

Diversity in Philosophy: Editors' Introduction¹

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For the past twenty years the lack of diversity in professional philosophy has come under increasing scrutiny. Reports that demonstrate the lack of women's and BAME representation in the field, alongside high-profile sexual harassment scandals involving prominent philosophers and articles in mainstream news outlets that have drawn attention to the hostile climate of professional philosophy, have fuelled growing public and academic attention to the discipline's 'chilly climate'. Perhaps due in part to concurrent high-profile feminist resistance surrounding sexist professional climates, the question of why women in particular are so underrepresented in the discipline has attracted the majority of public and academic scrutiny.

This issue, whilst being of great importance, has thus far largely – with a few notable exceptions – been highlighted in the absence of deeper intersectional questions and concerns surrounding how systemic injustices have structured and sustained the academy as an institution. As a result, the subject of professional philosophy's lack of diversity has seldom been connected to the broader history which has embedded institutionalised racism and sexism into the academy and is foundationally responsible for provoking the issues we witness in professional philosophy today. While the focus of this collection is on academic philosophy, we aim to help situate ongoing debates surrounding diversity in the field within the broader framework of these kinds of deeper concerns.

The recent student-led movements in the UK such as 'Rhodes Must Fall' in Oxford and 'Why is My Curriculum White?' – which began in UCL and then spread throughout the country – have drawn attention to the pervasive Eurocentrism throughout the humanities and social sciences. They have shed light on how this Eurocentrism is inseparable from the imperialist and colonialist past of Britain, and how this past is interwoven into the fabric of

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British academia. These movements have evolved the discussion of liberal ideals such as ‘inclusion’ and ‘representation’ in academia by making room for an interrogation of the deeper and more crucial issues of structural racism and systemic inequalities. This, in turn, has enabled a more holistic critique of the institutions that are responsible for producing and disseminating knowledge.

A crucial contribution that this evolution has made to the discussion surrounding ‘representation’ in the academy has been its expansion of the remit of possibilities regarding what can be questioned. In recent years – no doubt at least in part because of the student-led movements mentioned above – we have witnessed the dominant critiques of the academy increasingly shift in popular consciousness from the domain of who is doing the teaching and who is being taught (staff/student representation) towards the question of *what* is being taught.

Part of our aim is to bring these two questions – who is teaching and who is being taught – into dialogue with the question of *what* is being taught, and to direct these three strands of critical evaluation directly onto the discipline of philosophy. But the articles in this collection also move from the question of what is being *taught* to the broader – but obviously related – question of what philosophy *is*. At points within the collection, further vital metaphilosophical questions are raised that have a direct bearing on the discipline of philosophy as a whole: what are the defining practices that demarcate philosophy as a distinctive body of human knowledge? How do the defining practices of philosophy relate to the racist, sexist past (and present) of the discipline? Is there a way of amending these practices to make the discipline more representative of marginalised groups?

In their paper “Third-Order Epistemic Exclusion”, Zahra Thani and Derek Anderson succeed in broaching all the three aspects of the aforementioned evaluative critique. They discuss how and why metaphilosophical norms – and traditional approaches to curriculum construction – alienate students from marginalised groups. By exploring the situated perspectives of a lecturer and an undergraduate student, Thani and Anderson present an insightful appraisal of the seemingly value-neutral pedagogical norms in philosophy that so often go unnoticed.

Building on the evaluation of pedagogical practices in philosophy, Ian James Kidd’s “Trade-offs, Backfires and Curriculum Diversification” explores the theme of curricular diversification by considering how the aim of an appropriately diversified curriculum necessarily raises certain tensions and *can* raise further tensions. Kidd draws attention to how the process of diversifying curricula results in difficult trade-offs being made between certain central topics and thinkers; he further brings to light how it can – if done incorrectly – also

result in students having an inaccurate perception of the central aims of philosophy.

