

**Abstracts for concurrent sessions of
Agency and Embodiment
CSWIP 2005**

Babbitt, Susan

“Collective Memory and Knowledge; ‘Covering reality with Flowers’”

We sometimes remember something that has been forgotten when our lives change direction and what was forgotten becomes relevant as it was not before. We may know that certain things happened in the past, but since such stories play no role in how we understand ourselves now, they become meaningless. I will consider the implications of this insight for how we understand *collective memory*. Histories of marginalized groups are often known, but play no role in national identities or agendas. I will suggest that without such a role, such histories are not really understood. They are not part of the collective memory. Collective memory is not the same as knowledge of the past; it is awareness of the significance of the past for what we aim to become.

Bauer, Stephanie

“Embodied Autonomy: Can traditional models of autonomy suffice?”

Feminist philosophers have been increasingly interested in whether or not traditional models of personal autonomy with respect to one's thoughts and desires also apply to one's body. Traditionally, personal autonomy involves living one's life according to a reflectively accepted and integrated set of motivations... Embodiment has only recently figured significantly in philosopher's accounts of individual autonomy.... It is only with Catriona Mackenzie's essay, "On Bodily Autonomy", however, that a philosopher has attempted to provide a definition of autonomy with respect to the body. In this paper, I examine Mackenzie's definition of "bodily autonomy" as an individual's ability to reflectively identify with her bodily perspective. Mackenzie uses the term "bodily perspective" to denote the body as it has 'meaning' for the individual, both consciously and not. It is with respect to this perspective that the individual can be autonomous or alienated, according to Mackenzie.... I argue that Mackenzie is too quick to insert an individual's relationship with her body into the traditional equation for achieving personal autonomy with respect to one's motivations for action.

Bell, Jennifer

“Autonomous Agency and Ethical Conflict in the Health Care Setting: A Need for a ‘Rapprochement’”

Autonomy has traditionally been viewed as perpetuating a view of the self as atomistic, individualistic and abstract. Selves are viewed wholly independent of the social network and this independence is privileged under the law by asserting 'rights based discourse and upholding it in terms of classical legal doctrine, such as contract, property or tort law. In my presentation I deviate from this traditional understanding of the self and instead argue in favour of a more socially constituted self and corresponding understanding of autonomy. After elaborating on this self and corresponding understanding of autonomy, I take this notion into the health care setting. My project is to determine how we may best support patient autonomy in the health care setting and I pay special attention to how we may support patients in times of ethical conflict. Towards this end I develop a model of 'rapprochement' to guide the practical implementation of support.

Brennan, Samantha

“Against Plug and Play Ethics: Feminist Moral Philosophy and the Line between the Right and the Good”

Do feminist moral theories require a distinctive theory of value? Contemporary moral theories are often characterized in terms of the relative priority they give to the right and the good. So, for example, we describe consequentialist moral theories as those theories which define the right solely in terms of the good and deontological moral theories as those which give priority to the right over the good. In this paper I ask how feminist moral theorists fit into this schema. So let me begin by giving a general account of the way the relationship between the right and the good is described in the mainstream moral philosophy and then move on to say how it seems to me that feminist moral philosophy fits into the picture. If I'm right one of the strengths of feminist moral philosophy will turn out to be resisting drawing a sharp line between the right and the good, but a failure to recognize that the distinction exists at all will also turn out to be one of its weaknesses.

Burrow, Sylvia

“Ju-Jitsu Suffragettes: A Model of Feminist Autonomy”

A row of uniformed British police officers cower before a solitary “Ju-Jitsu Suffragette” in a cartoon featured in a July 1910 edition of Punch magazine. She is depicted as having tossed to the side her gloves, hat, and her placard, on it emblazoned “Votes for Women.” The caption reads, “What we may expect when our women all become Ju-Jitsu Suffragettes.” What caused such a stir? Earlier in the month, photographs of “Mrs. Garrud, a well-known Suffragette” appeared in the London Sketch in which she is throwing, ju-jitsu style, a uniformed British police officer to the ground. Mrs. Garrud's power creates a mockery. What does it say about her autonomy? Feminist discussions of agency and autonomy have flourished in recent years, but the literature largely overlooks the relationship between one's capacity for physical self-defence and the development of positive self-regarding emotions. I hope to show that the capacity of self-defence fosters self-trust and self-esteem, both of which increase one's power to effect oneself in the world because of increased autonomy competency. Ju-jitsu suffragettes thus seem to serve well as a feminist model for developing autonomy skills.

Carastathis, Anna

“The Fantasy of Solidarity: Beauvoir and the Constitution of a Feminist Political Subjectivity”

Simone de Beauvoir conceived the idea of an existential “situation” as a way of “concretely defin[ing] human groups [*ensembles*] without making them subservient to an intemporal fatality” (*PL*, 191). The concept of “situation” allows one to negotiate the problem of theorizing what is common to a social group – in particular, the structural relations of oppression and privilege which constitute social groups – without essentializing its members in politically problematic ways. Beauvoir considered the production of a theory of women's situation to be crucial to the project of their emancipation. Arguably, she viewed this descriptive task as the condition for the possibility of the emergence of a collective agency which could articulate and enact a transformative politics. In this paper, I discuss how the model of political subjectivity on which Beauvoir predicates a feminist politics emerges in *The Second Sex*. In particular, I am interested in the role of analogies and disanalogies between racism and misogyny and between black liberation and women's liberation in Beauvoir's production of a collective political subjectivity.

