



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

We take a bit of a break from the pattern of articles on the professional status of women in philosophy this issue, focusing instead on what should be a foundational topic—motherhood! From a philosophical perspective, motherhood is a rarely visited topic, despite all of us being mothered at some point in our lives (usually in the early years), and despite some of us being mothers. I aim to remedy that dearth of philosophical inquiry with the assistance of five philosophers, all of whom have something interesting to say on the subject. The variety represented in this collection is also noteworthy. Some speak from the perspective of being mothers, some from a starting point in philosophical discourse. Each contributes both to the existing philosophical discourse on motherhood and mothering and to our understanding of the inter-relation of philosophical reflection and personal practice. This relationship comes through most clearly in the first entry, by Megan Craig, in “Cora’s World,” in which she writes a letter to her daughter for the future, and in the closing entry, by Sara Goering, in her fascinating, and occasionally breath-taking, piece on mothers bragging about their maternal failings, “Bragging about Failure: Mothers Who Take Delight in Confessing Their Shortcomings.” Enjoy!

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

The *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* is sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). 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 reflect 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. Articles submitted to the *Newsletter* should be limited to 10 double-spaced pages and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language. Please submit essays electronically to the editor or send four copies of essays via regular mail. All manuscripts should be 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 seeking new book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send the editor 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: Dr. Christina Bellon, Department of Philosophy, Sacramento State University, 6000 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95819-6033, bellon@csus.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.

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

This issue of the *Newsletter* will not contain a separate “news from the CSW” item. Instead, an update on the Committee’s actions and undertakings for the year will appear in the next issue.

ARTICLES

Cora's World

Megan Craig

Stony Brook University

It would be good to give much thought, before
you try to find words for something so lost,
for those long childhood afternoons you knew
that vanished so completely—and why?

We're still reminded—: sometimes by a rain,
but we can no longer say what it means;
life was never again so filled with meeting,
with reunion and with passing on

as back then, when nothing happened to things and
creatures:

we lived their world as something human,
and became filled to the brim with figures.

And became as lonely as a shepard and as overburdened by
vast distances

and summoned and stirred as from far away,
and slowly, like a long new thread,
introduced into that picture-sequence
where now having to go on bewilders us.

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Childhood*¹

Dear Cora,

This evening I am thinking about philosophy and motherhood, as you sleep and as I write. I have been involved in studying and teaching philosophy for over a decade now, but I've only been a mother for a mere year—since your birth last October—or perhaps since my pregnancy began. It is hard to tell when you began now that you are here—I am inclined to say that you have always been, and only recently arrived. I am reminded of the first lines of Plato's *Phaedrus*: "Where are you going and where have you come from?"² Suddenly this question seems terribly important and deeply unanswerable. Truthfully, there has not been a lot of time for reflection in this past year, but as I started to think about philosophy and motherhood together, I could only imagine talking to you, to the one who made me a mother. So this letter is for you, or perhaps for a future version of you.

There is probably nothing I am more certain of than the fact that I am your mother. And yet, I have a hard time articulating what that means. It means, in our case, that I gave birth to you—it has a biological meaning. But it also means something else that is not strictly biological or reducible to any stage of pregnancy or moment of delivery. I am, with regard to you, someone else than I have ever been before. In a sense, we gave birth to each other, and perhaps this is why I cannot disentangle your childhood from my experience of motherhood, from the feeling of being "summoned and stirred as from far away" that Rilke describes in his poem. For a time we were entwined together, and since your birth there has been a series of separations—each one unique and surprising. I am beginning

to think that being a mother means learning to be at a distance from your own heart, or to let your heart beat outside of yourself. Julia Kristeva writes of a "maternal passion"—a passion that entails sublimation and that is the basis for the subsequent feeling of love.³ There is a passion I feel for you, but there is also an ever-deepening sense of awareness I have for you and around you. It is a form of awakening to separateness. You do, literally, keep me up at night, but you also awaken me to life in a way that I had not imagined possible, making me aware of distance and time as new and strange. You make life vivid. This waking and vividness now seem integral to my capacity to think and to philosophize.

Recently I have been wondering about your world—a world so much bound up with my own and yet so distinct and utterly your own. You've just started crawling, you wave and clap, and you say lots of things with emotion and intention, but not yet in a language I know or use. Wittgenstein claimed, "*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*"⁴ Your world, prior to language, is radically boundless and not yet carved up into pieces. William James described a baby's impression of life as "one great blooming, buzzing confusion."⁵ I love this image, and yet, from the moment you emerged in the world it seems to be me, not you, who is confused. You make me think about non and pre-verbal communication, the language of gesture, touch, and expression that Henri Bergson described as the heart of language—its hidden, naïve core.⁶ It is a language I sometimes think about relative to art and the wordless expressivity of a stroke of paint, a color, or a tone.

When you wave at the trees, the grass, the buildings, I am struck by how alive and moving your world is. It's full of fluttery pieces, a superabundance of greeting all around. It makes me consider things that lie at the margins of rational thought: wondering whether you see other lives that have become transparent and out of reach for my own adult, clumsy, senses. I am reminded of Merleau-Ponty's assertion that "the perception of other people and the intersubjective world is only a problem for adults."⁷ I question whether the acquisition of words will begin to delineate your world in ways that will make you less porous and open, less willing to wave at the seemingly inert matter all around. It was Andy Warhol who noticed that "the moment you label something, you take a step—I mean, you can never go back again to seeing it unlabeled."⁸ And then I wonder whether there is any way of unlearning language once it has been learned or of re-immersing oneself in the living stream of experience—entering into your world. Perhaps you can help me to unlearn the ingrained habits of speech and the hardened patterns of my own sensibilities. Perhaps later, when I am old and struggling to find the words for things, I will help you unlearn as well.

Philosophers often describe language as the threshold to rationality. Animals are routinely denied rationality in the grand and paternal tradition of Western Philosophy—Descartes says they are without souls; Heidegger describes them as "world poor." Often children are grouped together with animals among the irrational, emotional, speechless beings of the world. This has seemed deeply problematic to me for a long time, but now that I am seeing you press toward language, on the verge of your first words, I am more acutely aware of the poverty of words and the richness of your preverbal expressions.

This is all to say that in your ten months on earth you have helped me to question my basic assumptions about language and sense, urging me to think about your world, and my world, with increasing wonder. Wonder has always been the beginning of philosophy. Plato described philosophy in conjunction with stargazing from a ship at sea, and the philosopher as the one who first wonders at, and then learns to read the

night sky. It is surprising, therefore, that much of the history of philosophy ignores or diminishes the experience of children, ignoring those who seem most capable of experiencing and provoking wonder—those who might beget philosophy. When a child does appear explicitly in philosophy, as in Rousseau's *Emile*, for example, he is already subject to education and a process of attunement to expectations that often result in the diminishment of imagination and wonder. To his credit, Rousseau acknowledges at the beginning that "Childhood is unknown. Starting from the false idea one has of it, the farther one goes, the more one loses one's way."⁹ There is something unknowable about childhood, something that escapes one's efforts at reconstruction or recapitulation. Gaston Bachelard thought that our earliest childhood memories, our "primal images," would have to be accessed by daydreaming, since they overwhelm memory altogether.¹⁰ Rousseau was concerned with the education of a moral being—with the formation of a man who knows how to behave, how to reason, how to judge, and how to be good. I am thinking about other kinds of questions: how to unlearn and how to relax, how to dream and imagine more—how to be the child I know I was, and how to nurture the child you are becoming.

You help me to think about these less progress-driven, goal-oriented possibilities. Bergson called "intuition" a capacity for letting oneself be moved by the world and for finding oneself intimately attuned to things. Heidegger later called this "letting-be." These descriptions relate to a difficult and unique variety of passivity that is nonetheless intensely alive and poised. Levinas called it the passivity of openness, suffering, and patience. Simone Weil described such a passivity as *grace*, and she insisted on its gravity. Gadamer wrote about the utter seriousness of play. All of these are ways of letting oneself be absorbed or moved by alternative rhythms and vitalities—to be moved by someone or something without any articulate reason.

The tension is that thinking and playing don't always coincide. You lure me away from my philosophy books with your focused stacking of one block atop another or the re-reading of a book, or the shake of a rattle. But I think there should not be a dichotomy between thought and play. I would rather we considered multiple forms of play—each with their necessity and, as Gadamer taught us, their seriousness. Perhaps I am a more genuinely playful thinker thanks to your thoughtful play—just as I know I am a more enthusiastic greeter thanks to your exuberant wave.

I know it is a cliché to say that children have much to teach us. Perhaps it is part of being a mother to find myself saying things I know I've heard before, but saying them as if they have meaning for the first time. Or perhaps, what you have to teach me is utterly singular, and is not, therefore, something I might learn once and for all or blithely spin out into any theory (a "theory" of childhood, of language, or of maternity, for example). Your world is distinct and singular, but conjoined, with mine. Your life adds a dimension to mine that I am still trying to fathom, and I know that attempting to *understand* it will only render it more opaque. I am struck by your infant wisdom. You have taught me so much so far, causing me to question and re-evaluate, to slow down, and to pause.

Philosophy has yet to learn from children, to learn the wisdom of play, of touch, and of sensory immersion. There have been noble attempts (particularly by Merleau-Ponty, who knew that language itself arises from "primordial silence"), but it is as if philosophy is resistant to thinking-with children (which would entail *being* with them) rather than thinking about them.¹¹ There is a missing register, a missing attunement to the lives of others whose language we have yet to hear. Plato, notably,

made the terrible error of having Diotima describe children as a means to immortality, second in prestige and worth to the immortality achieved through the generation of beautiful ideas: "everyone would prefer to bring forth this sort of children rather than human offspring. People are envious of Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets because of the offspring they left behind, since these are the sort of offspring that, being immortal themselves, provide their procreators with an immortal glory and an immortal remembrance."¹² Diotima's hierarchy of "birth in soul" over "birth in body" leaves little room for a mother to be a thinker. You were at once a beautiful idea and a beautiful body, a surplus of beauty that is ever-changing and evolving, and a source of genuinely new ideas. I don't think of you as a means to immortality, although I hope, as every parent hopes, that you outlive me. But you are too much your own to be a mere extension or prolongation of my life. Instead, you are more like a visceral testament to more time—like the embodied touchstones of time Levinas describes as "faces." You enter my life without my history—you inject more time into the world. I don't have any idea what that time will be like or how it will unfurl, but if there is any meaning to the word "hope," then it is the openness of a future that has no edges, a future you initiated like a flare with your birth.

Philosophers think so much about death, but not enough of them think about birth.¹³ This blind spot seems coincident with the general ignorance of children and childhood, and particularly infancy. But it also seems coincident with a pervasive unease with the body. One can die alone, tragically. But at birth we are together, at least two, maybe more. Your birth coincides with multiple births—the birth of myself as a mother, your dad as a father, our parents as grandparents and so on...all of these selves born together all at once, as if proving the multiplicity and plurality of the self that begins as two (or more) in one and continues, endlessly, dividing. This was an abstract thought for me until your birth. Or rather, until I was pregnant with you, becoming both myself and another.

I'm not sure philosophy, as an academic discipline, is compatible or friendly with motherhood. Certainly the prevalent structures of maternity leave and the ethos of academia and American society at large are openly hostile to motherhood. The Platonic legacy of over-valuing the idea at the expense of the body persists. But perhaps philosophy can find new ways of thinking about passion, language, bodies, and time. Perhaps philosophy, with the help of mothers, can be more attuned to *infantia* in all its forms, becoming more welcoming to what children have to teach and how they help us to become better listeners—and therefore better teachers. And if we could all become less rigid in our routines and less self-assured in our knowledge, then perhaps we'd have a more intuitive, less bewildered, sense of how to go on.

Endnotes

1. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Uncollected Poems*, 1923, trans. Edward Snow, 1997. My thanks to my student, Darla Migan, for reminding me of this poem.
2. Plato, *The Phaedrus*, included in *Plato's Erotic Dialogues*, trans. William S. Cobb (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 227a, p. 87.
3. See Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 343.
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, ¶5.6, trans. Bertrand Russell (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1922), 149.
5. William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. I* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), 488.
6. Bergson describes the overtaking of a "fundamental self" by the "social self" as the human subject matures and exchanges "intuition" for "intellect." In *Time and Free Will*

he explains, “Thus a second self is formed which obscures the first, a self whose existence is made up of distinct moments, whose states are separated from one another and easily expressed in words.” In Bergson’s descriptions this is a necessary, practical step, and yet he wonders whether there might be a way of retrieving a measure of intuition and living in more intimate tandem with the inarticulate rhythms of the world. Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data on Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson, M.A. (New York, Dover, 2001), 138.

7. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 1962), 413. Merleau-Ponty goes on to criticize Piaget’s theory that the child “achieves the cogito” at or around age twelve, writing: “it must be the case that the child’s outlook is in some ways vindicated against the adult’s—and that the unsophisticated thinking of our earliest years remains as an indispensable acquisition underlying that of maturity” (414).
8. Andy Warhol, “Interviews,” in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 343.
9. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 33.
10. See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 121.
11. Merleau-Ponty describes the development of a certain deafness as one masters a language. He explains, “We become unaware of the contingent element in expression and communication, whether it be in the child learning to speak, or in the writer saying and thinking something for the first time, in short, in all who transform a certain kind of silence into speech. . . . Our view of man will remain superficial so long as we fail to go back to that origin, so long as we fail to find, beneath the chatter of words, the primordial silence, and as long as we do not describe the action which breaks this silence.” *Phenomenology of Perception*, 214.
12. Plato, *The Symposium*, in *Plato’s Erotic Dialogues*, 209c, p. 47.
13. There are genuine exceptions to this, including, perhaps foremost, Hannah Arendt’s conception of *natality* as the human capacity for renewal. Arendt offers a rich and compelling account of beginning and the hope inscribed in action. If, however, “natality” is meant to account for all varieties of beginnings, it sounds strangely detached and does not go deeply enough into the radical multiplicity and ambiguity of childbirth.

Personhood, Protection, and Promiscuity: Some Thoughts on Kant, Mothers, and Infanticide

Jordan Pascoe
CUNY Graduate Center

In one of the stranger moments in the *Rechtslehre*, Kant suggests that in cases where a woman bears a child out of wedlock, she and the child find themselves in “a state of nature” and that, therefore, she ought not to be punished under the legal code for killing that child.

Kant embeds this suggestion in his discussion of penal law and the retributive argument. The punishment for all homicide, he famously argues, ought to be death; this is the case even if “civil society were to be dissolved by the consent of all its members...the last murderer remaining in prison would have to be executed.”¹ Kant is intractable on this point—yet he then suggests that there are two cases where “it remains doubtful whether legislation is also authorized to impose the death

penalty.”² These cases, he argues, are killing a fellow soldier in a duel and an unwed mother killing her child. Both are cases of honor, says Kant, and therefore, “in these two cases people find themselves in a state of nature, and these acts of killing, which would not then even have to be called murder, are certainly punishable but cannot be punished with death by the supreme power.”³ This discussion of the duelist and the infanticidal mother signals a rare moment of ambivalence for Kant. In the end, his position is clear: the state is justified in executing both the duelist and the infanticidal mother—and given his insistence on consistency in law, this comes as no surprise.

Kant’s discussion of infanticide marks the only extended discussion of motherhood offered anywhere in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. He describes, in general terms, the rights parents have over their children in his discussion of the household, but these are predominantly the rights that the “head of household” (presumably, the father) has over all persons within the household.⁴ Mothers’ rights are of concern only in this discussion of infanticide, where Kant suggests that a mother’s rights place her somehow outside the state, in an imagined state of nature. Yet this entails, as I will argue, that the mother has an ability to influence the law precisely because her relationship to her illegitimate child places her outside the law. Kant’s arguments about infanticide (and, indeed, the very presence of these arguments in the *Rechtslehre*) reveal a great deal about the logics of personhood in Kant’s political philosophy. Far from being a speculative departure, Kant’s contemplation of mercy in the case of the duelist and the infanticidal mother offer key insights into the various ways that consent organizes both Kant’s moral and political arguments, and places mothers in a unique position in relation to the law.

Retribution, Rights, and Reciprocity

Kant’s claims about retributive punishment in the *Rechtslehre* are well known: he argues that capital punishment is a categorical imperative, and that anyone “who has committed murder must die.”⁵ This discussion comes in Section I of the second part of the *Rechtslehre*, in which he delineates the rights of the state. In order to understand how Kant’s retributive argument hinges on his account of rights, it is useful to say something about the way in which Kant formulates rights throughout the *Rechtslehre*.

Take, for instance, the argument grounding property right. Though in a state of nature, I may come to possess things—either because I am using them or defending them—my right to these things is not secure: it is *possession*, not *ownership*. To say that I own something is to say that I have a right to it—but what gives me this right? For Kant, all rights rest on reciprocal recognition: my right to a thing is premised on the fact that no one else has a right to it. Rights hinge on recognition and enforcement: I have a right only in a society in which others have agreed to recognize and respect that right, and in which we have all recognized the state’s right to coercively enforce those rights.

Other rights, like the right to life, work in the same way: I have a right to life only if others recognize and respect this right. If others don’t recognize and respect my right to life, then that right is merely provisional. It is not enforceable, so doesn’t behave as a juridical right at all. By the same token, my right to life is premised on the fact that I recognize and respect the right to life of others. If I commit murder, I have failed to recognize and respect the right to life of others, and thus I have forfeited my own right to life. Worse still, by failing to recognize the right to life of others I have in fact denied the right to life of all others: I have made the right to life provisional. And in order to restore this right, Kant argues, I must be killed.⁶

Thus, as Kant makes clear, the criminal has not simply subverted the law, he has *made crime his law*: he has made breaking the law the maxim of his actions (since he is autonomous). He does this either by universalizing this maxim or by treating himself as an exception to the law; either way, he has broken with the social contract.⁷ In the case of the murderer, this break is so severe that it constitutes a forfeiture of his right to life.

