

verifiche
rivista semestrale
di scienze umane

Verifiche. Associazione di Studi filosofici
Sede: via Francesco Algarotti 13/a – 35125 Padova
Direttore responsabile: Antonella Benanzato
Amministratore: info@verificheonline.net
Autorizzazione Tribunale di Padova n. 2445 del 17/09/2017
Poste Italiane s.p.a. - Spedizione in Abb. Postale 70% - NE/PD
Digitalandcopy sas - Vignate (MI), Via Roma 25
Anno L - N. 2 - Giugno-Dicembre 2021
www.verificheonline.net

PREZZO € 35,00

VERIFICHE 2021

2

verifiche

«VERIFICHE» ISSN 0391-4186

Feminist Metaphilosophy

Edited by Valentina Bortolami
and Giovanna Miolli

V. Bortolami, L. Cadahia, A. Castillo, M. Ciurria,
K. Dotson, R. Falkenstern, K. Glavic, D. Maffia,
D. Migliorini, G. Miolli, D. Suárez Tomé

2021

ANNO L N. 2

Verifiche

Rivista fondata da Franco Chiereghin e Giuliano Rigoni

Direzione/Editors

Luca Illetterati (Scientific Coordinator), Paolo Giuspoli (Editorial Coordinator), Francesca Menegoni.

Redazione/Editorial Staff

Michela Bordignon, Francesco Campana (Editorial Guidelines), Valentina Chizzola, Luca Corti (Peer review Editor), Alberto Gaiani, Paolo Livieri, Giovanna Luciano, Armando Manchisi, Giovanna Miolli (Web Manager), Antonio Nunziante, Federico Orsini, Giovanni Realdi, Barbara Santini (Reviews and Discussions Editor), Sergio Soresi, Alberto Vanzo.

Consiglio scientifico/Advisory Board

Gabriel Amengual, Myriam Bienenstock, Rossella Bonito Oliva, Claudio Cesa (†), Franco Chiereghin, Ferruccio De Natale, Giannino Di Tommaso, Alfredo Ferrarin, Luca Fonnesu, Stephen Houlgate, Marco Ivaldo, Jean-François Kervégan, Claudio La Rocca, Eugenio Mazzarella, Adriaan Th. Peperzak, Michael Quante, Leonardo Samonà, Birgit Sandkaulen.

The Journal uses a double-blind peer review procedure. Authors of articles to be considered for publication should email one copy in .doc or .rtf format, and another copy in .pdf format, to Luca Corti (redazione@verificheonline.net). Please include a short abstract in English (about 1,500 characters) and 4-8 keywords. The Journal accepts contributions in English, German, Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Accepted contributions should be prepared according to the journal's guidelines. Book reviews are generally commissioned by the Editorial Staff. If you are interested in writing a book review, please contact Barbara Santini (recensioni@verificheonline.net). Books should be sent to the following address: «Verifiche», c/o Luca Illetterati, Dipartimento di Filosofia, Sociologia, Pedagogia e Psicologia Applicata, Università degli Studi di Padova, Piazza Capitanio 3 - 35139 Padova, Italy.

  This publication is part of INRATIO PROJECT (researcher: G. Miolli, coordination: L. Illetterati) that has received funding from the University of Padua under the "MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd" programme.

«Verifiche» is an international biannual, peer-reviewed Journal (ISSN: 0391-4186)

info@verificheonline.net

www.verificheonline.net

Verifiche

International biannual, peer-reviewed Journal (ISSN: 0391-4186)

ABBONAMENTO/SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

Italia: privati € 55,00 (sostenitori € 65,00; studenti € 35,00); enti: € 80,00.

Europe and Mediterranean Countries: € 75,00 (students: € 55,00); institutional: € 100,00.

Other Countries: € 90,00 (students: € 70,00); institutional: € 115,00.

Spese postali incluse/Shipping charges included.

FASCICOLI SINGOLI/SINGLE ISSUES

Italia privati: € 35,00 (fascicolo doppio: € 65,00); enti: € 45 (fascicolo doppio: € 85,00)

Europe and Mediterranean Countries: plus € 11 shipping charges (double i.: plus € 17).

Other Countries: plus € 16 shipping charges (double i.: plus € 22).

FASCICOLI ARRETRATI/BACK ISSUES

Italia: € 40,00; Europe and Mediterranean Countries: € 40,00 (plus € 11 shipping charges).

Other Countries € 40,00 (plus € 16 shipping charges).