Code, Lorraine

"They Treated Him Well": Fact, Fiction, and the Politics of Knowledge

In this paper I consider how fact and fiction can collaboratively inform an epistemological project of deriving principles for understanding difference; for responding well to alterity. Specifically, I examine impediments to knowing how it is to live racial inequality from positions of white privilege. Starting from Nadine Gordimer's novel, "July's People", written when South African apartheid was moving violently toward its dissolution; yet where polite concepts/ideals integral to liberal enlightenment discourse, such as emancipation, equality, and welfare, were under strain, I examine the phrase "they treated him well" for how it permits people to ignore the full extent of an Otherness that is allegedly erased in the provisions they make for the comfort and welfare of those thus treated. The language is neutral, well-intentioned, self-confessedly liberal, and oblivious to the barriers and exclusions it sustains.

Davies, Jacqueline

"Ultrasound and the Face of the Other: Visualising the politics with which relational ethics is pregnant"

According to Emmanuel Levinas, ethics precedes both ontology and politics. The ethical response generated through encounter with the other occurs prior to any conception of self as moral subject, prior to any conception of moral laws, or any conception of others as moral patients. It, naturally, also precedes any conception of rights – my rights or the other's rights – never mind any scheme for the just distribution and defence of all the material and political goods to which we might have a right. As Claire Elise Katz notes, Levinas's radical prioritizing of ethics is intended as a corrective to the dominant virility of the ancient Greek fathers of philosophy ...

For a feminist, reading Levinas now it is hard not to hear echoes of Carol Gilligan's efforts to amplify a "different" ethical voice whose silencing she believed to be fundamentally connected to the silencing of women ... Moreover, in addition to their bases of affinity, these approaches also share points of dissonance, notably their unsatisfying responses to political questions about conflict between the ethical demands which hold care-givers hostage.

A subtle but significant difference between Levinas and care-feminism, however, lies in the gender of the figures that populate the stories they provide about the genesis of the ethical. Alarm bells have been rung about the figuration of the feminine in Levinas by feminists from de Beauvoir, who protests his construction of woman as Other, to Irigaray who decries the neglect of specifically sexual difference, charging that for Levinas it is collapsed into the idea difference as such. On this account the feminine Other is important not as an ethical subject but as the metaphorical mother of ethics -- the matrix out of which ethical subjectivity is born.

I propose that important contributions to the phenomenology of moral experience can be made by attending to cases in which a female figure is both a moral matrix and the subject born of it. One important site for this is in the experience of pregnant embodiment. Levinasian resources can be brought to bear through attention to the politics of the discourse and practices surrounding new technology for visualizing the face of the foetus – namely ultrasound.

Duthie, Katherine

"Agency and Elective Caesarean Sections: Using feminist Critiques of Cosmetic Surgery as a jumping off point"

This line of enquiry was inspired by a brief comment in the bioethics literature which suggested that elective caesarean sections (ECSs) be considered as morally similar cosmetic surgeries (CS). Ostensibly, both surgeries might be selected by fully informed, healthy individuals who autonomously decide to incur any risk for benefits that are unrelated to physiological ailments or maladies. I take this comparison a step further.

This paper examines how a feminist commentary on agency in CS might inform a feminist analysis of issues presented by ECSs. Setting aside considerations of the moral status of the foetus, I explore the extent to which a major difference between CS and ECSs – namely, the lack of attempt to improve physical appearance in the latter – restricts the applicability of a feminist analysis of CS to the ECS issue. I then take initial steps to develop a framework for a feminist analysis of ECSs by drawing parallels between features of ECS and CS, and applying feminist critiques of CS to issues presented in ECS.

Epp, Jennifer, Richard Wassersug and Tucker Lieberman
“Gender Identity after Castration and its Implications for Feminism”

Over 40,000 males are chemically or surgically castrated each year in North America to slow the progression of prostate cancer. Castration causes loss of penile function and body hair, shrinkage of genitalia, breast growth, and the development of characteristically female patterns of body fat distribution and neuro-endocrine processing resulting in increased emotionality. Recent studies suggest that these changes leave patients in a liminal gender space where they no longer feel physically or emotionally ‘like men’, but do not experience themselves as women either. However despite these substantive challenges to their masculinity, most patients try to maintain their masculine identity and present publicly as males. (Gray, 2004; Chapple and Ziebland, 2002; Navon and Morag, 2004; Gray et al., submitted)

For many of these patients, being unable to identify as a member of either gender is psychologically and socially traumatic. (Navon and Morag, 2003) Their gender liminality reflects the norms operating in most western cultures, which instruct us to be either a man or woman and penalize those who fail to do so. In particular, patients are ashamed of what they experience as their asexuality especially because “in a bipolarized gender role culture [asexuality] is regarded as highly deviant, even more deviant than homosexuality.” (Cheng, 1999) As a feminist philosopher, female-to-male transsexual, and castrated cancer patient, we are concerned both with the practical and theoretical questions raised by castration. Given the above difficulties, how should castrated patients understand themselves? Because our identities are intimately connected to our ability to interact in the world, the answer to this question is crucial.

