

Both the referents and the enabling conditions of individual mental states are richly sociological. Rousseau famously argued that you cannot experience indignation without the concept of wrongful injury. More concretely, if you chafe at being mistreated as a junior faculty member or wonder sadly why your dissertation committee demands that you write like a Bulgarian bureaucrat about to flunk English as a second language, your mental states depend on the existence of universities, of tenure, of (indefensible) norms of scholarly prose, and so on. Yes, those mental states have family resemblances to some available without those social conditions. But only family resemblances.

So, too, for enabling conditions: Kateb labors mightily to show that a deep Western “anger at the world” (p. 206) drives modern technology. Maybe that is in the mix, though I am inclined to doubt it. It cannot be nearly enough: Something must be said about the state of scientific knowledge, of engineering techniques, of mining and manufacturing, and of markets. (Kateb might pause to wonder how he can make sense of “the West” as an analytic category.)

Individualism itself has a characteristic social structure. It depends on the demise of ascriptive roles and the rise of elective ones and on other arrangements too. Without the likes of marriage for love, labor markets, Protestant theology, geographic mobility, and enough wealth and architectural innovations to offer privacy at home, it would not be possible for anyone to think the thoughts, celebrate the possibilities, and adopt the stances that Kateb does. So society cannot be the opposite of democratic individuality.

Alas, then, that the occasional arresting insights studing these papers do not begin to yield a satisfactory defense of the quirky individualism Kateb has been championing for some time.

**Feminist Thinkers and the Demands of Femininity: The Lives and Work of Intellectual Women.** By Lori Jo Marso. New York: Routledge, 2006. 240p. \$ 95.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070922

— Regina F. Titunik, *University of Hawaii at Hilo*

This elegant book explores the memoirs, private correspondence, and other self-revelatory writings of prominent feminist thinkers with a view to disclosing their struggles to live feminist lives while contending with conventional gender norms. The socially constructed standards of proper femininity that encumbered these women are what the author terms “the demands of femininity.” According to Lori Jo Marso, the demands of femininity vary “in terms of race, class and historical and cultural location” (p. 30), but notwithstanding their malleable content, these normative representations constitute constraints to which all women are subject under patriarchal conditions.

While the personal lives and thought of a number of feminist intellectuals are discussed in this work, four

feminist thinkers are given foremost consideration: Mary Wollstonecraft, Germaine de Staël, Emma Goldman, and Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir is the dominating presence in this book insofar as her thought both receives sustained attention and articulates the theoretical position that underlies the exposition as a whole. Marso’s idea of the demands of femininity mirrors Beauvoir’s concept of the “eternal feminine.” The latter is an expression Beauvoir derived from Goethe’s *Faust* and used to designate an essentialist ideal of femininity in terms by which women are defined. Subsumed under the category of eternal feminine, women are designated as passive, resigned, immanent, and object-like and thus denied the capacity to act as free, self-creating subjects. This notion of a fixed feminine essence, though mythical in Beauvoir’s view, has very real consequences; the myth induces women to accept subjection and forgo the travail of living freely.

Following Beauvoir, Marso sees women as controlled by socially produced categories that are purported to be real. Marso, however, conceives of her project as an advance on Beauvoir’s work insofar as the idea of “the demands of femininity” encompasses recognition of the variability of constructs of femininity over time and across cultures (although Beauvoir also recognized the historically differing ways in which women are defined to a greater extent than Marso acknowledges). Apart from this amplification of Beauvoir’s ideas to account for variations connected with “historical expectations about race, class and sexuality” (p. 15), Marso substantially shares Beauvoir’s existentialist view of free female subjects struggling against the confines of their material situation and the social conventions that are factors in that situation. These social conventions and expectations shape women’s experience of the world and their desires. Irrespective of how historically varied these representations of women may be, the effects of living with social definitions that one has not created are the same. Marso, following Beauvoir, sees the demands of femininity as circumscribing women’s freedom to be self-defining subjects. This view, however, begs the question of whether the valorization of self-creating freedom as the “highest good” (p. 28) does not also represent an unreflective acceptance of a specific historically and culturally created standard.

