

AVERSION TO REASON

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN OF PHILOSOPHY?

Why are there so few women in philosophy, especially in its upper echelons? This text looks at two possible explanations that are not mutually exclusive. First, at the structural reasons for why women may be averse to pursuing a path in academic philosophy; and second, whether there exists integral sexism in philosophy that devalues the feminine and sours the love of wisdom that otherwise entices all students of philosophy.

By Oda K.S. Davanger

It is no secret that philosophy is a male-dominated field. And unlike the STEM-subjects, there have been few institutionalized efforts at improving the imbalance. A report from the *Philosophical Gourmet* in 2015 found that women comprised only 23,4 percent of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in the top 50 graduate programs in philosophy (Hussein 2016). Jennifer Saul, professor of philosophy at the University of Sheffield, admitted that although research has gone into the subject, the reason for the underrepresentation of women in philosophy is not known. In other words, women's presumptive aversion to philosophy is the greatest mystery. But women's interest in the field is well documented, especially because the decline in female representation worsens the higher up the academic ladder we look.

In this text I look first at structural reasons for the underrepresentation of women in philosophy, as well as a brief overview of the 2019 public debate in Norway on the representation of women in philosophy. In the second part of the text, I investigate whether disciplinarian elements such as the reason/emotion dichotomy is to blame for what I satirically call "women's aversion to reason".

PART I. THE STRUCTURES

Where Have the Women Gone?

Amazingly, some of the most critically astute philosophy colleagues simply accept that the philosophical canon they are served must be comprised of the best texts by the best

thinkers across the time-space continuum of humanity. As if they have no regard for the biases, the accidents and historical coincidences, not to mention the political agendas that have greatly influenced the canon. Not the very least, as if they have no assessment of the need for constant critical revision of the canon based not only on what parts of the history of philosophy we used to know, but what we should know. If the reader takes one thing from this text, it should be: the canon is not unamendable. In fact, it has been amended already countless times throughout history and different schools of thought.

It is important to note that as long as there has been philosophy, there have been women in philosophy. However, the 'canon of kings' in the history of Western philosophy provides us with images of genius loners who produced the world's greatest ideas in solitude. This canon issues a false narrative that represents the history of philosophy as lacking of women's contributions. Women have not only participated in philosophical discourse all along, but they have also been hugely influential on and in serious dialogue with several of the well-canonized texts. But the canon moreover suggests that there were no women philosophers who—for a variety of reasons—produced any of the world's greatest ideas. The typical response to this gaping hole is usually something like: "Women were prohibited from participating in philosophy due to sexism and discrimination in the past", and furthermore, that this discrimination no longer occurs, evidenced by the presence



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of contemporary women philosophers, so there is no need to change the canon nor be attuned to gendered representation when forming the contemporary canon.

This defense is faulty on two levels. Firstly, although it is correct that women suffered sexism in the form of academic and intellectual exclusion throughout the history of Western philosophical thought, the absence of women philosophers is exaggerated by the canon. Women were much more a part of public intellectual development than our most powerful historical narratives reflect. Second, although it is true that women suffered a greater extent of *formal* institutional exclusion in the past, women as a group are still not met as being the equals of men in intellectual circles. There may be several reasons for this, such as women's extra care duties in the home, that diminish their image as thinkers or simply take time away from the focus and time that is needed to write academic texts, or the traditional expectation placed on women to perform emotional labor for others. However, this is the case for many academic fields. Specifically, for the field of philosophy, where argumentation is the name of the game, women start out with a disadvantage.

The idea of the classic philosopher-genius is the outwardly humble and reputable man who, when challenged, is ready to fiercely deliver 'intellectual shade' and employ clever undermining tactics just shy of *ad hominem* to shame opponents for 'ridiculous' positions. Both genders are rewarded for "good behavior" in line with gender norms, and punished for "bad behavior" in line with gender norms. In anything remotely aggressive, such as many of the often-used argumentative techniques in the discipline of philosophy, the allowances for behavior are more limited for women. When they break this code, they very often receive social sanctions—whether subtly or overtly. I cannot stress this too many times: While displaying the same tactics, such as using master suppression techniques—speaking continuously, asking several questions at once, interrupting, speaking loudly, laughing, eye-rolling, turning away, ridiculing—a man is perceived (by people irrespective of gender) as a clever argumentative combatant, whereas a woman's assertiveness is nothing shy of unbecoming.

On the 'Silencing of Women' in Mary Beard's *Women and Power: A Manifesto* (2017), Beard makes explicit the type of subtle behavior that women have struggled to pinpoint or articulate. These include interrupting, talking over someone, looking blank when they speak, referring to previous male speakers but not female ones, misattributing to a man ideas that were first proposed by a wo-

man, turning what a woman says into a joke—by willful misinterpretation or by bringing out an improbable, but absurd implication, attacking something a woman has said not at the time, but later, so that it is harder to respond, urging women to talk, but creating an aggressive or awkward atmosphere that makes it unpleasant to do so. The difficulty related to calling out this type of behavior is called *hermeneutic injustice*, where developing a vocabulary and language to describe the events happening is crucial to addressing those events and even explaining them to yourself.

Everyone publicly supports, or so we can hope, the idea of the 'proud feminist woman who claims her own space'. But most popularly acclaimed is the woman not too feminist, but just a little feminist without really saying or knowing it. But dare she become too assertive, employ the same rhetoric tactics as her male peers, or do so without displaying an apologetically curious or submissively careful demeanor, she's fair game. Or she's simply *too much*. Either she's put in her place, or she's ignored and not included as an authority on equal par with her peers. She's not taken seriously. This tendency is typically exaggerated if the 'proud feminist' is parlaying an overtly feminist stance. In other words, in such a competitive field as philosophy where typically masculine forms of argumentation are valued, women today still face covert discrimination in the form of social sanctions when acting in violation of continuously strict gender norms, and this even in an academic sphere that claims to value the argument, not the style or the deliverer of argumentation.