We propose that castrated patients explore the option of accepting the gender identity of ‘eunuch.’ The label ‘eunuch’ is biologically and technically correct for castrated men. Unfortunately, due in part to the historical practice of involuntary castration and slavery, it is today a pejorative metaphor. (cf. S. Freud in Taylor, 2002; Greer, 1971) To flesh out our suggestion we intend, first, to identify those characteristics of historical eunuchs that we wish to accept and reject. We will then explore, from a feminist perspective, the pros and cons of redeveloping this identity as it influences both personal—i.e., the patients’ sense of self—and political agendas. Next we identify some obstacles that might prevent patients from identifying as eunuchs. Finally, we address three objections to our proposal. In so doing, we aim to: 1) offer a resource to patients struggling with their gender identity; and 2) contribute to feminist and queer theory by providing another challenge to an oppressive heteronormative gender binary.

Failler, Angela
“Melancholic Agency: From Loss to Meaning”

Contemporary feminist and cultural theorists Judith Butler (1997), Anne Anlin Cheng (2000), and Frances Restuccia (2000) are engaged with a tradition of theorizing that takes as its starting point Freud’s (1917) psychoanalytic conceptualization of melancholy, and extends it, metaphorically, into an analysis of social and political phenomena. By using the concept of melancholy to think about the cyclical dynamics of heterosexism, racism, and domestic abuse (respectively), they aim to take into account the role that psychic loss plays in the formation of

subjectivity. Their work insists that subjectivity cannot be understood without recognizing the dynamics of loss and identification that, as individuals, mediate our attachments to social categories and experiences of identity. ... Specifically, these theorists render melancholy relevant in terms of the ways in which formations of gender, race, and domestic violence are produced through the repeated exclusion, disavowal, and exploitive consumption of certain marginalized subjects.

What is at stake for these theorists is the problem of how agency can be made possible for individuals whose identifications and/or attachments have been deemed unworthy and are thus forcibly “lost” or disavowed by economies of racism, homophobia, or domestic abuse. Cheng asks, “What can political agency mean for someone operating in a symbolic, cultural economy that has already preassigned them as a deficit?” (7) Similarly, Butler wonders, how can gays and lesbians have agency (if agency includes moving from suffering injury to speaking out against that injury) in a culture that demands the loss of homosexual attachments yet denies their grievability? And similarly again, Restuccia asks, how do battered women possibly find ways out of suffering toward healing when cultural practices of female subjection work to entrench women’s vulnerability and perpetuate male violence against women? In the face of these dilemmas, Cheng, Butler, and Restuccia each look for ways in which melancholic subjectivity might be interpreted not only as “injury” but also as a “pre-condition” for agency and healing.

Fielding, Helen

“Art, Body, Techne”

Proliferating advances in biotechnology reveal the privileging of cultural construction over nature that could be understood as a tribute to human creativity and accomplishment through the expansion of human possibilities; yet, these advances also obscure the intrinsic creativity, potentiality and limits of the body. Drawing upon a phenomenological methodology, I seek to rethink the relation of technology to the body through the mediation of art as techne, since art relies on technique yet must be corporeally encountered. In this paper, drawing upon a phenomenological analysis of a specific artwork, as well as the phenomenological insights into embodiment provided by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Luce Irigaray, I shall consider how art, as a creative and an embodied mode of thinking, is capable of instituting new ways of being. In particular I am interested in how perception can open us to difference. At the same time, I confront the paradoxes of the phenomenological methodology itself. For one, phenomenology involves description of what is there, and in this description, also brings into being. At the same time, the phenomenal body sediments structures that allow it to perceive the world, and hence integrating an inherently conservative structure that is less open to change.

Gowri, Aditi

“Corporate Agents and Loss of Bodily Control”

Should a corporation ever be held responsible for acts of its employees that it did not intend or command? One way to address this question is by considering the corporation as an agent that can formulate goals, act on intentions, and respond to reasoned criticism. A theory of corporate agency has been formulated by scholars such as French (1979, 1995), Gowri (1997), Richardson (2001), Schudt (2000) and Tollefsen (2002). They suggest that corporations and some other kinds of structured institutions can sometimes be understood as agents whose “mind” is constituted by internal decision making rules and routines. Although it is not clear that corporate actors are embodied agents in the conventional sense, they do seem to make use of a “body” constituted by some space-time segment of the bodies (and perhaps also the minds) of human persons. Employees are paid to act as representatives of the corporation and to carry out its intentions; so an employee’s violation of corporate policy or directives can be understood

as corporate loss of control over its body. If the question of corporate responsibility for unwanted employee acts is reformulated as a query about responsibility of the corporate mind for acts of its body, then it might be illuminated through the analysis of situations where a traditional (human) agent's limbs betray the intentions of her mind.

