European Journal of Analytic Philosophy EuJAP | Vol. 19 | No. 1 | 2023
https://doi.org/10.31820/ejap.19.1.5

WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY: WHAT IS TO BE DONE? INTERROGATING THE VALUES OF REPRESENTATION AND INTERSECTIONALITY

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Original scientific paper - Received 14/01/2022 Accepted 02/08/2022

ABSTRACT

It is clear that philosophy has a "woman problem". Despite the recent acceptance of this fact, it is less clear what ought to be done about it. In this paper, we argue that philosophy as a discipline is uniquely well-positioned to think through the marginalisation suffered by women and other minorities. We therefore interrogate two values that already undergird conversations about inclusion—representation and intersectionality—in order to think about the path ahead. We argue that, once we have done so, it becomes clear that the slow pace of improvement over the last few decades is unacceptable and more radical steps need to be taken. First, we outline the current state of women in philosophy focusing on three areas: levels of employment, publishing, and sexual harassment. Then we turn to representation and intersectionality respectively. We conclude by arguing that many women and people of colour have been arguing for a more radically diverse philosophy for many years. What we are facing is a lack of ambition on the one hand and problem of attention on the other.

Keywords: *representation; intersectionality; exclusion; employment; publishing; sexual harassment.*

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1. Introduction

Much work over the last decade, including this special issue, has aimed to show that philosophy has a "woman problem". Philosophy, as an institutionalised academic discipline and a site of knowledge, has failed to properly include, recognise, or celebrate women as members and thinkers in their own right. Because of this, philosophers have found themselves reproducing an almost exclusively all-male "canon" which idolizes a small number of European white men, while obscuring other important thinkers and theorists (Waithe 2015; Witt 2006; Zerilli 2009; Haslanger 2008; Tyson 2018). This canon does not reflect the actual distribution and production of philosophy across the world. As Lisa Kerber (1997, 19) notes: "when women are absent from the narrative history of ideas, it is not because they are truly absent, but because the historian did not seek energetically enough to find them". This gap has led to various movements within and outside of traditional philosophy departments that aim to correct this oversight. This has included volumes on women philosophers throughout history (Waithe 1987, 1990, 1994; Atherton 1994; Warnock 1996; Buxton and Whiting 2020). But it has also included pressure from philosophers themselves that aim to change the representation, position, and treatment of women and other marginalised groups within the academy (Tyson 2018; Holroyd and Saul 2018; Beebee and Saul 2021, 2011; Krishnamurthy et al. 2017).

Fortunately, many in philosophy now accept the existence of a "woman problem", representing a positive shift over the last ten years. The data substantiates this: there is slow but meaningful progress. However, we know from experience that some are still uncomfortable with this recent push for inclusion. The reaction to our edited collection *The Philosopher Queens,* a book about women philosophers by women philosophers, was almost entirely positive. However, some still believed the book to be wrong-headed for focusing on the gender of the philosopher as opposed to the "essence" of the philosophy itself, whatever that is. Despite this pushback, there have been many important and productive efforts to relocate women in the history of our discipline. Mary Ellen Waithe's *A History of Women* Philosophers (1987, 1990, 1994) gives an encyclopaedic overview of women thinkers throughout history, beginning in 600BC. Many collections now discuss European women philosophers in the early modern period, including a book by Margaret Atherton (1994). Mary Warnock's (1996) book *Women Philosophers* brought together work by 17 women, offering a

short introduction to each followed by a selection of their most influential work. Nancy Tuana's series "Rereading the Canon" offers feminist interpretations of canonical thinkers, including feminist approaches to Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel. The Oxford "New Histories of Philosophy" series, edited by Christia Mercer and Melvin Rogers, aims to help academics hoping to diversify their philosophy reading lists, with books on Frances Power Cobbe, Margaret Cavendish, Mary Shepherd, Sophie de Grouchy, and more. A new collected history on *African American Political Thought* (2020) edited by Melvin Rogers and Jack Turner includes chapters on Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, Audre Lorde, and Angela Davis. The "In Parenthesis" group at Durham University aims to highlight the work of "The Wartime Quartet": Mary Midgley, Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Iris Murdoch. Two new books have recently been released on these four thinkers: *Metaphysical Animals* (Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman 2022) and *The Women Are Up To Something* (Lipscomb 2021). The Paderborn University group "History of Women Philosophers and Scientists" hosts a summer school every year, to encourage new work in this area. There are also now many important mentoring schemes for women in philosophy, helping them to navigate life in the academy. For instance, The Collegium of Black Women Philosophers (CBWP 2020) runs conferences and helps early-career academics to seek important guidance from more senior members of the field. The Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP) runs a mentoring scheme that, in conjunction with the British Philosophical Association, links early-career researchers with academics in permanent positions across the UK.

