The Play of Reason: From the Modern to the Postmodern. By Linda Nicholson. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999. 179p. $47.50 cloth, $17.95 paper.

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The book is composed of nine essays; all but one have appeared in earlier publications. They have a timeless quality, however, and even readers familiar with them may find a rereading productive, especially in the context of examining them as a body of work.

Section I, which has five essays, examines "Modernity and the Problem of History." Combining a solid reading of political theory from the seventeenth century to postmodern times, Nicholson traces the development of such key concepts as the family, "race," gender, sex, and the body to show how history has shaped the kind of politics we imagine possible. The first essay, and possibly the least insightful, offers a critical review of the analyses of moral development by both Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan. The next examines Marxism and draws on Mary O'Brien and Iris Young to illuminate how Marxism can be adapted to examine women's subordination by reframing the categories of analysis to include child rearing and sexual relationships. Nicholson explores the key concepts of consumerism, family, kinship, production, and reproduction and goes beyond dual systems theory. She argues that both moral development theory and Marxist theory fall short in their ability to develop significant cross-cultural analyses.

The third essay examines the ways in which feminist theory has problematized the private/public distinction. Reflecting on the work of Young and Rosalind Petchesky, Nicholson examines how the personal is political to reveal how the economy and state organize family relationships. She explains how liberal theory created a public arena composed of male household heads that wholly excluded women. Maintaining the value of a private/public distinction, Nicholson sees the changes in this boundary as a political process and not simply a historical fact.

In the fourth essay, "Interpreting 'Gender,'" Nicholson questions the distinction between sex and gender by showing how these concepts are mutually constitutive. She argues that radical feminists like Janice Raymond as well as feminists like Gayle Rubin retain a kind of "biological foundationalism" that has some of the political problems present in biological determinism. She suggests reframing the concept of "woman" as a complex term that can serve a coalition politics based on women's differences.

The final essay in Section I is a historical review of how modernity constructs the family. After demonstrating that the so-called nuclear family is a myth emphasized in the 1950s and 1960s, Nicholson argues that understanding families as living arrangements rather than as kinship networks permits feminists to undo the distinction between the traditional family and the alternative family. She maintains that families provide social insurance and that the variety of family obligations suggested by cross-cultural analyses offers a broader understanding of family. The argument is persuasive, but she fails to show how this offers new ways of viewing the family as a political institution that shapes public life.

Section II, composed of four essays, examines "Postmodernism and the Problem of Connection." The first essay, published in 1988 and coauthored by Nancy Fraser, is philosophically dated. It was important in initiating dialogue about postmodernism among feminists, but the issues raised have been more elaborately developed in subsequent works, including an important book Nicholson edited, *Feminism/Postmodernism* (1990). For example, postmoderns have become much more articulate about the way in which politics is a part of their analysis; so the point that postmodernism lacks social criticism and is therefore politically "anemic" no longer holds (p. 100). Furthermore, this essay skirts the central epistemological concerns raised by postmoderns, although Nicholson does address some of these in "Bringing It All Back Home." In this essay, the one not previously published, she argues for a context-dependent understanding of reason based on pragmatism. She deals with the problem of relativism and shows the importance of social theory that acknowledges the limits of history and culture. In the conclusion of this essay, however, she compares philosophy to religion and suggests that "salvation does not coexist well with diversity" (p. 128). This seems to be an unnecessarily limited view of salvation, whether it is constituted by either a religious or a philosophical discourse.

The third essay in Section II offers a lucid argument about the limits of Charles Taylor's politics of recognition but acknowledges the strength of his critique of liberalism. The final essay takes on the issue of emotion in public spaces and argues for a balance between emotion and reason as the basis for politics. Emphasizing the work of Freud, Nicholson maintains that the psyche needs to be taken into account as a factor in public life. She does not draw on either Jane Flax's work in the psychoanalytical or Judith Butler's work on the psyche, *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). Nicholson's work is part of the same conversation, and it might have been useful to draw these thinkers into the discussion (pp. 156–61).

"Bringing It All Back Home" comes closest to fulfilling the promise of the title, "the play of reason," but Nicholson does not discuss "play," and one wonders how this title emerged and what it means to her. Placing these essays in the context of her current thinking would have underscored her point about the importance of paying attention to context and would have offered a view of how she understands the connections and disconnections in these earlier essays.

These important essays would serve well to introduce graduate students to some key issues in political theory that emerged in the United States from 1980 to 1999. The historical insights are especially relevant for those engaged in the history of modern political thought and its connection to postmodern concerns. Because the language of the text draws from the work of key philosophers rather than offering concrete examples, the book may not be useful for undergraduates. Scholars unfamiliar with postmodern political theory will find this a lucid introduction to some of the central issues. Certainly, political theorists will want to have this volume, as it offers ready access to the important contributions Linda Nicholson has made to political theory.

The Values Connection. By A. James Reichley. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001. 304p. $35.00.

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The connection between morality and politics is the core of political theory. The founders of political philosophy, Plato and Aristotle, demonstrated the indissoluble nexus between the life of the soul and the life of politics. Political theory was engendered as a response to the spiritual and political decline of Athens. Plato and Aristotle diagnosed the spiritual corruption of Athens and provided a prescriptive response to it. Since then, political theorists and social scientists have tried to determine to what extent ethical behavior and moral principles matter to political and social order. Whereas the