Kidd's paper shines a necessary spotlight on the difficulties that surround the kinds of curricular diversification for which many student activists have been campaigning – a topic that is taken up from the perspective of a student activist in an interview with Rianna Walcott, the co-founder of *Project Myopia*: a student-led initiative to decolonise university curricula. Walcott discusses the intricacies of recent student activism, the distinction between 'diversity' and 'decolonisation', and how each has distinct normative implications for university curricula. Walcott outlines the tensions surrounding each of these concepts and succeeds in simplifying highly complex issues and debates without distorting or burying their depth.

"Between Ambiguity and Identity" further investigates the meaning of 'diversity' by problematising its popular identity-based conception. Karoline Reinhardt attempts to provide a grounded philosophical account of 'diversity' by investigating the tensions that arise between identity-based categories and the messy intricacies of human life and experience, which entail, Reinhardt argues, a natural degree of ambiguity that is overlooked when diversity is conceived and measured in terms of 'ticking boxes'. "Categorical Imperfections: Marginalisation and Scholarship Indexing Systems" brings the subject of diversity directly to bear on the discipline of philosophy by analysing how hegemonic Eurocentric norms within the tradition have directly impacted upon indexing systems. Simon Fokt shows how *PhilPapers* – an essential tool for philosophical research that many would suppose was obviously value-neutral – plays a crucial role in reproducing the pervasive discriminatory assumptions and norms within the profession. By analysing the systems of classification used on *PhilPapers*, Fokt demonstrates how the tools for research – a place that is generally overlooked when it comes to discussions of diversity – can themselves contribute to the the perpetuation of inequalities within philosophy. In a similar vein, "Philosophy for Everyone: Considerations on the Lack of Diversity in Academic Philosophy" brings to light how certain methodological norms and popular assumptions – taken for granted by many – function as a means of keeping diverse practitioners out of the discipline. Nic R. Jones considers how the traditional adversarial style of philosophy and excessive boundary policing of what constitutes 'real' philosophy work together to ensure a hostile climate for diverse practitioners.

Both Jones and Fokt demonstrate the importance of taking a more holistic approach to critiquing philosophy's lack of diversity by bringing into view related but often overlooked aspects of the issue. Insofar as there is a serious ambition to make philosophy a more accessible discipline, it is vital that the ongoing discussions surrounding the issue do not focus exclusively on local, individualistic solutions. Any approach to addressing philosophy's lack of diversity must incorporate a re-evaluation of all that is taken for granted. In our paper, "In Defence of Different Voices", we take on Louise Antony's widely-cited

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distinction between 'Perfect Storm' and 'Different Voices' models for explaining the underrepresentation of women in philosophy. We argue for a reorientation of the Different Voices model, which draws on metaphilosophical feminist critiques of the defining norms within the discipline, and argue – *contra* Antony – that this model provides a potentially powerful explanatory model that merits significant further exploration.

Yasemin J. Erden and Hannah M. Altorf's paper, "Difficult Women in Philosophy: Reflections from the Margin", explores a very closely related issue by addressing how the philosophical conception of 'objectivity' functions as a means of keeping diverse practitioners out of the discipline. Erden and Altorf discuss what it is like to be a philosopher on the 'margins' by reflecting on their own experience of having a course they designed and taught closed down by their university. Erden and Altorf bring to light the negative impact that university league tables can have on less 'traditional' courses and how these kinds of systems of evaluation disproportionately disadvantage the marginalised.

Cecilea Mun's paper, "The Many Harms of SETs in Higher Education", also argues that evaluative metrics of teaching success – in this case, student evaluations of teaching – disproportionately affects marginalised teaching staff. However, Mun argues that the harms caused by SETs are not restricted to academic staff, and draws attention to the manner in which SETs also harm underprivileged students through undermining the pedagogical methods that should be equipping them to deal with life and work outside the academy.

Our hope in presenting these papers together is that readers will witness the interconnections between each of these seemingly distinct aspects of the issue, and that they will, collectively, encourage a more holistic approach to understanding and tackling philosophy's lack of diversity.