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On the Status of Women in Philosophy or Great Men, Little Black Dresses, & the Virtues of Keeping One's Feet on the Ground

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New School for Social Research ♦ Department of Philosophy
PSWIP 2nd Annual Colloquium

Great Men, Little Black Dresses, &
The Virtues of Keeping One's Feet on the Ground:
On the Status of Women in Philosophy

Babette Babich, Fordham University

Wednesday, April 8th 2009

2-4 PM



Jean-Baptiste Regnault, *Socrate arrachant Alcibiade du sein de la Volupté* (1791)

New School for Social Research
Machinist Conference Room, Mezzanine
65 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003

On the Status of Women in Philosophy

or

Great Men, Little Black Dresses, & the Virtues of Keeping One's Feet on the Ground

I am a professor of philosophy and I am a woman and no matter how I turn it around in my head and in my professional life, the one affects the other.

Thus I begin with a brief autobiographical reflection.

I was born at the end of the year in which Hazel Barnes' translation of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* first appeared in English and I was going on 12 when the events of '68 galvanized the intellectual worlds of Europe and the United States. In fact, as I am fond of saying, the 'sixties as we think and speak of that generation, really took place in the following decade, that is: in the 'seventies, years I spent in high school, in college and hitchhiking across the country alone and at grievous personal risk, especially because (for whatever reason) I was so out of step with the sexual freedom of the times that I refused to sleep, on principle, with any one of the (too) many drivers who stopped to give me a ride. To me this was both annoying and monotonous (young people have a presumptuousness all their own), in other words, I found it outrageous that in more than 3000 miles (some drivers took one not quite in the direction one wanted to go, and hitchhikers can't be choosers), there was not one of the men (and they were all men) who stopped to pick me up, who did not proposition me. As one of those who gave me a ride helpfully explained, guys just had to assume that if a woman was out hitchhiking she was *really* interested in finding an erotic adventure.

What I was doing was really trying to get back (to New York from San Francisco) and I was hitching, as people did in those days, for the obvious reason that I was young and, with no family to help out, I was without money. As I said, I did not "sleep" with any of them, but I did get shot at, I did have to jump from a moving car, practicing a judo roll that until then I had practiced for no plausible reason. What stayed with me was that I also had to endure the standard array of insults that one could expect during the liberated hey-day of the sexual revolution: when a woman turned a man down *it was because* she

was uptight/frigid/had hang-ups/generic problems, and always, always: was really not that good looking anyway — sort of the precursor theme to the anti-female sentiment of the current runaway hit, in book and movie form: *he's just not that into you*.

Philosophy ought to be an exception to all that. And in 1979, when I went to my first American Philosophy Association meeting in New York City, I was duly impressed by the presidential address by Richard Rorty, whose *Mirror of Nature*¹ had seemed a beacon of pluralist hope in the faculty and grad student reading group I had been part of, reading Rorty's (analytic-pragmatist's) book in the very rigorously continental but not less pluralistically idealistic department at Stony Brook where I took my undergraduate degree in philosophy after switching from biology and taking a full additional year to make up the missing courses for a major.² I had a lot of credits when I graduated.

Beyond the Rorty event which some argue to have changed professional philosophy, paradoxically nailing down (although by no means inventing) the analytic-continental divide that persists to this day, I remember two things from my first professional conference.

Both concerned the status of women in philosophy.

The first thing for anyone to notice was the overwhelming masculinity of the profession. Hotel meeting rooms filled to the gills with almost completely male audiences listening to what seemed universally to be male lecturers delivering dryly analytic and stunningly boring talks. Not much of either has changed: one difference might be that today most of the speakers tend to be grad students, still male, but grad students. At that time — I suppose this makes them literally the good 'old days! — older profs came to talk and to debate and students came to listen; today the older profs stay home because they are not listed on the program and the students talk and listen only to themselves (for even other students stay home unless they too are on the program).

¹ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

² My reasons were two-fold: I found it absurd for the first that the 'science of life' did not ask and expressly excluded the question 'what is life' (this meant that in ca. 1975-78, and likely still today, biologists use Schleiden and Schwann's 19th century schema to define life) and secondly and still more importantly because research in zoology and cell-biology which interested me involved harming animals, systematically and on every level. My exit allowed me to side-step a research assignment involving guillotining female hamsters.

The second experience was more personal. One of my Stony Brook teachers helpfully pointed out various luminaries at the smoker or evening reception, filled with masses of mostly male philosophers who were at the time furiously smoking as described (today, of course there is no smoking, although the reception is still so named, — but this prohibition provides one with the chance to hang out around the hotel entrances and look cool, in both senses of the term).

There were few women among the luminaries to identify in the first place, but there! was Ruth Barcan Marcus! described, and it was this description I took away with me, by my otherwise amicable and jovial teacher as a “battle-axe.”

The first sight (of mostly men listening to mostly men) I was well accustomed to: it characterized my experience at Stony Brook both in the department of biological sciences, where I began, and then in philosophy which as already noted I had turned to in a rage of idealistic (and very theoretically minded) impatience.

Thus it was much rather the specific description of a Yale professor of logic (and I am fond of logic, if I am also fond of pointing out its limitations, so that seeing her struck me with awe) described not in the way other (famous) professors might be but as a “battle-axe,” i.e., in sex-specific terms, which entailed as I instantly grasped that one could casually damn a woman for a character trait that would have been described with other terms (terms inspiring other feelings) had she been male.

To this day I have not ceased to think about it.

Now we all know Bertie Russell’s charming conjugation of what he named (upsetting linguists and grammarians everywhere) “irregular verbs.”

I am firm.

You are obstinate.

He is a pig-headed fool.

Let’s try it with “battle-axe” and pretend that English has, as it does not have, gender differences as they might be applied to, say a well-known male philosopher, let’s take Michael Dummett or you can substitute someone of your own choosing:

I am spirited.

You are pushy
He is overbearing/antagonistic/critical.

But, for Ruth Barcan Marcus, it would be:

I am spirited.
You are pushy.
She is a battle-axe.

I am not asserting that it is a great thing to be overbearing/antagonistic/critical as “he” is but only that it is word-worlds away from being a “battle-axe” as “she” is.³

This characterization framed the beginning of my academic career as I went on to Boston College, ruining my career prospects by neglecting other opportunities (failing to apply, failing to accept acceptances) just because Hans-Georg Gadamer whose *Truth and Method* and *Philosophical Hermeneutics* I was reading at Stony Brook happened to be teaching there in the 80 year old flesh.⁴

I have mentioned Boston College not to tell you the history of my life (I have left out all the good bits) but because it was there that I also met one of the least appealing, that is one of the most annoying and thus and perforce one of the most creative or radical feminist theologians of our time, Mary Daly.