There is also important and productive pressure from students to diversify and decolonise our university reading lists. However, when they do so, students are often not taken seriously, and are on occasion attacked by the right-wing press. For instance, SOAS (London School of Oriental and African Studies) students suggested that most of their readings should be written by those from precisely those geographies that the school is meant to focus on, Africa and Asia. This was met by false claims in The S*n (2017) that students wanted to "ban white philosophers" and were "Barmy radicals". Students continue to ask questions about their reading lists, even in the face of these unsympathetic reactions, even when they sometimes stem from within philosophy itself. As Charlotte Witt (2006, 539) points out, "the fact that feminist scholarship has an explicitly political goal (the equality of the sexes and the end of male oppression) puts it on a collision

course with philosophy's traditional self-image as the disinterested search for truth and knowledge".

Several interesting questions arise from this history of exclusion. For instance, *why* exactly have women been excluded for so long? *How* is this exclusion maintained and compounded? Eileen O'Neill's agenda-setting paper "Disappearing Ink" (1997, 19) discusses how women in early modern philosophy, who were well-known in their own time, have since disappeared from view. It is not the case that women in philosophy never existed. Instead, they have been forgotten: "why were women's printed books treated as if written ins disappearing ink—extant yet lost to sight?" O'Neill argues that this forgetfulness is partly because the losing philosophical positions of the day were associated with women (1997, 34–36). This coupled with the practice of anonymous authorship meant that women of the early modern period almost disappeared entirely. We might also speculate that this process of forgetting women in philosophy is at least partly due to the dispositions of those who have been responsible for maintaining and producing knowledge. Women were formally excluded from academic life until very recently and most historical work to resurrect women philosophy is done *by women.* In other words, until recently, there were simply very few women around to do the active work of remembering.

This paper aims to answer a different question about the exclusion of women in philosophy: *what ought to be done about it?* This paper aims to consider what philosophy departments ought to do about this issue and how they have already begun to tackle it.[1] Our knowledge of these problems stem from our own previous experience, but also from discussions with other women philosophers, interactions that we were able to have whilst editing *The Philosopher Queens*. We also draw heavily on the work of women philosophers who have mobilised around this issue, often for many years. Moreover, the claims that we are making here apply to other university departments. Sexism is not only a problem in philosophy. Instead, philosophy reflects and exacerbates exclusion that exists both within and outside of academia more generally. Louise Antony (2012) argues that philosophy is a "perfect storm" where many different

[1] We do not focus on the question of how to engage in the historical project of resurrecting women philosophers. O'Neill discusses three different methodologies for historical revival in "Disappearing Ink" (1997).

exclusionary factors manifest, making philosophy a particularly stark case. We make some reference in what follows to philosophy's specific forms of exclusion. However, many of the lessons can be thought of as general rather than targeted.

Philosophers are arguably uniquely well-positioned to think about exclusion, marginalisation, and oppression within our discipline, given that many philosophers interrogate these concepts already. We are capable of thinking about *why* inclusion is important and therefore understanding how best it can be achieved. The philosopher's toolkit can therefore be used to think about these problems.[2] The aim here is not to be entirely prescriptive. Instead, we intend for this paper to be part of an ongoing conversation within the discipline. This paper therefore focuses on two core concepts in feminist thinking that might help us to better understand what ought to be done about philosophy's "woman problem": *representation* and *intersectionality.* There are many values or concepts that we could have chosen. But these two, we believe, are best positioned to sharpen the conversation on what ought to be done about the absence of diversity in philosophy today. They are also *already* part of the ongoing conversation. The concept of representation, for instance, undergirds nearly all discussions of who is read and taught in philosophy undergraduate programmes. But what does representation mean and why is it valuable? We approach these concepts, not to underline their importance; we largely take their importance for granted. Instead, here we ask, given that we accept the importance of representation and intersectionality respectively, what is required of us now? We conclude that, once we have properly interrogated these underlying values, far more is required of us than merely including some more women on the reading list. A far more radical approach is needed. Indeed, as we will show in the following section, if philosophy continues to respond to these issues at its current (incredibly slow) pace, it will be many decades until we have a discipline that lives up to our aspirations.

[2] This "toolkit" and how it's generally used could of course be part of the problem. See Dembroff (2020).

The Current State of Women in Philosophy

To say why the concepts of representation and intersectionality are useful, we need to understand the current state of play for women in philosophy. This section draws on the latest data about three areas of women's experiences in philosophy: employment, publishing, and sexual harassment.