Grasswick, Heidi

“Feminist Epistemologies, Knowing Agents, and the Question of Communities”

Knowledge has been an important subject for feminist theorists. Not only do feminists make knowledge claims themselves (for example, that sexism is present in our society, and sexism needs to be eliminated), but they are also very concerned with how knowledge claims and practices are implicated in women's lives. Institutionalized knowledge has often been used against women—consider the role that claims about women's lack of rationality and intelligence have played in denying women educational opportunities, or consider how the lack of cognitive authority attributed to women has made it difficult to make their experiences of domestic violence heard and taken seriously. Feminist epistemologists seek to provide analyses of knowledge that account for this role of gender in the construction and dissemination of knowledge, while maintaining a normative sense of “knowledge” that will still allow them to distinguish responsible from irresponsible claims, such as is necessary when feminists want to legitimize non-sexist over sexist claims.

In this paper I compare the motivating forces behind those feminist projects inclined to offer a communal analysis, and those that resist taking the community as the center of analysis, focusing instead on the relationship between individuals and their communities. In particular, I examine the contrast between feminist philosophies of science (suggesting that they are more likely to adopt a view of communities as knowers) and those projects of feminist epistemology not specifically focused on science (suggesting that they are more likely to resist a communal account). In the latter part of the paper, I argue that *feminist* philosophies of science, need to address a broad range of questions, some which will require analyses that look to the relationship between individual epistemic agents and their communities.

Hassanein, Shereen

“Shades of Representationalism”

All nativist positions require some form of representationalism in their accounts of language and language acquisition. Taking for granted the cultural independence of representation, however, leaves some questions unanswered. By investigating problems in representation and misrepresentation (such as those proposed by Dretske), it becomes clear that representation is not strictly biological. Furthermore, by concerning ourselves with more complicated cases of misrepresentation in language, we see how an account of language independent of culture is senseless. Millikan's etiological account of biological functions also serves to show us how much we need to consider when investigating purposiveness in a biological structure. Finally, using Autism as an example of nontraditional language acquisition, it becomes obvious that cultural aspects affect language use down to its core elements. Finally, in investigating the cultural aspects of language, we see how linguistic elements effect how we view ourselves as agents.

Heyes, Cressida

“Beauty and Identity: Extreme Makeover and Normalization”

My main goal in this paper is to understand how cosmetic surgery is increasingly defined by a discourse of identity transformation that is not reducible to talk of beauty. Of course many cosmetic surgery recipients want to become more beautiful—but, plausibly, many also want to become the person on the outside they feel they are inside. Claims in this vein use a language

of individuality, authenticity and the need for recognition that, I suggest, are the contemporary face of what Foucault calls normalization. It would be a mistake for feminists to assume, as some do, that “normalization” is solely or even primarily a matter of conforming bodies to norms defined by ideals of beauty. Instead, cosmetic surgery is presented as a way of working on the self that helps people to overcome past trauma, improves relationships, achieves normalcy, sows the seeds of a better character, and enables individuals to achieve their full potential. I use the recent TV series “Extreme Makeover” as a case study, showing how the aesthetic effects of cosmetic surgery are presented through the prism of becoming a better person and changing one’s life.

Houle, Karen

“Justice and Future Generations: A Feminist Account”

In this paper, I stage an encounter between two phenomena. First, a sharp rise in attention paid to questions of ‘justice for future generations’ in environmental (science, economics, ethics) discourses. The main challenge is judge, and then to argue for, the proper degree of sacrifice required now ... in order to serve the interests (and rights) of the humans-to-come. Second, some demographic facts: the ‘elderly’, a group of presently-existing-humans closely monitored for their resource consumption (esp Medicare).... Is a population which is disproportionately female... The so-called *duty-do-die* if it is a duty to stop living; is the injunction to stop spending now the resources better spent on future persons. Specifically it is an injunction against the old to stop consuming now what they need to continue to live, in order that others may be able to consume, when they do live. But this ‘duty’ or pressure, is really an injunction directed at old women. The duty to not spend now (to arrive at a just savings principle for future persons) is thus, really an injunction to sacrifice the wants and needs of a *particular sub-portion* of the human population (elderly, female) for the needs of a quite different human population (youth, equally female and male). Overall notes that, between the two possible positions which could be held as to the value of living a long life -- prolongevity and apologism -- the most vigorously argued position in popular media and in academic circles is ‘against the prolongation of human life’ (15-16). In other words, the pressure on the elderly is real; is not countered by an equal and opposite pressure in the form of a *duty to live*...

As a concerned environmentalist, and a social justice thinker/activist, I work in this paper to articulate an intergenerational savings principle which does not make light work of the dues to which present generations, including aging generations, and especially women, are entitled to. Working from John Rawls’ arguments for an intergenerational savings principle as among the principles of justice which contractors would arrive at, behind the veil of justice, and the assumptions that Rawls makes about acquisitiveness, distribution and mechanisms for distributions of resources within families (of whom, the contractors are said to represent), I rework those assumptions and arguments in light of the unhappy facts sketched above.

Johnston, Rebekah

“The Case of Female Masculinity: Feminist Critiques of Queer Agency”

One aspect of queer theory is the claim that since everyone is inextricably located within particular historical and social structures and since there is no subject position outside of these structures, disruption of these structures must take place from inside; often in the form of transgression. One way in which this disruption is thought practically to manifest itself is by exercising political agency through transgressive embodiment. Some feminist scholars, however, have voiced concerns about the ways in which such projects fail to take into account the hierarchy of gender, i.e. that masculinity is systematically treated as more valuable than femininity.

