

## Editors' Introduction

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THREE YEARS AGO, A SMALL GROUP OF WOMEN, mostly philosophers but all interested in the convergence of continental and feminist philosophy, gathered in a small resort town in the mountains of Tennessee. We were there at the invitation of Kelly Oliver (professor of philosophy at Vanderbilt University) and Stacy Keltner (assistant professor of philosophy at Kennesaw State University) to discuss both our research projects and the formation of a new society, initially called the French Feminism Circle. Noting the absence of a circle devoted to the intersections of all the various forms of continental philosophy and feminist theory, the members planned, instantiated, and named ourselves (over drinks in a cabin and with much back-and-forth about compelling titles and diacritical marks) *philo*SOPHIA: the Society for Continental Feminism. The society has had three annual conferences, in Monteagle, Tennessee; Atlanta, Georgia; and New York City. While the idea for this journal was born of the same initial meeting, it has taken longer to come to fruition. We are thrilled to present here the inaugural issue of the journal *philo*SOPHIA and to take this opportunity to illuminate our vision for this undertaking and to encourage contributions to future issues. We are committed to providing an institutional venue for publishing feminist scholarship that draws upon and is inspired by the continental tradition in philosophy, including essays, translations, and book reviews, as well as reflections on the field and on the profession.

*philo*SOPHIA is, first and foremost, a philosophical journal that carries forward the rich tradition and conceptual resources of both continental philosophy and feminist theory. It is the first such journal that has this specific intersection as its mission. While the field of feminist philosophy generally

has committed itself to resuscitating and transforming the traditional imagery and representation of women (and of maternity, sexuality, and femininity), the field of “continental feminism” more specifically has provided the resources for reconceptualizing the historical legacy of European philosophy and the figure of the feminine and sexual difference that have been cultivated therein. The journal aims to explore and excavate this feminine figure throughout the history of philosophy, and to include articles that consider the relation of the feminine to nature, the body, language, and subjectivity. In addition, it will publish essays that consider the ways in which the figure of the feminine maintains but also quite possibly undermines the schisms between and among these central elements of human reality. We are hopeful that the critical endeavors of this journal will contribute to a feminist renewal and a renewal of philosophical culture, a potential rebirth of feminist theory in a philosophical ethos that will enhance rather than exclude it.

As the journal’s founding co-editors, we took inspiration from the figure of Sophia, arguably one of the oldest feminine figures associated with the pursuit and love of wisdom. As we wrote in our first call for papers, Sophia, considered to be the feminine aspect of God, fell from divine grace because of her desire for knowledge, and in doing so, she was mythologized as the origin of the material world. In the Kabbalah, Sophia appears as the feminine aspect of God and plays a pivotal role in Renaissance cosmology (Leon-Jones 1997). Associated with human wisdom and knowledge, but also with materiality and the body (since she is clearly distinguished from divine wisdom), Sophia personifies both the exclusion and the celebration of the feminine. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel claims that in Gnostic philosophy, Sophia (or *logos*) is the first-born descendant of the divine; in this reading of Gnostic thought, it is the human soul’s objective to actualize itself through a return out of matter to Sophia and harmony (Hegel 1974, 397). Here, Sophia represents a dynamic principle of wisdom (Hegel also refers to Sophia as *dynamis*), while also providing a metaphorical principle of feminine creativity.

Feminist philosophers working in the continental tradition have refused the option of rejecting engagement with eminent and influential philosophers and texts of the past. They have instead developed careful readings that aim to reactivate those texts against themselves or resuscitate their insights in a creative fashion. This style and ethic of reading, remaining with the text and respecting the truths it might convey while also interpreting it critically (and even vociferously) doesn’t pacify the history of philosophy but values its living force. As in Nietzsche’s metaphor in *Ecce Homo*, where the hammer is also a tuning fork, this strategy enables the reader to listen for resonances even while tackling foundations, but it also requires the cultivation of one’s ear. Philosophers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous, Catherine Clement, and Michele Le Doeuff exemplify the rich tradition of

reading and engaging with the history of philosophy in a simultaneously critical and mutually transformative way. Both independently and in relation to other philosophers, such as Emmanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean-Francois Lyotard, these “continental feminists” are often more radical than their Anglo-American counterparts, who customarily resist giving serious heed to the philosophical tradition.

Continental philosophy has been shaped by a constellation of intellectual traditions and texts, what Simon Critchley has called a “documentary archive of philosophical problems, with a distinct relation to their context and our own and marked by a strong consciousness of history” (Critchley 1998, 9). In this tradition, philosophical problems do not simply appear on the scene in a detached and ahistorical manner, but carry with them their intellectual and cultural context. Though there is certainly a canon of critical texts, it is constantly being interrogated, reworked, and reconfigured. This is why hermeneutic questions of translation and interpretation take a central role in philosophical investigation, and why language has so often operated within continental philosophy as not simply a straightforward form for transmission of meaning, but as itself the focus of philosophical inquiry. Texts and thinkers are approached as unfamiliar rather than immediately accessible, inviting critical attention and effort to understand them rather than pat summations, a style of reading that suggests the entanglements of translation.

