

Symposium:

*Feminist Philosophy Reconsidered**

FEMINISM AND RESENTMENT

Christina Hoff Sommers
Clark University

Feminist philosophers do not take well to criticism, and while many scholars are appalled at the idea of an academic field adhering to a controversial political philosophy and pursuing a controversial agenda within the academy, very few have been willing to take on the daunting and unrewarding job of examining and criticizing the feminists' arguments and assumptions. In consequence, a feminist philosophy that is inspiring the successful effort to transform the American academy goes on virtually unchallenged. In this paper I will briefly be discussing some serious moral and pedagogic weaknesses of feminist philosophy. My intentions are to initiate discussion on some important and controversial topics. The hope is that others will enter the fray and that a more open and less diffident debate will ensue.

1. Equity Feminism and Gender Feminism

Every day the public is witness to feminist outrage at how badly women are treated: in the workplace, in the courts, on dates, in marriages, in the primary schools—by men mostly, but sometimes by other women. Much of what is reported is indeed true, and some of it is very disturbing and provocative. Of course, the abuse of women must be made known and must arouse indignation. Plato himself recognized the role of righteous indignation.

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tion as a mainspring of moral action. In his metaphor, indignation is the good steed helping the charioteer to stay on the path of virtue by helping him to control the vicious, wayward steed straining to go its own brutish way. It is the "spirited" element in the soul that supplies the wise man with the emotional energy—the horse power—to curb the appetites so that he may act virtuously.

Certainly, feminist indignation at injustices to women is a motive force behind all of our efforts to right the wrongs women suffer. However, many of the umbrageous feminists who are publicly explaining the plight of women in America are moved by more dubious passions and interests. There is a feminism of resentment, one that goes quite beyond the moral passion for setting matters right. The feminists I have in mind are guided by a feminist philosophy that rationalizes, justifies, and fosters in women a wholesale rancor. It has little to do with moral indignation.

Resentment may begin in and include indignation, but it is by far the more abiding passion. Resentment is "harbored" or "nurtured"; it "takes root" in a subject (the victim) and remains directed at another (the culprit). It can be "vicarious." You need not have harmed me personally, but if I identify with someone you *have* harmed, I may resent you. Such resentment is very common, and it may easily be as strong and intense as resentment occasioned by direct injury. In a way it is stronger, for, by enlarging the class of victims to include myself and others, villainy has been magnified.

Having demarcated a victimized "Us" with whom I now feel solidarity, I have begun to think in terms of a victimized group. Pointing to one victim, I say to myself, "In wronging her he has betrayed his contempt for us all and wronged us as well," or, "Anyone who harms a woman harms us all," or simply, "What he did to her, he did to all of us."

Once one has thus generalized a victim class, it is quite common to take the next generalizing step by regarding the individual who wronged Us as himself representative of a group. Now resentment enlarges the focus of its animus to all the members of that group. This I may do quite "reasonably" by adopting a position from which people *like* the perpetrator (male, rich, etc.) are regarded as "the kind of people" that exploit people like "us." My social reality has now been dichotomized into two groups politically at odds, one dominating and exploiting the other.

Once I get into the habit of regarding women as a subjugated gender, I am primed to be alarmed, angry, resentful of men as oppressors of women. I am also prepared to believe the worst about them and the harm they cause to women. In all cases of this kind, animosity to a group is justified and made to seem reasonable by an analysis and social philosophy that promotes a picture of a bifurcated hierarchical society in which inimical forces represented by a group exploit and oppress the weak and the innocent. Those who promote this provocative analysis never think of