MODALITÀ DI PAGAMENTO/METHOD OF PAYMENT

Con bonifico bancario intestato a/By bank transfer to:

«Verifiche. Associazione di studi filosofici»

Intesa Sanpaolo Spa - Filiale terzo settore Veneto centro, via Jappelli 13 - Padova

IBAN: IT54X0306909606100000142839

Nella causale specificare il numero o l'annata (per ordini) oppure solo l'abbonamento (in caso di abbonamento annuale). Please indicate *issue number* and *year* (for single issue) or *year* only (for yearly subscription).

Per usufruire dello sconto per studenti è necessario indicare nella casuale il numero di matricola e la sigla della sede universitaria (oppure l'indicazione dell'istituto).

For further details:

info@verificheonline.net

www.verificheonline.net

Cover Design by Giulia Battocchia

verifiche

Anno L, N. 2, 2021

Dir. resp. Antonella Benanzato • Amministrazione: Via Francesco Algarotti 13/a - 35125 Padova
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Padova n. 2445 del 17.09.2017
Digital And Copy S.a.s. - Vignate (MI) - Via Monzese 40 - A. L (2), 2021

Feminist Metaphilosophy

- 1 *Feminist Metaphilosophy: An Introduction*
Valentina Bortolami and Giovanna Miolli
- 15 *Metaphilosophy: A What and A Why*
Kristie Dotson
- 33 *¿Es posible una recuperación de la fenomenología desde la filosofía feminista?*
Danila Suárez Tomé and Diana Maffía
- 51 *De la revuelta feminista, la historia y Julieta Kirkwood*
Alejandra Castillo
- 67 *Philosophy, Feminism and the Popular Field in Latin America*
Luciana Cadahia
- 89 *La cita feminista: Nelly Richard entre feminismos, crítica cultural y filosofía chilena*
Karen Glavic

- 111 *On the Uses and Abuses of Doing Feminist Philosophy with Hegel*
Rachel Falkenstern
- 133 *Come nottola al tramonto: ipotesi su metodo e scopo delle future filosofie femministe*
Damiano Migliorini
- 159 *A New Ameliorative Approach to Moral Responsibility*
Michelle Ciurria
- 183 *On the Metaphilosophical Implications of the Naturalism Question in Feminism*
Valentina Bortolami
- 209 *Composting Contemporary Metaphilosophy with Feminist Philosophical Perspectives: Towards an Account of Philosophy's Concreteness*
Giovanna Miolli

Book Reviews

- 241 A. Balzano, *Per farla finita con la famiglia. Dall'aborto alle parentele postumane*
(Giovanna Miolli)
- 248 R.M. Carusi, *Lacan and Critical Feminism: Subjectivity, Sexuation, and Discourse*
(Elena Tripaldi)

- 255 D. Ferreira da Silva, *A Dívida Impagável*
(Aléxia Bretas)
- 261 J. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*
(Anna Guerini)
- 268 A. Stone, *Being Born: Birth and Philosophy*
(Silvia Locatelli)
- 275 F. Vergès, *The Wombs of Women*
(Sabrina Morán and María Cecilia Padilla)

il femminismo nero potrebbe *includere* l'intersezionalità – e quindi adottarne l'ottica posizionata propria della testimonianza – per *eccederla* e mettere al centro il desiderio di una teoria femminista nera libera dall'«in-sistente uso della donna nera come segno chiave del campo» e dalle «infinite correzioni dell'uso dell'analitica» e quindi in grado di liberare spazi per le donne nere che rifiutano tanto la loro invocazione pretestuosa come indice di virtù accademica quanto gli scontri nelle guerre intersezionali (p. 136). Eppure, gli ambiti in cui l'eccedenza deve essere messa a frutto – società e università; margine e centro – stentano a congiungersi, come invece ci si aspetterebbe. L'intersezionalità continua ad essere definita come un campo di dibattito e ricerca tra gli altri, senza mai diventare la prospettiva epistemologica che ridefinisce i campi di ricerca specifici. Il riferimento al diritto, inoltre, non libera dal rischio di intendere gli assi di dominio come equivalenti e interscambiabili, ma rischia piuttosto di moltiplicarli all'infinito, mancando di riconoscere le loro articolazioni locali e globali e la necessità di mantenere una postura critica e posizionata e indebolendo, quindi, anche la proposta di riforma della società. Non si tratta di negare che l'inclusione giuridica garantisca diritti a chi non ne ha o di liquidare l'ipotesi di una trasformazione combinata di società e diritto, ma di sottolineare la mancata tematizzazione della funzione che lo Stato svolgerebbe in questa dinamica trasformativa e di contestare l'idea che questa prospettiva debba definire i confini operativi e rigenerativi della teoria politica femminista, che da anni guarda al transnazionale come luogo di alleanze contro le differenti ma interconnesse forme di subordinazione delle donne e riconosce il razzismo come struttura che connette le gerarchie sociali ed economiche globali e locali.

