

includes Heidegger, Nietzsche, Bakhtin and Sigmund Freud—the “fathers” of a French feminism that was anything but dutiful.

My only disappointment in this volume, though it is nevertheless a telling disappointment, is the “essay” by Hélène Cixous. Here is Cixous reflecting on her cat: “How do we telephone one another? The need to telephone has always existed because it’s vital to recall the mother. And all mammals bear the trace of the first telephone cord” (2001, 47). Perhaps, though, Cixous’s piece is a work of stunning irony, parodying a brand of feminism that could only be imagined by a narrow and literal misogyny.

Overall, this volume provides a valuable sense and reorientation of some of the key questions for feminist criticism today. The essays do not just interpret already canonized French philosophers for feminism; nor do they apply feminist questions to philosophy. Problems of essentialism, embodiment, aesthetics, and justice are negotiated from a series of competing but mutually provocative perspectives.

**Women of Color and Philosophy.** Edited by NAOMI ZACK. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

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In 1772, a London publisher agreed to issue the work of Phillis Wheatley, provided that John and Susanna Wheatley—her owners/captors—could demonstrate that the poetry was actually written by the twenty-year-old slave herself. Proof of her talents came on November 14, 1772, when John Wheatley secured and presented to the publisher a letter and an attestation, “To the Publick,” signed by the governor of Massachusetts and sixteen of Boston’s notable men. It stated:

WE whose Names are under-written, do assure the World, that the POEMS specified in the following Page, were (as we verily believe) written by Phillis, a young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa, and has ever since been, and now is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town. She has been examined by some of the best Judges, and is thought qualified to write them.

Wheatley’s story marks the beginning of the struggle by women of color for scholarly recognition and visibility in the United States. Two centuries later there are scores of collections of poetry, fiction, and essays by and about women

of color. But there has been no parallel effort to collect the works of contemporary, academically trained women of color in philosophy—until now.

Naomi Zack's unique and important collection, *Women of Color and Philosophy*, brings together for the first time the voices of twelve philosophers who are women of color. She begins with the premise that the work of women of color who do philosophy in academe, but who do not write exclusively on issues of race, ethnicity, and gender, merits a collection of its own. It's rare that women of color pursue philosophy in academic contexts; Zack counts at most thirty among the ten thousand members of the American Philosophical Association. Women of color in philosophy often suffer an initial lack of credibility with colleagues and students, their success is often attributed to affirmative action, and the merit of their research is often questioned. They are expected to teach classes on race and gender, and asked to serve on endless committees vouching for the diversity of university programs and policies. But Zack's collection is *not* about the philosophical import of these professional considerations. The idea underlying her anthology is that social identity is relevant to both philosophical activity and the production of ideas even when an author does not address race and gender.

This landmark volume is divided into three sections intended to reflect three critical themes: direct critiques of traditional academic philosophy; new and original applications of philosophical methods to social issues; and the fresh interpretation of traditional philosophy in ways that suggest new areas of study.

The critiques of traditional philosophy developed in the first section address existing philosophical projects focusing on speech, writing, and listening. The section opens with Joy James's provocative "Discredited Knowledge in the Nonfiction of Toni Morrison." James reads Morrison as a cultural observer who makes visible African epistemic frameworks and paradigms that have been systematically erased by European colonization. Drawing on cultural themes such as the centrality of community, the importance of ancestors, and nonlinear constructions of space and time, she illustrates how Morrison's essays rely on African-centered ways of knowing that predate European colonization. Relegation of these traditions to the category of superstition, she concludes, represents a significant loss to contemporary scholars, when the traditions might instead be viewed as a potential source of liberation.

In "Cultural Alterity," Ofelia Schutte addresses what she takes to be the most important challenge facing North-South relations and interactions: the problem of cross-cultural communication between members of dominant and subaltern cultures. Beginning with her own experience as a Latina philosopher, Schutte illustrates ways in which Anglo-American interlocutors render Latina intellectuals invisible as producers of culture. She explores what she calls "the problem of incommensurability" (2000, 47) and its implications for feminist

ethical thinking, and suggests ways in which alterity can balance asymmetry across diverse communication styles.