2. Employment in Philosophy Departments

Things have certainly improved for women philosophers in the last century. Women are, at the very least, no longer formally barred from academic institutions: they are able to earn degrees, teach, and hold senior positions in university departments.[3] However, there remain questions about the number of women employed in philosophy departments and how they are treated once they get there. Only 25% of Professors in UK Philosophy departments are women (Beebee and Saul 2021). These numbers have improved somewhat in the last 10 years. In their 2011 "Society for Women in Philosophy" report, Saul and Beebee found that only 19% of Professors in the UK were women. Progress is therefore slow but clear. An interesting feature of this data is the sudden drop off rate: women choose to take philosophy at undergraduate level at around the same rate as men, and therefore account for around 50% of philosophy undergraduates. Unlike other university subjects such as STEM, women do not seem to be encouraged away from philosophy from an early age (Calhoun 2009). The problem, then, arises further down the pipeline when women must choose whether to pursue graduate degrees. Ma et al. suggest that

> although they may enter the major unaware of these schemas [philosophy as male dominated], women may become acculturated to the masculine nature of philosophy at the upper-division where gender parity diminishes, or perhaps women see that most of their professors are male

3 The first woman allowed to attend university lectures in Europe was the polymath Anna Maria van Schurman at the University of Utrecht, on the condition that she sat behind a curtain so as not to "distract" the students (Oneill, 1997, 18). The University of Cambridge did not allow women to earn degrees until 1948.

> and course texts are predominantly male-authored (…). [T]hese perceptions may discourage women's identification and engagement in the field. (Ma et al. 2018, 77–78; see also Leuschner 2019)[4]

The male-dominated character of philosophy departments may be discouraging marginalised students from continuing in the field. Evidence from the US suggests that women are disproportionately less interested in philosophy at the beginning of their undergraduate degrees. This locates some of the problem, then, in the students' perception or experience of philosophy *before* they even enter the university classroom (Schwitzgebel, Thompson, and Winsberg 2020).

There is little focus on intersectionality in this data (something that we will discuss later on). However, reports from beyond philosophy paint a stark picture. In her 2019 report for the University and College Union (UCU), Nicola Rollock interviewed 20 of the 25 UK's Black women professors. Only 2 of these women had been Professors for more than 10 years. They described experiences such as bullying from co-workers, excessive and unfair workloads, and being overtaken by less qualified candidates in consideration for promotion. In her interview "The Pain and Promise of Black Women in Philosophy" (2018) Professor Anita L. Allen discusses the state of the field in the United States:

> White women are better represented and perhaps more easily accepted in philosophy than men or women of color. Pay equity and status gaps between women and men tend to favor men. Only about 1 percent of full-time philosophy professors are black, whereas about 17 percent are women. A higher percentage of black men than black women Ph.D students go on to tenure-track positions. (Allen 2018)

Botts, Bright, Cherry, Mallarangeng, and Spencer in their 2014 paper "What Is the State of Blacks in Philosophy?" found that "of US philosophy department affiliates, just 1.32 percent of them are Black" (2014, 237). So,

4 Evidence from non-Anglophone universities also finds a drop-off between undergraduate and professional philosophy. In Greece, women make up the majority of philosophy students, but only around 28% of staff (Iliadi, Theologou, and Stelios 2018).

while things are improving for women (albeit slowly), there is still a huge gap when addressing racialized marginalisation. Simply working towards more women in philosophy departments is not enough when many of them are from the most privileged groups in society. There is still more to be done.

2. Women in Philosophy Journals

Publishing plays an incredibly important role in an individual's chances of success in the academic job market. PhD students are encouraged to have at least one publication in a 'top' philosophy journal, in order to stand a good chance of career progression (usually to a poorly paid and precarious postdoctoral contract). It is well-documented that the publication process in philosophy is extremely slow compared to other disciplines. Students and early-career academics therefore must begin submitting papers for publication as quickly as possible. Good mentoring and support can help young philosophers to navigate this process, but it is often intimidating and frustrating, nonetheless.

We have already seen that women are not well represented in philosophy departments. This may be compounded by women's lack of representation in philosophy journals. In the 2000s only 13% of papers in top philosophy journals were written by women (Hassoun 2022). Strikingly, this hasn't changed a great deal over the proceeding century—in 1900 around 10% of publications in top philosophy journals were by women (ibid.). In her well-known 2007 *Hypatia* paper, Sally Haslanger collected data on the number of women authors in several prestigious philosophy journals: *Ethics, Journal of Philosophy, Mind, Nous, Philosophy Review, Philosophy and Public Affairs, and Philosophy and Phenomenological Research.* The table from that paper is replicated below.

Representation of Women in 3 Philosophy Journals, 2002 - 2007

Journal	*Authors*	*Female*	*Percentage*
Ethics	114	22	19.30
Journal of Philosophy	120	16	13.33
Mind	141	9	6.38
Nous	155	18	11.61
Philosophical Review	63	7	11.11
Philosophy and Phenomenological Research	212	26	12.26
Philosophy and Public Affairs	93	13	13.98
Overall	**898**	**111**	**12.36**

These findings have been corroborated by the Data on Women in Philosophy project (2022) who collected data on top philosophy journals up to 2015. Focusing on 2015 as an example year, they found that women accounted for 20% for authors, and that the proportion of women was higher in journals *without* double-blind peer review. In that year, not a single woman author was published by *Mind.* As Haslanger noted, the data speaks for itself. But to get a fuller picture of the last few years, we have replicated Haslanger's approach with three of the journals (*Ethics, PPA, and Mind*), focusing on the years 2015-2020.