A Question of Honor (or, Notes from a Swashbuckling Kant)

While Kant's arguments about infanticide might surprise us, the fact that he ruminates about infanticide in the *Rechtslehre* would not have surprised his contemporary readers. Infanticide held a critical place in the emerging field of legal philosophy in Germany in the eighteenth century; the famed German legal scholar Gustav Radbruch referred to it as "the key delict to all efforts at criminal law reform in the eighteenth century."⁸ Isabel Hull, writing on the history of sexual law in Germany in the eighteenth century, writes that discussions of law and sexuality "centered around a single offense, which then served as a metaphor for the sexual system and its legal ramifications as a whole." That offense, she argues, was infanticide.⁹ Criminal law in the mid-eighteenth century required that women who found themselves unmarried and pregnant report their pregnancy to the local authorities, who were required to punish them for fornication¹⁰; failure to report such a pregnancy put one under suspicion of infanticide, for which the punishment was death.¹¹ Infanticide accounted for half of all executions in Prussia in the second half of the eighteenth century, inspiring Frederick the Great to initiate legal reforms in 1765 to decriminalize fornication first for pregnant women, and then for all women by the time Kant was writing in the 1790s. An essay competition in 1780 received over 400 essays on the subject, and throughout the late eighteenth century, infanticide was the example used by those arguing for legal reform generally, and for the abolishment of the death penalty in particular.¹² That Kant includes infanticide in his discussion of retributive punishment, therefore, ought not to come as a surprise.

The scholarly debate about infanticide and legal reform in the 1780s highlighted the asymmetry of infanticide law, which defined infanticide as a crime only the mother could commit, and often positioned the infanticidal mother as defending her honor in the face of an unfair and oppressive legal and social system.¹³ Kant draws on this tradition, arguing that what the dueling military officer and the infanticidal mother have in common is that "the feeling of honor leads to both."¹⁴

The similarities, however, end there. The case of the dueling soldier is relatively easily solved in Kant's philosophy, turning as it does on the familiar notion of consent. The relationship between the unwed mother and child, however, is clearly not a dynamic structured by consent. Nonetheless, mother and child find themselves outside the bounds of law:

So it seems that in these two cases people find themselves in the state of nature, and that these acts of killing (*homicidium*), which would then not even have to be called murder (*homicidium dolosum*), are certainly punishable but cannot be punished by the supreme power. A child that comes into the world apart from marriage is born outside the law (for the law is marriage) and therefore outside the protection of the law. It has, as it were, stolen into the commonwealth (like contraband merchandise), so that the commonwealth can ignore its existence (since it was not right that it should have come to exist in this way), and can therefore also ignore its annihilation;

and no decree can remove the mother's shame when it becomes known that she gave birth without being married.¹⁵

At first glance, this seems to hint at a cruel and unfeeling tendency in Kant's vision of the state. Annette Baier calls it "a pretty shocking and cruel bit of Kantian reasoning, cruel in its apparent disregard of the fate of innocent victims."¹⁶ Jennifer Uleman, on the other hand, suggests that Kant's reasoning is "surprisingly compassionate" because the law cannot solve the problem of competing demands posed by competing legal and social norms and because it cannot protect her from the disgrace and social censure that follows from bearing an illegitimate child, a woman in this position must have the right to defend "the honor of her sex."¹⁷ Uleman suggests that this mercy reveals a feminist resistance to misogynist social norms where one's honor is relative to one's sex.

This compassionate consideration of mercy for the mother was not surprising as Uleman suggests—it was the dominant narrative about infanticide by the time Kant was writing in the late 1790s. The woman in question was, in other words, the object of great sympathy and compassion among German essayists and literati of the time.¹⁸ The Prussian General Law Code of 1794 had not only decriminalized fornication for all women, but offered unwed mothers unprecedented legal and social protections, allowing them to seek reimbursement, ongoing financial support, name and status from impregnators, giving them (effectively) the social status of an innocently divorced wife.¹⁹ Though Kant gestures towards a criticism of the harshness of punitive law and the unfairness of the social standard, he ultimately upholds capital punishment and defends the rigid social order that drove women to infanticide to begin with. In comparison to the legal reforms already on the books in Prussia, his claim that mother and child merely find themselves in a "state of nature" is startlingly *unprogressive*.

Uleman's reading fails not only to consider the progressive historical moment in which Kant was writing, but also to position his comments on infanticide in the context of the institutional order of the *Rechtslehre*. The social order that stigmatizes illegitimate birth is not amoral for Kant—rather, it is central to his moral conception of the state. Kant's arguments here are not a compassionate resistance to barbaric social norms but rather a set of claims about political recognition and identity. Indeed, Kant in the end condones these social norms, condemning the infanticidal mother to death in the name of retributive justice and consistency in law. Instead of critiquing social norms, Kant is offering an account of the boundaries of the political community. The state of nature that opens up around the infanticidal mother and her child is not simply a response to a failure of law to offer protection from social disgrace, or a failure of the penal code to correspond to the moral law. Rather, the state of nature opens up because of an exclusion of law: the child in question is not automatically recognized as a member of the community, and is therefore not automatically offered the protection of the law. This exclusion, I argue, is premised on Kant's rigid designation of marriage and the domestic sphere as the institutions that make sexuality and child rearing possible.

Marriage and the Juridical Community

My contention is that the sense in which the illegitimate child is outside the protection of law is not a "shocking and cruel" anomaly, but rather indicative of the central role that marriage plays in Kant's political philosophy. For Kant, marriage is a primarily public institution constitutive of a special class of rights which operate within the domestic sphere. The unwed mother's shame is not merely a result of having transgressed

social mores, nor even of having had immoral sex; it is shame at having had what can only be understood as *unlawful sex*. Beyond even this, it is shame at having become a mother—at having brought a child into the community—without having the right to do so.

Kant's concerns about sex are well known: sex leads us to objectify ourselves and our partners, to offer ourselves up as objects for sexual use, and thus to denigrate our humanity and moral personhood. When we present ourselves as available for sexual use, Kant worries, we are presenting ourselves as objects for use in public commerce with others. Sex is a necessary and inevitable part of human life, in other words, but it is not compatible with the dignity of persons in the public sphere. Marriage, as the publicly recognized juridical institution that contains sex within the domestic sphere, contains this problem.

How does marriage do this? The key to Kant's account of marriage is that it is "a right to a person akin to a right to a thing." In other words, it works like property right: it is defined through exclusive use. Through marriage, I have a right to my partner not in the sense that my partner thereby becomes a thing, but in the sense that no one else has a right to him.²⁰ Marriage occurs through *law and not by contract*.²¹ It is not a contract between two consenting parties but, like property right, is an agreement between two persons *and everyone else*. Marriage is a legal institution that depends on the participation and recognition of the community as a whole.

This allows us to understand the case of the unwed mother in a different light. It is not simply the sexual indiscretion involved in illegitimacy that poses a problem for the social order—it is also the very problem of how an illegitimate child can be raised outside the lawfully produced domestic sphere.²² Marriage is not the only relationship organized by domestic right. When we examine the range of needs and inclinations contained within the relationships produced and maintained through domestic right, it becomes clear that a larger political project is entailed. By grouping marriage, parenthood, all familial relationships, and domestic servitude under the same rubric, Kant has effectively located a whole host of intimacies, interdependencies, and inadequacies within the domestic sphere. By containing the intricacies of care in the domestic realm, Kant makes possible the independence and dignity of persons in the public sphere.

The illegitimate child is born outside domestic right, and threatens the social order by marking a public acknowledgement of the burdens of child rearing. Kant's claims about illegitimate children elsewhere in the *Rechtslehre* are instructive here: he argues that the state should pay for the care of illegitimate children by taxing unmarried people, implying that the threat to the social order brought about by illegitimacy is the responsibility of those who have, in turn, threatened the social order by refusing (or failing) to marry. The unwed mother finds herself outside the law precisely because there is nowhere within the institutions of law for her child to fit. She and her child are juridical anomalies that threaten to undermine the carefully constructed Kantian juridical order.

When Kant claims that the illegitimate child has "stolen into the commonwealth (like contraband merchandise)" he means literally that the child has entered the commonwealth without the public consent given through marriage. Marriage (and chastity outside of it) is not simply a social norm, as Uleman suggests: it is the institution that grants membership in civil society—the mother's identity as a citizen, a recognized member of the state, is not enough. In this sense, the institution of marriage functions as a kind of social contract: all citizens gain membership in the community either through immigration

(an explicit social contract) or legitimate birth (the implied social contract of marriage). Practically speaking, it is likely that marriage is the most common way that the community accepts and recognizes new members.

In suggesting leniency for infanticide, Kant argues that since the child has not entered the community legally (i.e., through the consent of the community), the law need not acknowledge the existence of the child and can even rightfully "ignore its annihilation."²³ It is this claim that Baier and others find truly cruel and shocking: Kant argues not merely that the illegitimate child has no *political* right to protection but that it has no *natural* rights to protection.

This tells us something critical about Kant's account of personhood. Kant scholars assume that one's status as a human being entails at the very least potential personhood. But Kant's infanticide argument hints at something else: children are potential persons only because their status as members of the community is granted through the institutionally organized recognition of the community. In other words, we are recognized as persons, and offered the legal protections of persons, only when we enter the community through the proper channels.

Maternal Obligations

There is some ambiguity here, of course. If the illegitimate child doesn't obligate the community, the possibility remains that the illegitimate child does morally obligate the mother. Certainly, Kant does not argue that infanticide is morally *right* in these cases—merely that it may be legally permissible because the illegitimate child does not warrant the recognition of either the law or the community. He argues only that infanticide may not warrant the "supreme punishment"—but his abrogation of the act still permeates the argument.

Most readings focus on the option whereby the mother, to protect herself from disgrace, kills her child and reenters society. But what if the mother *does not* kill the baby? Surely, the "state of nature" in which they find themselves cannot last indefinitely. Rather, the mother and child would have to take their (inconvenient, socially problematic) places in the community. But this, of course, requires that the community recognizes the child and accepts it as a member of society. The mother, then, is given the opportunity to decide whether the illegitimate child is a person: if she recognizes it as such, the community will be obligated to recognize it as well.

Unwed mothers, in other words, play a unique role in the political story of personhood. Personhood, as we have seen, is always granted through consent: through the consent of the community (in the case of the legitimate child) or through the consent of the mother (in the case of the illegitimate child). That the illegitimate child's fate is so wholly in the hands of the mother also tells us something: before a child is a potential person in its own right, it *belongs to* the mother, as an entity over which she has full jurisdiction.

This move has a range of implications for contemporary debates about motherhood and personhood. Certainly, it suggests that for Kant, women (or, at least, unmarried women) have greater rights over their bodies and their children than one might have anticipated. Accordingly, a Kantian account of abortion might surprise us: if the legal personhood of the child is up to the mother (even, in this case, after the child is born), then laws against abortion would be difficult to justify in a Kantian account of the state. We might hope, as Kant does here, that a mother would choose to grant personhood to her unborn child, but we would not have the right to coerce her to do so.

At the same time, this argument suggests that married women in the Kantian state have significantly fewer rights over

their bodies and their children than do unmarried women. Married women have the community's consent to have children, and through this consent, legitimate children are automatically recognized as members of the community. The community might then have a reasonable interest in protecting even the unborn children of a married woman. The married woman never finds herself "in a state of nature" where she alone has jurisdiction over her body and her child.

The "Supreme Punishment"

Of course, Kant doesn't remain ambivalent. Having considered the possibility of granting leniency to the unwed mother guilty of infanticide, Kant concludes that all murder—even for the duelist and the unwed mother—is murder and thus requires the supreme punishment. But as I've noted, this concession turns not on a sudden desire to protect the illegitimate child, but on a desire for consistency in law, a refusal to make exceptions.

Kant's final move in the infanticide argument turns on a distinction between two layers of justice. The state, he argues, is just in executing the infanticidal mother, while this same punishment is unjust "from the perspective of the justice arising from the people."²⁴ Parsing these two layers of justice is beyond the scope of this paper, but Kant's conclusion is clear: executing the infanticidal mother is required by retributive law *regardless* of the social norms and attitudes of society.²⁵

Troublingly, however, this conclusion does not necessarily extend full rights or protections to the illegitimate child, who remains a destabilizing and unwelcome presence in Kant's commonwealth. Far from critiquing the social structure which might have driven her to infanticide in the first place, Kant has developed an account of institutionally constructed personhood that leaves open the question of whether the illegitimate child can attain full membership in the community. The unwed mother finds herself in a double bind: she seems morally obligated to recognize her infant as a person deserving of protection (since failure to do so would result in her imminent execution), but her only recourse is to return with that child to a rigidly structured society in which her own shame "cannot be removed by decree"²⁶ and her child's rights are at best uncertain.

This paints a rather bleak picture of life in Kant's *Rechtsstaat* for those who find themselves in the interstices of the institutional order. The infanticide argument tells us a great deal about the relationship between juridical institutions, criminal law, and membership in the community—and about the sticky spaces outside of these institutional arrangements.

Endnotes

1. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:333. Henceforth, I will use the Academy abbreviation for the *Metaphysics of Morals*, MS.
2. MS 6:335.
3. MS 6:336.
4. MS 3:281.
5. MS, 6:333.
6. Kant lays out retributive punishments for other offenses, too. He argues, for instance, that the punishment for verbal abuses (or causing humiliation) ought to be public judgment and apology (or public humiliation), rather than a fine (MS 6:332). Someone who steals has disrespected the right to property, and thus has (for some determined length of time) forfeited his own right to property. As one who cannot own property, but who still needs to survive, the thief would have to perform "convict or prison labor" and might be "reduced to the status of slave for a time" (MS 6:333).
7. MS 6:320, footnote.
8. Isabel Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700-1815* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 111.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
10. Often by beating, imprisonment, or public humiliation.
11. Though the 1532 criminal code called for execution by being drowned in a sack (often with a dog, a cat, and a viper, depending on local tradition), the most common method of execution by the mid-eighteenth century was the sword.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
14. MS 6:335.
15. MS 6:336.
16. Annette Baier, "Moralism and Cruelty: Reflections on Kant and Hume," *Ethics* 103 (April 1993): 446.
17. Jennifer Uleman, "On Kant, Infanticide, and Finding Oneself in a State of Nature," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 54, no. 2 (2000): 174.
18. Kerstin Michalik, "Development of the Discourse on Infanticide in the Late Eighteenth Century and the New Legal Standardization of the Offence in the Nineteenth Century," in *Gender in Transition: Discourse and Practice in German-Speaking Europe, 1750-1830*, ed. Gleixner & Gray (University of Michigan Press, 2009), 57-59; Hull 1997, 111-113; 280-281.
19. Michalik 2009, 55.
20. Similarly, I have an exclusive right to my child and my servant—a right best exemplified by my right to forcibly retrieve a runaway servant or an erstwhile child. This category of rights also entails that my rights over my domestic servant are very different than my rights over other kinds of employees.
21. MS 3:276.
22. MS 6:326-327.
23. MS 6:336.
24. MS 6:337.
25. MS 6:336. Kant distinguishes between "the categorical imperative of penal justice" and "the barbarous and undeveloped" civil constitution or legislation itself.
26. MS 6:336.

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Race and Rousseauian Themes in Latin American Philosophy: D. F. Sarmiento and Republican Motherhood¹

Andrea Pitts

University of South Florida

The racial politics of most postcolonial nations have been largely shaped by the relationship between the intimate sphere of social discourse and the political sphere. The term “intimate sphere” refers to various social and political dynamics surrounding familial and sexual relations. The field of inquiry of such micropolitical interactions within “intimate” space, in this regard, might include diverse phenomena such as the gender norms that construct kinship identities, financial and proprietary negotiations that create personal commitments between individuals and families, and the customs and rituals of bodily care and adornment that are regulated within the domestic setting. Such research investigating the intimate sphere interprets family and sexual relations as matrices of power through which identities, including racial, ethnic, and gender identities, are constituted. In this paper, I claim that the efforts of public intellectuals to control sexual and sentimental relationships were and are crucial for creating and maintaining distinctions between racial groups and their respective roles in post-independence politics. To defend this position, I examine the work of writer and politician, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888), and Rousseauian ideals of republican motherhood to shed light on the racial and political effects of the regulation of the intimate sphere of social life. I argue that the production of racial and national identity in the public discourse of postcolonial politics in nineteenth-century Argentina was influenced by philosophical ideas that emphasized a need to regulate women’s desires and practices surrounding kith and kin. First, I provide an analysis of the maternal ideals that Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a major influence on Sarmiento’s thought, put forth in his writings to show how Rousseau envisioned the freedom of an individual being closely tied to women and the intimate sphere. Rousseau claimed that the “constitution” of the nation, meant both as the set of fundamental laws governing the state and as the composition of the physical bodies that made up the social collective, should be placed in the hands of women. From the nursing practices they employed to their roles as the lovers and wives of the male citizens of the republic, women were essentially tied to the ability for an individual to obtain a free and just political existence. While much political philosophy in the United States and Europe has focused on Rousseau’s *Social Contract* and its subsequent impact on conceptions of republicanism and liberalism, I claim that the influence of his educational writings and the explicitly gendered forms of civic involvement that he espoused play a significant role in the racial ideals of postcolonial politics in nineteenth-century Argentina.

To defend this, I then show how Sarmiento’s use of the Rousseauian conception of motherhood became integrated into the scientific racism that was emerging in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Concerns over potential impediments to civic progress were circulating within the independence discourses of Latin America, and Sarmiento’s response to these worries focused on the need to refigure the role of women of European descent within the country to preserve and protect “civilization.” I argue that Sarmiento’s depiction of his mother and sisters in his autobiographical work, *Recuerdos de provincia* [translated as *Recollection of a Provincial Past*], including his account of the transition from a

colonial organization of the family to a modern model of the domestic setting, develops a conception of the transformative role that the intimate sphere of social order has on the new national identity of the citizens of the Argentine republic. The role of European-descended women within this discourse was to (re)produce white European culture in a postcolonial setting. As such, the ability to retain strict boundaries between “barbarous” indigenous populations and “civilized” European populations was determined by the cultural customs that defined each group, and women were in direct control of preserving such customs.

