Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal
Acknowledgments

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Lisa Tessman

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Introduction

Lisa Tesman

This volume picks out, from within the wider field of feminist philosophy, works that focus on the ethical, the social, and the political—whether these are conceived as overlapping or as distinct but interrelated realms—and that understand the ethical, social, and political questions that concern feminists as questions about a non-ideal, actual world, and more specifically, about an actual world that is non-ideal in at least one particular way: it is marked by features of oppression. Some of the authors consider the relation between ethics and politics, some situate themselves explicitly within one or the other of the subfields of ethics and of social and political philosophy, and others cross over or combine these subfields, presenting a strong connection between them. Additionally, each of the chapters in this volume either presents theoretical reflections on the significance of non-idealizing as an approach to feminist ethics and/or social and political philosophy and on the implications of non-idealizing for a theory’s assumptions about background conditions or about the moral and/or political subject, or serves as an instance of work that is rooted in actual, non-ideal conditions, and that, as such, is able to consider some of the pressing problems that arise under such conditions.

1 Feminist Ethics and Feminist Social and Political Philosophy

When I was first asked to edit this volume and learned that it was to cover both feminist ethics and feminist social and political philosophy, my initial response was: these are perhaps the two largest ‘subfields’ of feminist philosophy, each of which (social and political thinking) dominates feminist thinking/philosophy before and when such thinking first entered the academy, so why try to cover both of these extremely prolific areas in one volume? I wondered if I might edit a volume solely on feminist ethics, and leave a volume on feminist social and political philosophy to someone else. However, the division of the volumes having already been decided, this was not an option. As it turns out, I am glad that I was forced from separating feminist ethics and feminist social and political philosophy, for in the process of putting this volume together I have been reminded of and have come to more fully appreciate, how importantly tied ethics, social, and political philosophy are or can be.
for feminists, as well as how rich the possibilities are for theorizing the relationship between morality and politics in a volume that combines the subfields of ethics and social and political philosophy. What the relationship is (or should be) between feminist ethics and feminist social and political philosophy is an interesting question, and I hope that the chapters that take up this question directly and the chapters that implicitly convey a certain understanding of this relationship will lead the reader to see this relationship complex.

In my own view, some of the complexity can be developed by rethinking the implications of—and perhaps reaffirming—the phrase 'the personal is political' by considering whether and when it is also the case that: 'the ethical is political'; the process through which we feminists—or we as feminists—aim to criticize, transform, produce, endorse and enact ethical values must be politicized. In the phrase 'the personal is political', politicizing a (thence solely personal) practice is understood to entail at least an element of publicizing the practice and an element of comprehending the practice as connected to the operations of power. In politicizing, one exposes a practice to public scrutiny, that is, one moves the site of potential critical viewing of a practice from the private sphere to a public site (though not necessarily to the site of a formal political institution such as a legislature or even to the site of a public of people understood only in roles related to formal political institutions, such as the role of citizen). There are two advantages of publicity: (1) the publicly viewed practice can be evaluated by all those sharing the same public site, thus increasing the potential for critical thinking and making it possible for formerly unarticulated practitioners to be convinced, and to have to reevaluate or at least defend their practice; (2) the publicity of a formerly personal/private practice also facilitates critical viewing of the practice because, revealed in public, the practice can be seen as of a kind with others' formerly personal/private practices, such that patterns are discovered; perceiving these patterns allows feminists to connect practices to the operations of power, including operations of power that are systematically structured, such as capitalism, male dominance, and white supremacy. To politicize a practice, then, is both to expose it to publicity with its associated potential for critique and contestation, and to understand its relationship to (systemic) operations of power. Politicization of (what are revealed to be) oppressive practices is a crucial part of the feminist struggle against gender oppression, and oppression more generally.

