CrossMark

INTRODUCTION

This issue of THINK focuses broadly on women and philosophy. There is no doubt that women are hugely underrepresented when it comes to the historical philosophical canon, and that there is significant bias within the discipline.

This issue combines illuminating, incisive, and engaging articles on pivotal women thinkers (Joyce E. Mitchell Cook, Iris Murdoch, Christine de Pizan, Mary Midgley, and Anne Conway), and it challenges the biases at work in academic philosophy, the philosophy of trans issues, and pregnancy.

Here is an overview of the contributions.

Rebecca Buxton and Lisa Whiting, authors of the recent book *The Philosopher Queens*, offer a manifesto for change which includes proposals for how to make philosophy a more inclusive place for everyone. Most academics in philosophy departments accept that their discipline needs to change, and this piece provides a valuable road map for moving forward.

Sophie Grace Chappell, a trans woman, offers an intriguing analogy designed to illuminate the debate about the categorization of trans men and women. Adoptive parents may not be the biological parents of their children, but they are rightly considered their parents nevertheless. We have extended the concept of parenthood to include them. Chappell makes a case for similarly extending the concepts of women and men to include trans women and men.

Anita L. Allen offers us an overview of the life and work of the first black woman to earn a PhD in Philosophy (from Yale): Joyce E. Mitchell Cook (1933–2014). Allen provides fascinating insights into the career of this trail-blazing public philosopher and bioethicist, and draws on her own personal experience of having worked with Cook. As Allen says: 'Cook's achievements can inspire women of all

doi:10.1017/S1477175621000269 © The Royal Institute of Philosophy, 2021
Think 59, Vol. 20 (Autumn 2021)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1477175621000269 Published online by Cambridge University Press

backgrounds who love philosophy to pursue graduate studies and academic careers.'

Suki Finn researches on the philosophy of pregnancy. She reminds us that, as she puts it, '[p]regnancy is something that historically has mostly affected women. And philosophy is something that historically is dominated by men.' She argues that a lack of diversity in philosophy has led to the overlooking of certain topics in philosophy, including pregnancy, which is actually a rich source of fascinating philosophical issues.

Samuel Cooper and Sasha Lawson-Frost provide an engaging introduction to Iris Murdoch's (1919–99) work on our 'moral vision' – on 'how we see the world' as human beings in a way that is shaped by our moral beliefs and concepts. Our moral vision shapes how we respond morally to the world, and to what we even consider a moral issue. Murdoch wants to remind us that, when it comes to moral decision-making, philosophers tend to focus on making a moral decision, largely ignoring the fact that what we even consider to be a moral decision has already been heavily influenced by our moral vision.

Helen Steward suggests that what are widely assumed to be the principles governing good philosophical writing (at least within the 'analytic tradition') are actually much more difficult to defend than they might first appear, and can be stifling. They may also be gendered. By changing these explicit or implicit rules we may foster more imaginative and adventurous philosophizing.

Hannah Marije Altorf's contribution looks at the way our biases and presuppositions shape what we think a philosopher is and what they do. Ask most people 'What does a philosopher look like?' and they're likely to describe an elderly man with a beard. Yet the history of philosophy is far less homogeneous. In particular, the canon of the history of philosophy omits many important and often highly courageous women thinkers. Altorf illustrates this with the example of Christine de Pizan (1364–*c.*1430).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1477175621000269 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Amber Sahara Donovan explores the thinking of Mary Midgley (1919–2018), particularly what Midgley says about why we need philosophy, and the assumptions that shape what we think philosophy is and is for. Philosophy, argues Midgley, should be centrally concerned with changing minds to change the world – which, as Donovan reminds us, is 'a kind of activism'.

Yasemin J. Erden argues that the question 'What is philosophy?' can be answered in different ways, and that the way it is answered often reflects bias, leading to a lack of diversity in the discipline. Erden also considers why philosophers are often reluctant to accept that bias plays a role in shaping answers.

Rebecca Roache's piece explores how established philosophers can best support and advise female students and junior academics in philosophy, discussing, in particular, how perfectionism, self-criticism, imposter syndrome, and the thought that philosophy 'isn't for people like me' are obstacles to success that disproportionately affect women and people from other historically excluded groups.

Finally, Elizabeth Burns presents an overview of the work of Anne Conway (1631–79), who addressed key problems in the philosophy of religion which are much discussed to this day. Conway's unusual and original approaches to the problems of evil and religious diversity are clearly explained, as is her influence on the work of Leibniz.

Stephen Law
Editor of THINK

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1477175621000269 Published online by Cambridge University Press