themselves as doing anything wrong. It is inevitable that anger and resentment is kindled against a whole group; it is inevitable that, in kindling public anger, falsehoods will sometimes be told. But these things cannot be helped: after all *that group* is the source of the oppression or pollution, and its power must be broken. Behind the popular books advertising the motifs of humiliation, subordination, and male backlash (e.g., Faludi's *Backlash*, Wolf's *The Beauty Myth*, Marilyn French's *The War against Women*),¹ there are the feminist philosophers who promote the doctrine of a bifurcated society in which women are trapped in a structure variously referred to as "capitalist patriarchy," "hetero-patriarchy," or the "sex/gender system."² According to Sandra Harding, it is "a system of male-dominance made possible by men's control of women's productive and reproductive labor."³ Borrowing from Gayle Rubin, Sandra Lee Bartky talks of the sex/gender system as "that complex process whereby bisexual infants are transformed into male and female gender personalities, the one destined to command, the other destined to obey."⁴ Virginia Held reports on the feminist conviction that feminist philosophers are the initiators of an intellectual revolution comparable to those of "Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud." Indeed, as Held points out, "some feminists think this latest revolution will be even more profound." According to Held, the "sex/gender system" is the controlling insight of this feminist revolution; she speaks of it as "intellectually gripping" and tells us of the impact the discovery of the sex/gender system has had on feminist theory: "Now that the sex/gender system has become visible to us, we can see it everywhere."⁵

Perhaps most feminist philosophers are "sex/gender feminists"; most do "see it everywhere." I sometimes envy Held and her sister gender feminists for the thrill they get from seeing the world through the lenses of sexual politics. Nevertheless, the sex/gender perspective on social reality constitutes the philosophical ground for a grim feminism of resentment and the ascription of collective guilt. For it promotes the doctrine of an impersonal but implacable male conspiracy built into the power relations that prevail in a culture deemed inimically androcentric.

Resentment is not a wholesome passion. Unlike indignation, it is not an ethical passion. But, because it often originates in moral outrage at real injustice (from wife battering to sexist job discrimination), resentment can be made to sound very much like a justifiable and even commendable passion for social justice.

Once a feminist has got the two genders in place in a system of oppression, her critical faculties are weakened, making it easy to believe ill of male-kind—and her hyper-readiness to be affronted is in place as well. Any little incident can then trigger rage, shock, and resentment. Reading feminist literature one finds a genre of writing in which the narrator reports on how she personally was the victim of some male outrage, often perpetrated by someone who may have been quite unaware of the distress

he caused.

The feminist theorist Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi opens her book *Mother-self* by telling us that she suffered while taking a walk on New York's Second Avenue.⁶ It happened when a bum asking for a handout said, "Mama can you spare some change":

[N]ever till that moment had I seen myself as "Mama" in such an impersonal, external context. In the man's speaking I beheld myself anew. "I" disappeared, as though turned inside out, and "Mama" took my place.

Ms. Rabuzzi reports on a "shocking dislocation of Self." Her reaction illustrates how a dichotomized view of social reality keeps many a feminist permanently on edge, ready to cringe at the slightest provocation.

Here is Sandra Bartky telling us how *she* was "dislocated" while taking a walk:

It is a fine spring day, and with an utter lack of self-consciousness, I am bouncing down the street. Suddenly . . . [c]atcalls and whistles fill the air. Those noises are clearly sexual in intent and they are meant for me. . . . I freeze. As Sartre would say, I have been petrified by the gaze of the Other. . . . I have been made into an object. . . . Blissfully unaware, breasts bouncing, eyes on the birds in the trees, I *could* have passed by without being turned into stone. . . . What I describe seems less the spontaneous expression of a healthy eroticism than a ritual of subjugation.⁷

In that last remark about "subjugation," Professor Bartky is taking pains to get the scarifying catcalls into proper focus: Bartky's personal discomfiture must be understood in *political* terms. It's what's happening to *all* of Us all the time—in the male-dominated culture.

In an article called "The Feminist Revelation," I suggested that the new feminism has many of the elements of a religion or religious cult.⁸ If so, the public testimony of its adherents has a *special* character. We are accustomed to hearing the testimony and confessions of sinners. But in the feminist case, the devotee testifies in public on how she has been *sinned against*.

