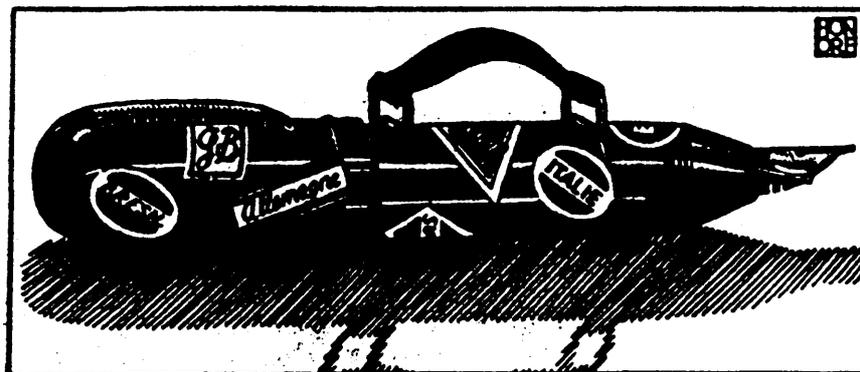


# EDITORIAL



'1988'—for almost anyone on the Left, this date must trigger the thought of 'twenty years on'; and no doubt the anniversary will be marked on many occasions during the coming year. *Radical Philosophy*, of course, had anticipated such events by organizing, in 1986, a conference on 'Philosophies of the Left since 1968'. One contributor was Barry Richards, a member of the *Free Associations* editorial board; and we now publish a considerably expanded and re-worked version of that paper, 'The Eupsychian Impulse'. Its main concern is to provide a historical and analytical overview of the many contrasting ways in which psychoanalysis has been taken up by the Left since 1968. But it also contains an incipient critique of 'the eupsychian impulse' which, in Richards' view, underlies several such attempted appropriations—the impulse to overcome once and for all various kinds of divisions and boundaries, and hence to conceive of revolutionary emancipation as achieving a state of psychic wholeness and fulfilment, characterized by the absence of both internal and external sources of tension and conflict.

Richards suggests that both psychoanalytic theory and practice, at least in their more recent Kleinian and object-relational forms, give grounds for scepticism about any such project. But at the same time he argues that it is difficult, if not impossible, to read off any specific, positive set of political values from psychoanalysis, however conceived; and he supports this contention by illustrating the diversity of such attempted readings on the Left, in a way that should finally lay to rest the old debates as to whether psychoanalysis is intrinsically either 'reactionary' or 'revolutionary'.

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According to Richards, a desire to transcend the boundaries between the 'personal' and the 'political' may be one important form taken by the eupsychian impulse, and one should thus be wary of the proclaimed identity of the two expressed in what is probably the best-known dictum of 'the politics of 68'. In 'The Personal and the Political: Twenty Years On', Ian Craib recounts the changes in his own understanding of this slogan in the intervening period. Written as a personal record, the article describes his growing antipathy towards the inherently authoritarian project he sees as implied by it, and how his own experience of psychoanalytic therapy has contributed to a sig-

nificant shift of political perspective—one that is consistent in at least some respects with the overall argument of 'The Eupsychian Impulse'. But no doubt other such autobiographical reflections, including those of many *RP* readers, might point in somewhat different directions—comments, please.

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The assertion that 'the personal is political' played an important part in the post-'68 development of feminism, and so too has psychoanalysis. Richards notes, for example, how both Dinnerstein and Chodorow have made use of psychoanalytic theory to explain the psychological origins of what they see as damaging splits between head and heart, reason and feeling, public and private, and the construction of gender-identities for men and women which correspond to these divisions. In 'Women, Humanity and Nature', Val Plumwood presents a conceptual framework in which to locate and assess the considerable variety of responses to such traditional dichotomies between 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics and the values placed upon them. She notes how these dualities have themselves been associated with a further set—between mind and body, humans and animals, 'man' and 'nature'—in such a way as to ascribe to women a less than fully human status; and how the masculine ideal of the rational control of nature has thus been intertwined with the domination of women by men.

Plumwood's main aim is to articulate the distinctive character of the contemporary eco-feminist critique of these dualities, showing how it differs from other varieties of feminist response to them. What she calls the initial, 'masculinizing' phase retained the traditional gender-dichotomies and their evaluation, insisting only that women could and should be removed from the feminine realm, and take their proper place in the public world of mind and reason. More recent strands of feminism, including the 'difference' theorists, have instead reversed the judgment of inferiority made of the feminine, sometimes claiming in addition that only women are able to display these superior (albeit often indefinable) features; whilst yet others have tried to reconstruct the conservative view of 'separate spheres' and 'complementary values', with a supposedly equal status ascribed to both the masculine and the feminine.

Plumwood argues that none of these options are acceptable.

What is required instead is a new conception of human values, including those concerning the relationships between humans and nature, which transcends both masculine and feminine values, and their mutual opposition; and she suggests that the eco-feminist movement can best be seen as attempting thus this. Whether this wish to overcome dualities should itself be seen as manifesting what Richards might regard as an illicitly eupsychian impulse is a question that will doubtless occur to readers of these two articles—taking note, perhaps, of his observation that psychoanalysis has tended to support a ‘model of cooperative complementarity, based on good relations between the sexes, ... as an ideal for human relations generally’.