In reflecting on this process, we are reminded of a scene in the film *Lost in Translation*, where Scarlett Johansson’s character, Charlotte, who had been a philosophy major in college and who aspires to be a writer, says to Bob Harris (Bill Murray), “I hate everything I write; it’s so mean.” Finding herself isolated in an alien culture, struggling to create or maintain an identity for herself in a world in which she is neither welcome nor unwelcome, she finds that what she can communicate, and whom she can communicate with, are profoundly at the edges of what used to be familiar.

Akin to this juxtaposition of cultures, we recognize the uncomfortable, discontented conjoining of feminism and philosophy. Continental feminism is a hybrid identity, not one that can be assumed with ease or self-assurance, and it may well be that there are parts of each area of inquiry that the other cannot digest or translate, some resistant elements that would keep the two in a relationship of permanently displacing and unsettling one another, of always coming upon the strangeness of the other.

We take this discomfort as presenting a possibility for new insights, not a reason for dismissal. It would be naive to think that we as thinkers can simply start afresh without being attentive to the genealogy of concepts that inform the trajectory of our investigation. Likewise, it would be self-defeating to assume

that the concepts that inform philosophy are simply words that will go away if we don't use them, or to dismiss them as mere patriarchal power tools.

Part of historical inquiry in the continental tradition involves asking the question of the relation of the history of philosophy, and perhaps of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy in particular, to its successors. Since Kant at least, the practice of philosophy has been critical, and since Hegel, it has emphasized the historically conditioned nature of philosophical concepts, questions, and practices. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud oriented the nineteenth century in a new direction of suspicion, opening up a possibility for change, both within the academic sphere and without. In the twentieth century, thinkers such as Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and Irigaray worked with and against the philosophical tradition in an attempt to expose its blind spots.

We envision this journal as the site for a philosophical array of projects in which we can begin to harvest the fruit of this historical formation of problems, enriched by insights from the contemporary world. We seek to ground and illuminate the movements of our own thought and the structure of our current reality by archiving and understanding the foundational frameworks of the philosophical tradition that informs it. We hope to continue a tradition that brings us closer to the concepts that give rise to the present ways in which we think while at the same time offering us the resources to develop new and critical concepts. We believe, with the field of continental inquiry and the insights of feminist theory, that new concepts cannot simply be created *ex nihilo* (in a vacuum); rather, they depend on the historical tradition to which they respond as a resource for their articulation.

What we are calling "continental feminism" thus encompasses a number of diverse methodologies and lineages, including those of psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and existentialism, and the various poststructural analyses that go by the names of "deconstruction," "discourse analysis," and "genealogy." Taking up aesthetic, ethical, political, and metaphysical questions, both together and separately, continental feminism grapples with the tradition of philosophy and develops new trajectories for challenging the conception of human subjectivity that binds it to masculinity.

What might transpire at the intersection of continental philosophy and feminist analysis? We generally think it a philosophical virtue to read and write critically, in a way that pays debts and respects by doing both justice and violence to the tradition, by opening texts to what they include and exclude. It has surely been a common strategy of continental feminist philosophers to read and write in this way, searching out texts for the sexual difference concealed and contained within them, for the aporias and openings that might let sexual difference speak in its own voice. Certainly this textual strategy entails risks, perhaps especially the risk of losing one's own voice in the philosophic gestures of rigor and discipline, of immersing oneself so deeply in the primary texts of

the history of philosophy, texts whose voices are not specifically feminine, that our only voice has already been appropriated. This journal aims not so much to alleviate these risks as to highlight them, most especially the risks of translation from one perspective to another and of the insistent (dis)connection between philosophy and sexual difference, between fidelity to texts and infidelity to their conditions of production, to the lingering traditions in which both they and we grew up. We recognize that this project of alliance, or of crossing boundaries, must be approached with care, that it calls for a judicious ethics of reading, an ethics of attention to the overlooked, an imperative to listen with a finely tuned ear, so that we can hear not just what we expect but also the tempo of a new style.

We also believe that continental feminism, as a sometimes close ally of women's studies, reaches across disciplinary boundaries, and that there is something productive in contending with the difficulty of speaking with those who have a differing vocabulary and conceptual framework or who are unfamiliar with the historical context of our analysis. These interlocutors may include faculty and students from women's studies, literature, and social science departments who are not always amenable to what they dismiss as "male theory," as well as analytic philosophers who are quick to reject what they see as "textual fetishism." We may sometimes find ourselves translating feminist theory into terms that seem to betray it—for example, turning psychoanalysis into psychology, sexual difference into gender, textual analysis into social science, or theory into betray. In mediating between our philosophical commitments and our commitment to support the growth and development of women's studies, something almost inexpressible seems to get lost. What is this lost element? We might describe it in Nietzschean fashion as "style" and as "tempo," but it is not exclusively these elements that get left behind. Rather, what gets lost is something that seems crucial to making ourselves understood, something substantive and distinctive that goes missing. Perhaps identity (as troubling as that word is) is part of what gets lost in translation. This "something" risks being interpellated and misrecognized in foreign ways. In not being able to meet on the same scene, we may pass each other and misread each other's tempo and style, but in this process, more seriously, the unique insights of continental feminism may also get lost.