Representation of Women in 3 Philosophy Journals, 2015 - 2020

Journal	*Authors*	*Female*	*Percentage*
Ethics	232	51	22%
Mind	233	15	6.9%
PPA	77	15	19.4%
Overall	542	81	14.9%

As the most up to date data shows, there does appear to be a slight improvement in the proportion of women being accepted for publication in these top journals. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* has seen the largest increase of the three, by around 5.4 percentage points (around a 30% increase). Moreover, while we only collected data from 2015-2020, 2021

looks more promising for *Mind,* with 9 women authors in total. The previous highest year was 4. It is also still the case that women tend to be more strongly represented in discursive or review articles. This, Leuschner notes, "exemplified the fact that women tend to do work of lesser prestige more often" (2019, 6).

There are several further questions that can be raised by this data. First, are women *underrepresented* in these journals or does the disparity simply reflect the fact that there are fewer women philosophers? Second, is the case that women are being discriminated against (either indirectly or directly) during the acceptance process or are women simply not submitting to journals as much as their male counterparts? And if women are not submitting as much, why is this the case? A recent paper by Krishnamurthy et al (2017) found that women *are* underrepresented in ethics journals, once we consider the number of women specialising in the given topic. That is, after accounting for the general underrepresentation of women in philosophy, women are still even *further* underrepresented in top ethics journals. Wilhelm et al. (2018) also found that women are underrepresented when compared to the number of women faculty in the US. On the second question, Anna Leuschner (2019, 4) points out that many top philosophy journals provided data to show that their acceptance rates are roughly equal: women are just as likely to be accepted during the peer-review and publication process. The problem is instead that women are less likely to submit papers for review than their male colleagues. This is also reflected in recent data published by *Ethics,* which shows that women have a low submission rate to the journal, but are just as likely to be accepted as their male counterparts. In other words, "on average, women submitting to this journal have as good a chance of having their articles accepted as do men" (Richardson 2018). If women are submitting less than men, why is this the case? Leuschner (2019, 10) argues that both direct and indirect disadvantages will affect how much women submit for publication.

> Direct effects of biases, that is, material disadvantages, such as inadequate working conditions, as well as nonmaterial disadvantages, such as professional marginalization and devaluation, a hostile atmosphere, microaggressions, and stereotype threat, are likely to lead to indirect effects of biases,

> that is, to the identified differences between women and men academics' working behaviour.

These biases may arise from women's material position within academia; they tend to take on more pastoral and additional work voluntarily, while also being more likely to hold a junior or temporary position.[5] Likewise, Leuschner cites a now well-known study by Leslie et al. (2015) which asks people from various disciplines to rate whether an individual needs "innate genius" to succeed. They found that philosophy had the highest proportion of such individuals. More problematically, Leslie et al. also found that women and African Americans were perceived as lacking this innate talent. Women and other marginalised groups in the academy are therefore held back by a bias that assumes that philosophy is a God-given gift, rather than something learned and cultivated.[6] While we have a good picture of the fact that women are underrepresented in philosophy journals, we perhaps are not totally clear as to why. Leuschner (2019) points out the many different biases that affect women's lives, as well as their working conditions. Saul (2017) argues that we lack sufficient evidence to know why women publish at such low rates in value journals, though we have many hypotheses. It seems, though, that more qualitative data is needed to think through women's experiences in attempting to publish papers. This missing piece of the puzzle could help us to understand the lack of women in "top" journals.

3. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is rife in academia.[7] Nearly every woman has a story of how they or someone they know has been harassed, either in their own workplace or at conferences and workshops. We recently asked women in

[5] Research from economics which shows that women on average take longer to write papers than their male counterparts, but also often write more clearly. This could mean that they spend less time on new research (Hengel 2018).

[6] Leuschner (2019) is also discussed in a paper by Liam Kofi Bright, which considers the more general "productivity gap" between men and women. He writes: "women concentrate on producing high quality papers in response to an expectation that their work will receive greater scrutiny. Whether or not this expectation is accurate, producing such work is time consuming, so women then produce fewer papers overall" (Bright 2017, 2).

7 Parts of this discussion appeared in Buxton and Whiting (2021).

philosophy to share their stories of harassment, to better understand how this affects our colleagues and students. Some of the respondents recounted fellow students or tutors making sexual remarks in seminars, another discussed a long-term relationship with her supervisor (for him then to move on to another of his students when they separated). Many shared stories of older men in our discipline saying that women were simply biologically incapable of rational thought and were therefore unable to do philosophy properly at all. Sometimes as an (apparent) joke, sometimes not. Another woman shared a story of a man stroking her leg under the table at a conference dinner. Other forms of harassment are rampant in philosophy as well. One source recounted a white faculty member saying to a Black woman that she "wouldn't mind owning some slaves", then noting that the woman in question might be particularly suited to the job.