First, allow me to briefly discuss Sarmiento’s work and his subsequent influence on contemporary Argentine racial politics. Sarmiento constituted part of a group of young writers referred to as the “Generation of 1837,” a group that was engaged in seeking cultural and political reform for the Argentine nation.² Sarmiento’s vision was to transform the vast territories of Argentina, then ruled by what he deemed as “barbarous” feudal lords, into major industrialized metropolitan centers similar to those found in the United States and Europe. Sarmiento’s official political involvement included serving as governor of San Juan, working as minister and advisor under President Bartolomé Mitre, and, finally, serving as president of the country from 1868 to 1874. Throughout his political career, he succeeded in consolidating a new economical system based on agricultural development, built national railroads, and helped establish a federal court system and postal service. Yet, his crowning achievement and most prominent mark in Argentine history was his contribution to the educational system of the nation, in which he built libraries and schools and developed a comprehensive educational curriculum for the country. As a result of this impact on the nation and due to his extensive writings on education and national development, many scholars consider Sarmiento to be one of the most influential intellectuals in Latin American history. Additionally, his work was recognized in both Europe and the United States during his lifetime.³

There is, however, another side to Sarmiento’s work and influence. In contemporary Argentina, the current website of the Ministry of Foreign Relations states that whites (*blancos*) make up 85% of the population, *mestizos* 10%, and indigenous persons and “others” make up 5%.⁴ There are many reasons for the current ethnoracial demographics of the country, but Sarmiento’s political ideals were certainly among such contributing factors. For instance, Sarmiento and other members of his generation encouraged massive waves of immigration in order to populate the nation with white European inhabitants, a process conceived with a special role for women in mind.⁵ Throughout his life, Sarmiento strongly defended the view that civilization depended on the eradication of Amerindian cultural influences and the extermination of the indigenous populations in the Argentine nation. He states in a newspaper article in 1844:

We must be just with the Spaniards; by exterminating a savage people whose territory they were going to occupy, they simply did what all civilized people do to savages, which the colony deliberately or not did with the indigenous peoples it absorbed, destroyed, exterminated. If this terrible procedure of civilization is barbaric and cruel to the eyes of justice and reason, it is, like war itself, like conquest, one of the ways Providence has armed diverse human races, and among these the most powerful and advanced, to replace those who, by their organic weakness and backwardness in civilization’s path, cannot achieve the great destinies of man on earth.⁶

Sarmiento claims here that, by divine decree, European and Creole populations in Argentina must “exterminate” and “destroy” the indigenous groups of the nation to further proceed on the “path” of civilization.⁷ Equating barbarism with the cultural norms and customs of the indigenous groups in Latin America, Sarmiento argues that Amerindians and mestizos pose a serious threat to the political and cultural potential of the nation.⁸

Although Sarmiento’s influence on the current racial politics of Argentina requires much more space than I have available here, my project is to isolate only one strand of his thought regarding the development of “civilized” customs and values in the new citizens of the Republic. To explore how Sarmiento envisioned the link between national success and conceptions of motherhood and femininity, it is important to note that several of his major literary influences on this topic were drawn from French romanticism. Such writings were located around a school of thought emanating primarily from Rousseau’s work on education. While Sarmiento clearly criticizes the (oft-interpreted) utopian project of *The Social Contract*,⁹ his views on Rousseau’s conceptions of nature, motherhood, and education are less equivocal. First, it is noteworthy that the author, Alphonse de Lamartine, whom Sarmiento often cites when he speaks of his own mother in *Recuerdos de provincia*, was heavily influenced by Rousseau’s account of motherhood. As Nancy Hanway claims, Sarmiento’s interest in Lamartine is quite understandable. Lamartine shared some key similarities with Sarmiento. For example, both believed in the importance of the education of women and both founded schools dedicated to educating girls.¹⁰ Furthermore, Saint-Simonianism influenced both Lamartine and Sarmiento; however, both thinkers disagreed with the new gender norms that were popularly endorsed by many Saint-Simonians. The followers of Henri de Saint Simon in the early nineteenth century developed a school of thought characterized by egalitarian gender and sexual norms for women and men—including the approval of non-monogamous sexual practices for women and the inclusion of women in the public political sphere. Notably, other authors of the Generation of 1837 were attracted to the treatment of the question of women’s role in nation-building found in Saint Simonianism.¹¹ Sarmiento, however, while advocating other features of Saint Simonianism, chose to locate his position on women’s involvement in the new republic within a different genre of writing, one that conservatively refashioned Rousseau’s conceptions of women and the formation of the body politic.

To understand the influence of Rousseau on Sarmiento more fully, we must turn to one of Rousseau’s key philosophical texts, *Emile; or On Education*. Importantly, Sarmiento cites this text as formative of his own education in *Recuerdos*. He writes that the priest who educated his own mother probably carried *Emile* hidden under his cassock.¹² This remark will prove to be significant once we flesh out Rousseau’s project for mothers within *Emile*. In *Emile*, Rousseau describes how it might be possible to raise a free individual. Emile, the protagonist of the story, will be raised as a perfectly free man because he does not feel constrained by the wills of others.

The only legitimate political arrangement for Rousseau is a state in which no individual feels constrained by the will of any other. Under this view, no figure can visibly rule or assert power over others, because, in order for all to be free, each agent must feel totally unfettered by the wills of others. However, for this task to be possible, each citizen must lack private interests that would come into conflict with the wills of others. Describing the Rousseauian free agent, David Gauthier writes: “His participation in sovereignty will be simply an expression of

his solidarity with the collective body...[H]e wants only what his society, his *patrie*, can do, and does what pleases it.”¹³ Freedom, according to Rousseau, requires a complete reorganization of human sentiment, wherein individual desires become transformed into desires for the good of the nation.

While this version of the individual’s participation within the social community might sound familiar to those already acquainted with the *Social Contract*, there is another side of Rousseau’s project for human freedom. In addition to the individual’s need to feel self-sufficient the Rousseauian agent is also, as Rebecca Kukla argues, a “concrete being planted firmly within the messy natural world of bodies, climates, and contingent habits and passions.”¹⁴ Rousseau’s conception of the self is distinct from most others available within French intellectual history prior to the eighteenth century.¹⁵ The rationalist tradition of the seventeenth century, as found through the work of figures like Descartes and Malebranche, viewed the self as something separated from the messy, contingent corporeal world, including the body.¹⁶ The bodily desires and sentiments of the agent, under the rationalist paradigm, were thought to be controllable by human reason and intellect. Rousseau’s understanding of the self, however, was as an embodied being that is inevitably affected by its surroundings. The task, then, of educating free individuals, requires that not only do the environments of the individual need to be intimately controlled, but their bodies themselves must be reared to have the proper kinds of desires. Some of the ways in which this type of education manifests itself are through the types of food children eat, the proper objects for them to play with, and how they must learn mathematical and theoretical abstractions.

Of course, an omnipotent educator that can wholly control the environment of a subject is unfeasible. A more practical personification of such an educator is the mother. The dedication of *Emile* to mothers at the start of the book illustrates this investment in the role of mothers in shaping free subjects. Rousseau declares:

It is to you that I address myself, tender and foresighted mothers, who are capable of keeping the nascent shrub away from the highway and securing it from the impact of human opinion! Cultivate and water the young plant before it dies. Its fruits will one day be your delights.¹⁷

Mothers play a fundamental role in forming a new republic. In order for citizens to be reared to have interests in common with the social whole, they must be “cultivated” by the hands of their mothers. For example, the nourishment of the infant with the mother’s breast milk will be one of the initial symbolic and performative acts by which one can shape the will of the individual. Rousseau states in his treatise on the government of Poland, in the section dedicated to education: “Every true republican drank love of fatherland, that is to say love of the laws and of freedom, with his mother’s milk.”¹⁸ Here, the practice of breastfeeding represents an opportunity for mothers to pass on civic virtues to their children. Yet, the implications of this can be dangerous as well. If the mother of the infant is not herself reared properly, she will pass vices on to the child.¹⁹

In this vein, Rousseau strongly advocated a return to the role of domestic motherhood. Many bourgeois mothers of eighteenth-century France had relegated domestic and childrearing duties to paid nurses and servants, and Rousseau saw this as a threat to the familial order necessary for social harmony. He thus advanced a return to the domestic role of mothers in the building of a new social order. He writes:

[L]et mothers deign to nurse their children, morals will reform themselves, nature’s sentiments will be

awakened in every heart, the state will be re-peopled. This first point, this point alone, will bring everything back together. The attraction of domestic life is the best counterpoise for bad morals.²⁰

Therefore, the step to reshape the subject's nature is to reform mothers and reestablish the role of motherhood into the domestic sphere. Controlling women's desires, i.e., to become mothers and to perform the "duties" of motherhood, becomes another normative project within *Emile*. Every facet of the free subject depends on this relationship with his mother, and controlling women's nature becomes imperative for the formation of the new republic.

In Argentina, these Rousseauian ideals became integrated into the vision that Sarmiento had for the newly emerging republic. In *Recuerdos de provincia*, in the section devoted to his mother's life, Sarmiento refers often to the then recently-published text by Lamartine, *Les confidences*. Lamartine's own writings were heavily influenced by Rousseau. Like Sarmiento, Lamartine turned to Rousseau as a model for his conception of republican motherhood because he disagreed with the sexual politics of Saint-Simonianism.²¹ Furthermore, both authors claim that their mothers were educated according to the dictates of a sound Rousseauian education. We saw earlier that, in *Recuerdos*, Sarmiento claims that his own mother was educated by a priest who studied *Emile*. Likewise, in *Les confidences*, Lamartine claims that the man who educated his mother was the first to "dare to apply" Rousseau's "natural philosophy" to education.²²

However, Sarmiento and Lamartine were also quite distinct in the content of their autobiographical writings. Alix de Lamartine, Lamartine's mother, clearly fit the picture of the new republican mother.²³ She was the "angel of the house" who cared for her family's physical, emotional, and moral needs.²⁴ Lamartine's mother was born to French aristocracy but withdrew from the older aristocratic traditions to rear her family.²⁵ Sarmiento attributes Lamartine's success in France during the 1848 Revolution and the bringing forth of France's Second Republic to his education, including, most notably, the education he received from his mother. Sarmiento describes Lamartine as "that last scion of the old aristocratic society, who is transformed under the maternal wings to become, soon thereafter, the angel of peace that will proclaim to a restless Europe the advent of the republic."²⁶ Sarmiento compares the project before him, establishing a new Argentine Republic, to the actions of Lamartine that occurred just two years prior. Yet, Sarmiento's upbringing is distinct from Lamartine's. Sarmiento's mother was not born into aristocracy. Rather, Sarmiento's mother, Doña Paula Albarracín, was representative of Argentina's colonial past.²⁷ Her family had little money, and as Sarmiento notes, her father "left only poverty to be divided among fifteen children."²⁸ Rather than coming from a class of wealthy elites and descending into the humble life of domesticity, Doña Paula's life required that she work to support her household.²⁹

Thus, Sarmiento's mother did not ideally fit the popular image of nineteenth-century republican motherhood. Instead, Doña Paula represents a period in Argentine history when women's labor was both common and valued within society.³⁰ Sarmiento, in contrast, did not advocate skilled labor for women of the upper classes, and, as such, the republican mothers that he envisaged for the nation would thrive in the domestic, not the public, sphere. The colonial era, of which Doña Paula was a part, represented a social structure that needed to be replaced. Sarmiento attempts to destroy this colonial past and to establish the new republic through a radical transformation of his mother's environment. Rather than attempt to change

her beliefs directly, Sarmiento recounts how her home was transformed to be in accord with the new modern European customs. Sarmiento's sisters, guided by Sarmiento's judgments, take it upon themselves to arrange the domestic domain so that the proper display of republican values becomes apparent. Sarmiento describes his sisters as "borne of the wave of innovation,"³¹ and the sentiments and aesthetic values of this generation, of which Sarmiento was a part, sought to reform the domestic sphere. Among the changes the sisters make are the relocation of two portraits of Dominican Saints from the salon to the bedroom, signifying the secularization of the nation; and the removal of a divan which held associations with Arabic customs and culture, associations that Sarmiento also linked to his mother's Arabic ancestry.³²

Yet, one of the most striking illustrations of Sarmiento's desire to reorganize Doña Paula's home is seen through the destruction of her favorite fig tree. Sarmiento describes how the fig tree shaded his mother's loom, which, for him, represents Doña Paula's labor and financial contribution to the family.³³ Sarmiento writes: "the fig tree was a lost cause in the public eye; it violated all the rules of decorum and decency, but for my mother, it was a question of economics...."³⁴ The family decides to tear down the tree, and when the deed is being performed, Sarmiento symbolically ties together the destruction of the tree to his mother: "The blows of the figicidal axe shook my mother's heart as well, tears filled her eyes, like the tree's sap that oozed from the wound, and her sobs echoed the shuddering leaves; each new blow called forth a new cry of pain...."³⁵ The family replaces the tree with an orchard. Sarmiento states: "The slaughtered tree was replaced in her affection by a hundred little trees that her maternal eye encouraged to grow."³⁶ Sarmiento then builds a wall around the orchard to enclose the property. That is, "to make it productive," he constructs physical boundaries around the orchard, seeking to take control of its utility for the family.³⁷ This act then serves to effectively erase the colonial values and legacy that his mother's work represented.

Regarding race more specifically, fears regarding the influences that indigenous and black populations had on the emerging republics were becoming prominent in nineteenth-century Latin America. Many intellectuals of the period were fixated on claims that the newly independent nations of this area were facing severe problems due to the intimate contact that European colonizers and their descendants had with indigenous groups and African slaves. A concern over whether Europeans and creoles in the Americas were becoming corrupt due to the geographical regions they inhabited began to spread, and quickly predominated nationalist discourses. Since the theoretical commitments of popular accounts of race like those of Immanuel Kant and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach claimed that one's racial features became permanent once one was reared within a particular geographic setting,³⁸ the issue of whether children born of European families in the Americas would develop the physical and psychological features similar to those of native inhabitants became widespread. Many European and Latin American thinkers of the nineteenth century, Sarmiento among them, viewed Europe as the locus of high civilization, and envisaged the *telos* of other cultures of the world as attempting to reach the pinnacle that Europe had achieved. Connecting Enlightenment ideals of universal humanism to concerns about human evolution, theorists began asserting that civilization existed in differing degrees throughout humankind.³⁹ An author could determine the progress of the human race by comparatively assessing the cultural products of different human populations. For example, the types of educational institutions, religious iconography, architecture, etiquette, economic structure, and so forth became methods

to measure, even if arbitrarily used to defend European norms and customs, the degree to which a human culture was civilized.⁴⁰

Sarmiento, who was keen to these concerns, explicitly advocated social reforms that would erase or repress cultural influences from indigenous and Afro-descendant populations in the nation. Among such reforms were the educational and maternal ideals that he adapted from Rousseau and Lamartine. To regulate and reshape Argentina into a civilized nation, Sarmiento believed that the non-white, non-European elements that marked its colonial past had to be eradicated. In a newspaper article written in 1841, Sarmiento undertakes an analysis of women throughout the history of “human evolution.” Believing, as many others did at the time, that racial differences represented differences in the stages of human evolution, Sarmiento compares women in Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Europe to determine the relative level of “human evolution” that is expressed in each group of people. He chides Amerindian men for their idleness and laments at how indigenous women must be “condemned to continual work.”⁴¹ He hierarchically arranges African men and women above indigenous persons of the Americas, but does so because, unlike Amerindian peoples, “the black person of Africa” does not “still wander through forests... [H]e has a fixed domicile, and he has distributed and taken control of the land.”⁴² He then situates Asian women and men above Africans and Amerindians, but attributes the practice of polygamy to all of Asia. He concludes by praising Europe for their practice of monogamy. In Europe, he claims, women are seen as the true companion of men, and take a “natural” place within the domestic sphere in such an arrangement. He states of European women:

In charge of the domestic hearth, adapting her occupations to her strengths and ability, and guiding the first steps of her progeny, she will give birth to the family, that is, that compact body, that embryo of society which reciprocally links its members by mutual affections and gives rise to ideas of authority, obligation, rights, along with the affections of the heart which are its strongest tie.⁴³

Here the Rousseauian conception of republican motherhood and civic progress is directly linked to the racial development of the human species. Thus, the responsibility of Argentine mothers in the new republic is to reshape their progeny to correspond with the duties and dictates of the unified government that Sarmiento envisioned. His discussions of rearranging his mother’s home, as well as his writings on women’s education demonstrate a preference for European values and customs, and the ideals he created for mothers and women of nineteenth-century Argentina were to reiterate and reinforce white European customs and values.

The role of mothers in the development of the Argentine nation as articulated by Sarmiento then shows us how the regulation of the intimate sphere of social discourse can affect the structures of racial categories within a postcolonial setting. Sarmiento’s work links the cultivation of desires within the family to the civilization and progress of a nation. As I mention above, the influence of Rousseau’s writings on motherhood and civic progress played a key role in the development of the racial ideals circulating within the postcolonial politics of the nineteenth century. As such, this then pushes us, as academics in the United States, to pursue the connections between intimate space and the metaphysics of racial categories from a more global perspective.⁴⁴ That is, not only does Sarmiento’s interpretation of Rousseau shed light on the reception literature of his corpus, it also pushes us to further understand how philosophical ideas about desire and the family impact the organization of public

space more broadly. Projects within such a framework, I claim, would include taking a view of race that looks beyond history and culture in the U.S. to examine how desires for family, sex, and companionship aid in shaping racial identities and their normative force. In this regard, the exploration of the history of race that I offer here is but an example of how one might come to understand the ways in which philosophical ideals surrounding maternity and social progress can aid in shaping and transforming the body politic.

