

Summer School 2021: In and out – Questioning the Philosophical Canon

Institute of Philosophy, Zagreb, 28. 6. – 1. 7. 2001

A Report

From 28th June till 1st July 2021 the Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb hosted its third Summer School, organized by Luka Boršić and Ivana Skuhala Karasman. The title of the Summer School was *In and out – Questioning the Philosophical Canon*. The main idea was a provocative topic that has been widely discussed in the world of philosophy – the question who, and by which criteria, should be considered a canonical philosopher. The question of authority in philosophy, that is, the question which past philosophers are worth studying and being taught is not new among philosophers. However, from late 1960s, in philosophy, like in art history and literary criticism, we can witness emergence of ever-louder voices requiring a more systematic justification of the philosophical canon. Even the term itself is relatively rarely used before 1980s. It started circulating as a reference to those philosophers and their works which are generally regarded as indispensable for the basic study of philosophy, roughly from Socrates to Wittgenstein. The “philosophical canon” has also become a useful name for the object of attacks and various controversies. The attacks on and challenges of the philosophical canon come from various standpoints and with various scopes. For instance, “analytic” philosophy would give prominence to some philosophers who would, in turn, be neglected by the philosophers in the so-called “continental” tradition. However, among all of them there would be a general agreement on the fundamental importance of several other philosophers (e. g. Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, etc.). Marxism launched an attack on the canon from a different, action-oriented perspective. Yet another line of attacks on the canon come from critical race theory and feminism: the canon is labelled racist, sexist, and xenophobic, consisting of exclusively “dead, white, European males.”

Some proponents of these attacks require at least an augmentation of the canon. On the other hand, some require a more radical revision of the canon, such as replacing the male-only canon with a women-only canon. The aim of

the Summer School was to cover multiple topics regarding the philosophical canon. On the one hand, the philosophical and historical processes that led to the development of the philosophical canon and investigate different aspects of theoretical attacks on and defenses of it were explored. On the other hand, some more particular questions were tackled on. Is questioning the canon a sign of a crisis? Who and why should be included in or excluded from the canon? Is there a need for a canon? These topics were addressed from historical and philosophical perspective.

The lecturers were: Peter Adamson (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany), Luka Boršić (Institute of Philosophy, Croatia), Ruth Hagenhuber (University of Paderborn, Germany), Iris Vidmar Jovanović (University of Rijeka, Croatia), Boris Kožnjak (Institute of Philosophy, Croatia), Martino Rossi Monti (Institute of Philosophy, Croatia), Mary Ellen Waithe (Cleveland State University, USA), and Marie-Élise Zovko (Institute of Philosophy, Croatia).

The opening lecture was *Fighting Philofolly! Rewriting the History of Philosophy*, held by Ruth Hagenhuber. The next lecture was *A global philosophy without any gaps* presented by Peter Adamson. The second day two more lectures took place: *God and the Philosopher are Gender Non-conforming: How to Subvert Dogmatic Thinking about the Philosophical Canon*. With examples from Plato, Spinoza and Kant by Marie-Élise Zovko, and *Sex, Lies and Bigotry: The History of Philosophy* held by professor emerita Mary Ellen Waithe. The next day started with the lecture 'First they take Manhattan, then they take Berlin': *cancel culture in philosophy and science* held by Boris Kožnjak. Second presenter was Iris Vidmar Jovanović with her lecture *Philosophical Canon and the Truth: Challenges from The No-Progress View Of Philosophy*. The last day of Summer School the participants had the opportunity to hear two more lectures- The first one *The Canon Wars and the Decline of the West* was presented by Martino Rossi Monti, and the closing lecture *Is homo unius libri a philosopher? An example of Maria Gondola* was held by Luka Boršić.

The Summer School was held online and it was attended by some thirty students, mostly doctoral and postdoctoral younger scholars. The students came from all over the world: from China, India, Germany, Philippines, Italy, USA, Great Britain, Denmark, Switzerland, Cyprus, Russia and Croatia. All the lectures were accompanied by many and substantial discussions: although the Summer School was held online, we had a rich interaction with each other so that the scheduled time frame was often too short for all the interventions and ideas. It was a good opportunity not only for the exchange of different perspectives but also for getting to know each other in hope of some future collaboration.

Hopefully the pandemic situation will allow that the 2022 Summer School be held in-person in Zagreb. We are already looking forward to host a new Summer School with a new topic!

Luka Boršić
Ivana Skuhala Karasman