Jennifer Saul, a well-known philosopher of language and feminism, has created the website "What is it like to be a woman in philosophy?" Here you'll find a collection of stories from women in our discipline. Some speak of problems in finding women mentors, others recount times when men grabbed them in bars or hit on them in departmental meetings. It makes for a depressing read. A recent report by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (2018) considered the impact of harassment in academia more generally. They concluded that "the cumulative result of sexual harassment in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine is significant damage to research integrity and a costly loss of talent in these fields". The report also finds that higher education has the second highest levels of sexual harassment, surpassed only by the military.

While the general culture around sexual harassment may potentially have improved in the last decade, universities still often fail to take women seriously in their allegations of assault. As Beebee and Saul note, the pressure needs to be kept up on this issue:

> We therefore, as individuals, as departments and as a profession, need to ensure that we create and sustain a culture that both minimises risk (e.g. by adopting and advertising local staff-student relationship and conference behaviour policies) and maximises the chance that victims will report incidents to us, e.g. by making it clear that they will be taken

> seriously and that staff know what to do if an incident is reported to them. (Beebee and Saul 2021, 5)

So, although more is being done across universities in general, we need to continue creating a space where women can come forward if they need to.

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The status of women in philosophy has certainly improved in the last few decades, and women are beginning to stay in the discipline, publish more, and feel safer. But there remain clear challenges for women in philosophy that need to be addressed. To think through these challenges, the remainder of this paper will focus on the concepts of representation and intersectionality. The aim here is to consider how thinking through these concepts (in this specific context) more fully might lead us in a better and more theoretically grounded direction. We already have some recommendations of things that can be done for women and other marginalised people in philosophy. But pressing further down two avenues, on which we already rely upon heavily, might clear a path and show us what is to be done. We do not argue that these concepts answer all our questions. Rather they help to ground our response to the problems outlined so far in a more rigorous and productive way.

I. Representation

Discussions about what to do about philosophy's "women problem" tend to start with the idea of representation. Rarely is it discussed exactly why or how this representation will bring about the required change, however it is often the most visible way to supposedly make progress. Here, we provide a sketch of how best to consider representation within debates about philosophy, and what this means for our understanding of the history of philosophy as well as the discipline today.

There are many different conceptions of representation, particularly in the sphere of political representation. The type of representation we are primarily concerned with is *descriptive representation*: the extent to which a group of people reflect the identities of those they work on behalf of. Our

view is that philosophers, in their pursuit of knowledge and truth, should reflect the diversity of the society they exist within. One argument for this is made well by the political philosopher Anne Phillips (2021) who argues in her recent work that we should be cautious of grounding our arguments for equality on the potential for some tangible benefit, and rather make the case based on the grounds of unqualified justice. Our philosophy departments should be diverse, just as our political representatives should be diverse, not because they necessarily bring about any specific outcomes, but because academia should strive to reflect the diversity of the public it serves. Equal representation is a necessary arrangement and consequence of a just institution. Phillips' argument is therefore that representation is an end in itself, and a necessary one.

We agree with Phillips that representation is an end, and that women's representation should not be contingent on a set of benefits that may or may not arise from increased diversity. This argument alone should be sufficient to make the case for representation. However, where there is evidence for instrumental benefits arising from a representative curriculum and department, we should also make the argument for inclusion on these grounds (Tyson 2018). One example of such benefits comes from the philosopher Katherine Gines who has argued for the importance of the symbolic representation of underrepresented groups within philosophy due to the benefits of role modelling. She writes:

> When Black women see and/or read the scholarship of other Black women in philosophy, it allows the option of becoming a philosopher to enter into their realm of possibilities in very concrete ways. (Gines 2011, 435)

A paper on the impact of same-gender role models of college students also found that women were more positively impacted and inspired by same-gender role models (Lockwood 2006). This is supported by other research that shows having role models that are the same race and gender as a student improves their educational outcomes (Zirkel 2002).

Representation is therefore important, both as an end in itself and as way to achieve a better outcome for the most marginalised in the discipline today. However, it is also in our approach to the history of the discipline

where representation can falter. In many Western philosophy departments, there is a solidified narrative and timeline that constitutes *The* History of Philosophy. Commonly understood as "the canon", these texts set out the history of the discipline through the major philosophers who have been deemed important enough for inclusion. Drawing on the work of Youde and Steele (2008), Owens and Hutchings comment on how these texts

> establish a common set of reference points for disciplinary discussion, form a core part of university curricula, and serve as a crucial pedagogic tool for the socialization of generations of scholars. (Owens and Hutchings 2021, 347)

There have been many rigorous and powerful critiques of the philosophical canon as currently conceived and taught, such as Waithe's (2020, 3) recent evisceration of arguments used to justify the male-dominated canon. She argues that such exclusion is usually rooted in "ineptness or simple bigotry".