Endnotes

1. I would like to sincerely thank Adriana Novoa for reading numerous drafts of this paper and for encouraging my research in this area. Her guidance and support has been an invaluable part of my graduate education. Also I’d like to give special thanks to Rebecca Kukla for cultivating my interest in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
2. Other figures of the Generation of 1837 include Esteban Echeverría, Juan Bautista Alberdi, and Bartolomé Mitre.
3. For example, prior to his term as president of the Republic of Argentina, Sarmiento received an honorary doctorate from the University of Michigan for his work in education and constitutional law. Georgette Magassy Dorn, “Sarmiento, the United States, and Public Education,” *Sarmiento and his Argentina*, ed. Joseph T. Criscenti (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 82.
4. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, La Cancillería, “Información sobre Argentina.” <http://www.cancilleria.gov.ar> (accessed March 24, 2011).
5. This form of “social cleansing” was not unique to Sarmiento’s writings in the nineteenth century. The suggestion to “whiten” nations in hopes of achieving social progress became prominent in the work of intellectuals throughout the continent during this period. However, the degree to which these ideas were carried out in Argentina, through genocide, immigration policy, and military practice, exceed almost all other nations of the Americas. See also Adriana Novoa and Alex Levine, “Sexual Selection and the Politics of Mating” in *From Man to Ape: Darwinism in Argentina, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 156-91. Here Novoa and Levine explore the relationship between the repopulation of the country and the role of women.
6. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Obras de D.F. Sarmiento II* (Santiago: Imprenta Gutenberg, 1885), 214. Quoted and translated in William H. Kutra, “Rereading *Viajes*: Race, Identity, and National Destiny,” in *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, ed. Tulio Halperín Donghi, Iván Jaksic, Gwen Kirkpatrick, and Francine Masiello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 76.
7. Sarmiento’s early writings portray the destiny of Afro-descendant populations in the Americas more hopefully, i.e., as capable of being “civilized” through increased contact with Europeans and creoles. However, in his later works, Sarmiento retracted those claims altogether and treated Afro-Argentine populations with equal disdain.
8. Kutra, “Rereading *Viajes*,” 76. As Kutra points out, although Sarmiento makes comments in his early writings that tend to romanticize the indigenous groups of Latin America, these views were later abandoned and replaced by the view that such groups would only serve as obstacles to the civic progress of the nation.
9. Criticisms of *The Social Contract* can be found in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, trans. Kathleen Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 121-23.
10. Nancy Hanway, *Embodying Argentina: Body, Space, and Nation in 19th Century Narrative* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2003), 60.
11. One clear example of this can be found in the writings of Esteban Echeverría.

12. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Recuerdos de provincia*, in *Obras completas de D.F. Sarmiento* III (Santiago: Imprenta Gutenberg, 1885), 126.
13. David Gauthier, *Rousseau: The Sentiment of Existence* (New York: Cambridge, 2006), 65. The masculine pronouns refer only to male subjects for Rousseau.
14. Rebecca Kukla, "Making and Masking Human Nature: Rousseau's Aesthetics of Education," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 29 (1998): 228.
15. Although Genevan by birth, many scholars consider Rousseau a major figure within French intellectual history, particularly for his influence on the ideals that inspired the French Revolution.
16. Kukla, "Making and Masking," 229.
17. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile; Or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books: New York, 1979), 38.
18. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Considerations on the Government of Poland and on its Projected Reformation in Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch, (New York, Cambridge, 1997), 189.
19. For example, see Rousseau, *Emile*, 57.
20. Rousseau, *Emile*, 46.
21. Hanway, *Embodying Argentina*, 95.
22. Alphonse de Lamartine, *Les confidences*, trans. Eugène Plunkett (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1849), 60.
23. Hanway, *Embodying Argentina*, 61.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, 62.
26. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Recollections of a Provincial Past*, trans. Elizabeth Garrels and Asa Zatz (New York: Oxford, 2005), 120. [Sarmiento, *Recuerdos*, 123.]
27. Sarmiento, *Recollections*, 36-37. [Sarmiento, *Recuerdos*, 45-46.]
28. Sarmiento, *Recollections*, 126. [Sarmiento, *Recuerdos*, 129.]
29. Hanway, *Embodying Argentina*, 65. Sarmiento's father appears to have been absent from the life of the family or contributed little to the family's sustenance.
30. Hanway, *Embodying Argentina*, 62.
31. Sarmiento, *Recollections*, 138. [Sarmiento, *Recuerdos*, 139-140.]
32. Sarmiento, *Recollections*, 138-143. [Sarmiento, *Recuerdos*, 139-145.]
33. Hanway, *Embodying Argentina*, 69.
34. Sarmiento, *Recollections*, 142. [Sarmiento, *Recuerdos*, 144.]
35. Sarmiento, *Recollections*, 143. [Sarmiento, *Recuerdos*, 144.]
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), viii-ix.
39. Robert C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 49.
40. See also Novoa and Levine, *From Man to Ape* for more on the development of evolutionary thought in nineteenth-century Argentina.
41. Elizabeth Garrels, "Sarmiento and the Woman Question: From 1839 to Facundo," *Sarmiento: Author of Nation*, ed. Tulio Halperin Donghi, Iván Jaksic, Gwen Kirkpatrick, and Francine Masiello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 280.
42. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, "La mujer," in *Obras completas de Sarmiento* XII (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Mariano Moreno, 1896), 199. Translated in Garrels, "Sarmiento and the Woman Question," 280.
43. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, "De la educación," in *Obras completas de Sarmiento* IV (Santiago: Imprenta Gutenberg, 1886), 237. Translated in Garrels, "Sarmiento and the Woman Question," 281.
44. For example, contemporary topics in U.S. academic philosophy engaging immigration, assimilation, and multiculturalism would be aided by such research that explores the relationship between intimate desires and the regulation of public space.

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The Performativity of Being a Mother and a Philosopher

Anna Aloisia Moser
Pratt Institute

One of my students reminded me recently that I had answered a question of hers in the first class she took with me by saying that I was not a "human doing," but a "human being." The notion of such "being" rather than "doing" is what motivates my paper. When it comes to doing, it is obvious how different the "doings" of motherhood are compared to the activities

of philosophy: being at home with and attentive towards a baby, watching, feeding, and diapering compared to teaching, presenting at conferences, writing papers, and reading. More difficult than comparing these activities even, is adjusting the timing when changing from one activity to another—trying to slow down, be calm and present at home, and the moment I leave the house to “work” adjusting into a fast pace.

The point I want to make in this paper is that being a mother or motherhood itself is very different from just doing the tasks of being a mother. In the next section of this paper I discuss what I mean by performatively being a mother. I argue that being a mother does not merely consist in getting things done but that motherhood is constituted by a performativity that is a doing that constitutes a being at the same time. This makes motherhood altogether different from the doing of things a mother does. Being a mother is rather a form of response that is required from a mother that is not a doing of tasks or a fulfilling of obligations and getting things done, but a “being” that is constituted in its performance again and again.

Being a philosopher is not all that different from being a mother in that respect. It is not about getting all the things done that a professional philosopher needs to do, but has more to do with a certain response that is required from the philosopher that is not a doing of tasks but a “being” in the sense of how to be with these questions. This is the only way in which being a mother as well as being a philosopher becomes possible despite the seemingly impossible amount of things that need to be done. This specific performativity of being a philosopher and a mother shall be developed in the following. I would like to add that if we are mothers and philosophers by virtue of this performativity, then being both is possible, too.

Performativity of Motherhood

The other day I prepared lunch for my daughter and myself. I rushed and ended up cutting my thumb with a sharp knife. My daughter watched me and as blood came gushing out of the wound, I quickly held the thumb under cold running water and said as calmly as possible, “Mommy has cut herself with the knife, she will have to go to the bathroom to find something to put on it.” So I ran to the bathroom and held my thumb under running water in the sink there, but realized I needed a clean kitchen towel to stop the thumb from bleeding, which was naturally back in the kitchen. The next thing I said to my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter was: “Can you please bring me a kitchen towel from the pantry?” I knew in the same instant that this was too much to ask of her, especially since she could not reach the pantry. A moment later my little girl came running to me with a wooden toy spoon in her hand, which she offered to me with the utmost sincerity. I realized that she was so concerned that she rushed to bring me the first thing she could get a hold of. I took the spoon, looked at her and said: “Thank you so very much, that is exactly what mommy needed” and smiled. She returned my smile.

I recount this event to show how being a mother is different from getting the things done that a mother needs to do. In the following I will use Judith Butler’s concept of performativity of language to stake out the preliminaries for such a theory of performativity to then propose my own version of a performativity. This will show in what way I understand being a mother and being a philosopher as performative.¹

My reading of motherhood as performative agrees with other philosophers’² accounts in that I think motherhood is not exhausted by the biological function of giving birth, but entails caring for children or even raising infants through adulthood, no matter whether they are adopted or raised in an unconventional family structure. However, my account of motherhood goes beyond that distinction. Irene Oh describes

in a recent paper entitled “The Performativity of Motherhood” that performativity of motherhood means: “what mothers self-consciously do rather than what mothers biologically are.”³ The distinctive feature of my account of performativity is that I argue that being a mother is neither a biological function, nor is it exhausted by self-conscious agency or a doing, but rather that it is a being—albeit not a being of the sort of biological motherhood—but a performative being of a different kind.

In order to elaborate this performativity that I envision let me continue to contrast my view with Irene Oh’s, whose view simultaneously builds on and is critical of Butler. While Oh states that motherhood should be understood as performative: “that is, entailing self-reflective agency but not entirely separable from women’s bodies,”⁴ I argue that motherhood should not be understood as consisting in the self-reflexive use of language. This would be an attempt to copy the history of thought in which self-consciousness becomes the epitome of thinking. The performativity of motherhood should rather be understood as a kind of responsiveness to the demands that thought and language as performative put on us. What grounds my account of performativity is then an account of thought and language that is not based on a self-conscious subject, but is act-oriented in that we always already try to respond to the way we are thought or spoken. In order to elaborate my take on performativity, I will start by presenting Judith Butler’s groundbreaking take on performativity in *Gender Trouble*⁵ and *Bodies that Matter*.⁶

Butler’s Account of Performativity

In the 1999 Preface to *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler reflects on how she tried to clarify and revise her theory of performativity developed in that text as it appeared in 1990. Butler held that gender was not a category that we found ready-made but that “the performativity of gender revolves around [...] the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself.”⁷ This means that the anticipation conjures its object and that we have expectations concerning gender that end up producing the very phenomenon that we expect. Furthermore, Butler holds that “performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body.”⁸ Butler adds here that gender is not an internal essence, but is manufactured by us. We do this by repeating again and again the same set of acts, which style the body and which make us think that that is what gender is in the first place. Butler says that while we think gender is an internal feature of ourselves, we really anticipate and produce that feature through our bodily acts. One could say that this is what she understands performativity to be. However, at the same time Butler admits that a lot of work has been done in terms of understanding performativity since she wrote *Gender Trouble*. One question that has occupied her is the question of iterability. What she said about gender being produced through repetition of the same acts—iterability—is most interesting and has brought up the question whether performativity is a theory of agency at all. I would like to render a longer quote here. Butler is concerned with the:

difficulty of the “I” to express itself through the language that is available to it. For this “I” that you read is in part a consequence of the grammar that governs the availability of persons in language. I am not outside the language that structures me, but neither am I determined by the language that makes this “I” possible. This is the bind of self-expression as I understand it. What it means is that you never receive me apart from the grammar that establishes my availability to you. If I treat that grammar as pellucid, then I fail to call attention precisely to that sphere of language that establishes and disestablishes

intelligibility, and that would be precisely to thwart my own project as I have described it to you here.⁹

What Butler is doing in this paragraph is extremely helpful for my attempt to give an account of performativity of motherhood. In what sense “are” we mothers, and not merely doing the things mothers do, has to do with the way we are part of our acts of thinking and speaking, the way we are immersed in a grammar available to others. To know that this is how we “are” mothers is to not treat that grammar as nonexistent and to think that our language is freely available to us to say or do whatever we want to say or do. It is more so that over time we have repeated ourselves as mothers by expressing ourselves in the very grammar that we are asserted in and that makes us available to others.

There is one more thing in *Gender Trouble* that makes Butler’s account of performativity difficult: for Butler performativity seems to be sometimes a linguistic account and sometimes a theatrical one. She insists that the two are “invariably related, chiasmically so, and that a reconsideration of speech act as an instance of power invariably draws attention to both its theatrical and linguistic dimensions.”¹⁰ This is crucial in terms of how to understand what performativity means. The chiasm is an interesting rhetorical figure or trope, one that works more complicatedly than analogy in that it really compares two things that we both are not quite sure about what they are or how they work. Thus to say that performativity in its theatricality and in its linguistic dimension are interlinked to such a point adds to the richness of performativity, since we get a glimpse of how the structure of our language is really performed in the way the early structuralists understood it to be.¹¹ Finally, we get the main announcement of gender as performative on p. 34 of *Gender Trouble*:

In this sense, gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed.

With Nietzsche, Butler continues her definition: “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.” Butler therefore leaves off with an account of gender being a reiterated social performance rather than the expression of a prior reality.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler in turn develops her ideas about performativity starting from the writings of John Austin in “How to Do Things with Words.”¹² Austin stumbled over the fact that speaking is a form of doing itself, so that in some cases he called utterances performative not constative, e.g., the saying of “I do” when we get married or “I call you Queen Mary” when christening a ship. While Austin first thought this was a side effect of some sorts, he admits in the later chapters of the book that all language seems to be afflicted by such performativity.¹³

In this spirit Butler takes up the difference between constative and performative expressions to show how each constative is also a performative. A beautiful example here is her example of the birth of a child, when the doctor exclaims: “It is a girl.” For Butler this statement is never just a constative, but always already at the same time the beginning of the constitution of what she calls of that child being “girded”:

The doctor who receives the child and pronounces—“it’s a girl”—begins a long string of interpellations by which the girl is transitively girded.¹⁴

Butler goes on to debate where the power of that performative comes from, whether the subject who cites the performative is the origin of the performative. Here Butler makes the move to call the subject a subject-effect. The subject is the consequence of the performative, is a derivative or an effect.¹⁵ Butler together with Jacques Derrida¹⁶ does not originate the power of the performative act in the subject who utters it, but in the fact that it is an iterable utterance, one that can be repeated. So it is not an intention (in the sense of self-reflexive agency) that governs the action of speech, but the fact that prior actions are repeated and that repetition ties into an authority of repeated practices. Here Butler says:

It is not that the speech act takes place within a practice, but that the act is itself a ritualized practice. What this means, then, is that a performative “works” to the extent that it draws on and covers over the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized.¹⁷

As Oh elaborates, this is where Butler sees the power of iteration or repetition, “that each act of motherhood becomes an opportunity not only for reinforcing that norm but also for deviating from it.”¹⁸ Oh’s criticism here is that Butler’s account relies on this subversive agency, on rebellion or resistance, and she compares Butler against Mahmood’s account of a performativity of motherhood in which norms are “performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways.”¹⁹ I think that Oh (and Mahmood) misunderstand what Butler means by iteration and in what sense the repetition of the performance re-inscribes the performance and can make a difference. Butler holds in *Burning Acts* that she does not want to let the subject of hate speech get away without punishment, although she still wants to look for the culprit not in the subject repeating the injurious speech, but in the speech act and its power itself. This is what I am interested in: the power of the speech act or “that something is spoken again and again” that has the effect (here Austin would call it a perlocutionary effect) on us and the kind of response or attention that it demands from us. I argue that it is the way we can respond to the reiterations of e.g., being girded or being made mother that counts in going forward. This is not a matter of self-consciously choosing motherhood or being a woman, but about how we each time perform motherhood.

Performativity as Act-Oriented

The difficulty with my account is that when I say it is act-oriented, it seems as if I return to an account of being a mother as a doing, not as a being. However, my example from the introduction provides us a clear view of the distinction. It is not my doing in the event of cutting myself that makes me a mother—as a matter of fact, I fail terribly by cutting myself, by letting my daughter watch the accident and not being organized enough to treat myself properly. Indeed, I end up asking a two-and-a-half-year-old for help. However, what does make me a mother in this story is that in the moment my daughter offers me a completely useless solution to my problem, I do not continue to be helpless by berating her or telling her that what she brought me is not useful. Instead, I see the importance of this interaction, the sincerity of her deed in bringing me the spoon and am able to not only not fail her but also to empower her in our mother-child relationship. I thank her for her concern and for what she brought me. I make her a good daughter and by that I become a mother. It is the response to the situation that performatively constitutes my being a mother. It is that I was able to step out of the ordinary “what needs to be done, what do I need, what did I get” chain of events and was able to see that

a different kind of response was needed, one that has nothing to do with the situation of the accident of my cutting myself. My daughter needed reassurance that the overwhelming danger she sensed was in control. I was able to respond to her in that way. Now in what way do I think that this is how being a mother is performatively constituted? I did not consciously choose to answer like that. I was completely immersed in the situation of the accident; however, I remembered that I was responsible for the safety and care of the child in front of me beyond my concerns of how to deal with the accident itself.

Unfortunately I don't have the space here to elaborate my theory of performativity as I develop it in my readings of Kant and Wittgenstein. What I can do is to outline the kind of theory I come away with. It is the fact that we think, that we perform a think act that is in the center of my reading of Kant and that I argue constitutes thought in the first place. While Butler labors with special concepts such as "gender" or "queer" in her theory to show that those concepts are not essentially there before they become performed—I argue that all our concepts are of that kind. The meaning of thinking or speaking is always guided by our repeated thought or speech performances. There is not a meaning of any thought or concept ahead of time that could be laid down through specific rules or criteria that would then tell us what really constituted that concept in the first place. So any attempt to say what motherhood is apart from how it is being performed day in and day out would lead to the same kind of empty metaphysics that the *First Critique* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is haunted by.

I tell my daughter when I leave her that I go to university to teach or to write and that that is important to me. I let her know that this is why she will go to the park with her babysitter and not with me. As a result my daughter sometimes greets her babysitter after she wakes up from her nap, by saying: "Mommy went to university—mommy is happy!"

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show how being a mother and being a philosopher are both performative in the sense that both being a mother and philosopher is attending and responding to certain questions and demands rather than doing the things that mothers or professional philosophers do. This performativity has nothing to do with fulfilling the normal or normative conditions of doing things in terms of self-conscious agency in getting things done, but has a dimension of being rather than successfully doing.²⁰ Being responsive to needs and demands performatively (not in the sense of doing but being) is what is asked of both a mother and a philosopher.

I have also raised the question of how philosophy and motherhood can be combined, and I conclude that although both philosophy and motherhood demand from us to do an impossible amount of tasks, motherhood and philosophy do not consist in merely doing those tasks, as in ticking the box on a to-do list. Being a mother and being a philosopher together thus becomes possible by the disposal of the to-do list. That said, I would probably be a worse mother if not for philosophy, and I think I have become a "better" philosopher for being a mother.

