

## BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

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### **Feminity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression**

Sandra Lee Bartky

New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1990. xiii + 141 pp. \$12.95 (paper)

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Bartky presents an account of her "emergence and development as a feminist thinker" in articles published over the last 15 years. The subtitle is perhaps a bit misleading, since Bartky herself notes that her phenomenological project is complemented by, and even subordinated to, a Marxist approach, as well as by a wish to incorporate appropriate elements of poststructuralism (pp. 2-5).

As a Marxist and a feminist, Bartky intends her work to offer "occasions for consciousness-raising" (p. 4), as well as to represent "political interventions" in the women's movement itself (pp. 4-5). This is an ambitious, but worthwhile venture. One limitation that Bartky herself recognized, and is reflected often in her work, is an attempt to move beyond introspection to comment upon the many varieties of women's experience which she has not fully shared (pp. 7-10). This does seem to raise yet again the question of the role to be played by intellectuals in decentering movements, an issue to which Bartky does not respond.

The first and fifth chapters, which deal respectively with Bartky's own transformation as a feminist, and with the articulation of Foucaultian and feminist approaches, are by far the most interesting and successful. Where Bartky tries to extend her theorizing beyond white, middle-class experience, as in chapter 2, her work becomes rather too abstract and uneven. Her attempt to refit narcissism as a form of alienation in chapter 3 is limited by her unwillingness to attend to commodification as a significant component. The discussions of sadomasochism, shame and emotional nurturance in chapters 4, 6 and 7 would clearly have profited by reference to the work of French feminist psychoanalysts. Finally, it is surprising that an admirer of Alison Jaggar would not have seized numerous opportunities to shape a more general critique of Enlightenment thought and the androcentric liberalism which this has engendered.

Overall, I find this work somewhat disappointing: it is too abstract to represent effectively the micropolitics of women's lives and too narrow to address macropolitical issues normally encompassed by Marxist and feminist thought alike. As for evoking the diversity of women's voices, Bartky's apparent reduction of feminism to "a tale of female injury" (p. 114) seems inadequate to satisfy her own stated goals for the collection.