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Historical Note: Paul Carus

Paul Carus, the first editor of The Monist, was born in Ilmenburg am Harz on July 18, 1852, and died in La Salle, Illinois, on February 11, 1919. After receiving his Ph.D. degree in philosophy and classical philology from Tubingen University in 1876, he taught briefly at the State Military Academy at Dresden. In search of freedom for expression of his independent views, he migrated first to England and then to the United States. In 1887, he accepted the invitation of Edward C. Hegeler (who later became his father-in-law) to edit The Open Court magazine, a monthly journal devoted primarily to comparative religion. In 1888, The Monist was established as a quarterly journal of the philosophy of science, and Paul Carus served as editor of both journals and as editor of the Open Court Publishing Company until his death in 1919.

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COULD DEMOCRACY BE A UNICORN?

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5. "John Wong, who is reminded of Somalia and Switzerland when I talk about 286 PCs, takes me to task for vagueness in my most recent message. He "risks being inadequate" but he does not risk a charitable reading of my text." (Herbert Hrachovec, Nov 29, 1995)
8. Gunnar Olsson, passim.
GENDER AND POSTMODERN COMMUNICATION

The Programme
A Play in three Acts. There will be poetry breaks after the first and second Acts.

Actors
LYDIE MEUNIER as Lydie
ERIN THOMPSON as Erin
MICHAEL ELDRED as Michael
DEBBIE RODAN as Debbie
RADHIKA GAJJALA as Radhika
FIONA STEINKAMP as Fiona

Stage Director
FIONA STEINKAMP
Usherette
FIONA STEINKAMP

Audience
Full House of 25

The Monist Interactive Issue discussion on Gender and Postmodern Communication ran from 22nd June – 15th July 1996. The participants debated about the form of this programme during August 1996. An accurate rendition of the discussion is difficult, however, because any formalized presentation will fail to capture the interweaving free-flow of comments and ideas that takes place on the Internet. Moreover, by giving the debate an artificially imposed structure, some issues will necessarily be omitted from the “official” discussion and other points will, by contrast, be given more emphasis than was originally the case. As a result, some of the flavour of the live discussion will be lost. Thus, to the extent that the final, published account does not wholly reflect what took place, any formalized presentation will have an element of fiction to it. Hence the decision to offer the discussion in the form of a play.

There are a number of advantages to presenting the debate in this way. Firstly, it allows the participants to speak for themselves. It is true that this could have

"Gender and Postmodern Communication" by Fiona Steinkamp,
been achieved simply by selecting passages from participants and by presenting the formalized article as a live discussion. However, in practice, free-flowing discussions are difficult to restructure as a series of points nicely leading on one after the other. For, just because such debates are free-flowing, these debates interweave and interact rather than being linear in structure. Thus, one advantage of presenting the debate as a play is that the stage director can change the scene of the play (i.e., the topic of discussion) without the audience (here: the readers) needing to see why or how such a shift takes place.

Secondly, by presenting the discussion as a play a greater variety of forms of discourse can be brought into view. The scuffle portrayed in Act 2, Scene 1, for instance, did have an impact on the nature of the discussion and it is a typical element of many net debates. It could not be reported in conventional format (it would be deemed irrelevant) and yet it is nevertheless a crucial factor in the way in which net conversation unfolds. The scuffle also brings up some interesting philosophical issues of itself (e.g., how free-flowing should a discussion be allowed to be? Does the postfeminist view mean that even disruptive discourses should be accorded equal respect?). By presenting the discussion as a play, more of the truths and issues inherent in the debate can be brought to life.

Thirdly, putting forward a play and its programme as academic expression challenges and exposes the limitations of traditional academic linear prose (and this latter is itself often claimed to be a style that pertains to a specifically male paradigm). Thus the play is itself an active manifestation not only of postmodern communication (insofar as it permits — more so than traditional academic prose does — a variety of discourses), but it is also a manifestation of a discourse that is friendly to both genders. That is, the play format itself is about Gender and Postmodern Communication. Similarly, the poetry breaks even in this format lie outside the main (i.e., traditional) scenes of the play. The poetry is relevant and yet it breaks the continuity and linearity of the officially reported conversation (hence poetry “breaks” rather than “intervals”). The current format nevertheless enables such marginal forms of expression to enter in as a valid contribution. Readers may like to ponder further other subtleties to the format.

Finally, a play is generally understood as something that is performed before an audience. Although the debate was not precisely “performed” (thus suggesting that the analogy between the play and the discussion is not a strict one), the discussion did have an audience. The audience consists of the people who are not seen in the play itself, but who were nevertheless there at the live debate. By presenting the report of the debate in the form of a play, the audience is thereby also understood, just as those participating in the actual discussion are often themselves at
least to some extent aware that they do indeed have a live audience.

Strangely, then, and aptly by postmodern views, the fictionalization of the
debate as a play reflects more of the truths of what took place than a more tradi-
tional, ostensibly objective report would do. The stage director has edited some
of the participants' speeches, so it would not be fair to say that what is presented
here is a direct representation of what participants said — although all actors have
agreed to the way in which their arguments are portrayed in the play.

