

Editorial Introduction to the Found Cluster on Trans Feminist Philosophy

ANN GARRY

Hypatia hopes to publish two separate clusters on trans philosophy in volume 34. We present the first, a “Found Cluster,” in this issue. In a future issue, we hope to publish articles that grew from talks given at the Trans* Experience in Philosophy Conference held at the University of Oregon in 2016. This successful conference was funded in part by a Diversity Project Grant from *Hypatia*. We are very pleased to participate in the development of trans feminism and trans philosophy by highlighting new work both at conferences and in print. It is a testament to the quality of the articles in this issue that one referee said: “This is an article that we need at this time. It helped me to make sense of my own experiences. [I] could not ask more from a philosophical exercise.” As editors, we are grateful to those who entrust us with their eloquent work and look forward to receiving more articles on trans issues.

The relations between trans feminism/trans philosophy and other forms of feminist or queer philosophy runs from mutually reinforcing to highly contentious. Readers will see some of the variation in the articles in this cluster. Sometimes the positions of feminist philosophers straightforwardly invalidate trans people’s lives and experiences. In other instances, feminist or queer philosophers’ work can serve as a fruitful resource for trans feminists but only after significant modification, often because earlier writers were not thinking of trans people at all when they developed their theories. Finally, the work of a number of feminist, queer, and other trans writers can be applied to trans feminist issues without major revision. The authors in this cluster look with fresh eyes as they draw upon, modify, or critique other feminist or queer work.

In the essays by Amy Marvin and Hilary Malatino, readers will find a common theme concerning the value of collective caring for trans people, though they are working with different contexts: Marvin with trans youth generally, Malatino specifically in the context of transformative rage/breaks. Although both philosophers draw upon other feminist and queer philosophers, Marvin has a stronger need to modify previous feminist views for her purposes. Marvin and Malatino both turn to the resources that trans communities have provided in order to better understand what is needed theoretically and politically as well as to perform the kinds of caring that are called for.

The title of Marvin’s essay, “Groundwork for Transfeminist Care Ethics: Sara Rudick, Trans Children, and Solidarity in Dependency,” signals accurately her approach

to the underdiscussed subject of trans care ethics. Marvin draws deeply on Ruddick's treatment of mothering (Ruddick 1995), but argues that it needs to be diversified and that preservative love, nurturance for growth, and social training need to become more interactive and "messy" in the light of trans children's and young adults' experiences (consider, for example, a decision about delaying puberty and the meaning of "nature" there). Alongside recognition of the limitations of feminist mothering ethics, Marvin notes the difficulty that trans studies has in explaining the dependency that trans youth have on their parents or other caregivers. The way she wants to conceptualize care ethics for trans youth is to link a more open, diverse view of preservative love, nurturance, and training with trans solidarity of the kind shown in the work of trans activists Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. Starting in the 1970s, Rivera and Johnson provided housing and care for trans youth in programs that linked dependency with solidarity across differences in specific communities.

In "Tough Breaks: Trans Rage and the Cultivation of Resilience," Malatino counters a negative view of rage by showing the ways in which, as a critical resource, it can transform trans people's lives and start creative world-building for lives that Judith Butler would call livable and Sara Ahmed would call bearable. Malatino's context is trans rage in a "break": a break enables a distance from harmful relationships and a chance to heal. A productive break requires witnesses/interpretive communities that offer many forms of caring labor "from attending to basic survival needs to generating, supporting, and co-elaborating continued reasons for living" (this issue, \$\$). Malatino seeks an "infrapolitical" (under the radar; see Scott 1990) ethics of care that goes beyond person-to-person care ethics and "into a terrain shaped by the recognition that caring, in the context of structural marginalization and systemic violence, must always be collective" (this issue, \$\$). It is this shared, collectivized empathetic response—including responses to cultural productions—that can amplify and transform rage into "a source of communal resilience" (this issue, \$\$). Malatino draws examples from responses to Ce Ce McDonald's prison letters and Cassils's performance art.

Oli Stephano's article, "Irreducibility and (Trans) Sexual Difference," differs from those of Marvin and Malatino not only in its more ontological focus, but also because of its direct engagement with another feminist position. He argues against Elizabeth Grosz's elaboration of an Irigarayan notion of sexual difference. Stephano neither rejects the "generative force" of sexual difference, nor argues against its irreducibility as "the very machinery, the engine, of living difference, the mechanism of variation, the generator of the new" (Grosz 2011, 101). Instead he distinguishes this kind of irreducibility from a second kind, namely, the irreducibility of two sexually specific bodies, male and female. Working step by step through Grosz's views, he argues that the second kind of irreducibility is not required by the first. He says,

To claim that sexual difference will only ever yield cisgender men and cisgender women, and that other forms of embodiment and identification are illegitimate metaphysical border-crossings—that *"one remains a man or a woman, even in the case of gender-reassignment or the chemical and*

surgical alteration of one sex into the *appearance* of another”—is to establish an ontology that invalidates trans embodiment and subjectivities. As Grosz herself has consistently and eloquently argued, the ontologies we formulate scaffold and sustain ethical and political worlds. (this issue, \$\$)

Stephano also argues that to maintain this second kind of irreducibility impoverishes feminist conceptions of sexual difference.

REFERENCES

- Grosz, Elizabeth. 2011. *Becoming undone: Darwinian reflections on life, politics, and art*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Ruddick, Sara. 1995. *Maternal thinking: Toward a politics of peace*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the arts of resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.