Explorations in form: Revisioning philosophic methodology

Lisa Gerber

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EXPLORATIONS IN FORM:
REVISIONING PHILOSOPHIC METHODOLOGY

by

Lisa Gerber
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Explorations in Form: Revisioning Philosphic Methodology

Director: Deborah Slicer

How can one find her voice in a tradition-soaked discipline such as Philosophy? This study explores the possibility of changing the structure of philosophical deliberation in order to reflect a shift in ethical, epistemological, and ontological orientation.

Each paper within this study is a methodological and contextual exploration. Paper #1, Dethroning the Porn Queen, looks at the legal liberal tradition and revisions the pornography debate within a feminist context. Paper #2, By Whose Authority? A Look at the Interconnections Between Philosophy, Science, and Agribusiness, critiques an oppressive conception of science and philosophy while offering a relational paradigm. Paper #3, Reflection, Dialogue, Insight: Exploring Racism, uses a contrived dialogue to make connections between racism and sexism, and to explore racism in the feminist movement.
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The following papers are experiments. I am searching for a way to do philosophy that is true to my voice and is reflective of the subject matter. This process is much like sculpting a three dimensional piece. In sculpture, there is a recognition that the form of the piece is an integral part of the content of the work - indeed it is part of the subject matter itself.

I have been trained in traditional philosophy. Philosophical theory is a method of objective argumentation. One states a thesis, then provides reasons or justifications for this thesis. Finally, the writer restates this thesis in the form of a conclusion. The conclusion must logically follow from the premises. Most importantly, the argument must be written in objective language; language that is emotionless, bodiless, and detached. Objective in that there is a radical separation between the knower and known. Theory must be set apart from the writer, distanced, because subjectivity contaminates Truth.

I have found that this form of traditional theory was unable to hold my views or the content of which I spoke. I felt that in using it, I was distorting my vision, objectifying my words, and confining the subject matter. I felt that I was locked in a dark hallway when what I really wanted to do was walk outside. There are many ways
in which I think that traditional theory distorts experience. In its attention to logic and rationality, it negates feelings as a valid route to knowledge. Perhaps there is a space to discuss feelings as an epistemological tool, but there is no space to feel, or to listen to feelings. In traditional theory's objectivity, it ignores the fact that subjective human beings are writing this theory. In its search for Truth, it ignores the complexities of truth. In its search for unified theory, it subjugates contextual lives to principles.

The above are generalized critiques which I see now after writing these papers. When I had tried to write them in a traditional method, I felt like I was walking into walls. My writing did not feel fresh, honest, or alive. I felt that the subject matter demanded something different. Women and nature can no longer be objectified. They are subjects in themselves and part of dynamic relationships. The things that harm women and nature, such as pornography, agribusiness, and racism, can not be spoken of in objective terms. Indeed it is objectivity which allowed the harm to be obscured in the first place. As a writer, I feel that the subject matter demands that I honor my experience, emotions and intuitions as a route to knowledge. Subjectivity, then, nurtures understanding.

I began the process of experimentation so that I could write more honestly and completely. I am only beginning
to explore, and I do not want to imply that I have found perfect or even adequate forms. Some things work and others fail miserably. Yet, even in the areas which fail, I still learn something. I remember the first time I sculpted. I thought that I had this perfect idea on the subject of allocating rights. As I began to construct the piece, I found that my idea was lacking. By constructing the form and seeing how the idea looked in a different light, I enriched my vision. This is how I feel about these papers.

In the writing of this introduction, I have been focusing on myself and why I felt the need to do philosophy differently. I do not see this experimentation as only benefiting myself and my personal voice. As I said before, I think that different forms need to be found in order to accommodate areas which philosophers are only beginning to explore. This would include such areas as environmental ethics, feminist theory, race theory, applied ethics and ecofeminism. I say this because I think the form should reflect a shift in epistemological, ethical, and ontological orientation.

In addition, I see a recognition of different voices and methods as a way of allowing people and philosophy to blossom. Maria Lugones, whose writings I work with in the last paper, says that white privileged women can and should make a space for women of color to articulate
their experience. I see the process of experimenting in method as a way of creating space, of shaking up philosophy in a way that will allow for the hearing of different voices and different ways of seeing meaning. There are many diverse people in this world, and a variety of ways of doing philosophy. I think we should honor this and learn to listen to different voices, in form and content.
DE-THRONING THE PORN QUEEN

or

RE-VISITING THE LEGAL LIBERAL TRADITION
AND TRYING TO MEND IT WITH OUR WORDS...
SPEAKING ON PORNOGRAPHY

"Great, so you've found the 'right answer. But, now you're alienated from yourself and the entire universe."
Sue Bradford to JPN  20 May 1991
INTRODUCTION

As a word of warning, or perhaps a word in anticipation, I tell you that in exposing the thoughts of the legal liberals, I will be using the patriarchal voice. This voice was brought to my attention by Susan Griffin in her brilliant work Women and Nature. The Roaring Inside Her. I borrow her portrayal of this voice. Griffin, who researched this voice says that it, "rarely uses a personal pronoun, never speaks of 'I' or 'we' and almost always implies that it has found absolute truth, or at least has the authority to do so." Griffin writes that we can recognize this voice by the use of such phrases as 'it is decided that' or 'the discovery was made'.

Following her, I too will attempt to reconstruct this voice. To me, this is the voice of the legal liberals. In her writing of the book, Griffin says: "this paternal voice became quite clear to me, and I was afraid of it." After reading her work this voice jumps out at me from many texts including the work of the legal liberals; I am also afraid of this voice. Yet, I seek to open it up for all to see as I introduce the thought of the legal liberals.

Later, in analyzing David A.J. Richard's segment "Obscenity", I have placed my own thoughts in parenthesis. His words are so insulting and disempowering that I could not let them stand alone. I talk back.
THE POLITICS OF REASON

It is asked whether there is a shared objective point of view. If there is common ground on which to form a political arrangement. It is asked if there is a framework which can be the basis of law.

It is said that there is no connection between law and morality. That our political arrangements are merely practical. That humans are simply enlightened egoists and, "that the rational pursuit of self-preservation is what leads men to form commonwealths or states...[that there are] rules a reasonable being would observe in pursuing his own advantage."^3

It is said that there is a universal moral law. That an individual has certain basic rights, such as the right to freedom, property, and self-preservation. That men freely enter into legal contracts to protect their moral rights. That law allows men to pursue their own liberty, "and not be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man."^4

It is said that there is an overlapping consensus. This consensus is found to be the foundation for a political arrangement. It is decided that this consensus is really a moral consensus. That this consensus is a narrow, but a shared political morality.

In fact, it is said that this consensus is based on a political conception of justice which is itself moral; "it is a moral conception worked out for a specific kind of subject, namely, for political, social and economic institutions."^5 It is decided that this overlapping consensus is an institutional morality.

It is decided that this institutional morality is a closed system. That it does not appeal to any wider conception of morality; that, "it looks initially to the basic [political] structure and tries to elaborate a reasonable conception for that structure alone."^6

It is found that this overlapping consensus is influential. From shared values, a legal system is born.
It is decided that political men have all agreed to disagree. It is shown that law flows from the institutional morality. It is said that there is a Rule of Law.

It is said that there is a Rule of Law in which the institutional morality is contained, and that both are objective and knowable. It is said that in the Rule of Law, there is a system of rules. That there are primary and secondary rules.

It is decided that principles are included in the Rule of Law. That Law can no longer be seen in terms of primary and secondary rules. It is found that principles can be logically articulated from the institutional morality. That principles reflect the rights of individuals, and thus must be consistent and coherent. That these principles must be carefully weighed and measured when taking into account the rights of parties.

It is decided that when a judge hears a case, he must decide which basic rights are applicable. He must discover which objective, knowable principle the right is based on in the Rule of Law.

It is said that the Rule of Law is logical and knowable. It is said that certain distinctions can and should be made in deciding cases. That it is the judge's duty, "to discover what the rights of parties are, not to invent new rights."

It is found that there is a distinction between policy and principle. Policy is concerned with the goals of the community, and consequently is not founded in the Rule of Law. Principles are concerned with individual or group rights. It is decided that decisions should be made on principle.

It is found that rights are built into the political institutional morality; that these rights are real and can be weighed and measured. It is agreed that a distinction must be made between concrete and abstract rights.

An abstract right has no weight. It, "is a general political aim of which does not indicate how that general
aim is to be weighed or compromised in particular circumstances against other political aims. In contrast, it is found that concrete rights have weight. They have weight, "against other political aims on particular occasions." Rights, it is said, can also be further divided into institutional, legal, and background rights.

It is said that in deciding cases, authorities have two obligations. One is to discover the rights of parties: institutional, not background, concrete not abstract. Two is to discover the single and only right answer.

Hercules, with his power to overcome evil in a gradual and ordered way, is found to be the best role model for decision makers. Hercules understands the overlapping consensus, both historically and morally. He accepts that the rights theses hold in the community. Thus, he sees, "that judicial decisions must be taken to be justified by arguments of principle rather than arguments of policy."

Again, it is said that the institutional morality is knowable. Thus, Hercules understanding this, finds justification for principles. It is these principles which are weighed and balanced. In this way, it is said, Hercules can resolve conflicts. He can discover the rights of parties.

* * *

HOW THE LEGAL LIBERAL SPEAKS HIS MIND ABOUT THE BODY

The legal liberals, in their patriarchal voice, present the Rule of Law as being coherent and ordered. The system is tight and closed, and thus conflicts can be resolved by appealing to rationality. This attitude serves to silence people. Experience from the context of people's lives is not taken into account in the Rule of Law; value
is placed on discovering principles, without taking into consideration the deeper social and philosophical issues or the real feelings of people who are oppressed under the mythical Rule of Law. More properly this attitude should be called the 'logic of domination', i.e., "a structure of argumentation which leads to a justification of subordination."^{16}

In this paper I am focusing on the issue of pornography; more specifically, on 'hard-core' pornography, which depicts the degradation and torture of women. Two crucial waves are being seen in the pornography business right now. First, the pornography business is expanding, thus its scope is increasing. Second, the portrayal and degree of violence against women is becoming more pervasive.^{17} Before I discuss the philosophical issues underlying the brutalization of women in pornography, I will analyze how the legal liberals present their views on these issues. In particular, I am referring to David A.J. Richard's analysis. The patriarchal voice, in its dedication to the Rule of Law, is strikingly apparent in his sophisticated legal liberal argument.

For Richards, pornography is an issue of principles. He is attempting to weigh and measure the concrete right of free speech as it applies to pornography, and the concrete right of people to be free from clear and present danger in their lives. His argument hinges on the concept
of 'obscene' as it is defined in Miller vs. California 413 U.S. 15, 24 1973 (quoting Roth 354 U.S. at 489). The current legal doctrine for indentifying obscenity is:

a) whether 'the average person, applying contemporary community standards' would find that the work, taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest,
b) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law,
c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious artistic, political, or scientific value.

He writes that this definition of 'obscene' itself does not follow the institutional morality in the Rule of Law; that it "expresses controversial moral judgments that no longer command either general or critical moral consensus." Since he believes that the current legal notion of 'obscene' is unconstitutional, he looks for principles within the institutional morality which can be weighed and measured.

At issue for Richards is the right of free speech found in the First Amendment. He writes that the exclusion of obscene from protected speech is unprincipled. More specifically, he argues that, "consenting adults have a right to view pornographic materials and a denial of it would violate core free speech interests." For Richards, this stems from the fact that the "restriction on the pornographic is clearly directed at what is communicated" rather than a regulation of time, place or manner. This, he decides, is constitutionally questionable because, it rests on, "nonneutral assumptions inconsistent with the
required equal respect for moral independence....[and thus] fails today to be a just application of the principle of equal respect interpretively fundamental to the value of free speech."\(^{22}\) (Why does he use the Puritan art analogy? Why does he equate moral independence in choosing to watch plays, with the portrayal of the brutal degradation of women's bodies? Does this analogy fit? Does art make me fearful? Vulnerable?)

It is decided that the questions of pornography and Puritan ideas on art are a matter of principle; "[p]ornography may not be art, but it is certainly a communicative expression whose aim and effect are imaginative, namely, the cultivation and stimulation of sexual imagination."\(^{23}\) (Why do I think of the woman strung up by her legs? Why do I think of the woman who has her breasts locked tightly in grips?) Richards decides that what is at issue is a person's moral independence to choose to watch hard-core pornography. (Why does he call it pornographic communication? What is being communicated to me as a woman? That the hatred of a woman's body is acceptable. That it is alright to torture a woman - that it is alright to send me through a meat grinder. That I am supposed to like this - that I can find this 'communication' sexually stimulating?)

Thus, Richards has decided that the definition of 'obscene' (Where is the context of our lives?) is
unconstitutional. He reevaluates 'obscene' and says that pornography is a unique vision of sexuality, as opposed to the rigid Victorian view of the body. (Why must he trivialize our historical suffering as women? The loss of self that we experienced under Victorian descriptive and prescriptive images was harmful. We were told that our bodies were unclean; that we were to be the upholders of morality, and this meant denying our bodies. But wait. We must bear children ... We must 'serve' our husband's needs. Is this rape - smiling while being raped.) Richards writes that pornography "offers an alternative model of plastic variety and joyful excesses in sexuality." (Get out of your self-righteous modes, he implicitly tells us, enjoy your sexuality.) Pornography, writes Richards, can be, "engaged in the construction of more fulfilling and humane personal relationships." (Is he trivializing feminism? Carol Gilligan?)