The times and dates of participants' lines have been cited. This should enable
easier reference back to the web site where the original speeches are archived. By
referring back to the original discussion readers will have the opportunity to im-
merse themselves directly in the problematic status of the reported discussion as
a fictional/real representation of what truly occurred. Since the aim of the Monist
Interactive Issue was in part to introduce a new way of doing philosophy, readers
should understand that it likewise requires a new way of reading and engaging
with that philosophy.

The citation of the times and dates also illustrates the contrived nature of the
play — for Lydie now responds to Michael before Michael has even made a com-
ment (Act 2, Scene 1). This breaking down of the discussion to an area that lies
beyond linear time both helps to give an impression as to the peculiarity of cy-
berspace by analogy with time (for crossing cyberspace is not a problem, just as
in the play crossing time is not an issue) and it illustrates once more the non-linear
mode of this postmodern discourse.

Where appropriate, references to web sites have been provided for particularly
abbreviated contributions. This itself serves as an indication that there lies more
beyond the words than what is written on the page. It is hoped that these references
will encourage readers to engage more fully with the text which is not located
merely on these pages alone.

One of the major advantages to the discussion has been the sharing of informa-
tion from people from a variety of backgrounds. Thus at the end of the discussion
readers will find a bibliography of works referred to during the course of the live
discussion. Similarly, there is a list of web sites which were referred to during the
debate and that may be of interest to the current audience.

We hope you enjoy the play.
ACT 1

Scene 1 (Opening Scene)

[Enter centre stage all actors. Each steps forward, speaks and then retreats in
turn, one after the other, in quick succession.]

Debbie:
I want to argue that there are no fixed identities, that identity is fragmented, in-
determinate and overdetermined (as exemplified in "Sammy and Rosie get Laid").
But I also want to argue that there is a boundedness to cultural identities. I am
also interested in the global interaction of women on the internet as part of the
feminist movement. Will this interaction be useful for women in terms of politi-
cal participation? Of course, this raises the question of who has material access?
Who has access to knowledge? What knowledge is legitimate? Who has technical
skills? etc. (http://www.ed.ac.uk/~ejua35/paper4.html)

Erin:
We are but a heartbeat away from the ability to project sensation. An entire full-
body suit capable of transmitting and receiving all sensory data is now viable. If
full sensory projection is possible, we will assume the full emotional complement
as well. Does changing gender image mean anything? Does changing gender in
physical life mean anything? I suggest that culturally we are presently engaged in
a psychical battle for control of imagery. If gender and racial image is a choice
in Virtual Reality, what gender and race will prevail and why? Does "identity" –
whether in terms of gender, race, sexuality or class – cease to have meaning in
virtual life? (http://www.ed.ac.uk/~ejua35/paper1.html)

Lydie:
I'm interested in the notion of equality from a postmodern perspective and
in improving communication among women and men of various backgrounds.
Postfeminism is a possible solution. It conveys to men that feminism is not a
struggle for power, but a search for both self and mutual understanding and
respect. It lets go of hierarchical and judgemental psychological frameworks.
(http://www.ed.ac.uk/~ejua35/paper2.html)

Michael:
What is gender? Can we be sure of the fact that there are men and women?
The terms masculinity and femininity, or maleness and femaleness, by no
means refer unambiguously to the factually given, obvious genders. I pro-
pose that masculinity and femininity do not have their origins in two differ-
ent kinds of human being. The origin has to be sought elsewhere. The be-
ingness of human being has to be put into question. And is communication
a matter of intersubjectivity? What is between subjects (if there are subjects)?
(http://www.ed.ac.uk/~eju35/paper3.html)

Radhika:
There is a need to articulate a non-western feminist position. A position that
is neither separatist nor one that can be subsumed under multiculturalism. It is
based not on the notion of essential difference, but of difference in experience.
(http://www.ed.ac.uk/~eju35/paper7.html)

Scene 2 (The Question and the Other)
[Erin is seen talking to everyone, but the first thing this audience hears is:]

Erin (22nd June, 2:17):
The issue of essentialism will inevitably be raised regarding sexual identity. “You
cannot possibly know what it is to be a man because you aren’t one.” However,
one in a full body suit in virtual space, one could “present” as whatever gender
or image one wanted – whether as male, female, mammal, amphibian or alien.
This gives rise to the question of essences of identity. If one can fully project
and receive sensorially as a gender other than one’s own, then what else apart
from bodily experience constitutes gender identity? Many people will argue that
there is infinitely more to gender identity and sexuality than anatomical experi-
ence. I, however, suggest that anatomical and hormonal differences are the only
differences between male and female sexuality. Everything else is cultural indo-
ctrination and reification of meaning and implication; i.e., everything else is due to
gender assumptions and stereotypes. And in this discussion, separating the term
“gender” from the term “sex” is to imply the sociocultural portion of this dis-
course.