Ms. Bartky gets her wounds when she passes construction sites. Marilyn French, the author of *The War against Women*, finds herself vulnerable in museums where she is mugged by works of art created by men:

Artists appropriate the female body as their subject, their possession . . . assaulting female reality and autonomy. . . . Visiting

galleries and museums (especially the Pompidou Center in Paris) I feel assaulted by twentieth century abstract sculpture that resembles exaggerated female body parts, mainly breasts.⁹

Not all of the women who believe they are in a gender war against men, are defiantly resentful. Some are demoralized by the feeling. This is well illustrated by Carole Sheffield's article "Sexual Terrorism" in a recent anthology on feminist philosophy.¹⁰ I excerpt it at some length, to show how the perspective of being trapped in a "rape culture" can lead one from angry defiance and resentment to a more permanent and crippling state of fearfulness. Unfortunately, Ms. Sheffield's reaction is common to many a teacher of feminist theory, and her mood of siege and terror is being conveyed to more and more students:

The word *terrorism* invokes images of furtive organizations ... whose members blow up buildings and cars. . . . But there is a different kind of terrorism. . . . Its targets are females—of all ages, races, and classes. . . . I call it *sexual terrorism* because it is a system by which males frighten and, by frightening, control and dominate females.

Ms. Sheffield describes an "ordinary" event that took place one early evening. She was alone in a laundromat and suddenly felt very vulnerable:

[T]he laundromat was brightly lit; and my car was the only one in the lot. Anyone passing by could readily see that I was alone and isolated. Knowing that rape is a crime of opportunity, I became terrified.

Ms. Sheffield left her laundry in the washer and dashed back to her car, sitting in it with the doors locked and the windows up.

When the wash was completed, I dashed in, threw the clothes into the drier, and ran back out to my car. When the clothes were dry, I tossed them recklessly into the basket and hurriedly drove away to fold them in the security of my home. Although I was not victimized in a direct, physical way by objective or measurable standards, I felt victimized. It was, for me, a terrifying experience.

At home, her terror subsided and turned to anger:

Mostly I was angry at being unfree: a hostage of a culture that, for the most part, encourages violence against females, instructs

men in the methodology of sexual violence, and provides them with ready justification for their violence. . . . Following my experience at the laundromat, I talked with my students about terrorization.¹¹

Whether one reacts with terror to the feeling of being a hostage in the male culture is partly a matter of individual temperament. Among most gender feminists, a defiant resentment is perhaps more the norm.

Students in the "feminist classrooms" who are taught to regard the society they inhabit as a patriarchal system of oppression are deeply affected by this perspective. I have talked with quite a few women students who spoke to me of their feelings. Some are frightened, others are angry. But for most, the world had become grimmer than before.

According to Laurie Martinka, a Women's Studies graduate from Vassar, "You're never the same again. Sometimes I even bemoan the fact that so much has changed. I am tired of always ripping things apart because they exclude the perspective of women. . . . You become so aware of things. And it is hard. My mother cannot accept it. It is hard for her because I have changed so completely."

Anne Package, a student at the University of Pennsylvania, told me how students talk among themselves about this keen new awareness: "We call it 'being on the verge' or 'bottoming out.' You are down on everything. Nothing is funny anymore. It hits you like a ton of bricks. You hit rock bottom and ask: How can I live my life?"

The expression intrigued me. On the verge. Of what? But there is no mystery here. Women on the verge do not hesitate to tell you that they are barely containing their wrath at how women have been intimidated and put down. And every so often they vent it.

When I suggested to Ms. Package that she and her classmates are regarded as among the world's more fortunate young women, she bristled. "We still suffer psychological oppression. If you feel like the whole world is on top of you then it is."

