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Introduction to the Special Issue: In the Unjust Meantime

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Introduction to the Special Issue: In the Unjust Meantime

Barrett Emerick and Scott Wisor

In 2014, we helped to organize a conference titled "In the Unjust Meantime: A Conference in Honor of Alison M. Jaggar." Three invited keynote speakers were joined by 18 of Jaggar's current and former students who gave papers that engaged a wide array of philosophical topics. It was important for Jaggar that her students' papers not be all about her, but instead should be inspired by her work and the many contributions she has made to philosophy. This should come as no surprise to those who know Jaggar and understand her deep commitment to her students.

This special issue, born from that conference, develops lines of argument and areas of inquiry inspired by Jaggar's nearly five decades of scholarship. The first six papers were authored by Jaggar's former students. Those papers, along with the three invited papers, all engage with the insight for which this issue and the conference take their name. In her 2009 coauthored book on abortion, Jaggar notes that philosophical accounts of justice and ethics often abstract away from the real-world facts on the ground. While some claims about the nature and scope of our moral obligations or just social arrangements might be true in a future, utopian world, "in the unjust meantime," (Jaggar 2009, 145) our understanding of justice and right action must be similarly non-ideal.

Indeed, in our view the move towards non-ideal theory is one of the most significant developments in contemporary philosophical methodology. This is of course not to say that there is no room whatsoever for imagining what a perfectly just world would look like, but it is to say that our work as philosophers must be grounded in the world as it is and must engage with actual social arrangements and real-world problems. Given not only Jaggar's groundbreaking role in helping to create contemporary feminist philosophy as an area of study, but also her role in helping to carve out the space for non-ideal methodology, we are delighted that this collection has found a home at *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*. In what follows, we offer brief summaries of the papers included in this special issue.

It is simultaneously striking and common to encounter those who claim that men are the victims of gender-based injustice and that in virtue of men's status as men, they are oppressed. Peter Higgins ("Three Hypotheses for Explaining the So-Called Oppression of Men") undertakes a careful analysis of what might be meant when others (especially his students) make these claims, and then offers three independent hypotheses that can explain the harms and limitations which men experience qua men. Higgins argues that these hypotheses are a superior alternative to the claim that men are oppressed as men.

Abigail Gosselin ("'Clinician Knows Best'? Injustices in the Medicalization of Mental Illness") argues that the medicalization of mental illness—that is, the treatment of mental illness as a primarily biological phenomenon located in the individual, rather than a social phenomenon which arises at least in part due to social factors external to the individual—traps those living with mental illness in a cycle of vulnerability. In doing so, Gosselin takes seriously the standpoint of affected individuals and focuses on oppressive background conditions and systems of injustice which oppress those living with mental illness.

Corwin Aragon ("Global Gender Justice and Epistemic Oppression: A Response to an Epistemic Dilemma") explores the complicity of Western feminists in global gendered epistemic injustice. Global epistemic justice, like global justice more generally, will not be delivered tomorrow. In the unjust meantime, we must think about how to approach the unequal epistemic engagements between Western feminists and non-Western knowers. For Aragon, critically interrogating their role in producing epistemic oppression is a better place for Western feminists to focus their efforts than on judging the epistemic "failures" of non-Western cultural groups.

Amandine Catala ("Multicultural Literacy, Epistemic Injustice, and White Ignorance") builds off Jaggar's work on the relationship between multicultural literacy and democracy. Catala argues that the persistence of the character Black Pete in Dutch society amounts to a failure of multicultural literacy and an epistemic injustice in which white Dutch citizens fail to recognize Black Pete as a racist figure. On Catala's view, avoiding this instance of what Charles Mills calls "white ignorance" will involve combating both subjective and objective hermeneutical injustice.

Theresa Tobin ("Religious Faith in the Unjust Meantime: The Spiritual Violence of Clergy Sexual Abuse") argues that in addition to recognizing the physical, sexual, and psychological harms caused by sexually abusive clergy members, it is essential to recognize the spiritual harm of clergy abuse. Tobin uses a naturalized feminist epistemology (which she has codeveloped with Jaggar) which grounds moral and political conclusions in structural injustice, the standpoint of survivors, and the context of abuse. Tobin argues that spiritual trauma is a serious component of clergy sexual abuse and to disregard this aspect is to disrespect the testimony of survivors.

As the preceding papers make clear, our world is far from perfect. However, it is arguably more just than it was in the past. Moral progress has sometimes involved incremental change, but in other cases it has, in the view of Dan Lowe ("The Study of Moral Revolutions as Naturalized Moral Epistemology"), involved moral revolutions. Lowe argues in favor of studying moral revolutions (such as women's suffrage or the abolition of slavery) as a form of naturalized moral epistemology. For Lowe, this approach to moral epistemology offers a superior alternative to the armchair theorizing still widespread in analytic philosophy.

In the first of the three invited papers to this special issue, Uma Narayan ("Sisterhood and 'Doing Good': Asymmetries of Western Feminist Location, Access, and Orbits of Concern") focuses on Western feminists engaging in non-Western contexts. Narayan engages with Jaggar's 2005 paper "Saving Amina," putting it in conversation with her own groundbreaking work, noting that prominent "asymmetries of concern" exist in which Westerners may be worried about the "global poor," but they may fail to apply that same critique of injustice in the West. Narayan further develops Jaggar's critique (as well as her own earlier critique) of the use of "adaptive preferences" to claim that women in non-Western contexts are mistaken about what is best for them.

Serene Khader ('Global Gender Justice and the Feminization of Responsibility") argues that there has been a feminization of responsibility, shifting additional burdens on women in the global South, often in the name of women's economic empowerment. Khader criticizes efforts which aim to increase women's productivity without recognizing or providing alternatives for the significant amounts of productive but uncompensated work women are already doing. Khader argues both that the feminization of responsibility is caused by structural factors in Northern economies and creates obligations for those in the global North to not contribute to, and help to alleviate, the exploitation and overutilization of women in the global South.

In the apt conclusion to the collection, Jaggar ("Thinking about Justice in the Unjust Meantime") argues against idealized approaches to theorizing about justice on the grounds that such approaches are destined to employ mistaken methods, privilege some groups over others, and provide philosophers in their armchairs too much authority in determining what justice is or should be. Jaggar endorses recent calls to move towards non-ideal theorizing which examines the lived experiences of the oppressed and attempts to learn from social movements that challenge oppression. Doing so is not without its own problems since it can often be difficult to determine which social movements can be sources of truth about justice and how we can know whether social experiments have succeeded. Despite those methodological pitfalls, Jaggar concludes on a note of optimism regarding our ability to work towards justice in the unjust meantime, in part by engaging in politics with nonphilosophers to build a better world.

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