Michael (23rd June, 14:12):
I asked “What is gender?” and Erin referred to two common everyday understand-
ings of gender in biological or sociocultural terms. These common explanations
are explanations of origin and causation. Erin suggests that one can channel these
explanations in two different directions and he distinguishes between sex and gen-
der – parlance that has become accepted in the discourse on gender. Then my
question What is gender? would have the answer: It is determined socioculturally.
This is an answer referring to causal determination.
But my question was not: What causes gender? Nor was it even: What is the or-
igin of gender? It was simply: What is gender? There is a difference between the
two questions: What causes gender? and What is the origin of gender?
The latter question asks where gender comes from; it does not necessarily ask
what causes or effects it.
I would like to put this proposed origin of gender into question. For me, it is questionable that gender comes from society and culture, i.e., that it is a product cultivated by society. Erin’s answer presupposes that the question of gender is a question of identity in being-and-living-together. Identity is a matter of self-understanding, of how one understands oneself. However, I would suggest that gender is not primarily or originally a matter of self-understanding; it is a mode of being (human).
Identity is a part of gender-being only because self-understanding is part of being a human, that is, of living a human life. As far as self-understanding in terms of gender goes, it would be a matter of exploring what it means to understand oneself living malely or femally. Maleness and femaleness would then be modes of human being that are understood as such and which are open to human being to being understood as such.
Not only can I understand myself in my maleness and/or femaleness (and thus I have an identity), but I can also understand other humans in their maleness or femaleness. Maleness and femaleness can be a part of my self-understanding and thus of my identity, but where do maleness and femaleness themselves as modes of human being come from? And what are maleness and femaleness as modes of human being in themselves?

Erin (23rd June, 18:17):
I suppose the question might be raised: is there any essentialism to male or female sexuality? What makes a male know he is a male? How is his experience of maleness different from a woman’s experience of femaleness?

Debbie (24th June, 9:40):
My response to Michael’s point is that whilst there may be a process of self-understanding to identity, it is very important to remember that the other names us too. In other words, our identities are inextricably inscribed from both the internal and the external processes of socialization, realization and cultural interiorization (cf Franz Fanon). Both the self and the other are implicated in the process of identity inscription. In other words, identity is both inside and outside the self. Marcia Langton, in her work, shows how this is evident when the (here: indigenous) “other” names me too. For example, I am not just identified by who I am when the “other” calls me European; I am, at the same time, named by the “other.”

Lydie comments (25th June, 20:09):
Identity is certainly shaped by interaction and language. How come the first question people raise when a child is born is still: Is it a boy or a girl? Why do we need to know?

Erin adds (24th June, 7:11):
Yes, Debbie's point is well taken. The process of identity inscription informs particularly marginalized groups in our culture, such as gay and lesbian sexual identities and racial and ethnic identities. It also illustrates that internalized conceptions of cultural belief can become part of one's "identity" as much as any other construct can. If a culture tells young black men, for instance, that they are obviously genetically predisposed to criminal activity because 80% of the jails in California are populated by black males under 25, this message is easily internalized by the youth who are incapable of seeing the flaws in this logic. Then, if this message is reified by a white populace that wants to scapegoat a segment of society, the message becomes "I am a criminal, my uncle who is in jail confirms that this is my rite of passage and the white guys who wouldn't hire me obviously knew it."

Michael replies (25th June, 1:07):
I agree with Debbie. In fact I would go even further and say that only the other inscribes us and marks us into human beings. But then we must differ, because Debbie understands the other as society and culture. This socio-cultural other is not otherly enough for me.

Lydie (23rd June, 10:44):
But gender-specific schemata are acquired through language. Studies (Cameron, 1992) consistently indicate that females use a more standardized language than do men. Girls are encouraged and rewarded for using "elegant" language, whereas boys are allowed more flexibility and roughness in language use: "Rough talk is discouraged in little girls more strongly than in little boys, in whom parents may often find it more amusing than shocking" (Lakoff, 1975, 6). When considered from a historical perspective, the difference in the use of vernacular styles across genders can be explained as follows: Keeping in mind that languages have evolved from vernacular forms, non-standard styles are the avant-garde of the next generation's standard language. As such, speaking non-standard forms is an expression of both freedom and creative power in which females are not allowed to participate. Cameron (1992) also points out that children's activities shape various styles of speech: "Boys tend to play in large groups organized hierarchically; thus they learn direct, confrontational speech. Girls play in small groups of 'best friends', where they learn to maximize intimacy and minimize conflict" (Cameron 1992, 73). As a result, adult females are socialized to speak in order to maintain harmony and strong relationships, whereas adult males are socialized to use a competitive and assertive discursive style – hence their tendency to control topics of conversation (Cameron, 1992). I do not dispute that personality differences along with sexuality differences (heterosexuality and homosexuality) add a complex dimension to the whole issue of gender. Moreover, the socialization process affects both
females and males. Specifically, males are often trained to fear sounding like a
female.