Is the ethical political (or can, or ought, the ethical be politicized) in this way? This depends not only on one's understanding of the political but also on one's understanding of ethics. I favor a conception of ethics that allows one to answer in the affirmative: ethics should at least in many cases be politicized; feminism in particular should in many cases politicize the ethical. What my conception of ethics permits me to mean by this is that feminism should participate in the critical production and transformation of morality through political processes. Politicization can only be thought of as a way of critically producing and transforming morality if morality is the sort of thing that can be produced and transformed by human processes. If one understands morality not as something that endures unchanging and unaffected by actual, situated human practices, but rather as something that is created and changed through human processes, then politicization counts as one of the processes through which moral practices can be (critically) shaped, a way that I would suggest it behooves feminists to embrace precisely because of the crucial role that politicization plays in undermining oppression. If on the other hand moral facts are taken to be true or false independent of actual, situated human practices—whether descending from God or existing in a normed realm accessible through pure reason or even determined by the telos of humans as a 'natural kind'—then the political struggle over ethical values degenerates into a contest to show who has gotten the independently existing moral facts right. Believing oneself to have the correct moral facts has tempered even feminists—it is, after all, a big stick to wield and a difficult one to relinquish—but I would propose that the political process through which consideration of moral practices should take place ought to be conceived as a process of publicly criticizing, producing and transforming morality, not a process of determining who has knowledge of already existing, unchangeable moral facts. Thus the 'naturalizing' trend that has captured at least some feminist ethicists—and that influences this volume's theme of non-ideal theorizing—offers a way of conceiving of ethics that supports my claim that the ethical can and often should be politicized. In saying this, I hope to be extending the work of feminists such as Margaret Urban Walker (1998/2007, 2003), whose situated approach to ethics highly informs the account of morality that I have just given. For Walker, the ethical is clearly social. She notes that 'morality is a naturally occurring structure of all human social groups' (2007, 108), and that 'morality itself consists in practices' (1998, 14), insisting that 'morality is not socially modular' (1998, 17), that is, that it 'cannot be extricated from social practices' (1998, 17). Understanding what morality is thus requires inquiries into the actual practices of people in moral communities and into the moral understandings that people have of their practices. But a critical, and not merely descriptive, step is also necessary, a step in which members of a moral community question whether their understandings constitute a way of life that is not only 'how we live' but also 'how to live', a way worthy of people's attention, effort, restraint, or sacrifice' (2003, 109). For Walker, the key critical tool for deciding whether 'how we live' is 'how to live' is 'transparency testing'. Transparency testing can expose a practice and a moral community's understanding of the practice as lacking transparency if, through testing, people choose to see that 'our way of life in reality betrays our shared understandings, or if these understandings turn out to be driven by deception, manipulation, coercion, or violence directed at someone of us by others, when it is not transparently based on shared vision of the good' (2003, 109). In failing a transparency test, a practice loses the trust of the practitioners, and the practices thus 'lose their moral authority' (2003, 109; italics in the original). The critical work of testing morality enables the moral community to reject some practices, reshape others, and see the need for new practices; since this testing leads to a loss of the moral authority of practices that require oppression, domination, and other misuses of power, this critical work is feminist.

While Walker undoubtedly affirms that morality is social—it consists of social practices and is transformed through critical social processes—that does not emphasize politicization or speak of the negotiation of moral understandings as a political process. I propose that the political realm is a site of contestation that is
indispensable for feminist attempts to critically shape morality; it is a site where moral understandings can be shifted through a process that has a chance at being more democratic and potentially more powerful than processes that take place within less public venues that may be described as "moral communities." Being less optimistic than Walker is about the tendency of members of social groups to lose trust in their practices (especially when they are the beneficiaries of these practices, as, say, even are of practices of male domination) even when these practices are revealed as inconsistent with their own professed values (such as egalitarianism), I believe that the sort of contestation that characterizes political struggle and that becomes strong in times of political movements is required in order for significant liberatory change to take place. The public scrutiny and contestation offered by the political, and—when democratic norms actually function in the political realm—the egalitarian practices that formal political structures can support, are important factors for feminist critique. The problem—particularly visible when one considers the other thematic of this volume, namely non-ideal theorizing—is that actual, available political venues tend to be far from egalitarian or inclusive. It is out of the work of feminists to make them more so, while continuing to point to their shortcomings. The suggestion that one ought to "politicize" something must not convey the false impression that the political realm one would thereby enter actually conforms to any ideal(ized) model of the political.