In her recent book, *Unpacking Queer Politics*, Sheila Jeffreys criticizes Judith Halberstam’s

claim that female masculinity is a subject position that is politically disruptive. While Halberstam takes the position that practicing female masculinity is an instance of exercising political agency through embodiment, Jeffreys argues that there are two serious problems with this claim: it is problematically individualistic and it is problematically dependent. I argue that although Jeffreys' critique is unsuccessful, the particular way in which it fails is instructive in terms of articulating the sort of agency that transgressive embodiment yields.

Koggel, Christine

“Globalization: Assessing Inequalities and Enhancing Agency”

In general terms, globalization represents increased cross border flow of things such as technology, information, trade, and people. An overarching feature of globalization is that we live in a context of *economic* globalization, one in which markets, multinational corporations, international financial institutions, and world trade organizations shape the issues and circumscribe its effects on people. While the hope is that economic globalization can create opportunities and reduce poverty, statistics show that there are persistently high levels of poverty and ever-growing inequalities in wealth within and across borders...

While it is too quick to say that economic globalization has *caused* poverty or increased the gap between the rich and the poor, it is fair to say that multinational corporations, international financial institutions and trade organizations, and economically powerful countries do not have the reduction of inequalities in wealth as their main focus or motivation. Larger and more open markets have provided jobs for people where little opportunity existed before, jobs that have in turn increased levels of income and national wealth, improved access to education and healthcare, and challenged gender norms and practices in many parts of the world. But economic globalization has also resulted in the exploitation of workers in Third World countries and the destruction of families and communities when corporations move to countries with even lower wage labor. Moreover, Third World countries without environmental protection legislation can have their resources depleted by those same corporations motivated by profit maximization. While economic globalization may have positive effects, these sorts of negative effects have magnified relationships of power between rich and poor countries and in ways that shape its effects on people and the power they have to change oppressive conditions.

These brief descriptions show that we have to consider globalization piece by piece. They also suggest the importance of a contextual analysis, one that examines the ways in which features of economic globalization shape relations of power and reduce people's agency to effect change. I argue that the importance of attending to detail and context is central to the work of feminist relational theory and postcolonial feminism, both of which pay attention to relationships of power and oppression and to the people in them.

By focusing on relationships and on the impact of oppressive ones on people in them a relational approach uncovers the governing norms and practices, ones that sustain inequalities of various sorts for those who are powerless and disadvantaged. A focus on relationships also reveals the relevance of the perspectives of those adversely affected for learning about various kinds of inequalities and the structures that sustain them.

Kretz, Lisa

”Challenging Boundaries: Reframing Responsibility, Agency, and Personhood through Reframing the Self”

The notion of what it is to be a self, and what it is to be responsible agent in the world, are intimately connected. To be a responsible agent in the world requires, minimally, the precondition of being a self. How wide the net of self can be cast, or should be cast, is up for debate. This issue is central when it comes to issues of claiming and accepting responsibility. Pending on the view of the self we advocate, the potential landscape for responsibility changes.

I will first use feminist arguments to critique a western historical notion of the self and the oversimplified version of responsibility it is used to under-gird. I begin to chart multiple ways selfhood can be opened up such that our options for both agency and responsibility are complicated, and made to more adequately reflect the many selves we potentially are.

Kukla, Rebecca

“Penetrating the Pregnant Body in Early Obstetrical Textbooks”

Modern obstetrical practices are rightly troubling to feminists in all sorts of ways. A popular feminist narrative blames these troubles on the ‘medicalization’ of pregnancy and birth; according to this story, the advent of professional, male-dominated obstetrics as a medical specialty co-opted women’s control over reproduction, displacing a caring and woman-centered midwifery tradition and transforming maternal bodies into passive objects and mere fetal containers. In this paper I argue that this narrative is a gross oversimplification of a philosophically and historically rich chapter in the history of maternity and medicine. I will give a reading of some treatises and textbooks in obstetrics that were written just before, during and after the birth of modern obstetrics as a professional medical specialty – that is, from the early seventeenth through the late eighteenth centuries. I will read these works as philosophical and cultural documents, attending to their representational and rhetorical strategies, and I will show slides that track these changing representational conventions. My aim is to uncover for feminists a more complicated and equivocal story of this birth. In particular, I will argue that the ‘medicalization’ of pregnancy did not simply deny or undercut the agency of pregnant women. Rather, it accorded them a new, complex form of agency with respect to the control over the care of their bodies and over the outcomes of their pregnancies. This new agency was deeply double-edged, with both oppressive and liberating dimensions. I will end by briefly revisiting the famous debate over ‘man-midwives’ that raged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, arguing that feminists should not be so quick to take the side of those who critiqued male-dominated medical obstetrics.