V. F. Cordova's "Exploring the Sources of Western Thought" is an intellectual memoir. She contrasts her knowledge of the roots of Western philosophy with the Apache beliefs passed down to her from her father. Her memoir begins with a desire to uncover the sources of the common psychological architecture believed to ground western thought. She discovers that the uniquely western ideas of substance dualism, individualism, idealism, monotheism, and the concept of earth as mere matter are not rooted in the Greco-Roman tradition, as many believe. The Greek world was infinite, temporally cyclical, polytheistic, and organic. The genesis of the Western *leitmotiv* is, Cordova argues, more accurately attributed to the church fathers, and in particular to Augustine, who almost single-handedly fashioned the "common mental stock" of Europe from pre-existing Christian and pagan notions about human nature and the world (2000, 77–82).

Adrian Piper's "General Introduction to the Project: The Enterprise of Socratic Metaethics" offers readers an ethical critique of contemporary philosophical practices through the lens of Socratic metaethics. Socratic metaethics offers us a method for unpacking the metaphysical premises of normative moral theories by analyzing the roles these theories give to rationality in the self. Recognizing two branches of Socratic metaethics (those linked to Immanuel Kant and to David Hume), Piper argues in favor of the Kantian view, which more effectively motivates action than Hume's view. Her position is driven by the virtues of rational discourse. Against Nietzsche's devaluation of rationality as characteristic of slave morality, she argues that reason is central to persons whose desires are constrained by the desires of others.

The essays comprised by the "Activism and Application" section share the concern that philosophical activity be socially relevant. Contributions to this section demonstrate a variety of ways in which philosophical tools can be used to address individual and community well-being outside of academe.

In her interview with George Yancy, Angela Davis explains how she came to see philosophy as an indispensable device for political organizing around issues of social justice, as well as race and gender equality. Davis credits her passion for philosophy to her progressive parents, who encouraged her to think critically about the segregated world of 1940s Birmingham, Alabama. Her passion was sharpened by graduate readings in the German Idealist tradition. As a philosopher, Davis is not interested in abstract questions of human existence. She prefers to engage the "ways in which philosophy could serve as a basis for developing a critique of society and how that critique of society could figure into the development of practical strategies for the radical transformation of society" (2000, 142). These strategies include creating courses that focus on philosophical themes in black literature, the importance of integrating gender analysis

into black philosophy and politics, and her work with both the National Black Women's Health Project and the Prison Activist Resource Center.

Like Davis, Anne Schulherr Waters views philosophy primarily as a tool for social change. In "That Alchemical Bering Strait Theory! Introducing America's Indigenous Sovereign Nations Worldviews to Informal Logic Courses," Waters describes how she successfully incorporates American Indian philosophy into her critical thinking classes in ways that empower both Native American learning and nonnative understanding. Beginning with Eurocentric scientific explanations for how first peoples came to populate the Americas, Waters demonstrates how the theory's acceptance generates false beliefs about them. She uses these claims to illustrate how informal logical fallacies such as slippery slope, false cause, and begging the question are used to support Eurocentric claims about first peoples.

Barbara Hall's "The Liberation Role Model and the Burden of Uplifting the Race" asks whether successful African Americans have unique obligations to their communities (for example, to function as role models, or to live their lives in ways that reflect positively on the race). Although this idea initially offended her liberal sensibilities, she has come to believe that successful African Americans do owe members of the community some sort of fidelity. The relationship between what W.E.B. Du Bois called "the talented tenth" and the African American community as a whole is analogous to the relationship between a sea captain and the passengers and crew (1903, 33). There is, she argues, an ambassadorial responsibility placed on the "talented tenth" group to counter the reputation of the community as a whole that is the result of the constant stream of degrading images and bad press Blacks receive (2000, 174). Hall's argument justifies this obligation not in terms of a duty to uplift but rather as a utilitarian obligation not to harm members of the group.