Richards also realizes that he must weigh the principle of the clear and present danger of harmful acts. (A friend wrote a paper on pornography. She researched it first hand, visiting book stores, watching films and live shows. She told me that she became afraid; that one night her fiance and a male friend were sitting on the porch, and that she locked them out of the house.) Richards dismisses the danger principle easily on the basis that there is no 'reliable evidence' to support the claim that pornography
endangers women. (Then why do I feel afraid. Is this irrational. Why since beginning this paper have I began having nightmares - that I knew him, trusted him - that he was chasing me - that he was going to kill me. I am fearful and no longer rational. My fear, my friend's fear, is denied; it is not provable.) Richards writes that the interpretive disagreements on the clear and present danger of harmful acts renders the weight of the principle non-existent. The debate, he says, reflects a larger moral controversy, outside the Rule of Law, "about which the state, on classical free speech grounds, remains neutral."26

Thus, Richards concludes that hard-core pornography is protected under the First Amendment. That, "the scope of free speech be assessed in terms of facts and values relevant to the independent exercise of our moral powers of rationality and reasonableness."27 Each individual person alone, it is said, must decide how to live her or his private life, and thus the state has no justification for censoring pornographic material.

Richards clearly subscribes to the Rule of Law. His argument is concerned solely with the institutional political morality, and the weight of principles governing the pornographic issue. His argument also rests on the fact that principle, rather than policy, must be taken into account. That is, the individual rights of people take precedence over communal goals. The underlying
assumptive value in this preference deserves further thought. Underlying his argument is a patriarchal conception of self as opposed to a feminist conception of self.

THE SELF AS MONAD

Richards stresses that it is up to each individual alone to decide whether or not to read or view pornography. This emphasis on the individual is typical of the male conception of self. The masculine self is conceived atomistically; the self is defined as isolated and separate. As Carol Gilligan points out, this self fits into the image of the hierarchy. In the masculine self, there is, "the wish to be alone at the top and the consequent fear that others will get too close."28 Self is defined as alienated from and in competition with others.

Jim Cheney adds another dimension to this conception of self, which provides interesting insights into the legal theory itself. Cheney, drawing from the words of Freud and Gilligan, writes that, "men tend either to define themselves as egoistic individuals or to identify with ('fuse' with) large wholes."29 This conception of self is directly linked to the Rule of Law and the practice of law today. Later, I will critique the rights theory in general, but for now I want to draw some interesting connections between Cheney's thought and the legal liberals.
The atomistic self, writes Cheney, experiences alienation and thus, because of a real human need for relationships, seeks to overcome his isolation. (Cheney is speaking about love, yet I find the insights are on the mark in the metaphysics dictated by the male conception of self.) Consequently, "there is an expansion of self so as to include the relationship to which it feels alienated." The whole is subsumed by the expanded self. Thus, when Dworkin talks of policy, and the goal of community, I think of this expansion of self. The goals of community are essentially defined by the dictates of the elite legal and philosophical community. (We need a new baseball park for the community, because politics is becoming too effeminate?) In a sense, rights are expanded to others only in cases where the rights of an oppressed group are seen as engulfable by their conceived individual rights. Cheney writes:

it is interesting that there is a very strong tendency on the part of male theorists to understand networks of defining relationships on the mode of an expansion of self to the boundaries of the whole. This is, to be sure, a way of overcoming alienation, and as a way of having one's cake and eating it too, it can't be beat: one overcomes alienation from the other by absorbing the other into the self.31 There is however, no respecting the other as other.31

Am I stretching the comparison too far? I don't believe so. Through a long historical process women and minorities have been allocated rights by the dominant tradition. The right to vote was given to both.
Segregation was declared unconstitutional. Women were given the right to own property. Affirmative action programs were instituted. I do not want to deny the importance of these events, but I do want to point out their philosophical foundations. Essentially, it is a method of assimilation, a way of prescribing an individualistic world view - a way of expanding the notion of individual rights to people who were finally considered to be human. Until the recent help of feminist and race critics, there has been no attempt to respect the other as other. There was no acknowledgment that people may have different world views, different ideas of relationships, and different needs; not until recently in our Western tradition has this diversity been recognized and respected. And even today, only marginally so.

Jim Cheney writes that, "fusion is a move toward health, which however, carries the sickness of atomism with it." The sickness of the isolated self also carries with it the equally unhealthy conception of individual rights found in Western tradition and for my purposes under the Rule of Law. Individual rights presuppose this male conception of self, and underlying the notion of rights is the idea of competition. Marti Kheel perceptively writes that, "the notion of rights can, in fact, be conceived of only within an antagonistic or competitive environment. The concept of competition is inherent in the very
definition of rights. As Joel Feinberg states, 'To have a right is to claim something against someone...'" Thus humans are seen to be individual, autonomous, rational beings who are competitively attempting to maximize their own interests.

The masculine conception of self also places extreme valuation on reason. It is through reason that the institutional morality, rights, and principles can be understood. This is analogous to Lawrence Kohlberg's analysis of (male) moral maturity. In writing about Kohlberg's work, Gilligan says that men develop high stages of morality, "where relationships are subordinated to rules (stage four) and rules to universal principles of justice (stages five and six)." This is precisely what is happening under the Rule of Law. Rational judges can discover objective principles on which the one and only correct answer is found. Similarly, "the rights conception of morality that informs Kohlberg's principled level (stages five and six) is geared to arriving at an objectively fair or just resolution to moral dilemmas upon which all rational persons could agree." Gilligan may have added, on which all rational, isolated, competitive, alienated, rights-obsessed people could agree.

THE SELF AS WEB

Gilligan's book, In A Different Voice, opened up the
lives of women and exposed a sense of self that is not consistent with the male-identified patriarchal self. The feminine conception of self, according to Gilligan, is seen in terms of webs of connections, rather than isolation. Our conception of self is related to our connections with others. Gilligan writes that our self is defined in relationships of care and responsibility. This is not to say that there is a complete absence or suppression or sacrifice of self. Rather, we see our selves as interconnected with others. We see ourselves as bound together reciprocally. Ideally, we do not subsume the other, nor alienate ourselves from the other. We are people expressing our being in relationship. The following words of Karen Warren ring true to me. She is speaking of rock climbing, and of her relationship with the mountain, but I find that her words express my perceived relationships with other people as well as non-human nature. She writes: "there is no fusion of two into one, but a complement of two entities acknowledged as separate, different, independent, yet in relationship." This conception of self implies a morality different from a rights based ethic. If we see ourselves in relation to others then a moral theory emerges which is based on relationship. As Cheney writes:

the moral issue here is the correct relationship ... in order to understand what our relationships are, to understand what is required of us, it is necessary to understand the individuals involved (or the nature
of the kinds of individuals involved), their relationships to one another, and their place in a complex community.

Thus, Gilligan writes about how women, in particular, flesh out moral dilemmas to resolve conflicts. When we realize that relationships are important, not rights, then we must begin by filling in what relationships entail. I feel and I would argue that emotions are the binding force of relationships. Emotions allow us to live in the world rather than look at the world. Emotions are the bonds which hold people together; they allow for connections between beings who are not identical, but can express their being in relation to another.

It is important to talk about how we feel, and listen to the feelings of others. Hearing how people feel can elicit empathy, and a new understanding of the ways people live in the context of their lives. Many critical legal theorists are placing value on how people feel in certain situations. Here the importance of narrative within the legal tradition comes clearly into focus. Patricia Williams and Mari Matsuda have eloquently portrayed how people's lives are affected by racist speech. Lives come to the forefront, rather than principles; we begin hearing the stories of previously voiceless people in our legal tradition.
WHAT THE WOMEN ARE SAYING

The pornography issue is being examined by many feminist legal theorists. Feminists are divided on both the legal issues and the underlying assumptions; they offer a variety of rich arguments as they explore the issues in depth. I will begin looking at this feminist discourse by focusing on the work of Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. In their groundbreaking ordinance, they have provided an axis around which many debates have focused.

In 1984, MacKinnon and Dworkin proposed an ordinance which focused on the issue of pornography which was passed in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1985, the Indianapolis Ordinance was brought to court by the American Booksellers Association. The District Court of the Southern District of Indiana ruled that the ordinance was unconstitutional. Later, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed.

Rather than using the concept of 'obscene' which is not protected under the First Amendment, the ordinance defined 'pornography'. Under the ordinance 'pornography' is:

the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women, whether in pictures or in words, that also includes one or more of the following:

1) Women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or

2) Women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or
3) Women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt, or as dismembered or truncated or fragmented or severed into body parts; or

4) Women are presented as being penetrated by objects or animals; or

5) Women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury abasement, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual; or

6) Women are presented as sexual objects for domination, conquest, violation, exploitation, possession, or use, or through postures or positions of servility or submission or display.

The Court of Appeals, in American Booksellers Ass'n Inc. v. Hudnut, found this definition of 'pornography' unconstitutional, and consequently found the Indianapolis ordinance unconstitutional. The court continually referred to the definition of 'obscene' which MacKinnon and Dworkin purposely left out. The court, acknowledging the constraints imposed by the rule of law, found the ordinance unconstitutional because its definition of 'pornography' did not match the Supreme Court's definition of 'obscenity'. The court found that the ordinance, "discriminates on the ground of the content of speech."  

Mari Matsuda, in an article on racist speech, points out that the content-based argument is one of the strongest against the criminalization of speech. Matsuda writes of the concern that, "it puts the state in the censorship business, with no means of assuring that the censor's hand will go lightly over 'good' as opposed to 'bad' speech."
There is also an argument that this ordinance puts us on a slippery slope. The state will begin censoring everything. Thus, it is argued that the state must uphold democratic ideals, while striving to promote tolerance and the free expression of ideas.

It sounds like a good argument on the surface, yet it is interesting to note how the theoretical claims are being carried out in concrete issues. I argue that the decision makers, while saying that they rationally look to principles are misguided (at best). They are strongly directed by images and their expectations of certain groups of people. This is seen quite clearly in recent court decisions that are affecting women's lives. On the one hand, in hard-core pornography, free speech is upheld above all else; despite the real harm to women in the form of fear of rape and violence. On the other hand, during the Bush administration under Title X, free speech was denied. Women who went into federally funded health clinics could not be told of the option of abortion, nor obtain any information on abortion clinics. Does this uphold the democratic ideal of free speech?

The court is clearly being influenced by two historical images which govern women's lives. Women are seen as whores, as in pornography, or as baby-making machines. Through the playing out of these images in the court system (among other places) women are being denied their own
bodies. I can not emphasize this enough. I am being denied my body - my self.

In pornography, women's bodies are objectified to be controlled and brutally mastered. This is an act of possession; it is the breaking of a woman's body to be used for sexual gratification. When I see a woman on film who is bound and gagged, or who has a pistol thrust in and out of her mouth, I am fearful and angry. Angry because it speaks to me of the fact that women's bodies are constantly being abused. Fearful, because I see the connection between these brutalizations of women on film, and my own fear as I cross the footbridge at night. I see the connection because I live with the knowledge that our culture condones violence against women in two pervasive ways. One, we promote it, as in pornography which is protected by the legal system. Two, we ignore it, as seen in the silenced voices of rape and abuse victims. This hatred of women's bodies has deep historical roots in Western society. I see the thread running from the sin-of-Eve, to the witchburnings, to pornography. Running concurrent with this image is the image of woman as breeder.

Under Title X, women were again being denied our bodies. We are implicitly and indeed explicitly told that our bodies are not our own. Rather, we are a passive receptacle waiting to be filled with child. These are the images which need to be uprooted and fought. They
need to be looked at for what they are, and not hidden under some abstract principle, or lofty democratic ideals.

At any rate, the truncated vision of the Court of Appeals in Hudnut objected to the perceived inconsistency of the ordinance; under the ordinance the treatment of women as equals was seen as lawful, no matter how sexually explicit, while the treatment of women as submissive degraded objects was unlawful, no matter how artistic the work. Thus, the court claimed that, "the state may not ordain preferred viewpoints in this way. The Constitution forbids the state to declare one perspective right and silence opponents." \(^4^2\)

Later, the court goes on to rave about the value of the First Amendment. The liberal government, unlike those dreaded totalitarian governments who 'rule' most of the planet, is different because of, "our absolute right to propagate opinions that the government finds wrong or even hateful." \(^4^3\) It is extremely disconcerting that the court makes us argue on these terms. I am sure they recognize the necessity of this amendment for oppressed people in this country. It is our vehicle for change; it is something for which oppressed people have struggled to achieve. At any rate, it is clear that the court is not really hearing what MacKinnon and Dworkin are saying. In a tight logical way, the court weighs principles, and decides that the right to free speech is the heaviest. Decision
affirmed; case closed.

But what are MacKinnon and Dworkin saying? They are rightly objecting to the brutal degrading objectification of women in pornography. These images do influence how people view women in our culture. For MacKinnon, these images reinforce the maledominated power structure. She writes:

"Pornography is neither harmless fantasy nor a corrupt and confused misrepresentation of an otherwise neutral and healthy sexual situation. It institutionalizes the sexuality of male supremacy, fusing the erotization of dominance and submission with the social construction of male and female...Men treat women as they see women as being. Pornography constructs who that is. Men's power over women means that the way men see women defines who women can be."

A woman who is portrayed as a sexual object who enjoys being brutalized, sets up women for all kinds of abuse, both physically and mentally. And within our current power structure, this abuse is not only portrayed, it is acted out.

MacKinnon and Dworkin seek equality for women in order to balance out the power structure. Robin West, in her article "The Difference in Women's Hedonic Lives: A Phenomenological Critique of Feminist Legal Theory", has criticized them and other radical legal feminists for this obsession with power. West believes that the radical legal feminists have a goal of an autonomous Kantian individual. She writes that radical legal feminists believe that women aren't currently autonomous because of their
political, legal, and social victimization. According to West, the feminist project is abandoned by speaking in a male-oriented power language, rather than attending to the voices of women. West's criticisms are well taken. If MacKinnon and Dworkin are pursuing equality by trying to make women more like men in the hierarchy, then I think their work is seriously flawed. Yet, I think that MacKinnon and Dworkin are taking women in the right direction. Yes, there is a power discrepancy, but there is a layer underneath this which needs to be addressed.