Why is Representation Important?

In philosophy, as in society at large, diverse representation is important. According to an analysis of democratic representation by Pamela Paxton and Kristopher Velasco (2018), we can distinguish between formal, descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation. *Formal* representation are about legal rights. *Descriptive* representation is whether the social group in question, in this case women, are taking advantage of their opportunities and whether they are represented in numbers similar to their percentage in the population. In philosophy at the University of Oslo, there is a majority of women interested in philosophy in BA and introductory courses, but women are in great minority among the professors and associate professors. From using representative identity as a measuring tool, it is apparent that the pipeline theory, namely that the representative proportion you start out with in the beginning parallels the representative proportion you end up

with, does not apply. *Substantive* representation measures whether those in positions of power speak for and act to support issues women face in philosophy, even if the case that formal and descriptive representation is adequate. In other words, substantive representation concerns whether the institution or its leaders and those with the professorships speak for and act to support challenges that particularly women face in academia in general and the field of philosophy in particular. And finally, *symbolic* representation concerns whether women in philosophy feel that they are effectively represented—that the institution and professorate is receptive to them as a group. These different kinds of representation illustrate why formal representation is not on its own adequate to ensure or even promote adequate representation of gender and minority diversity.

Diverse representation is important for several reasons: Firstly, it is an epistemological question. As standpoint theory and feminist empiricism have shown, having people viewing the world from similar perspectives creating theory together risks leaving out important elements of the human existential experience that are not immediately apparent to them. Increasing diversity in knowledge production can provide more data points (to use a technical term) to provide more accurate results. A diverse group of thinkers will challenge perspectives that mistakenly take some experiences to be universal expressions of humanity, which means that people marked by identities of difference such as women and minorities can contribute with perspectives and ways of knowing and being in the world that challenge dominant narratives.

Secondly, a university with a diverse number of philosophers can appeal to a larger and more diverse set of students, which will also contribute to the epistemic value of their studies. Different professors will see different kinds of promise in different kinds of students, and vice versa. Different professors will relate to perspectives of discrimination, racism, sexism and alienation depending among other things on their own personal experiences, and include these perspectives as important philosophical challenges to philosophical questions. Miranda Fricker's book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (2007) was an important contribution to the field of applied epistemology that dealt with questions on how epistemic injustice typically befalls marginalized social groups. For example, in the form of *testimonial injustice*, where experiences are not believed or taken seriously typically correlated to identities of difference. Alternatively, in the form of *hermeneutic injustice*, where it is difficult to express or understand marginalization or one's experiences

of marginalization because there is no adequate language or conceptual tools, or because one is lacking those fundamental tools to do so.

This point responds to a question some readers may be asking themselves, namely: Why does representation even matter, when it is the material itself—the philosophy—that matters, and not from whom they learn it? In principle, faculty members advocate for all students, not simply those that are marked by visual identities similar to themselves. In practice, however, those least likely to advocate for interests of groups are those not of the group themselves. Those more likely to advocate for the presence of women in the department and philosophical topics that is relevant to the experiences of many women are, in fact, women faculty.

Thirdly, having a more diverse syllabus will challenge the deep-seated beliefs many bear within them about the irrelevance of women and minorities for the intellectual development of Western thought. It may also affect the way women are often dismissed or deemed inappropriate in heated philosophic debates. Mostly, however, feminist philosophers hope that including female and non-white/non-Western philosophers in the syllabus will make apparent and provide open, contemporary challenges to all the sexist and racist attitudes philosophers have said about women for the past 2500 years. Should we simply assume that philosophers are reasonable, upstanding fellows who have too much intellectual prowess to be affected by the subtle dismissive rhetoric of Aristotle or Kant? Or better yet, should we assume that they are immune to the subtle oppressive mechanisms along identity axes in today's society at large? If philosophers are interested in human relations as it is relevant for ethics, politics, epistemology, metaphysics, or even logic, shouldn't inequality between human beings also be reckoned with? As Robin May Schott argues in "Feminism and the History of Philosophy": "Approaches to history of philosophy that exclude feminist questions are themselves ideological, both because they are epistemologically flawed and because they contribute to the justification of social relations of dominance" (2007, 58).

The institutional presence of feminist philosophy and philosophy of race is important for whether students feel the material relates to their experiences. Does the philosophy they learn speak to them, and does it intellectually reflect questions that are meaningful about their lives? Are their perspectives and questions taken seriously in philosophy? If feminist philosophy and philosophy of race are included as important philosophical areas at their univer-

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sity, the chances that students from an increased variety of social groups find meaning in philosophy will be greater.

The University of Oslo employs few women philosophers, but it has some. At present, none of these philosophers do work specifically in feminist philosophy (much less the philosophy of race)—in what is supposedly one of the most gender equal countries in the world. Feminist philosophy is often marginalized institutionally, even snidely ridiculed for being unobjective or unphilosophical, a field one indeed could display familiarity with, but not devote to one's area of expertise. Although less popular among the faculty, the perspectives feminist philosophy provides seems to be more popular with students. Feminist philosophy manages to include gender and discriminatory perspectives in the grand philosophical questions (and vice versa) in ways that make these courses especially popular among female students. "They always ask me where the female philosophy students are," said philosophy professor Antje Gimmler, coordinator of a masters-level summer school in feminist philosophy at Aalborg University in 2017. "Well, I will show you all to them—here you are!" She said this to a room of 30 philosophy master students, almost all women, having travelled from cities near and far, some on their own dime, to participate in a week-long intensive extra-curricular course on feminist philosophy.

