



Editors' pick: *Hypatia*

ALISON WYLIE, CO-EDITOR OF *HYPATIA*, ON A COLLECTIVE UNDERTAKING

When the first issues of *Hypatia* appeared in the mid-1980s, they were the culmination of a decade-long process of visionary debate in the Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP) about what form a journal of feminist philosophy should take, and how to make it a reality. The impetus for founding *Hypatia* was growing concern, through the 1970s, that a substantial body of feminist scholarship was taking shape in philosophy, but there were woefully few outlets for publishing it. Papers presented at regional SWIP meetings were widely circulated and often compiled in readers for an expanding roster of courses in feminist philosophy, but SWIP members reported difficulty finding a home for explicitly feminist work in what they described as “standard” avenues of publication”. By 1980 a dozen key articles had appeared in mainstream

journals like *Ethics*, *The Monist*, the *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *Philosophy*, and *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, and some saw the light of day if they fit the mandate of interdisciplinary feminist journals like *Signs*, or anthologies of feminist theory like *Sex Equality* (English, 1977) and *Feminist Frameworks* (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1978). The first anthologies dedicated to feminist philosophy began to appear in the mid-1970s two of which, *Women and Philosophy* (Could and Wartfosky, 1976), and *Feminism and Philosophy* (Vetterling-Braggin, Elliston and English, 1977), brought several dozen new articles into print. But otherwise the early collections reprinted the few published articles by contemporary feminist philosophers alongside examples of popular or empirical literature on feminist issues and selections from the philosophical canon on women, their status, and questions of gender equity – like Hume on “Chastity and Modesty”, Mill’s

“Subjection of Women”, Rousseau’s *Emile*, and Bernard Williams on “The Idea of Equality”. There was no journal that supported the regular publication of feminist philosophy.

Although the odds were strongly against them – the late 1970s and early 1980s were a particularly tough time to start a new journal – the *Hypatia* founders drafted a “Statement of Policy” in 1976 and set about enlisting an editor, finding a publisher, and establishing a free-standing journal. The signatories to early minutes of the not-yet-named journal’s editorial board were an impressive group, many of whom have since played a pivotal role shaping feminist philosophy; assembled by Ann Garry and Jacqueline Thomason, they included, among others, Sandra Bartky, Sandra Harding, Sarah Hoagland, Alison Jaggar, Helen Longino, Linda McAlister, Kathryn Morgan, Janice Moulton, and Joyce Trebilcock. Although they came from diverse philosophical traditions and represented a broad range of subfields, they shared a commitment to bring feminist perspectives to bear on established philosophical problems and to think outside the box, to direct attention to political, ethical, and epistemic issues raised by feminist scholarship and activism that were not on the philosophical agenda.

The minutes of a meeting of the Editorial Board of 1980 record a decision to name the journal after Hypatia, a renowned woman mathematician and philosopher who lived from 370 AD to 415AE and was the last head of the library at Alexandria. The first three issues of *Hypatia* appeared as annual special issues hosted by *Women’s Studies International Forum* (1983 through 1985) and, in 1986, *Hypatia* began publication as an autonomous journal. The editorial that appeared in the first issue of *Hypatia* (1983) ends

with this dedication: “[Hypatia’s] name reminds us that, although many of us are the first women philosophers in our schools, we are not after all the first in history”.

The guiding vision and signature strength of *Hypatia* has always been its pluralism; it is dedicated to publishing feminist work in all areas and traditions of philosophy. When we convened a Twenty-fifth Anniversary conference in 2009 – *Feminist Legacies / Feminist Futures* – we faced a real challenge: how could we possibly do justice to all the varied lines of inquiry that had been explored by *Hypatia* authors and special issue editors since the mid-1980s? Even in the first decade of publication the range of topics and interests represented was staggering. With hindsight, however, some early articles and special issues stand out as pivotal, crystallising focal themes that have figured prominently in *Hypatia* over its thirty year publication history and continue to play a key role as both foundation and foil for innovative new work in feminist philosophy.