Arguments for canon-expansion can be sorted into two broad categories. The first is that a representative canon is necessary as it more accurately reflects history. Second, a more representative canon might bring about certain benefits for students and our society, in adjusting our understanding of philosophy and its history. For the former view, these arguments are rooted in the belief that the canon, as traditionally conceived, is factually inaccurate and that is reason enough for it to change. It frequently omits important contributions from women philosophers and will often ignore all the rich histories of non-Western philosophical traditions. Any set of texts that is meant to illustrate the richness of philosophical history that fails to include significant contributions from these histories is unlikely to be worthy of the classroom.

However, we might also wish to improve representation within the history of philosophy for the benefits it brings to those doing philosophy *today*. In an excellent essay "On Diversifying the Philosophy Curriculum", Táíwò (1993) raises the importance of what we deprive students of, when we deny them a well-rounded education, which should include the rich histories of non-Western philosophical traditions as part of a core curriculum. Critics of these ideas often argue that those from underrepresented groups are

underrepresented simply because they have not made sufficiently important contributions to these histories to warrant their inclusion. The extensive scholarship on women philosophers is sufficient to rebut this argument, but even if it was the case that women's contributions are not as rich as their counterparts (which it plainly isn't), there exists a strong argument that teaching about the existence of these women will also serve the same purpose of providing intellectual role models and dispelling the myth that to be a great philosopher one must be a white man. Philosophers such as Hypatia of Alexandria may not have published their own philosophical works, but her life as a philosopher, teacher and mathematician is fascinating, and can offer valuable lessons about the lives of ancient philosophers, the challenges that arise in documenting their lives, the role of philosophers in society, and reclaiming and contextualising the contested legacies of notable women from history.

We create the history of philosophy in what and how we teach, and who is considered both as a philosopher and as relevant will also shape the future of philosophy. This is articulated well by May (2015) when discussing the role of citation in developing a history of philosophy—"Citational practices (…) offer a way to mark collectivity, delineate historical precedence, and claim legacies of struggle" (2015, 55). Who we include in our teaching is a choice, even for those who claim objectivity and neutrality.

One of the major challenges with discussions of representation is whether representation is, by its nature, essentializing. On the one hand, if we argue that representation is important due to the diversity of experience and perspectives it brings, we risk suggesting that there is a shared experience and imply that one woman can speak for many. In reality, we know that women's experiences and ideas are highly diverse. As Mary Warnock notes at the beginning of her collection on women philosophers, "In the end, I have not found any clear 'voice' shared by women philosophers" (1996: xlvii). However, if we agree that women do not share a distinctive perspective, why does their gender matter at all? The challenge is that we already do not focus on their work, as demonstrated in both our reading lists and data from publications. The common experience of women philosophers is one of being excluded from philosophy precisely because of their gender. To remove this from the narrative altogether in the name of a "gender blind" philosophy only further compounds this problem.

Questions of the value of representation open up difficult puzzles about the purpose and role of philosophy in our society, but if philosophy is meant to reflect and serve a diverse public, then it fails to do so in its current form.

So, what does this richer look at representation tell us about what ought to be done? First, it demonstrates that students and staff asking for more representation both in reading lists and departments have many ways to make their case, and those that have been resistant to this change ought to listen. We should be interrogating the content of our courses, both who is included in our existing courses and department structures. Representation as an ideal requires us not just to include tokens in our reading lists, but a re-evaluation of whose ideas have been prioritised and how this has shaped our contemporary understanding of philosophy. Similarly, while gender-balanced departments may go some way to addressing representational challenges, we need to consider whether the substantive representation of women's concerns are also being prioritised within courses, as well as in our work structures. We have seen in the data on journal publications that representation is poor in many aspects of philosophy, so this commitment needs to be extended to how philosophy is evaluated, how philosophers from underrepresented groups are supported and encouraged to apply to top journals, and how early-career researchers can be helped to maximise their chances to receiving secure academic posts.

Most importantly however, we need to be open to radical solutions to increasing representation, or we risk philosophy becoming further removed in its image and in its content from the realities of a diverse public. We should evaluate how women philosophers are compensated for additional labour, including role-modelling work and any pastoral work that disproportionately falls on them. In the interim, departments may want to reconsider how performance and progression is assessed, recognising women will likely face more implicit and explicit barriers when working in a discipline that is less likely to view them as intellectual equals. Saul and Holroyd (2018) discuss a number of measures that have already been taken to tackle implicit bias, including universal anonymization, affirmative action programmes, training for academic and administrative staff, and much more. These ideas are illustrative, and many will disagree with them, but there is a need to provoke a conversation that considers more radical solutions because the current pace of change is too slow for many

women who have already been burnt out and disillusioned with whether philosophy is a place for them. We do a disservice to future generations of philosophers as well as those currently working in the field if we do not consider how to speed up what is an unjustifiably unequal discipline. All of this, however, is contingent on an approach that recognises the multiple disadvantages that many women face, and gender alone will be insufficient as a domain for radical change.

II. Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality has become a touchstone for much contemporary feminism, as theorists and activists attempt to make their politics more expansive and inclusive. Some dismiss intersectionality as a form of "identity politics" which causes fractures within the social class of women. However, the concept instead highlights the compounding and layering ways in which oppression and domination can manifest. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), who first coined the term, discussed how Black women are treated by the law. Their simultaneous experiences of being Black and women changes the way in which they are marginalised by others. Intersectional marginalisation and oppression are not merely a question of racial oppression *plus* patriarchal oppression. It is a compounded and unique form of the two. The history of intersectionality predates the introduction of the term by Crenshaw. For instance, the Combahee River Collective (1977)—a Black feminist lesbian group created in the 1970s—argued for an "integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking".[8]

Intersectionality is also a rallying call against viewing feminism purely from the perspective of middle-class white women. Concerns raised by powerful white women—such as a desire to enter the workforce—have not always translated to the patriarchal and racist oppression of Black women. Black women had been (forcibly) included in the workforce for many years, often serving rich white women and their families. "Mainstream" feminism (white feminism) therefore often fails to serve the most marginalised women, because it is framed and driven by the concerns of

[8] Patricia Hill Collins argues (1995, 492) that "interlocking" and "intersectional" refer to the macro and micro-level phenomena. This is further discussed in Carastathis (2014).

white women. As Amia Srinivasan argues in *The Right to Sex,*

> the central insight of intersectionality is that any liberation movement—feminism, anti-racism, the labour movement—that focuses only on what all members of the relevant group (women, people of colour, the working class) have in common is a movement that will best serve those members of the group who are least oppressed. (Srinivasan 2021, 17)

More perniciously, mainstream feminism often fails to even attempt to find something that all members of an oppressed group have in common. Instead, they simply take the white experience as universal.

Today, intersectionality is best-described as "a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool" (Carbado et al. 2013, 303). It is therefore not simply a tool for theorising and thinking about oppression. It is also a specific disposition that we ought to adopt both inside and outside our work. As Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays and Tomlinson recently put it "intersectionality is what intersectionality does" (2013, 312). Intersectionality is therefore not only intellectual but *operational.* There have been some recent worries raised that intersectionality has lost its force after coming into the mainstream. Many women and feminist societies now describe themselves as "intersectional" but fail to put this into practice: "labelling something 'intersectional' does not make it so" (Collins et al. 2021, 692–93). Some, for instance, pay lip-service to Crenshaw's paper, but do not engage with the rich history of intersectional thinking by women of colour. Some like Collins highlight the need for focus on intersectionality's *critical* aim writing that "critical analysis does not only criticize, but it also references ideas and practices that are essential, needed, or critical for something to happen" (2021, 691). We therefore ought to avoid a depoliticized version of intersectionality and remember its ability to critically interrogate concepts, practices, and ideas. In other words, "if intersectionality is to have a promising future in feminist theory, its intellectual history must be engaged with rigor, integrity, and attentive-ness to the theoretical and political aims which originally animated it" (Carastathis 2014, 312).

A non-intersectional approach to the question of women in philosophy will therefore best serve those women who need the least support. That is, if

we focus only on the "pure" question of women, without considering other forms of oppression, we fail to serve and support other, more marginalised, women in philosophy. We therefore hope that the value of intersectionality is clear. It helps to shift the focus of concern, such that multiple forms of oppression within the category of women can be heard and addressed. There are several benefits to this view. It allows feminist theorists to critically and practically assess the messy reality of the social world more clearly: it accounts for the ways in which oppression and domination intersect and shape one another. It also allows our approaches and work to become more inclusive, since we are no longer concerned with the totality of shared experience.

There are (at least) two ways in which we can think about intersectionality in the context of women in philosophy: how it affects women and marginalised people in our departments and how it affects our research. Here, we are going to focus on the experience of individuals. It should be clear that focusing on the concerns of white, powerful women in philosophy will obscure concerns raised by other groups. For instance, writing on her experience in an Australian philosophy department as a woman of colour, Tracy Llanera wrote the following:

> On more than one occasion I have mentioned to other academics that being a woman of color makes me anxious about my chances in the job market, since there are so few philosophers in the Australian region with a similar profile. More than once, I've received dismissive retorts from white women to the tune of "well, it's hard for all women". (Llanera 2019, 378)

This kind of response to women of colour in our discipline is not only offensive, it also fails at the level of fact. It is hard for women in philosophy, we know that. But the difficulty that women face in the discipline is not distributed evenly. Far from it. The fact that "it's hard for all women" does not help us to think about how it can be even harder for certain women, and how we might compound that injustice by brushing it aside. That is, focusing on the "woman question" as a singular and universal issue can blinker us from appreciating the inequality *between* women in philosophy as well. When considering the importance of including more women (as

demonstrated in the last section), we also need to ensure that this inclusion is not singular. For instance, class is an often-missed axis of exclusion in philosophy. Very few people from working class backgrounds take philosophy degrees and even fewer progress to senior positions. Focusing on the woman question *alone* may obscure how difficult, and different, philosophy is for those without financial resources and family wealth. This does not mean that the "woman problem" should be ignored. But in attempting to address it, we should be careful not to replicate the same exclusion that we seek to overcome.

