

I started my first business with a welfare cheque. Now here is where the entrepreneurship starts: I was a brash, angry, impatient, and ignorant woman who was in many ways alienated from standard heterosexual, middle class culture. Looks pretty bad on paper, doesn't it? Now add to the hopper loving support in the form of hugs, suggestions, hand holding, and a little cash to invest (let's not forget the welfare cheque) and a distinct wish to remain as free as possible from any form of authority. There you have it—prime entrepreneurial potential. Necessity, a lack of anything to lose, and lots of caring support is a perfect incubator for a business start up.

Since then I have witnessed scores of middle class women suffering horrible crises of confidence and lacking the sort of motivation necessary to take the plunge into business. They simply worry too much that they might fail, not succeed, harm the family, etc. The upshot is—they have too much to lose. How do you teach someone to be desperate? How do you teach nice women with children and mortgages that they should forget about all

that and jump in with both feet? Don't be stupid, you say—teach them business skills so they can minimize their failure. Teach them how to keep accounts, market, do a damned business plan, you say. What you are really saying is: tame them. I am of course not stupid enough to think that those things are not important but they are not the qualities that facilitate discovery, imagination, creativity, and impulse. They are, however, crucial qualities that every entrepreneur should work in *partnership* with.

Most people think that my enumeration of entrepreneurial qualities sounds more like a pathological diagnosis. Maybe it is—but we don't care. I love working with Helen and my other partner, Myra, because they help me focus and stay on target. In place of the women's movement of yesteryear, they provide the love and support that foster my creativity. They also keep me away from the bank because I am openly hostile to bankers. I am eternally grateful to women like them because if it were not for them I probably would have ended up in jail rather than as an entrepreneur. I once wondered why feminists should have anything to do with the capitalist system. I thought we were being co-opted and that our principles would be somehow compromised. I remember mentioning this to a woman who replied that she thought the most subversive thing you could do today with women is to assist them in the creation of a dream that will feed and clothe them both physically and spiritually. I now see that she is right. Entrepreneurship is nothing new to women in the developing countries—they have been running micro-businesses from carts and kitchens for years.

In the *Meno*, Socrates is attempting to discover why the ignorant, illiterate slave boy knows math. Socrates, coming from his position of privilege, can't explain it so he takes a great logical leap and makes the claim that his knowledge comes from a past life with the deities. My reading of the *Meno* is that the slave boy was bluffing and fed back the information that Socrates wanted to hear based on the signals that Socrates was putting out. Well, perhaps the slave boy and female entrepreneurs have something in common: I believe that we are motivated to perform well based on our necessity to survive. We do so with great flair and imagination, changing hats frequently and creating smoke and mirror illusions. We do this not only to cover our lack of business skills but to mimic what seems to be out of our reach. The ability to manipulate one's environment is crucial to survival. Can entrepreneurship be taught? Only if the teacher's experience is trans migratory.

*Adrienne Rosen is the President of The International Courier and a professor of philosophy and ethics at Seneca College in Toronto.*

#### References

Plato. *Meno*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. Indiana: Bobbs Merrill Educational Publishing, 1949.

## CHRIS WIND

### To My Philosophy Professors

Why didn't you tell me?  
 When I was all set to achieve *Eudamonia*  
 through the exercise of Right Reason,  
 When I was eager to fulfill my part  
 of the Social Contract,  
 When I was willing, as my moral duty,  
 to abide by the Categorical Imperative  
 When I was focussed on Becoming,  
 through Thesis and Antithesis to Synthesis—

Why didn't you correct me?  
 Tell me that Aristotle didn't think I had any reason,  
 That according to Rousseau,  
 I couldn't be party to the contract,  
 That Kierkegaard believes I have no sense of duty  
 because I live by feeling alone,  
 That Hegel says I should spend my life  
 in self-sacrifice, not self-development,  
 That Nietzsche thinks I'm good for pregnancy  
 and that's about it—

Why didn't you tell me I wasn't included?

(Perhaps because you too had excluded me  
 from serious consideration;  
 Or did you think I wouldn't understand?)

(I do. I do understand.)

*Chris Wind lives in Sundridge, Ontario.*