We did not get along but Mary Daly got along with no one and I did not take it personally. I did make an effort to understand the phenomenon. Now Daly, who was always introduced numerically, that is by counting her PhD's (she will do this herself, if you meet her) and noting the provenance of the same (Fribourg and therefore and by implication that serves to square the PhD achievement by emphasizing that it would be gotten in Swiss German with a fair admixture of Latin and no less Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic), has achieved far more fame or notoriety from her classroom restrictions than her books, *The Church and the Second Sex*, *Beyond God the Father*, and

³ There is a wide literature on this topic but recent work has not quite taken up the points of some older efforts: such as the Julia Penelope, *Speaking Freely: Unlearning the Lies of the Fathers* (London: Pergammon, 1990) or Tania Modelski, *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a 'Post-Feminist' Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991). It is often assumed that one is “past” a need for such readings, (I am quite sure we are by now up to the fourth or fifth wave of feminism). But it seems to me, and this is also how I read Plato, that we have hardly managed the first “wave.”

⁴ It did not occur to me to hold his age against him.

indeed here more broadly influential: *Gyn-Ecology*, etc.⁵ And this was as true 29 years ago as it is today. In the philosophy department at BC, colleagues disapproved: how dare she, they asked, ban men from her classes? This is relevant beyond Daly's personality because and at the very same time, in the 1980's, the so-called "chilly" academic "climate" for women was beginning to attract scholarly attention.⁶ Indeed, as a grad student I found myself on a just-so-titled interdisciplinary university committee.

The argument was that women suffered more from taking academic risks than men did. More popularly, and outside of the academy, it was observed that when women spoke, they were not judged as favorably (given the same content to their discourse) as men were.⁷ The first point mattered rather more directly on the university level and thus got rather more air time for a community of educators: women in the classroom found themselves far too aware of and hence needing (or thinking that they needed) to take account of supposed or anticipated or recollected responses from the men around them, such that they felt inhibited to say the least, and, so the studies seemed to suppose, this

⁵ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985 [1973]), *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990 [1978]); *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press 1984), etc. For an alternative example of a mainstream and leading feminist theologian in the Catholic tradition, see the works of Elizabeth Johnson, notably and very linguistically: *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

⁶ This research is ongoing and has yielded sobering results. See R.M. Hall & B. R. Sandler's 1982 "The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women?" in the "Student Climate Issues Packet," available from the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, 1818 R St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. See further, Chilly Collective, eds., *Breaking Anonymity: The Chilly Climate for Women Faculty* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1995). See specifically for philosophically (if also further specified with respect to analytic philosophy and a plea for social skills), Sally Haslanger, "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone)," *Hypatia* 23/2 (2008): 210-223, Virginia Valian, *Why so Slow? The Advancement of Women* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), and see also the Hunter College Gender Equity Project reviews edited by Valian and Vita Rabinowitz for 2006 and 2007, as well as for an overview and listing of recent literature, Joan C. Williams, Tamina Alon, and Stephanie Bornstein, "Beyond the 'Chilly Climate': Eliminating Bias Against Women and Fathers in Academe," *The NEA Higher Education Journal* (Fall 2006): 79-96. And see, because promotion and tenure often depend on student evaluations the range of studies of student gender bias, e.g., J. Miller, & M. Chamberlin, "Women are Teachers, Men are Professors: A Study of Student Perceptions." *Teaching Sociology*, 28 (2000): 283-299.

⁷ Robin Lakoff and Deborah Tannen have developed this to wide acclaim without changing anything in the process. And Tannen does not mean to be a rabble-rouser but to mediate a resolution: see Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue* (New York: Random House, 1999). See too Tannen's original best-seller, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: Harper, 2007).

inhibition appeared to affect female students whether they spoke out in class or not.⁸ The same concern for the possible adverse or positive reactions from members of the opposite sex did not seem to be a factor in male performance — which did not of course mean that men were unaware of the presence of women in the class rooms, just that that presence did not seem to handicap the kinds of questions asked, especially the kind of questions most essential for learning: the questions that can seem foolish and not less, the other important academic kind of question: the question that shows the depth and reach of one's own learning.

Because Stony Book, like most philosophy departments, had offered only a few courses in medieval philosophy which conflicted with the courses in ancient philosophy and philosophy of science that I did choose to take, I took the opportunity to make life hard for myself by filling the gaps in my historical background by taking courses in medieval philosophy and theology. Thus I met the Canadian Thomist philosopher, Bernard Lonergan,⁹ someone rather more formidable in every regard than either Ruth Barcan Marcus or Mary Daly.

Yet what struck me was almost perfect similarity between Lonergan and Daly. Where Daly refused comparisons — a Hegelian as I was at the time, post Heidegger, pre-Nietzsche (whom I hated) — I sought to situate her reading vis-à-vis Hegel. But Daly rather than mentioning Augustine or Tillich or Altizer (all of whom and others Daly cites in her own work) or indeed anyone more recent but that her thought was unique to her and that she should be compared only to herself. I demurred and smiled at that (Hegelians, and I count myself with Daly at the time, are always right). Raising a similar query (as was my Hegelian wont) to Lonergan about his own Hegelian schematism, I got the same insistence in a reply even more indignant than Daly's on the singularity of Lonergan's thought.¹⁰ Coming from a man whose method of teaching theology was to

⁸ As a teacher for some three decades now, I can confirm this, as I am sure others can as well.

⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972). Lonergan was known to me for his masterwork, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957) as well as for his helpfully clear *Verbum*.

¹⁰ Of course there is a Hegelian connection: see Jon Nilson, *Hegel's Phenomenology and Lonergan's Insights A Comparison of Two Ways to Christianity* (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1979) and including Lonergan's own "A Post-Hegelian Philosophy of Religion," an address given at the 1980 meeting of the International Association for the History of Religions in Winnipeg, Canada.

read, out loud (and without taking student questions),¹¹ from his book *Method in Theology*, the pattern could not have been more complete.

Let me explain this just a bit more. When Daly who, and like Lonergan, focused on her own books in her classes, told me in class that there were and despite the Fribourg locale of her two, count'em PhD's, *no* Hegelian influences whatever in her thought she was saying what Lonergan said. In fact, when Lonergan made his declaration in response to my question (duly submitted a week in advance, following the specified rules), the whole class nodded in response, almost including me and I would have gone along as I liked Lonergan personally and admired the sheer scope and systematic achievement of his thought but I was distracted by noting that Lonergan exemplified the "Great Man Syndrome."

Socrates had already explicated the syndrome of the Great Man to the Boule of Athens assembled to hear his self-justification or *Apology*. He was not speaking of himself (though some have argued that he might have been), but of those reputed to have wisdom (such as the poets) and of the limitations of that wisdom.

