

AJP Version

Annette Baier 1929-2012

Annette Baier, Hume scholar, feminist, moral philosopher and philosopher of mind, died at Dunedin Hospital on the 2nd of November 2012, where she had been admitted with heart problems a few days earlier. She was 83. Annette C Baier (nee Stoop) was born in 1929 in New Zealand, and remembered swagmen coming to the house for food during the Great Depression. From an early age she dreamed of going 'beyond the hills', to experience 'other lands, other ways of living and other visions of life'. She completed an MA in Philosophy at Otago, where her teachers included D. D. Raphael and John Passmore (who helped to foster her interest in Hume) and D. H. Monro (whose book, *the Argument of Laughter*, she rather cheekily criticized in the student magazine *Critic* for being insufficiently funny). However, the Otago teacher who made the biggest impression was Denis Grey, who seemed to Annette like a character straight of *Brideshead Revisited* with his exaggerated mannerisms and his habit of wearing lipstick to class. Studying Plato with him and learning Ancient Greek was an entry into 'new magic worlds'. Annette went on to do a B.Phil dissertation at Oxford on 'Precision in Poetry' under the supervision of J.L Austin, whose shoes sometimes betrayed the evidence of recent visits to his pigs. At Oxford she was the butt of a memorably Gricean put-down from Anscombe: 'Well, there's nothing wrong with your *Greek*'. She was also befriended by Janet Vaughan, the distinguished hematologist and Principal of Sommerville, but as she makes clear in her memoir 'Other Minds', throughout her life Annette was eager to form friendships with scholars from other disciplines.

Annette's first teaching post was at Aberdeen (physically freezing but good intellectually) followed by another at Auckland. It was on her way to take up this latter position that she began a shipboard romance, as a result of which she fell pregnant. The conventions of the day meant that she had to have the baby in secret, concealing her pregnancy under her academic robes and giving up her child for adoption. This devastating experience 'fueled her developing feminist thoughts'. It was only many years later that she was happily reunited with her long-lost daughter, Sarah, and discovered that she was already the grandmother of four grandchildren.

At Auckland Annette fell out with the then head of the Philosophy Department, R.P. Anschutz, who she describes as an enemy but a generous one. So after three years, she left for a job at Sydney, but not before meeting and marrying Kurt Baier in 1958. They had a long and happy marriage lasting till Kurt's death in 2010, partly for the usual reason that they laughed at the same jokes (though they also shared a taste for walking and mountain scenery). However, Annette did not stay long at Sydney since some of her colleagues were a 'sexist pain'. They regarded free love as an obligation, and she suffered 'not just sexual harassment but moralistic sexual harassment'. In 1962 Kurt was offered a chair at Pittsburgh and the Baiers left Australasia for the States. (Being a foreigner or a resident alien - as she was for most of her professional life - was, Annette thought, good for the soul, and especially good for the soul of a social philosopher.) At first Annette taught at Carnegie Mellon, before joining the Pittsburgh Department in the 1970s where her career really took off. (Her first publication was the entry on 'Nonsense' in Paul Edwards' *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967 so, unlike the boy-wonder Hume, she was something of a late-bloomer.) She became famous as a moral philosopher, a Hume scholar and a feminist, with books such as *Postures of the Mind: Essays on Mind and Morals* (1985), *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (1991), *Moral Prejudices* (1995) (including the essays "What Do Women Want in an Ethical Theory?" and "The Need For More Than Justice") and *The Commons of the Mind* (1997). She was also an inspiring and much loved teacher: witness the many enthusiastic online testimonials from former students. Lynne Tirrell, for instance, describes her as 'a brilliant, sophisticated, witty, and cosmopolitan person—unlike anyone I had ever met' and praises her 'loving eye and kind compassion, her generous friendship, constant encouragement, and her fierceness as a champion'.) Perhaps the biggest of her many achievements was to put the concept of trust at the center of moral philosophy, though Hume scholars also talk of 'the sparkling intelligence of one of Hume's most perceptive readers ever'. She served as President of the Eastern Division of the APA (as did Kurt), gave the Paul Carus Lectures in Philosophy (as did Kurt) and was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (as was Kurt), making Kurt and Annette perhaps the only husband and wife duo to achieve this trio of distinctions.

In 1995 the Baiers retired to New Zealand, dividing their time between Queenstown and Dunedin, where Annette was an active and much-valued regular at the Otago Departmental Seminar. She had something intelligent to say about virtually every topic, including subjects well outside her official specialities such as paraconsistent logic. She published four more books during her amazingly productive retirement: *Death and Character: Further Reflections on Hume* (2008), *The Cautious, Jealous Virtue: Hume on Justice* (2010), *Reflections on How We Live* (2010) and *The Pursuits of Philosophy* (2011). One of the big themes of these later writings is her use of Hume's *History of England* to illuminate his earlier, more philosophical, works. Annette was active in philosophy right up to the last, attending and contributing to the Otago Departmental Seminar with her usual wit and acuity to within a few weeks of her death. Her last comment was a Moorean criticism of the error theory of her friend and former colleague J.L Mackie, the gist of her remarks being that it is much more likely that there is something wrong with Mackie's argument than that all moral judgments are false.

The Chair in Early Modern Philosophy at Otago, endowed in 2005 by an anonymous donor, is now to be renamed the Baier Chair. But for us at Otago that is a poor consolation for the absence of Annette.