To understand this underlying layer, and, perhaps, to keep the Indianapolis Ordinance on a feminist track, it is useful to remember the women's conception of self discussed earlier. Women's conception of self comes from our relations with others, thus, we are relational rather than autonomous individuals. But when there is a huge power discrepancy, as romanticized in pornography, the relationships are not healthy. One person, the male, has power over another, the female. There is no room for healthy relations among people in this scenario. Women are degraded to the status of an object - an 'it'. Power over, means denial of a person, who is properly a Thou. Women are seen as objects to be beaten, fucked, and violently restrained; all as a means to some perverse notion of sexuality. These ideas are carried into, and affect, women's daily lives.
West believes that we should listen to the voices of women, and I can only reply that I have heard them, just as I have heard myself. This power discrepancy is usually misused, and a man's ability to use power over a woman creates real fear in her life. Both violence and the threat of violence constrain women; sometimes we are too fearful to act or move. As West points out, we fear date and stranger rape, spouse abuse, and catcalls among other things. When I hear my friend talk about when she was raped, or another friend talking about how her husband threw her against the wall then kicked her as she fell, I know that these are not isolated occurrences. I know that this fear comes from the same source as the fear I felt when a man in a local book store leered at me over the rack of pornographic magazines. As women, we know this fear; we live with the threat of violence daily.

Living with this kind of fear, spurred by the power discrepancy, there is little room for healthy relationships within our community. Women tend to deny ourselves as we try to conform to the images prescribed under the hierarchy. We lose ourselves, and rather than entering into an I/Thou relationship, we enter into master/slave relationships. By living for the other person we become objects of possession.

It is insulting that the violent portrayal of these unhealthy master/slave relationships is protected by law.
What is more frightening perhaps is that many women do not see pornography as affecting their lives. I relate this tragically and most readily to the words of Philip Hallie. He writes that in institutionalized cruelty (such as racial hatred, or in this case, misogyny), there is a "persistent pattern of humiliation that endures for years in a community, [and in it] both the victim and the victimizer find ways of obscuring the harm that is being done." We need to bring this harm to consciousness. That involves women speaking out to each other, to members of the community, and to the legal system.

The Indianapolis ordinance provides feminist legal critics with fertile soil for debate. Feminists are not in consensus about the ordinance; some agree with its approach, others disagree. Even so, the ordinance has provided a backdrop against which feminists flesh out the issue. In order to bring greater clarity to this discussion, I will explore two other feminists texts: a brief from the Feminists Anticensorship Task Force (FACT) and the article, "The Difference in Women's Hedonic Lives: A Phenomenological Critique of Feminist Legal Theory" by Robin West.

The FACT brief, written by Nan D. Hunter and Sylvia A. Law, opposes the Indianapolis ordinance. The criticisms stem from the vagueness of the terms, the sexual stereotyping of men and women, and the problematic
connection of violence and sexually explicit speech. Most crucial is their objection to the vagueness of terms, and how overbroad enforcement could censor crucial feminist expression.

The FACT brief points out that the language of the ordinance authorizes censorship of not only violent material, but also any material that is sexually explicit:

the language of the definition mixes phrases that have clear meanings and thus ascertainable applications (e.g. 'cut up' or 'mutilated') with others which are sufficiently elastic to encompass almost any sexually explicit image that someone might find offensive (e.g., 'scenarios of degradation' or abasement').

The FACT people rightly point out that these definitions are unclear, and their interpretations by different judges would vary immensely. They argue that there is no clear legal definition for these terms. Also, they argue that the meaning of the work as a whole often derives from the context rather than specific isolated instances of 'subordination' or 'degradation'. They write:

whether a specific image could be found to 'subordinate' or 'degrade' women may depend entirely on such factors as the purpose of the presentation; the size and nature of the audience; the surrounding messages; the expectation and attitude of the viewer; and where the presentation takes place...among others.

These two factors, the vagueness of the terms and the lack of consideration of the overall meaning, are problematic. The FACT people rightly point out that under this ordinance a large amount of valuable material could be censored. Thus, the, "Amici fear that the
experimentations of feminist art which deal openly and explicitly with sexual themes will be easily targeted for suppression under this ordinance.⁴⁹ Their concern is justified. Lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual women are reclaiming their bodies and openly exploring their sexuality. To censor the rich feminist expression that is blooming would be a huge disservice to women.

Yet, I object to the fact that this issue is being viewed as an all or nothing distinction. That is, must we censor all or nothing? A finer distinction should be made, and that would be the distinction between pornography and erotica. Pornography can be seen as the violent physical exploitation of women. Erotica could be seen as non-violent sexual exploration.

Robin West points out that before we start making any distinctions, we need to begin listening to the voices of women and how they feel on the subject. She points out that the writers of both the ordinance and the brief have abandoned the feminist project by subscribing to definitions and principles rather than attending to the narratives of women.

West argues that the subjective lives of men and women are different. She is listening to women and has brilliantly articulated the fear that women live with in their daily lives: the fear of street hassling, rape, and abuse. Most interesting for my purposes in this paper
is her attendance to women's hedonic lives. She criticizes MacKinnon and Dworkin with overlooking this aspect of women's lives, by calling it a 'false consciousness'. She criticizes liberal legal feminists, like the FACT people, with retreating to liberal principle; focusing on choices rather than lives. She writes that they feel that "fantasies are private and beyond political analysis; the role of law should be to expand, not shrink, the options available to women, including the option, if freely chosen, of masochistic desire, fantasy, practice, and pleasure."  

West, in contrast, honestly looks at women's accounts of their expressed pleasure in erotic submission and domination. She recounts the Story of O by P. Reage in which O enjoys submission which is often painful. She then relates this to Maria Marcus' own identification with this enjoyment. As I understand it, Marcus and West are saying that there is a fine distinction between pleasure and pain. The pain is something which needs to be worked through and then used as a sexual stimulant. In Marcus' words:

[Pain] has to be passed. There has to be a moment when I hate you and loathe the pain, and only wish I could get away from it. But once you have been on the pain-level, it can be used sexually at another moment in time.

An interesting aspect of this pleasure found by women in S&M sex is the element of trust. West writes that painful acts of dominance and submission is an expression
of trust, and is exciting for some women. She writes:

Absolute pliant obedience - the willingness to transform one's subjectivity into another's object - is sexually arousing (for some) when it enables the submissive subject to transcend her own selfhood, and thereby to abdicate her responsibility for her own action. That this total abdication of responsibility can be erotic, I think, reflects a genuine human truth and a deep human need.

I want to reject this notion, and attribute it to the 'false consciousness' that MacKinnon speaks of. For so long women have given themselves completely to another, whether it be a husband, lover, child, or boss, I feel that this is a harmful playing out of our victimization. Also, I feel that this practice violates the boundaries of trust appropriate within relationships. To me there is something dangerous and oppressive in the notion of trusting someone when he or she is causing real bodily pain; why risk the danger of giving up one's own body and one's self? West admits that O reaches a point where her submission is no longer pleasurable, but harmful. To me, this seems the logical outcome of these relationships.

Yet, I hesitate to condemn. I have not experienced this. I do not understand what these women are talking about. Because of this, I appreciate their honesty in exploring and expressing these experiences. They are trying to come to some understanding of this in their own lives, and I will listen. This is important to me. I am realizing that under the patriarchy in which we live, women are wondering who we are. We are trying to articulate our sense
of self, and in this way we can learn to relate honestly with others.

Despite my lack of understanding and skepticism on this issue, I think that West has provided some valuable insights which can help us as we flesh out the pornography issue. Speaking again of fear and trust, West writes:

I believe that sexual submission has erotic appeal and value when it is an expression of trust; is damaging, injurious and painful when it is an expression of fear; and is dangerous because of its ambiguity: both others and we ourselves have difficulty in disentangling the two.

Yet, it is an important step to try to disentangle the two. As I see it, this could provide a way to further distinguish between erotica and pornography. Erotica is based on trust, whereas, pornography is based on fear. This distinction would most likely mend the differences between the writers of the Indianapolis ordinance and the FACT brief. This distinction addresses the most important issue we face in pornography: the fact that pornography elicits fear of violence in women's lives.

West writes about the issue of violence. She wants to look at how it affects women's lives. She warns us to be clear on the issues, "it is the injuries that pornography causes the violent expropriation of our sexuality - which is the 'muck we can live without'." West advises that we relook at the overbroad definition of pornography, and more importantly that we look at pornography itself as we search for solutions. I must
admit that if I'm going to talk more about this I'll need to watch and read pornography. So far, I understand the fear part (having watched Not a Love Story and having lived with fear), but I am very ignorant about the pleasure in submission part (indeed I find it hard to believe). Yet, I do have eyes and ears and I can listen to the women who are exploring this.

West provides us with a direction. She writes:

If we look at what is presently and too broadly defined as pornography, we might discover that the pornography that hurts us - the pornography that contributes to the violent expropriation of our sexuality - is not so hard to distinguish from the pornography that doesn't hurt us and which might be pleasurable - the description of controlled erotic submission.

I think that this area needs exploration, and it seems that it has the potential for providing common ground for feminists, because it addresses the real problem in women's lives: violence and the threat of violence.

CONCLUSION (when the uninitiated must stop)

This paper states that I have little faith in the legal liberal tradition. In it, I see dehumanization and oppression. I am impressed by the good work that has been done by the critical legal theorists in deconstructing the underlying assumptions and the concrete practices of the legal liberal tradition.
There is another step; one that is perhaps harder and one that is being taken by the critics. A need for the articulation of oppressed people is seen, and critics are stepping in to fill the void with their words. We need to change the system with our narratives, philosophies, and insights. We must speak of our fears and our strengths. I have faith in humans. I think we have a deep human need to relate to each other and a willingness to understand each other. I appreciate the work of the race and feminist critics. Their words are changing the legal tradition; MacKinnon's work on sexual harassment is a good example of this. I know it is hard and I realize that there is resistance, but we can gain strength from the words of others. We can explore our selves and the context of our lives; the expression of which allows for healthy change. Let us make our presence felt.
ENDNOTES


2. Griffin, p. xvi.


8. Dworkin, see Chapter Two, p. 14-45


10. Dworkin, see pages 82-84.


12. Dworkin, p. 93.


14. Dworkin, see Chapter 4, pages 81-131.

15. Dworkin, p. 115.


21. Richards, p. 204.
22. Richards, p. 204-5.
23. Richards, p. 205.
25. Richards, p. 207.
27. Richards, p. 207.
32. Cheney, p. 124.
34. Gilligan p. 18.
37. Cheney, p. 141.
40. Hudnut p. 325.
42. Hudnut, p. 325.
43. Hudnut, p. 328.

44. Hudnut, p. 325 quoting MacKinnon.


48. FACT, p. 11.

49. FACT, p. 12.

50. West, p. 117.


52. West, p. 129.

53. West, p. 129.

54. West, p. 136.

55. West, p. 137.
PAPER #2
BY WHOSE AUTHORITY?
A LOOK AT THE INTERCONNECTIONS
BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, AND AGRIBUSINESS.

Written by Ken Stocks and Lisa Gerber
INTRODUCTION

The following paper was written by Ken Stocks and myself. There are several sections of this paper: sometimes we speak together, sometimes alone, and sometimes in dialogue. We choose this form for many reasons. This is a way to engage in philosophy as a process and dispel the myth that philosophy (or science) has the authority to claim absolute truth. Also, we wanted to work with the concept of communication - of listening and speaking, of thinking and feeling. There are networks of dialogues in this paper. Among them are dialogues between Ken and myself, between a farmer and the land, and between philosophy and science. We wanted to attend to these relationships in the writing of this paper.

This paper was presented in the seminar, "Challenges to the Authority of Science" which Burke Townsend offered. Robert Hamilton, Anne-Marie Lombardi, Jamey Loran, Leslie Ryan, Danny Smitherman, David Stokes, John Weidner, as well as Ken and I participated in this seminar. I give you these names for two reasons. One, it will help with clarification, because we refer these people within the paper. Two, because we want to honor the people in the seminar. Not only did we challenge science, but we challenged each other. What is remarkable is that we did this respectfully and in a way that nurtured communication and dialogue.
Food production is a cultural necessity. If modern science works, then its application to agriculture must flourish with the fruits of its labor. And, conversely, if modern science is destructive in its application to agriculture, then its failure in this area would be a strong argument to revise or reject the entire project. Without food, even scientists die.

In 1972, Jim Hightower wrote an analysis of the interconnectedness of agriculture, science, technology, business, government, and education called Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times. In the study's introduction, Senator James Abourezk said one of the results of this interconnectedness is that, "...an entire rural culture is disappearing."¹

A spokesman for an association of land grant colleges justified this 'disappearance' by saying:

Great agricultural achievements are not accomplished without some side effects, and the accusation that the land grant colleges and universities have been taken over by the great food conglomerates and have driven the little farmer out of business tend to overlook the dazzling array of abundant foods this cooperation has made available.

And former secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz added, "adapt or die."³

Adapt to mechanized monoculture, high yield hybridization, high tech processing, high input use of chemicals and fertilizers, intense competition for centralized markets and transport systems - adapt to all of this or die.
Most of us can still remember, if not taste Thanksgiving dinner. There can be little doubt in our minds that we have access to an abundance of food, even an over-abundance. Even if, "rural America is crumbling"^4, we are being fed. For all the evils of an interlocking meta-institution of science, business, government, technology, and agriculture, we are being fed.

Who cares if Hightower is right when he whines,

Land grant colleges have become closed communities. The administrators, academics, and scientists, along with USDA officials and corporate executives, have locked themselves into an inbred and even incestuous complex and they are incapable of thinking beyond their self-interest and traditional concepts of agricultural research.

So what if he is right? We are still eating . . . most of us. To make an omelet, eggs get broken. Hightower, who is not a philosopher argues that, "... technology, productivity, and efficiency should be humanized."^6 Sure, as long as we keep eating, right?

We are still eating and, at worst, as one consumer spokesperson has testified before Congress: "the consumer pays for the research, pays for the product, then pays by consuming a food which is either junk or dangerous."^7

Well, maybe it does get a little worse. Perhaps the current marrying of science and business to education and government has created an agricultural system that is feeding us in this decade by starving us in the next decade. Unless, of course, we are rich or powerful.
As a deconstructor of the scientific method, I must answer many difficult questions. An example of one of the most difficult questions is: If science ends, what will we do with the millions of genetically identical white mice? Another example: if science ends, how will we build sewer systems?