One tends not to have insight into oneself and one can argue that a great bit of the institutional project of the university is based on the truth of this but not less of the difficulty of reading and understanding: we assign texts to our students to read and then we all get together and talk and think about what we have read, a practice which supposes that we are somehow as "absent-minded" in our responses to what we have read as we are with regard to our own lives as Nietzsche argues in his Preface to the *Genealogy of Morals*. For Nietzsche, speaking of life as immediately as possible, of "real" or lived life, we constantly fall short of "giving our hearts to it — not even our ears! Rather, as one divinely preoccupied and immersed into oneself into whose ear the bell has just boomed with all its strength the twelve beats of noon suddenly starts up and asks himself: 'what really was that which just struck?'" (GM i)

Both Mary Daly and Bernard Lonergan were perfectly enthusiastic victims of the same Great Man Syndrome. The issue for me is and has been that where Bernard

¹¹ Questions were not accepted from the floor but had to be submitted, in writing, under his door, the week prior to class.

Lonergan got away with it and was, this I can assure you, *admired* for it, Mary Daly simply did not.¹²

But that is to say that what is ordinary and understandable, what goes without saying, for a great man of thought, whether in philosophy or theology, is not at all ordinary but intolerable in a woman, whatever the rank of her scholarly contributions.

Lonergan was a great man, with all the strengths and weaknesses that go along with that. Mary Daly's greatness, with its strengths and comparable weakness, absolutely did not go without saying and it continues to be a sore point — one she embraced, calling herself, as she does on her website, a "Positively Revolting Hag," using a model some feminists still follow but I find misguided for simple empirical reasons, trivially ontic, details.

The theory seems to be that if you yourself call yourself impolite and misogynistic names — this conviction presupposes some kind of metonymic homeopathy — those names will cease to be harmful, becoming "good things" in the end. Thus some feminist comics and a good many young women of a certain generation have opted to name themselves "sluts" or "chicks" or (substituting "x" for "ck" is imagined to make a huge difference) "chix," thereby preempting the appellation, sort of the way blacks do (but sort of not). In the same way, some social theorists claim that prostitution is powerful and propose to re-write history in this mode from Athens and Rome to Madame Pompadour and the sex-workers of our day. A similar tactic has been used by feminists to call dishwashing good, or housework a joy, diaper changing great or getting up when the baby cries an exercise in mysticism (and I am not arguing that it is not), etc.

But euphemisms are as euphemisms do. Calling a bad term good (this is after all the patent mechanism of what Nietzsche called the slave revolt in morality) can work, but the idea here is to remain bad (while calling it good) and thus to subvert while preserving the bad term as such. Nietzsche's slavely moral reverse engineering of valuation functioned because those denominated from the "good" or noble point of view as "bad," that is to

¹² Although Daly was able to resist pressure to admit male students into her classes (and offered to tutor them individually), she would ultimately be forced to resign from Boston College, a resignation she resisted until negotiating a final settlement in 2001. After her death on Jan.3, 2010 she drew considerable vitriol — still.

say, the slavely moral, simply elevated their own *morēs*, the morality of their own slaveliness into the designation of goodness (while changing nothing about themselves, *bien entendu*) simply appropriating the signifier itself. The revaluation worked the same way the original valuation worked with the difference that the first was an active valuation born of abundant feeling and abundant power and the second was a reactive valuation. What to call the formerly noble mode of valuation was the only problem. Bad or falling short (*kakos*) couldn't work, hence after taking the name of the formerly good, the *agathoi*, the nobles with all their virtues of abundant feeling and abundant power, were renamed the evil ones.

Thus, we all know Nietzsche's story, those on the side of the bad in the good/bad value schema write themselves into the place of the good and because the move is an inverted one, those who had formerly called themselves good can be called evil. And why not? The slaves were only bad and only fell short from the *noble* perspective of exemplary power. From the perspective of those who fell short, one could easily argue as Nietzsche says, that this valuation is by far the better course of valor: it would not be good for us, from our perspective, as Nietzsche whispers on their behalf, to do things one does not have the strength to do, and those who do such things, are they not, must they not, be evil?

But the explanatory tactic of calling a garbage collector a sanitation engineer leaves the job to be done the same as it ever was. I cannot begin to address prostitution here — indeed: there is enough trouble where only the usual exchanges of capital are involved as in dating, marriage, and the like. But on the matter of housecleaning, I vote (as if voting were an option) for dividing the chores, not at all equally but fairly, assuming as I do that for the sake of reparations men might take the greater share of said chores, given the work that has already been done by women on the domestic side, not collectively and not in history, but in their own lives, since their mothers, as Virginia Wolf rightly reminds us, first gave them all the peace and calm in the world, a calm that could not but permit a certain level of inattention to the details of what Michel de Certeau calls “everyday life.”

Thus if Daly tried, as she did and is still trying, to insist upon her own greatness, her efforts backfired — and given the very nature of the great man culture, by no means so

named by accident, such insistence could not but fail. There are exceptions like Simone de Beauvoir (but only in part) and Hannah Arendt and one can arguably say the same for Luce Irigaray or Judy Butler but I also think it worth noting how quickly the personal becomes relevant to laying claim to such exceptionality.¹³ Thus we complain that de Beauvoir was critical of and even “mean” to women and thus “not nice” and Arendt not enough of this or that, and that Irigaray (like Sarah Kofman), was difficult to get along with (meaning not sufficiently “nice” to her interlocutor) and so on. Nor do we have such a heck of a lot of names.

To put it in other words, far more male scholars with a certain level of achievement can and are regarded as super-scholars, *without* noting details of personal qualities in the process, plus or minus, than female scholars of comparable (how shall we make this comparison? What are the criteria? Who will vote? How will one vote?), and of those fewer female scholars their achievements tend to be restricted to fields like political philosophy, like ethics or indeed and still more feminism or women’s or gender studies, sometimes aesthetics, or else in the philosophy of literature or else as is sometimes said literature and psychoanalysis (a combination that gives the philosophical store away just in the saying of it), sometimes ancient philosophy, and that in spite of the likes of Ruth Barcan Marcus. Or they can be very good little girls indeed like Iris Murdoch or Martha Nussbaum. Failing that, this we know, they are horrid.

Feet on the Ground

I have sought with the above reflections to make the point that the promises of the 1960’s and 1970’s especially those of the women’s movement, have yet to bear significant fruit in the academy. A handy-dandy wiki-check on the net yields the claim that “U.S. Department of Education reports indicate that philosophy is one of the least proportionate, and possibly the least proportionate, fields in the humanities with respect

¹³ Keep in mind Sally Haslanger’s recommendation (cited above) that one change the “climate” for women in philosophy departments by somehow (how?) making one’s male colleague more polite, more socialized, etc., rather than by suggesting that women who have the traits men have be regarded as one regards men, namely, with respect. Recall my comments on being called a “battle-axe.”

to gender,”¹⁴ with a rather dismal addendum reporting that in “2004, the percentage of Ph.D.s in philosophy going to women reached a record high percentage: 33.3%.”¹⁵ In 2007, according to the NCES report, 54% of all doctorates went to women.¹⁶ What is significant is that, despite this numeric advantage at the starting gate, women have continued to be represented by a much smaller proportion in their respective professions, especially including philosophy, a percentage that diminishes as one goes up the academic ladder.