The readings that we hope will be developed in this journal resist the notion that simply because the history of philosophy is written by "dead white males," we should leave it behind. We have had very bright, very politically correct students who insist (or perhaps it would be better to say "assume" or "presume"), that the discipline of philosophy is patriarchal, a contention that is made repeatedly but mostly in passing. Continental feminism resists this refusal of the call to read, refusal of the call to love philosophy. We cannot forget that the reading and rewriting we do as feminists in our relation to philosophy

might also be a form of love (as the title, for instance, of Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, should make abundantly clear). As we have described *philoSOPHIA* here, the love of wisdom may indeed be best understood as the love of a feminine virtue or goddess. Women who love philosophy are not in love with patriarchy; this love need not be perverse. Still, it's been a long engagement, and love has its limits.

If we're not dutiful daughters or seduced daughters, what kind of daughters can we be? Kelly Oliver has also asked this question about the daughter's responsibility to her father—"[C]ould the future be a daughter?" she asks (Oliver 1997, 211). How do we direct our energies to philosophical texts in a way that entails the disruption of the philosophical economy? If the feminine body has not only carried but reproduced (psychically and literally) the masculine philosophical text, and if the history of philosophy has both inscribed and veiled this appropriation, then by what means might we return to the resources of feminine identity and desire buried in the father's text without diverting our energies away from forging new identities and opening up new pathways for thought? How can we create a space in the text for ourselves that doesn't appropriate us while giving the text our love and attention? In *Thinking Through the Body*, Jane Gallop writes of herself that "my desire to be an academic, intellectual speaker is a desire to speak from the father's place. Yet the spiritual father's place demands separation of ideas from desire, a disembodied mind" (Gallop 1988, 21). Must the daughter be patricidal? Must she disinherit the father?

Perhaps part of our love for philosophy has to do with identifying with the embattled contingent of the continental tradition. One way that continental philosophy and feminist philosophy are clearly allies is that they often share a common enemy (academic politics makes not-so-strange bedfellows), and both must defend the claim to be legitimate philosophical heirs. It's not clear which is more threatening these days to the keepers of proper lineage. The name "continental philosophy" is in fact a retronym, which by definition is a word that always comes after the term that displaces it (or seeks to); in this case, it's a term whose creation consolidates the professional hegemony of analytic philosophy. But we also think that feminist theory has become part of the history and tradition of philosophy. Although perhaps it has not yet displaced its masculine patrimony, it has nonetheless found a presence, an identity capable of effecting change and changing affect. Within the discipline of philosophy, feminist theory keeps us attentive to remainders, ghosts, hauntings, to what gets lost in translation, and to the father's blind spots (what philosophy does not see itself as, or what alien forces drive it to its intimate others).

Here, we remember the work of Teresa Brennan, whose legacy affirms the possibility of energetic connections among women and whose life expressed and practiced a commitment to nurturing feminist philosophers. When we

can't write, when the movement of our energetic flow is blocked, Brennan maintained, it is the gift of energy from another, providing facilitating identifications, that might get us moving, working, and writing and provide release from that feeling that everything we write is mean. Brennan held onto the idea that, as she writes at the conclusion of *The Interpretation of the Flesh*, "in order to act upon the world, any being needs an identity" and she recognized that an affirmative identity requires "living attention" (Brennan 1992, 239). The key to self-transformation, and perhaps also therefore to the transfiguration of our philosophical inheritance and philosophical infrastructure, lies in the attentive love that might allow us to displace and destabilize but also engage and reenergize both ourselves and this tradition by reclaiming our heritage with others (Brennan 1992, 240). Perhaps if or when the transformation of philosophy occurs, we will need a retronym for that nonfeminist philosophy, unaware of sexual difference, that came before, its text having succumbed to or "disappeared under our interpretation" (Nietzsche 1989, §38).

The journal *philoSOPHIA* aims to represent the best in feminist continental philosophy. We invite submissions from scholars who work at the intellectual and philosophical intersections that we have sketched out here, in the hope of opening a wider dialogue around a diverse array of questions concerning sexual difference, sexuate identity, women writing and being written about in philosophy, and the interrogation of canonical historical texts. The journal will publish twice a year and, in addition to essay submissions, we encourage submissions of book reviews and short "reflections."

In our second issue, we will inaugurate a "Reflections" section that will be thematically focused and offer multiple perspectives on vexing professional issues. The first theme (for the second issue) will be on publishing feminist philosophy, and upcoming themes include feminist pedagogy; the philosophy job market; the relation between feminist philosophy and women's studies; and the relation between Anglo-American and continental feminism. We are excited about the prospect of discovery ahead of us and look forward to reading some wonderful work. We thank Miami University, and especially the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for institutional support for the journal.

—Elaine Miller and Emily Zakin  
Miami University

*We dedicate this first issue of the journal to Karen Burke, our former student and friend; we will always remember her as radiant and resolute.*