(Anna Guerini)

ALISON STONE, *Being Born: Birth and Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 276 (ISBN: 9780198845782).

Alison Stone's latest book poses a necessary philosophical challenge for contemporary thought. With a clarity of exposition never overflowing in oversimplification of conceptual structures, the author has

succeeded, through the analysis of the event of birth, in bringing to light certain themes – vulnerability, interdependence, situatedness, and the contingency of our existence – that can no longer be neglected or underestimated, not only in the current academic philosophical debate, but also, and above all, within that philosophical thought that aims to come to terms with life and human existence.

The conceptual framework of the text and the various terms examined consists of the concept of birth, understood by the author as a characteristic and fundamental trait for understanding our existence in a conscious manner. Coming to terms with birth is therefore Stone's way of encouraging readers to come to terms with their own existence in a straightforward, direct, and sometimes shocking manner, as it highlights the constitutive limits of our being in the world. These limits, if analyzed from a philosophical perspective in some ways different from much of the Western philosophical tradition, could also be highlighted as possibilities and as constituent traits of that particular and unique mode of existence of the human being.

The philosophical analysis of birth is the method Stone uses to present our existence to us as constitutively vulnerable, contingent, situated, interdependent, relational, and subject to social power relations that override the 'will' of the individual and characterized, among other existential anxieties, by an unresolvable anxiety which she calls birth anxiety. In other words, the key to reading the text can be summarized around a crucial awareness: the vulnerability, situatedness, contingency, interdependency, and constitutive of our existence can be best understood by analyzing the crucial moment in which it all began. Interestingly, analyzing the event of birth can allow us to re-evaluate and re-signify our relationship with two other constitutive elements of existence, such as mortality and temporality.

The text is highly dense and attempts to find in different currents of thought cues, contrasts, and conceptual structures to understand in a philosophical manner birth and its consequences for the existence of the human being. The main references for Stone's analysis are feminist thought, particularly within a continental matrix and linked to the thought of sexual difference (Irigaray, Cavarero), philosophy engaging with the themes of birth and pregnancy (Jantzen, Battersby, Ettinger, Staehler, Baraitser, Schües), feminist care ethics (Kittay), psychoanalytic

thought (Stern, Benjamin, Chodorow, Freud, Rank), and existentialism (Sartre, Camus, De Beauvoir, Heidegger).

From the first chapter of the text, the author demonstrates her indebtedness to a certain current of feminist thought – particularly Cavarero, Irigaray, and Jantzen – which has allowed the introduction, within Western philosophical thought, of an analysis of birth, gestation, and the relationship with the maternal matrix and with corporeity. In fact, if in Western philosophy the theme of birth has always been underestimated, if not – as Freud would say – forgotten, one of the immense merits of continental feminist philosophy consists in the revaluation of birth as a philosophically meaningful concept. Starting from this enormous and important merit, Stone pushes her argumentation in a different direction than the authors mentioned above, striving not so much to focus on the feminist political issue linked to the treatment of the theme of birth, but structuring her project as an existential one, aiming to analyze birth and its consequences for human existence. Moreover, the author does not conceal some critical issues related to the thought of these philosophers, in particular the link between birth giving and mothering and the complex concept of parenthood and motherhood in a world where the concept of women, the relationship between sex and gender, as well as the symbolic connection between the body of gestation and the parental role, are reshaped. In addition, Stone repeatedly emphasizes that the consideration of birth should not be pursued to the detriment of a consideration of death and its existential repercussions. Conversely, the two events must be considered distinctly as the two limits of our existence, having equal importance and implying different existential consequences in our lives.

Starting from this existential re-evaluation of the event of birth, Stone turns to existentialist thought, both for a critical confrontation and to re-evaluate some fundamental aspects, especially of Sartre, which in feminist philosophy have perhaps been too hastily set aside. On the critical side, Stone attacks the emphasis on death to the detriment of birth; while it is true that death characterizes my human condition, putting me in a position to create meanings and values that consciously make my life authentic, it is also true that I am not born from nothing, but within «webs of meanings I have inherited from others» (p. 63), i.e., a set of cultural values, projects, and symbolic connections. This means that

inheritance is constitutive of our being. We are not neutral beings, and we cannot decide which education, cultural values, symbolic orders – and many other factors – will shape our personality. In this sense, for Stone, the value we can give to life is not given by the subjects in a completely free manner; rather, it is conditioned by the set of values created by those who precede us.

