

Women's Philosophy Review, 1997–2005

In August 2005 the editors and editorial board of the *Women's Philosophy Review* (WPR), the journal of the UK Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP), decided to cease publication, at least for the foreseeable future. WPR grew out of the *Women in Philosophy Newsletter* that had been circulated to members of SWIP for many years under the editorship of Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whitford. In the summer/autumn issue of 1997 (no. 17), it was transformed into an ISSN-registered, peer-review journal in acknowledgement of the need for a 'proper' journal dedicated to feminist theory and philosophy. In particular, as its new editor, Christine Battersby, wrote in the first issue of the transformed journal, WPR aimed to correct the comparative neglect of feminist philosophy in mainstream philosophy journals. Along with interviews with women philosophers and feminist theorists, review essays of feminist literature on major philosophical figures and areas of philosophy, the journal published regular guest-edited special issues. Soon WPR was commissioning the most significant interviews with women philosophers to be published in the UK. Outstanding examples include Alessandra Tanesini's interview with Judith Butler in WPR 18 (1998), and Penelope Deutscher's interviews with Monique David-Ménard, Barbara Cassin and Claude Imbert in WPR 24 (2000). The journal also published substantial articles, opinion pieces and news and conference reports, providing readers internationally with a diverse and extremely lively resource in an otherwise inhospitable publishing climate for feminist philosophy and related gender theory. Rachel Jones and Helen Chapman took over as editors in 2000–2001, and WPR remained consistently strong, fulfilling its unique function in philosophy in the UK, until the end. So what went wrong?

Like so much else in British intellectual life over the past fifteen years, WPR suffered ultimately from the interminable pressure exerted on individuals and institutions by the ever-growing becoming-administrative of academia and by the RAE – the *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* of turn-of-the-century British university life. Ironically, the RAE was originally one of the spurs to the transformation of WPR into a journal that could 'count' in its great reckoning. But by reducing intellectual productivity to that sanctioned by – and, worse, *produced for* – the publishing industry, the RAE has effectively prevented individuals from investing time in (and institutions from supporting) the sorts of activity that keep a discipline alive, rather than allowing it merely to exist. Moreover – as discussed at the most recent SWIP meeting in October – some of the longer-term effects of the RAE may only now be beginning to emerge. Although (again, ironically) it is impossible to quantify, the tendency towards conservatism in philosophy encouraged by the RAE seems to have actually reversed the growth in the numbers of female PhD students in philosophy evident in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Women in all areas of the discipline also report a discouraging dearth of young women students interested in philosophy and gender, who would replace the current generations of women philosophers in the UK and who could have been the future editors of WPR.

However, the demise of WPR has been partly responsible for a welcome rejuvenation of a regrouped and freshly organized SWIP. A conference and general meeting is planned at Birkbeck College, London, for Friday 28 April. The problem of the inhospitability and unattractiveness of philosophy to young women graduates is high on the agenda.



WOMEN'S PHILOSOPHY REVIEW

NUMBER 17
SUMMER/AUTUMN 1997
ISSN 1368-812X

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