

Pieranna Garavaso (editor)
The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Feminism
London: Bloomsbury, 2018 (ISBN 978-1-4742-9778-3)

Reviewed by Sergio A. Gallegos-Ordorica, 2020

Sergio Armando Gallegos-Ordorica is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY). He received a BA in philosophy at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and a PhD in philosophy at the CUNY-Graduate Center. His main research and teaching interests lie in Latin American philosophy, philosophy of race, philosophy of science, and feminist philosophy (particularly, Indigenous feminism). He has published several articles in journals such as *Hypatia*, *Critical Philosophy of Race*, *Synthese*, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, and *Axiomathes*.

Quote:

"What is particularly attractive and distinctive about this book is not solely the impressive breadth of the intellectual field covered or the depth of the scholarly contributions gathered, but also the ambition...to make this companion a useful tool for both the well-versed specialist and neophyte readers"

Pieranna Garavaso's edited collection, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Feminism*, is an outstanding and most welcome contribution to the growing body of literature on analytic feminism. What is particularly attractive and distinctive about this book is not solely the impressive breadth of the intellectual field covered or the depth of the scholarly contributions gathered, but also the ambition (which is well realized) to make this companion a useful tool for both the well-versed specialist and neophyte readers who might be looking either for a point of entry to the vast literature produced by feminist philosophers influenced by the analytic tradition, or for a current lay of the land that maps the most important debates and discussions. Indeed, one of the great merits of *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Feminism* consists in including not only a general introduction to the book (which contains detailed essays by Pieranna Garavaso, Ann Garry, and Ann Cudd and Kathryn Norlock that respectively address the nature of analytic feminism, the motivations to engage in analytic feminism, and the history of the Society for Analytical Feminism over the last twenty-five years), but also individual introductory chapters written by Garavaso and other colleagues (specifically, Katharine Jenkins and Amanda Roth) for the three main parts of the book, which gather, respectively, a series of essays in feminist metaphysics, feminist epistemology, and feminist value theory. These three introductory chapters do a great job at offering condensed but thorough accounts of feminist metaphysics, feminist epistemology, and feminist value theory as well as introducing the essays grouped in each section. In addition, the companion contains a fifth (and last) section that includes an overview of basic logical notions as well as a glossary of key terms and concepts that help make the companion approachable for interested readers who may not have had much previous exposure to the formal tools and the technical concepts routinely employed by analytic feminist philosophers. In light of all this, the pedagogic ambitions of the editor are well accomplished.

Let me now elaborate a bit more on why the companion is a great resource for the specialist by examining in more detail some of the essays included in the collection. In the section on feminist metaphysics, two essays in particular are noteworthy. The essay by Jennifer McKittrick, "Feminist Metaphysics: Can This Marriage be Saved?," addresses a central question: can feminist metaphysics be defended against metaphysicians who argue that metaphysics cannot be feminist since it aims at an analysis of objective reality, and against feminists who argue that feminism, being a value-laden project, cannot contribute to an inquiry that aspires to unearth the objective nature of reality? What is particularly remarkable about this essay is that, after examining a series of considerations raised by metaphysicians and feminists suspicious of feminist metaphysics, McKittrick points out that these critics tend to share one common assumption: the thesis that "metaphysics is about what kinds of things exist, their natures and how they are related" (74). In contrast to this ambitious assumption, McKittrick suggests considering metaphysics more modestly as a project that aims not to describe objective reality, but to provide a series of models of our world. This alternative conception of metaphysics, which draws its inspiration from Laurie Paul's (2012) work on model-building, is original and appealing given that it does not compel feminist metaphysicians to abandon the ideal of objectivity (after all, certain models are more objective or accurate than others), and it enables them to defend the idea that feminist metaphysics not only is but also should be, just as philosophy is, a value-laden enterprise (after all, different models are often developed with different values in mind). The essay "Feminist Metaphysics as Non-Ideal Metaphysics," by Mari Mikkola, is concerned with an important question: granting that feminist metaphysics is a project that should be both critical and constructive in nature, what kind of overall structure or nature should it have? In response to this question, Mikkola contends that feminist metaphysics should be considered as a non-ideal metaphysics, drawing a parallel with the non-ideal theory defended by Charles Mills. For Mikkola, this non-ideal metaphysics is not understood as a uniform approach or a systematic inquiry, but rather as an orientation in which "our theorizing should not rely on distorting idealizations, although abstraction understood as selective attention is legitimate" (89). Mikkola contends that, if we adopt this orientation, we can draw various lessons. In particular, one of the most interesting lessons that Mikkola points out is that pursuing a feminist metaphysics enables us to question a distinction drawn by some philosophers between "proper 'pure' metaphysics and 'applied' ontology that is not really metaphysics, but social theory" (96). This lesson is of key importance since it constitutes an important warning against the surreptitious tendency to create and maintain hierarchies within different projects of philosophical inquiry.