This consideration brings a change in the account of the ‘choice’ of those values that make our lives authentic: We begin to move within values and cultural roles that precede us, and we can produce change – or perpetuate them, aware that alterations of the world around us always imply change in repetition – in a truly conscious and effective manner only by being aware that this can only happen within a constant confrontation with our inheritance. The inheritance with which we are born is therefore not only linked to the constitutive moment of the birth event but characterizes our existence in its totality.

Noting our non-neutrality of birth leads us to consider another fundamental trait that characterizes the event of birth – and, as a consequence, our entire life: our ontological and existential condition, in Butler’s words, of vulnerability. On the one hand, as the author notes, there are vulnerabilities characterized *by virtue of being born*: our being born wholly helpless, both with regard to the possibility of being hurt, and with regard to the link with primary relationships, which will be the most fundamental in that they characterize our future relational approaches. This also applies to the social power relations to which we adapt without having the possibility – at least at birth – to criticize or detach ourselves from them. On the other hand, there are vulnerabilities *in being born*, i.e., our being located individuals, born in different cultural, social, geographical, as well as physical and bodily conditions.

From the treatment of the inheritance and vulnerability typical of our birth – and which will accompany us throughout our existence – emerges the author’s desire to link the existential consideration to a community, shared and relational awareness. In fact, with a movement of thought with strongly post-structuralist traits, Stone succeeds in getting to the crux of a debate that is fundamental not only for philosophical discussion, but also and above all for a conception of the real that truly wants to come to terms with the complexity of human existence, which as such is a shared and therefore political existence. In fact, for the author

it is fundamental to underline the axes of inequality that characterize our life since our birth – and which, indeed, in our birth find their primary, radical, and fundamental sedimentation. Not all heritages and birth vulnerabilities are equal, and the consequences of this awareness – achieved precisely due to a pervasive analysis of the birth event – consist in the recognition that there are some realities that are more privileged than others.

In this sense, the Foucauldian analysis of social power relations can be applied to the state of our birth. If race, class, gender, disability, and age are categories that characterize systems of oppression and privilege, then our being born into a particular system of power will determine our future lived experience. Again, therefore, analyzing birth leads us to become aware of a fundamental feature of our existence: the inequalities, oppressions, and privileges present in the world. In this sense, if death makes life more appreciable for us, birth takes on a much more positive character, as it allows us to abandon our individualistic perspective and enter into a community, empowering, relational dimension. Stone succeeds, therefore, through the analysis of these issues, in empowering us in our relationships and daily lives: «in some human lives suffering unfortunately outweighs flourishing», and this means that we have «to respond with appropriate care to our inherent differences in vulnerability and to endeavor to bring in egalitarian social arrangements that redistribute (situational) vulnerability as evenly as possible» (p. 80).

Another fundamental characteristic of birth is the strong dependency that characterizes the human infant: As children, we are dependent for everything, emotionally and materially, on our caregivers, as we are in most cases in adolescence and early adulthood; moreover, we are world-receptive, malleable in response to influences, and we acquire the culture in which we are embedded precisely through our early dependency relationships. Here again, Stone, linking to Kittay's feminist care ethics, which regards society as a nested chain of dependency, demonstrates how a feature of birth is actually «the more ultimate condition» (p. 90) of our existence in general and how many dependencies – linguistic, material, relational, and habitual – are connected with birth. From dependency comes interdependence, or relationality: Relationships constitute our selves, not only in childhood, but throughout our lives. In particular, in line with the psychoanalytic tradition, Stone brilliantly links

the temporal character to the relational one, insisting on how it is our first childhood relationships that form us as subjects, while subsequent and future ones re-form us, starting from that character base formed by the first years of formation, in which relational dependence plays a fundamental role.

The last two characteristic traits of birth analyzed by Stone are radical contingency and birth anxiety. Firstly, the author underlines how the question ‘Why is this the life I am leading?’ is not at all perplexing, but a genuine existential question which can be traced back to the first real contingent moment of our existence, our birth. The question then becomes the following: ‘Why was I born *me* in the first place?’

For Stone, there is no doubt about the answer: ‘There is no explanation to these questions. All we have to do, then, is to accept the facticity – and here Stone’s take on Sartre and his link between facticity and birth succeeds brilliantly – of our existence, in which «facticity names the reality that my being is an ultimate fact behind which we can penetrate no further» (p. 123).