Lanoix, Monique

“Shifting Paradigms: Notes on the Citizen Reconfigured”

In this paper, I argue that feminist theorists, in pointing to an ideal of a relational individual, are on the right track to a re-conceptualization of the citizen. The relational individual points to an understanding of the citizen as someone who is 'somewhat embodied', in the sense that this citizen may give birth, she may have to take care of another, and she needs others. However, I claim that we need to go further and reconfigure the citizen as someone who has a lifespan and does not occupy political society as an active member only. I make the case for a lifespan approach to citizenship as it avoids the dichotomy of citizen as breadwinner or citizen as carer. This notion of 'lifespan citizenship' more closely identifies the citizen with an embodied reality, where issues of productive and reproductive labour as well as being the one cared for are part of her life and integrated into her status as member of society. Thus the citizen is not just a person with ideals of the good life but one who has an embodied reality. This concept of the citizen is one of an embodied individual who is born, ages, and occupies different corporeal locations within society.

Lee, Emily

“Body Movement as the Site for Agency”

The possibility of agency looms as a problem for philosophical systems that seriously ponders the situatedness of human beings, that recognize the social cultural world influences and forms us, and that human beings live as Beings-in-the-world. Upon acknowledging our formative association with the setting of our development, it is difficult to conceive the possibility that

human beings can act at all. Yet much of this work that illustrates the relation between human beings and the social cultural world derives from thinkers concerned with the living conditions of certain members of the state. These analyses attempt to clarify that the situations of certain members of society are not the result of bad decisions and equally bad psychological proclivities of isolated individuals, but the result of structural institutional conditions. They forward the understanding of the formative influences of the world precisely for change. Social structural change and the encouragement of exercising agency are precisely the aims of elucidating our social constructedness. Yet precisely agency has become difficult to conceive with the understanding of being in the world.

This paper explores the possibility of agency within our always situated state. For this project I draw upon the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, particularly in his analysis of body movement. Within Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that subjectivity is the body and his work on body movement lies the possibility of reconceiving agency.

Levey, Ann

"A Modest Feminist Defense of Contractarianism"

Feminist philosophers (e.g. Jaggar, Held) have criticized traditional contract theory. The foci of the critiques are the assumption that the parties to the contract are mutually disinterested and the assumption that the parties to the contract are ideal agents abstracted from their particular social and historical locations and from the particular interests generated by those locations. These assumptions are criticized on two broad grounds. First, they ignore the affective ties and facts about relationships that characterize real lives. The effect of this is to privilege a structure of justice that takes affective ties to be a matter of individual choice and so outside the constraints of justice. Second, in pretending to locate moral agents as anybody located nowhere, they in fact instantiate a particular male ideal of a moral agent located in a gendered society. While I agree with much of the feminist critique, I believe the answer is to modify contractarianism rather than to jettison it. In particular, contract theory can allow us to model a conception of moral agency that is not held hostage by existing affective and social relationships.

Mackenzie, Catriona

"Self-Constitution, Narrative Integration and Embodiment"

Marya Schechtman argues that philosophical discussions of personal identity conflate two distinct questions, the question of reidentification, or what makes someone the same person over time, and the question of characterization, or which psychological features of the person are central to, or truly expressive of, her. As a result of this conflation, she contends, neither bodily continuity nor psychological continuity theories are able to provide an account of personal identity that can explain our intuitions regarding the practical importance of identity in matters relating to survival, self-interested concern, moral responsibility and compensation. Schechtman argues that the focus of these practical concerns is characterization not reidentification and that while questions of reidentification are best answered by identifying persons with their bodies, questions of characterization are best answered by identifying persons with their autobiographical narratives.

I agree with Schechtman that our practical interest in identity is best articulated in terms of a theory of narrative self-constitution, rather than in terms of a metaphysical theory of personal identity. However I argue that our practical interest in the body extends well beyond questions of reidentification and includes questions of characterization. The extended narrative subject, I contend, is an embodied subject. If narrative is an organising principle for understanding one's history and future possibilities, as Schechtman argues, then developing an integrated and ongoing narrative of one's embodied subjectivity is central to the activity of self-constitution. This

narrative is not separate from but interwoven with a person's self-conception, so that her experiences and conceptions of her body are central to the interpretive context which makes intelligible her actions, emotions, beliefs, desires, values and character traits. The centrality of embodiment to a person's self-narrative is most evident when physical trauma, disability, or bodily processes such as pregnancy or ageing bring about significant bodily changes that disrupt this narrative. However, such cases simply bring to the fore what is usually taken for granted as one of the background conditions for the ongoing unity and intelligibility of our lives.

Maclaren, Kym

“Emotional Metamorphoses: The Role of Others in Becoming-Other”

Emotions are often thought to be internal, subjective, and irrational states of mind. In this paper, drawing primarily on the thoughts of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, I argue (a) that emotions ought to be understood not as internal phenomena, but as occurring in our expressive, bodily engagements with others and the world, (b) that emotions are dynamic experiences that can draw us into new, more comprehensive ways of perceiving (as well as into increasingly compulsive and self-isolating behaviours), and (c) that the dynamic unfolding of emotional experiences is driven by the multiple ways in which we are implicated in others' embodied expressions.