And I am here to tell you that when you get to the top there is no top there, not unless you are deferential and polite, have good social skills, and bat your eyes. Until you age of course. *Then* you will be either a battle-axe or a mindless biddy (even niceness will not help you here) and nothing in-between.

Of course, and I am aware that you are discounting all of this as it applies to you, just because it will be different for *you*. We’ll see.

If the women’s liberation movement sought equality in general, that is: not to be judged on the basis of sex (which includes gender-bias and among other things lookism, ageism, freedom of sexual orientation, and this includes but is not only a right to same-sex- or trans-orientation), and I mean this as a lamentable minimum, more than forty years later we are nowhere near such equality.

At best we have might have equal opportunity for jobs, yet we do not have even that,¹⁷ and at best we might have child-care at the work place and yet we do not have

¹⁴ “Salary, Promotion, and Tenure Status of Minority and Women Faculty in U.S. Colleges and Universities.” National Center for Education Statistics, Statistical Analysis Report, March 2000; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement, Report # NCES 2000–173;1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:93).http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_philosophy. Accessed 12:15 PM, March 21, San Diego.

¹⁵ Same wiki citation. Reference there is to “Hoffer, T.B., V. Welch, Jr., K. Williams, M. Hess, K. Webber, B. Lisek, D. Loew, and I. Guzman-Barron. 2005. *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report 2004*. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center.” The wiki article notes that “The report gives the results of data collected in the Survey of Earned Doctorates, conducted for six federal agencies.”

¹⁶ V. Welch, Jr., 2008. *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Selected Tables 2007*. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center. (The report gives the results of data collected in the Survey of Earned Doctorates, conducted for six federal agencies, NSF, NIH, USED, NEH, USDA, and NASA by NORC.), p. 5.

¹⁷ And I will say this although young people seem surprised at this: we do not have equal pay. I am paid less than junior males teaching at my institution, not in the business or law school but in my own

even that. I say “at best” with reference to the last just because the example of child-care alone exemplifies how far we have not come: the issue of child-care is meant to facilitate women in the work place, including the university and yet it is a non-issue for men. The idealist in me insists on believing that it should be a non-issue for women, the empiricist in me knows just by taking a look that it is not so.

In my own department, in every department I have worked at, as in any department I know of, the majority of my philosophical colleagues are men and when I stop to think about it — and I have to pause to do this, so non-evident is it otherwise — I am and have been for some time, the only female full professor in philosophy at Fordham, not that I have any credit for this achievement in my department and the rank, although I value it, and more crucially, it offers me little, in fact: *no* power by contrast with my colleagues.

And the only point of power is by contrast with one’s colleagues. We are primates and power, to be power, is about respect.

But that could be me. Indeed, as a woman, I have learned to assume that whatever limitations I confront in the profession are probably personal rather than endemic, rather than political. And to say that I think in this fashion, although it is common for women to do so, is fairly remarkable as I began by underscoring that I grew up at the tail edge of a generation that emphasized that the personal was always the political. Indeed, I write about the identification of the political where one does not always see it in academic philosophy in the case of analytic versus continental philosophy.¹⁸

The status of women in philosophy is and remains nugatory or weak, that is to say, most of the time in the most important and everyday ways that matter, the status of women is low or trivialized in the profession (and one of the best ways to trivialize any issue is to deny that there is a problem).

department. And as I teach at a graduate institution it is also relevant that I am rarely offered the chance to teach grad students (though this may have more to do with my department’s desire to remake itself as a Notre Dame level school on the Leiter-scale, which means both more God and more analytic philosophy). Grad students who come to Fordham expecting a continental training are swiftly disillusioned.

¹⁸ See Babich, “On the Analytic-Continental Divide in Philosophy: Nietzsche’s Lying Truth, Heidegger’s Speaking Language, and Philosophy,” in: C. G. Prado, ed., *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003), pp. 63-103.

Thus I have been here arguing, in case you have not noticed this — I have already repeated it once or twice — for *respect*. Not in the way “respect” is ordinarily claimed by women (will you respect me in the morning?) but really, that is for the kind of regard that accrues to power. And although power can be and, your political and social and cultural theorist and even social worker friends will tell you this, *must be claimed*, such claims only work as claims if they succeed. Otherwise not. Hence it is all about what it might take to get such claims respected.

Revolutions? Marching in the streets? Writing book after book? This has been done.

I argue for a different tack (and because I realize that this is a subtle point, let me emphasize that I am being ironic in the spirit of Jonathan Swift’s “Modest Proposal” which was, you will remember this, neither modest nor indeed a proposal, properly speaking).

I argue for the perfectly professorial *right* for women in the academy who happen to be professors to be as professors often are, preoccupied, to act just as they are affected by the things they read and think, and to have the right so to act which means that they would then have the right to be distracted, i.e., to have (*pace* both Tannen and Haslanger) “poor” social skills and not be penalized just as men are not penalized for but indeed are often rewarded and admired for the same.

From the continental side (the side of professional philosophy Haslanger deliberately disregards in her reading), I do agree with much of what Haslanger takes as her point of departure in her “Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy.” I agree with many of her conclusions. Where I disagree is only with the notion that the solution might be “to find ways to discourage antisocial behaviour” in men as this sounds very much like the kind of things Haslanger herself earlier in her article identified as onerous obligations. Moreover it seems to me that women have a hard enough time discouraging anti-social behavior, one on one, in the family and in personal relationships and if they are not particularly good at it on a personal level, how will this work in a department. I am reminded of Lonergan’s argument that women’s special gift was to provide this same socialization, but he presupposed sanctity, as both Haslanger and as I do not.

In a word: I am all for politeness but think the ball is already in the men's court on this one. Just as Lonergan and Tannen and others argue, women already do everything they can to encourage such socialization. My point is empirical: women, holding up whatever bit of the sky they are said to hold, fail and fail miserably at changing men by the subtle means they are said to use.

In addition, I especially challenge Haslanger's concluding suggestion that it be the women in a department who ought to "encourage a sense of belonging."¹⁹ Again such an undertaking is rather up to those who factually, practically, count others out. It is, I agree with Nietzsche here, the men teach other men to discount women especially and above all when it comes to professional respect. If a department needs (still! a decade into the new millennium!) to set out to hire women as a deliberate initiative this is very much because women tend not to be ranked as highly as men in ordinary recruitment efforts to begin with. Why is this?

What is the value of poor social skills? Have they anything to do with rank and status? Neither Haslanger nor I are talking about sociopaths: we are talking about some of our male colleagues, the point of the having of poor social skills within a social environment is that there are distinct rewards for the same. Some social actors are more equal than others: some can be rude and disheveled (and get away with it on both counts), some not. Nor is this limited to academics, nor is this limited withi the academy to philosophy departments. The point here is that some with poor social skills suffer from this deficit while others are rewarded.