While I have argued for connecting morality and politics—and connecting feminist ethics and feminist social and political philosophy as fields of study—it may be that while many feminists see feminist ethics and feminist social and political philosophy as highly connected, different ones of us have different entry points—emphasizing either ethics or politics—and may try to claim priority for one or the other in cases of conflict. Ethical and political commitments may conflict when one's commitment to a particular moral practice is not in fact endorsed or affirmed through a political process that one helps endows. Democratic politics can be extremely frustrating; it does not always yield what one wants it to. In such cases, feminists face the prospect of having to forego moral practices and moral understandings that are precious from a feminist perspective (and that may be the condition of certain moral subjects' capacity to participate meaningfully in politics), but that cannot (yet) be sustained upon violating certain political values such as the value of freedom at the core of democratic practices. It is here that the political theorists and the ethicists amongst us may have different instincts. But the fact that there are conflicts between what are in some cases incommensurable values—which these values are all cast as moral values or whether some are moral and some are political values—is inevitable in non-ideal(ized) worlds, which will typically be characterized by highly dilemmatic conditions.

2 Theorizing the Non-Ideal

The value of a non-idealizing theoretical approach, and its relationship to feminist theorizing, has become more widely recognized in recent feminist work. It is advocated, for instance, in Charles Mills' "Ideal Theory" in Ideology (2004), where he refers to non-idealizing approaches as "idealizing feminist and critical race theory." Mills' claim is that engaging in a certain sort of idealizing—"theorizing that relies on an idealization to the exclusion, or at least marginalization, of the actual" (2004, 166)—constitutes an ideological move that makes it all the more difficult to understand the workings of oppression and to transform actual, non-ideal, unjust societies into more just societies. He writes: "the so-called ideal theory more dominant in mainstream ethics is in crucial respects obfuscatory and can indeed be thought of as in-part ideological, in the pejorative sense of a set of idealized forms that reflect art and contribute to perpetuating illicit group privilege" (2004, 164; italics in the original). Mills distinguishes between the sense of the 'ideal' in which all of normative ethics involves ideals—which he calls 'ideal-as-normative'—and the sense of 'ideal' in which an ideal is a model (he calls this 'ideal-as-model') (2004, 164). Normative ideals can themselves be problematic, and as Mills points out particular normative concepts, for example the normative ideals of 'parity' and 'autonomy', have to be examined for their ideological effects or historical abuses (2004, 174-175); however, it is not the mere having of normative ideals, but rather the having of wrong or misguided (and sometimes ideologically informed) normative ideals for which feminist thinkers need to be on guard.