In examining the lives of feminist thinkers, the author reveals that although these women endeavored to transgress norms of femininity, they were unable to successfully free themselves from conventional standards. Not only were they constrained by contemporaneous demands of femininity but they also accepted and embraced these standards to a surprising extent. Marso presents fascinating material that shows these canonical feminist thinkers capitulating to the gender roles that they intellectually abjured and compromising their aspirations to live in feminist ways. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, was reduced to needy despondency by her unrequited love for Gilbert

Imlay. A letter reflecting her distress, as a result of Imlay's rejection, indulged an idealized image of marriage inconsistent with her feminist understanding of "the inequality stemming from the sexual division of labor" (p. 93). Emma Goldman also experienced a similar contradiction between her aim to be independent and her longing for intimacy. In a letter to Ben Reitman, whose love she feared losing, Goldman characterized herself as a suppliant slave to love who "has no right to speak of freedom" (p. 121). Similarly, Beauvoir's offer to submissively "wash dishes and mop the floor" (p. 139) for her American lover, Nelson Algren, contrasts sharply with her strong-willed defiance of the eternal feminine.

Marso exposes these contradictions and dilemmas experienced by preeminent feminist thinkers and observes that these examples show "how even the most radical and forward-thinking women can get trapped by contemporary patriarchal norms under which they live; they often may even unconsciously internalize these norms" (p. 111). While plausible to a certain extent, this observation strikes me as too thin to make adequate sense of the poignant episodes recounted. The disclosures point to a distinction between deep-seated desires that may be inextricably human—the desire for intimacy, for example—and socially constructed desires that dictate what kind of person one should want to be—a married person, for example—in order to have a better chance of satisfying the deepest human longings. To be sure, in patriarchal systems, the demands on women to comply with socially constructed standards, in order to satisfy fundamental desires, are arguably more exacting than the demands on men. But what ultimately seems to be laid bare in the course of this exposition is an inexorable human longing for intimate connection with another human being, a longing which is fraught with the potential for coercion, dependency, and disappointment. The recognition of enduring human desires and dilemmas, however, is precluded by the existentialist framework that Marso adopts.

Notwithstanding my reservations about existentialism, Marso's work, in my view, exemplifies an admirable tendency in recent feminist scholarship to reconnect and engage with classical feminist authors. The author envisages her project as opening a dialogue with these feminist mothers and potentially inspiring a shared consciousness among women of different races, classes, and cultures of the role that restrictive social norms play in their lives. By recognizing that women from a variety of circumstances and cultures are subject to the demands of femininity, women would be able to forge a politically empowering sense of common identity that does not reimpose essentialist constructs. That is, cognizance of common struggles potentially fosters the formation of "political coalitions with and as women" without making "essentialist statements about who women are" (p. 192). This delightfully sanguine ambition is less compelling

than Marso's graceful and lucid examination of the lives of feminist thinkers.

### **The Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America.** By Ben A. Minter.

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. 272p. \$28.00.

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— John M. Meyer, *Humboldt State University*

Accounts of the history of American environmental thought typically characterize it as riven by a divide between a utilitarian preoccupation with "use" and a more romantic focus on "preservation." Many contemporary environmental philosophers have fixated upon a similar debate between "anthropocentrism" and "ecocentrism."

Ben Minter argues that these dualisms must be overcome if the contemporary environmental movement is to find its voice. Like Kerry Whiteside in *Divided Natures* (2002), Minter introduces the reader to thinkers who offer an alternate way of conceptualizing the relationship between humans and the nonhuman world. Where Whiteside turns away from Anglo-American thought in favor of French theorists, however, Minter finds his inspiration closer to home. Like Robert Gottlieb in *Forcing the Spring* (1993), Minter expands our sense of both who counts as an "environmentalist" and what counts as "environmentalism" in the United States.

Minter devotes chapters to four thinkers from the first half of the twentieth century. He presents each as exemplary: Liberty Hyde Bailey, Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye, and Aldo Leopold. With the clear exception of Leopold, they have received scant attention within environmentalist circles. In all four cases, Minter's aim is to offer a "useable past" (p. 195) that will help us delineate what he terms a "third way": "a pragmatic alternative running between the zealous 'humans first!' and 'nature first!' camps" (p. 2). He then seeks to identify manifestations of this in present-day initiatives, focusing upon both "New Urbanism" and Wes Jackson's "Natural Systems Agriculture."

Minter's most distinctive and compelling argument is that his environmental intellectuals all articulate their concerns within a broader civic framework. This framework is defined by concern for democratic engagement, communal obligation, and social justice. The payoff for many political theorists and political scientists also can be found here: Minter does not simply argue that his thinkers inflect their environmental ideas with a public philosophy, but that they model the conviction that political and environmental thinking are inextricably linked. The book's subtitle is explained by his contention that this approach was directly or indirectly (it is not quite clear) influenced by philosophical pragmatism, particularly the ideas of John Dewey.