There is a substantial literature on the "verge" reaction and how to help women to channel it properly. Professor Carolyn Shrewsbury of Mankato State University, Minnesota, suggests that feminist teachers can "empower" their students by talking about the verge feeling in a way that "recognizes their right to understand what they are undergoing." This validates their perspective on social reality and makes them feel not only normal but exceptionally insightful. The feeling of being on the verge is not treated as a transitory student stage, but as a permanent condition reached by women who have achieved a realistic awareness of their plight in the male-dominated society.

Contemporary resenters claim continuity with the likes of the eighteenth-century feminist Mary Wollstonecraft or later feminists like the

Grimke sisters, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan Anthony, and Harriet Taylor. But those giants of the women's movement nursed no personal grievances. Speaking of the women who participated in the Seneca Falls convention of 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote: "They had not in their own experience endured the coarser forms of tyranny resulting from unjust laws, or association with immoral and unscrupulous men, but they had souls large enough to feel the wrongs of others without being scarified in their own flesh."¹²

One of the main differences between the humanistic, Enlightenment feminists of yesteryear and today's sex/gender feminists is the degree of *self-preoccupation*. Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony were other-directed in their focus; they were keenly aware that they themselves were privileged, middle-class, protected women; they knew in their bones how utterly inappropriate it would be to compare themselves with the vulnerable women of their day, and it never occurred to them to talk of their own personal grievances before the public.

The founders of the women's movement were inspired by Enlightenment principles of individual justice to wage their fight for women's rights, the very principles that the founders of America's political order had appealed to. Stanton had her consciousness raised by reading John Locke and Thomas Jefferson. Her reliance on the Declaration of Independence (adding only that women as well as men enjoyed the rights it proclaimed) was a direct expression of her sincerely held creed and the creed of the men and women assembled at Seneca Falls. Stanton and the other founding mothers of American feminism demanded that *recognized constitutional principles* be applied to women as well as to men.

By contrast, the radical demand to dismantle Patriarchy calls for a social revolution. The sexual politics of gender feminism is essentially utopian; its political goals cannot be achieved by amending the Constitution. The contemporary resenters have lost faith in the classically liberal Enlightenment principles. Again, where the classical feminist agenda was designed to work within the system, calling for constitutional reforms and other such measures, the new feminism is radical in calling for a new social order.

It is now a commonplace that feminist theory *must* move away from liberalism and individualism. According to Alison Jaggar, "radical and socialist feminists have shown that old ideals of freedom, equality and democracy are insufficient."¹³ Iris Young points out that "after two centuries of faith . . . the ideal of equality and fraternity" no longer prevails.¹⁴ Andrea Nye acknowledges that the liberal agenda has been successful in gaining women *legal* freedoms, but she insists that this means very little, since "the liberated enfranchised woman might complain that democratic society has only returned her to a more profound subordination."¹⁵

I want to linger just a bit over Jaggar's anti-liberal animadversions. Jaggar is, after all, a *doyenne* of contemporary feminist philosophy. (But I

confess, she interests me personally because she has taken a special interest in *me*.)

Like all gender feminists, Jaggar distrusts the aspirations and values of women who have been socialized under patriarchy. She is critical of the liberal notion of "autonomy":

Central to the concept of autonomy is the idea of self-definition, a reliance on the authority of individual judgment. If individual desires and interests are socially constructed, however, the ultimate authority of individual judgment comes into question. Perhaps people may be mistaken about truth, morality and even their own interests: perhaps they may be systematically self-deceived or misled by their society.¹⁶

However, her theory of false consciousness does leave room for exceptional women who are able to transcend their socialization: "[C]ertain historical circumstances allow specific groups of women to transcend at least partially the perceptions and theoretical constructs of male dominance. . . ." It is these women of raised consciousness who "inspire and guide women in a struggle for social change."¹⁷

Jaggar is a clear writer who makes no bones about saying that most women—including seemingly free and enlightened American women—are wrongly socialized, and confused, and that their values and aspirations and choices may therefore be mistaken. But of course she is *not* atypical. One sees many a feminist philosopher caught in the loop of exclaiming, over and over again, in ever more subtle ways, how women's choices are complicitous, confused, and manipulated by men intent on holding on to their own dominant status.