McLeod, Carolyn

“Demanding Referrals in the Wake of Conscientious Objection to Abortion”

In a recent study, CARAL (the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League) cited the refusal of physicians who conscientiously object to abortion to refer patients to an abortion provider as a barrier to women's access to abortion in Canada. Currently, the preferred accommodation in law and in medical practice for conscientious objection among physicians is to allow the objector to refuse to accede to the patient's request so long as the objector refers the patient to providers who perform the relevant service. Yet if this arrangement were truly an accommodation for conscience, the referral requirement could not conflict with the protection of conscience, which it often does. Typically, if a person opposes a particular practice on grounds of conscience, then she will strongly oppose the known facilitation of that practice. But a medical referral is one way to facilitate, knowingly, a medical practice. It follows that requiring referrals in the wake of conscientious objection could effectively eliminate protection for many conscientious objectors in medicine. In my view, we should demand the referrals regardless, for abortions and for relevantly similar practices. But I have come to realize how difficult it is to defend this view! So instead of defending it in this paper, I explain why the issue of referral for abortion in the wake of conscientious objection is terribly complex. My hope is that by sorting through the complexity, I will be better able to devise a persuasive argument in favour of referral.

Meyers, Diana Tietjens

“Psychocorporeal Practical Intelligence and Adaptive Agency”

A recent rereading of Orlando, Virginia Woolf's nonpareil novel about personal identity, gendered embodiment, and social spaces got me thinking about identity crises – what they are, why people are vulnerable to them, and how one can mend one's sense of self. Orlando, the protagonist of Woolf's fiction, lives in several historical periods, sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman. S/he undergoes the most radical corporeal transformations imaginable. S/he is often surprised and affronted by gender-biased customs, norms, and social arenas. Yet, Orlando never suffers an identity crisis. Although nothing is more common in contemporary U.S. society than identity crises and anguished struggles to reassess who one is, I take my cue from Orlando and ask two principal questions. How must selfhood be construed given that people's identities are subject to deadly threats? And how must selfhood be

construed given that some people skirt identity crises and renegotiate the terms of their personal identity without losing their equilibrium -- their sense of self?

To address these questions, I defend an account of psychocorporeal identity and agency. In the spirit of Merleau-Ponty's account of the intentional arc and J. J. Gibson's account of the relation between corporeity and affordances, I argue that the human body cannot be fully theorized as a tool of the rational mind or as a product of social molding. Human bodies encode individualized meanings, memories, and values, and they function intelligently – for the most part, without awaiting directions from the rational mind. Moreover, it is the human body's capacity to “grasp” possibilities in its environs and to capitalize on those possibilities in action that enables some people to avert impending identity crises. When people intellectualize the problem of how to cope with a wrenching inner conflict, a staggeringly different social situation, or a major personal reversal, they are more likely to suffer an identity crisis. In my view, placing your trust in the intelligence and adaptability of your psychocorporeal identity and agency is your best insurance against the unassimilable self-loss that constitutes an identity crisis.

Mullin, Amy

“Disembodiment and Agency”

The ability to play a role in having those social interactions we prefer, and thus avoiding those we don't want, is central to people's agency understood in the general sense of having a life that has meaning to oneself. This is a form of agency important to children as well, and it involves a set of skills, or competencies, which are crucial to their agency as social actors. These competencies need to be nurtured, encouraged and taught. Most typically it is women, especially mothers, childcare workers, and primary school teachers, who do the work involved in encouraging children to develop social skills and providing them opportunities to exercise agency with respect to social relationships. Early relationships are both essential for the development and maintenance of autonomy and are an arena in which agency is importantly exercised.

Okruhlik, Kathleen

“Disembodiment and Agency”

The first part of this essay reviews the very striking difference between feminist philosophers and feminist historians in their assessments of Descartes. The second part explores the much-ballyhooed “death of the Cartesian subject”. And in part three, the focus is on the need to preserve a role for agency (as well as embodiment) in feminist epistemology and philosophy of science.

Panasiuk, Elizabeth

“Attentiveness and Responsiveness in the Politics of Care: Empathy and the Mechanisms of Attention and Action”

In recent years theorists have attempted to transform care ethics from a personal morality for intimates to a political theory of care. Joan Tronto (1993; 1995; 1996) laid the groundwork for a political theory of care, and subsequent attempts have been made to apply it to social policy (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, 2003), international relations (Robinson, 1999) or, more generally, to offer tentative insights on how care might be institutionalized (Engster, 2004; Robinson, 1999). However, none of these theorists offer robust suggestions of how a political culture of care might be cultivated-- that is, why citizens might be motivated to care—which seems to be crucial to the project of politicizing care. My paper will argue that the care literature has not given due credit to the mobilizing force of empathy. Instead, empathy ought to be conceptualized as the starting *mechanism* for a politics of care because (1) it draws our attention to what is most salient and once our attention is drawn, (2) its motivational force also makes it more likely that

we will take action.