Public Debate

In 2019, a renewed interest appeared in the Norwegian media about the exclusion of female philosophers from the philosophical canon. What sparked the discussion was the publication of a new textbook anthology for the obligatory philosophy subject for all university students (the *Examen philosophicum*) with remarkably few women philosophers included, and the somewhat embarrassing hiring of 10 male university lecturers for a simultaneous opening of 10 positions in philosophy at NTNU. In an interview, professor of philosophy at NTNU Roe Fremstedal said that the whole point with the new textbook was to change and modernize this module, whereas the authors hold that the textbook has to reflect the current "national consensus" of canonical philosophers (Schei, 29.9.2019). The motivation for modernizing does not seem to be altogether different from the point made by associate professor in philosophy at the University of Oslo Ingvild Torsen in an interview with Khrono: "What kind of questions asked is important. Do students recognize experiences, descriptions and questions in the questions asked?" (Schei, 16.9.2019). Her point builds on the acknowledgement that the world treats men, women and

minorities differently, and the idea that a more diversely represented curriculum will to a better extent represent the diverse experiences among the students. Others have highlighted the need to present the students a curriculum and faculty that is representative enough to avoid painting a picture that there are no women philosophers good enough to be read or hired (Ibid.). Whether or not you as a woman or member of a minority can see yourself having a future in this discipline is important for whether you pursue it or not.

NTNU associate professor at the institute for social work Øyvind Eikrem argues in contrast that philosophy as a discipline should avoid being gendered by these feminist requests (Nilsen 9.9.2019). To this, and the stance articulated by Dagfinn Døhl Dybvig, philosopher at NTNU, that there does exist a "national consensus", NTNU professor of philosophy Solveig Bøe argued that a discussion community without women is indeed a gendered community (Schei, 29.9.2019). Likewise, doctor of philosophy at UiO Hilde Vinje argued that blindly accepting the canon that has been handed down to you is a sign of lacking self-reflection in the field. "Philosophy as a discipline is not only about passing on those thinkers one was presented to, but also about thinking critically through the premises for who one passes on and how", she said to *Klassekampen* (Nilsen 2019). The different voices in the debate disagree on whether the female philosophers were there at all, or whether they have been properly accredited in both historical and contemporary documents. They disagree about whether we should trust the reigning canon, or whether we should re-evaluate it in light of the international work done to "rediscover" presently forgotten but historically important female philosophers.

Nothing New

The arguments and the request to increase diversity among professors, lecturers and on the syllabus is far from new. In fact, veterans will divulge that every so often, every couple of years, there will be a renewed surge of impetus to make changes along gender lines. In 2018, a reading group was organized by eager students at the University of Oslo under the unpaid guidance of professor Tove Pettersen to learn more about women philosophers in the history of philosophy (taking on this role was part of Pettersen's academic activism). Efforts were put in place to convert the reading group to a course or a half-course. This application was refused, despite faculty competence and eager student interest. The interested students were almost all women philosophy students, with a few honorable male

exceptions from other disciplines. However, the reading group was successfully introduced in the fall of 2020 as an accredited course in the Centre for Gender Research.

In 2009–2010 (11.12.2009–19.2.2010), eager students at the University of Oslo organized an exhibition on both historical and contemporary women philosophers at the University Library (Galleri Sverdrup). The exhibition “Filosofiens annet kjønn” (Philosophy’s Second Sex) presented 120 female philosophers, received many visitors and a lot of media attention, both nationally and internationally. Several other institutions requested to borrow the exhibition, and from 2010 to 2014 the exhibition was shown several different places including Nordland Akademi for Kunst, Vitenskap i Melbu, Lund University and Uppsala University. The exhibition explicitly highlighted that gender has long been a philosophical issue. Canonical figures such as Aristotle and Aquinas described women as incomplete men (by implication, incomplete humans), and have been greatly influential for the canon following them. The exhibition also highlighted the diverse questions female philosophers have written about.

In 2015, the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas at the University of Oslo received a formal application to relocate the exhibition permanently to the department building, but the application was declined. The exhibition, along with the attention, was promptly forgotten as the students involved graduated, and new students enrolled. A few portraits of female philosophers remain, having been color printed on sheets of paper and taped to the walls of a breakroom for students, confusing students as to their origin. Some have even taken to printing and hanging portraits of male philosophers like Aristotle.

It is important to tell these stories so that the resurgence of the question of female philosophers in syllabi and canons never seems new. Women have been active participants in philosophy all along, and the request to include them canonically have continuously been voiced for decades—probably centuries. And these efforts keep being forgotten. Rumor has it that the long-time lone female philosopher on the syllabus of the *Examen philosophicum*, namely Simone de Beauvoir, had to be forcefully bargained in by a top female philosopher who otherwise refused to approve the course—standing alone, “making trouble” and risking the dissent of her male colleagues. That not more has been done from those with institutional power to genuinely change the male dominance in philosophical representation after all this time is... puzzling.

Texts Less Travelled

In her article “Texts Less Travelled” (2017), Tove Pettersen, who is no longer a professor at the institute of philosophy, but has relocated to the Gender Studies department at UiO, argues that texts written by female philosophers both now and in the vast history of philosophy have “travelled far less” than men’s writing. Studies of citation show that in philosophical history as well as today, “works by women are cited proportionally far less than works by men” (2017, 5). Unfortunately for the discipline, Pettersen finds that it is not philosophy’s “institutional and discursive structures” that prevent women’s texts from making it into the canon, for male texts that dispute other canonized texts or transverse genres or explore emotionality are included. It is, more probably, “because women have written them” (Ibid., 22), and because, as I have attempted to show in this text, that women philosophers are received—in general—with less authority and taken less seriously. Not only is that factor unjust in itself, but it is also an injustice for philosophy as a discipline because it is a discipline principally based on the originality of ideas and soundness of argument.

