

Eileen O'Neill · Marcy P. Lascano *Editors*

# Feminist History of Philosophy: The Recovery and Evaluation of Women's Philosophical Thought

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# Feminist Philosophy Collection

## Editor

Elizabeth Potter, Alice Andrews Quigley Professor of Women's Studies, Mills College, Oakland, CA, USA

Over the past 40 years, philosophy has become a vital arena for feminists. Recent feminist work has challenged canonical claims about the role of women and has developed new methods of analysis and critique and in doing so has reinvigorated central areas of philosophy. The *Feminist Philosophy Collection* presents new work representative of feminist contributions to the six most significant areas of philosophy: Feminist Ethics and Political and Social Philosophy, Feminist Philosophy of Religion, Feminist Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art, Feminist Metaphysics, Feminist History of Philosophy, and Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science. Feminist work in some fields, notably ethics and social theory, has been going on for four decades, while feminist philosophy of art and aesthetics and feminist metaphysics are still young. Thus, some volumes will contain essays that build upon established feminist work as they explore new territory, while others break exciting new ground.

Eileen O'Neill (1953–2017) • Marcy P. Lascano  
Editors

# Feminist History of Philosophy: The Recovery and Evaluation of Women's Philosophical Thought

*Editors*

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*For Eileen,  
with love and gratitude*

# Acknowledgments

Eileen O'Neill planned this volume in 2006. She picked the fantastic list of contributors and persuaded some of them to write on figures they had never worked on before. In many cases, these contributors were examining women philosophers whose works had no critical or scholarly editions and very little secondary literature written about them. After choosing the list of contributors, Eileen asked me to join her in editing the volume. I was just about to start my first tenure-track position and was excited to be part of her project. The project would be delayed for many years due to various unavoidable issues. However, after 12 years, the volume that Eileen envisioned will become a reality.

In 2006, this volume seemed revolutionary. While the progress in recovering early modern women is now clearly well underway, it is important to note that many of the women in this volume are still understudied. The chapters in this volume on lesser-known figures will no doubt prompt further work, and the chapters on more familiar figures will add to our growing understanding of these women philosophers. While it is true that many of the articles in this volume were written over 6 years ago (as of my writing), I believe that they are just as important and exciting as they were when they were written.

Eileen and I both wanted to thank all the contributors to this volume for their chapters and for their (near) infinite patience. Reading these contributions was some of the most rewarding “work” we have done. We would also like to thank our Editor at Springer, Christi Jongepier-Lue, and the Series Editor, Elizabeth Potter. In addition, thanks must go to the Philosophy Department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, for their support for Eileen. I would also like to thank California State University, Long Beach, for support during the years in which I worked on my contributions to the volume. For support and help through it all, much love goes to Gary Ostertag and Jason Raibley.

My final thanks go to Eileen. Eileen was at the forefront of the movement to recover the voices of early modern women philosophers. Her influence on me, as well as many of the contributors in this volume, and early modernists in general, has been profound. Eileen showed me the city of ladies. I am eternally grateful.

Marcy Lascano

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
	Eileen O'Neill	
<b>Part I The History of Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Natural Philosophy</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Women Philosophers and the Cosmological Argument: A Case Study in Feminist History of Philosophy</b> . . . . .	<b>23</b>
	Marcy P. Lascano	
<b>3</b>	<b>Anne Conway's Metaphysics of Sympathy</b> . . . . .	<b>49</b>
	Christia Mercer	
<b>4</b>	<b>Sensibility and Understanding in the Epistemological Thought of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz</b> . . . . .	<b>75</b>
	Laura Benítez	
<b>5</b>	<b>Du Châtelet and Descartes on the Roles of Hypothesis and Metaphysics in Natural Philosophy</b> . . . . .	<b>97</b>
	Karen Detlefsen	
<b>6</b>	<b>Lady Mary Shepherd and David Hume on Cause and Effect</b> . . . . .	<b>129</b>
	Martha Brandt Bolton	
<b>Part II The History of Moral Philosophy, Moral Psychology, and Philosophy of Mind</b>		
<b>7</b>	<b>Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia on the Cartesian Mind: Interaction, Happiness, Freedom</b> . . . . .	<b>155</b>
	Tad M. Schmaltz	
<b>8</b>	<b><i>L'Amour, L'Ambition</i> and <i>L'Amitié</i>: Marie Thiroux D'Arconville on Passion, Agency and Virtue</b> . . . . .	<b>175</b>
	Lisa Shapiro	



<b>9</b>	<b>Sophie de Grouchy, Adam Smith, and the Politics of Sympathy . . . .</b>	<b>193</b>
	Eric Schliesser	
<b>10</b>	<b>Imagination, Religion, and Morality: What Did George Eliot Learn from Spinoza and Feuerbach? . . . . .</b>	<b>221</b>
	Moirá Gatens	
<b>11</b>	<b>Surpassing Liberal Feminism: Beauvoir's Legacy in Global Perspective . . . . .</b>	<b>241</b>
	Karen Vintges	
 <b>Part III The History of Social and Political Philosophy</b>		
<b>12</b>	<b>Virtue Ethics and the Origins of Feminism: The Case of Christine de Pizan. . . . .</b>	<b>261</b>
	Karen Green	
<b>13</b>	<b>Marie de Gournay and Aristotle on the Unity of the Sexes. . . . .</b>	<b>281</b>
	Marguerite Deslauriers	
<b>14</b>	<b>The Radical Nature of Mary Astell's Christian Feminism . . . . .</b>	<b>301</b>
	Hilda L. Smith	
<b>15</b>	<b>Damaris Masham on Women and Liberty of Conscience. . . . .</b>	<b>319</b>
	Jacqueline Broad	
<b>16</b>	<b>Taking Liberty: Politics and Feminism in Margaret Cavendish and Catharine Macaulay . . . . .</b>	<b>337</b>
	Sarah Hutton	
<b>17</b>	<b>Wollstonecraft's Contributions to Modern Political Philosophy: Intersectionality and the Quest for Egalitarian Social Justice . . . . .</b>	<b>355</b>
	Eileen Hunt Botting	
	<b>Biographies and Bibliographies for the Female Philosophers . . . . .</b>	<b>379</b>
	<b>Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources . . . . .</b>	<b>415</b>
	<b>Index. . . . .</b>	<b>441</b>