Let me turn now to the section of the book devoted to feminist epistemology, in which two of the most noteworthy contributions are the last two essays: "Say Her Name: Maladjusted Epistemic Salience in the Fight against Police Brutality," by Ayanna De'Vante Spencer, and "The Epistemology of (Compulsory) Heterosexuality," by Rachel Elizabeth Fraser. Spencer's essay is interesting because it introduces the notion of maladjusted epistemic salience in order to study carefully the erasure of the violence and brutality directed by the police against black women in the US. Using this notion of maladjusted epistemic salience, which she characterizes as referring to "breaks in an epistemic community's salience-making structure such that knowledge of a subcategory and/or intersection of categories is relegated to the margins as irrelevant" (311), Spencer shows how numerous instances of lethal violence against black women (in particular,

the cases of Rekia Boyd and Islan Nettles) remain, despite the fact that the Black Lives Matter movement was spearheaded by women, a generally unrecognized fact. For Spencer, this is because black women and girls are subject to maladjusted epistemic salience: they are systematically considered, in virtue of the intersection of their race and their gender, as being obligated to take second place or to defer to others. In particular, as Spencer notes, "even when folks acknowledge police violence enacted on black women, they often see it as an anomaly or require recognition of violence against black men as precondition for addressing the violence against black women" (321–22). Fraser's essay is particularly exciting and bold because, drawing on the framework developed by Charles Mills in a famous article discussing the duty of black men to marry black women (Mills 1994), she contends that "Mills's arguments can be used as a map, or scaffold, to construct structurally similar arguments against (certain) heterosexual relationships . . . [to] allow us to pick up and diagnose important epistemic structures in the institution of compulsory heterosexuality" (330). In particular, one of the most remarkable features of this essay consists in Fraser showing how the "questionable motivations" argument (which contends that black men's desire for white women can be seen as a proxy for a desire for status and power in a white-dominated society) that Mills examines in his article can give rise to a parallel argument in which a woman's heterosexual desire for marriage or a relation with a man can be considered as a proxy for a desire for status and power in a patriarchal society. As Fraser shows, since both arguments run on similar epistemic machinery, one can then argue that, in a patriarchal society in which heterosexual relationships are the imposed norm, the molding of sexual desire as a proxy and a mask for a desire for power and status forces women to pay a cost, since the "masking process acts to conceal the politically loaded character of desires for power and status as well as helping to conceal the injustice of the patriarchal gender system which those desires, and actions informed by those desires, help to entrench" (349).

Finally, let me consider the section of the book devoted to feminist value theory. This is, in my opinion, the richest section of the book and I cannot do justice, given space limitations, to all the great contributions compiled there. Thus, I focus only on two of the most noteworthy essays: "What is Sex Stereotyping and What Could Be Wrong with It?," by Adam Omar Hosein, and "Resisting Oppression Revisited," by Carol Hay. In his essay, Hosein contends that, in order to understand adequately the nature of sex-stereotyping with the goal of articulating an adequate moral and political critique, "we should be pluralists about sex stereotyping: we should think that there are a number of different phenomena that should count" (438). Hosein's endorsement of pluralism vis-à-vis sex-stereotyping is an appealing and potentially quite rewarding strategy to the extent that it enables him to group different likely candidates for sex-stereotyping (in particular, Hosein distinguishes implicit from explicit associations, normative from neutral approaches, and individual from collective associations) and to offer a comprehensive treatment of them. He points out that, if we are concerned with identifying sex-stereotyping for purposes of moral evaluation and political melioration, we should adopt pluralism because "each of the possibilities that we have looked at can be morally problematic, for several different reasons, when deployed into action" (444). In particular, one of the most interesting cases that Hosein discusses is the harm inflicted by stereotyping practices on gender outliers in the military in virtue of a policy that allowed a serviceman to automatically claim his opposite-sex partner for the purpose of receiving benefits, but forcing a servicewoman to prove that her opposite-sex partner relied on her for more than fifty per cent of his income (451). Using his pluralistic stance, Hosein argues that this policy involved a form sex-stereotyping that is similar to other forms of

sex-stereotyping, such as the one that imposes on women the expectation to be deferential to men in the workplace. Thus, the virtue of Hosein's essay is to enable us to see that sex-stereotyping is not a monolithic phenomenon, but something that comes in various shapes and forms. Finally, in her essay, Hay revisits her previous arguments that show that oppressed people have an obligation to resist their oppression. What I enjoyed particularly in Hay's essay is how, after recapping her prior arguments for this thesis, she sets out to answer some of her critics. In particular, the response that I appreciated the most was a common reply that she makes to objections raised separately by James Stacey Taylor, Daniel Silvermint, and Karen Jones. In a masterful move, Hay observes that all the objections, which ultimately invoke the idea that the oppression endured by the oppressed may not be strong or damaging enough to support a general obligation to resist, make a common assumption: there is a distinction between the capacities or abilities of oppressed people to achieve certain ends and the ends themselves, and thwarting the former does not necessarily change or alter the latter. In response to this, Hay mentions that the problem of badly adaptive preferences shows that "oppression can also affect what ends people will set in the first place" (495), thus showing the interconnectedness between our capacities or abilities and the goals we set for ourselves.

My only minor criticism of the companion is that it lacks a section on aesthetic feminism. This is a limitation since a lot of great work has been done in the last three decades by feminist analytic aestheticians such as Mary Deveraux, Anne Eaton, Sherri Irvin, and Sheila Lintott, and this work is not addressed. In light of this, if there is at some point a second edition, I would strongly suggest adding a section on feminist aesthetics. However, even in the absence of this, Pieranna Garavaso's companion is a remarkable achievement that will become a key reference in analytic feminist literature in the future.

Reference

- Mills, Charles W. 1994. Do Black men have a moral duty to marry Black women? *Journal of Social Philosophy* 25 (s1): 131–53.
- Paul, Laurie. 2012. Metaphysics as Modelling: The Handmaiden's Tale. *Philosophical Studies* 160: 1-29