My own view (about which I have written at some length) is that this whole approach to American women is unacceptably elitist and matronizing.¹⁸ Indeed, in its devaluation of the professed preferences and interests of the majority of women, and in its idea that most women may be systematically self-deluded and in need of inspired guidance and deprogramming, the whole approach is profoundly condescending and not a little misogynist. The doctrine is morally flawed. What is more, it represents a betrayal of classical feminism.

2. Women's Ways of Knowing

Imperviousness to criticism is to be found whenever one encounters a closed perspective that chews up and digests all counter-evidence, transmuting it into confirming evidence. The fact that most people, including most *women*, do not see the "pervasive and tenacious system of male power" is

only taken to show how deeply inculcated it is. The more women reject the teachings of this radical feminism, the more it proves them in thrall to the androcentric system. Nothing and no one can upset the hypothesis of the sex/gender system for those who "see it everywhere."

Susan Sontag, who has been notably absent from the ranks of resent-er feminists, understood the totalizing and otiose character of their philosophy back in 1975. (I am convinced that, even earlier, Ms. Sontag must have taken a good course in analytic philosophy and taken to heart some elementary cautions.) Here she is answering critics who had accused her of not fully appreciating the plight of women (and of not seeing it everywhere):

Virtually everything deplorable in human history furnishes material for a restatement of the feminist plaint . . . just as every story of a life could lead to a reflection on our common mortality and the vanity of human wishes. But if the point is to have meaning some of the time, it can't be made all the time. . . . [I]t is surely not treasonable to think that there are . . . other wounds than sexual wounds, other identities than sexual identity, other politics than sexual politics—and other 'anti-human values' than 'misogynist' ones.¹⁹

Ms. Sontag also shows her sound philosophical instincts when she speaks disapprovingly of feminist "anti-intellectualism," telling us that she has felt the need to "dissociate [her]self from that wing of feminism that promotes the rancid and dangerous antithesis between mind . . . and emotion." Needless to say, feminist philosophers promote that antithesis in the manner in which they oppose male to female "ways of knowing."

Susan Haack and Susan Sontag are liberal feminists who are disturbed by the gynocentric turn taken by feminist philosophy. There are others. Two years ago I wrote to the British novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch, asking for her views on some recent trends in Women's Studies. In her response she said:

Men "created culture" because they were free to do so, and women were treated as inferior and made to believe they were. Now free women must join in the human world of work and creation on an equal footing and be everywhere in art, science, business, politics etc. . . . However, to lay claim, in this battle, to *female* ethics, *female* criticism, *female* knowledge . . . is to set up a new female ghetto. (Chauvinist males should be delighted by the move. . . .) 'Women's Studies' can mean that women are led to read mediocre or peripheral books by women rather than the great books of humanity in general. . . . It is a

dead end, in danger of simply separating women from the mainstream thinking of the human race. Such cults can also *waste the time* of young people who may be reading all the latest books on feminism instead of studying the difficult and important things that belong to the culture of humanity. (Her emphases.)

The universal ideal of a culture of humanity is a theme glaringly missing from contemporary feminist philosophy. On the contrary, the self-imposed segregation of women is everywhere in evidence. The harmful idea of gendered ways of knowing has trickled down to rank-and-file feminists, who are hard at work transforming the curriculum in schools all over the country. Even science education is not escaping the sweeping gender-feminist broom.

Philosophers from Plato to John Dewey have been keenly aware that good or bad education is primarily a matter of good or bad philosophy. At the present time, too many philosophers have virtually abandoned their historic function of being watchdogs to education. One result is that, increasingly, educational philosophy and practice are being influenced by bad feminist philosophy. It is unfortunate that clearheaded philosophers, whether feminist or nonfeminist, have only *just* begun to join the discussion.