For me, these questions are critical. I have nightmares about white mice and I used a laser at my last good paying job to lay sewer pipe to grade.

But I ruptured a disc in my back laying some of that pipe and I can no longer kill white mice.

There are other important questions. What do we do with nuclear waste or even conventional waste? How do we restore acid damaged water systems? How do we feed excess populations (or even necessary populations, which, I hope, include myself)? What do we do if we have breast cancer or AIDS?

I want to stop science on mere philosophic grounds. I feel no great trepidation for doing this because I have been assured by Hume that even if I am wrong, a wrong philosophy can, at worst, make me ridiculous.

Who among you, or among those at MIT, Sandia Labs, RIBI Immunochem or at any other center of science dares to fear the ridiculous?

Until I took this course, I was unaware of the extent
to which science is under attack. Its collapse appears immanent and I almost hope that it holds together for at least a few more months. My brother is one semester away from becoming a high school science teacher. Out of love for him, and because I can not afford to feed his family, I will wait until he has accepted a teaching contract before I put a 'Separate Science and State' bumper sticker on my CO$_2$ spewing '62 Chevy.

Philosophically, then, why do I maintain that the scientific method should be abandoned?

If we accept the premise that our primary world view is scientific and that science is value free, meaning that science discovers facts and that facts in themselves have no moral content (again I am back to Hume).

And if we also accept Plato's position that our world is held together by morality.

Then looking at the world scientifically would destroy the world.

Symbolically, this would be represented as:

\[
\begin{align*}
S & \supset M \\
\sim M & \supset \sim W \\
S & \\
\therefore \sim W
\end{align*}
\]

When $S$ is science, $M$ is morality, and $W$ is world.

Hume was right. Plato and I are beginning to look pretty ridiculous. Besides, Alasdair MacIntyre persuaded argues that we no longer experience an ethical world anyway so maybe it is just Plato's world that has
come unglued and the paradigm of the modern world is incommensurable to his.

Ironically, MacIntyre uses an analogy of what our concept of science would become if it was suddenly fragmented to demonstrate how our view of ethics is fragmented. After reading Popper and Kuhn and Feyerabend, I have decided that MacIntyre's analogy is a poor one - science, too, is fragmented and MacIntyre's paradigm is as incommensurable as Plato's.

Back to incommensurability. Dan has stated, using Feyerabend and Kuhn as referents, that experiencing the world through one paradigm precludes experiencing the world through any other paradigm.

Accepting Kuhn's and Feyerabend's claim that science cannot provide truth sets up another piece of amateur logic.

If truth exists then it is our duty as philosophers to seek it even if we can't find it. Again I am referring to Plato.

If we look at the world scientifically, we cannot look at the world in any other way.

Science cannot discover truth.

Therefore, as philosophers, we must break out of the scientific paradigm.

Those are the arguments for abandoning science that make little or no difference. But I have another reason that does make a difference, or, at least, made a difference
back when I used to be a human being.

("Pilate saith unto him, 'What is truth?"")

I saw a film clip purportedly made in a concentration camp during WWII. A man with a rifle would strike a small boy with the butt of the rifle, then another man, wearing a white smock, would have the boy try to walk a straight line or touch his finger to his nose or do some other structured task. The man in the smock was a sadist of course, and not a scientist. Or maybe the whole thing was a hoax - a Zionist conspiracy or an Allied propaganda film.

It doesn't matter. The method and the purpose made perfect sense to me and I do not doubt, assuming the truthfulness of the film itself, that significant progress was made in the area of diagnosing and treating head injuries. I can even imagine that the results of the experiment were used to save many lives.

I saw on television (this, too, may have been a hoax) that a French doctor was so certain that he had developed an AIDS vaccine that he had injected himself with the AIDS virus. Again, the design and methodology made perfect sense to me.

I, too, am a scientist. I once did a study of the effects of specific anti-convulsant drugs on blood-gases. For part of this study I required fully oxygenated aortic blood. A graduate student held a white mouse which I
injected a needle through the mouse's sternum. My hands were shaking so much that during my first attempt I pushed the needle through the mouse's body and into the graduate student's palm. After three attempts, my hands quit shaking and I extracted the required blood.

As far as I know, the results of my experiment were never used to save any lives, but I got an 'A' in molecular biology lab.

A few years later, during my next attempt at higher education, I refused to etherize and dissect a frog. The dissection was a course requirement but I knew that my hands would not shake.

There is much to be said for steady hands. The surgeon who scraped and sculpted my fourth lumbar vertebral disc had steady hands. A few hours after the surgery, I could walk again. I have little doubt that he has dissected many frogs, impaled many mice. I have no doubt that he never watched as a young boy's head was smashed by a rifle butt.

But I would wager that he would understand the experiment at least as well as I understand, and I wonder if he ever misses the person he was when he picked up a scalpel for the first time - and his hand shook.

Dan has poignantly stated his concern that science turns everything sensible into an object and that once we are objects, we can never be anything else and can never
see anything else. We are left muttering to ourselves, 'I am not an object, I am not an object, I am not an object.'

Muttering, of course, in syntactically correct English using subject-verb-object sentences.

One of the essential premises for a scientific paradigm is that of self intending subjects - the radical ego - distinct from an objective environment. An ego so distinct, in fact, that its own cranium, heart, genitals, souls, and hands are considered environment, conceptualized as objects.

The only process preventing these egos from falling into solipsistic philosophies (and many of them collapse into solipsism anyway) are shared conceptual constructs - primarily language. Thus Lois Welch (U of M's creative writing director) can say at a Philosophy Forum, "If language is not our world, then what is our world?"

Her question was a rhetorical response to Derrida's deconstructionism of Heidegger's constructed world. Beaudrillard refers to it as the "evil demon of images." Our world, the ground of our being, is nothing more than words that refer to other words and images that refer to images.

Its ontology is circular, its metaphysics is self-referential, and its epistemology is cultural phenomenology. Instead of this 'constructed world'
expressing any spirituality or divinity inherent in either ego or being, it has created a barrier between ego and being, and consumes both. According to Heidegger, we live in the world that we have thought. According to Beaudrillard, we can live in no other world. According to Derrida (and Beaudrillard) this world has no ontological relevance. According to MacIntyre, this world has fragmented the moral, the ethical. Unfortunately, and contrary to Hume, a philosophy based on this world (the 'constructed world') is not only ridiculous, but destructive.

The economic and political impetus for science is the exploitive application of knowledge to resources to produce technology. Many have argued - Jamey, John, David and others - and argued passionately and logically, that science can be separated from the destructive uses of science.

But, I agree with Harding when she states that even though individual scientists may have lofty goals and ideals, science itself functions to perpetuate control of the many by the few.12

This oppression is inherent in the subject-object distinction used to justify an ego (a self-intending subject) when it places nature on the rack to reveal her secrets (to paraphrase Bacon) or to oppress animals because they are not self-conscious (to paraphrase Kant).
The fact-value distinction, necessary to pursue modern science, removes any moral limit that science might self-impose and makes science oppressive without limit, destructive without limit, and exploitive without limit. The naive faith that the science that fathered the technology that has created such huge social, environmental, and spiritual crises is necessary to resolve these same crises makes the mythical casting of virgins into a volcano's mouth seem reasonable, rational, and responsible.

We live in the world that we have created. And it has created us. We can refer only to the world, and it refers only to us.

The greatest illusion of all may be that we can replace this paradigm with a paradigm that is healthy, nurturing, and communal. Perhaps the most we can do is put on sack cloth and ashes, and lift up our hands to Newton's particle system heaven.

A parable:

One day, not long from now, Frankenstein's monsters went into a pointless, pain-driven rage and killed Dr. Frankenstein.

Since they were mindless, soulless, spiritless, and had been killing themselves, their children, and one another for generations; no one even noticed that Dr. Frankenstein was dead.

Eventually, their mismatched arms and legs rotted
from their torsos and the metal rods rusted from their
necks. Their heads rolled into the dust, and they died.

But - and I say 'but' only because I love happy endings
- some of their children survived.

* * *

<Lisa>

Science. Just saying the word makes me feel numb,
vague. I wonder how to express what I perceive to be the
oppressive nature of science in a few minutes - that is,
shortly and concisely. How can I fit this into a tight,
logical argument? How can I force myself to compact all
the feelings and reasonings that I have about science into
a little gem of truth?

I guess I'll start with a story. A story that is
hard for me to tell, because it brings many themes to the
surface - themes that touch me and touch the ones I love.

My father is a nuclear physicist. A plasma physicist
to be precise. He works for Sandia National Labs in
Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is working on many projects
that I can only see as destructive. Some are secret.
Others are referred to vaguely as Star Wars research,
lithium research, fusion research. My father works with
lasers.

Currently, he is studying lightning. He is fascinated by it, and tells me about lightning balls, and how lightning travels, and how one can really be safe in a lightening storm. When he speaks of these things, he is filled with awe and wonder. And fear. He speaks of the fear and respect that comes from understanding how lightning 'works'. I admire his sense of wonder. My heart leaps when I hear people talk with respect for and awe of nature.

But, my father's story does not end here. He is studying lightning for a purpose. Perhaps, by removing the threat of lightning, NASA rockets can take off on schedule. Or perhaps, the Forest Service could have the lightning discharged from clouds early, so that dry forests would not be threatened by fire. Yellowstone could have been saved.

Crazy. Dad, I say, this is crazy. What about the effects on the ecosystem? Why do you want to manipulate nature in this way? What gives you the authority? You, who taught me about respect and dignity - how can you think about or act upon nature in this way.

Part of me wants to defer to authority - to my father's authority, to political authority, to scientific authority. But, I can not. I am angry. For the moment, however, I'll let my anger rest. For the sake of philosophical argument, I will follow along the lines of Jack Turner.
He writes: "but for the present let it be, at best, controversial, and at worst improper, to have strong moral feelings about the treatment of animals, plants and places - an emotional mistake - like being in love with the number 2."¹³

I can, though, legitimately attack the authority of science on philosophical grounds.

First, the scientist starts with a dangerous metaphysical assumption. Theirs is a metaphysic that views nature as mechanical and inert. As Merchant points out this view of nature as dead justifies many violent and destructive acts upon the earth. Humans are seen as the center of this world. This type of anthropocentrism fueled by the mechanistic world view has reduced human capacity to see the world as a complex, interrelated, and alive system of which humans are a part.

The mechanistic world view has been and is challenged by many people - ecofeminists, Native Americans, women from India. These people in one way or another incorporate a life principle into their metaphysics. From this an ethic of respect is developed. As Chief Smohalla cries, "you ask me to plough the ground: shall I take a knife and tear my mother's bosom? You ask me to cut grass and make hay and sell it and be rich like white men; but how dare I cut off my mother's hair."¹⁴

In contrast, assuming the world is dead and inert
leads to dangerous epistemological assumptions. The capacity for humans to know nature is severely diminished by excluding and marginalizing other knowers and by excluding other ways of knowing. For example, scientists are perceived as the proper knowers of nature. These experts, fueled by scientific and political authority, have muted other voices. Midwives and herbalogists are trivialized, at best, or put to death, at worst. It is no coincidence that the most brutal and widespread witchhunts occurred during the beginnings of the scientific revolution. The words of Smohalla are scoffed. What does he know about soil composition, or pest control, or the genetic make-up of hay? Ask the experts.

This brings us to the other aspect of the epistemological assumption, that of excluding other ways of knowing. This is seen quite clearly in the work of my father. The way he comes to legitimately know lightning is in the lab - through time lapse photography or by studying the electrical charges. To use Bertrand Russell's vocabulary, he knows a lot by description. That is, he may know it abstractly. I would argue, however, that he also has knowledge by acquaintance, but he refuses to value this knowledge. He does experience fear and awe while immersed in a lightning storm (my mother can attest to this). The world is saying something to him - perhaps speaking of power, or dynamics, or life. Yet, my father
does not hear. He ignores this knowledge, perhaps as irrational, as he goes back to the lab, believing the only way to know lightning is through abstract rational study.

Connected with this bias is an ontological assumption: that is, things are seen as isolated and separate. This idea that things can be separated out from a larger whole allows us to view the world with blinders, and it bases our ontological assumptions on alienation and non-participation. Thus, my father is perfectly validated within his profession to study lightning as an isolated unit in an attempt to solve a specific problem. Never mind that ecologists are screaming that things in the world do not have these characteristics. After all, the world is a system of parts in relation. Tampering with one aspect affects the whole.

These assumptions lead to an ethical breakdown which justifies the manipulation and domination of nature and the marginalization of people including the radical separation of cultures from other cultures. Yet, by listening to excluded voices, one can come to understand that the world is an alive, complex system of interrelated parts. With this in mind, other types of ethical maxims come to the fore. As Aldo Leopold writes: "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."15 Or, as ecofeminists point out, we
must realize that we are relational beings, and we must ask ourselves in each instance if we are preserving a healthy relationship. Viewed from these two perspectives, my father's actions are morally wrong. There is no justification for tampering with nature's processes in order to control forest fires, or to control rocket take-off times.

Another ethical aspect that is related to this and is relevant to today's presentation is the moral objection of transforming nature, "such that its organic processes and regularities and regenerative capacities are destroyed." I have in mind the research and technology of miracle seeds, but this is also related to forced sterilization of women. These miracle seeds, produced by agribusiness are genetically uniform and are highly responsive to heavy inputs of chemical fertilization and irrigation. Yet, the frightening aspect of these miracle seeds is that the life force is removed from the seeds. That is, the plants springing from these seeds are unable to reproduce themselves - the hybrids are sterile. Thus, the miracle in these seeds is really only a commercial miracle because farmers have to buy new supplies every year.