We lack reliable data on how intersectional oppression can and does affect women in philosophy. As noted earlier, one of the core contributions of the concept of intersectionality is to give voice to the *different* forms of hardship and oppression faced by members of the same gender. Black women do not only face *more* hardship than white women, but the challenges also that they are face are of a different kind. Most papers on women's status in philosophy journals are not intersectional and therefore do not capture the distinctive ways in which women of colour, queer women, or disabled women can be excluded from academic life. Likewise, most reports of how many women are employed in philosophy departments do not tell us how many of these women are white. We already know that it is the vast majority: we do not need to wait for this data before starting to think through solutions and ways forward. But lacking this intersectionality in our narrative often means that we obscure what the state of play really is.

One area which philosophy is particularly failing to address is the inclusion of queer and trans voices in the discipline. This is in spite of the fact that we know that trans women are often subject to hatred, offensive language, exclusion and marginalisation from their own colleagues and students. Many young trans students have chosen to leave the discipline because of this hostile environment. Robin Dembroff (2020) calls this philosophy's "transgender" trash-fire. Some of this stems from ignorance. But part of this exclusion may arise from philosophy's methodology in treating the question of whether trans women 'count' as women as just another interesting area of discussion, rather than something which deeply affects people's lives. For instance, Dembroff argues that philosophers often use folk intuitions or appeals to 'common sense' when thinking about trans rights, rather than reading or listening to queer and trans voices. But of course, if 'common

sense' is generated against the background of marginalisation, then these resources simply carry that injustice forward. Talia-Mae Bettcher argues in "When Tables Speak" that those considering the metaphysics of gender often forget that trans women are (or ought to be) part of the discussion of what constitutes trans inclusion. As Bettcher writes:

> We're here. In the room. And we've suffered from life-long abuse. I've helped a friend die of AIDS, fending off the nurses who misgendered her, watching in horror as the priest invalidated her entire life at her funeral by reducing her to a man. I've been personally assaulted in public to prove that I was a man. I've had a friend trans-bashed. And as this beating was gang-related, she then lost her home. I've had a friend stripped by police-officers, forced to parade back and forth while they ridiculed and harassed her. So please understand that this is a little bit personal. (Bettcher 2018)

We need to better understand how different forms of oppression are compounded in philosophy departments and academia more generally. Some forms of philosophy are not taken seriously *as philosophy.* At the beginning of *The Racial Contract,* Charles Mills noted that white philosophers set up disciplinary boundaries that count these people and ideas as incompatible with "serious philosophy" (1997, 4). As Kristie Dotson argues in "How Is This Paper Philosophy?", the disciplinary practices in philosophy bar diverse voices from being viewed as valuable. She writes (2012, 6): "the environment of professional philosophy, particularly in the U.S., bears symptoms of a culture of justification, which creates a difficult working environment for many diverse practitioners". We should not, then, simply focus on the number of women doing philosophy, but what kind of philosophy we are all doing, reading, and encouraging (see also Superson 2011). Collins (2021, 692) argues that dialogues among subordinated groups are an important way to establish this new knowledge and practice. But such dialogues can be difficult to develop if you are consistently told that the kind of philosophy you're interested in "is not really philosophy".

All of this speaks to the need for something bigger and bolder in our approach to women in philosophy. A commitment to intersectionality

requires that we do not stop at minimal inclusion but must push to make philosophy better for everyone.

Conclusions

One clear conclusions to be drawn from all this is that there is much work left to be done. Although there has been some progress over the last few decades, it has been slow. This slowness has prevented us from properly tackling the more pernicious forms of exclusion in our discipline. Instead, we have been aiming for the bare minimum standard of inclusion. As we pointed out earlier, philosophers have at their disposal many rich theoretical resources to be better when trying to understand the experiences of women in philosophy. Properly interrogating the concepts that we are already relying upon, we believe, points us in a more radical direction. For instance, once we understand the value of representation, paying lip-service to inclusion rather than taking radical steps towards it shows itself to be unacceptable. What is most frustrating is that much of what we have said here is not new. Women have been arguing for more valuable (and intersectional) inclusion for many years (Haslanger 2008; Wylie 2011; Waithe 2015; Tyson 2018; Witt 2006; Llanera 2019). A central issue, then, is the lack of attention paid to the important voices of these women. A shift in attention to something more aspirational is required.

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