The theme of community obligation continues with Anita Allen's essay, "Interracial Marriage: Folk Ethics in Contemporary Philosophy." The majority of African Americans, Allen asserts, view marriage between Blacks and whites as a *moral* problem that is best avoided: they argue that community members should "marry Black," even if finding a partner is difficult (2000, 184). Philosophers, Allen believes, have ignored the moral dimensions associated with interracial unions. She argues that membership in the Black community imposes a distinct set of moral obligations, including obligations about partner choice (2000, 182). Allen explores the moral imperatives that, she thinks, ground community disapproval of "out-marriage": respect and care for one's community of origin, family and friends, and oneself. She concludes that interracial intimacy can be defended within the framework outlined by these imperatives.

"New Directions," the final section, explores alternative interpretations of traditional academic philosophical subjects. Yoko Arisaka's "Asian Women: Invisibility, Locations, and Claims of Philosophy" develops a multifaceted

account of how the philosophical writings of Asians have been neglected by Western academic philosophy. She begins by spelling out factors she thinks contribute to Asian invisibility as a cultural phenomenon, including the fragmented nature of the category Asian, the influence of Confucianism on many Asian traditions, and the broader influence of Eurocentrism/Orientalism on Asian identity. She highlights the gendered dimensions of Asian invisibility, arguing that Asian women are twice feminized: once as women, and again as docile and silent Asians (2000, 210–14). This analysis is followed by a discussion of the invisibility of Asians and Asian ideas in Western academic philosophy.

Linda Martín Alcoff's "On Judging Epistemic Credibility: Is Social Identity Relevant?" challenges a key philosophical assumption: that a person's social identity is irrelevant to the assessment of knowledge claims. Epistemic claims, she points out, are commonly based on observer testimony, and the race, gender, or ethnicity of the person testifying commonly affects the credibility of that person's testimony (2000, 335). Alcoff supports this thesis with textual, historical, and personal in-classroom examples. Next, she demonstrates the relevance of social identity to epistemic judgment with an appeal to two theories of perception. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault, she describes perception "not as simple and immediate but as a historically and culturally variable learned practice and as the foundation of consciousness" (2000, 251). If racial and gendered identities help to structure perception, then they will influence the composition of a background against which we come to know the world.

In "Cognitive Science and the Quest for a Theory of Properties," Dasiea Cavers-Huff also is convinced that physical sensory perception is influenced by the social identity of observers: "The interactive nature of perception emphasized in her theory of properties, as Zack herself points out, "seems to be an empirical, as well as a metaphysical, counterpart to Alcoff's claim that perception is influenced by social identity" (2000, 19). Cavers-Huff extends some of the basic principles of cognitive science to metaphysical questions raised by the theory of properties. She begins by explaining the need for a theory of properties, and why she rejects as inadequate traditional realist and nominalist accounts. In their place she outlines the ways in which the cognitive sciences can help to provide an alternative framework for a theory of properties that is consistent with the goals of philosophical naturalism.

Naomi Zack's "Descartes's Realist Awake-Asleep Distinction in Naturalism" completes this fine collection. Zack's interest in René Descartes is mostly a matter of personal intellectual taste. However, much of what she has to say about perception here ties in nicely with previous essays in this section. Here Zack presents an interpretation of Descartes's awake-asleep distinction that draws more on his realism than it does on his arguments for the coherence of awakesness in the Sixth Meditation (1973). Some awake experiences are

incoherent, while some dreaming experiences can be frighteningly coherent (2000, 19). She suggests ways in which Descartes' realist observations are relevant to findings in contemporary neuroscience—in particular the discovery that parts of the brain associated with self-awareness and abstract thought are active even during sleep.

Zack's new anthology is the first of its kind: a unique collection of essays by nonwhite women philosophers who do not work exclusively as feminists or critical race theorists, but whose work is largely unrecognized by mainstream analytic thinkers. We are all indebted to her for bringing these voices together in this fine collection.

#### REFERENCES

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