Mills sets aside the possible problems with the 'ideal-as-normative' to explore the uses of the 'ideal-as-model'. There are two senses in which an ideal can be a model. In the first sense, which Mills calls 'ideal-as-descriptive-model', the ideal is a simplified and abstracted representation of something based on its most important features. While simplifying and abstracting from features of something, however, an ideal-as-descriptive-model is still a representation consisting of features of actual instances of what it is modeling. One does not choose which features of something to include and which to omit from an ideal-as-descriptive-model on the basis of how good or desirable or perfect a feature may be, but rather on the basis of how accurately that feature captures what the thing being modeled is actually like. To create an ideal-as-descriptive-model of a grade school classroom in the small city I live in, one should probably include in the description the fact that some of the children regularly arrive at school hungry. Contrast this with what Mills calls an 'ideal-as-idealized-model', which is an exemplar of what something should be like, or would be like if it were perfect, a perfect instance of a thing of its kind (for instance, perfectly just, perfectly suited for learning, or even, since he 'should' need not always be understood in moral terms, perfectly designed for the purpose of torture (see 2004, 165)). In an ideal-as-idealized-model of a grade school classroom (the purpose of which is presumably to enable the education of children, none of the children would sit at their desks distracted by hunger. Mills is concerned with the gap between [a phenomenon P] and the ideal, and correspondingly between ideal-as-idealized-model (an ideal—in the sense of accurate—model of how P actually works) and ideal-as-idealized-model (an ideal—in the sense of an exemplar—model of how P should work) (2004, 165). This gap is a matter of concern because ideal theories assume that one can draw exclusively or primarily on an ideal-as-idealized-model in order to reach an understanding of actual phenomena. Mills points out that the question of whether an ideal-as-idealized-model is helpful for 'trying to understand the workings of an actual P'
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In the first chapter, Bar-Ami Bar On expresses a worry about the loss of the centrality of feminist political action, a loss that has come about in two ways. First, as feminists have shifted their attention from changing public opinion and initiating large-scale changes in the structuring of public life to transforming practices internal to personal relationships or to relationships within private or bounded communities, feminist activism has become less clearly political. Secondly, even the activism—including revolutionary activism—typical of second wave feminism has been characterized by feminists as activism rooted in moral commitments rather than as political action. This characterization, according to Bar On, misconstrues the relation between the ethical and the political, and wrongly presumes that political action cannot produce its own sort of normativity but rather needs to borrow normative content from the ethical realm. Bar On rejects the false assumption that politics has no normativity, and the apparent assumption of feminists that feminist activism can bring feminist moral values into the political, but that the values themselves remain moral, while political action is not a source of (feminist) normativity. She argues instead for an Aristotelian understanding of political action that she urges feminists to embrace.

In Chapter 2, Lisa Riveter continues probing the relation between ethics or politics, and in doing so she also evaluates ideal and non-ideal theories for their ability to conceive of this relation adequately. Unlike Bar On, Riveter begins with the assumption that feminist commitments are political (rather than moral) commitments, and, focusing on the political commitment to resist oppression, she raises the question of whether such a commitment can count as an ethical reason. A worry that the importance of this sort of political commitment gets overlooked leads Riveter to be critical of ideal (moral) theory, in part because it fails to account for the normative priority that agents' political commitments can have. Invoking the insights of a version of moral particularism and emphasizing the particularity of an agent's social location as it relates to her commitment to resist oppression, Riveter points out that while an ideal theory may recognize the moral value that a political commitment can have by virtue of contributing to others' good, the theory will still be inadequate if it fails to recognize that the political commitment—tied to the agent's particular relation to oppression—is not interchangeable with other reasons for acting, even if the resulting action brings about an equivalent good.

The last two essays of Part I assess frameworks or methods in terms of whether they engage in idealization, and work to pinpoint the sort of idealizing moves that are problematic and to identify the merits of non-ideal theory. In the opening chapter, Chapter 3, my focus is on a utopianistic ethical framework. This framework appears unattractive for theorizing about the actual conditions faced by oppressed people, since eudaimonism centers the concept of eudaimonia or flourishing, and under some conditions of oppression eudaimonia may be unattainable. I suggest that while an idealizing form of eudaimonism must posit the background conditions and the features of moral subjectivity under which it is possible for an exercise of the virtues to be constitutive of (attainable) flourishing—and so idealize in order to do this since actual conditions and actual features of moral subjectivity under oppression interfere in the possibility of virtue functioning in this way—
is worth distinguishing between an idealizing and a non-idealizing pluralism. I thus recommend that a non-idealizing pluralism continue to center the concept of flourishing—now understood as largely unattainable—and examine the frustrations and disappointments of exercising the virtues under conditions of oppression where the virtues become disconnected from flourishing.