Then why do women report that they do not feel they belong in philosophy (Gordon-Roth & Kendrik 2015, 366)? One theory posits that the ideal philosopher (the male genius-trope) is “sustained by the canonical philosopher’s portrayal of women as emotional rather than rational beings” (Ibid., 5). This connotational link is far from innocuous. Femeness has been associated, at least since Pythagoras if not earlier, with the particular in opposition to the masculine universal. If we follow this line of thought all the way through, as Pettersen does, it “actually makes the term ‘woman philosopher’ an oxymoron” (Ibid., 17). As an example to illustrate this association with women as particular and men as universal, Pettersen contrasts Descartes’ meditations in diary form examining the particularities of his armchair and his fireplace with Beauvoir’s *L’Invitée*. For Descartes, the particularities explored are analogous with universal questions, whereas for Beauvoir, her discussion of “classical philosophical questions such as determinism and free will, bad faith, the conflict between reason and emotions, and the limits of individual freedom” are for the reviewer, interpreted merely as a reveal of the complications in her romantic relationship to Jean-Paul Sartre. “Instead of being read as discussing philosophical questions,” Pettersen notes, Beauvoir is “interpreted as fretting over personal romantic love” (Ibid., 18). Therefore, perhaps the question should not be why women do not feel they belong in philosophy, but why

women should stay in a discipline that does not adequately acknowledge or engage with their contributions?

Although Pettersen argues the fault is not integral to the discipline, I posit that there is an argument to be made for the concept (conceptualization) of reason and its pedestal position in philosophy that hinders the gender balance in philosophy. Consider the idea that there is something gendered about philosophy itself. Not, as usually is the case for the adjective, a question of feminization, but masculinization. How might philosophy be intrinsically sexist? Dare we suggest philosophy is not upheld to clean, objective standards? Dare we suggest that philosophy's proudest tool might be sexist too? I am referring, of course, to the tool of language.

How might language be sexist if sexism is an attitude, some may ask. But sexism is much more than an attitude. As any gender studies bachelor's student will tell you: Sexism is structural. As it happens, so is language. To further complicate matters, the concept of reason has travelled through eons of contexts, languages and times (that often reinforce its historical and present connotation to the masculine and sometimes not). Nevertheless, reason is rarely examined as a concept itself—it is often used to justify a universal trait among human beings.

PART II. THE DISCIPLINE

Reason and Emotion

Rationality legitimizes the ranking of humans above nature and animals, and in many canonical philosopher's texts it is also used to rank men above women. Reason is a feature, says Aristotle, that is unique for humans, but that not all humans possess, which is why there is a ranking among humans too. In *Generation of Animals*, he writes: “[T]he woman is as it were an impotent male, for it is through a certain incapacity that the female is female” (GA I.20, 728a). This metaphysics of justified hierarchy, which also excludes animals and plants from ethics, is plainly androcentric and sexist for all its merits. What feminist ethics, environmental ethics and animal ethics have in common is that they argue to expand what is morally relevant for ethics (see for instance Plumwood 1993). The tension in question surrounds rationality and *how* inclusion in the moral domain should be justified.

Therefore, one very important argument for feminists in the 17th century has been to argue that woman is equipped with the same rationality as men, which has contributed to the popularity of the mind-body dualism. With this dualism, one could then argue that whatever possible physical differences between men and women in the body,

the mind was equally rational and therefore that women were deserving of the same moral and political standing as men. As a consequence, women's rationality, as being on par with men, legitimizes the consideration of women as moral agents and their inclusion in the moral domain. However, not all humans have this level of rationality and by extension the capacity to make sound moral judgment (children, sick people, people in a coma, etc.). Care ethics, for instance, is a novel tradition that looks beyond the capacity for reason as a requisite for moral standing. Granted, it has been a feminist move to argue that women equal the rational capacities of men. However, the question remains to investigate whether “reason” is sexist not only in distribution, but in conception.

In the canonical texts in the history of philosophy, reason is defined in an oppositional relation to things such as subjectivity, emotion, senses, particularity, flesh, even irrationality and hysteria. As with countless other concepts that we aim to define *positively*, they are perhaps more successfully defined *negatively*, by demarcating and limiting the scope of the grasp of the concept. In the case of reason, the oppositional things are connected metaphorically to the feminine, and the *positive* descriptors such as objectivity, universality, abstractedness and bodiless (mentality) are connected metaphorically to the masculine. For those who presume to know what reason is, an investigation or a genealogy of the term might complicate matters.

To demonstrate what I mean, I draw on Phyllis Rooney's article “Gendered Reason: Sex Metaphor and Conceptions of Reason” (1991), where Rooney investigates reason's genealogy of metaphors to explain that the term is gendered (or raced). From her genealogical attempt to understand reason, she concludes: “we hardly know what reason is” (Rooney 1991, 96). Reason has been understood, she writes,

in terms of images, metaphors, and allegories that implicitly or explicitly involve an exclusion or denigration of some element that is cast as “feminine,” where that element would typically be something like body, nature, passion, instinct, sense or emotion (Rooney 1991, 77).

By analyzing several historical metaphors explaining or invoking reason in a gendered contrast to emotion in canonical text, Rooney posits that our concept of reason is gendered and that we depend on this gendered connotation to grasp reason. She analyzes the uses of ‘reason’ by prominent and influential philosophers such as Plato,

Pythagoras, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Rousseau, Locke, Kant, and Hegel and holds that our understanding of reason is not separate from the gendered metaphors they use to describe reason. In all cases, reason is described with impartiality, neutrality, abstraction and universality. It commonly refers to the “faculty or process by means of which we gain ‘proper’ knowledge or truth” (Ibid., 78), and contrasted to feminized and lesser things in order to establish what reason *is* (Ibid., 86). Often the successful use of reason involves “some form of denigration, extrusion, domination, or control of the [feminine], with related images of battle or struggle not uncommon” (Ibid., 91). The struggle is usually about separating reason as a cognitive faculty from other mental or bodily activity to achieve clarity or truer knowledge, whereas sometimes the argument isn’t that men are more rational, but nonetheless have a better capacity to subsume irrational or unreasonable activity. Similarly, Robin May Schott finds that “overarching philosophical concepts of reason and objectivity have been gendered as male” (2007, 46). When reason is understood in a dichotomizing relation to emotion (typically), this comparison may seem like it provides clarity, but instead it gives a polarized, dichotomous picture that highlights some qualities about our cognitive operations and suppresses others (Rooney 1991, 88).