An obvious reference point for feminist philosophy in the period when *Hypatia* was taking shape was Simone de Beauvoir’s path-breaking work, *The Second Sex* (1949) – a key source of inspiration, in the 1970s, for feminist philosophers and activists alike. Beauvoir served on the *Hypatia* Advisory Board in the early years (1983 – 1986), and *The Second Sex* was the subject of the first special issue published by *Hypatia* in 1985. Peg Simons later contributed an interview with Beauvoir to a special issue on *French Feminist Philosophy* (1989), and subsequently edited a second special issue on *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir* in 1999. *Hypatia* has since regularly published articles probing the implications of Beauvoir’s incisive

feminist analysis for contemporary philosophical thinking about topics as diverse as marriage and motherhood, friendship, sexual embodiment, and autonomy. In a retrospective assessment of Beauvoir scholarship which appeared in the *Hypatia 25th Anniversary* special issue, Simons turned her attention to meta-philosophical questions about how we now conceptualise philosophy, themes that also figure in an article on “Beauvoir, the Scandal of Science, and Scepticism as Method” which we have just published online, on EarlyView (Klassen, 2013).

Hypatia contributors have consistently drawn inspiration from historical antecedents in philosophy, rereading and expanding the canon in challenging and creative ways. Another early special issue, *History of Women in Philosophy* (1989), showcased some of the first historical work in philosophy aimed at recapturing key contributions made by women to intellectual traditions widely presumed to have been an exclusively male preserve. This issue included articles on Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Edith Stein of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Anne Conway and Damaris Masham of the seventeenth century, and Hypatia herself in a contribution that casts her as “A Christian Martyr in Reverse” (Molinaro) and in a review of the then brand new first volume of Mary Ellen Waithe’s *History of Women Philosophers: 600 BC – 500 AE* (1987). Two special issues, spanning twenty years, focus on American Pragmatism – *Feminism and Pragmatism* (1993) and *Women in the American Philosophical Tradition 1800 – 1930* (2004) – and our next open issue (Summer 2013) features articles that engage such historical figures as Margaret Cavendish, Mary Astell, and Damaris Masham in strikingly original ways.

From the outset, however, the touchstone for the contemporary feminist philosophers who founded and now sustain *Hypatia* has been the real world issues, experiential and political, that have galvanised feminist activism and scholarship since the late 1960s, directing attention to new questions as well as reframing the old.

A recurrent theme here is insistence that philosophy must be understood to be situated – grounded in particular contexts and kinds of experience – however much this is obscured by the abstractions of “ideal theory”, as Charles Mills described it in a 2005 *Hypatia* article. Two commitments follow from this: to critically assess the assumptions that animate mainstream philosophy from an explicitly feminist perspective, and to direct philosophical attention to issues of particular concern to women and to feminists that had been marginalised within philosophy.

In this spirit, *Hypatia* authors filled early issues with probing critiques of the dominant sex/gender norms that define motherhood and sexuality, romantic love and marriage, the conventions of sexist humour and feminine beauty; they refined feminist analyses of affirmative action and reproductive rights; they called into question the conceptions of autonomy and moral/political agency that underpin arguments for political liberalism and the welfare state; they explored the possibilities and pitfalls of a “gynocentric aesthetic” and of a distinctively feminist ethic of care; and they challenged conceptions of rationality that define epistemic agency in terms of conventionally masculine attributes.

The titles of some of the early special issues are telling: *Motherhood and Sexuality* (1986), followed by issues on *Feminism and Reproduction* (1989), *Feminism and the Body* (1991), and *The*

Family and Feminist Theory (1996). Each of these articulate key themes that have been taken up anew in recent issues on *Love and Work* (2002), *Maternal Bodies* (2006), *Writing Against Heterosexism* (2007), and significantly extended by contributors to *Transgender Studies and Feminism* (2009) and to two recent thematic clusters on “Sexual Expressions” (2011) and “Myths of Maternity” (2012). Most recently we have published a series of special features on the theme of “embodiment”: a special issue on *The Ethics of Embodiment* (2011), two follow-up clusters on “norms of embodiment” (2012, 2013), and a retrospective virtual issue assembled by Linda Martín Alcoff that brings together an additional 15 articles that have appeared in *Hypatia* since the late 1980s on epistemic, normative, and historical questions about embodiment.