By means of my ironically immodest proposal (I suspect that I must make this explicit), I am not making a plea for individual rudeness but *and only* invoking the very cliché, very academic exemplar of the distracted professor. Thus, and I asmit that this is fairly limited as suggestions go, I have been arguing on behalf of the right for women to exemplify the ideal, the icon of the distracted, the absent minded professor.

I am not quite (but almost! let's not forget that we are, exactly as academics here, talking about professors) claiming the right to be curmudgeonly, but merely the right to be a bit out of it at times, to be inattentive at times (it is not my job — here Haslanger and

¹⁹ Haslanger, "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy."

I will, at least initially, agree — to take care of the emotional life of the department), the right sometimes to be a bit brusque — but can we call it shyness (which we might well do, at least from the perspective of the one supposed to be brusque). After all, women learn to take this generous perspective on behalf of men: they learn to discount rudeness, distance, silence, etc., inventing entire Heathcliffian worlds of interiority to explain this, why not do this for women as well?

I have another reason for supposing that the remedy of better socialization for the men in philosophy departments as proposed by Haslanger (and by Tannen in academic contexts more broadly) may not work and that is that women have a wretched track-record, one-on-one, of changing such anti-social or non-supportive behaviour, i.e., in a relationship where both parties supposedly have a mutual investment in the relationship. I refer to the whole dramas that are played out between individuals about talking and not-talking, about taking a nurturing role in the erotic dynamic and economy of love, tends to fail at least for the most part (and Baudrillard and Sartre and de Beauvoir and Lacan are only some of those who propose a differing array of reasons why from the more philosophical side of reflection on such matters), but women are very good (this is the paramount social skill is it not?), at learning not to mind.

But and alongside a required course in logic, I think it would do the profession worlds of good if all PhD students, male and female, were required to take a course in feminism.²⁰ And I would argue for this “requirement” for the simple reason that we are all of us, male and female, born of woman and hence the issue of what is called feminism touches the whole of the human condition.²¹

To go back to wishes, and to return to the ontic and sartorial level, a desideratum for me would be the right to dress just as casually as one’s male colleagues do (shirt, trousers, done) *and* (and this conjunction is the crucial bit) *not to have anything thought*

²⁰ Andrea Nye, *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic* (London: Routledge, 1990).

²¹ This is also the reason I began an essay I was asked to write summarizing continental philosophy for translation into and publication in Chinese by talking about women and logic, and thence to Western reason. Babich [in Chinese], “Continental Philosophy in Britain and America.” Chinese translation by Dezhi Duan. In: Kang Ouyang and Steve Fuller, eds., *The Map of Contemporary British and American Philosophy and Philosophers*. Beijing. People’s Press, 2005. Pp. 22-82, especially, my “Introduction” pp. 22-28 and “Existentialism: Toward an Ethics of Responsibility and a Feminist Erotic Ethic,” pp. 40-44.

of it, pro or con. There is an absurd double standard when it comes to clothing (not unlike the makeup thing and then there is the matter of one's hair — I am not even going to talk about elective surgery, Botox, etc.).

For philosophy in the grand and that means old tradition of Thales is the tradition of distracted philosophers. But to this day, only the men have the socially questionable (*pace* Haslanger as well as Deborah Tannen) but exactly philosophically essential right to be poorly socialized as that also happens to be the very intellectually decisive right to be distracted or even out of it (we recall that Socrates shows symptoms of what would today, at the very least appear to be Asperger's syndrome, mild autism, and a kind of intermittent catatonic, if we trust Plato's description: Socrates is said to be utterly unresponsive, so the *Symposium* begins, so much so that Agathon has to send a slave to get him, the slave calls to him but the slave reports that Socrates makes no reply to his entreaties and Aristodemus remarks that this is habitual with Socrates, that one let him be, and that he will come when he is ready (*Symp.*, 175 a-b). In fact, Socrates (shades of what Haslanger calls "poor socialization") only joins the other guests when the meal is half over and Alcibiades, who comes in later still, closes the dialogue by echoing the same image of Socrates, similarly immobile, even in the midst of battle at Potidaea, remaining frozen in thought in spite of the cold, throughout the night to the morning (220c-d). Socrates unusual character is not at issue here, as he could also drink, without ill-effect, throughout the night only to arise to go off when the others are still asleep, to greet the day. Apart from Socrates' remarkable characteristics, Nietzsche calls him a monstrosity for this reason, this monstrous privilege would also entail the right to be, the observer, as Aristophanes would mock, of higher rather than lower things.

*Thales had the right (he claimed it, he enjoyed it) to **be** the one who falls into the well.*

Women, it seems, have the option of practicality, "not wanting" such a privilege. And one can imagine that women academics will be of two kinds, the Marthas and the Marys, that is the ones who laugh, whether girlishly or sardonically or else they will be the ones who avert their eyes when Saul Kripke or some other male philosopher has his fly undone or shirt/hair/face unkempt, as indeed this can also apply (although he does indeed favor bowties) to Jean-Luc Marion, thereby and neatly covering the philosophic

profession, *both* analytic *and* continental, by pointing to a range of sartorially insouciant or incompetent professors on *either* side and by naming such names I mean to underscore the point that such incompetence harms them not at all. Simon Critchley himself, a t-shirt and jeans guy from way back takes insouciance so far that both undergraduates and journalists can get carried away by his “style” (if he does take a care for his shoes, albeit at levels of discrimination below the impeccable Alexander Nehamas, who wears, no matter what may be said for his other excellences, simply wonderful shoes).

Why does it seem to be pushing things a bit to talk about Simon Critchley’s clothes or Alexander Nehamas’ shoes, not to mention the distracted fall out of Kripke’s couture? My point is that Kripke’s messiness is part of his reputation and that that is part of his reputation for *genius*.

Do we have women philosophers of this kind? Maybe we do, my point will be that we do not think of them in the same way.

This is not a detail limited to the academy. If you pass a man of ordinary middle age wearing a casual shirt and a casual pair of pants you will not even notice the detail of his attire. What do clothes have to do with it? Put a jacket and tie on the guy and he’s dressed for the finest restaurant, and these days, he can even skip the tie. The phenomenon stands out in contrast with what can be observed of a Friday evening in New York (or because this is NY, any day or evening will do). Do a little ad hoc phenomenology using your observations and your own variations, and hence with and on yourself and your judgment as you wander down the street on such evenings (assuming you are not part of the phenomenon yourself as you might well be). Look for the well-dressed young women out for the night, ideally with a date for the evening, sometimes its hard to tell: they do not always walk together but a comparative observation, if you mean to make one, can only be made when one can check out her companion. She may be wearing a little black dress or the equivalent, high heels, stockings, have newly polished nails, newly coiffed hair, and underneath taken more care with her undergarments than even her mother would have recommended in the case of an accident (and then there is that make-up thing). If her companion is her own age (and this will not always be the case), almost invariably he will be dressed as he was the whole day (though the more

fashion-conscious young fellow may have switched the day's t-shirt for a t-shirt for the evening, etc.). If he is an older man, he may well be wearing a suit, an article of "dress clothing," which even including one of the more complicated of the limited styles of knotting a tie, never takes more than ten minutes to don, shoes and all, or he may have the Euro, I-am-still-young look just described. Let me add too what is also likely, for both older and younger male companions, but especially if he is an older man (and this is, alas, an almost quantifiable phenomenon), his attractiveness and height will nearly always be inversely proportional to hers, let us call this the Donald Trump or Woody Allen factor.