Elizabeth Minnich traces the tradition of a male cultural elite to a "few privileged, males . . . who are usually called The Greeks."²⁰ Minnich, along with the other "curriculum transformationists," believes that the conceptions of *rationality* and intelligence are white male creations. Professor Minnich:

[A]t present . . . not only are students taught "phallogentric" and "colonial" notions of reason as *the* forms of rational expression, but the full possible range of expression of human intelligence also tends to be forced into a severely shrunken notion of intelligence.²¹

Note the references to a "colonial" rationality that binds women to a narrow conception of reason. The transformationist feminist critique of the imperial male culture is not confined to impugning the history, art, and literature of the past. Logic and rationality are also regarded as "phallogentric." It has become common to use scare quotes to advertise the suspicion of a "reality" uncovered by male ways of knowing. Thus, the feminist philosopher Joyce Trebilcock speaks of "the apparatuses of 'truth,' 'knowledge,' 'science,'" that men use to "project their personalities as reality."²²

The attack on male culture has become an attack on the rational standards and methods that have been the hallmark of scientific progress. Here, for example, is a characteristic fragment of applied feminist philoso-

phy taken from the guidelines of the state-funded New Jersey Project on Curricular Transformation (the project has already done considerable damage and should long ago have been discredited by philosophers of science): "Mind was male, Nature was female, and knowledge was created as an act of aggression—a passive nature had to be interrogated, unclothed, penetrated and compelled by man to reveal her secrets."²³

That the state of New Jersey should find itself in the position of endorsing controversial conceptions of reality and knowledge is a tribute to the energy and influence of the feminist transformationists. The New Jersey Project conducts "conferences, workshops and a regional network of meetings," all in aid of transforming knowledge to make it more women centered.

A nationwide feminist campaign to change the curriculum of the American academy to reflect the "new epistemologies" is being supported at the highest levels of the academy and government. There are now more than two hundred individual projects devoted to making the academy more congenial to "women's ways of knowing." The transformation projects are generously funded by the Ford Foundation and by federal agencies such as the Women's Education Equity Act Program and FIPSE, as well as by state governments from New Jersey to Tennessee to California—even Montana has one.²⁴

In a much-cited transformationist text entitled *Women's Ways of Knowing*, the authors distinguish between two kinds of knowing. "Separate knowing" is defined as "the game of impersonal reason," a game that has "belonged traditionally to boys." Male scholars specializing in their academic disciplines (from chemistry to philosophy) are known as "separate knowers":

Separate knowers are tough-minded. They are like doormen at exclusive clubs. They don't want to let anything in unless they are pretty sure it is good. . . . Presented with a proposition, separate knowers immediately look for something wrong—a loophole, a factual error, a logical contradiction, the omission of contrary evidence.²⁵

Separate knowers play the "doubting game." The authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* contrast separate knowing with a higher state they call "connected knowing." In place of the "doubting game," connected knowers play the "believing game." This is more congenial for women because "many women find it easier to believe than to doubt."²⁶

The credulous transformationists do, however, reserve their skepticism for the "male-centered curriculum" they wish to replace. Catharine MacKinnon has given extreme expression to feminist anger at being taken in by male ways of knowing and patriarchal constructions of knowledge. Here she

is in *Signs*: "In the Bible, to know a woman is to have sex with her. You acquire carnal knowledge. . . . Feminists are beginning to understand that to know has meant to f***"²⁷ (expletive deleted).