[Lydie turns to her audience and shows them her paper about these studies. This audience sees “Lydie’s paper” at http://www.cmhc.com/perspectives/articles/art79621.htm]

Erin reads and responds (28th June, 23:20):
Lydie correctly notes that human beings can be competent in both male and female
paradigms, because all human beings (children) have the potential to develop such
traits if they are given the freedom to do so. However, I’d like to add that although homo-or-hetero-or-bi orientations are apparently formed at a very early age (6-18
months – Freud), the acting out and manifestations of these orientations do not
show up until around the ages of 6 or 7 (George Herbert Mead). This is almost ex-
actly the same age as when a child develops a clear abstraction of the generalized
other. Before then children identify with their parents. For example, if you give a
five year old some money and say “pick out a gift for your mother” they will pick
out something that they themselves would like. In so doing, they assume that the
rest of the world holds the same values and preferences that they do. If you give
a ten year old the same amount of money with the same instructions, they will
actually put some thought into what the other person would like. It is tempting to
speculate that the child’s generalized other must be gendered, or at least contain
gender-appropriate language.

Michael (28th June, 22:30):
We are talking about the self and the other, but this other is still all-too-human for
my liking.

End of Act 1.

[Poetic Break]

[Michael (5th July, 18:11)]:

Not
men and women,
But
the folding
of the clearing itself.
Standing, facing beings
knowingly
in the open
Scene 1 (Androgyny and its Problems)

ACT 2

[End of Poetic Break]

Fiona Steinkamp

[Redultika (5th July, 21:31)]

perhaps, talk of possibilities...

(but we were never tabula rasa, says a voice from within... the voice that knows that tabula rasa is a point of view from where you stand empty, from where you stand not empty, I stand I may see... perhaps, each other's meanings?)

Or, touching one another, ununderstandingly, scarcely, in the crease between...

It is ironic that in a forum that is explicitly dealing with postmodernism and gen-
der, we are implicitly assuming the male/female binary. This notion of masculinity as belonging to men and of femininity as belonging to women is so culturally ingrained in language, it is sometimes difficult to problematize it sufficiently in interaction. In this respect I'd like to introduce Eve Sedgwick's notion that masculinity and femininity are orthogonal. That is, instead of being opposite poles of the same axis, they are actually in different, perpendicular dimensions, and therefore they are independently variable (Constructing Masculinity, eds. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson).

Michael replies (11th July, 21:43): The thought of dimension is very important in my opinion. But orthogonal dimensions from mathematical statistics are not adequate for the dimensions I see. By considering dimension more deeply, a way to get beyond biological, etc. determinations of gender can be indicated. Orthogonal dimensions are the co-ordinate perpendicular x-y axes familiar from co-ordinate geometry or, more properly, the dimensions in which statistical variables can move orthogonally to, i.e., independently from, each other. This idea would imply that masculinity and femininity were something like symmetrical, independent factors, each with their own weight, which would result in the "gender mix" of a particular person, culture, group or whatever. Dimensions have to be thought more originarily here, however. A dimension is an open space that can be measured-through, i.e., moved through. I propose that masculinity and femininity be thought of neither as biological attributes (sex) nor as socio-cultural attributes (gender), but as dimensions of being.

Lydie responds (28th June, 0:04): Radhika is right too about our assuming the male/female binary. Although I started my contribution to this list in binary mode (analysing gender-specific communicative styles), my point was to share studies that reveal the predeterministic social reality still entered by infants today. My contention is that, once aware of this predeterminism, we will be able to change it. Of course the assumption of a binary position on gender issues is somewhat passé. It overlooks in many ways the instability of gender divisions and the many differences that exist both amongst women and amongst men. However, if you go to the street and organize an anthropological survey asking people about their definitions of women and men, the majority of responses will fall into the binary stereotypes we all know.

Michael (23rd June, 14:12): In asking the questions about the origin of gender and of the ways in which people understand themselves as men or as women, I passed over the fact that we as
humans are either men or women. And it is justifiable to pass over these facts because the questions concern modes of human being rather than distinctions among entities called human beings.

Erin replies (23rd June, 18:17):
You imply here that humans becoming is somehow separated from society as a whole. But as infants, we learn language from interaction, as toddlers we learn how to walk from emulation, in latency we learn to project a generalized other—a voice that represents society and that is sometimes called a conscience—in order to integrate laws and social control. As pre-adolescents we learn the rules of the mating game from urban mythology. As teenagers we fumble through the darkness of negotiating comfortable sexuality. None of these activities is done inside our heads alone. They are all social activities, modified and attenuated by feedback we get from our parents, peers and objects of affection. I don’t think that humans becoming can be separated from society.

Lydie (27th June, 17:46):
In relation to overcoming the male/female binary I would like to speak about feminist movements and the different phases it went through. The first feminist movement was labelled as “radical feminism.” It was composed of women (often perceived as anti-men, and for reasons that are understandable) who detached themselves from men in order to assert women’s identities—these latter being denied by the patriarchal order.

Once women had managed to assert their presence in the Western World, they realized that they were exploited as a cheap labor force. This realization led to a Marxist feminist movement (especially in Europe). In the U.S. this movement was labelled “Liberal Feminism” and it advocated equality for all individuals and citizens. However, this notion of equality was a totalizing and general concept which did not take individual differences into consideration. Thus inequalities and unfairness still prevailed.