What is important is that however casually or formally he is dressed, he will get to have his feet — every last inch of his feet — on the ground.²²

What is important is that however casually or formally he is dressed, he will get to have his feet — every last inch of his feet — on the ground.

Men are not objectified on the street, and this is so despite the commercial success of metrosexual products (which I am all for, you will have noted my enthusiasm for men's haberdashery and in general *anything* to do with male beauty). I have in the past encouraged women in the courses I rarely but occasionally give on feminism to follow up their own readings of Sartre's discussion of phenomenology, in terms of perception and consciousness (but not less with reference to de Beauvoir) by a similar kind of practice or phenomenological free variation on the street, using one's own glance or "look" to do so.

Men are not and women still are. And this holds for academics, maybe, especially for academics. Haslanger points out at the start of her article, though she does not suggest the remedies I do, that the assumption is that that "a successful philosopher should look and act like a (traditional, white) man" but the kicker, for women, is that if one "looks" like a traditional, white, male philosopher one will look, more or less, look unkempt. This is quite apart from whether the traditional look one follows is a t shirt look, or a shirtsleeve look or a, jacket-to-go-to-the-APA-in look. Men not only do not have to dress

²² Men are not objectified on the street, and this is so despite the commercial success of metrosexual products (which I am all for, you will have noted my enthusiasm for *anything* to do with male beauty).

to please a woman's appraising eye but when they do dress up it is solely for the sensibilities of other men. One can argue that women do this to, but anyone who argues in this way is stretching it because, as de Beauvoir is keen to note, women sit in competitive judgment²³ on others and this is not quite the same. Ergo men who have spent a diffident youth ignoring their mother's, sister's, girlfriend's advice on clothing, make an immediate about face when they enter the business world. If the other men seem to think that wing-tips beat cap-toes this year, so it goes. And the suits follow suit.

Sartre's account of intentional consciousness, the subject-objectivating consciousness and its reciprocal subjected modality, describes seeing a man on a park bench in order to reductively note the phenomenon of *being seen* as opposed to having only the transparent sense of himself as the one who has a regard for the one he looks at, that is, as a conscious subject rather being reduced to — and it is essential to note that is a reduction *to* the status of — an object *for* another consciousness.²⁴

Consider what a difference it makes to be a female, not as an subject of desire be it in Hegel's or in Butler's genitive subversion/inversion, but as a Sartrean consciousness as a conscious subject for whom there is a still subjected world of objects that can turn the tables on the observer, in the case of other subjects of consciousness, simply by being there: "*I am seen*,"²⁵ as Sartre has it.

To see this, it can help to experiment by varying, indeed by inverting the example Sartre suggests. As a woman, look at a man. That's it. Such a look can be done at any age and any stage of attractiveness (note the description because it already underscores the point under discussion. And indeed is "attractive," i.e., what the ordinarily male and ordinarily heterosexual consciousness regards as an object of desire, so much the better for the purposes of inversion, if and of course, certain risks may be involved (why so? Because a mouse may look at a king, but only if the king hasn't it got it in for mice.)

²³ See in general the latter portions of Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.

²⁴ As Sartre who was a marvelously consequent Hegelian as much as a Husserlian/Heideggerian, " 'Being-seen-by-the-other' is the *truth* of 'seeing the other.' He is that object in the world which determines an internal flow of the universal, an internal hemorrhage which bleeds in his direction." *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Objectivity*, Hazel Barnes, trans. (New York: Washington Square, 1956), p. 345.

²⁵ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 347.

The experiment is simple, one only need to walk down the street and consider the men passing by. *Just look at them.* For most women raised in an Anglo-European culture (and I am not talking about other cultures for simplicity's sake), just looking at them will *not* be easy, inasmuch as most women are attuned to worry about their looks and are accordingly concerned with how they might be seen rather than with looking at others (an exception, as we have already mentioned de Beauvoir on this point, is made in the case of other women: there one notices every flaw in what one revealing calls her "looks," meaning of course how she looks to men).

Thus one might have a bit to do to check one's own consciousness in the process: at issue is not at all a matter of aesthetic judgment, whether you like/dislike the men in question as this so often and very quickly can become a desire to look for a look, as Sartre would speak of it, that is, a response to your own appearance/presence/being and the possibilities of the same in the process. This is the routine matter of the suspension of judgment or bracketing that Sartre speaks of, that Husserl speaks of (if Husserl's instantiations are rarely as quotidian as Sartre's). Instead (and without smiling),²⁶ simply look over the men you pass on the street: look them up and down: check them out without inviting them to do the same. Look at them, in other words, as they might look at you. You can practice looking at men after they pass you (men often look at women this way, since the whole point of the action is appraisal not invitation) and then try looking at them head on as they pass.²⁷

"At Best They are Afraid of Her": Jelinek on the Status of Women

What this means, as Elfriede Jelinek, author of the novel *Women as Lovers*,²⁸ has explained, is a matter of the status of women as such and in society and that means as compared with men. What is at stake as Jelinek explains it reflects the dynamics of "a

²⁶ A note for phenomenologists and other stripes of experimental, hands-on, eyes-open philosophers: *Be careful!* Like the drivers I mentioned at the start in speaking of my cross-country misadventures, some men assume that a look is a sexual invitation – so limit such a phenomenological experiment to wide-open spaces, in broad daylight, on Fifth Avenue, say, in midtown, or around Lincoln Center, etc.

²⁷ When students of mine tried this, they reported that the reactions of men were the most striking. In some cases, men even lost their footing, stumbling on the sidewalk, so off-putting was the experience of being looked at in this way.

²⁸ Jelinek, *Woman As Lovers*, Martin Chalmers (London: Serpent's Tale, 1995)

Hegelian relationship between master and slave.”²⁹ With respect to desire, that is to say of desiring, and hence of desirability, Jelinek makes the inherently provocative observation that “as long as men are able to increase their sexual value through work, fame, or wealth, while women are only powerful through their body, beauty and youth, nothing will change.”³⁰ Answering her surprised — and surprisingly indignant — female interviewer’s protests in response that surely this contention could not be said to hold for famous women such as, perhaps, Jelinek herself, Jelinek rather than taking the flattering compliment, merely replied that a “woman who becomes famous through her work reduces her erotic value. A woman is permitted to chat or to babble but speaking in public is still the greatest transgression.”³¹

This confused her interviewer, who immediately discounted it. But Jelinek is not the only one to have made such observations.

