

Editorial: Explain and Discuss

The April 1978 issue of *Philosophy* had something in common with the issues of January 1973, January and July 1977, and January 1979: in each of those issues the authors of the articles, discussion notes and book reviews were all of the same sex. Only in the case of April 1978 did this feature attract any comment. Now that April's here again, and brings with it responses from two of last April's contributors, it may be appropriate to explain and discuss, as those under examination are commonly required to do.

The explanation is simple. When Dr Susan Haack was reviewing this journal for the American Philosophical Association's *Guidebook for Publishing Philosophy* she noticed that we print an unusually high proportion of papers by women philosophers. In the year under review it amounted to one in five, as compared with one in twenty in *Mind*. This did not seem surprising, but it prompted a survey of the articles then in stock. The overall proportion was well maintained, and in the provisional schedule for April 1978 it came to sixty per cent. It was therefore possible to compose the April 1978 issue, in the form in which it finally appeared, by a relatively slight rearrangement of the order of publication of articles that were all accepted before Dr Haack's comment was made, and *a fortiori* before there was any thought of a special number. The *Guidebook* was reviewed in the April 1978 editorial, even though its account of *Philosophy* did not in the end include Dr Haack's statistic. Its loss or suppression (from feminist scruple?) removed all occasion or temptation to draw particular attention to the special feature of the issue. There had never at any time been any intention to blow a fanfare or commit ballyhoo. Nor was there any such 'policy' or 'position' as many of the respondents, including Dr Wilkes and Professor Rorty, have diagnosed. In so far as there was an ulterior intention it was to start the discussion that has in fact been started. We plead not guilty to the charge of reverse discrimination, and fully endorse the opposition of Dr Wilkes to such a policy. We assure Professor Rorty that we are seeking the articulation and the understanding that she urges us to seek.

The range of reactions has been wide. Against the doubts and questions of some of the feminists there is enthusiasm from other feminists to be set. One of these writes: 'I feel a bit jealous because I was once associated with the idea of an anthology of philosophers drawn up on similar lines. It came to nothing when the publishers saw the list of topics. It seemed that they didn't want philosophy, but feminism. In other words, us women are allowed to *whine* in print, but not to *think*. Whining sells, thinking doesn't. Unless you are a he.' The warmest welcome of all came from

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Professor J. J. Wilson, herself one of the joint authors of *Women in Art*. (She tells us that one of her graduate students at Sonoma State University in California is compiling a bibliography of the work of women philosophers.)

It was always clear that there would be opposition as well as endorsement, for on most of the relevant issues there are cons as well as pros. The debate will continue, in these pages and elsewhere. At present the only regret in the editorial breast is a pang on behalf of the contributors who would have preferred, for whatever reasons, not to appear in the exclusive company of their sisters, but were given no option. It may be possible to print further comments in later issues but here there is space only for two of the shortest and most sharply contrasted of the communications we have so far received. The head of an Oxford college sent a postcard on the day when his copy reached him: 'Much enjoyment will be caused by your Special Ivy Benson All-Girl Memorial Number of *Philosophy*, Other analogous possibilities crowd the mind.' (Overseas readers, and the very young, may not know that the Ivy Benson All-Girl Band played regularly for the BBC when most male musicians were fighting in the Second World War) Later there came a letter from one of the book reviewers of April 1978:

I gather that some indignation has been expressed to you about the April number of *Philosophy*. I thought you might like to know that at least one women reader is unoutraged. For my own part, I took the number to be an elegant and uninsulting joke, the correct response to which was a private smile and public imitation of the Editor's deadpan countenance. It would indeed be strange, and cast an odd light on my views of women philosophers, were I to object to finding my contribution in such excellent company.