The analysis of this contingency is linked to the situatedness of our birth, or our coming into the world in a network of historical, cultural, geographical, ethnic, but also relational and value situations, unique and different for each human being. Here, the overcoming of Sartre’s concept of individual freedom is implemented thanks to the resumption of Heidegger’s concept of thrownness, with which it is possible to emphasize that set of circumstances that we cannot transcend, but which characterize what the author calls the ‘sedimented sense-making’, whereby when we respond to our contingent circumstances, we are always carrying forward an inherited horizon of meanings and values.

Secondly, birth anxiety, which the author addresses by linking to – and criticizing – psychoanalytic theorists such as Rank and Freud, manifests itself in different forms, first and foremost as existential anxiety, since the mystery of birth – which appears radically contingent and groundless – is the foundation of the mystery of our existence. Moreover, if it is true, as already written, that our formation in our childhood years is fundamental for the structuring of one’s personality, it is also true that we do not remember these years clearly. As a result, we feel powerless in the face of our own behavioral patterns and emotional reactions. In this sense, natal anxieties are different from those caused by death and

must be analyzed in conjunction with these. Therefore, «when we attend to birth as well as death, we can do better justice to the full range of existential anxieties and difficulties with which these two ends of life present us» (p. 177).

Finally, the focus on birth allows us to re-evaluate our concepts of death and temporality. Firstly, Stone introduces the fascinating concept of ‘relational mortality’ – unhinging the individualistic conception of death found in Heidegger, among others. Since our existence, she might state, is constitutively shared, the death of someone dear to me cannot be experienced as an event separate from my individual death, but rather as a loss – a death – of a part of me. In this sense, «our deaths are *relational*» (p. 182), and «the deaths of distinct individuals are intertwined and shade into one another» (p. 187). Secondly, «being born structures the temporal quality of ordinary human experience» (p. 212). Our very perception of temporality is changed through the consideration of birth, since the focus on this event manages to re-signify the importance of the past, as well as the present and future, as a constitutive trait of our existence.

In conclusion, it can be stated without doubt that Stone’s text succeeds in confronting readers with existential questions of fundamental importance in considering our individual existence and our community responsibility. This direct confrontation with our own existence is made possible by the treatment of birth, since «human existence emerges in a new light when we take natality into account» (p. 233). Existence, analyzed from this perspective, becomes an event characterized by mystery, vulnerability, situatedness, interdependence, contingency, dependence, and relationality.

The fascination of the text lies in the straightforward but never trivially pessimistic manner in which Stone confronts us with the anxieties, limits, and possibilities of our existence. Indeed, the existential traits that emerge from the philosophical investigation of birth are treated by Stone neither through an annihilating pessimism – the kind that makes one wonder, Camus-style, whether, in the end, this life is worth living – nor in a romantically idealized manner, and thus always maintaining a rigorous philosophical argumentation and analysis. The text simply confronts us, in a Lacanian way, with the raw contradictions of reality, not concealing the existential anxieties and mysteries of our reality behind ‘safe’

theories of the subject – which can find a reference in the autonomous and rational Cartesian and Kantian subject – but finding in these uncertainties and human finiteness the existential value of our being in the world.

This text undoubtedly succeeds in its aim, which is most likely the primary one of any properly philosophical reflection, especially from the perspective of a feminist philosopher such as Stone: to analyze philosophically an event – here, that of birth – to (1) make our existence authentic precisely because of its finiteness, vulnerability, and contingencies and (2) direct our relationship with reality in a responsible, communal, and shared way. In other words, this text breathes the possibility of reuniting philosophical thought and lived life.

(Silvia Locatelli)

FRANÇOISE VERGÈS, *The Wombs of Women. Race, Capital and Feminism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2020, pp. 155 (ISBN: 9781478009412).

Intersectionality and postcolonialism constitute two dimensions of third-wave feminism that have developed extensively during the first decades of the twenty-first century. Having overcome essentialist assumptions concerning race and gender, as well as the vindication of gender's priority over class and race, feminism has become plural, historically and geographically situated⁶. On the one hand, intersectionality sheds light on how the interaction between diverse dimensions of women's subjectivity is embodied in political institutions and power devices that reproduce the status quo and oppression. Forged by K. Crenshaw in 1989, this term refers to how black women have been invisibilized both by white feminist discourse and antiracist vindications focused on the violence and oppression suffered by black men. It finds in the interaction between gender and race the explanation behind black

⁶ S. Gamble, *Feminism and Postfeminism*, New York, Routledge, 2006.