I said earlier that I would let my anger rest, yet now I'll let it resurface. I can only answer to the destruction of places, people, plants, and animals from
deep within myself. My relationships in the world are the source of my knowledge of the injustice of modern science. I realize that emotions have been invalidated by the highly rational technocratic world in which we live. The reason/emotion duality sets up a system which values reason while devaluing emotion. Yet, I value my emotive response. As Turner writes: "Anger nourishes hope and fuels rebellion; it presumes a judgment, presumes how things ought to be and aren't, presumes a care. Emotion is still the best evidence of belief and value." 17

* * *
Ken: Lisa, that was beautiful. But I do have one tiny question. Turner describes the kinds of things you are saying as 'ecobabble', so I'll just ask his question - "What does it mean to communicate with a plant or a place?"

Lisa: Karen Warren, referring to the work of Marilyn Frye, states that it starts with the way we view things - with a loving eye instead of an arrogant eye. It is in this respect that I want to ask you a question about your reference to Hume. Referring to him, you said that a wrong philosophy at worst could make you look ridiculous. I am thinking now about Rousseau's conception of women. He did not look at women with a loving eye, but through his characterization of women justified our subordination. I currently see the effects of his philosophy on how women are seen - as sexual, emotional helpmeets to serve men. How can you say that the consequence of his wrong philosophy is merely ridiculous?

Ken: Lisa, if you had been listening you would have asked a meaningful question - but what can I expect from someone who refers to a 'loving eye' as a clear and concise philosophical term. Anyway, in Descartes' words, "reasoning makes us men" and, by extension, ridiculous reasoning
makes us ridiculous men. But back to your presentation. You say that part of you wants to defer to authority, in line with Descartes' 'masters and possessors' theme. If you really want to be a harmonious being, then why shouldn't this part of you be granted the same status as any other 'part' of you?

Lisa: But, if I defer to authority, I also have to accept their definition of me as a human being. I would accept the master/slave, sado/masochistic duality on which appeals to authority rest. According to Paul Schmidt, deferring or sacrificing myself to authority would entail, "the describable traits that make a person an object." But, defining myself as an object is antithetical to me as a relational being. This is why I honestly wonder why you say that some of your arguments mattered when you were still a human being. So you're not a human being? OK, whatever you are, why do you blame science? I know you've injected mice, but I also know that you were a hunter long before you were a scientist. How then can you blame science for your dehumanization.

Ken: That's the trouble with you feminists - give you a voice and what do you do - just substitute your own self bemoaned 'otherness' for another 'otherness'. So I'm not a human? My statement was a rhetorical implication that
none of us are human. Silko's description of hunting as ritual in *Ceremony* justified my hunting under your own ecofeminist paradigm. Besides, I quit killing years ago - the dreams stopped me. The dreams of all who I had killed. But what about your desire for a healthy relationship in agriculture - can you, whose father is a nuclear physicist, make any reasonable claim to some Rawlsian 'Principle of Fairness.' What makes you think that your agenda is any healthier than Descartes' or Newton's agenda?

Lisa: You ask me to justify my own agenda while trivializing voices which I rely on in my life. Voices found in *Ceremony*, ecofeminist writings, dreams, and nature. Why can't you patriarchs stop? You imperialize others and other ways of knowing for your own ends, raping them of their dignity. You say that we live in a world that we created and it only refers to us. Can't you see that the 'we' and the 'us' refers to males with power. You think that you have created women and nature - once subsuming us under your radical ego and somehow setting yourself apart. "We are women and nature. And he says he can not hear us speak. But we hear."22

Ken: Harding was right -even the illuminated utilize "metaphors of gender politics."23 But you understand my
argument with amazing, if irrational, clarity. Not only was I created and creating out of the modern project's conceptual charnel house - but so were you. But please, since my universalization of a very private pain has offended you so greatly, explain to me what caused your pain if it was not the same monster that caused mine? Who created your self if it was not the same world that created mine? Or were you, like Plato's demi-urge, self created and are now over-flowing with sufficient goodness to create the rest of us?

Lisa: OK Ken - we hurt and are hurting each other. Your acknowledgment of your own pain reminds me of your humanness - something which I have forgotten in speaking harsh words.

Ken: And if I stand in opposition to everything then I stand on the soil of hatred, despair, and alienation - the very evils I oppose. Modern science, modern project, the radical ego - all become empty words in a world where people are starving. Lisa, what can we do?

Lisa: We can quit shouting at each other and start listening to someone who is trying to feed us.

* * *
In November 1991, a few days before Thanksgiving, we visited with Nancy Matheson, a coordinator for Alternative Resources Organization in Helena; and with Bob Corbett, an architect with the National Center for Appropriate Technology, in Butte. A reconstruction of the interview with Nancy Matheson follows.

* * *

Nancy Matheson\textsuperscript{24} (M): Sustainable agriculture has goals. Among these goals are regional food self-sufficiency and agricultural community. To meet these goals, we will need to revise the role of science and technology. We supply the kind of information you can't get through official channels like county extension agents and university researchers. We want to reduce the dependency of farmers and consumers on agri-business.

Question (Q): Why? The current system seems to be providing a cornucopia of food.

M: Modern farming methods are not sustainable. The inherent fertility of our soil is disappearing. Pest and
weed cycles can be broken up by sustainable agricultural methods instead of the sustained use of pesticides and herbicides.

Q: How does sustainable agriculture avoid the use of chemicals?

M: We encourage an ecosystem approach, one that mimics nature and relies on diversity.

Q: Isn't that the kind of help provided to farmers by extension agents, Soil Conservation Service, and the University system?

M: The SCS has been helpful but most extension agents and the universities use methodologies that don't relate to ecosystem agriculture.

Q: Then your project has met resistance?

M: The resistance from scientists is abetting, but there's still resistance from agri-business. At first, MSU couldn't understand our research methods - we use case studies that can't be duplicated or well controlled. MSU wanted to help but they couldn't envision our model - they wanted to apply a microscope universally.
Q: And agribusiness - how does it respond?

M: At first, they treated us as a lunatic fringe. But now they want to work with us because they see sustainable agriculture as inevitable.

Q: How will you know when your project goals are being met?

M: When extension starts doing what we're doing, then we've been a success.

Q: Will that ever happen?

M: I hope so. We quit trying to convert people from monoculture and increased mechanization ideologies. Instead, we work with researchers and extension agents who are interested in our methods. It takes too much energy and time to convert institutions. When we couldn't get the information we needed from University Agricultural Science Departments, we turned to Environmental Studies Programs.

Q: But what about scientific developments in genetic engineering and other pure science areas that may have huge significance in future agricultural projects?
M: We see genetic engineering as a risk. Hybridization, artificial hormones and gene splicing - all of these decrease genetic diversity, increase dependence on agribusiness, and do not use a systems approach to agriculture.

Q: It seems like the two models of agriculture - the high tech, high input model and the sustainable agriculture modes - are incompatible. What will determine which path agriculture takes?

M: Federal policy. Policy now encourages chemical dependent farming, summer fallowing, monoculture, centralized markets, intense mechanization and other methods that require a high degree of dependency on agribusiness.

Q: Who changes from traditional to sustainable farming methods?

M: Our farmers are not conventional. They tend to have more education, they're more thorough, and more dedicated.

Q: Why do they switch from conventional to sustainable methods?

M: Most farmers switch to sustainable agriculture for
one of two reasons. The first reason is based on an environmental ethic. Usually, this is triggered by a personal experience involving pesticides or other chemicals. I'm not talking so much about accidents or careless handling, even apart from these dangers they get sick or their farm animals get sick and sometimes they see the danger to their own children.

The other reason is soil deterioration. They apply commercial fertilizer for a few years then notice that they need to use a lower gear or pull fewer blades to plow a field.

Fifty years ago, when records of soil composition began, Montana's soils averaged 3% organic matter. Now, it averages 1% organic. Below 1%, soil becomes agriculturally sterile - no matter which system - conventional or sustainable - is employed. Since record keeping began, Montana has lost 50% of its topsoil.

Q: What is the greatest threat to Montana's soil?

A: Chemical fertilizer is a bigger issue in Montana than pesticides - they turn the soil into cement and every farmer notices this. But almost all farmers have had negative experiences with pesticides.

Q: How does AERO work?
M: Small groups of farmers develop projects for which we provide small grants. We're trying to nourish relationships among farmers, not tell them what to do. We provide technical assistance and clerical support, but the projects are farmer driven. After the projects have been completed, we try to keep the networks that have been established intact. The networking involves farmers, local markets, and government agencies as well as AERO. The SCS is excited about sustainable agriculture.

Q: How are you funded?

M: Membership dues, donations, foundation grants, and federal grants. The availability of research money makes the research itself more credible.

Q: Does agribusiness support you financially?

M: The seed companies provide some funding. Even elements within agribusiness are beginning to realize that agriculture - under any method - may not be sustainable. Natural plant genotypes are already at risk. Soil quality continues to deteriorate.

Q: Are sustainable agriculture farmers succeeding financially?
M: They've tended to develop their own local markets and on average do as well or better than conventional farmers. This regional nature of agricultural markets needs to be maintained.

Q: How does agribusiness respond to these local markets?

M: There was a study a few years ago called 'LISA', an acronym for Low Input Sustainable Agriculture. The chemical industry ridiculed and trivialized the acronym to such an extent that the name was changed to, 'Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.'

Q: What chance do 'Farm Improvement Clubs' and dreams of 'community' have against agribusiness' power and money?

M: Questions about power and money are virtually meaningless. It is critical that soil depleting activities are stopped.

* * *

Matheson seems to describe a science that has no authority, that is not universal, not replicable - in short, she uses the word 'science' to describe an activity that is antithetical to the 'rational application of method
to test a specific hypothesis about the objective world,' or any other traditional definition of science.

Because of this, we will use the word 'burrowing'. We see no precise definition of the term 'burrowing'. Rather we see burrowing as a process ... a process of being enfolded by the land, a process of remembering we are of the earth. In burrowing intimacy with the land informs decisions about how to farm and about how to work with the land. 'Burrowing', then, denotes the recognition of reason in loving relationships.

Ruth Ginzburg describes midwifery in much the same way that Matheson describes agriculture, or Corbett describes energy production, or David describes quantum mechanics. These may not be competing paradigms, or extensions of old paradigms. They may be unrelated activities that are working within the same paradigm, connected only by a sharing of content in mutually exclusive ways. We can conceive of 'science' and conceive of 'burrowing' simultaneously, but we cannot apply 'science' and 'burrowing' to the same content simultaneously.

This is a way to challenge the authority of science. No longer is science imposed metaphorically from above. In fact, as we said, looked at in this way, 'science' is no longer 'Science'. Burrowing refers to a way of agriculture in which people work with and listen to the land. Of course, in working with the land people may use
methods such as crop rotation or test plots. But these methods are a tool just as a toothbrush is a tool. Our lives are not dictated by the correct universal method in brushing nor by the toothbrush itself.

This does reveal difficulties and paradoxes in shifting from a 'burrow' to a 'science'. 'Test plots' and 'method' refer to concepts inextricably woven into the 'modern project.' Even farmers practicing 'burrowing' describe their activities scientifically. Neil Streyer, a Saskatchewan alternative farmer states, "it takes eight units of energy in conventional agriculture to produce three units of food energy - that's not sustainable. I want to balance that energy equation."26

Like Matheson has stated, though, the shift must be gradual. We can no longer be arrogant enough, or certain enough, and we no longer have a sufficient margin of time or land to precipitate another agricultural crisis, such as the one she believes is linked to agribusiness.

The attitudes and relational perspectives necessary for a burrowtific way of life are developing. Stephen Elliot, a Victor farmer, said, "the technique I feel most valuable is fine-tuning my observational skills. To become intimate with my farm."27 Or, as farmer Frederic Kirschenmann said, "proposing such examples (case studies) is risky because the temptation may be to follow rather than use them as guide-lines - and that is dangerous ...
Each farm is unique and what works on one may not work on another." AERO recognizes that 'authority' itself, whether as science or as burrowing, is inherently dangerous.

Burrowing places goals such as soil fertility over goals such as profit or control. No activity is separated from the ethical, taken out of the whole fabric of our relationships. Vandana Shiva sees conventional agriculture as a shift, "from seeing farming as a process of nurturing the earth to maintain her capacity to provide food, a masculine shift takes place which sees farming as a process of generating profits."  

It is in the shift back to nurturing the earth, allowing the inherent fertility and life force to thrive, that entails a necessary and important land ethic. Working with the land begins by respecting the land's own processes. Rather than the reductionist method of 'single-technology-to-solve-a-single-problem', this land ethic presupposes a respect for the inherent dignity, and life force of the land. This healthy ethic is seen in the approach of many AERO farmers who are, "creating fundamental new ways of working with the land." The farmers list main objectives of conserving and protecting the soil organic matter and soil fertility. Some farmers refuse to handle poisons or put them into the environment.  

As for the perceived result that agribusiness has created huge food surpluses, Shiva quotes Dr. C. Gopalan,
'India's leading nutritionist': "our buffer stocks are apparently more an indication of the poverty of our masses than of real food surplus."\textsuperscript{32} We wonder how much of this nation's food surplus is based on empty or malnourished stomachs. We wonder what the term 'food surplus' means if even one child is hungry.

We also talked to Bob Corbett\textsuperscript{33}, an architect at the National Center for Appropriate Technology. NCAT's vision shares much with AERO. Like Nancy Matheson, Corbett sees 'political will' as the major obstacle to 'decentralized, conservation oriented, and alternative energy production,' and corporate structures as the biggest adversary.

AERO and NCAT talk to each other. Both have quit trying to talk to people who will not listen to them. The needs are too critical to waste time and energy battling ideologies. Finding alternatives to freezing and starving is more important than proving the rightness of their ideology. Besides, they believe that time is running short. Corbett said, "we may not have the time to educate significant numbers of people."