Endnotes

1. I develop this account of performativity in A. A. Moser, *Performative Intentionality: On Performativity of Thought and Language in Kant and Wittgenstein* (PhD diss., New School for Social Research, 2010).
2. E.g. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986).
3. This definition is taken from Irene Oh, "The Performativity of Motherhood: Embodying Theology and Political Agency," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29 (2009): 4.

4. *Ibid.*
5. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
6. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
7. *Gender Trouble*, Preface, p. xv.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.* xxvi.
10. *Ibid.*, xxvi-vii.
11. Think of accounts of language as a structure that occupies and does not occupy spaces. We can say "house" and "mouse" and "louse" but not "bouse" or "pouse" or "nouse." The difference here is only the consonant before "ouse." See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966).
12. John L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).
13. I think that Austin has two different definitions of performative. First he develops the distinction between performative and constative. Then in Lecture VII he introduces the new distinction among locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. In Chapter XII Austin compares the two senses of performative and tells us that they stand towards each other like a special theory to a general theory. See John L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 148.
14. Judith Butler, "'Burning Acts' Injurious Speech," in *Performativity and Performance*, ed. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedwick (New York, London: Routledge, 1995), 203.
15. *Ibid.*, 206.
16. In this context see Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, ed. Gerald Graff (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972).
17. *Ibid.*, 205.
18. Irene Oh, "The Performativity of Motherhood: Embodying Theology and Political Agency," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29 (2009): 6.
19. Saba Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 190. I cannot develop Oh's argument which favors Mahmood's account over Butler's, but I find it useful to use her emphasis of different forms of agency, exactly to draw out the point that it is not agency that makes the performativity of motherhood. Mahmood's and Oh's point is that women who self-consciously enact what we would consider a passive role in motherhood—women who would be labeled "fundamentalist," "traditionalist," or even "backward" by progressive liberals—also possess self-awareness and agency.
20. Not doing things or failing to do things is a big part of being a philosopher and being a mother. This would be an excellent topic of another paper.

Bragging about Failure: Mothers Who Take Delight in Confessing Their Shortcomings

Sara Goering
University of Washington

I went to a high school where academic achievement was not something highly valued among the popular group. Indeed, people in that group more typically bragged about their failures—how they completely bombed a test, or blew off a paper assignment. To be cool, one had to make it clear that doing well academically was not important. As a member of

the scholastic bowl team and a math geek, I found this both annoying and constraining. Bragging about failure seemed to be evidence that a person aimed low, and didn't really care about things I thought mattered.

How strange, then, that thirty years hence, I find myself part of a new group that brags about failure. In this case, the peer group is professional working mothers,¹ and the failure has to do with how we raise our children, or at least how we fall short in particularly tough moments along the way. The failures are typically not horrendous—leading to death or deep psychological trauma—but they are not exactly mild either. I have in mind things like the time my five-month old son, sitting in his bumbo seat, fell off the kitchen counter on to the hardwood floor; the time I wasn't watching him closely at a parade and he ate a cigarette butt, slowly drooled parts of it out, then vomited repeatedly, and smelled like an ashtray for the rest of the day; the time he fell into a full bathtub with his diaper on while I was in another room and was lucky enough to get his head above the water. These are only, of course, a smattering of the many episodes I might report (there I go again). Though some of you may be thinking this is really a problem for individual therapy (or perhaps simple parenting classes would suffice), I think there are interesting philosophical dimensions to this habit and the context in which it occurs. Plus, I'm pretty well read on parenting, though I haven't taken formal classes. Also, I know *many* other working mothers who share this tendency. In fact, when I was in graduate school, two of my favorite well-educated professional mothers were in a dead-heat competition to see who was the worst mom. (Their failures had to do with all kinds of threats and deception, as well as pitiful Halloween costumes, public embarrassment, and inability to keep school schedules straight.) So it's not just me, and it's not just a lack of parenting education.

In this paper, I want to show that it makes sense to think of the phenomenon in question as indeed bragging (in the style of bragging about accomplishment, but shifted for moral valence), and then explore what the reasons for this bragging might be. As such, what I offer is more of a diagnosis of a problem than an argument about how it should be resolved.

Bragging, traditionally conceived

Regular bragging about accomplishments is an interesting phenomenon in its own right. Morally, it is discouraged—we think of braggarts as insensitive, lacking appropriate virtues, and annoying for all of us (and so, consequentially troubling). But why should we be so averse to bragging? As Claudia Mills asks in a 2004 paper that investigates the subject, why shouldn't I share my "glad tidings" with everyone? So long as they are true (or very nearly so), it's a bit difficult to pinpoint where I go wrong morally in sharing them widely. I generously presume others will take delight in my good fortune.

Mills identifies several possible problems linked to bragging: the bragger often monopolizes conversation, paints an overly positive picture of her life (through "strategic omissions" of negative facts), gives more significance to her good news than is warranted, and uses her good news to diminish the hearer (that is, to show who is competitively better). She doesn't, in other words, demonstrate appropriate care and respect for the hearer, who may have her own stories to tell and who may not appreciate being belittled.

On the one hand, this doesn't sound much like the kind of bragging with which I'm concerned here. Mothers who crow about their shortcomings are painting a *negative* picture of their abilities. On the other hand, bragging about failure could meet each of those standards, appropriately shifted in valence. First, I might go on at length about the cigarette butt incident and its

lingering ashtray smell, and take up too much conversational space. If I insist on telling my bad mother stories in great gory detail, I may unintentionally "erase the other partner to the conversation" (Mills 2004, 5). But as Mills points out, not all braggers are guilty of monopolization; some of us can slip in horrible stories with a few short lines.

Second, I may indeed paint a somewhat false overall picture of my child-rearing skills by reporting primarily on the worst experiences. In fact, I know my mothering is not atrocious, though I tend to highlight the failures. In the realm of bragging about success, this distorted picture worry has to do with inaccuracy, but is also linked to the competitive point. Not only do I make myself sound better overall than I am, but I use that false picture to rank myself as better than you. But how does this translate to the realm in which we brag about failures? The inaccuracy concern seems less salient when it is decoupled from competition to be the best. If my friends truly believed that I thought I was a terrible mother, I imagine they'd take steps to help me reassess my overall picture, to make it more accurate. But I'm quite sure they know that I'm aware that I'm an acceptable, good enough mother. Bystanders who overhear my delighted tales of mothering shortcomings would also, I think, recognize from my tone that I am not deeply unsure of my abilities. That's what makes it so strange. It is *bragging*, and yet it's about failure in a realm that I believe matters.

Third, the bragging is decidedly competitive. Of course, given the negative valence here, the competition is to be the *worst* mother. In recent discussions on this topic, a friend suggested that perhaps the habit in question is not an instance of bragging at all, but merely good storytelling. Just as we share our tales of delight and woe in other realms, to keep our friends and family up-to-date on our lives as well as to entertain them, so mothers may share tales of our shortcomings simply to inform and perhaps amuse our audience. But that interpretation doesn't match my experience. When someone always has a bigger, better story (they climbed a higher peak, ran through rain for longer, in fact it was *hail!*, had an even crazier language barrier fiasco while traveling, etc.), we find it annoying in a way at least related to bragging. "I can do better than your story" is a mode of bragging. Mothers bragging about failure are, I think, similarly competitive and equally annoying when they manage to one-up us. "You think it's bad that you let your child fall into a full bathtub while you weren't there? *My child* ate sleeping pills off the counter in the bathroom and ended up in the ER with a stomach pump." I'm not joking. What's going on here?

Can mothers who brag about failure really be accused of belittling their audience, or expressing disrespect or a lack of care for them? I think not. Indeed, bragging about failure might be taken as an effort to make the hearer feel better about herself. The bragger insinuates, "If you haven't done the terrible stuff I've done, you're probably a much better mother." But given the braggy nature of the confession, that's a loaded compliment. Perhaps it is not so great to be a "much better mother." I'll come back to this point.

One interesting difference between the fodder for typical bragging and bragging about mothering failure is that when we brag about good news, we typically think we deserve some share of the credit. This is obvious when someone brags about having an article accepted into an elite journal, or winning a scrabble tournament, but remains true when she brags about her child getting picked for the lead role in the ballet, or her department moving up in the national rankings. When mothers brag about failure, on the other hand, it typically takes the form of non-intentional neglect—I wasn't looking and X happened; I forgot about the birthday party and embarrassed my child; I got caught up in my work and found my daughter teary-eyed

at the closed daycare, where they slapped me with a fine. (I have, however, known mothers who bragged about terrible things they intentionally said to their children, but even in those cases, the suggestion seemed to be that they were in some way overcome with frustration or annoyance, and the words came out without being fully planned or intended.) So while mothers brag gleefully about failures, they are generally framed as sins of omission, neglect, or loss of control.

Who can brag in this way?

Before beginning my investigation into the possible explanations for this phenomenon, let me acknowledge that some mothers are not permitted to take part in this kind of competition. So, for instance, women whose mothering abilities are already called into question due to mainstream mothering norms (mothers who are disabled, who are impoverished, who are parenting solo, etc.) will not be able or inclined to brag about failure. If they did, they would invite undue scrutiny from extended family or concerned others who might already be suspicious of their parenting situations. In some cases, this might result in unnecessary encounters with child protective services, or, at a minimum, in difficulties gaining much needed support. Indeed, mothers who are unfairly presumed to be at a disadvantage in their mothering abilities may feel forced to be silent about the difficulties they experience, lest they be blamed for attempting to mother in the first place.

Additionally, mothers who have experienced tragic consequences—whose children have died in accidents, or become profoundly impaired—will not feel able to jokingly brag about even relatively minor parental oversights and failures, knowing how easily they can become quite serious. A history of even one disaster closes off the possibility of apparent pride in mothering failures. Recognizing that not all mothers participate in bragging about failure may help us to understand certain contextual features that shape the phenomenon, and in turn help to explain it.² My focus here is on professional women who become mothers, who have not experienced tragic consequences, and who don't already have their mothering abilities called into question.

Explanations for bragging about our mothering failures

What might account for this tendency to brag about failure? In this section, I want to consider several possible explanations. I don't believe there must be *one* right explanation—each may be at play in particular episodes of bragging—but I do want to show that some of the more obvious possibilities are not fully satisfying.

First, maybe we brag about our failures because of gendered styles of self-presentation. That is, women tend to lead with our foibles. We are often socialized toward self-deprecation and a generally unassuming manner, at least in part because we are still fighting to overcome the historical belief that women are less capable, a belief that individual women may well internalize in part, despite our best efforts to combat it. Given that possibility, perhaps bragging about our failures as mothers is simply another mode in which we advertise our flaws. But this explanation doesn't work for two reasons. First, why don't I want to brag about *other things* that are my own failures—e.g., getting another rejection from a journal, doing a lousy job of teaching a class, admitting that I do far more than my fair share of the childcare at home? These are secret shortcomings that I typically try to keep quiet. Second, why must I *brag* about my failures, rather than simply acknowledging them when asked? Bragging mothers, in my experience, jump at any opportunity to give evidence of mothering shortcomings, and do so with glee.

Of course, perhaps we jump at the opportunity to report the failures as a way to be the *first* to acknowledge the problem, to put the story in our own framework, before someone else has a chance to notice and weigh in on our failure (this is the “you can't fire me, I already quit” phenomenon). What underlies this explanation may be a feeling of insecurity that we are not living up to the standards of motherhood, but a sense that it's better to claim our failures (indeed, even claim them loudly and with good humor) than to let others do the accusing. Though I know mothers who are satisfied with this explanation, to me, it doesn't fully account for the phenomenon. When I brag about my failures, I don't actually feel insecure about them. I *like* reporting them. I report them even when no one else would ever otherwise know what had occurred.

Another possibility is that we report on our shortcomings because it's a way to give relief to other mothers, by showing that we all make mistakes. This allows for us to feel at ease with each other, because then we recognize we aren't among perfect mothers/supermoms. But then a) again, why does it *feel* more like competitive bragging, and b) why do we report our shortcomings to non-mothers (e.g., our colleagues)? It certainly helps to know that other mothers have also dropped their kids on their heads, with no permanent damage. But that doesn't account for the excitement of the report (as in, I can't wait to call my friends and let them know the latest worst thing I've done). It's rather like having a really juicy gossip scoop, and wanting to tell it. My son had barely stopped crying from one of his falls when I was on the phone, dialing a friend to report the event. Surely this is not a habit motivated only by our desire to prove we are not annoyingly perfect moms. That goal would be pretty easy to achieve without all the glorification of the bad stuff.

The matter of the audience for the bragging is another key feature to consider. Working moms who brag about failure certainly rely on each other as sounding boards, and need each other to get the competition going. But we also tell these things to our work mates who are not parents. The non-mother audience will be less likely to receive the stories as evidence of bragging (they are not part of this particular competition), but it's interesting to think about why they might be picked out to hear about the shortcomings. You might think, for instance, that talking about our failures would jeopardize our standing at work. If she's so incompetent at home, how can we trust her with important projects in the workplace? But this isn't the typical response, at least in part because our colleagues know that we're over-playing the incompetence (just as any bystander will recognize that failure reported in a braggy tone with such glee does not likely require a quick call to social services).

Maybe we brag because it is confessional, a way to “get it off our chests”—to hear other people say they still like us, despite our faults. If so, then perhaps we're still under the sway of the ideology of motherhood to some extent. We still hold ourselves to the unattainable standard of motherhood (requiring full self-sacrifice, constant supervision, unconditional love, etc.), and confess as a way to relieve the guilt of falling short. Confession is an admission of fault. This explanation rings true for some reports, but again, cannot account for the *competitive* feature of bragging about failure. Mere confessions aren't competitive; they gain force simply through the clearing of conscience.

One way to understand the *competitive* feature of the bragging is to understand it as a way to show that we are *not* held by the standards of intensive mothering. It's evidence of a backlash against the still powerful ideologies of motherhood. We see ourselves as feminists, and these shortcomings in the maternal arena prove that we are *not* worried about living up to patriarchal standards of good mothering. That might account for the braggy nature of confession—see what a good

feminist I am!—but, if this were really all that was going on, it seems like we might choose somewhat different stories. There's nothing *feminist* about letting your kid fall to the floor or into a full bathtub, though I suppose there's a way these events demonstrate the impossibility of the ideal of constant supervision. On the other hand, some rejections of the ideology of motherhood seem more directly feminist in nature. The idealized mom makes thirty cupcakes from scratch for her daughter's birthday day class treats; the feminist mom buys them from a store. The feminist mom may happily report this fact, and see this as further evidence that she's not bound by stereotypical roles and expectation. Hurrah! But bragging about failure to meet the less obviously patriarchal expectations—say, general *safety*—isn't fully explained by a refusal to participate in stereotypical roles.

Perhaps then, given the kind of thing that gets reported, the sheer delight in telling it, and the particular audience to whom it is relayed, we need another explanation. Here's one to consider. Maybe we're responding to a different ideology, one that still has a firm grip on us. Being an ideal worker (at least in professional fields) requires devoting oneself to one's work, having a passion for it, making it a central part of one's identity. The time required is extensive, and the level of mental commitment is significant. The ideal worker is always ready to work over-time, never leaves work for a sick child, and generally devotes his primary attention to work issues. Most ideal workers, if they have families, rely on someone else to take care of the matters of family life, whether that is a wife in part-time work, a nanny, or a hodge-podge collection of babysitters, family members, and neighbors. But the ideal mother is one who always puts her children first.

Being an ideal worker, then, may seem impossible for mothers, who inevitably have to make tradeoffs between caring for their children and doing their work. Legal scholar Joan Williams recognizes this conflict: “[W]hen women find that they perform as ideal workers, they are condemned as bad mothers; if they observe the norm of parental care, they are condemned as bad workers” (Williams 2000, 70). This bind may help to explain why so many mothers are impoverished, or why they make less money than their male counterparts (given continuing gendered inequities in caretaking roles at home). But it also may explain this habit of bragging about failure.

Earning a reputation as a competent professional surely requires success in the standard benchmarks of one's field: publishing papers, receiving grants, getting rave reviews for one's work, etc. Women who once shone by those standards may face difficulties continuing to meet them once they become mothers and experience conflicting demands that cannot easily be sacrificed. When this happens, mothers may urgently feel the need to present themselves as professionals (to preserve that role and maintain status), even as they recognize the difficulty/impossibility of reaching the standard of ideal worker. So, I suggest, they might brag about failures of mothering as a way to insinuate where their real talent lies. “My flaws as a mother show that my head is really better suited for professional work. I'm one of you!”³ The implication is not entailed, of course—one could surely fall short in both arenas—but if one can only meet the ideal in one arena, bragging about failure in mothering might demonstrate where one's aspirations lie.

I don't mean to suggest that working mothers do this consciously. Indeed, I never would have thought about my habits this way if I hadn't spent some time trying to figure out why so many mothers I know were bragging about such outrageous things. But the ideology of the ideal worker is less contested in professional circles. It affects us, even as we aim to elude its grasp. And it affects us even when we're in

relatively friendly, relaxed work environments. We might think that academic environments are ideally suited for motherhood, given the flexibility of schedules and higher education's theoretical commitments to gender egalitarianism. Yet women in academia have fewer kids than in professional fields such as law and medicine (Jaschnik 2008). Our schedules may be flexible, but the standards by which we rate each other are not. “[L]ike corporate America, the halls of the academy also revere the ideal worker, rewarding those who work the longest, produce the most and, in terms of graduate school, finish first” (Sutherland 2008, 215). So mothers may feel the need to assure their colleagues that they can still be ideal workers. Ironically, we may do it by loudly proclaiming that we are lousy workers in another realm: motherhood. Even departments with quite civilized approaches to tenure and promotion provide fertile grounds for bragging about such failures, if only because they're still in the grips of the same ideal, even if the academic bar is set somewhat more reasonably.