In Chapter 4 Alison Jaggar compares two methods for theorizing about justice and injustice: that of John Rawls and that of Iris Marion Young. She outlines the ways in which Rawls idealizes, and the contrasting ways in which Young avoids idealization, demonstrating the superiority of Young's critical method for addressing actual injustices. The pitfalls of Rawls' ideal theory include his exclusive focus on developing general principles which can then be applied rather than starting with descriptive accounts of actual practices, his choice to employ a fictional—and in fact impossible to actualize—model of reasoning (the reasoning that takes place in the hypothetical original position), and his focus on a society in which, counter to the facts of actual societies, members comply fully with the governing principles instead of on an actual society with all of its deviations from full compliance. Young avoids all of these pitfalls and Jaggar spells out the advantages of her doing so. What Jaggar reveals is the enormous potential of a feminist, non-idealizing, critical theorization of justice, particularly in the hands of a philosopher as passionate and imaginative as Iris Marion Young.

Part II of this volume is comprised of essays that critique one particular aspect of ideal theory, namely the idealizing portrayals of personhood employed in ideal theory. Each of these four essays focuses on different ways in which this idealizing takes place: through the idealizing assumption of a self whose embodiment is as a 'singleton' (as opposed to a conjunct twin), through the idealizations of heteronormativity and heteronormative persons, through the idealizations of persons as not needing (good enough) care and as not having been scarred by bad care, and through the idealization of persons as having cognitive capacities that not all actual humans have (alongside a degrading, stereotyped portrayal of actual cognitively impaired people, who are thereby excluded from personhood).

Christine Overall, contributing to feminism's practice of attending to embodiment, argues in Chapter 5 that ideal theory tends to ignore the fact that persons are embodiments; that feminist theorists do much better in that regard and regularly include considerations of gendered and racialized bodies, and bodies that are shaped by age, weight, and abilities and disabilities, and yet even feminists uniformly assume the embodied personhood of a singleton. Overall challenges the reader to rethink even this assumption, in part so as not to take for granted that the singleton way of being separable from other bodies, and the singleton habits of exercising the sort of authority, autonomy and privacy that singletons have with respect to their (single) bodies, are the only or the ideal ways of being embodied. Taking for granted the inevitability or the desirability of singleton embodiment leads to poor treatment of conjunct twins, who, as Overall shows, are not necessarily better off being 'idealized.'

A different sort of normalization—the normalization and idealization of heterosexuality through a pretense of its universality—is the focus of Chapter 6, by Ada

Joanna. She draws on Soren Kierkegaard as a resource for the critical questioning of this idealization. Her reason for turning to Kierkegaard is that she recognizes that, being ideologically motivated, the tenacity of people's allegiance to heteronormativity cannot be undermined through rational argumentation, or even a more comprehensive education, alone; it requires instead an existential guilt and the development of a spiritual inwardness because this is what can subvert the subjective attachment to this particular practice of the normal and the repression (of the queer) that it requires. Additionally, a Kierkegaardian understanding of the spiritual can be counterposed to the fundamentalist's conception of religion (which Kierkegaard would claim is not spiritual at all), displacing the Religious Right's hold on the religious or spiritual discourse on hetero- and homosexuality.

Another discourse that makes idealizing assumptions about personhood is the discourse of distributive justice. Anca Gheas, in Chapter 7, critiques theories of distributive justice, and the very ideal of distributive justice, by observing that a crucial element for fostering people's equal chances at success—good enough care—cannot be accounted for by theories that purport to cover all the varieties of goods that must be distributed fairly. Idealizing theories of distributive justice both idealize the persons about whom they theorize (by making oversimplified and false assumptions about their care needs, if they are characterized as needing care at all), and idealize the potential capacity of social policies to ensure whatever care is needed. Real, as opposed to idealized, persons often suffer from their histories of bad care, which leave traumas that cannot be easily overcome or repaired through fair distributive practices. Real, as opposed to idealized, social policies and institutions are insufficient—and, as Gheas contends, cannot suffice—to meet actual needs for good enough care or to compensate for the effects of bad care. As important as policies directed at equalizing access to good care are, they will remain inadequate because necessary caring relations cannot be created or distributed through even the best policies. Good caring relations, according to Gheas, must be promoted by those most able to do so, namely those individuals who have themselves benefited from good care.