Rigo, Darlene

“The Non-Sartrean Significance of Beauvoir’s Biological Facts”

Feminist critics often regard *The Second Sex* as fraught with theoretical inconsistencies. In her book, *Yielding Gender: Feminism, Deconstruction and the History of Philosophy*, Penelope Deutscher provides an overview of some of the principal critical responses to the text, and asks whether “any feminist philosopher of the twentieth century is better known for her contradictory arguments than Simone de Beauvoir” (1997:169). As might be expected, no other candidate comes immediately to mind. “*Les Données de la biologie*” chapter which opens “Facts and Myths”, Book I of *The Second Sex*, is perhaps the most controversial source for such critical assessments. There, in what feminists from Mary Evans, Judith Okely, Céline Léon, Julie K. Ward and Kristana Arp have identified as biologically essentialist terms, Beauvoir describes femaleness as inferior to maleness, yet proceeds to deny the validity of such a comparative appraisal, as well as the underlying essentialism which supports it. In what may seem to be a puzzling opposition, Beauvoir describes aspects of female embodiment which she deems “facts”, as hindering women’s transcendence, yet suggests that “in truth” such biological “givens” do not in themselves carry their “significance”, and therefore pose no necessary obstacle to women’s freedom (SS34/DS73).

Besides those who conclude that the text is fundamentally incoherent on the basis of this orienting idea about biological facts and their significance, most feminists have attempted to explain its implications by reference to an uneasy alliance with Sartre’s philosophy, and even those who do not fault or aim to resolve the seeming contradictions involved, still look to *Being and Nothingness* for insight into Beauvoir’s meaning. However, I will argue in this paper that rather than giving rise to irreconcilable or inadvertent contradictions, Beauvoir’s treatment of biology is dependent on a particular phenomenological understanding of facts which is not commonplace nor beholden to Sartre’s early theory. In phenomenological terms, facts are not brute givens, absolute or free-standing, nor synonymous with truth as conventionally conceived. They are commonly held views associated with the findings of de facto sciences which it is the business of phenomenology to question and situate within a broader horizon of human significance and truth.

Thachuk, Angela

”Agency and (Dis)Embodied Madness: Ethical Considerations on Theorizing Mental Illness”

Traditionally, one of two dominant approaches has been pursued in attempts to theorize the complex relationship between women and madness: the material or discursive, focusing on either the biomedical or social aspects of mental illness respectively. While each of these frameworks contributes to our understanding, when taken as mutually exclusive tactics each proves to be reductionistic. The material-discursive framework of Janet Stoppard (2000) offers an in-between approach that accommodates the value of each perspective. In highlighting the benefits of this model, my goal is to emphasize and potentially resolve some of the ethical tensions created between our theorizing mental illness and the lived experience of it. In doing so, this paper will focus specifically on women’s acceptance of a clinical diagnosis of mental illness, and the often difficult choice to pursue a psycho-pharmaceutical approach to treatment.

Thalos, Mariam

“Towards a Control Account of Agency”

It is commonly assumed that the best route to characterizing agency—the best route to marking the difference between actions and mere happenstances in a life—is by focusing upon quite clear cases where an agent voluntarily produces an action, though first voluntarily producing an act of willing it. I will refer to these as “at-will” behaviors or performances. Focusing upon at-will behaviors proves to be a precarious strategy. For doing so clearly assumes that at-will performances are paradigm, or at least sufficiently characteristic of those behaviors that deserve labeling actions (as contrasted with mere happenstances in a life). But in fact they are not. One clear difference between those things we should like to categorize events, and at-will performances, is that the latter have an arbitrary, spontaneous or capricious quality—and are not sufficiently grounded in the soil of one’s deepest needs and aspirations. Whereas we should hope that the bulk of the actions in a life deserve such a characterization. And the strategy of focusing on at-will behavior is thus open to the retort that very little in a life deserves calling an action, because very little in a life is performed “at-will”.

A true science of action must be open to the possibility of actions not bearing the characteristic of being transparent to their perpetrator as to why they were performed...

I shall be arguing for a three-pronged approach to a science of action: (1) that we pay attention to key features of action that make the Davidsonian approach untenable, and which suggest we select as focal examples not at-will behaviors, but habituated behaviors; (2) that our account should be informed by findings in cognitive science about the nature of cognitive processing; (3) that we pay attention to developmental issues concerning the maturation of control over behavior. Attention to such matters will lead naturally to an account that is extendable to collective agency.

Wendling, Karen

“Mapping Feminisms”

Alison Jaggar’s 1977 paper “Political Philosophies of Women’s Liberation” has had an enormous impact on feminist philosophy. In it, she laid out three feminist positions, which she called Liberal Feminism, Classical Marxist Feminism and Radical Feminism, plus two developing positions, Lesbian Separatism and Socialist Feminism. Jaggar’s categories have become a standard way of characterizing feminist positions, although they have been added to by her and by others. They now include many forms of feminism in addition to the initial five: existentialist feminism, post-modern feminism, Black and multicultural feminism and psychoanalytic feminism, among others.

In this paper, I propose a modification of Jaggar’s categories that I think more accurately reflects the multiplication of feminist theories and philosophies. I suggest that we keep the labels but find a new metaphor to reflect the fact that the same person often holds several compatible positions. I’m going to suggest that we think of the various perspectives within feminism – liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, lesbian, multicultural, existentialist, post-modern, and so on – as positions on three different maps of feminism: a political spectrum map, a “differences” map, and an academic map. Each map covers the whole of feminism. That is, each maps the same territory, the range of feminist positions, but divides them up according to different criteria. Since this is a short paper, I’ll quickly go over the “differences” and academic maps, and spend most of my time on the political spectrum map.