Surely this is a feminist conundrum. Just as feminists have recognized the importance of overcoming all oppression, rather than only oppression of women, we need to see that undermining the ideology of motherhood must be accompanied by attention to the ideology of the ideal worker. Contemporary feminists have put forward excellent proposals for how we might revalue and reward domestic work (including care for children)(e.g., Kittay 1999, Mullin 2005, Okin 1989) and how we need to alter the structure of the workplace to improve conditions for mothers (e.g., Williams 2000, Jacobs & Gerson 2004). One signal of the importance of that work is the prevalence of mothers bragging about their failures as mothers. In a better world, we'd continue to tell funny mothering tales in all their glorious detail, but we might not feel the need to shout about dangerous episodes and feel oddly *proud* of our shortcomings. Rather, we'd aim to be good workers *and* good mothers, in a way that recognizes how the skills of each domain overlap and even improve each other.

Endnotes

1. What I say here is intended to apply broadly to professional working mothers, though I focus more on academic mothers, given my own experiences and closest peer group.
2. For instance, working class women and women on welfare are clearly not held to the same standard of intensive mothering as middle- or upper-class women; indeed, the TANF program requires welfare recipients to seek work outside the home even if they have young children (see Kittay, 1999, esp. Chapter 5 – “Policy and a Public Ethic of Care”).
3. Men may also brag about their parenting failures at work as evidence of their commitment to work, but my guess is that the kind of failure reported is quite different, more about the amount of time they are available rather than the actual care given (or not, as the case may be).

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Deepening Darkness: Patriarchy, Resistance & Democracy's Future

Carol Gilligan and David A.J. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). 352 pages. ISBN: 978-0-521-89898-0.

Reviewed by Susan Dieleman

York University, Toronto, Canada; scd@yorku.ca

Chief among the aims Carol Gilligan and David A.J. Richards set out to achieve in *The Deepening Darkness* is to trace the cause of certain tensions found in contemporary democracies to efforts to maintain patriarchal values or "Love Laws," a term the authors borrow from Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* to denote the constraints patriarchy places on "whom and how and how much we may love" (20). In short, Gilligan and Richards argue that the psychological trauma induced by patriarchy suppresses intimate relationships and personal voice, those very aspects of our psychology that inform social justice movements and also legitimize democracy. Thus, they forward the possibility of "a resistance to patriarchy and an impulse to democracy grounded not in ideology but in what might be called human nature: in our neurobiology and our psychology" (4). This book seeks to capture and integrate recent insights from progressive work in a wide array of fields, including neurobiology, psychology, philosophy, history, and literature. As such, the text is a truly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary effort to explain, come to terms with, and uncover possibilities for resistance to the contentious issues that characterize life in contemporary democracies. Their journey to reach this conclusion follows a sweeping historical trajectory that begins with the transformation of Rome from republic to empire, leaps over the medieval period to explore enlightenment arguments for toleration, followed by the encounter with psychoanalysis at the turn of the twentieth century and the novel as literary genre, to the social justice movements of the 1960s, to contemporary examples of racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism, and many points in between. Such a vast range of resources, however, proves to be both the strength and the weakness of this book.

In Part One: "Roman Patriarchy: Entering the Darkness," Gilligan and Richards explore what they see to be the root of the tensions apparent in our contemporary democracy: the patriarchal culture and traditions of ancient Rome. They turn their attention to ancient Rome in part because of the analogous situation they perceive between it and contemporary America, namely, the tension between republic and patriarchy. This tension can be seen, they argue, in any number of contemporary debates, but most notably in the "contentiousness over gay rights and abortion within U.S. politics and the focus on the state of Israel within international politics" (9). They provide ample evidence for their claim that, when faced with a decision between patriarchy and democracy, as the authors suggest ancient Romans were, it was unsurprising that the Romans

chose the former. Thus, under Augustus, Rome ceased to be a republic, and became instead an empire that was "more congenial to their patriarchal religion" (33). Augustus then cemented Rome's patriarchy by passing a number of laws, most notably the *Lex Julia*, which forbade nonmarital sexual relations (41-52). The authors pursue the legacy of patriarchal Rome confirmed under Augustus's rule through Vergil's *Aeneid*, which, the authors argue, offers "a piercing revelation of the psychological costs Romans endured to make this [Augustus's] triumph possible" (80), through Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, which provides insight into the "psychological potential for resistance to such patriarchal demands, a resistance that was...quite common even in the Roman world" (91), and through Augustine's tale of conversion in *The Confessions*, which investigates how he fails to resist patriarchy and instead reinforces its values in his turn to celibacy and his endorsement of a "new, more demanding form of patriarchy—one, in Augustine's case, that establishes an exclusively male, autocratic priesthood" (113).

Having traced the roots of contemporary patriarchy to ancient Rome, Part Two of the book: "Resistance Across Time and Culture," offers an exploration of the many ways patriarchy has been resisted, offering examples from religion, psychology, art, and politics. Gilligan and Richards introduce the historical Jesus, Judaism, Bayle's, Locke's, and Spinoza's arguments for tolerance, radical abolitionism, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership, and survivors who speak out against sexual abuse by Catholic priests, as just some examples of resistances that have emerged out of the religious context. They recount these examples since, they argue, "If an anti-patriarchal resistance is part of our psychological nature, it is also part of our religious heritage" (121).

They show how Freud's early work, exemplified in *Studies on Hysteria*, exemplified resistance to patriarchy by emphasizing "the power of voice to bring dissociated parts of the self back into relationship" (163), and how Freud took on the voice of patriarchal authority by the time he published *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Thus, although Freud had discovered a method of resistance that proved to be "psychologically rather than ideologically grounded, arising from our desire for voice and relationship, from our human nature" (164), the pressures of patriarchy and anti-Semitism led him to abandon these findings and instead locate patriarchal assumptions in our nature, as part of our psychology, exemplified most clearly by his famous Oedipus complex. Thus, Gilligan and Richards argue, "patriarchy has distorted psychoanalysis in the same way that through Augustine it distorted Christianity" (185).

They also present various examples of the ways artistic expression has demonstrated resistance to patriarchal virtues, including in particular the novels of Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, Edith Wharton, Virginia Woolf, and D.H. Lawrence, each written and published in the years following the Great War. An exploration of art is vital, Gilligan and Richards argue, because artists can reveal for us issues and ideas about which we otherwise cannot speak. "Since patriarchy rests on a suppression of voice and a rewriting of history," they assert, "artists can perform the vital function of speaking the truth and shifting the framework" (198). Thus, each of the novels they explore offers a picture of how patriarchy can be resisted, from Frederick Henry's "farewell to arms" in Hemingway's novel (202), to Leopold Bloom's distinctly anti-patriarchal character in James's *Ulysses* (206), to the sexual love between Constance and Mellors in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (219). Finally, Gilligan and Richards explore political resistance to patriarchy, although the examples provided in this section do not receive near the detailed attention of previous sections. Nevertheless,

the work of Ida Wells-Barnett to uncover the patriarchal assumptions underlying late nineteenth-century lynchings in the American south is presented by the authors as a case of political resistance (229-232). Another instance can be found, they suggest, in the American democratic constitutionalism of the 1960s, which led to the recognition of anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, and homophobia as constitutional injustices. The social justice movements of the 1960s, at the heart of which is “speaking in a different voice, one that resists patriarchal norms and values, a voice grounded in experience, in the body and in relationship” (242), as well as opposition to originalism in constitutional interpretation, are presented as further examples of resistance to patriarchal Love Laws.

Where Parts One and Two of *The Deepening Darkness*, which outline the roots of patriarchy and trace attempts to resist its values, together constitute almost 250 pages of this text, only approximately twenty pages are devoted to the final and forward-looking Part Three: “Democracy’s Future.” In this section, Gilligan and Richards argue we are currently experiencing a backlash against those who have dared reveal and/or fight against the patriarchal values that dictate “whom and how and how much we may love” (20); values which tend to result in trauma that can lead to dissociation and a consequent adoption of the patriarchal voice. Among the contemporary examples of this phenomenon they include the role of colonialism in maintaining pre-existing and imposing new patriarchal values on colonized cultures, the way fundamentalist regimes and the terror they support emerges out of patriarchal values, and the tendency to rewrite and inaccurately label the 1960s as a time of “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll,” which downplays the very real moments and movements of resistance that in fact characterized the decade.

Gilligan and Richards conclude by returning to the puzzle with which they began: the contentiousness of gay rights and abortion in America, and the international focus on the state of Israel. They suggest that the mysteriousness of our focus on these issues becomes less mysterious when one sees how they are connected by patriarchy and its Love Laws: “When violence is acceptable and pleasure is demonized, when newspapers print photographs of dead bodies and ruined houses while censoring bare breasts and the word ‘fucking,’ when Love Laws are enforced with righteousness and fervor while torture is condoned and Geneva conventions violated, the shadow of patriarchy is unmistakable” (263). For such bold suggestions, highlighted via highly controversial examples, twenty pages clearly do not suffice. Thus, while this section provides a vantage point from which to gain a new perspective on the sorts of issues Gilligan and Richards so briefly touch upon, it raises more questions than it answers.

This book may well have the potential to introduce a new lens through which to understand and engage with the contentious issues that characterize life in contemporary democratic societies. Indeed, its bold claim that democracy is rooted in our psychology has the potential to dramatically shift current theories of democratic legitimacy. However, my central concern is that the likelihood that the lens they present will be adopted by enough people to render it a new paradigm depends entirely upon whether there are readers who approach the text out of desire to make sense of the same sort of phenomena that drive the authors to write the text. This is, I think, because the reader is required to do a great deal of the work in this book, both to piece together some aspects of the argument presented which are not altogether clear, and also to maintain the integrity of the argument throughout a text that at times seems to almost buckle under its own weight.

In terms of the first concern, I offer an example that the philosophical reader is likely to find disappointing: in just one page (129), Gilligan and Richards employ the *paradox of intolerance* (borrowed from one of Richards’s previous works) to explain, at least in part, the role patriarchy plays in the history of religious persecution. The paradox they employ refers to the way “the orthodox conception of truth is no longer defended on the basis of reason but is increasingly hostile to reasonable assessment in terms of impartial standards not hostage to its own conception. Indeed, orthodoxy is defended as an end in itself, increasingly by nonrational and even irrational means of appeal to community identity and the like” (130). My concern here is not that the concept they use here is incorrect—indeed, perhaps an abrupt treatment of such a complex and weighty topic is an unavoidable side-effect of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches; but surely explaining Christian anti-Semitism on the basis of this epistemological paradox warrants further justification and explanation. My second concern arises from the fact that what strikes one more when reading this text than the conclusion being pressed is the sheer volume of resources employed to reach that conclusion. Indeed, the resources I mention here account for nothing close to an exhaustive list of the resources, both primary and secondary, that the authors include. This book could have been either a series of books intended to trace patriarchy and its resistances throughout history, or a more succinct and less detailed version of itself. And since the former would likely be unsatisfactory, as the argument presented would lose what cohesion it manages to retain in this book if spread out over a number of books, the latter would seem to be a better option. As it stands, however, and unless one approaches the text with similar concerns to those that prompted Gilligan and Richards to write it, *The Deepening Darkness* can be a little overwhelming. But for those who attempt it, the results are likely to be illuminating and possibly even paradigm-shifting.

Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race

George Yancy. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008.) 290 pages. \$29.95. ISBN 978-0-7425-5298-2.

Reviewed by A. Todd Franklin
Hamilton College; tfrankli@hamilton.edu

“Nigger, your breed ain’t metaphysical.” In these five pithy words the poet Robert Penn Warren succinctly gives voice to a dominant conception of blacks within the white imaginary. Moreover, placed in the mouth of a prophetic buzzard in the poem “Pondy Woods,” a buzzard who gazes down from his roost on a “slick black buck” named Big Jim Todd as he hides from a lynch mob, these words epitomize the objectification of blackness as devoid of the transcendence or metaphysicality that typifies the humanity of whites. Outraged by the utter reduction of black identity to a physical body, a body that whiteness decodes as distinctively and instinctively base, Sterling Brown, poet, professor, and chronicler of literary expressions of black subjectivity, insightfully retorts, “Cracker, your breed ain’t exegetical.” In this same vein, George Yancy’s *Black Bodies, White Gazes* details the ways in which whiteness connotes a conglomeration of discursive practices that malign the subjectivity of blacks. In doing so, Yancy’s book compels its readers to see and comprehend the ways in which the gazes these practices prefigure are far from exegetical.

Fundamentally, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* focuses on the lived experiences of black people, or black bodies, within the racist and socially normative context of whiteness. In doing so, Yancy's book illuminates the existentiality of blackness in ways that powerfully inform our notions of what it means to be black. Additionally, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* aims to shed light on the existentiality of whiteness and formulate a well-needed new way of comprehending what it means to be white. Highlighting the methodological similarity to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Yancy notes that he wrote the book "in the spirit of Frantz Fanon's critical explorations of the lived experiences of Blacks" (xvi). Like Fanon, Yancy not only reveals how the experiences of blacks are weighed down by a white imaginary that incessantly weaves them "out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories," he also goes to great lengths to "show whites that they are 'at once the perpetrator[s] and the victim[s] of a delusion'" (xvi).

Throughout the book, Yancy critically gazes upon and interrogates anti-black racist attitudes, beliefs, and practices in an attempt to make whiteness visible. Moreover, much of the text clarifies the nature of whiteness and challenges whites to clearly see and understand themselves in relation to it. Noting the parallel between Yancy's analysis of whiteness and feminist analyses of the phallus, Linda Alcoff's foreword astutely analogizes the relationship between whiteness and white to the relationship between phallus and penis. As Alcoff describes it, whiteness, like the phallus, connotes a culturally pervasive "sign system that works on objects of all sorts, bodies as well as other kinds, to interject meanings and values and map relationships, beyond any conscious intent or conscious awareness" (x). Similarly, just as the semiotics of the phallus psychologically and materially situate and impact those who poses a penis, whiteness not only socially locates those who are white, it also constitutes a "central feature of [their] subjectivity" (x). In sum, Alcoff emphasizes the fact that just as feminists decipher the ways in which male identity is an identity prone to internalizing, expressing, and perpetuating the hegemony of the phallogocentric meanings, values, and relations of power, Yancy develops an insightful account of the way white identity is an identity prone to internalizing, expressing, and perpetuating the hegemony of white supremacist meanings, values, and relations of power.

Central to Yancy's account of white identity is an insightful and in-depth analysis of the white gaze. As Yancy describes it, the white gaze casts and conceptualizes the black body as an antipode. Criminal, monstrous, "a source of white despair and anguish, an anomaly of nature, the essence of vulgarity and immorality," the black body is ontologically fixed vis-à-vis the white gaze within a Manichean framework that hails whiteness as "the transcendental norm, the good, the innocent, the pure" (xvi). Operating as such, the white gaze not only serves as the impetus for denigrations and violations of the black body, it also obfuscates the obvious and not so obvious ways in which white bodies are culpable.

Although the white gaze frames black bodies and white bodies as diametrically opposed, Yancy trenchantly outlines the sense in which they are ontologically identical. In general, the oppositional conceptions constructed via the white gaze are simply reflections of what he characterizes as "a thick social reality that has always already been structured by the ideology and history of whiteness" (68). Given this social reality, the meanings of black bodies and white bodies are "inextricably and relationally" tied to this history (xxi). However, Yancy stresses the fact that neither is reducible to this history, for in so far as each body is also an embodiment of subjective agency, the meanings of black bodies and white bodies always

constitute sites of contestation and are always "subject to cultural configuration and reconfiguration" (xxii). Ultimately, it is this existential formulation of the duality of historicity and agency that frames the pivotal elements of the text.

Just as black bodies and white bodies are inextricably and relationally tied to history, the bulk of *Black Bodies, White Gazes* is inextricably and relationally tied to narrative. Moreover, highly sensitive to the limitations of theoretical abstraction, Yancy anchors all of the major elements of the book in powerful and richly textured narratives of lived experience. At base, Yancy's reason for doing so stems from his recognition of whiteness as a "relationally lived" phenomenon (34). Although scientists and philosophers alike have revealed the ontologically fictitious nature of race and many have urged people to abandon the use of the concept, Yancy clearly recognizes its indisputable social reality and considers narrative a useful means of disclosing the dynamics of the everyday in a way that allows one to see the "unseen" of whiteness and problematize one's relation to it.

Although *Black Bodies, White Gazes* explores a number of different narratives of the relational nature and operation of whiteness, these narratives generally reveal various ways in which the white gaze animates processes of interpellation. In the case of the black body, Yancy primarily focuses on how the white body's performance of distortional ways of "seeing" pick out black bodies in certain terms and call upon blacks to recognize themselves as such. Drawing upon experiences ranging from his own personal experience of being "seen" as a menacing threat, to Sara(h) Ba(a)rtman(n) being "seen" as a sexual abnormality, to the protagonist of Ellison's *Invisible Man* being "seen" in such a way that he's not even seen at all, Yancy deftly unpacks the ways in which the white gaze subjects the black body to what actor and activist Ossie Davis aptly characterized as a process of "niggerization." Notably, however, Yancy also goes to great lengths to recount various narratives of agential black bodies recasting themselves, and more broadly blackness, in terms much more conducive to affirmations of their subjectivity.

In the case of the white body, Yancy also provides the reader with a number of insightful narratives of the processes of racialization that inculcates the outlooks, attitudes, and physical reflexes of whiteness. However, one of the most significant aspects of Yancy's exploration of the relation in which the white gaze stands to the white body is its focus on how whiteness ensnarls the white body, or more specifically white consciousness, so thoroughly within a socially normative "whitely" way of being, that so long as they are not doing or saying anything that's blatantly outside of this norm, many whites feel perfectly justified in considering themselves racially "innocent."

Noting the fact that whiteness can even waylay those whites that consider themselves staunchly antiracist, Yancy closes the book by focusing on the "transformative power of vigilance" and joins a chorus of other scholars in claiming that "dismantling whiteness is a continuous project" (232). Moreover, Yancy's final and perhaps most perceptive point in relation to whites is that effectively liberating oneself from the sway of the white gaze and whitely ways of being requires an "existential conversion" that entails "a constant affirmation of new forms of responsiveness, new forms of challenging unearned privileges, and assiduous attempts at founding antiwhiteness values" (246).