In *The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy* (1984), Genevieve Lloyd argues that the “regular juxtaposition of reason and maleness [... is] not a superficial linguistic bias but something that lies deep within our philosophical tradition” (Ibid., 78). Because the idea of reason already is something abstracted and difficult to understand, having been “notoriously intractable for philosophers”, metaphors may have even more power to determine the meaning of a term:

It becomes unclear at certain points which is being used to argue for which: whether the supposed superiority of man to woman is being assumed in order to argue for the “proper” relation of reason to body, passions, and instincts; or whether it is assumed that reason is superior to the passions (and related “feminine” elements), and it is also assumed that males embody reason (or more of it) and females embody unreason (or more of it), and then one infers that man is superior to woman. Or do we have a global fallacy of circular reasoning surfacing in the history of philosophy? (Ibid., 86).

The issue is that our conception of reason is not only—in the attempt to achieve clarity about it—reductive and limited, but that it is formed by a widely shared misogynistic linguistic structure. It dismisses feelings as a way to, or form of, important knowledge or as a moral tool, and implies that women’s experiences are not universal human experiences.

Philosophy then operates with a notion of ‘reason’ that is based on an implied and assumed ‘natural’ and unquestioned gender hierarchy that serves as an affirmation of the value, strength and importance of reason itself. Associations between “Reason, form, knowledge, and maleness” have “permeated what has been thought to be moral knowledge [...and] scientific knowledge” (Held 1990, 323). Whatever has been associated with masculinity has also been associated with legitimacy, unlike whatever has been associated with femininity, which has typically not been regarded as important knowledge. As articulated by Josephine Donovan, scientific neutrality is inadequate in the sense in which it under-privileges that which cannot be “represented in the chosen symbolic language of mathematics”, historically referring to whatever bears feminine associations (Donovan 1990, 66). This privileging of the mathematical, the clear and distinct over the multi-faceted and nuanced, is connected to the forceful ordering of that which in and of itself is not so ordered (Ibid., 67). The implications for our understanding of reason as impartial are serious:

In an essay on her relationship as a philosopher with Reason, Sara Ruddick writes, “For a woman to love Reason was to risk both self-contempt and a self-alienating misogyny” (1989, 5). In light of what we have uncovered so far, her statement is no longer the exaggeration that it might once have seemed to be (Rooney 1991, 95).

Because reason is so important to philosophical thinking, the metaphors present the feminine not only as the radical *other* of reason, but also as something entirely different to philosophical discourse (Ibid., 95). This may very well have consequences for how women philosophers may feel othered, by a concept of reason that relies on a devaluation of the feminine and by the philosophical discipline in general, when it tacitly accepts, reveres and operates with a sexist ontology.

Are we really wise to assume that we as contemporary philosophers in the “age of equality” are immune to the explicit and implicit misogyny of those we study? Are we

wise to think we are unaffected by the sexism that has been circularly (re-)affirmed for the past 2500 years in the history of Western philosophy? Schott, for example, asks, “should Aristotle’s sexist comments give rise to a gendered interpretation of his metaphysical views?”, in particular the hierarchical relation between form and matter (2007, 49). Form and matter provide a conceptual framework that informs most of Aristotle’s philosophy, so there is a lot at stake in the question as to whether one can “merely remove Aristotle’s theory of sex difference from the rest of his philosophy, [if] it expresses social values that become the basis for a metaphysics” (Ibid.). Similarly, she points out to Aquinas’ ideal of reason as gendered, and argues that the important question is less whether neutrally specified ideas of rationality apply to women, and more whether these ideals themselves are gendered (Ibid., 51).

In an article “Skjønne og gode handlinger: To Kant-perspektiver på moralen” (1999) [“Beautiful and good actions: Two Kant-perspectives on morality”; my translation] the first female philosophy professor in Norway, Else Wiestad, examines gendered philosophy in Immanuel Kant’s division between two moral dimensions: a male moral of duty and a female ethics of natural inclination and taste. Like Rooney, Wiestad is also concerned about Kant’s gendered language to explain morality. His difference between legality and morality is based on this gendering:

Women’s actions are however determined by other motives. She acts out of taste and a natural inclination to do good and avoid evil. These subjective motives, which spring out of an originally good orientation, can through education be gently formed so that the woman becomes a morally developed person. She prefers right over wrong actions because the right ones are sensed to be beautiful and the wrong as ugly. From this she can be said to be capable of acting morally correct and beautifully, but not morally good (Wiestad 1999, 161; my translation).

Women can act in accordance with moral virtues, but without being morally virtuous in the same way that men can. Because Kant (and many others) have viewed emotion as unpredictable and subjective, emotions have been excluded from moral deliberation, which instead is directed by principles and what Kant terms the sublimity of men’s rational capacity to subsume their will to principles (freedom) and therefore become moral agents (Marwah 2013, 556). On this view, moral decisions based on emotion is too personal and cannot be universalized in ethics