Peggy McIntosh, one of the principal architects of the influential Wellesley Report on primary and secondary education, is more decorous in her choice of words.²⁸ But her views are not far from MacKinnon's, or from those of the New Jersey Project. She is known among feminist pedagogues for her refinement of the distinction between "vertical and lateral thinking." McIntosh's "five phases of curricular consciousness" rest upon her own special variant of the "connected knower" and "separate knower" distinction. Vertical thinking is how the "white male elite" thinks. The dominant elite aim at "exact thinking, or decisiveness or mastery of something, or being able to make an argument and take on all comers, or turning in the perfect paper."²⁹ Vertical thinking is "triggered by words like excellence, accomplishment, success and achievement." Lateral thinking is more spiritual, "relational," and "inclusive." Women and people of color tend to be lateral thinkers. For "laterals," the "aim is not to win, but to be in a decent relationship with the invisible elements of the universe."³⁰ Dr. McIntosh is convinced that the current curriculum in the primary and secondary grades is dominated by vertical thinking. The Wellesley Report urges rooting out such "Anglo-European male values." For example, the report is down on debating clubs, which it sees as expressions of the emphasis on vertical thinking: "Debating clubs . . . take for granted the adversarial, win/lose orientation. . . . The definition of the citizen in debate clubs . . . relates more to what psychologist Carol Gilligan names 'the ethos of justice' . . . rather than the 'ethos of care.'"³¹

To me, as to Susan Haack, the assumption that "knowing" and knowledge can be gendered is thoroughly alarming on social and political grounds. Just as alarming is the question of why a philosophical establishment that feels free to express its abhorrence of the Nazi idea of Jewish Science, should find itself so tongue-tied when it comes to feminist talk of "male science," "male ideas," and "male ways of knowing."

My area of expertise is ethics, so I am happily leaving it to epistemologists such as Ms. Haack to sort out and appraise the "new epistemologies." For the moment, I defend not the strong thesis that feminist epistemology is completely wrongheaded, but the weaker thesis that the debate over its merits has hardly begun. In any case, it is much too soon for anyone—including the State of New Jersey—to begin "transforming the curriculum" to reflect the "new epistemologies."

At the root of all transformation projects is the thesis that not just people but also ideas and disciplines are gendered. But, as the academic promoters of the politics of sexual identity are beginning to learn, gender is not sacrosanct as a principle of social and epistemic division. Why should identity politics be stabilized at just two? A woman can be simultaneously a

victim, and, depending on her race and physical status, also a white, able-bodied oppressor of Latinas, black males, and the disabled.

Today, white, able-bodied, heterosexual, feminist authors, awash in the new "politics of identity," are encouraged to confess to their privileged status right from the start. Here is a characteristic self-introduction by two feminist editors in their new book *Feminisms*:

'We' are Robyn and Diane; we speak as white middle-class heterosexual American feminist academics in our early thirties (to cover a number of the categories feminist criticism has lately been emphasizing as significant to one's reading and speaking position: race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, political positioning, education-level, and age).³²

The middle-class, educated women who discovered the sex/gender system are now being forced to regard themselves as oppressors in a complex ecology of domination and subjugation. But perhaps "ecology" is too orderly a concept for a victimology that is spinning out of control.

Feminist philosophy must itself be critiqued; and the radical pedagogical programs it has inspired must be put on hold. The doctrine of the divided society and the thesis of gendered knowledge need to be squarely confronted and evaluated by philosophers prepared to brave the wrath of feminist academics with full awareness that their criticisms may well be taken as expressions of sexist backlash.

I was speaking recently to a historian friend of mine about the feminist philosophers' attacks on rationality, and we both agreed that the negative attitude toward reason was deplorable. "But don't be depressed," she said, "after all, most of human history has been dominated by ignorance, superstition, and irrationality. Why should we be any different?"

But of course, as philosophers, we must do our utmost to *be* different. I do find it depressing that philosophers are not loudly protesting the talk about vertical and lateral reasoning, about separate and connected knowing. It is dismaying that so few are challenging the philosophical premises of other pernicious doctrines that have already affected educational practice and policy. That reason and reasonableness are rare is true enough. But defending an enclave of clarity and reason from the forces of unreason has been the point of doing philosophy from the very beginning. We are not morally free to hang back and allow unreason to have the last word.

1. Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used against*

Women (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Marilyn French, *The War against Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

2. Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 50. Bartky is relying on the work of the feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin, who was among the first to speak of the "sex/gender system." Here is Rubin's definition: "While particular socio-sexual systems vary, each one is specific and individuals within it will have to conform to a finite set of possibilities. Each new generation must learn and become its sexual destiny, each person must be encoded with its appropriate status from within the system." See Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women," in Rayna Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 161. See also Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1988), p. 148; Virginia Held, "Feminism and Epistemology: Recent Work on the Connection between Gender and Knowledge," *philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Summer 1985), p. 296; Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 113.

3. *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and philosophy of Science*, ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), p. 312.

4. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, p. 50.

5. Held, "Feminism and Epistemology," pp. 296 and 297.

6. Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, *Motherself: A Mythic Analysis of Motherhood* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 1.

7. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, p. 27.

8. Sommers, "The Feminist Revelation," *Social philosophy & Policy*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1990).

9. French, *The War against Women*, p. 163.

10. *Feminist Philosophies*, ed. Janet A. Kourany, James P. Sterba, and Rosemarie Tong (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992).

11. These four block quotes are from Carole Sheffield, "Sexual Terrorism," in *Feminist Philosophies*, p. 61. Sheffield is a Professor of Political Science at William Paterson College, where she serves as co-chair of the campus violence project.

12. *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 416.

13. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, p. 148.

14. Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 93.

15. Andrea Nye, *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 23.

16. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, p. 44.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

18. See Christina Sommers, "Philosophers against the Family," in *Person to Person*, ed. Hugh La Follette and George Graham (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); "Do These Feminists Like Women?" *Journal of Social philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1990); and "Argumentum Ad Feminem," *Journal of Social philosophy*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 1991).

19. Susan Sontag, "Feminism and Fascism," *New York Review of Books*, March 20, 1975.

20. "Transforming the Knowledge Base: A Panel Discussion at the National Network of Women's Caucuses, 1989," National Council for Research on Women, New York City, 1990.

21. Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, *Transforming Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), p. 113.

22. Joyce Trebilcot, "Dyke Methods," *Hypatia*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Summer 1988), p. 3.

23. "The New Jersey Project: Integrating the Scholarship on Gender," by Paula

- Rothenberg; available through the New Jersey Project, White Hall 315, William Paterson College, Wayne, NJ 07470.
24. For fuller accounts of the curriculum-transformation projects, see *The Courage to Question: Women's Studies and Student Learning*, ed. Caryn McTighe Musil (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, 1992), p. 3; Betty Schmitz, *Integrating Women's Studies into the Curriculum: A Guide and Bibliography* (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1985); *Transforming the Curriculum: Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies*, ed. Jonella Butler and John Walter (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), see esp. pp. 21-34.
25. Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 104.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
27. Catharine MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Methodology, and the State," *Signs*, Summer 1983, p. 636.
28. *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, commissioned by the AAUW Educational Foundation, researched and distributed by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA, 1992.
29. Dr. McIntosh gave a lecture on curriculum transformation in Brookline, Massachusetts, in October 1990; her lecture was videotaped and is available through the Brookline School Department. The quoted words are from her lecture. An article about the lecture appeared in the *Brookline Citizen*, March 15, 1991 ("The Mother of All Curriculums," by Robert Costrell). Versions of her lateral/vertical distinction can be found in two "Working Papers" by Dr. McIntosh distributed by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women: "Interactive Phases of Curricular Re-vision: A Feminist Perspective," 1983, and "Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-vision with Regard to Race," 1990.
30. McIntosh, Brookline lecture, October 1990; see also her "Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-Vision with Regard to Race."
31. *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, p. 66.
32. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, *Feminisms* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. ix.