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The problematic nature of gender-differences and their evaluation is also a central concern of Kelly Oliver, in ‘Nietzsche’s Woman: The Poststructuralist Attempt to Do Away with Women’. As this article demonstrates, approaches to the gender issues raised by Nietzsche’s philosophy have moved on rapidly from the initial feminist response, which was content mainly to document and criticize the overtly misogynist statements to be found throughout his work. One possible reason for doubting the adequacy of this approach is that Nietzsche’s own antipathy towards the tradition(s) of Western philosophy might itself be seen as a rejection of characteristically masculine forms of thought—evidenced, for example, in his ‘non-masculine’ mode of writing. But Oliver is concerned to criticize some recent post-structuralist attempts to reverse the initially hostile feminist judgments of Nietzsche by presenting him instead as engaged in a ‘feminine operation’, and as writing with ‘the hand of woman’.

This latter phrase is taken from David Krell’s *Postponements* (1986); and Oliver’s article primarily addresses this book, with Derrida’s *Spurs* (1979) as its backdrop. What Krell fails to recognize, it is argued, is that the apparently positive images of ‘woman’ and ‘the feminine’ in Nietzsche’s work are themselves constructed from a masculine standpoint: they express a masculine desire for woman, a desire for possession, a desire based on the fetishization of its object. To demonstrate this, Oliver has recourse to the classical Freudian account of the Oedipal triangle. Thus Nietzsche’s attacks on traditional philosophy are to be understood as manifesting an unresolved Oedipal conflict, in a desire to kill this philosophical father(s), deemed to be impotent, and to take their place in impregnating the (maternal) ‘womb of being’ so as to give birth to the *Übermensch*. In more general terms, Oliver’s approach here suggests that philosophical uses of gender-related concepts should not be taken at face-value, but require some form of depth-psychological interpretation which focusses, for example, on the specific imagery and metaphorical resonances of particular texts.

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These articles by Plumwood and Oliver, whilst differing considerably in philosophical genre, are further evidence of *Radical Philosophy*’s success in attracting work on feminist philosophy since the publication of its special issue on ‘Women, Gender and Philosophy’ a few years ago (*RP* 34, Summer 1983). An area of debate with a much longer history in the pages of *RP* has concerned the relations between Hegel and Marx, including the nature and significance of their respective conceptions of dialectic and social theory. Tony Smith’s article, ‘Hegel’s Theory of the Syllogism and its Relevance to

Marxists’, continues this debate and pushes it in new directions. Endorsing Lenin’s claim that one cannot understand Marx’s *Capital* without understanding Hegel’s *Logic*, he argues that this is true even of what is often seen as an especially unilluminating element in the latter, Hegel’s theory of the syllogism. Those who have struggled to make sense of this will welcome Smith’s elucidation. But it is the use to which it puts Hegel’s theory that is most distinctive about this article. Smith argues that Hegel’s account of the syllogism provides important guidelines for the construction of explanatorily adequate social theories—guidelines which can be seen at work in Marx’s own theory of capitalism, and which also serve to warn one of the dangers involved in various forms of reductionist misinterpretations of it. He concludes by sketching out some further applications of Hegel’s position in the domain of political practice, focussing especially on questions of ‘particularity’ v. ‘universality’ in the politics of the new social movements.

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In its early issues, *RP* published a number of articles exploring and criticizing the specific institutional contexts within which philosophy as an academic discipline was practised. Unfortunately, it is an area of work which has largely disappeared since then, no doubt reflecting the increasing theoreticism and professionalism of Left intellectual activity more generally. But Sally Minogue’s article on ‘The A Level Canon’ marks a welcome return to those earlier concerns. In it she questions the radical credentials of some current modes of literary theory, by considering what they would actually mean for the practice of English A level teaching in an FE college. And she suggests, for example, that the now derided ‘humanism’ of the Leavisite tradition, with its associated emphasis upon the student’s individual response to (canonic) texts, may well be a good deal less authoritarian in practice than what is proposed by radical critics of the ‘authority’ of that literary canon.

The issues raised by Minogue clearly have much broader ramifications, not least for the practices of philosophy itself in the institutions of higher education. *Radical Philosophy* has played some positive part in the significant changes over the past fifteen years in the courses and syllabuses available to students of philosophy and the social sciences; and some of the intellectual and political perspectives it has encouraged now have an accepted, if often minor, place in these. But the relationship between the political content of theoretical positions, and the political dimensions of their teaching and learning, is neither simple nor direct. For example, the experience of studying the latest versions of Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, or poststructuralist theory may be no more obviously liberating than that involved in the conceptual analyses promoted by linguistic philosophy—indeed, the latter at least has the benefit of relying partly on the student’s already acquired intellectual resources. Perhaps there are questions here which radical philosophers might usefully address during a year which will also mark another anniversary: the 50th issue of *Radical Philosophy* itself, scheduled for this coming autumn.

Russell Keat