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The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy
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Reviewed by Amy Marvin, 2018

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The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy breaks new ground in presenting feminist philosophy as a core subdiscipline of philosophy grounded in pluralist, interdisciplinary, and socially conscious inquiry. Consisting of fifty-six chapters written by different feminist scholars and organized under five sections, the *Companion* offers a consolidation of feminist philosophy that not only surveys approaches to the subdiscipline so far, but also presents new avenues for conversations that will be useful to interested newcomers and practiced scholars of feminist philosophy alike. In this way, the *Routledge Companion* should serve as a helpful guide and resource for a variety of teaching and research purposes informed by a plurality of methods, locations, and identities that comprise feminist philosophy as a collective practice.

The *Routledge Companion* is set apart from earlier feminist philosophy companions, such as the *Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy* (Fricker and Hornsby 2000) and Blackwell's *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy* (Jaggar and Young 2000), by providing a much-needed update to the field of feminist philosophy with an impressive combination of breadth and originality throughout the sections and chapters. The newer *Routledge Companion* focuses on five subtopics in feminist philosophy across more than 700 pages: I. Engaging the Past, II. Body, Mind, and World, III. Knowledge, Language, and Science, IV. Intersections, and V. Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics; part V is subdivided under the three subtopics. This division of sections is helpful for ensuring that feminist philosophy is discussed in both its feminist and philosophical intersections. The *Companion* thus addresses feminist approaches to identity and difference while also relating to classic subdivisions in philosophy such as philosophy of mind, value theory, and phenomenology in ways that avoid a reduction of feminist philosophy to a response to "traditional" Western philosophy canons. In this vein, the *Routledge Companion* both follows in the tradition of and expands upon the pluralist approach in the Blackwell *Companion* from 2000.

For example, part I, "Engaging the Past," includes feminist engagements with the history of Western philosophical traditions as found in the organization of earlier feminist philosophy companions, but also extends beyond this, linking developments and insights in feminist philosophy to thought, conversations, and action beyond Western academic institutions. Thus,

alongside chapters such as Janice Richardson's on social contract, Susanne Lettow's on the Enlightenment, and Elaine P. Miller's on nineteenth-century philosophy, the *Routledge Companion* includes Robin R. Wang's feminist analysis of Daoism in Chinese intellectual history, Tanella Boni's chapter on the engaged development of African feminist philosophies, and Kristie Dotson's introduction to US black feminist philosophy. The *Routledge Companion* thus presents feminist philosophy as not only participating in and transforming "traditional" canonized philosophical topics, but also in its global and extra-academic dimensions. Part I also links "Engaging the Past" to contemporary developments in feminist philosophy, with chapters such as V. Denise James's on the history of pragmatism explicitly linking to current exciting feminist work.

One benefit of this expanded approach to feminist philosophy is that readers can expect each topic to be pluralist, global, and invested in feminist philosophy as it is practiced across difference. One aspect of this pluralism is that each section includes both analytic and continental approaches to feminist philosophy. Part II includes a range of chapters not only accommodating analytic and continental approaches to studying identity, the self, and society but also moving past them, including Sally Haslanger's chapter on the sex/gender distinction and social construction, and Sara Heinämaa's chapter on embodiment.

Part III, which engages with the subject of "Knowledge, Language, and Science" and thus may have risked favoring more analytic approaches, also makes sure to include a not-to-be-missed chapter by Gertrude Postl on language, writing, and gender that includes discussions of French feminisms, Italian feminisms, and Mary Daly as a philosopher of language. Alison Wylie's chapter on feminist philosophy of social science also indicates the *Routledge Companion's* inclusion of interdisciplinary conversations. The volume is thus consistently useful for readers interested in continental or analytic approaches to feminist philosophy, but especially rewards readers who are willing to work across these distinctions or even eschew them altogether. Curious readers can be brought up to date on feminist discussions of both psychoanalysis (written by Kelly Oliver) and epistemic injustice (written by Miranda Fricker and Katharine Jenkins) alike.

Another key aspect of the *Routledge Companion's* pluralism, extending beyond the volume's conversations across continental and analytic "divides," is its consistent emphasis on global approaches to feminist philosophy across differences. Earlier in this review, I mentioned how this plays a distinct role in part I and its expanded analysis of feminist philosophy "Engaging the Past," but this emphasis also persists across the other parts of the book. This is most prevalent in part IV, "Intersections," which includes detailed discussions of intersectionality in chapters by Tina Fernandes Botts and Falguni A. Sheth, as well as a chapter by Kim Q. Hall discussing transnational, decolonial, and queer/trans approaches to disability studies. Part V's subsection, "Social and Political Philosophy," also heavily includes transnational and decolonial approaches, opening with a chapter by Monica Mookherjee on postcolonial critique and one by Serene J. Khader on feminist philosophies of global justice.

Finally, the volume is pluralist in the sense that scholars have been given a range of ways to approach the subjects of their chapters. Some chapters focus mainly on providing a thorough overview their subject, but many chapters also include original reflections and arguments in their

fields, such as Shay Welch's stand-out chapter on Native American metaphysics, chaos theory, and feminism.

One potential difficulty with this approach for readers--and this trickiness persists across companion volumes for several areas of philosophy--is that it may sometimes be unclear when starting any given chapter whether it will be best suited for certain survey, explanation, teaching, or research purposes. But each of the chapters clearly introduces its approach, so this can be alleviated through attentiveness to each chapter on its own terms. Some chapters will be suitable for more advanced research, others will be more friendly to prime undergraduate or graduate students at various levels, and taking in the whole volume should provide an informed perspective on feminist philosophy in both its comprehensive and positively surprising, original dimensions. The "Further Reading" and "Related Topics" sections at the end of each chapter are also helpful for connecting readers both to related chapters in the *Companion* and to books and articles outside the collected volume.