When federal funds were cut and a demonstration project of fifty energy efficient houses was canceled by HUD, NCAT approached Habitat for Humanity. They are now building energy efficient homes with Jimmy Carter. There is poetry in this project - NCAT began as a dream of the Carter administration.
We know the dangers of shouting 'Fire' to a room full of philosophers. If you can't smell the smoke, then no doubt you will counter us with arguments more elegant, more compelling than our own. Still though, we hope that you will listen.
ENDNOTES


3. Abourezk, p. viii.


6. Hightower, p. 82.


10. Holy Bible, KJV, John 18:37


17. Turner, p. 83.


29. Shiva, p. 97.

30. *Cereal-Legume*, p. 4


32. Shiva, p. 129.

PAPER #3

REFLECTION, DIALOGUE, INSIGHT:
EXPLORING RACISM
INTRODUCTION

The paper you are about to read has been a difficult one to write. It has taken me to a very hard place - a place of questioning myself as a person and a student of philosophy.

It is no coincidence that two months before receiving my MA in philosophy I had to write this paper. I have worked for many years as a philosophy student and for about two years as a feminist. It is with great sadness and understanding that I now come to the question of racism in the feminist movement. It is with swollen eyes that I begin to see similarities in the tactics of oppression - in the ways in which men oppress women and in the way white women oppress women of color.

I had a difficult time deciding on a format for this paper. I didn't want this to be a strictly analytic paper, because I thought that an analytic paper would not do justice to the writings of women of color that I rely on extensively. I did, however, want this paper to be a sculpture. I wanted to piece together segments of writings from these women in order to show how their writing has led me to a clearer understanding of racist oppression. It is their voices which I attend to and I wanted a form which portrayed this attention.

In the end, I decided on a dialogue. It is a contrived dialogue. I have selected segments of essays and literally
placed them in a dialogue form. In many ways this is my story - a story about the way I have come to understand racism in my own life and feminist theory. This is a story which I need to understand in this time of transition in my life. Thus, I purposefully pulled out segments that had significance for me - segments that hung in my mind and were pressing on my consciousness. Segments which demanded that my vision of feminist philosophy change.

By selecting segments, I do not want to imply that this is all these women wrote. That would be misleading. Nor do I want to imply that I have come to the correct understanding of their words. I have interpreted their words and incorporated them into this paper. I realize that I may have misinterpreted these women and/or missed their point. I feel vulnerable about this because I see how white privileged women do not always listen to women of color and therefore I may not have really understood their meaning. I acknowledge this and stand open to criticism. I stand willing to work on communication, to work on listening. As I say in the paper, I am not willing to protect my ignorance at the expense of another person's well-being. In light of my blurred interpretation, I encourage readers to read the sources I used. They are listed under 'sources'.

Finally, I encourage readers of this paper to think about process. I want you to think about how you interpret
other people's stories, about how you interpret a philosophical argument or a novel. Think about how these stories are incorporated into your own life and work. It is an interesting process - one which deserves careful thought. One which I am exploring now.
In 1960 Betty Friedan published the *Feminine Mystique*. This book marked the beginning of what many people deem the second wave of feminism. While this second wave was similar to the first (1846-1920) in that it strove for political and civil rights for women, it is distinguished by the huge amount of theory generated. This theory-making grew out of consciousness-raising groups and focused around such questions as sex/gender distinctions, socialization of men and women, rape, unpaid labor, and other social issues.

All this theory-making is an attempt by women to articulate our own experiences. No longer willing to accept the definitions placed upon us, women are striving to define ourselves. We are recovering a lost history. We are striving to articulate our lives systematically in order to allow ourselves the freedom to explore who we are as women and to make sense of our future as women. Women are taking our experiences as women seriously.

Maria Lugones: "But you theorize about women, and we are women, so you understand yourselves to be theorizing about us and we understand you to be theorizing about us. Yet none of the feminist theories developed so far seem to me to help Hispanics in the articulation of our experience. We have a sense that in using them we are distorting our experiences. Most Hispanics can not even understand the language used in these theories - and only
in some cases the reason is that the Hispana can not understand English. We do not recognize ourselves in these theories. They create in us a schizophrenic split between our concern for ourselves as women and ourselves as Hispanas, one that we do not feel otherwise. Thus they seem to us to force us to assimilate to some vision of Anglo culture, however revised that version may be. They seem to ask that we leave our communities or that we become alienated so completely in them that we feel hollow."

Lisa Gerber: When I read these words of Maria Lugones, I think of many things. I think of how I felt when I realized that I had been excluded from theory. For me, this was especially true of ethical theory. I was not the kind of person who was being defined for me. I was not the Kantian super-rational individual, nor the calculating utilitarian. I felt crazy in trying to approach ethical problems in a way that did not fit my experience or myself. The philosophical definition of person did not coincide with my self definition.

I finally felt that my experience and my self-conception was being explored when I began studying feminist theory two years ago. No longer did I feel that my approach to ethical dilemmas was deviant, but I felt validated in contextualizing situations and lives. I keep using ethical theory as an example, but I have similar experiences in comparing traditional theory with feminist
Yet, I hear Maria Lugones saying that this feminist theory, which has been so liberating for me, has silenced her. It is hard for me to comprehend how feminist theory after breaking generations of silence has then turned around and silenced others. I hear her saying that Anglo women have created this feminist theory and it is exclusive.

Elizabeth Spelman: "It is only possible for a woman who does not feel highly vulnerable with respect to other parts of her identity, e.g. race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual alliance, etc., to conceive of her voice simple and essentially as a 'woman's voice'."

Lisa: That is interesting and insightful. What I hear Spelman saying is that gender is the most, if not only, vulnerable factor of an Anglo, affluent, heterosexual women living in a sexist, racist, elitist, homophobic culture. So these women, women like myself, focused on the problem which they wanted to change - the fact that gender makes us vulnerable in a sexist society. So in the consciousness-raising groups and in theory, white privileged women attempted to drop the definition placed upon them by patriarchy and stove to articulated who they were as women. 'Woman' was what theory was focused upon, not what is my experience as a white, heterosexual, affluent woman. 'Woman' was thus being defined by a select group of women and universalized to include all women.
Yet, as Lugones points out this creates a split in her. She feels divided as a Hispana and as a women. Our theories attempt to split her being. As Anglo women, I do not see how we can recognize how this universalizing has hurt us and then turn around and use this oppressive tactic upon other women. Not only does this delegitimize our feminist theories, but more importantly, this type of oppression hurts people. It is imperative to realize that being a woman is not experienced essentially; that my experience in being a woman is intimately connected with the fact that I am white among other things. This aspect is integral to who I am and how I experience the world. To ignore this difference as clouding the essential women and to assume that gender is the only important difference among people is racist. This is a tactic of an oppressor.

Maria: "I think it necessary to explain why in so many cases when women of color appear in front of white/Anglo women to talk about feminism and women of color, we mainly raise a complaint; the complaint of exclusion, of silencing, of being included in a universe we have not chosen. We usually raise the complaint with a certain amount of disguised or undisguised anger."

Lisa: I understand this anger. This exclusion from theory and theorizing, this forcing into an unchosen world, this silencing of experience is a well known patriarchal
tool. As a white woman, I know the harm in being excluded from history. I have felt the pain in being defined by someone else. I have felt confusion in trying to understand traditional ethical theory when it did not coincide with my experience or views on life. I remember the hurt and anger I felt when I realized sayings like "all men are created equal" referred only to men and not all people.

And now. And now I hear women of color saying that they are being excluded. I hear them saying that white feminists speak about 'women', but in reality are only referring to white women. I imagine, though I am not sure, that there may be a greater sense of betrayal, a greater sense of exclusion, when women exclude other women.

I understand that white women when they universalize are acting as oppressors. I must ask, in the same vein as I have asked male theorists, what entitles me to speak for all women. To say I know 'woman', essentially and definitively, is a form of power over. Who gives me the power and authority to define woman? At first it seems appropriate since I am a woman. But, as it has been made crystal clear, I say women, but I mean a particular group of women. And so it fits. Oppressive tactics are varied and deep. I have been excluded from the category human for the best part of 2000 years, and now I am excluding my sisters. This pains me. I hope that I can act on the lessons I have learned. I have learned the importance
of people defining themselves, rather than being defined by someone else.

Blanche Jackson: "When human beings group themselves and claim an identity, they are entering into an experiment, a contractual agreement, to generate a body of information on a set of evolving relationships. In doing this work, women of color do not welcome the uninvited input of white feminists who project the attitude that their truth is every woman's truth, that they created feminism and that they will guide minorities to the light."
Amoja Three Rivers: "Ethnocentricism, according to the Random House Dictionary of the English Language means 'a tendency to view alien groups or cultures in terms of one's own' and 'the belief in the inherent superiority of one's own group and culture, accompanied by a feeling of contempt for other groups and cultures.' It is ethnocentric to use a generic term such as people to refer only to white people and then racially label everyone else. This creates and reinforces the assumption that white people are the norm and that all others are aberrations and somehow less than truly human. It is seeing white people at the center and everyone else as variations on the theme."

Lisa: It is ethnocentric for me to speak of women (as I have in many papers) when I am conceptualizing the lives of white privileged women. I don't know how many times one of my professors asked who is the 'we' you write about in this paper. Not understanding, I would then write, 'we, as women.' I do not think that my experience is a rare occurrence in theoretical writing. Sadly and ironically many Anglo feminists have challenged the patriarchy because of its androcentricism while failing to look at their own ethnocentric biases.

bell hooks: "One reason white women active in feminist movement were unwilling to confront racism was their arrogant assumption that their call for Sisterhood was a non-racist gesture. Many white women have said to me,
'we wanted black women and other non-white women to join the movement' totally unaware of their perception that they somehow 'own' the movement, that they are the 'hosts' inviting us as 'guests'."

Lisa: I do think it is ethnocentricism that leads to this arrogant assumption of which bell hooks writes. This is part of seeing white people at the center and everyone else as variations on the theme. This ethnocentricism makes it possible for white people to think we own the feminist movement. I've seen this in organizations that I belong to. At the University Women's Center we often speak about the need for more diversity. Recognizing this need we try to recruit more women of color by placing our posters in different parts of campus and working with other groups. And still we are a group of mostly white women. Betty, the sole black women in our organization said that she has invited members of the Black Student Unions to our meetings. No, they replied, that is a white women's group.

I understand what bell hooks is saying. As long as it is white women trying to figure out how to get women of color to join, there is going to be a problem. It is saying that this is our group and the way we want to define it is diverse. What needs to happen if it is to be multiracial instead of racist is that we need to activate together. Diverse women need to begin groups together
and to develop goals and values together. This is a process which needs to be addressed. One step in this process is dropping the tool of ethnocentricism which allows white feminists to assume that they have created women's culture and women's groups. It is to drop the ethnocentricism which allows white feminists to assume that their goals and values are right and other women's goals and values should be molded to fit them.

I think this ethnocentricism is damaging in at least three important ways. First, it allows for the exploitation of other cultures. Second, it can lead to a misunderstanding and devaluation of nonwhite women's history and experience. Thirdly, ethnocentricism can harm women when their histories and experiences are not taken seriously. When I acknowledge the way ethnocentricism can damage I am acknowledging that it is a tool of an oppressor; the ethnocentric world view is used, implicitly or explicitly, to justify harm to other cultures.

Amoja: "Let's face a hard reality: 20th century white society is culturally addicted to exploitation. Cultivate an awareness of your own personal motivations. Do not simply take and consume. If you are white and you find yourself drawn to Native American spirituality, Middle Eastern religion, African drumming, Asian philosophies, or Latin rhythms, make some effort to maintain some kind of balance. Don't learn the fun and exciting things about
us and then go home to your safe, isolated, white, privileged life. Learn about the history of the people whose culture you are dabbling in. Learn how your history relates to our own, how your privilege relates and contributes to our oppression and exploitation. And most importantly - give something back."

Lisa: I think the exploitation of other cultures can be obvious as well as subtle. I am bothered when I hear one professor try to justify animal rights by appealing to part of Chinese philosophy. I am bothered when environmental ethicists talk about Native American tradition without giving voice to the differences in tribes or various people. I think theorymaking is especially vulnerable to these types of exploitation. The philosopher and the anthropologist, the historian and the biographer, justify their exploitation because they are on the search for truth.

I hear Three Rivers when she speaks about learning history. There is much historical interaction that I have not taken the time to learn. I have always wondered about the relationship between white southern plantation owners wives and black women slaves. Maxine Van de Wetering began a story which she never ended. She spoke about how southern white women were supposed to be virtuous, practically bodiless, but they were still expected to lay with their husbands. Most likely, the wife was raped. These plantation owners also had a history of raping black slave women.
These men would take a special liking to certain black women who they raped and would make them work in the house, usually as an attendant to the wife. So there they were. Two women, both raped by the same man, yet living out an oppressive relationship – one mistress, one slave. Was there hatred, jealousy, tension, empathy. What is the story?

I am also wondering about what Three Rivers says about giving something back. In this paper, I am taking the words of women, but am I giving anything back? I have been so well trained to take, I am not sure what to offer.

Amoja: "It is important that European women not assume with ethnocentricism that their herstorical experiences are universal. They should not assume that no group of women any where could possibly have had 'rooms of their own' or input into shaping how their people moved in the world."

Lisa: These words of Amoja Three Rivers sink into my heart. Anglo-European feminists have long maintained that males have been the creators of culture and women have been defined as helpmeets to male needs. Anglo feminists have hailed the writing of Virginia Woolf in her insight that women need rooms of our own, real space and resources, in order to be creative. I hear Three Rivers saying that while this may be true for Anglo culture, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is true for all cultures.

I am feeling really uncomfortable right now. I think
about how I am using the writing of these women to my own ends - in the exploration of how feminist theory is racist. This is my story. Perhaps I am so preoccupied with this, that I haven't really listened to these women. I have a feeling that I am distorting their words to suit my needs.

So when I hear Three Rivers suggest that maybe not all women have not had 'rooms of their own', nor input into shaping their culture, I stop. I see clearly the narrow vision I am following. I look sideways into the recesses of my mind. There tucked into a corner are stories I have heard. Stories about strong Pueblo women. These women designed adobes and the layout of the pueblo. They commanded great respect and made decisions which affected the whole community. When white traders first came, these Pueblo women continued in their role as spokeswomen. Yet, these white traders would not talk with the women. They wanted to trade with other men.