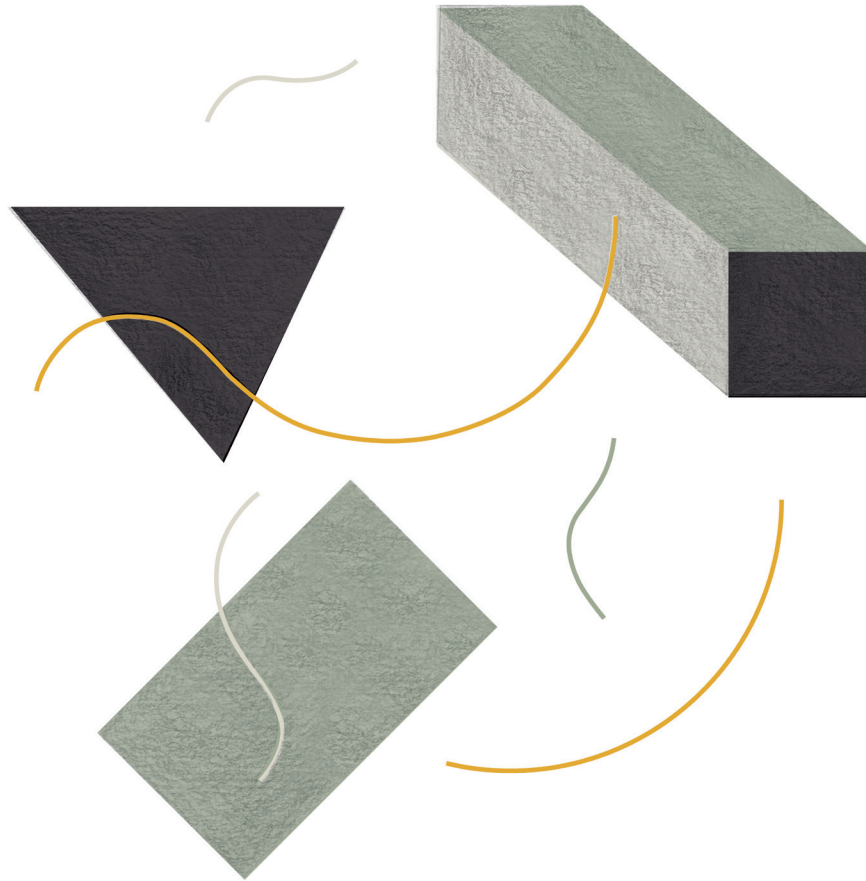
because they cloud one’s moral judgment. Wiestad asks whether Kant’s universality demand is only relevant for half of human kind, which is the case, she argues, if Kant kept a consistent view on gender throughout his life as a philosopher (1999, 160). Wiestad asks, how does his view on gender affect his moral philosophy when he says that “[t]he fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, but it is a beautiful understanding, whereas ours should be a *deep understanding*” (Ibid., 155; Kant 1965, 2, 229).

Along the same vein, Inder S. Marwah writes in “What Nature Makes of Her: Kant’s Gendered Metaphysics” (2013) that even though Kant was a staunch defender of moral egalitarianism, it is necessary for his teleological account of humanity’s perfection that women must adopt an explicitly nonmoral character (i.e. subordinate status) and, that in turn, Kant’s teleology is inextricable from his view of moral agency. Her reading of Kant’s works finds that women are “naturally motivated to push forward the civilization harboring her particular character and virtues, drawing the species toward higher stages of moral development” (2013, 554). In this way, women participate in moral life only *indirectly* (Ibid., 556), by playing a role according to their “natural qualities” in “furthering civilization by curbing the barbaric urges and impulses to which men are naturally prone” (Ibid., 553). Because this feminine moral character—“diametrically opposed to those demanded of rational, autonomous beings”—is necessary for humanity’s development, the sexism inherent in the theory is also necessary for it, Marwah argues.

Wiestad posits that Kant’s gendered division of morality is a partial precursor to contemporary theories of ethics of justice and ethics of care. Perhaps most famously, this includes Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development and Carol Gilligan’s feminist ethics of care, respectively. Whether we admit it or not, Wiestad holds, we are still deeply affected by Kant’s and his successors’ dichotomous thinking, hereunder the gendered metaphysics dividing *genuine virtue* and *adoptive virtues* explored by Marwah. I will leave unresolved the question of whether or not the gendered metaphysics of Aristotle, Aquinas and Kant are intrinsic or extrinsic to their theories. Instead, I urge that we should ask what happens to moral theory if we strive not to operate with a dichotomous understand of reason and emotion, much less a gendered one.

Attempts to Challenge the Reason/Emotion Dichotomy

One of care ethicist Virginia Held’s three most questionable aspects of the bias in the history of ethics from a



feminist point of view, is “the split between reason and emotion and the devaluation of emotion” (Held 1990, 328). Traditional moral theories such as deontology and utilitarianism hold that emotion interferes with rationality and thus distorts moral behavior (Ibid., 329; Robinson 2013, 136). Ethics of care, however, has worked to recognize emotion as a vital part of, and source of, moral understanding (Held 1990, 332).

Pettersen argues that Carol Gilligan’s work on care perspectives provides a “radical critique of traditional moral epistemology” and attempts to transcend this epistemology (Pettersen 2008, 80). Gilligan’s notion of “mature care” is composed of abilities of “contextual sensitivity” as well as “principle-based reasoning”, which is an account of morality that acknowledges the importance of emotion as well as reason (Ibid.). Gilligan wants to address the knowledge of human relationships that is undermined “by washing out the logic of feelings [Gilligan quote]” (Ibid., 54). When parts of what constitute human lives are ignored or repressed in moral theory, that theory is inadequate. Gilligan promotes a framework of “reconciliation” of the

binary and hierarchical thinking that separates reason and emotion (Ibid., 54–5). For instance, Pettersen holds that affections and reasoning are both important “cognitive sub-faculties” for moral judgments (Ibid., 81). However, this account may still ascribe to an understanding that accepts a pretty standard division between these the faculties.