The concept of equality is, indeed, very tricky: People in general understand equality in terms of sameness and they do not know how to deal with differences. For instance, women had to adopt a masculine style in order to be considered seriously in the socioeconomic world. That’s when postfeminism comes into play: postfeminists assert and acknowledge personality differences of both men and women; they look for communication in full awareness of such differences as an enriching part of life. The aim is an androgynous society in which gender differences fade away. Postfeminism assumes that adults are aware that their gender-specificity is imposed on them by traditional social norms, and that, in the light of their awareness, they are ready to construct a gender-free society by
orienting future generations in this direction. This view of a "brave new world" coincides with the postmodernist premise of "polyvocality"—a participation of different voices that will not silence or exclude any other. Ideally, postfeminists (Haraway) advocate that we consider each other as human beings and not as gender-specific beings. Indeed, Simone de Beauvoir very rightly raised the question: "Are there really women?" And the answer for postfeminists is "no." In fact there should be neither men nor women; there should only be human beings whose differences are to be respected and considered as enriching given a symmetric multi-faceted society in which there is no "one difference" that prevails and that becomes dominant and oppressive of others. For Postfeminists there should not be any generalizing and totalizing theories on either women or men.

Michael (28th June, 22:30):
Lydie, there doesn't seem to be anything postmodern to me in insisting on a plurality of individuals' rights. What I find much more disturbing is that this expression of individuality is so uniform, i.e., that there is no difference (although there may be heaps of differences in the sense of squabbles and conflicts). There are many different levels on which differences between people come into play: private relations, politically, in discourses. Individuals are also captives of the discourses they speak and thus they are often not individual (i.e., indivisible) at all; rather they are one of the crowd.

Lydie (25th June, 20:09):
Sameness is a myth that does not fit postmodern reality. Maybe we can share a desire for communication. From a postfeminist point of view the ideal androgynous human being would be competent in both male and female paradigms of communication.

Michael (28th June, 22:30):
But why should gender differences fade away? And what androgyny is at all remains for me a task of thinking. The fading away of gender difference... don't you hear alarm bells? Here the difference between overcoming and getting over seems apposite: learning to live with difference as difference; not its levelling. But first we have to see, to know what difference is. And I do not think that feminist discourse has worked that out.

Lydie (27th June, 17:46):
Derrida was very clear in that regard: Considering that we all have different schemata in mind and that language does not exactly transcribe our thoughts and realities, a written document can be as many texts as there are readers. Cameron says: "The representation of experience by language is partial in every sense of
that term." The linguist Roy Harris also mentions that meanings assigned to forms (words, texts) are not fixed and he maintains that to assume the opposite is to fall into the trap of language myth. Postmodern communication is based on the premise that multiple vocality and interpretations reflect the inherent right of individuals to express their individualities. Whether we write, speak, listen or read—these are all production skills that construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct meaning as the basic right of expression. Knowing that all individuals have their own different schemata and experiences, the basis of mutual understanding is to transcend one's own schema in order to grasp one's interlocutor's perspective and frame of mind. Only in so doing can one perceive that other person's reality. How can an heterosexual communicate with an homosexual if that heterosexual does not attempt to see life from an homosexual perspective? If such empathic transfer makes someone feel uncomfortable, doesn't this indicate that we are not very clear about our own identities? Do we think that differences are drawbacks and weaknesses? Minorities are willing to communicate, yet how do you explain that dominant groups have difficulties communicating with groups whose lifestyle and experiences are different from their own? Isn't it time that we recognize differences as valid expressions of personal identities and not as divergences from the norm?

Erin (7th July, 21:19):

"Stepping out of our schemata" seems problematic in several ways. One problem is the simple "biology as destiny" argument. We are physically sexed and our psychosexual outlook on the world is underpinned by a knowledge of how our sexed apparatus work. Hence, on this view, men "penetrate" and women "envelop" men quest into the unknown, women nurture. We can't step out of our schemata because of this biodeterminism. There is also a problematization simply on the level of individual ego. If all sensory perception is filtered through the ego, then "to step out of one's schemata" is tantamount to saying one is going to "detach one's brain from one's brain." And it is difficult to know what sense can be made of this. Kant, Heidegger and Kierkegaard all understood the metaphysical problems in trying to know the unknowable. Lastly, there is the problem of socialization. Other than everyone running round naked and not reacting sexually to one another, how does one propose to shed schemata? We may be back to one arena of problematics in first-wave feminism; that of presuming that we can reach a state of "skinlessness."

Michael adds (25th June, 22:23):
Also, any social scientific research into differences between the behaviour of men and women, such as Lydie Meunier has presented, has to proceed from a pre-
understanding of masculinity and femininity that is taken as self-evident to even start. This preunderstanding of maleness and femaleness has always already understood certain ways of human existing — for example, human being as male or masculine. Instead of proceeding from this pre-understanding and then leaving it behind in order to investigate human behaviour socio-scientifically, I propose climbing back behind this pre-understanding to ask where it comes from.