I am not sure where I heard this story and I am not sure if this is the type of story that Three Rivers is suggesting. I am sure however that I need to listen more carefully to the voices of other women. I must quiet myself... listen... allow other women the space to articulate their story. Stories not born out of Anglo culture.

Again, I hear women of color continuing to point out that white women's experiences are not definitive of all
women's experiences. To assume that white culture is the norm caused the distortion of many women's experiences.

Gail Burstyn: Another issue for me as I listened to my supervisor describe my career plans was my fear of taking up space. Of seeming too obvious or overpowering. This is a tricky issue and feels incredibly risky to write about. My fear is based upon the stereotype that Jews are loud, obvious, and pushy. As part of my internalized anti-semitism, I try to disassociate from this negative stereotype. Yet this stereotype is rooted in some particular feature of Jewish culture which I do not consider negative. Many of my Jewish peers grew up as I did in homes where debates and discussions were common mealtime and anytime activities. We were encourage to open our mouths and speak up. 'Don't talk back' and 'children should be seen and not heard' were not sayings in my household. We were not raised to be docile or compliant. So, as Jews, we sometimes stand out because of this upbringing and as Jewish women, we may seem even more unlike our non-Jewish colleagues, who may not have been raised to be so assertive.

Lisa: I can empathize with Gail Burstyn and admire her strength in speaking about her truth as a Jewish woman. I have a sense that she is reclaiming an identity from the jaws of a negative stereotype. I too have done this. I have reclaimed my emotions and intuitions which have
been negatively stereotyped by the patriarchy. I am doing this against great resistance.

Yet, Gail Burstyn is referring to a conference in which she and other women gathered around the issue of domestic violence. I wonder how the woman's movement perpetuates stereotypes. Do feminists really make a space for difference? I say this with my new understanding of how white affluent women, usually of Christian heritage, have claimed ownership of the feminist movement. These Anglo women historically have been prescribed meekness. It may be that we play out these historical images. In the feminist collective to which I belong, many of us work to speak our minds directly and honestly. It is something which had to be learned, and it is a practice which is not always easy.

Perhaps deep inside we fear assertive behavior. In white Christian culture, women have been rewarded for manipulative behavior. My own mother, who is incredibly strong and clear sighted, says that she has perfected the tactic of getting what she wants by making my dad believe that he thought of it. So perhaps when we Anglo women see a strong woman like Gail, we see all the doors which have been shut on us when we directly speak our mind.

I hear Gail when she says that her assertive behavior is rooted in part of Jewish culture which she sees as positive. I think that it is crucial that we honor each
other and each other's strength and leadership. I also think that a lot of self-reflection needs to go on; self reflection on a personal level and self-reflection on a social, political level. Without this reflection, serious harm can occur.

Donna Alhadeff Messinger and Haley Seif: "While Task Force members understand and value making the various Task Forces visible, having Jewish women wear light blue stickers to achieve this goal was inappropriate. Many of us were disturbed and angered by being put into a position of wearing the light blue stickers. Many Jewish women refused to wear these stickers while others of us wore them, having serious reservations about doing so. We are a diverse group of Jewish women. Some of us are Holocaust survivors. Some of us are daughters and granddaughters of Holocaust survivors. Nazi soldiers and citizens of Nazi-occupied Europe killed many of our family members and/or allowed them to be killed. Those nations, following official German policies, required Jews to wear yellow stars at all times. Our people were denied civil rights and eventually denied rights to live at all. The thought of wearing color coded stickers brought up images of the Holocaust for some of us. We, too, would like to be visible within the Battered Women's Movement. The option of wearing light blue stickers, however, ignored our oppression. As a Task Force, we would like to choose a symbol that affirms and empowers
our people."

Lisa: Listening to Messinger and Seif, I can see why the feminist movement must be interconnected and multicultural if oppression is going to be fought in any revolutionary manner.

Amoja: "Nor should [European women] decide that 'multicultural' means that they get to take what they want and give us what they think we should have. Perhaps instead of our music and spirituality, women of color would like to contribute our notions of respect."
Audre: "Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our experiences and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear that it is the task of women of Color to educate white women - in the face of tremendous resistance - as to our existence, our difference, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought."

Lisa: I have noticed this oppressive tactic in dealing with the male power structure. This tactic is especially useful in maintaining the existent power structure for two reasons. First, it requires a constant drain of energy; energy which could be better spent elsewhere. Second, it allows for an evasion of responsibility on the part of the oppressor.

Now I hear and I understand that white women are placing the responsibility of education upon women of color and thus are using the same oppressive tactic. I see how the burden is wrongfully placed upon women of color. I have often heard that we can not speak about racism unless there are women of color present. Women of color are sought to be on panels on racism. Black women are asked to go into classrooms and explain the importance of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. Indian women are told
they must share their spirituality. And it is said that women of color must educate on racism.

Amoja: "The closest I have come to doing any real antiracism work is giving workshops on the background and cultural perspective of the Cultural Etiquette guide in which I talk women's herstory. I think that gives women some fuel with which to combat racism and internalized oppression. But as far as doing antiracism work directly, I don't because I find it too painful. I try to encourage white women to do this work among their sisters."

Lisa: I know how painful it is to speak with men about sexism. I think of the blank faces. Or the questions which are condescendingly asked. I hate the way I am asked for 'proof' when I felt the painful truth in the telling of my story. By analogy and because I understand what these women are saying, I see how hurtful it is to ask a woman of color to educate me about racism.

Audre: "this letter (to Mary Daly) attempts to break a silence which I had imposed upon myself ... I had decided never again to speak to a white woman about racism. I felt it was wasted energy because of destructive guilt and defensiveness and because whatever I had to say might be better said by white women to one another at far less emotional cost to the speaker and probably with a better hearing."

Lisa: I honor the strength of Audre Lorde and Amoja
Three Rivers. Their clarity in not educating white women about racism and not participating in a relationship dictated by an oppressor makes me determined to subvert the other part of the unhealthy power relation; I will take responsibility for my own actions and my own education. I say this while acknowledging and being grateful for all I have learned from the women whose words appear in this paper.

One way for Anglo women to take responsibility for eliminating their ethnocentricism and their racism is learning about women and the cultures to which they belong. One way to do this is to read books by women of color. In this way we can educate ourselves about other ways of being in the world, other holidays, other values, other ways of seeing racism and sexism.

Maxine Hong Kingston: "And again whammed into the block question: does he announce now that the author is - Chinese? Or, rather, Chinese-American: And be forced into autobiographical confession. Stop the music - I have to butt in and introduce myself and my race. 'Dear reader, all these characters whom you've been identifying with - Bill, Brooke, and Annie - are Chinese - and I am too.' The fiction is spoiled. You who have been suckered along, identifying like hell, only to find out that you've been getting a peculiar, colored, slanted p.o.v. 'Call me Ismael.' See? You pictured a white guy didn't you? If
Ismael were described - ochery ecru amber umber skin - you picture a tan white guy didn't you? Wittman wanted to spoil all those stories coming out of and set in New England Back East - to blacken and to yellow Bill, Brooke, and Annie. A new rule for the imagination: The common man has Chinese looks. From now on, whenever you read about those people with no surnames, color them with black or yellow skin." -from The Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book.

Lisa: Ah, and we must always be aware of how we remake others in our image. This passage from Kingston's novel made a great impact on me. I think about it often and ask other white women about if they see white characters when they read. Many replied yes, unless they knew the cultures intimately. So another way of educating ourselves might involve making a good faith effort to get to know different women and educate ourselves about their cultures.

Andy Smith: "When white 'feminists' see how white people have historically oppressed others and how they are coming very close to destroying the earth, they often want to disassociate themselves from their whiteness. They do this by opting to 'become Indian.' In this way they can escape responsibility and accountability for white racism.

Of course white 'feminists' only want to become only partly Indian. They do not want to be part of our struggles
for survival against genocide, and they do not want to fight for treaty rights or an end to substance abuse or sterilization abuse. They do not want to do anything that would tarnish their romanticized notions of what it means to be Indian."

Lisa: What I hear Andy Smith saying is that getting to know other cultures does not mean exploitation or colonization. No, educating oneself about other cultures is part of a process of engaging in mutual and respectful dialogue.

Maria: "Here we should again note that white/Anglo women are much less prepared for this dialogue with women of color than women of color are for dialogue with them in that women of color have had to learn white/Anglo ways, self-conceptions, and conceptions of them."

Lisa: White women have not had to learn the ways of women of color in order to survive. In a white supremacist society, white people get a free ride because of the color of our skin. A free ride built upon the lives of other people.

Maria: "The only real motive that makes sense to me for your joining this investigation is the motive of friendship, out of friendship. A non-imperialist feminism requires that you make a real space for our articulating, interpreting, theorizing and reflecting about the connections among them - a real space must be noncoerced
space - and/or that you follow us into our world out of friendship. I see the 'out of friendship' as the only sensical motivation for this following because the task at hand for you is one of extraordinary difficulty. It requires that you be willing to suffer alienation and self-disruption."

Lisa: Wait. I am feeling uncomfortable again. I have reached another insight in the writing of this paper. When I first began this project, I wanted to use extensive quotes from women of color, because I wished to respect their voices. But, what is happening here is not noncoerced space. It does not get much more coerced than this. And I haven't felt that I have offered a space for them to articulate their experience. No, I have taken their words and put them in a space where they will support my thesis. I have not followed a woman of color into her world, but dismembered her words and drug them into my world of theory.

So now I have a strong criticism of this particular paper, but I feel that this critiques goes deeper than that. After the writing of the first draft I went into a deep depression. I was hurt because I had come to see ways in which the feminist movement was oppressive. I was also hurt by the form of the paper. I had this feeling that I could never do philosophy again. I thought that I had misused and misinterpreted the words of these women. Yet, in a strange sort of way, I felt like the way I had
set up this paper was more honest than traditional theory. Longer quotes would allow readers a stronger sense of what these women were saying and would allow readers to see how I interacted with their material. So there is this tension. Tension between honoring the voices of other women and exploiting them.

This tension allowed me to see how traditional theory is exploitative. How many times have we said, "according to .." or "as so and so says in her book..". Who is to say that our interpretation of other texts is correct. Somehow we philosophers appeal to other's writings and assume that we have the correct translation. Yet, very often, we choose only part of a text and many times we misinterpret it.

The reading of texts has come to be so solid. One can read and reread an essay until one gets to the point that she thinks she has found the correct translation. Then she takes this gem of truth and takes it to her own work and incorporates it. But, we must remember that we come with our selves, with our own experiences, our own needs, and our own methods of translating and interpreting. Acknowledging this may mean honest theory.

I am beginning to understand that theory can be done differently. I feel motivated to work through a blurring of boundaries. I want to dissolve the philosophical lining so it can mingle with prose and with poetry. I want to
do philosophy in a way than I am completely embedded in it. I want to take those noble questions, questions of what it is to be a human being, of what it means to act ethically, of beauty, and explore them from my concrete life. The writing of this paper has led me to understand that what I really want to speak about in the discussion of racism is listening. I want to explore the personal, political and social barriers that get in the way of listening. I want to write about the virtue of listening.

That however is another essay. We must continue and think through two more sections of oppressive tactics.
Lisa: Emotions have been an important source of knowledge for feminists. Many feminists have argued that rationality is not the sole epistemological tool and that emotions are an important source of knowledge. I have often argued that emotions are not only a source of knowledge, but are bonds which hold us together. That is, emotions allow me to connect with others - with humans, trees, birds, the Clark Fork River.

Audre: "Women responding to racism. My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my vision to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of anger will teach you nothing also.

Women responding to racism means women responding to anger: the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-option."

Lisa: Anger. I have thought much about anger. Historically, I see how European women have been taught not to be angry. I think about the story of patient Griselda. Griselda is a dutiful wife who never gets angry. She is put through many trials by her demented husband including the supposed killing of her children, yet she always complies with cheerfulness. She is completely
devoted to obedience and delights in nothing but her husband's pleasure. This is a story written in the early seventeenth century, and yet this prescription still holds true today. How often are Anglo women told to smile or that they look ugly when they are angry.

Yet, even with all this cultural baggage, I have learned to value my anger. I have learned to listen to this anger and to express it. I know that anger is an appropriate response to the fact that one out of every three women will be raped in their lifetime. I know that my anger at the acres and acres of clearcut in Pattee Canyon is an appropriate response. Anger is not a still emotion. It necessitates change. My anger has been a motive force for activism. This anger spotlights a better vision, a healthier way of envisioning relationships among people and between people and the world.

Audre: "For women raised to fear, too often anger threatens annihilation. In the male construct of brute force, we were taught that our lives depended upon the good will of patriarchal power. The anger of others was to be avoided at all costs, because there was nothing to be learned from it but pain, a judgment that we had been bad girls, come up lacking, not done what we were supposed to do. And if we accept our powerlessness, then of course any anger can destroy us."

Lisa: I hear you Audre Lorde. I have been taught
to express anger, but I have never learned to respond to someone's anger. I remember at the first feminist conference I went to the poet Chrystos was there. She was angry. She said she was angry because she had been invited to read at a conference on race, class and gender, but as she stood up to read, she spoke to a group of mostly white faces. She said she was angry because she felt tokenized. She was angry because of the lack of Native American women attending the conference. She was angry, and yes I felt like a bad girl, like I had done something wrong. I felt guilty. Guilty for participating in a racist institution. Guilty for being white.

Audre: "I have no creative use for guilt, yours or my own. Guilt is only another way of avoiding informed action, of buying time out of the pressing need to make clear choices, out of the approaching storm that can feed the earth as well as bend the trees."

Lisa: That is interesting. I was raised a Catholic and Catholics are taught that when you feel guilty you go to confession. You sit in a dark booth and tell the priest your 'sins'. The priest then gives you a certain number of Hail Mary's to say and your sin, and subsequent guilt, is absolved. Yet the problem is never confronted directly.