Basing her argument on psychology, Karen Warren writes that both reason and emotion are necessary to make valuable (correct) moral judgments (2000, 110). The example she uses is the Elliot-case, which is the story of a patient’s successful surgical removal of a brain tumor, which consequently preserved his rational intelligence but impaired his emotional intelligence, rendering him unable to “assign *values* to differing possibilities” and thus “incapable of moral reasoning” (Ibid., 109–10). This leads Warren to the conclusion that reason without emotion is inadequate in the context of ethics, and places emotion on equal footing with reason to better understand motivation, reasoning and practices in ethics (Ibid., 112). Her reading of the Elliot-case, however, reveals that Warren understands reason and emotion as located in different

parts of the brain, and that they thus are distinct and separate (Ibid., 109). Although Warren acknowledges the importance of emotion for cognitive functions and ethical reasoning, she fails to investigate to what extent emotion is reasonable and reason is infused with emotion. She does not investigate whether these are constructs, potentially a product of the Aristotelean heritage, into which we categorize elements of human cognition to reinforce the existence of those constructs without questioning the circularity of that methodology.

Perhaps instead it is the case that reason and emotion are not distinct from one another, but that there is substantial emotion in reason and substantial reason in emotion (or perhaps it is the case that we have not found the appropriate terms to grasp this phenomenon at all). One can conceive of the two as co-constitutive instead of opposites, and not just because they construct one another linguistically in an oppositional relationship. Instead, we must understand that emotion precluded Elliot from fully reasoning precisely because emotion is part of reasoning. On the other hand, reason is part of emotion, which is clear by the fact that emotions do not simply happen to us for no reason (and so if Elliot was unable to have emotions, this was also because his reasoning was impaired). Because a dichotomous construct of reason and emotion precludes us from an adequate understanding of human cognition and ethical theory, we need to explore what other options might exist for understanding human cognition by radically transcending the dichotomous framework.

It is not correct that emotions are without rationality or vice versa. It is for instance the case that experiencing sympathy is a complex intellectual exercise. Why are we trying to “mute” these cognitive faculties for moral decision-making? Instead, should not our philosophical inquiry lead to asking how these emotions work, and what they can help with when we are in a process of deliberating, instead of being stamped as untrustworthy and illogical? I propose that we should investigate the importance of a moral imagination as an ability to reconstruct the reality of someone else, in contrast to appealing to abstraction and objective distance.

Conclusion

In the first part of this text, I have attempted to provide an overview of the issues pertaining to philosophy as a male-dominated field, why women (and minorities) might be deterred from pursuing philosophy academically, and why representation in philosophy *matters* epistemically and democratically. I have also attempted to show that in-

dividuals, students, and female philosophers in particular have for decades already attempted to increase women's presence in philosophy, whether by teaching philosophy that includes gender issues or feminist perspectives, or by pushing to include more women in syllabi. However, the history of these efforts have been lost, and with every new surge those pushing for change may think they are advocating something for the first time. Instead, questions should be posed as to why these changes have not already occurred. I would like to reference Ibram X. Kendi, who in his book *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (2016) argues that love and education will not put an end to racism, but instead places his hope in policy. There is competence among faculty, a strong will to make these changes among several faculty members and not least from large groups of the student body. There is a great deal of popular demand and interest for the question of diversity in philosophy. There is, finally, the question of epistemic legitimacy that arises when there is a lack of this diversity. Despite these factors, little has actually changed. Actual change is dependent on institutional policy change. Those with powerful positions in the institution are more easily equipped to see these changes through, and therefore they have more responsibility to do so.

In the second part of this text, I have taken up the issue of whether there are elements integral to the *field* of philosophy that may have deterring effects on women. I suggest that the gendered conception of reason may be unappealing to women, because inherent in the reverence for and conception of reason lies sexist presumptions about the inferiority of the *feminine*. If this is the case, the gendered conception of ‘reason’ widely understood in philosophy, has exclusionary sexist (and colonial) effects. Feminist ethics of care and feminist epistemology has repeatedly taken issue with the gendered notion of reason, but philosophy to a large degree still operates with an unexamined genealogical acceptance of ‘reason’ *séparée* as one's highest cognitive faculty, best exercised in isolation from the others. The field as a whole would do better to critically investigate the existence of the term, its genealogy, and its use from a feminist and post-colonial perspective. Anything else is an uncritical acceptance of what has been handed down, not a sign of rigorous intellectual inquiry and self-reflection. Like Robin May Schott writes, feminism can help philosophy do its job better (2007, 44). I end this text by urging the proactivity of institutional leaders in promoting gender and minority diversity in faculty, among students, in syllabi, and topics covered in the teaching that occurs at the universities.

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NOTES

- 1 Ongoing research on this topic is taking place at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø, specifically through the project "IMPLISITT: Avdekking av ubevisste kjønnspartheter i filosofifagmiljø på UiT", funded by the Research Council of Norway, led by Melina Duarte and Kjersti Fjørtoft.
- 2 This point has already been proven several times, and I need not do so here. For those interested, there are by now several anthologies on female philosophers in the history of philosophy. A great place to start is the 2010 exhibition on women philosophers at UiO, which has for the past decade remained homeless. For anthologies, see for instance: Jacqueline Broad, *Women's Philosophers of The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004). Eileen O'Neill, "Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History", in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice. Critiques and Reconstructions*, ed. Janet A Kourany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Karen Warren, ed. *An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy* (Landham, Maryland: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2009); Emily Thomas (red.) *Early Modern Women on Metaphysics*, Cambridge University Press, 2018; Mary Ellen Waithe, ed., *A History of Women Philosophers vol. 1–4*. (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987–1995). Included in Waithe's anthology is the Pythagorean Aesara of Lucania and her notion of the tripartite soul containing mind, spiritedness, and desire, a theory later mostly associated with Plato. Also, princess Elisabeth of Böhmen who corresponded with René Descartes and contributed to the formulation of the mind-body problem.
- 3 See Schei (29.9.2019); Nilsen (2019); and Nilsen & Døskeland (2019) for an overview of common stances in the Norwegian debate on women in philosophy.
- 4 Of course, there may be individual exceptions to this group dynamic.

Some women do not feel disregarded, excluded or discriminated against. These women are fortunate, and should do well to remember that their experiences do not change the fact that many women do experience disregard, exclusion and discrimination—often in subtle and micro-aggressive ways.