Indeed, one can read Anne Carson’s later poems after her lover/husband rejected her, published after the extraordinary success of Carson’s *Eros the Bittersweet*³² for an extraordinarily honest and not less painful articulation of the same phenomenon to which Jelinek refers. As Carson writes about this herself:

Loyal to nothing
my husband. So why did I love him from early girlhood to late middle age
and the divorce decree came in the mail?
Beauty. No great secret. Not
ashamed to say I loved him for his beauty.
As I would again
if he came near. Beauty convinces. You know beauty makes sex
possible.
Beauty makes sex sex.
You if anyone grasp this – hhush, let’s pass.³³

²⁹ Deborah Solomon interview with Elfriede Jelinek, “A Gloom of Her Own,” *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 2004.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Anne Carson, *Eros, the Bittersweet* (Dalkey Archive Press, 1998). Originally published in 1986.

³³ In Carson, *The Beauty of the Husband* (New York: Random House, 2000).

Carson and the nature and range of eros and desire would bring us around again to a previous theme and turn it into another altogether. For Carson, like a good philologist, attentive to the letter of the letter, cuts into assumptions by assuming them.

In her interview with Jelinek, Solomon exemplifies whole chapters of de Beauvoir's reflections on women's 'complicity' both with the brittle tone of her questions but also with the title she was inspired to give her interview with Jelinek "A Gloom of Her Own." Pressed by Solomon's journalistic contraction, Jelinek answers only with a repetition: "A woman's artistic output makes her monstrous to men if she does not know how to make herself small at the same time and present herself as a commodity. At best, people are afraid of her."³⁴

Speaking of Hannah: Heraclitus and Heidegger, Agamben and Love

Elsewhere and in addition to eros, I have also written about love in and as philosophy.³⁵ That is: love for Heraclitus and for Empedocles inasmuch as love and inclination (*Mögen* for Hölderlin) are — as everyone of us knows and this absorbs us in our reading of Carson and Jelinek but also de Beauvoir — vulnerable and impermanent dispositions: harmonies that must be held, sustained or tuned in being, on the pain of vanishing so completely that we find ourselves wondering if it ever was, if anything ever was there to begin with.

Beyond the excitement associated with an attunement of any kind, this same loving vulnerability is the key to philosophy. As Heidegger has it: "Once, however, in the beginning of Western thinking, the essence of language flashed in the light of Being — when once Heraclitus thought the Λόγος as his guiding word, thus to think in this word the Being of beings. But the lightning vanished abruptly. No one preserved its streak of light or the intimacy of what it illuminates."³⁶

³⁴ Elfriede Jelinek, *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 2004.

³⁵ Babich, *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*, Preface and Chapter One. I draw upon this text for what follows.

³⁶ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. D.F. Krell and F. Capuzzi (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 78. Text originally in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954).

As the mark of loss, this is and as Carson has also underlined it for us, *can only be* an erotic figure. We begin, with Heidegger, by talking about philosophy, the love of wisdom. Just as quickly, we find ourselves talking about longing, betrayed in the same movement, we are talking about the erotic and this is never quite, if it is also never far from, the discourse of love.

Numerous commentators have written on Heidegger and love, if they share the tendency of forgetting (or never noticing) that others too have written on the same topic.³⁷ In the guise of what Agamben calls a lover's "complaint" about Heidegger and love, Agamben draws attention to Heidegger's seeming failure to mention love (just as Heidegger fails, fatally for Sartre one might remember, to talk about apricot cocktails,³⁸ or for Irigaray, to mention air).³⁹ As Agamben reminds us, given Heidegger's familiarity with Max Scheler's views on the preeminence of love (and hate) and considering (this is Agamben's trump card) the romantic involvement of Heidegger and Arendt, attested in a backwards look from a letter Heidegger wrote to Arendt later in life, and which we do indeed know all too much about, Agamben asks us to note that the very "writing of *Being and Time*" took "place under the sign of love."⁴⁰

And so too *Being and Nothingness* but this does not catch Agamben's attention, perhaps because and for whatever reason there is less *frisson* in the case of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre than in the case of Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. Why so? Perhaps because of the age difference between Heidegger and Arendt? Perhaps

³⁷ This is rather like those who write on Nietzsche's Zarathustra and begin by remarking on how few scholars write on Zarathustra. Steiner does not refer to Irigaray in his *Lessons of the Masters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). But one should see Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

³⁸ "We ordered the speciality of the house, apricot cocktails. Aron said, pointing to his glass: 'You see, my dear fellow, if you were a phenomenologist, you could talk about this cocktail glass and make philosophy out of it.' Sartre turned pale with emotion at this. Here was just the thing he had been longing to achieve for years — to describe objects just as he saw and touched them, and extract philosophy from the process." From: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life: The Autobiography of Simone de Beauvoir* (New York: Marlowe & Co; 1992), p. 112.

³⁹ Agamben qualifies the claim with reference to Heidegger's invocation of the love terminology of Pascal and Augustine (as most other such claims might also be qualified — this is the same Heidegger who begins by talking about nothing only to discover Being or, else beginning with Being, to advance to thinking about nothing).

⁴⁰ Giorgio Agamben, "The Passion of Facticity: Heidegger and the Problem of Love" in Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 185. Agamben cites Karl Jaspers, *Notizen zu Heidegger* (Munich: Piper, 1978), p. 34.

and just because Sartre and de Beauvoir were students together such that their love had the distinction of enduring precisely in the midst of dissolution/distraction/mortality? Like ordinary married people?

Thus George Steiner, without to be sure referring to Agamben, sets Heidegger in the place of Peter Abelard in the lover's square installing Hannah Arendt in the place of Heloise.⁴¹ As a set construct, Steiner's assemblage reminds us of the old claim that philosophy begins in gossip (another way to translate the famous first line of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*). And because we are here talking about gossip, or love affairs in Heidegger's case, Heidegger, it should be underscored, instigates the high erotic move of evasion. This — *not being that into you*, because he can't be, because he can't commit, is already married, and his wife needs him or is sick or would be at the thought, or because he already has a *necessary* rather than a contingent love. This, not being that into you, is the master's move that like Socrates, so Lacan will tell us (here following Nietzsche),⁴² that assures his erotic allure. Heidegger outdoes even Nietzsche for sheer provocation, declaring that "the essence of eros is nothing erotic."⁴³

If Luce Irigaray's reading retains the elevated tone of a Derrida by comparison — and despite what must have been the distractions of her Lacanian formation — George Steiner's reading by gentle or literary contrast raises the stakes less of scandal than redemptive romantic entanglement: these are what Steiner calls the "lessons of the masters," happily, or unhappily: (he took the title of his book reluctantly, so he assures us). These "lessons" are offered beyond the cheap, ontic reality of sexual harassment — Steiner has no patience with the language and imputations of unwanted attentions (how could there be anything but mutuality here, albeit on a clearly unequal level, he seems to ask?), nor does he have any time to consider the possibility of less than spiritual, less than gentle consequences of such mismatched seduction (again, on both sides).