Like Gheas, Eva Feder Kitay engages the literature on care ethics in her chapter, Chapter 8, arguing directly that care ethics stands as an excellent example of a non-idealized ethics. She contrasts care ethics with those justice-theory ethics that idealize in such a way as to exclude from personhood people who have severe cognitive disabilities, and points out that those exclusions result from failures of responsible and non-arrogant inquiry—failures that are ultimately in the very practice of doing (idealized) ethics. Kitay characterizes the contrast between care ethics and theories of justice by emphasizing their different 'entry points': care ethics takes as a point of entry actual practices of care (and from there, aims to conceive and actualize "best practices" of care), while in the case of justice the entry point is the hypothetical, fictionalized, or oversimplified theoretical assumptions or stipulations about moral subjects and moral conditions. Kitay’s critique of idealized ethics focuses on two utilitarian theories of justice, the one by Peter Singer and the other by Jeff McMahan that distinguish between persons and nonpersons in such a way as to exclude people with severe cognitive disabilities from personhood, an exclusion that results from
their reliance on hypothetical examples that employ only stereotyped portrayals of the cognitively disabled, instead of an accurate, empirical information.

While Part II of the volume primarily critiques idealized characterizations of personhood, the essays of Part III take the next step and re-envision the moral and political subject—whom engaging in pernicious idealizations. Various traits are considered for this new subject—who is understood to be living under and struggling against the non-ideal conditions of oppression—as the authors explore the possibilities of the self as a vulnerable, as exhibiting a virtuous sort of anger, as approximately (and imperfectly) forgiving, and as sublimating.

Desiree Melton theorizes the vulnerable self in Chapter 9. Just as Jains points out to the case of heteronormativity that it cannot be undermined with mere rational argument but requires an existential guilt and a spiritual approach, so Melton argues that what is refusal to recognize racial injustice cannot be disengaged with evidence or argumentation, undermining this refusal also requires an emotional awareness in the form of a disposition that Melton calls "vulnerability." Her claim is that the disposition of vulnerability enables the self to be open to recognizing racial injustice. The dispositional viewpoint involves an attunement to the mutual dependence of self and other on each other for understanding and respect—can be purposely cultivated, and Melton recommends such cultivation, a task which, because of how racism and white privilege function, she expects will be easier for blacks than for whites.

For Macaulay in Chapter 10, the trait to be investigated is anger, which can count as a virtue only if it is appropriate anger; Bell is interested in the possibilities of anger being a virtue under the very non-ideal conditions of oppression. Anger, a response to being wronged, seems promising from a feminist perspective because it can be an egalitarian response to the wrongs of oppression, an assertion of self-respect in the face of a wrong done to one, and a force that serves to motivate resistance. As a character trait understood along the lines suggested by an Aristotelian framework, anger, to qualify as a virtue, must be appropriate in a variety of respects (well timed, well targeted, properly moderated, etc.). Bell further questions whether anger can count as a virtue in non-ideal conditions if its only connection to flourishing is that it will eventually lead to flourishing (for the bearer of the trait or for others). She asks how one accounts for the virtue-oriented connection between virtue and flourishing. The conclusion is that the virtuous flourishing is a function of the "Appropriate Attitude Account"—that it is the non-instrumental value of a trait such as anger.

Anger emerges again as a consideration in Alice MacLean's discussion of forgiveness in Chapter 11. MacLean's account of forgiveness involves the necessity of any singular ideal of what forgiveness is or should be, noting that forgiveness can take place in a wide range of contexts and for a wide range of reasons. Singular ideals or paradigms of forgiveness have tended in the philosophical literature to ignore how contextual meanings—and the very value—of forgiveness can vary depending on its role in the denoted dimension of the situation: the expectation that women will self-sacrifice and refrain from anger wrongs done to them, for instance, can make the value of their forgiveness suspect. Yet and, since forgiveness does retain some value even

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in non-ideal situations where its value may be compromised or reduced. MacLean proposes that one look at forgiveness as a practice (rather than an ideal), and recognizes it as an imperfect practice that can and often should take place even under imperfect conditions. For instance, forgiving may be viewed as a practice in which forgiveness is embodied with anger and resentment, and this "imperfect forgiveness" may be exactly the sort of forgiveness that is best suited for certain situations, such as situations in which women's anger is so constrained that it can only be expressed when combined with the forgiveness she is expected to deliver.