Exemplifying existential philosophy at its best, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* not only pays homage to the insights of Frantz Fanon, it very astutely and skillfully draws upon the views and experiences of others in ways that faithfully extend them. Expansive in its use of testimony, autobiography, fiction, and theory, and exacting in its disarticulation of the phenomenon

of whiteness, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* is a text that should be of great value to anyone interested in the intricacies of seeing and doing race differently.

Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing

Miranda Fricker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). 188pp. \$34.95 ISBN 9780199570522/ \$60.00 ISBN 9780198237907.

Reviewed by Lauren Freeman
Concordia University, Montreal, Canada;
Lfreeman@alcor.concordia.ca

Knowledge and justice are commonly taken to be distinct areas of inquiry: the former lying under the auspices of epistemology, the latter, of ethics and political philosophy. In her remarkable book, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Miranda Fricker masterfully opens up a territory, which “renegotiates a stretch of the border between these two regions of philosophy” (2). In so doing, she makes a compelling case that we ought to think of these domains as fundamentally intertwined in ways that carry serious implications for who we are and for how to understand ourselves as knowers both in epistemic, moral, and political communities, and also as individuals.

Epistemic Injustice is comprised of an introduction, seven densely packed chapters, and a brief conclusion. In this book, Fricker re-works and develops themes that she’s been thinking through for over a decade such as the relation between reason, epistemic authority, social identity, power, prejudice, testimony, and moral and epistemic virtue. In so doing, she weaves them into a seamless, systematic, robust account of *epistemic injustice*. With an eye toward highlighting their ethical dimensions for subjects who are socially situated, Fricker gives an account of how these elements play out in our actual and most basic epistemic practices, such as communicating knowledge to others and understanding our own social experiences. In her account, Fricker is not so much concerned with instances in which we get things right; rather, she is primarily interested in when, why, and how these practices go wrong. She turns our eye away from ideal situations of justice and toward less than ideal situations and practices—in particular, to injustices in the sphere of epistemic activity.

The aim of the book is to articulate a distinctive kind of injustice—*epistemic injustice*—which takes place when a prejudice of some kind leads to someone being wronged, specifically in his or her capacity as a knower. That is, epistemic injustice deflates the speaker’s or knower’s credibility (on the basis of his or her race, class, or gender), undermines the capacity of the knower, and does so specifically in his or her capacity as a knower and a giver of knowledge. Although there are a number of phenomena that could be brought under the umbrella of epistemic injustice,¹ Fricker concentrates on two basic kinds: *testimonial injustice* and *hermeneutical injustice*.

Testimonial injustice occurs “when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to the speaker’s word” (1). It is caused by prejudice in the economy of credibility in exchanges of information; it occurs between individual testimonial exchanges—specifically when someone’s assertions fail to be accepted; and it results in the knower or speaker being treated as though he or she lacks what is necessary in order to be a reliable informant. That is, he

or she becomes “less than a full epistemic subject” (145). Hermeneutical injustice, on the other hand, occurs at a prior stage and is purely structural: it refers to a lacuna in collective interpretive resources, which unduly disadvantages someone when he or she tries to make sense of his or her social experience. It is caused by structural prejudice in the economy of collective hermeneutical resources and excludes certain people from shared interpretive discourses, which results in what Fricker calls their *hermeneutic marginalization*: socially coerced, unequal hermeneutical participation with respect to a significant area of social experience.

Whereas testimonial injustice occurs when, for example, a police officer believes you to be suspect because you are black, examples of hermeneutical injustice include the plight of women who faced sexual harassment before second wave feminism had identified, named, and articulated the concept (149-152). As a result, these women were unable to understand, describe, or label their experience, thereby shattering their faith in their ability to make sense of the world. The two are connected insofar as they both involve prejudicial exclusion from participation in the spread of knowledge. But Fricker goes beyond merely laying out the problem. In her discussion of two corresponding epistemological virtues—*testimonial justice* and *hermeneutical justice*—she also begins to develop an account of what hearers can do to avoid committing the kinds of oppressive epistemological and ethical offenses that she has delineated.

Epistemic Injustice unfolds as follows. Chapter 1 sets the stage by defining a number of key terms and concepts which resurface throughout the book. Of prime importance is Fricker’s working conception of *social power*, which she defines in a sufficiently broad way so as to cover both agential and structural operations of power, and which refers to a socially situated capacity to control the actions of others. *Identity power*, a form of social power that can operate actively or passively, is directly dependent upon shared social-imaginative conceptions of social identity (like what it means to be a woman or a man, straight or gay). Insofar as identity power exists at the level of the collective social imagination, it can control our actions despite our beliefs. Fricker goes on to argue that identity power is an integral component of testimonial exchange: hearers rely upon social stereotypes as heuristics in unreflective assessments of their interlocutor’s credibility. The way that prejudice operates in judgments of credibility is equally important from the perspective of epistemic injustice. Fricker is mainly interested in ways that prejudice is related to social identity, which she calls *identity prejudice*. The influence of identity prejudice in a hearer’s credibility judgment is an operation of identity power. These are among the key concepts that are crucial to Fricker’s project of examining epistemic injustice. With them in hand, the remainder of the chapter gives a detailed account of the primary form of epistemic injustice, testimonial injustice, which she (slightly awkwardly) defines as *identity-prejudicial credibility deficit*. Thus, Fricker takes the first step in revealing the place of epistemic justice in the broader pattern of social injustice.

Chapter 2 considers how identity prejudice and a distinctive kind of stereotype constitute the wrong of testimonial injustice by shaping a hearer’s credibility judgment. Fricker is particularly interested in the intrinsic harm that testimonial injustice causes to the speaker. In Chapter 6, she revisits and develops her discussion of the harm, which is included in what she calls *epistemic objectification*. Epistemic objectification of the negative (morally bad) kind is the cognitive analogue to Kant’s conception of what constitutes the immoral treatment of another person: undermining their status as a rational agent. Taking her discussions from both chapters together, we come

to see just how serious testimonial injustice can be. Fricker's argument goes something like this. Being a knower is a form of rationality and rationality is one of the aspects of human beings that give us special value. If I undermine you in your capacity as a knower, then I undermine you in a capacity that is essential for human value (in general, and for *your* value in particular). To undermine a capacity that is essential to human value is an intrinsic injustice that results in profound harm or "ontological violation of another person" (136): you are degraded in the community of recognition, you lose your dignity, and you cease to be treated with respect. In sum, an assault has been made on your very personhood, your self-development, and your self-respect, thereby preventing you from fully becoming who you are. In a detailed and highly constructive analysis of pornography, the sexual objectification of women, and the silencing of women in sexual encounters (137-142), Fricker casts into relief an especially severe form of testimonial injustice which entirely discounts the subject's status as a knower.

In Chapter 3, Fricker positions the phenomenon of testimonial injustice within contemporary debates in the epistemology of testimony and develops a non-inferentialist position of virtue in an epistemological context. Taking up the idea that a credibility judgment can be a perception, and building an analogy with the idea of a virtuous agent's ethical sensibility, Fricker argues that in testimonial exchange, the virtuous hearer perceives the interlocutor in an epistemologically charged way, just as a moral subject perceives the world in a morally charged way. On this basis, she provides a general account of the virtuous hearer by developing an account of *testimonial sensibility*, thereby preparing the groundwork for Chapter 4, where she presents the specific virtue of *testimonial justice*.

This virtue enables one to detect and correct for the influence of identity prejudice in the hearer's credibility judgment. In particular, Fricker highlights the role of self-critical reflection through which we become aware of when identity power and identity prejudice are at work, and by which we can take active measures to neutralize the influence of prejudice in our credibility judgments. Despite the breadth of her discussion of epistemic virtues and their distinctly reflective structure, it still remains unclear to me precisely how either of the two virtues can reliably correct for certain injustices caused by identity prejudice, given that the virtues operate at an agential level whereas the root of the prejudice is non-agential: it is systematic, systemic, and structural; it is, as Fricker admits, "an endemic hazard in the ongoing training of testimonial sensibility" (86); and most importantly, it operates both in everybody and in nobody. Chapter 5 traces the genealogical origins of testimonial justice and argues that it is a hybrid virtue, both intellectual and moral, insofar as its ultimate ends are both truth and justice. Finally, Chapter 7 introduces and develops the second kind of epistemic injustice, *hermeneutic injustice* and its corresponding virtue, *hermeneutic justice*.

A particular strength of *Epistemic Injustice* is that Fricker extends beyond the level of sheer conceptual analysis to also focus on the lived experience of various practices of knowing. She does this by drawing on a wealth of beautifully selected examples from literature, history, autobiography, and memoir. For example, in order to illustrate an extreme example of testimonial injustice—"a gross epistemic failure and an appalling ethical failure of grave practical consequence" (26)—Fricker meticulously analyses Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Specifically, she examines the white jury's failure in their duty to believe Tom Robinson on account of their prejudiced social perception of Robinson as a speaker. Fricker returns to this example (and to others from the novel) throughout the book in order to elaborate upon the finer points

and various dimensions of testimonial injustice stemming from racial prejudice. This method is helpful in drawing out her case; furthermore, it is particularly enjoyable to get such a rich reading of a classic novel.

To illustrate testimonial injustice stemming from gender prejudice, Fricker analyzes Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, and in particular Herbert Greenleaf's unjust silencing of Marge Sherwood in his inquiry into his son's death. Also of particular note is Fricker's analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's aggressive, demeaning treatment of Simone de Beauvoir (an account taken from Beauvoir's *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*), which highlights the way that testimonial injustice can, and *did*, attack one's intellectual confidence, humiliate one's person, and crush one's sense of self. Finally, I found Fricker's examples from Susan Brownmiller's *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*—and in particular, her discussion of one woman's experience of being sexually harassed before such a concept was part of our collective imagination—particularly helpful to illustrate the implications of hermeneutical injustice from the first person perspective. In each of these (and other) examples, and with an eye toward their epistemological and ethical implications, Fricker brings out the multifarious kinds and shades of real life injustices suffered by individuals, on the basis of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Given that some time has passed since this important book's publication and that it has already been the subject of much acclaim and critical response, it will be interesting to see how and in what direction Fricker develops her project: be it by developing other discursive or more distributive forms of epistemic injustice (such as, for example, the unequal access to epistemic goods like information or education²). Perhaps Fricker will expand upon the broader political significance and implications of epistemic injustice (which are hinted at, but underdeveloped in the book) or maybe she'll even out her treatment of some of the practical solutions to and implications of the problem of epistemic injustices, which are not as elegantly developed or well-constructed as the problem itself. Whatever direction Fricker takes, no doubt she will continue to make important, enlivened, and original contributions to the fields of epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, and feminist philosophy.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, Christopher Hookway, "Some Varieties of Epistemic Injustice: Reflections on Fricker," *Episteme* 7, no. 2 (2010): 151-63, specifically, 158-59.
2. See Miranda Fricker, "Replies to Alcoff, Goldenberg, and Hookway on Epistemic Injustice," *Episteme* 7, no. 2 (2010): 164-78, 175.

Abortion: Three Perspectives

Michael Tooley, Celia Wolf-Devine with Philippe Devine, and Alison Jaggar (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 258 pp. \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-19-530895-2.

Reviewed by Anca Gheaus

Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands;
agheaus@gmail.com

Abortion: Three Perspectives is jointly authored by Michael Tooley, Celia Wolf-Devine with Philippe Devine, and Alison Jaggar. It aims to present three different approaches to the main normative questions raised by abortion, while encouraging the

authors to engage in a conversation with each other. This is a very exciting project, given the high degree of divisiveness of the issue discussed. The format—three longer chapters each arguing for one position on abortion, followed by three shorter pieces in which each author replies to the others—ensures a good amount of dialogue. The very uneven quality of the analysis offered by the three authors, however, makes for a partial success.

The book is an interesting experiment in several ways. The authors argue for different substantive positions on abortion. Moreover, they identify the central question differently, with two chapters discussing abortion as a *moral* issue, while the third focuses on abortion as primarily a *political* issue of gender justice. Each chapter illustrates a different methodological approach to ethics or political theory. The authors engage in sustained reflection on their favorite way of doing philosophy. Especially in the replies to each other they aim to clarify not only their own, but also others' methodological assumptions and often explain what kind of argumentative strategy it would take to refute their position. The readers can thus learn a great deal about different styles of doing normative philosophy, which in itself recommends the book as a teaching tool for introductory courses in ethics.

In the first chapter, Michael Tooley defends the position that abortion is morally permissible, which he identifies as liberal. The style of this chapter is typical for normative analytical philosophy, prizing clarity and accuracy, drawing as many distinctions as necessary, searching for basic presuppositions, and trying to preemptively refute possible objections. Thanks to the generous use of counterfactual examples and thought experiments, in this chapter the reader encounters extraterrestrials, individuals with modified brain-consciousness connections, etc.

From the outset, Tooley draws a helpful distinction between arguing that abortion is *prima facie* permissible and arguing that although abortion is *prima facie* wrong, it is permissible *all-things considered*. His is the first position, and the main argument is that the moral status of individuals, and hence the permissibility of killing them, depends on the intrinsic, morally significant, properties possessed by that individual. Much of his reasoning involves showing how implausible the alternative position—that the moral status of fetuses makes it morally wrong to kill them—is. Importantly, he debunks the theory according to which there is an immaterial soul which comes into existence at conception. Given the weight he places on the capacities for self-consciousness and thought in determining individuals' moral right to life, much depends on when exactly do human beings acquire these capacities.

On a critical note, although Tooley starts by stating that abortion poses very difficult intellectual problems, at times he proceeds with his argument as if this was not quite true. For example, he gives too little recognition to how difficult to avoid, yet extremely contentious and difficult to settle, is one of his arguments' implication that killing newborns is not immoral.

Wolf-Devine and Devine defend, in the second chapter, the opposite position that abortion is (almost) always morally wrong. It is unfortunate that the authors call their position "pro-life." This is, of course, keeping with the way in which individuals and movements who oppose abortion self-identify, but given that the rationale behind this self-identification is rhetoric and inaccurate, it is surprising to encounter it in a philosophy book. Calling "pro-life" the position that abortion is immoral wrongly suggests that defenders of the permissibility of abortion are in some sense against life. This, of course, is untrue (as Jaggar herself makes clear in her reply chapter).

Wolf-Devine and Devine present their position as communitarian but, unlike Tooley, they do not rigorously derive

their argument from a number of premises belonging to a coherent moral theory. Instead, they seem happy to appeal to whatever arguments they can find to make their case and, as a result, their chapter contains numerous superficially discussed claims. Their main argument seems to be that human embryos/fetuses possess, from the very moment of conception, full moral status in virtue of belonging to the *Homo Sapiens* species. Fetuses are deemed persons due to their potentiality to turn into human adults. (For a clarifying, and critical, reconstruction, see Tooley's reply chapter.) The chapter ends with a few suggestions of how to go about bringing down the abortion rates.

The authors bring numerous arguments that abortion is impermissible that are based on poorly documented, and sometimes undocumented and very far-fetched empirical claims (for example, that abortion seriously affects the grandparents, or the future spouses of the couple). But even if these empirical claims were true, their interpretation would not be straightforward—for example, do women suffer after abortion because abortion is morally bad, or because of its social meaning, or for other, confounding, causes? The claim that real-world abortions have various harmful consequences is presented as if these facts could in themselves constitute arguments that abortion is morally wrong and, moreover, warrant the conclusion that women should be prevented from aborting.

The second chapter includes numerous inconclusive discussions containing rushed and flawed reasoning: false empirical premises, unclear normative premises, *non sequiturs*, straw man arguments. To give one example, a policy they suggest is that women who want to abort should receive mandatory counseling, including graphic materials, because not doing so would be equivalent to withholding information and therefore failing to treat them as ends in themselves. It is ironic that the authors contend to represent one stream of feminist ethics.

The third chapter, by Jaggar, argues that abortion is a human right, that making it legally accessible at all stages of pregnancy and at public expense is necessary for ensuring gender equality, and that a right to abort will foster public welfare (leading to health and economic improvements). The fundamental values supporting her arguments are political liberalism and gender justice. This is at least as interesting as a piece on gender justice as one on abortion. Three principles of political morality should, according to Jaggar, should universally inform abortion policies: that women should be free to decide on the continuation of their pregnancy, that they should be enabled to exercise their legal rights protecting this freedom, and that social institutions should aim to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Most of this chapter is devoted to the discussion of abortion as an issue of political morality and of the gender-related consequences of regulating it.

By contrast, Jaggar's discussion of the moral status of the fetus is brief and entirely defensive—she aims to refute various arguments according to which the fetus has a right to life. This part will not convince readers who find merit in some of these arguments. Therefore—as Tooley remarks in his reply—the success of Jaggar's political argument depends on the truth of a moral position which she does not defend. Jaggar's philosophical analysis is nuanced; she does not suggest that abortion is morally indifferent. However, nothing in her argumentation explains why, or even allows for the possibility that, abortion is in any way morally undesirable.

All authors claim to use reflective equilibrium as a method of philosophical reasoning. Wolf-Devine and Devine's appeal to this method appears to be merely rhetoric, since nowhere in their reasoning do they allow principles to challenge their

central intuition that abortion is morally wrong. Jaggar offers a very clear introduction to reflective equilibrium, but it is less convincing when the method is put to work—it is not clear what exactly are the widely shared intuitions to be balanced against the principles to which Jaggar is committed (i.e., human rights). Most likely, these intuitions consist of the alleged wide consensus about liberal values, and, in particular, again, about human rights.

In the reply chapters, both Tooley and Jaggar concentrate on replying to Wolf-Devine and Devine. The reason is obvious, given the various misinterpretations of Tooley and Jaggar present in Wolf-Devine and Devine. This choice has its costs: a discussion between two philosophers who aim for clarity and coherence would have made a more interesting exchange. But there are also benefits, since both Tooley and Jaggar illustrate how one can reply to confused, and often unfair, criticism, and in the process engage in lengthy explanations about what makes for better argumentation.