Lydie (25th June, 20:09):
I don't really understand how we can bypass pre-understanding in order to understand something which is beyond it and which would not itself be a form of pre-understanding. What is pre-understanding? To me, understanding belongs both to the past and the present, the past often providing valuable information on the present.

Fiona (4th July, 19:20):
I think we are all agreeing and disagreeing here about the same points. Michael claims that there is a mode of being prior to gender. Erin's thoughts about a sensory virtual reality ultimately lead towards a genderless being and Lydie's suggestion of androgynous discourse is likewise reminiscent of this same uniformity. But at the same time we are all uncomfortable about this proposed androgyny. Erin has problematized the notion of "transcending schemata," Lydie has questioned how we can possibly comprehend that which lies beyond our preunderstanding of being and Michael has worried about the problems of uniformity in difference.

Erin (7th July, 21:19):
I suggest that, rather than seeking homogeneity, we celebrate pangeneity. The stable identity of mythic selfhood should become a wavering mirage. This may cause the subject pain and confusion. But this ex-centricity of dislocation and absolute relativism presents new opportunities. The participant could take pleasure in the understanding that singularity and contradiction exist unresolved and that these latter can proliferate in productive ways.

[Radhika steps forward centre stage]

Radhika cites Grewal (7th July, 17:05):
"A nonessentialist position does not imply a nonbelonging to a group, nor does it imply loss of agency or of coalitions and solidarities. For some feminists of color, identity politics remains central, though identity may be multiple. One may position oneself or be positioned in many different groups for different reasons. One may belong to different groups by gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity and so on. There can be syncretic "immigrant," cross-cultural and plural subjectivities, which enable a politics through positions that are coalitions, intransigent, in pro-
cess, and contradictory. Such identities are enabling because they provide a mobility in solidarity that leads to a transnational participation in understanding and opposing multiple and global oppressions operating upon them; that is, these subject positions enable oppositions in multiple locations. Multiple locations also enable valuable interventions precisely because the agendas of one group are brought along to interrogate and empower those of another group."

[Erin applauds]

**Lydie (25th June, 20:09):**
We all have to remain on the qui vive and we have to make sure that we readjust possible interactional imbalances in full awareness and recognition of our and others’ communicative styles. We will thereby adopt a postmodern approach geared towards recognition and validity of differences.

**Michael (27th June, 18:04):**
But I am not in favour of allowing just anything at all to pass as an opinion worthy of respect.

[An audience member suddenly clammers on stage and proclaims:]

**Anonymous (11th July: 09:05):**
Blood, sex and money are the determinants of Western culture. You can “discourse” your head off and it won’t change reality. It is the Heideggerians and the impotents of postmodernist discourse who would have us believe one can never be so “sure” as to commit oneself for moral action.

[A scuffle ensues between Erin and the audience member. The usherette finally shows the audience member back to the stalls. The person eventually decides to leave the theatre altogether.]

**Michael adds (28th June, 22:32):**
Lydie, is there a way of turning away from humankind, of leaving the centre free for something else? Can human being become decentred instead of insisting on rights, etc.? Could it be time to get a little sick of humankind and its occupation of the centre?

_End of Act 2_

A couple of people leave the theatre.

[Poetic Break]
mere words?
   I cannot call them that

these words that have
scarred, cajoled and coerced me ...

moved me into
ways
of thought (and action
   is there action without
         thought?

mere words
without
action?
   maybe sometimes
   maybe often

but merely with words
I am often
told
who I am
   even as I try to say
   I am
   not
   that.

[End of Poetic Break]

ACT 3

Scene 1 (Gender – Reality and Myth)

Erin (3rd July, 5:26):
The complication of gender identity is compounded by the inherently subjective
to e-mail and net communication in general. In other words, how do you
know what gender I am? The homogenization of gender stereotypes is not some academic dream. It is reality, as represented in everyday life. And postmodernism complicates these stereotypes and interactions. This is what we are addressing.

Radhika (5th July, 23:16):
But the net mirrors the cultural and social relations of power etc., that already exist. Amit Rai (1995) is also critical about the possibility that those spaces can "inaugurate liberatory practices of the Self." In fact what is visible on spaces like soc.culture.indian etc. is precisely "reactionary politics." Virtual communities appear disembodied but nonetheless they are discursive reproductions of real-life societies. We have not completely dispersed into pure cyberspace. And even temporarily transcending the old relations of power on the net does not change our material existence radically.

Lydie (5th July, 12:29):
Nevertheless, communication is the key to transcend gender-related impulses to act (react) according to schemata acquired through our childhood.

Erin writes (23rd June, 1:29):
The element which has been missing for a radical change in identity is exemplified by what we are doing right now. We have text-based communication, which allows us to remain body-centred wherever we really are in the physical world. Thomas Scheff pointed out—as did Freud—that emotions live in the body, not in the rational mind. They display and present in the body, and they manifest themselves when repressed. As soon as those data suits are perfected, a full sensory projection of the "self" will become possible. Where, then, will the "seat" of identity be?

