# Facing Issues in the Profession

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## Cluster Introduction

Since beginning my tenure as managing editor of *Hypatia*, I have had the pleasure of working closely with individuals who are associated with *Hypatia* in various ways, and I have been awed by the extraordinary generosity and effort so very many people freely give to *Hypatia*.

One of my most valued experiences at *Hypatia* has been watching this cluster on "Issues in the Profession" take shape. I proposed the idea for the cluster in the fall of 2016, when we began to receive a large number of submissions that dealt with issues in philosophy as a discipline. The authors did not coordinate their submissions. Without knowing they were doing so, the authors in this cluster entered into dialogue, and they are speaking to a topic that is vital to philosophy as a whole. Each of the seven articles in the cluster focuses on problems of diversity in philosophy: how prevalent they still are, why they continue to exist, what it means to face them in the classroom setting, and what we can do to address them. These articles are by no means comprehensive. They do not speak to all of the issues in the profession, and many important voices are still missing from the discussion. These articles do, however, serve as part of an ongoing call to action that philosophy—and philosophers—are responsible for taking up.

Yolonda Wilson's musing "How Might We Address the Factors that Contribute to the Scarcity of Philosophers Who Are Women and/or of Color?" opens the cluster with a poignant analysis of common acts of discrimination underrepresented philosophers routinely face. In Wilson's words, by examining why philosophy remains a "relatively homogeneous" discipline, "we become empowered to take important steps to recruit, encourage, and support those who are underrepresented to enter the field and to flourish" (this issue, 853). Beginning from the lived experience of underrepresented philosophers, Wilson critiques the everyday practices of "a profession that is relentlessly white and male" (this issue, 859), noting that such practices function as "microcosms" of a racist, sexist society. Wilson argues that "A real commitment to caring about how racism and sexism work in philosophy necessarily commits one to caring about these issues generally" (this issue, 859). If we are to truly address issues of discrimination within the discipline of philosophy, we must also work to address these same issues on a broader social scale.

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The next three articles focus on pedagogical techniques that counteract the harmful effects of privilege in educational settings. In "Comforting Discomfort as Complicity: White Fragility and the Pursuit of Invulnerability," Barbara Applebaum examines the role comfort and discomfort play in social-justice classrooms. Applebaum notes how educators tend to comfort white students who feel distress at discussing issues of racism, and how this comforting serves to maintain both the privilege of white students and the systematic oppression of black students and students of color. Applebaum argues that the best response to such situations is "supporting but not alleviating white students' discomfort" (this issue, 872). Encouraging white students to develop a sense of vulnerability—which Applebaum defines as "an openness to change, dispossession, and willingness to risk exposure" (this issue, 870)—could guide white students "to a willingness *to stay in discomfort*" (this issue, 872; emphasis in original), and encourage them to directly confront their own privilege.

In "Tracking Privilege-Preserving Epistemic Pushback in Feminist and Critical Race Philosophy Classes," Alison Bailey takes aim at privilege-protective epistemic pushback, "a variety of willful ignorance that dominant groups habitually deploy during conversations that are trying to make social injustices visible" (this issue, 877).This kind of epistemic pushback frequently occurs in philosophy classrooms as a way for students from dominant social groups to maintain their social dominance, and to exercise control over critiques of their dominance, by utilizing traditional philosophical techniques. It is, as Bailey writes, a method of "using the master's tools to defend the master's epistemic home terrain" (this issue, 883). Bailey recommends that social-justice educators treat cases of epistemic pushback as shadow texts, "texts that run alongside the readings" (this issue, 877) and function to undermine instead of engage the readings. In this way, educators can encourage "class members to become aware of the fact that these moves are political and that sometimes they are driven just as much by fear and ignorance as they are by the desire to engage with the text" (this issue, 890). The goal of social-justice education should not only be to teach students to critically read texts, but also to critically read their reactions to those texts.

In "'Tell Me How That Makes You Feel': Philosophy's Reason/Emotion Divide and Epistemic Pushback in Philosophy Classrooms," Allison Wolf expands on the discussion of epistemic pushback. Focusing specifically on how "the discipline of philosophy itself facilitates, obfuscates, and/or provides the tools for students to engage in this privilege-protecting type of epistemic pushback" (this issue, 894), Wolf maintains that philosophy's tendency to emphasize reason over emotion is frequently "deployed as a tool of privilege-evasive epistemic pushback to continue tilting the unlevel knowing field toward dominant groups" (this issue, 894). Wolf notes that while philosophers pride themselves on engaging in unemotional argumentation, philosophy, and philosophy classrooms, are never free of emotion. Instead, the emotions of members of socially dominant groups tend to be implicitly validated, while the emotions of members of traditionally marginalized groups are taken as an indicator of poor argumentation skills. Arguing that "good philosophy requires us to recognize both information and our emotional response to the information to gain knowledge" (this issue, 907), Wolf outlines three strategies that are designed to help students of

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philosophy engage with texts on an emotional level, and learn to critically respond to their own emotional reactions.

