issues of concern for social epistemologists broadly speaking, and/or further the development of feminist epistemology by considering the most pressing challenges it faces.

Suggested topics and issues to be addressed include:

- How have the projects and methods of feminist epistemology intersected those of other social

epistemologists on such topics as testimony, objectivity, the normativity of epistemology, and the role of values in science? How have their methods and results remained distinctive?

- How successful have feminist epistemologists been at developing theories that adequately account for the epistemic relevance of social divisions such as race, class and sexuality, in addition to gender? How are these issues best addressed?
- What kind of knowledge policy recommendations are supported by a feminist epistemology?
- How can feminist epistemologists best analyze the social elements of knowing without diminishing the importance of critically evaluating our current knowledge practices?
- What are the benefits and challenges of employing a naturalistic approach within feminist epistemology?
- How can the idea of “situated knowledges” be further developed by feminist epistemologists?
- How can the idea of objectivity best be reconstructed to do justice to feminist concerns about our knowledge practices, especially science?
- How do feminist studies of the actual practices of science (including case studies) shed light on our understanding of knowledge as a whole, and the relation between science and other forms of knowing?
- How have developments in nonfeminist forms of social epistemology provided feminists with useful tools of analysis?
- Are feminist epistemologists necessarily partisans in the “science wars,” or can they make peace?
- How does feminist epistemology support a general feminist social and political agenda?
- In what ways are the ideas of “voice” and the ethics of “care” in feminist ethics connected to projects in feminist epistemology?

Submissions are due August 15th, 2001, and should be sent in duplicate to:

Mark Webb
Philosophy Department
Texas Tech University
Box 43092
Lubbock, TX 79409-3092.

Inquiries can be directed to either Mark Webb (address above) or

Heidi Grasswick
Visiting Research Fellow
Calgary Institute for the Humanities
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Calgary, AB T2N 1N4, Canada

Emails: Heidi Grasswick, grasswick@middlebury.edu
Mark Webb, mark.webb@ttu.edu

5. CALL FOR PAPERS—Entremundos: Creative and Critical Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa

Seeking creative and theoretical essays, artwork, poetry, and experimental narratives that explore the writings, ideas, and impact of Gloria E. Anzaldúa. Possible Areas Include: (1) Concepts (“borderlands,” “conocimientos,” “mestizaje,” “nepantla,” “nos/otras,” “spiritual activism,” etc.). (2) Interaction with and impact on contemporary theorizing (border studies, Chicana/o studies, composition studies, critical “race” theory; cultural studies; feminist theory, lesbian studies, literary studies, multiculturalism, queer theory, pedagogy, postcolonial theory, whiteness’ studies, women’s studies, etc.). (3) Interaction with and impact on artists (comedy, performance, painting, film, etc.). (4) Use of multiple/mixed genres (autobiography, children’s stories, essays, fiction, interviews, poetry). (5) Role as an editor (*This Bridge Called My Back; Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras*). (6) Political interventions and implications (for activists, readers, students, etc.). (7) Revisionist mythmaking.

Please send 1-3 page proposals ASAP to: AnaLouise Keating; English Department; Aquinas College; 1607 Robinson Rd., SE; Grand Rapids, MI 49506. Email: zami@mindspring.com. Fax: 616/732-4487.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Marilyn Frye teaches Philosophy and Feminist Theory at Michigan State University. Her current philosophical work is on developing a pluralist and non-essentialist picture of what categories are and of what it is to be a [noun], with the hope of saying something sensible about social categories and associated identities. She is the author of *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* and *Willful Virgin: Essays in Feminism*.

Ann Garry, Professor of Philosophy at California State University, Los Angeles, specializes in feminist philosophy. She writes on topics ranging from feminist epistemology to bioethics. She co-edited *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, and is an associate editor of *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*.

Martha Nussbaum is Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, with appointments in the Philosophy Department, Law School, and Divinity School. She is on the Board of the Center for Gender Studies, an Associate in the Classics Department, and an Affiliate of the Committee on Southern Asian Studies. Her most recent book is *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*.

Naomi Scheman is Professor of Philosophy and Women’s Studies and Associate Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota. Her teaching, research, and administrative work focus on the epistemological consequences of diversity and, especially, of inequalities of power and privilege. She is the author of *Engenderings: Constructions of Knowledge, Authority and Privilege*.

Naomi Zack is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Doctor of Arts in Humanistic Studies Program at the University at Albany, State University of New York. She is the author of *Race and Mixed Race* and *Bachelors of Science: Seventeenth Century Identity, Then and Now*, as well as the short textbook, *Thinking About Race*. She has also edited four anthologies on race, mixed race and gender, the latest of which is *Women of Color and Philosophy*.

CORRECTION

In Hilde Lindemann Nelson’s review of Uma Narayan and Julia Bartowiak’s *Having and Raising Children: Unconventional Families, Hard Choices, and the Social Good* (Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy 00/1 [Fall 2000]), a third person is mistakenly included as an editor of one of the works cited. The work in question is *Mother Troubles* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), which is, in fact, edited by Julia Hanigsberg and Sara Ruddick. The regular Editor (Joan Callahan) takes full responsibility for this error and offers it as a fine example of the hazards of using the webpages of electronic booksellers for bibliographic research...