The book shows to what extent the abortion debate is embedded in factual disagreements and how defenders of various positions seem to have in mind entirely different realities when it comes to issues such as women's reasons for terminating pregnancies, the relative health threats rose by abortion, or the consequences of abortion on women's mental health. The latter is a particularly good, because straightforward, example: while Wolf-Devine and Devine cite sources according to which abortion is very likely to cause depression and anguish, Jaggar argues that there is no established connection between abortion and mental disturbance and suggests that Wolf-Devine and Devine rely on methodologically unsound studies, commissioned by ideologically biased, anti-abortion groups.

Overall, the value of the book is less as a new contribution to the abortion debate (Tooley, Wolf-Devine, and Devine had made their arguments about abortion elsewhere) and more as an illustration of different styles and methods of doing normative philosophy. Its main shortcoming lies with the disappointing quality of the chapters by Wolf-Devine and Devine, which is far from matching the pieces by Tooley and Jaggar. There exist coherent, philosophically rigorous, and morally plausible arguments against the permissibility of abortion (such as, for instance, that of Don Marquis); it is a pity that, in this book, the case against the permissibility of abortion is badly made. Also, the numerous argumentative fallacies of the second chapter may lead some readers to believe this is a style of philosophy as legitimate as any other. This would be a regrettable conclusion.

Critical Perspectives on bell hooks

Maria del Guadalupe Davidson, George Yancy, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2009). 242 pages. \$39.95. ISBN: 978-0-415-98981-7.

Reviewed by Alexis Shotwell

Laurentian University, ashotwell@laurentian.ca

At the 2010 SPEP meeting, one of the discussants on a panel conversing with Patricia Hill Collins quipped that sometimes it seems as though philosophers must import black women theorists into overwhelmingly white philosophical spaces. Collins, a significant figure in feminist epistemology, is herself a theorist who opens answers to the question of how we ought to think about the paucity of black women theorists in white-dominated and racist institutions. bell hooks, in different ways, critically assesses these questions as well. In writing this

review, I have been conscious that many philosophers, even many feminist philosophers, may consider *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks* an inapt candidate for a newsletter presenting philosophical work on gender. What does it mean to bring discussion of hooks's work into intellectual spaces constituted by some of the disciplinary bounds hooks herself contests? Since racialized philosophers and philosophers working on race and racism experience these sorts of boundary-maintaining questions as part of the hostile conditions of being in philosophy, thinking on these issues is important to assessing this collection. Some of the pieces in the collection will be immediately legible as examples of philosophical work on gender, engaging hooks as a way to access philosophical issues or written by philosophers. Others will be useable by extension, and still others will likely strike philosophical audiences as off-point.

Maria del Guadalupe Davidson and George Yancy co-edited this collection, which brings together scholars from a range of disciplines and locations. Yancy's involvement is one reason to read the assortment of perspectives on bell hooks's work as a philosophical intervention, in line with a number of other significant Yancy-edited collections aiming to complicate and nuance the field of philosophy. There is much happening in the collection, but here I will focus on how we philosophers who work with intersectional conceptions of gender might take up and make use of the book.

hooks has published more than thirty books, many of them pairing critical theory and cultural studies with a resolutely accessible writing style. The magnitude of assessing the range and quantity of work hooks has produced would daunt many editors, and one of this volume's strengths is the way the editors have opened a way "in" to the multiplicity of hooks's work. Throughout, Davidson and Yancy aim, as they write, to engage the "pedagogical, cultural, political, and social philosophy of bell hooks—Womanist, public intellectual, scholar, political gadfly, transgressive teacher, activist, and a black woman of wisdom and fortitude" (7). *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks* is divided into three topical sections, which each traverse a range of work from hooks's career to date: "Critical Pedagogy and Praxis," "The Dynamics of Race and Gender," and "Spirituality and Love." This way of parsing hooks's work is accurate and also enables useful modes of cross-reading—from her books for kids to her interventions in high theory in each topical grouping.

The first section of the volume, "Critical Pedagogy and Praxis," focuses on hooks's significant work in theorizing radical/Freirian pedagogy. The strongest pieces in this section take up and extend hooks's work in thinking pedagogy. Yancy's chapter "Engaging Whiteness and the Practice of Freedom: the Creation of Subversive Academic Spaces" will be of particular interest to feminist philosophers and teachers, as he richly theorizes the importance of emotion to classroom spaces, critiquing the reduction of philosophy to the mind. He pushes theories of engaged pedagogy further through considering how the banking system of education helps to produce normalizing forms of whiteness, particularly in philosophy classrooms. Yancy fruitfully reflects on how white students can be brought to critically reflect on their own racial formation through creating and supporting a contestative, risky, collaborative pedagogic space. He emphasizes that such a space involves vulnerabilities not only on the part of student learners, but—perhaps especially—for philosophy teachers who want to challenge white supremacist modes in syllabi and in the classroom. As he writes: "To recognize that one's disciplinary legitimating practices, and one's style of pedagogical engagement, are fueled by racial and cultural hubris and hegemony is threatening" (51). Cindy LaCom and Susan Hadley's piece "Teaching to Transgress: Deconstructing Normalcy and Resignifying the Marked Body" usefully expands hooks's attention to the import

of bodily being in teaching, looking at forms of embodiment that go unmarked; their reflections on ability and disability in the classroom are particularly productive. Also from this first section of the collection, Carme Manuel's discussion of hooks's children's books as pedagogical interventions is striking. Manuel frames the children's books as therapeutic "potentiating devices"—"blueprints for a happy life in blackness" (95). Philosophers, who sometimes have a tendency to believe that the texts we encounter as adults are uniquely significant for our subject formation, as well as people thinking through the political effects of children's literature, will be engaged by Manuel's chapter. Other pieces in this section discuss class and capitalism (Jaramillo and McLaren), racism as systemic and institutional rather than simply a matter of beliefs (Davidson and Davidson), and personal reflections on entering the kinds of critical pedagogic spaces hooks theorizes as a student, and bringing those experiences in to teaching (Generett).

The second section of *Critical Perspectives*, "The Dynamics of Race and Gender," is the most obviously situated within—and against—philosophical traditions. Donna-Dale Marcano suggestively contends that hooks's "corpus can be and should be considered a phenomenology of a black feminist consciousness" (112). Marcano is persuasive in her argument that the phenomenological tradition has not enthusiastically taken up women's, feminist, and race-conscious approaches as central to the tradition. Indeed, as she argues, to understand hooks as a significant contributor to phenomenology challenges the form as well as the content of much Continental philosophy. Marcano's work on voice, self-recovery, and critical feminist consciousness rooted in black women's experience is generative, and her work on *Talking Back*—the only book she discusses in detail—left me hoping that the project she sets out is something she'll consider in more detail in work to come. Maria del Guadalupe Davidson productively explores how hooks's antiessentialist theorization of black subjectivity and identification can counter culturally imperialist imperatives to commodify and consume otherness. Arnold Farr opens a discussion of deconstruction and love in hooks's work; his piece is incisive and generative, though short, and offers points of attachment for thinking about non-color-blind antiracist praxis. In "The Ethics of Blackness: bell hooks's Postmodern Blackness and the Imperative of Liberation" Clevis Headley takes up hooks's work on postmodernism in more detail. This is an often-gestured-toward but rarely explored feature of hooks's work, and Headley's chapter is a useful reformulation of many of the core interventions hooks opens. The chapter will be useful to those thinking about racialization, ethics, and postmodernism; it is one of the most substantial in the collection, allowing Headley to give a rich description of how we might understand hooks more deeply in light of a number of the canonical writers in postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy. He gestures toward some very interesting critiques of hooks in the last part of the chapter, leaving me to wonder how this kind of productive and appreciative critique could have been brought in to more of his piece, but also more of the collection altogether.

In the final section, "Spirituality and Love," writers discuss hooks's more recent work. Based in hooks's practice and study of Mahayana Buddhist traditions, particularly from Thich Nhat Hanh and Pema Chodron, this strand of her thinking is not as taken up as her earlier work in cultural criticism, and it is fruitful that Davidson and Yancy have devoted a proper section to hooks's work in this area. Kathy Glass offers a reading of hooks's work in three books—*Salvation*, *All About Love*, and *Communion*—through a range of literary spaces. This chapter will be useful to readers working on hooks in literary traditions, but might be harder for non-literature scholars to access

theoretically. Marilyn Edelstein continues the work of thinking about hooks as a postmodern critic with a consideration of how Julia Kristeva can be read with and through hooks. This chapter speaks to work on Kristeva in provocative ways, and feels in some way situated in a broader conversation that is not completely explicated in the chapter we're given. Other pieces in this section engage Christian interpretations of a love ethic (Nienhuis) and how such an ethic can contribute to political practices of healing (Vega-González).

Altogether, *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks* presents a testament to the significance and complexity of bell hooks's work, cutting in topic and contributors across disciplinary lines—much as does hooks herself. The strength of the book lies in its heterogeneity and scope: it will provide readers a picture of the range of hooks's work, particularly useful for those of us who have engaged hooks along only one axis of her thinking. So, readers who have understood her as primarily a sharp cultural studies observer of contemporary film will see how her pedagogical work is connected to that area of her thinking; readers who have encountered primarily the work on love will gain more understanding of how that work is connected to her theorization of thinking from the margin—and so on. The unevenness in the collection arises, perhaps necessarily, out of the mode of reading hooks calls for in her work: when one engages hooks, one does it with a whole-self mode of attention. For her, reading, teaching, theorizing, and thinking are personal and passionate. This form of reading is evident in the perspectives on her work, many of which foreground the effect hooks has had on the writer and their life. But in some cases, the seemingly effortless way hooks herself renders the imbrication of the personal, the political, and the theoretical/cultural is shown to be difficult to enact oneself: the collection offers pieces in which authors attempt to practice hooks's mode of thinking with choppy results. Since the volume is so successful in summing up a broad range of hooks's concerns, it is also interesting to look at the trends of attention represented by the works collected here. Works cited in *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks* do tend to stick with some of her most canonical, influential, and already widely cited works. hooks's work on visual representation, class, autobiography, and self-making through writing call out—still—for critical attention. Of course, with such a capacious oeuvre to reference, any reviewer could say the same. This indicates, I believe, the import of this collection on hooks's thinking: *Critical Perspectives on bell hooks* can stand as an opening in theoretical work and a call for more engagement, rather than as a final word. In this way, perhaps hooks—a theoretician of openings, beginnings, and renewals—would approve.

The Mathematics of Sex: How Biology and Society Conspire to Limit Talented Women and Girls

Stephen J. Ceci and Wendy M. Williams (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010). 288 pages. \$34.95. ISBN-10: 0195389395. ISBN-13: 978-0195389395.

Reviewed by Tinola N. Mayfield-Guerrero
Owens Community College;
Tinola_mayfieldguerrero@owens.edu

The Mathematics of Sex (Ceci and Williams 2010) is a book that addresses an issue that continues to plague society. And while the question of biology versus culture in the discussion of women and their underrepresentation in mathematics

and other STEM fields has been considered time and time again by feminist scholars, philosophers, and other interested individuals, the discussion surrounding this issue continues to generate complex and robust debate. Using a variety of data from Cogitative research, Ceci and Williams set the stage for their book by looking at some of the alleged causes as to why women are thought to be underrepresented in math-intensive fields. Ceci and Williams assert that innate ability, social and cultural biases, and personal preference (aka, women prefer more people-oriented careers than men) are some of the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields (7-12). These causes are not new to the debate and seem relatively familiar, but the authors represent their ideas in a way that adds a certain level of complexity to the question at hand. The authors deal with each of these alleged notions in the book; but in the end they conclude that women are underrepresented in math-intensive careers because of nonbiological factors (201-202). When it comes down to it, men prefer to enter into math-intensive fields (such as engineering and physics), while women prefer other occupations such as medicine and law. Some of this preference has to do with the ways in which girls and boys are raised, but it also has a lot to do with the overall time demands of the occupation. In fact, “there is no question that children are a major reason for the dearth of women in all fields at senior levels” (203). Women are not necessarily willing to concede having children and a family for the structural demands of an occupation. And since structural inequalities still exist in the family itself, the desire to have children is a serious consideration when weighing the demands of a family against the demands of an occupation.

I found it rather interesting and meaningful that the authors were quick to establish the fact that the issue of women’s underrepresentation in math-intensive careers is a multidimensional problem. Rather than limiting the scope of the discussion to one of biology versus society, this book looks at the question in a multitude of ways and with several different variables at hand. With women scoring as high as men in various aptitude testing and scoring high marks in math courses in the classroom, the old adage that women are simply not biologically capable of doing math seems to have been significantly challenged, but what has not been challenged are the social expectations that certain types of jobs require of people. The issue of women not being willing to necessarily sacrifice family over a job is one of the issues that seems to contribute to the lack of women in certain math-intensive fields. Throughout the book the authors use a variety of data and other research to consider the multidimensional nature of why women are underrepresented in math-intensive fields.

So how is it that society and biology conspire against women and limit the ability of talented women in excelling in and pursuing careers in STEM fields? As asserted by the authors Ceci and Williams (2010) on page 48, “women’s success in academia is on a collision course with their success as parent and partner.” How so? The book goes on to state that women in academia have higher rates of divorce than their male counterparts and women in academia who are married with children report working 101 hours per week (versus 88 hours per week for men with children) across the domains of career, work, and household (48). Furthermore, the book goes on to relate that women with young children (pre-kindergarten or younger) are 8.2% less likely to obtain a tenure track position in science, whereas children for male candidates in the sciences increases their likelihood of being perceived as reliable (49). So whereas children become a liability for women in certain career paths (such as tenure track science positions or other senior level positions), they are a mark of positive character development for men (same job description, but different

biology of the applicant).

Overall I found this book interesting, well organized, and full of attention-grabbing data and narratives. The information was useful and accessible. And while the authors do not necessarily present the reader with new answers to the question of women being underrepresented in math-intensive fields; this book does—however—provide the reader with a fruitful way of continuing to discuss the issue in an organized fashion. In the end it does not seem to be the case that women, simply by being female, do not possess the inherent capabilities to excel in STEM-related fields. The authors state that “non-ability factors such as women’s preferences must play an important role—math talented women are choosing non-math careers far more frequently than math talented men” (202). It does seem to be the case that the way in which society (and therefore certain occupations) continues to be structured plays a large part in the reason as to why women are underrepresented in math-intensive fields (and thus how biology and society conspires to limit the talent of women and girls).

CONTRIBUTORS

Megan Craig is a mother of one, a painter, and an assistant professor of philosophy and art at Stony Brook University.

Susan Dieleman recently completed her doctoral work in philosophy at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her dissertation was in the areas of feminist philosophy and pragmatism. She is currently developing a pragmatist feminist approach to issues in social epistemology, including the phenomenon of peer disagreement, the epistemic role of diversity in democracies, and the place of testimony and expertise in promoting social progress. (scd@yorku.ca)

A. Todd Franklin is an associate professor and chair of the philosophy department at Hamilton College. His research focuses on the existential, social, and political implications of various critical and transformative discourses aimed at cultivating individual and collective self-realization. The author of several scholarly works on the intersections of existential philosophy and the lived experience of race, Franklin is currently working on a multifaceted account of the nature and transformative power of various forms and expressions of subjectivity.

Lauren Freeman is an assistant professor of philosophy at Concordia University in Montreal. Her research aims to demonstrate the relevance of a phenomenological account of personhood and intersubjectivity in ethics, feminist philosophy, and the philosophy of emotion. Lauren has published articles on the possibility of a Heideggerian ethics, on recognition, and on the relationship between a phenomenological concept of the self and relational autonomy. Currently she is currently working on two projects entitled “Phenomenology of Mood” and “Challenging a Panoptics of the Womb: Phenomenological Responses to the Problem of Diminished Epistemic Authority in Pregnancy”; she is also co-editing a book entitled *Applied Ethics: A Contextualist Approach*.

Anca Gheaus is a researcher in philosophy at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. She has been working for several years on questions concerning gender justice, care, and the ethics of having and raising children. Some of this work was published, or is forthcoming, in *Hypatia*, *The Journal of Social Philosophy*, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, and *Social Theory and Practice*.

Sara Goering is on the philosophy faculty at the University of Washington, Seattle, where she specializes in bioethics, feminist moral philosophy, and philosophy for children. She is mother to two wonderful children who probably have very little clue about the negative bragging competitions their mother takes delight in entering, and regularly wins.

Tinola Mayfield-Guerrero is a scholar, writer, artist, activist, and teacher whose academic work focuses on gender, metaphysics, social sciences, and systems theory/organizational design. When she isn't reading, Tinola enjoys distance running and playing cello. Tinola is an administrator and instructor of sociology and philosophy at Owens Community College in Ohio.

Anna Aloisia Moser defended her Ph.D. thesis on performativity in Wittgenstein's and Kant's philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in 2010—a year after her daughter was born. Previously she earned an M.A. in German Language and Literature/Linguistics from the University of Vienna, Austria, with a thesis on metaphor and metonymy. Her main interest lies in how language and thought work, which she explores through literature, linguistics, and philosophy of language. Aloisia lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband and daughter and a baby son. While a Visiting Instructor at Pratt Institute, she now writes to turn her dissertation into a book.

Jordan Pascoe is a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate Center at CUNY and teaches philosophy and interdisciplinary studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Hunter College. She writes about Kant's political philosophy and anthropology, as well as feminist and African philosophy.

Andrea J. Pitts is currently a graduate student in philosophy at the University of South Florida, where she earned her M.A. and a graduate certificate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies. She will be starting the Ph.D. program in philosophy at Vanderbilt University in the fall of 2011. Her main research areas are Latin American philosophy, philosophy of race, and feminist philosophy. She is also interested in conceptions of race and gender in early modern philosophy. She hopes to write her dissertation on the history of the metaphysics of race in Latin American thought and its relevance for contemporary Latina/o issues in philosophy.

Alexis Shotwell is an assistant professor in philosophy at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. Her academic work addresses racial formation, unspeakable and unspoken knowledge, gender, and political transformation. Her engagement in political struggle focuses on indigenous solidarity, ending war, and feminist community education. Her written work has appeared in *Hypatia*, *Sociological Theory*, *Upping the Anti*, and several book collections. She has recently completed a book entitled *Knowing Otherwise: Implicit Understanding and Political Change*. (ashotwell@laurentian.ca)