David M. Peña-Guzmán and Rebekah Spera's article, "The Philosophical Personality," picks up on the theme of what counts as good philosophical argumentation, and who is taken seriously as a philosopher. Peña-Guzmán and Spera construct a profile of the archetypical philosopher, based on both the social, economic, and political considerations that "determine, empirically, who can become a professional philosopher today" (this issue, 912) and the idealized image of what it means to be a philosopher —the way "philosophers understand themselves *qua* philosophers" (this issue, 912). Together, these factors create a conception of a philosopher who "is white and he is male. He is also heterosexual, cisgendered, and able-bodied. He is an offspring of the middle class, the child of academics" (this issue, 917). According to Peña-Guzmán and Spera, "This conception, which is internalized by current and aspiring members of the profession, shapes the latent content of the philosophical imaginary as an unacknowledged norm" (this issue, 917), influencing both who counts as a philosopher, and even what is considered the proper philosophical methodology. Peña-Guzmán and Spera point out two significant problems with this conception of the philosopher. First, the conception contributes to the continued marginalization of philosophers who do not appear to fit the archetypical image of the philosopher. Second, the conception encourages philosophers to be ignorant of the realities of their own discipline, "creat[ing] a cycle of active ignorance that prevents philosophers from engaging in genuine self-critique" (this issue, 923). Peña-Guzmán and Spera argue that "In order to meet the demand for self-knowledge and become a welcoming space for individuals from diverse backgrounds... philosophy must be reimagined at its deepest level" (this issue, 924). Diversifying philosophy means reconceptualizing both who the philosopher is and what it means to do philosophy.

The last two musings present empirical investigations of two important aspects of underrepresentation in philosophy: academic publishing and recruiting undergraduate philosophy majors. In "The Underrepresentation of Women in Prestigious Ethics Journals," Meena Krishnamurthy, Shen-yi Liao, Monique Deveaux, and Maggie Dalecki ask if women are underrepresented in prestigious ethics journals, relative to the number of women who specialize in ethics. The authors conclude that "Women who specialize in ethics are indeed underrepresented in prestigious ethics journals" (this issue, 932). These findings are particularly important since—as the authors note —there is a much higher percentage of women specializing in ethics than in other subfields of philosophy. If women are underrepresented in some of the most prestigious ethics journals, "the gender problem in philosophy publishing may be more widespread and pernicious" than many philosophers suspect (this issue, 930). Krishnamurthy, Liao, Deveaux, and Dalecki suggest that further research is necessary to determine if there are structural causes both in academic journals and in philosophy departments that lead to this kind of underrepresentation.

In "Evidence Supporting Pre-University Effects Hypotheses of Women's Underrepresentation in Philosophy," Chris Dobbs reports the results of research supporting the hypothesis that there are causes influencing women to choose not to major in

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philosophy even before they enter university. Based on an analysis of American Freshman Surveys conducted between 2004 and 2009, Dobbs finds that even though women made up over fifty-five percent of the survey respondents, only "About one of every three students who intended to major in philosophy were women" (this issue, 942). Dobbs notes that "The sex gap in intention to major in philosophy mirrors the sex gap in philosophy degrees awarded. . . . About one of every three students who graduated with a philosophy BA were women, despite the fact, again, that more than fifty-seven percent of the sample was made up of women" (this issue, 943). Dobbs cautions his readers against mistaking these results as a sign that philosophy departments should give up on diversity initiatives. On the contrary, Dobbs points out that "If anybody is contributing to an anti-woman philosopher schema, it is the people who practice philosophy. . . . It is up to philosophy department members, and nobody else, to foster an anti-discriminatory culture" (this issue, 944). Philosophers are responsible for creating a culture that can either encourage or discourage women from becoming philosophy majors, and the ripples of this culture reach beyond the formal boundaries of the university. If the culture that discourages women from becoming philosophy majors—even before they enter university—is to change, it is philosophers who must change it.

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