5 Even in “equal” or “contemporary” relationships, women usually end up doing most of the domestic work, and most of the responsibility for it, including maintaining an overview, delegating and planning domestic work. There is lots of literature on this, but for reference, see for instance: Ciciolla, L., Luthar, S.S. 2019. “Invisible Household Labor and Ramifications for Adjustment: Mothers as Captains of Households”. *Sex Roles* Vol. 81: 467–486; Knudson-Martin, Carmen & Anne Rankin Mahoney (eds.) 2009. *Couples, Gender, and Power: Creating Change in Intimate Relationships*. Springer Publishing Company; Suttie, Jill. “How an Unfair Division of Labor Hurts Your Relationship”. *Greater Good Magazine*. 5.11.2019. URL = <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_an_unfair_division_of_labor_hurts_your_relationship>; And in Norwegian: Dietrichson, Susanne. “Mor tar mer ansvar for barna enn far, selv i likestilte par”. *Forskning.no*, 9.10.2017. URL = <<https://forskning.no/likestilling-barn-og-ungdom-kjonn-og-samfunn/mor-tar-mer-ansvar-for-barna-enn-far-selv-i-likestilte-par/317816>>; Smeby, Kristine Warhuus & Berit Brandth. 2013. «Mellom hjem og barnehage: Likestilling i det tredje skiftet». *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning*, Vol. 37 (3–4).

6 For more on the term emotional labor, see: Oda K.S. Davanger, Grazia Dicanio, Lene M. Eriksen, Alexandra L. Kristinnsdottir (2019).

7 I am indebted to Ingvald Torsen’s analysis of the philosopher genius-trope at the seminar on women’s lacking presence in the fields of history and philosophy: “Structural Imbalances? Promoting Gender Equality in History and Philosophy” at the University of Oslo, 15. October 2019, organized by Kim Christian Priemel and Reidar Maliks and supported by the Faculty of Humanities’ likestillings- og mangfoldsmidler for 2019.

8 See Berit Ås’ Master suppression techniques (“hersketeknikker” in Norwegian): Ås, Berit (1981). *Kvinner i alle land... Håndbok i frigjøring*. Oslo: Aschehoug. Based on Norwegian philosopher and psychologist Nissen, Ingjald (1945). *Psykopatens diktatur*. Oslo: Aschehoug.

9 Many of these issues are not limited to philosophy. See for instance: “Om å være kvinne i akademien” [On Being a Woman in Academia] (4. December 2019, Forskerforum) and «Det snakkes for lite om ‘mikro-diskriminering’» [There is Lacking Discussion on Micro-Discrimination] (10. December 2019, Forskerforum), both by Minda Holm.

10 See Fricker 2007.

11 These dynamics are under-researched, but remain real and very much experienced, as discussed by Emily Nerland, Tove Pettersen, Nora Birkeland, Maria Halle, Siri Granum Carson, Sunniva Engh, Eirinn Larsen, Dragana Bozin, and Nicola Miller at “Structural Imbalances? Promoting Gender Equality in History and Philosophy”.

12 Important contributors to feminist empiricism include Helen Longino, Louise Antony, Elizabeth Anderson, Lynn Hankinson Nelson, and Miriam Solomon. Important contributors to feminist standpoint theory include Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, and Dorothy Smith.

13 At the Centre for Gender Research at the University of Oslo, Centre Director Professor Helene Aarseth’s research project looks at the fallacies of similar perspectives for knowledge production. The project is titled *Equality and Excellence in Sustainable Balance? Gender, Love and Desire for Knowledge in the Competitive University*. The project is funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

14 See Phillips 1998.

15 For an extended argument on the correlation between topics in philosophy and the prevalence of female philosophy students, see for example Bostad & Pettersen 2015.

16 Dagfinn Døhl Dybvig, Magne Dybvig & Truls Wyller. 2019. *Tanke og handling – filosofi, vitenskap og samfunn*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

17 The course name is «KFL2033 / 4033 Aktuelle temaer i kjønnsforskningen 2: Feministisk tenkning i historisk perspektiv». See “Nytt emne: Feministisk tenkning i historisk perspektiv” on the website for the Centre for Gender Research at the University of Oslo: <<https://www.stk.uio.no/forskning/aktuelt/aktuelle-saker/2020/feministisk-tenkning-i-historisk-perspektiv-.html>>.

18 See for example: Meijer, Jakob. “Lyfter kvinnliga filosofer”.

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19 Many prominent female philosophers find placements outside the philosophy department, such as the pedagogy department or the gender studies department, or leave academia altogether. Some Norwegian examples include, among others, Inga Bostad, Ingeborg Owesen, Linda Rustad, Tove Pettersen, Helgard Marth. Since Pettersen’s move to the Gender Studies Department, it has been a challenge for IFIKK to find faculty members to the courses “Gender and Philosophy” (Kjønn og filosofi) and “Feminist Ethics of Care” in the Philosophy Department.

20 See, for example, the Pythagorean table of opposites.

21 Kaja Melsom, philosopher and senior adviser for The Norwegian Humanist Association speaks about her experience as a philosophy student and why she took her ambitions elsewhere in an interview with *Khrono* (Schei, 26.5.2019).

22 Kant was exposed to progressive views on gender in his life, which also means that we cannot dismiss his misogynist views “as merely a reflection of an earlier epoch” (Schott 2007, 52).

23 In particular *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.

24 Others, such as Helga Varden in “Kant and Women” (2015) argue that men and women’s complementary natures are both equally valuable in Kant’s morality, and that his morality is not anti-feminist.

25 Just before the publication of this text, the University of Oslo and Gyldendal forlag has issued a new textbook, edited by Herman Cappelen, Ingvald Torsen and Sebastian Watzl under the name *Vite, være, gjøre. Exphil: lærebok med originaltekster* that features 33% female philosophers.