

Four Essays from Garry and Pearsall's Women, Knowledge and Reality: Topics and Questions

1 Genevieve Lloyd's "Man of Reason" is both the ideal of rationality associated with rationalist philosophies of the seventeenth century. and ". . . something more nebulous -- the residue of that ideal in our contemporary consciousness. . . . (111) There is, of course, a lot to be said in praise of the Man of Reason. But it has all been said. (124)

In her closer examinations of this masculinist 'ideal', Lloyd focuses primarily on Spinoza's arguably compulsive need to find detachment in the ineluctable and near-ineffable austerity of his Deus sive natura, and secondarily on Descartes' ambitious claims to 'found' rationality in an incontrovertible 'method'. She says relatively little (cf. 124) about Leibniz' holism, his appreciation of the world's infinite complexity, or the capacities of his little monadic 'souls' to 'mirror' that complexity (albeit with varying degrees of 'clarity' and confusion), and nothing about other notions of 'reason' and 'rationality', which one might find, say, in Berkeley, or Hume, or Kant.

Among the (male) philosophers whose works we have studied, which seem to you the most conspicuous 'Men of Reason'? Have any seemed to you to vary more noticeably than others from this "ideal"? Did any make, in one form or another, "an attempt to grasp the continuities rather than the separations" (127)?

2 Allison Jaggar offers a carefully argued characterisation of emotions as intentional, socially constructed and "characteristically human perceptions of and engagements in the world", which focus our attention selectively, directing, shaping and even partially defining our observations, even as our observations direct, shape and partially define our emotions (both quotations form 138).

In the section which follows, she then compares this "engagement" with "the myth of dispassionate investigation", which is, she argues, characteristically aligned with (but conceals) a strong emotional desire to dominate and control (compare Lloyd's critique of Spinoza). Collectively, she adds, the myth is also well-designed . . . to bolster the epistemic authority of the currently dominant groups, composed largely of white men, and to discredit the observations and claims of the currently subordinate groups. . . The more forcefully and vehemently the latter groups express their observations and claims, the more emotional they appear, and so the more easily they are discredited. (142

Correlatively, she identifies (and identifies with) "outlaw emotions", which "may provide the first indications that something is wrong with the way alleged facts have been constructed" (145).

Since she also acknowledges that emotions -- "outlaw", and other -- "are open to challenge. . . . (and) may be dishonest or selfdeceptive, . . . incorporate inaccurate or partial perceptions, or. . . be constituted by oppressive values" (147), we will inevitably have what the classical skeptics called a "criterion problem".

What is "the standpoint of the oppressed"? If we do endorse Jaggar's presumption in favor of this "standpoint" (which I would, since it seems to me essentially right), how do we recognise when

They will **ramify**. in other words, rather like the 'theses' and 'antitheses' of Kant's four **Antinomies** (model-ideas of pure reason).

Might Wittgenstein and Kant, in effect, have jointly formulated a kind of '**complementarity principle**': that

2.3 'semantic monism' and coherent **talk** about 'semantic monism' are **incompatible**.

Or, alternately, that

2.4 'philosophical talk' gives rise to a recurrent plurality of interpretations of 'philosophical talk'?

Wittgenstein contemplated (various prototypes of) this dilemma many times, I believe, late and soon, and he responded to it in a number of intricate (and highly verbal) ways.

Roughly speaking, he vacillated (I think), in his later as well as his earlier writings, between two confliction conclusions, neither of which ultimately satisfied him.

The first conclusion is (somewhat) more characteristic of his '**early**' views (which we have already read).

The second is (somewhat) more prevalent in his '**later**' arguments in the **Philosophical Investigations** (which we may read after the strike).

The first is that

2.5 philosophical talk is indeed "nonsense", or at least untenable (because it is not canonically interpretable).

The second is that

2.6 demands for canonical interpretation **are** indeed "nonsense", or at least untenable (because they fail to withstand the scrutiny of philosophical talk).

Do you incline to one or the other of these two 'complementary' views?

Are **both** tenable, but perhaps only in shifting theory-relative contexts?

Might a tendency toward one or the other finally reflect yet another

'complementarity' -- this time of philosophical **temperament(s)**?

If so (in short), where do your sympathies lie?

(for example) someone may be coopting someone else's "oppression", for use as a manipulative pose?

Given that any composite theory of emotion and 'cognition' should be critically "self-reflexive", and that "reconstruction of knowledge is inseparable from. . . reconstruction of ourselves" (148), what do we do about the fact that "(t)he ease and speed with which we can reeducate our emotions unfortunately is not great"?

In her conclusion, does Jaggar offer us any concrete answers to such questions, beyond a more socially and anthropologically informed feminist variant of truistic Greek injunctions to "know ourselves (and others)"?

If not, is that understandable, because that's basically all we can do?

Would this be a natural and inevitable concomitant, in other words, of "self-reflexive" examination of Jaggar's appeals for critical self-reflection?

3 Similar criterial questions can (and perhaps should) be raised about Lorraine Code's carefully considered appeals for "epistemic responsibility", and the closely related distinctions she wishes to draw between "stereotypes", "stories" and "theories".

Beyond the (accurate) observation that "stereotypes" can often be discerned by their "extreme crudity" (161), how are we to use the implicit injunction to be "an intellectually virtuous person (who) would value knowing and understanding how things 'really' are" (160-161)? Does the recommendation that our 'stories' "maintain continuity with experience" (166) essentially reexpress 'empiricism' in more appealing and "receptive" (166) language?

What would it mean, finally, to "select stories. . . open enough and theoretically specified enough to elicit a range of responses" (167), given that Code is gently criticising Carol Gilligan for not "selecting" stories about women's responses to abortion? What are, in other words, the "experiential accounts of a certain kind of situation" Code calls for at the bottom of 167? Who "selects"? Who "interprets"? Yes, Descartes was obsessively arrogant and ambitious, but how can we be confident that 'our' "(carefully selected) stories" are not someone else's "stereotypes"

Perhaps we can't, but must simply act, all the same?

4 Another endorsement of "critical self-reflection" appears in Evelyn Fox Keller's article, supported by an assertion of Jean Piaget that

Realism is. . . anthropocentric illusion. . . . So long as thought has not become conscious of self, it is a prey to perpetual confusions between objective and subjective, between the real and the ostensible.

Keller outlines a now-well-known "psychodynamic" called "object-relations theory" (180-182), and argues that this provides a "system of associations linking objectivity (a cognitive trait) with autonomy (an affective trait) and masculinity (a gender trait)", and distorting, in effect, all three.

Whether or not you consider this particular psychological theory very plausible (it seems to me rather stained), do you think some sort of psychological account may be appropriate to the linkage she outlines, and to the "illusion" criticised by Piaget?

Among the historical authors we have considered, which (if any) seem to you to have had more of the (critical) "consciousness" of self which Piaget and Keller endorse?