Sally Scholz, in Chapter 12, investigates the moral and political subject whose obligations and responsibilities stem from her being in a relation of feminist political solidarity, a solidarity that forms in opposition to injustice. Describing feminist political solidarity as a commitment to a cause or political struggle that members of a solidarity group undertake together, rather than, for instance, an already-existing unity among people who share an identity, Scholz contends that the particularities of the group's political aim will affect the sorts of obligations and responsibilities that arise from their solidarity; that is, the members of the solidarity group are transformed through their commitment, as well as, often, through the challenges of carrying out this commitment with a diverse group of others.

A requirement for non-ideal theory is that it consider moral and political problems within the actual worlds about which it describes. The essays in Part IV of this volume are each strongly rooted in a particular, particular context, in each case a context that exhibits a problem or an injustice. In each of these essays, the author refrains from examples in which the characteristics of the moral/political subject and of the background conditions are hypothetical, counterfactual, and impossible in the real world—each author refrains from pernicious idealizations—and instead analyses an actual problem within a context whose details the author knows about through accounts of experience, including empirical studies and fictional and nonfictional narrative.

In Chapter 13, Peggy DesAutels begins the recognition of the importance of studying moral life in contexts whose power is unequal and exercised abusively, and she compares two such contexts: contexts of oppression, and contexts in which a particular organizational structure supports unequal and perhaps abusive power relations. She focuses on organizational structures in which a moral wrongdoing has taken place, and considers the possibilities for someone within the organization to resist this wrongdoing in engaging in "whistleblowing"—exposing the wrongdoing with the aim of bringing it to a halt. Individual value of a trait such as anger.

Maria Pia Lata's analysis in Chapter 14 is contextualized in the problem of rape, including many of its varieties (for instance, rape in war, rape of young girls in forced marriages, rape within abusive relationships), her primary focus is on explaining how to derive meaning and ultimately legal accountability by means of concrete narratives. Beginning with stories—in this case, stories of rape—as
presenting particular examples of a kind of violence and moving from there through the moral discourses that the stories open up, one can arrive at new conceptualizations of violence. Borrowing from Arendt, Laras emphasizes that it is in the public realm—where 'spectacles' of a story can debate its meaning—when the 'moral filter' that allows one to understand the story emerges. Being able to understand the sort of violence that rage is (in the moral lens that Laras proposes, a 'paradigm of evil') and then define rage as a crime (through a 'paradigm of justice') which offers the legal category of 'accountability' depends upon this process of 'reflective judgment.'

The role of narratives for understanding violence and abuse remains a theme in Chapter 15, by Diana Tollefson Meyers. Meyers explores the relationship between narratives of the victims of human rights abuses and normativity. Meyers rejects two influential narrative theories that connect narrative to normativity but that Meyers views as able to capture neither the conditions of ongoing (rather than isolated) violence under which abuse victims narrate nor the most relevant features of these victims' narratives (including, for instance, the shame-driven silence that suppresses many female victims' stories). She proposes instead that one abandon the idealized expectation of perfect moral closure (where the story's closure is a reflection of moral closure in the real world, a moral closure that would consist—ideally—of a permanent end to all human rights abuses) and pay attention instead to the 'moments of moral closure' that surface in victims' narratives, narratives that are likely to be fragmented representations of suffering but that cannot reflect any completed real-world moral closure because such closure has not occurred. Representing a 'moral void' through the communiation of the narrative carries an implied moral demand that takes the place of the traditionally-conceived form of moral closure, and this moral demand that issues from victims' narratives can enter successfully into human rights discourse if those who listen to the narratives are equipped with the kinds of background knowledge that enables them to competently discern the moral meanings of the narrative.