Frequently topics taken up by prescient *Hypatia* authors anticipate by a decade or more lines of inquiry that have since gotten uptake in mainstream philosophy and well beyond. One example is the characteristically feminist emphasis on relational conceptions of agency, whether the agency in question is moral, political, or epistemic. This move to foreground our (inter)dependence is central to feminist care ethics, and it is clearly evident in the work of feminist political theorists. Themes that are prominent in recent special issues on *Democratic Theory* (2007) and *Just War* (2008) are rooted in work that appeared a decade earlier in special issues on *Feminism and Peace* (1994), *Citizenship* (1997), and *Women and Violence* (1996), and in Claudia Card’s widely reprinted article “Rape as a Weapon of War” (1996). A second example is Sue Wendell’s classic “Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability” (1989), and the

special issues on *Feminism and Disability* that followed (2001, 2002). These opened up questions about norms of beauty, health and diverse capabilities that will be central to a special issues in prospect of Winter 2015, *New Conversations in Feminist Disability Studies*. And a third example is the strikingly forward-looking feminist thinking about environmental philosophy embodied in *Ecological Feminism* (1991) and in Val Plumwood’s pivotal discussion, “Nature, Self, and Gender ... the Critique of Rationalism”; they anticipate by two decades key themes that have been re-engaged and reconfigured by contributors to *Animal Others* (2013), and to a forthcoming special issue on *Climate Change* (Summer 2014).

A striking feature of feminist work on these persistent themes is that it transgresses conventional philosophical boundaries, integrating ethical, aesthetic, and political theory with metaphysics and epistemology – often in the context of rich interdisciplinary engagement with empirical research in biological and social sciences, in psychology and medicine. Indeed, *Hypatia* bears out the expectation of early advocates of feminist philosophy: that feminist analysis would prove to have a direct bearing not only on ethics and political philosophy, where its relevance seems obvious, but on fields like epistemology and philosophy of science that seem most insulated from feminist concerns.

A special issue on *Feminist Science Studies* published in 2004 takes, as its point of departure, fifteen years of intensive work on questions about objectivity, the role of values in science, and feminist methodologies that has been shaped, in part, by a pair of special issues on *Feminism and Science* that date to the late 1980s. A subsequent issue,

Feminist Epistemologies of Ignorance (2006), redirects attention to the contours of what we do not know, situated agents that we are, given not only gender but also race and a number of other salient dimensions of difference. These are themes taken up most recently in a 2011 cluster of essays on "Epistemic Justice, Ignorance, and Procedural Objectivity".

Throughout *Hypatia's* history the engagement between feminism and philosophy has been consistently and significantly enriched by intersectional analyses of the kind pioneered by postcolonial and transnational feminist theorists. Our most recent special issue, *Crossing Borders* (2013), scrutinises the "politics, identities, disciplines and ideologies" that sustain borders of all kinds. It builds on an earlier two-volume issue, *Border Crossings: Multicultural and Postcolonial Challenges to Philosophy* (1998) that examined the impact of structural and cultural conditions that configure our lives on a global as well as local scale, showing how critical scrutiny of these borders "unsettles familiar philosophical and political frameworks" (Narayan and Harding, 1998). Similar themes figure in contributions to *Indigenous Women in the Americas* (2003), *The Reproduction of Whiteness* (2007), and *Responsibility and Global Justice* (2011). In recognition that this work represents the creative growing edge of feminist philosophy, we have this year established a Diversity Essay Prize. The first competition drew an extremely compelling set of submissions from which the review committee selected (with some difficulty) a winner that will appear in our Fall 2013 issue: "Basements and Intersections" by Anna Carastathis.

In short, feminist philosophy is thriving! There are now more outlets for feminist philosophy: for

example, the *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* and *PhiloSOPHIA: A Journal of Continental Feminism*, not to mention an enormous and growing number of single-author books and anthologies – the motivation for launching *Hypatia Reviews Online* this past year. But *Hypatia* continues to be the one journal that publishes feminist philosophy of all stripes and on all topics, fostering an ongoing conversation across borders that continues to expand the conditions of possibility for feminist scholars and for philosophers.

Many of the articles referred to here were nominated by *Hypatia* readers for inclusion in a 2009 selection of sixteen most transformative articles published by *Hypatia* in what was then its twenty-five year history. These appear together in an open access, online *25th Anniversary Retrospective Virtual Issue* hosted by our publisher, Wiley-Blackwell. For more information visit:

Wiley-Blackwell *Hypatia* website, where you can find current and back content, and special features like virtual issues on *The Place of Women in Philosophy, Embodiment*, and the *25th Anniversary Retrospective*: onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291527-2001

***Hypatia* Editorial Office website**, where we post journal news and maintain a digital archive of *Hypatia* events: depts.washington.edu/hypatia

Hypatia Reviews Online, where we provide "timely, broad coverage of feminist philosophy books and books of interest to feminist philosophers": hypatiaphilosophy.org

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