Debbie answers (25th June, 9:51):
This is a very interesting perspective. However, to paraphrase Rosemary Hennessy and to agree with Radhika, this openness to endless difference (or endless identities, etc.) does not translate into the political, economic and material changes that are necessary for those who do not have access to the privileges of the dominant group. One of the main problems in the idea of a cyborg taking on any identity it likes is that, for me, this is being a "high-tech romantic" (a comment that Rosi Braidotti made about Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy). I think that from a historical perspective economic inequalities are inextricably linked to gender. In other words, there are material effects of being a certain gender, sexuality, race, class identity etc.

Scene 2 (Gender and the Body)

Erin (5th July, 20:57):
Is there anything that is "inherently essentially (biologically)" masculine or femi-
nine? If so, how does it inform our social selves? What is it?

Debbie (25th June, 09:51):
There are no essences of identity. Spivak suggests that a person does not choose her or his “bio” (meaning life as it is linked to one’s biology) and that one’s “bio” is graphed by a history, by a language and by a culture. My reading of her work here is that there are personal experiences of one’s own “bio” which may be both similar and different to the lived reality of others. Thus her position can allow that bio-cultural experiences of women may differ from those of men without grounding this difference in some essence. That is, there are bio-lived relations that constitute our identities which is why there is also a boundedness to cultural identities.

Erin writes (25th June, 4:44):
Yes, if we have cultural inscription alone, it becomes problematic when we look at the “fringes” of society; the “deviant” cases. For instance, how does cultural inscription explain gay and lesbian culture? Or choices of deviant sexuality? In the beginning Michael asked “Can we be sure of the fact that there are men and women?” This is a good question. One might state it another way: “Do female hormones (estrogen, progesterone, oxytocin) affect emotions and cognition? If so, are emotions and cognition predicates for our definition of “identity?” I would suggest that yes, they are. However, this complicates things when we start addressing issues like gay and lesbian identity.

Michael (10th July, 17:12):
Feeling has this tactile thing about it; being touched by something, we are moved. This is emotion. Things have an impact on us, we are moved. In fact, we are always already in some mood or other, always enveloped in some mood or other, always attuned with the world as a whole in one way or the other. Our being-in-the-world is always already mooded. We hear that a friend has died and we are moved to tears. We sob, we are depressed, we do not smile. The body participates in every mood we are in, and our respective mood shows itself in our bodily behaviour. But that does not mean that the mood is in the body. By participating, the body is moved; this is emotion. But what does this mean for sense-perception? We do not feel because we have skin, nerves, etc.; rather, we have skin, etc., because we feel, because we are always already mooded.

Erin (10th July, 23:20):
You wish to invert the order of causation?

Michael (12th July, 11:56):
No, I’m leaping out of causation altogether.

Fiona (11th July, 16:30):
There is a parallel between trying to rid oneself of the divisive way of thinking about gender and trying to rid oneself of the subject/object distinction (Michael’s point about causation being tied to this latter attempt). I think both of you are fundamentally in agreement about (a) the primacy of process (overriding the subject/object binary mode) and (b) that there is an ambiguity in what it is to “be there.” That is, by placing primacy on process, the notion of presence or being present becomes displaced. Thus Erin is interested in the issue of whether gender displaced in a sensory virtual reality would change the very notion of gender (because the notion of the situatedness of gender has changed).

Erin (7th July, 21:18):
Are any traits inherently female? For instance, are females inherently locked into a more compassionate mode because they carry babies?

[Pause]

Erin (10th July, 23:20):
But if you cut off your arms and your legs, would you still be “you?” Most would say yes, but the fact is that your experience of the world would be different from that moment onward and therefore the cumulative experiences which comprise the “you” that is “you” would be substantively and contextually altered.

Fiona (11th July, 16:36):
Women who have a mastectomy are very sensitive about it. This is a purely bodily thing (at first glance) which suggests that the role that our bodies play is important in self-perception. Although, perhaps, it is the way in which others perceive our bodies that is important or, at least, the way in which we think others perceive it. Indeed, can you separate the body from perception of it?

Erin (10th July, 22:01):
Butler notes that no matter how hard we try to get at the materiality of the body, we won’t succeed. If there is a material body that precedes discursive appropriation, we cannot know it. This is why some bodies end up mattering more than others. This is not to say there’s only language and nothing else. It’s to say that we cannot have the thing in itself … not even the body in itself. Even the materiality of the body has a history. We will have always already, to use a Heideggerianism, thinged the thing.

Fiona (11th July, 14:38):
Interesting. I wonder about the conclusion (“that is why some bodies end up mattering more than others”), though. Is it that some bodies end up mattering more or is it that some forms of discourse and interaction about bodies end up mattering more? Or are forms of discourse about bodies the intermediary stage and then
we, so to speak, return to the bodies themselves as if they were themselves really what the discourse was about and thus the bodies themselves come to be what is important (even if this step is ultimately mistaken)?

Erin (8th July, 22:10):
Yes, the simulacra (the image of the object) becomes the object itself. Therefore the subject-object distinction disappears. Text becomes its own context.