The last chapter of the book is Ann Ferguson's, which focuses on women's grassroots resistance that is a part of the anti-corporate globalization movements. As the other authors in the fourth section of the book do, Ferguson begins with careful attention to the actual—in this case, to actual cases of women's activism—and bases her theorizations on these concrete cases. Ferguson considers three different ways of framing justice that all can be found within these cases: one, labeling them the 'liberirian or neo-liberal justice' paradigm, the 'women and/or social justice' paradigm, and the 'justice as solidarity' paradigm. She finds this last paradigm to be the most useful in that it can effect fundamental change in the form that globalization takes, and she spends time detailing the practices—actual, collective, social—of production that serve as alternatives to capitalist globalization—that support this vision of global justice as solidarity, noting the important place of women's activism and feminist concerns contributing to this vision, and insisting all the while that the vision is achievable rather than utopian. Together the essays of this volume engage in a wide range of concepts with the ethical, social and political dimensions of the actual, non-ideal world we live in, focusing a feminist lens on both the oppression and the resistance present or possible in this world. It is my hope that these attempts at critically understanding the actual can support even a bit of movement toward more just arrangements.

Notes

1. I am using the term 'ethics' and the term 'social and political philosophy' because I am following the conventional way of dividing philosophical methodology (in the titles of courses, in the organization of textbooks in the descriptions of specializations, etc.). However, below, the customary division—where 'ethics' stands alone in one subfield as if it were distinct from the social, and distinct from the political, and where 'social' and 'political' are lumped together as if they were not important differences between them—will be problematic.

2. Thanks to the Ausi Bar On for drawing my attention to these elements, especially the element of publicity.

3. See Alison Jaggar's claim that within the 'diversity' of Western feminism, 'a certain consistency of approach may be discerned. This consistency is expressed as a distinctive feminist version of socialism, rooted in feminism's concern above all with inequalities of power' (2000, 457). Of course, there are feminists who reject this normative approach; see for Melissa Virginia Held (2002). A version of feminist nationalism in ethics is developed in great detail by Margaret Urban Walker (1998/2000, 2003).


5. This observation recalls for me the following anecdote. Once one—maybe twelve or so years ago—my partner Ann and I were camping in a campground. It was morning, and the people in the neighboring campsite had tied their dogs up and driven off for the day. Immediately, the dog started whining and crying, and both Ann and I looked over at the dog sympathetically. "Poor dog," I said, "he misses his people." "Poor dog," Ann said, "he wants to be free, off his leash." Our comments—our projections onto this dog reveal plenty, but among other things they seem to have foreclosed the fact that in the past decade, Ann has drifted more squarely into the position of a political theorist centrally concerned with the question of freedom, and I into the position of an ethicist focused on the concept of flourishing. The political theorist wanted to secure the dog's freedom, and the ethicist wanted to secure for the dog what he needs to flourish (including in this dog's case, and as emphasized in many versions of feminist ethics, connection to relation to others).

6. This claim has been made by others (1979).

7. Cherie Calbourn uses the term 'reality' to refer to 'interrelatedness to what moral life is really like to what moral agents are really like, to what the production and acquisition of moral knowledge is really like, to what the social practice of morality is really like, to what character development is really like, to what practical reasoning is really like—an approach to the construction employed within moral philosophy for describing these same things; and she believes that such a realism (which she further qualifies by calling it an 'innovative realism') captures the common concern of western philosophy's work in moral philosophy' (Calbourn 2004, 4, italics in the original).

8. Mills draws on the work of Cherie Calbourn (1987, 1992) and follows Calbourn in rejecting ideal-allowance while endorsing abstraction; he argues that while some abstraction abstracts away from gender, race and class realities, it is not abstraction that is a tool of
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References