I come from New Mexico. This state has a rehabilitation home for priests who have gone astray.
Many times I have driven past this ranchette and thought of all the alcoholic priests who wandered the grounds. I imagined they had all nipped a little too often on the blood of Christ. And yet last week I found out that this center also housed priests who molested children. The place isn't funny to me any longer. The child molesters roam around the beautiful New Mexico landscape and pray for their healing. After enough Christian prayer they would be reinstated into the church, most of them staying in New Mexico. Their prayer did not confront the problem. Their prayer did not help the many New Mexican children were sexually abused by these men.

Audre: "Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to ones' own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since then it is no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness."

Lisa: I see how guilt is not an appropriate response to anger. I refuse to protect my ignorance at the expense of another woman's well-being. I see how guilt is the perfect tool of an oppressor who does not want to change; who does not want to change herself or society.
It's funny, I had a whole list of fears about standing in front of another woman's anger. I feared that I would respond with anger and we would not communicate, but hate. I feared that I would be unable to hear your pain, especially if it was pain to which I had contributed. Perhaps I feared the dissolution of that part of myself which stands upon the false pedestal of a racist society. No matter. Those fears are but memories. I stand open and ready to listen.

Audre: "It is not the anger of other women that will destroy us but our own refusals to stand still, to listen to its rhythms, to learn within it, to move beyond the manner of presentation to the substance, to tap that anger as an important source of empowerment."
SAMENESS
bell: "According to their [bourgeois women liberationists] analysis, the basis for bonding was shared victimization, hence the emphasis on common oppression. The concept of bonding directly reflects male supremacist thinking. Sexist ideology teaches women that to be female is to be a victim."

Lisa: Yes, I see that. Historically, the common oppression of women was emphasized. Feminists looked at ways in which women were defined by the male culture and then looked at the ways in which this definition set women up for abuse. For example, one image of woman is the whore. This woman is promiscuous, and always wants sex; she is threatening to men, because she could lure even the purist of men to their sensual destruction. She was the siren. She was nature attempting to cause men to fall from their spiritual sky. She was the vagina dentata. She was the woman next door who could not call it rape, because she, like all women, really wanted it. She was a victim. A victim because she had been defined in such a way that her abuse was not seen as abuse.

So yes, in the feminist movement women have been defined by their common oppression. Yet, I think there is more than sexist ideology working in the idea of common oppression. I think it comes from the focus upon commonality or sameness. I further think that this search for sameness is another tactic of an oppressor. Think
about how America has been defined as the great melting pot where differences melt away and where every man has the chance at the American dream. Or think about how moral worth has been accorded to people having a common feature—like Kant's notion of rationality for instance. Or think about the traditional notion of marriage. Two people are united as one under a common surname. Or think about how we do theory.

This striving for commonality was seen in the first part of this piece during the discussion about how white feminists were universalizing their own particular notion of woman. We searched for a common feature, a common essence which would unite all women. This example refers to the content of theory. The theoretical method also emphasizes sameness. As a student, I have been told to think for myself, but I am told to couch it in ways that are nonpersonal and objective. Theory all follows the same form. One has a thesis and then one gives reasons and authoritative quotes to support this thesis. What I have found after five years of philosophy is that this sameness in the guise of objectivity has silenced my voice and trained me to exploit the voices of others.

Audre: "Simone de Beauvoir once said: 'it is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting.'

Racism and homophobia are real conditions in all our
lives in this place and time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices."

Lisa: There are many differences which are not now acknowledged in a revolutionary manner by white feminists. I say revolutionary manner, because difference is acknowledged in a very superficial way. I don't know how often I have read essays which speak about women and say something about how we must, of course, take into account differences in race, class, sexual preference, age, etc. This is not a way of honoring difference, but merely a way of moving our lips.

Audre: "Poor women and women of color know that there is a difference between the daily manifestations of marital slavery and prostitution because it is our daughters who line 42nd Street. If white American feminist theory need not deal with the differences in our oppression, then how do you deal with the fact that the women who clean your houses and tend your children while you attend conferences on feminist theory are, for the most part, poor women and women of color? What is the theory behind feminist racism."

Lisa: One of the reasons why Anglo women fear to look at difference is because as in the case above, we will
have to acknowledge our role in oppressing others. In addition, we will have to look at our own lives and change those aspects which are oppressive and harmful to others. We will also have to look into ourselves to see how we judge difference, and explore the reasons why we think we are justified in oppressing others.

This devaluation of difference and legitimizing of oppression because of those differences is a construct of an oppressive group. There is a close relationship between this, methods of assimilation, and the idea that white feminists own the feminist movement. After all if I and others like me own the feminist movement, then I and others like me dictate norms and values. If you want to take part in this movement, you will do so in terms of attributes we share as women. Regarding our differences, I can ignore them, devalue them, or appropriate them for my purposes.

If I see another woman solely in terms of ways in which she is like me, then I negate much of her being. It hurts me to think about this, but what if I thought that the only significant aspect of Audre Lorde was that she was a woman? What has happened to the description of herself as a black lesbian mother of two and member of an interracial couple?

Audre: "...I believe one of the reasons white women have such difficulty reading Black women's work is because
of their reluctance to see Black women as women and as
different from themselves. To examine Black women's
literature effectively requires that we be seen as whole
people in our actual complexities - as individuals, as
women, as human - rather than as one of those problematic
but familiar stereotypes provided in this society in place
of genuine images of Black women. And I believe this holds
true for the literature of other women of Color who are
not black."

Lisa: I recognize that tactic. It comes back to being
defined as an Other rather than defining oneself. As long
as a person is defined as Other all types of abuse are
not seen as abuse at all. I can not see the harm that
my theorizing does to women of color unless I see nonwhite
women as dynamic complete individuals. Unless I listen
to and hear the self descriptions of women of color then
I will be condoning the existent power structure. I will
be supporting and continuing the very structure which
oppresses based on difference.

Audre: "Now we must recognize difference among women
who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and
devise ways to use each other's difference to enrich our
visions and our joint struggles.

The future of our earth may depend upon the ability
of all women to identify and develop new definitions of
power and new patterns of relating across difference.
The old definitions have not served us not the earth that supports us. The old pattern, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemns us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges.

Lisa: I do think there are healthy ways of relating across differences. Right now I want to explore the concept of difference in my work. I think there are two things that are happening here. One is that differences between people must be recognized and honored. Two is that difference needs to be recognized in the method of theory. For me this realization is a symbol of freedom. No longer do I feel bound by traditional theoretical shackles. I am also excited about listening to how other women do theory, when they are given the space to do it freely. How a woman does theory will add to the expression of who she is. Theory is the creation and articulation of an idea - an expression of how one sees the world. If we honor difference in living one's life, we must also honor difference in the articulation of life.

One question keeps running through my mind: can diverse women do theory together? This is an interesting question and I hear hope in the asking. The way I see it is that if we can reject (as our only alternative) the traditional notion of theory, then the possibilities of theoretical discourse blossom. I think it will be an interesting process when diverse women do theory together. The form
of theory will need to be created by the women themselves. Also, I think that much active listening will need to take place. That means a lot of "what I hear you saying is..." and "No, what I mean is..." Finally, I think it will take an honoring of emotions in a way that allows knowledge to be heard. I say this about theory, not because I think the feminist movement needs diverse women to do theory together. No, I say this with the recognition that women may want to explore this possibility as we strive to articulate our lives and relationships.

Audre: "Within the interdependence of mutual (non dominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with the true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged."
Sources


POSTPARTUM

It has been two months now since I have finished these papers and participated in the thesis dialogue. With good reason, I have decided to name this final section postpartum. You know, that after-thesis, masters degree depression. The depression which comes from having something be part of you then separate, and realizing that it is independent.

The papers offered in this thesis are not merely academic exercises, but they have life. In some ways, I feel as if they are my children. I have nurtured them, cared for them, worked with them, molded them, and exposed my vulnerability in them. When it came time for my thesis dialogue, I had to let these children go. These papers, these thoughts and feelings, now exist independent from me and can be respected or scoffed according to the will of the reader. As a writer, I want these papers to be cared for and read sympathetically; yet, this is something over which I have no control.

I believe in a vision which these papers offer - a vision of mutual dialogue, communication, and respectful listening. This is why I asked for a thesis dialogue, rather than a defense. I wanted to live the vision of people working together rather that against each other. I wanted people participating in the dialogue to be able
to explore our own prejudices and abuses of power.

Perhaps because I am new at this, and perhaps because I am naive, I thought that my papers would radically reshape how people interacted with each other. Thus, I was devastated when during the thesis dialogue two male professors spoke over and interrupted a female student. I was angry when I saw how this incident served to silence the other students in the room. Not one of them spoke again until I specifically asked them a question and gave them structured space in which to talk. Then each one of them spoke eloquently and articulately. They had obviously put much thought into their words. I was also disturbed when we spoke at length about how I had misinterpreted 'science', rather than explore how we perpetuate racism in our institutions. Obviously, it is easier for thirteen university educated white people sitting in a philosophy library to speak about science rather than racism. I hold all of us accountable, because I believe in the vision that everyone's voice be heard, and that we all be self-reflective in our interactions with each other.

So, things were not as perfect as I had hoped. There were still abuses of power and a refusal to look at our own "isms". Yet now, after two months and further reflection, I have made peace with the thesis dialogue. I do this, because I respect and honor the effort made
by every person in that room. The dialogue was different from a traditional defense, and people took cues from each other on how to act. I am inspired by both the professor who came up to me and apologized for speaking too much, and the female student who struggled to overcome her fear of speaking in a group. Just as I experimented with form in the papers, we all explored new ways of relating with each other in an academic setting. A great thanks to everyone who participated in the thesis dialogue!

Now that I have voiced my objections, I must answer two objections about these papers. The thesis committee has taken issue with the discussion of the conception of self in the first paper, and the characterization of science in the second paper. I have agreed to speak to these objections. Perhaps exploring these critiques will add insight into the process of writing and exploring in philosophical form.

In the first paper on pornography, it was objected that the Cheney/Gilligan discussion of self was tacked on and distracting. I find this to be an interesting objection. In fact during the thesis dialogue when I was asked why I had included this discussion in the paper, I had thought that he had understood the foundation of my argument. I smiled at the insightful question and proceed to explain why this discussion was important. The masculine self, I argued, gives rise to the legal
liberal tradition which makes it possible to subjugate lives to principles. In contrast, the feminist concept of self envisions a self in relation and allows for a legal revolution in which concrete, particular and diverse lives come to the forefront. Yes, I reasoned, how one sees oneself is directly related to how one lives in the world.

Upon rereading this paper, however, I can understand why a reader would find the discussion of self distracting even while I can understand why the conceptions of self are integral to the paper. As a writer, I think I have come to a resolution of this tension in the third paper. In the paper on racism, the feminist conception of self is also integral to the paper, but I did not need to explicitly discuss it. Rather, I explored this conception of self in the form of the paper. Through the dialogue structure, long quotations and personal interaction with the material, I could explore what it means to be a self in relation. This attention to exemplification seems a more powerful and exciting way to write. This is another clear example of how the form of the paper can be an integral part of expression.

The objection to the second paper is much more problematic. It was said that Ken and my description of science was too hardlined and simplistic, as if science were separate from the people who practiced it and oppressive by nature. Yet, Ken and my point is that a
practice can not be isolated and viewed independently. Practice, whether in the form of science or burrowing, is embedded within a complex system. Difference is seen when one views the practice immersed in a complex worldview. To make this point more clear, I will refer back to the paper and discuss two different worldviews in which the practices of science/burrowing are immersed. A useful way to do this will be to look at the conception of self and the assumptions about knowledge that are embedded in the worldviews of the AERO farmers and the practitioners of agribusiness.

The AERO farmers are clearly articulating a conception of self that is vastly different from a patriarchal western conception of self. As mentioned in the first paper, this masculine conception of self is viewed as isolated and separate. It is a self that acts upon something, rather than in relation. In contrast, the AERO farmers describe a self in relation similar to the self discussed by Gilligan and Cheney. Refer to the second paper and listen carefully to how one AERO farmer describes his relationship with the land: "the technique I feel most valuable is fine tuning my observational skills. To become intimate with my farm." (p. 30 - this and subsequent page numbers refer to paper two.) He is using relational language and techniques to describe his relationship with the farm.

Another clear contrast is the conception of knowledge,
both in how knowledge is obtained and who is considered
an expert knower. The AERO farmers speak about their unique
and specific farm. They listen to the land and gain
knowledge from their relation with the land. The idea
that knowledge is gained by working in a specific context
also empowers the individual farmer to act on that
knowledge. Again referring to the second paper, Matheson
reflects this empowerment of the farmer when she says:
"small groups of farmers develop projects for which we
provide small grants. We try to nourish relationships
among farmers, not tell them what to do." (p. 27) Thus,
the farmer can honor the knowledge gained by intimacy with
the land as well as honoring him- or herself as a knower.

This is very different from the agribusiness approach
to knowledge and experts. I have learned much by speaking
with my great-uncle Gordon who farms in Minnesota. Because
of economic and societal pressures, he has become highly
dependent on agribusiness. He describes with frustration
going to an office to check in. There he listens to a
person behind a computer tell him what to do on his farm.
The information he is given is general for an entire region.
He is told what to do, rather than develop ideas himself.
He grumbles about all of this, talks about how it used
to be, wonders if he'll ever get out of debt, and if he
will be able to maintain his small farm as large
corporations buy up the farms in his community.
Clearly, then the worldviews in which science or burrowing are practiced are vastly different. People in each may use scientific tools, such as a test plot, but there is a difference in the orientation, attitudes and results.

* * *

So there you have it - exploration in form, explorations in thought processes, and explorations in honesty. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to write these papers. Many things came together - a strong women's community, the newly formed women's studies department, the agreement of Nancy Cook and Tom Huff to be on the thesis committee, and especially an unimaginably wonderful thesis advisor. With the presence, support, and insightful criticism from Deborah Slicer, I was able to explore in content and structure. All of this adds to my clarity about the importance of supporting each other as we find our own voices and as we listen to the voices of others.