Scene 3 (No more subject)

Michael (8th July, 17:35):
What is reality? What is the virtuality of virtual reality? “Virtual – related to virtue – can mean” “that is so in essence or effect, although formally or actually; admitting of being called by the name so far as the effect or result is concerned” (OED). Virtuality is “Essential nature or being; apart from external form or embodiment” (OED). In questioning the virtuality of virtual reality, one is quickly thrown back into the heart of metaphysics. “‘Is this what you wanted, To live in a house, That is haunted by the ghosts, Of [metaphysics]? (apologies to Leonard Cohen). How does postmodernism leave these ghosts behind? Does it just try hard not to think about it?

Erin (8th July, 22:10):
The subject-object distinction disappears. Text becomes its own context. You are here with me in California, because I am responding to “you,” correct? Where, if this is not so, is the “you” that is the essential, real “you” located? These questions are obviously problematized by virtual reality, although I prefer the term “telepresence” for the sensory body-suits since this term conveys the entire extent of meaning when speaking about the projection of identity.

Michael (9th July, 17:49):
But if the subject-object distinction disappears, consciousness does so too.

Erin (9th July, 23:15):
How can you say that? No way. This is an enormous leap in logic.

Michael (10th July, 17:12):
It is an enormous leap in logic, but it is based more deeply on a leap into phenomenology. This is not the place to spell it out in detail, but there is only consciousness for a subject. The object is given to the subject and only because the object stands over against the subject can the subject take it as an object. The object is put into an image and this takes place in consciousness. But if there are no more objects and no more subjects, then there is no more consciousness. Incidentally, I question your assumption that the body is the site of feeling and emotion.
Erin (10th July, 23:20):
No more subject-object delineation. Fine. But your view denies the possibility of individual or social change. I do not adhere to that.

Michael (12th July, 11:56):
I do not kid myself that we are going to get this issue of subject/object, presencing, consciousness etc. straightened out in the course of this discussion.

Radhika (14th July, 11:05):
But who says anything should have a "conclusion?" We just end.

FIN

Web Sites (in no particular order)

Location of the Monist Interactive Issue, Gender and Postmodern Communication web site (includes the raw discussion, the initial outlines submitted, the programme and play, links to all sites mentioned during the discussion or in participants' signature files and to some other sites relevant to the topic):
http://www.ed.ac.uk/~ejua35/mii-gpmc.html

Women-writing-culture archives:

Greg Sherk's site on gender (crime and parenthood are foremost):
http://www.niagra.com/~jaxon/

History of Consciousness Program, University of California, Santa Cruz:
http://www.ucsc.edu/ucsc/hum.html

Allucquere Roseanne Stone's web site (University of Texas):
http://www.acilab.utexas.edu:80/~sandy

Michael Eldred's treatise on masculinity from a Heideggerian perspective (in German): http://www.webcom.com/artefact/kaemstan.html


Michael Eldred's artefact page: http://www.webcom.com/artefact/


REFERENCES

Below is a list of works referred to in the course of the live discussion.


Langton, M., 1993 *We'll I heard it on the Radio and I saw it on the Television.... An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and about Aboriginal People and Things*. Sydney, NSW: Australian Film Commission.


SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION THROUGH ELECTRONIC MAILING

1. What is the Internet?

The Internet is a physically connected network of computers of different types and capacity located at some distance from each other. The physical connection between the computers is maintained by electronic hardware, a number of sophisticated computer programs with cryptic names and millions of miles of cables. The large capacity computers are usually networked 24-hours a day, while the smaller ones (the so-called "personal computers" or "PCs") are linked to the net only when their users wish to communicate. Therefore PC users entering the net usually first build up a connection to a high capacity computer (in most cases through phone lines) and utilize the latter's 24-hour technical services; thus these computers are called "servers."

Some forms of Internet communication require the simultaneous presence and activity of all communicators at the same time (as in a round-table discussion), others do not (they involve activities more like leaving messages on a bulletin board). Forms of Internet communication can also be classified on the basis of whether the communicated message goes from one person to one person, or from one person to many. Due to the rapid development of technology none of these forms are strictly separated, each uses some elements of the others. Most of them are literacy based verbal communication, but in the World-Wide-Web (WWW), the most popular non-simultaneous one-to-many Internet communication – the role of audiovisual materials is increasing daily.

The technological standards of the Internet were developed in the 1960s and before the early 1990s these standards were used only for communication between academic institutions. The rapidly spreading popularity of the Internet in everyday life is due to a number of technical and social developments – the most obvious of these is the increasing availability of visual information supplementing information of the verbal type. In theory all forms of networked communication can be used for scholarly purposes, and in fact a number of such forms are in actual daily use in academic institutions. This introduction focuses on those forms of scholarly communication that are based on electronic mail, not only because these are

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5. FOOTNOTES: Footnotes or references should be typed double-spaced in a separate section, and numbered consecutively. They will be printed at the end of the paper. The first mention of a book or journal article should have complete bibliographical information (for books, the publisher's name should be included and for journal articles the volume and date of the journal should be included). "Op. cit." should be replaced by an abbreviated reference—see University of Chicago, A Manual of Style, 13th ed., p. 489.

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