One criticism of the inclusive and pluralist collection in the *Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy* is that despite its efforts to include a variety of feminist perspectives and inquiries across the volume, it still centers some topics and approaches over others in ways that match with general trends of work that is valued in contemporary Western professional philosophy.

For example, discussions of feminist philosophy in relation to East Asian philosophy consist primarily of Wang's previously mentioned chapter on Daoism and a chapter by Sin Yee Chan arguing for a collaboration between scholars of Confucian and care ethics. Additionally, Native American and indigenous intersections with feminist philosophy show up primarily in Welch's previously mentioned chapter on chaos theory and within one paragraph in Trish Glazebrook's chapter on ecofeminist philosophy. Also missing is a chapter on feminist philosophical critiques of incarceration and the prison industrial complex (although Botts's chapter does briefly mention research on black women in prisons), as well as a more in-depth consideration of interactions between feminist philosophy and the increasingly discussed practice of "public" philosophy. Finally, the subtopic on feminist aesthetics is the shortest divided section in the book, with three chapters included in it. The *Routledge Companion* is a vital and needed update to earlier companions to feminist philosophy, and its consistent but focused pluralism is key for updating readers on the state of the field, but this still (understandably) includes certain weights in focus to maintain a coherent picture.

Another occasional downside of the volume's pluralist approach is that there are a few rare occasions where the discussion of some marginalized perspectives and identities may be deployed a bit haphazardly. For example, many of the chapters make sure to mention trans identities and experience. In this context, and as someone who often writes on intersections between feminist philosophy and trans studies, I was delighted to see a chapter by Talia Mae Bettcher that surveys current research while also breaking new ground on the subject of gender dissatisfaction. Likewise, it was interesting to see discussions about trans identity, experience, and surrounding discourse in chapters where they may not have been expected, such as Mimi Marinucci's nuanced discussion of "gender critical" radical feminism in a chapter on lesbian theory and queer theory, Susan J. Brison's brief reflection on the naming of "cisgender" in her

chapter on personal identity, and Kim Q. Hall's detailed discussion of conversations in trans studies about disability.

However, the emphasis on including trans people as a marginalized example throughout the volume sometimes leads to missed opportunities or avenues that seem taken for granted or undeveloped. The chapter written by Fricker and Jenkins on epistemic injustice that takes up trans people as a main example is both thoughtful and groundbreaking, but misses the opportunity to include philosophy (and indeed feminist philosophy) within the systems of hermeneutical marginalization and injustice under discussion. Additionally, Postl's chapter on language and gender is a bit too hasty to distance Irigaray's work on language from trans identity (301), while Mari Mikkola's chapter on essentialist and anti-essentialist frameworks of gender moves a bit too quickly through the complicated subjects of trans identity/gender continuity and trans socialization (175, 177). I am by no means suggesting that these important chapters do an injustice to trans people, and overall the volume stands out among the other feminist philosophy companions as explicitly and welcomingly trans-inclusive. I am suggesting only that including marginalized identities such as trans people among topics that should be considered and written *about* may restrict a pluralist conversation differently than do conversations *with* and *by* that group, considered as colleagues.

Finally, one strength of the volume and its comprehensive, timely, and pluralist collection of many themes and perspectives from feminist philosophy into one place is that it encourages a reflection on what this sort of collection might mean. With this in mind, I offer a third comment that is more about the consolidation of pluralist feminism than an assertion that the volume has a particular gap or flaw. The volume brings together an impressive range of topics and approaches to feminist philosophy across difference, including key contestations with the history of canonized Western philosophy. However, while frequently presenting feminist perspectives and concepts in philosophy that are significantly different, sometimes the focus on inclusion can lose sight of how these differences might result in more direct contestations not only among feminist philosophies but also between feminist philosophy and differing understandings or practices of feminism.

I do not intend to suggest that this is entirely absent from the volume, and feminist disagreements can be found in, for example, Mookherjee's chapter on postcolonial feminisms. Additionally, Botts's chapter on "The Genealogy and Viability of the Concept of Intersectionality" provides a helpful breakdown of existing critiques of intersectionality. Rather, I am interested in how the overall consolidation of feminism into a pluralist collection across difference may risk obscuring larger attention to ongoing or imminent contentions.

I'm reminded, for example, of earlier feminist philosophy collections such as *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (Benhabib, Butler, Cornell, and Fraser 1995) that explicitly centered disagreements among feminist philosophers, as well as the regular lunch-time "Difficult Conversation" panels held at the biennial Feminist Ethics and Social Theory conference. It is also not lost on me that I have written this book review for *Hypatia*, a journal that has been the site of recent (and quite public) feminist contentions. I want to suggest that in addition to the inclusion of difference, it could also be productive to highlight how these

differences in feminist philosophy can lead to difficult, and sometimes even intense, disagreements.

The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy presents an exciting, comprehensive, and original pluralist presentation of feminist philosophy that is a much-needed update to existing feminist philosophy companions. Students, scholars, independent researchers, and departments interested in feminism and philosophy would do well to make sure they have access to this volume, and it should be a relevant resource for years to come. Reviewing such an expansive presentation of feminist philosophy across differences also raises considerations about the meanings and limits of pluralism and inclusion in feminist philosophy as an ongoing collective project.

References

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