For the masters never want to be masters at this level: this is the chance to return to the Shropshire of their remembered, or unremembered, fulfilled or unfulfilled youth.

⁴¹ See Babich, *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*, Chapter One, for further references.

⁴² See for a discussion and references, Babich, "On the Order of the Real: Nietzsche and Lacan," in: David Pettigrew and François Raffoul, eds., *Disseminating Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 48-63.

⁴³ I have this on hearsay, but it also accords with Heidegger's scholastic and apt understanding of essence.

And to be sure, for such literal minded thinkers of the old school, sexual harassment would be and is in fact a woefully inadequate term for the intellectual betrayal, the frustrated hope and wronged innocence that teachers of a past generation can never imagine. Never, never ever.

Teaching, to paraphrase Nietzsche, is so erotic. But for whom? Whose eros if not the master's erotic ideal: for we are not talking about a student playground, youth on youth.

Nietzsche himself was in this regard no outsider but stood full in the company of the masters — professors, teachers.

He did not, so he assured Lou Salomé in a disarmingly innocent protestation of his “intentions,” merely want someone to act as his secretary and practical assistant in household affairs, he wanted a — she could be his — pupil. And Arendt was Heidegger's student.

Why do we persist in calling Lou Salomé by her first name, just where we do not refer to Nietzsche as Friedrich (forget Fritz or Freddy) or why Arendt is almost always emphatically *Hannah* Arendt, and Heidegger only Martin in the context of a love story? The paradigmatic love story for academic masters, as Steiner recalls this account, is that of Héloïse (did she even have a last name?) and one Peter Abelard, an unusually gifted troubadour and thus quite successful with all the women who heard him, as Héloïse would remind him in one of her later letters. Perhaps we are all of us vicarious masters, in Steiner's phrase, and thus we, male or female, assume the right of speaking on a first name basis whenever we speak of women.⁴⁴

If Nietzsche was correct to upbraid philosophers (he almost never included himself in this company, despite an academic ambition to secure an appointment as a philosopher that endured from the beginning to the end of his career) criticizing the philosophers for what he diagnosed as their “lack of love,”⁴⁵ a point addressing less the philosophers'

⁴⁴ We even extend this intimacy to women we are not supposed to like, like Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth, like Heidegger's wife, Elfriede, or Wagner's wife, Cosima or his daughter Winifried.

⁴⁵ “Ach dieser Mangel an Liebe in diesen Philosophen, die immer nur an die Ausgewählten denken und nicht so viel Glauben zu ihrer Weisheit haben. Es muss die Weisheit wie die Sonne für jedermann scheine: und ein blasser Stahl selbst in die niedrigste Seele hinabtauchen können” (KSA 7, 720-721; cf. Nietzsche's discussion of the sun in GS § 337). See Alphonso Lingis's sustained invocation of the power of this

innocence or their deficiencies in matters erotic (as sex-manual mad or just gender scholars have assumed) than the philosophers' lack of critical concern with the "question" of love.

Worse than Augustine's question concerning the nature of time, it turns out that everyone knows — asked or unasked — what love is, and everyone knows that love is desirable (this is Plato's ironic edge, in the conveyed words of two hired lovers, both male and female: paid for the pleasure of their beautiful speeches, because, so Nietzsche reminds us, the ancients regarded the art of speaking well as the most alluring of all (cf. GS §80). Thus Plato gives us Diotima's remembered teaching in the *Symposium*, and details the triangular constellation of Lysias's written seducer's speech in the *Phaedrus*). Much more, as Nietzsche goes on to deepen his challenge to this presumption, everyone knows that a god of love — and here Nietzsche turns ugly — must correspond to a higher divinity than any other god before him. Exactly how this divine evolution might advance (GS §141), and even pondering what a god of love might in fact know above love (BGE §142), Nietzsche argues that our convictions, already knowing as we do, might be unfounded (GS §307). Just as Descartes critiques the common conviction concerning "good sense," whereby "every one thinks himself so abundantly provided with it"⁴⁶ that one also assumes oneself entitled to forego the acquisition of rules for the direction of thought, so too, we tend to forget that we need to learn how to love things in general (GS §334), be they musical, artistic, or corporeal, whether we love words (philology) or wisdom (philosophy). The same will be true for the impossible challenge of loving one another.

Despite Agamben's assertions, and as Irigaray has noticed (and Steiner follows her, without adverting to her lead if only because Steiner, like other Great Men, only reads himself or at least writes as if this were true), Heidegger himself does indeed inquire about love in his discussion of philosophy, even, if only indirectly in *Being and Time*. Later, and inspired by Nietzsche, Heidegger will observe that in the philosopher's love of

metaphor of the sun, in Lingis's case, as a transformation of passions. Lingis, "Black Stars: The Pedigree of the Evaluators." *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 15/22 (1991): 67-91.

⁴⁶ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part I.

the *sophon* — that is, for Heidegger: being in Being — the disposition of love turns to desire from the start.

Love in the process, this is the legacy of formal indication, obscures the character of this solicitude. Failing the exigent reticence of love, the philosopher becomes a scholar, aspiring to wisdom. Worse (in what Heidegger called cybernetics and would we today call information-/cognitive science), the philosopher can become a man of science, dedicated to the calculation of practical knowledge, a calculation of security that is for Heidegger (as it would also have been for Nietzsche) no different from the calculation of the man of faith.⁴⁷

Postscript

This is the text of a talk I was originally invited to give at the request of the grad students at the New School in New York on April 8th, 2009. In fact, those who invited me did not expect that I would talk about the status of women in philosophy – the “Status of Women in Philosophy” was simply the title of their lecture series, thereby justifying inviting women to speak, for it turns out that some specific justification seems to be needed and women are a conspicuous minority in my own and other department speaker programs.

But taking the name of the series as the theme, I wrote a paper.

I thus sought to publish the essay and had some interest from journals but none interested in the entirety of the text. This led to a great deal of frustration on my part. At the end I was asked by Hypatia (after a truly arduous peer review process, I speak of the protocol involved with Hypatia’s online review process) to boil it down to a “Musing” and the editors wrote to say that this was in order to invite other, one assumes more acceptably feminist, voices to “contribute” (one hopes they will bypass said editorial gauntlet). In the interim of Hypatia’s seemingly infinite process, I was offered the opportunity to publish a similarly truncated but different version as a ‘Comment’ in

⁴⁷ Thus Heidegger writes that “the collapse of thinking into the sciences and into faith is the baneful destiny of Being.” *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 40. Originally published as “Der Spruch des Anaximander” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950).

Radical Philosophy as “Hey Can’t You Smile? (not my title, my last line, but editor’s do this and is their right to do so: this what distinguishes a journal).

Allison Wylie, editor of Hypatia was unhappy with seeing a second version of the paper in Radical Philosophy (although not a journal she or other readers of Hypatia read regularly, as she noted, coming across it only by accident) and I withdrew the article from Hypatia.

The text here is offered in its entirety for the purposes of further research.