# Chapter 1

## Introduction



Eileen O'Neill

*Only by the thrashing of history could truth be separated from prejudice. (Leland Thielemann, "The Thousand Lights and Intertextual Rhapsody: Diderot or Mme Dupin," Romantic Review 74, 3 (1983): 316–29)*

**Abstract** This Introduction examines the role that feminism has played in the recovery and evaluation of women's philosophical writings. First, O'Neill addresses the question of whether it is possible to trace conceptions of feminism before the twentieth or nineteenth century. O'Neill offers no analysis of 'feminism,' but instead, argues that certain components of feminism that may be traced back to Christine de Pizan. O'Neill then argues that how we understand the role of women in our histories depends on the methodology one uses in doing feminist history of philosophy. She concludes that "pure" history of philosophy allows for the reconstruction of women's role in philosophical endeavors in terms of the motives, pre-suppositions, and argumentational strategies and standards of the past era without the distorting influence of contemporary conceptions of what counts as "philosophy" or what counts as "feminist." Finally, the issue of the historian of philosophy's great debt to feminism is acknowledged. It is through feminism that we come to realize that women philosophers' erasure from history is due to religious, economic, political, and social forces, which reinforce tradition, custom, and "common sense," in creating structural barriers to women being able to take their place in the histories of philosophy.

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## 1.1 Feminism

Historians of many stripes—those focusing on social and political, intellectual, or women's history—have attempted to trace the terms 'feminism' and 'feminist' back to their origins. Some earlier historians, as well as French dictionaries, attributed the initial use of '*féminisme*' to Charles Fourier in the 1830s.<sup>1</sup> Some more recent historians have claimed that both terms originated in late nineteenth-century France.<sup>2</sup> Other historians, who have focused on "self-naming," have traced the origin of 'feminist' to the 1910s, when it was first used by certain activists to refer to

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<sup>1</sup>Claire Goldberg Moses, "Debating the Present, Writing the Past: Feminism in French History and Historiography," *Radical History Review* 52 (1992): 79–94, fn. 5., cites the following as examples of these earlier historians: Jean Rabaut, *Histoire des féminismes français* (Paris: Stock, 1978); Celestin Bouglé, "Le Féminisme saint-simonien," *La Revue de Paris* 25 (15 September 1918): 371–99, and *Chez les prophètes socialistes: le féminisme saint-simonienne* (Paris: Alcan 1918); Léon Abensour, *Le féminisme sous la règne de Louis-Phillipe et en 1848* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1913); and Charles Turgeon, *Le Féminisme français* (Paris: Librairie de la Societe de Recueil Generale des Lois et des Arrêts, 1902).

<sup>2</sup>See Claire G. Moses, "What's in a Name"? Feminism in Global Perspective," Keynote Address, Australian and International Feminism Conference, 2004. Karen Offen argues that the terms 'féminisme' and 'féministe' did not enter "public discourse before the end of the nineteenth century"; see her "On the French Origin of the Words *Feminism* and *Feminist*," *Feminist Issues* 8, 2 (Fall 1988): 45–51. In *Offen's European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), she claims that "no traces of the word [féminisme] have yet been identified prior to the 1870s"; by 1894–95 the term had "crossed the Channel to Great Britain"; and by the late 1890s 'feminism' entered discourse in the United States, though it was "not commonly used in the United States much before 1910" (p. 19). However, the OED identifies a usage of 'feminist' dating back to 1852, where the meaning is "of, relating to, or advocating the rights and equality of women." In *Debow's Review* 13, 3, article V: 267–291, we find a review of Elizabeth Oakes Smith's *Woman and Her Needs* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1851). This book is a compilation of a series of articles that Smith published in the *New York Tribune* in 1850–51. The reviewer, Louisa S. McCord, publishing under the initials L.S.M., states: "[O]ur attention has happened to fall upon Mrs. E. O. Smith, who is, we are informed, among the most moderate of the feminist reformers!" Smith was a women's rights activist, who attended the first National Women's Rights Convention in 1850; in 1879, she lectured on "Biology and Woman's Rights" at the eleventh Woman's Suffrage Convention, in Washington D.C.

themselves and their movement.<sup>3</sup> At present, it appears that the exact origin of the terms remains unclear.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the historically more interesting and challenging questions, however, are not ones about the origin of the term 'feminism' and its derivatives, but about conceptions of feminism and how these conceptions underwent changes in different historical and cultural settings. And if what constitutes feminist consciousness and activity changes dramatically from country to country and from era to era, are there any elements common to these differing conceptions of feminism that form a core meaning? In the past few decades, historians have offered a number of different answers to this question. On the one hand, scholars such as Nancy Cott have understood feminism as "a critique of male supremacy, formed and offered in light of a will to change it, which in turn assumes a conviction that it is changeable... Such a definition does have a uniting political core. It does not posit that what women do of a public or civic character is in itself feminist, unless a challenge to male domination is present."<sup>5</sup> Cott has urged historians to expand the vocabulary of women's history and to distinguish feminism, which she has taken to be "a discrete, self-named movement in the 1910s," from earlier pro-woman writings and civic activities on the part of all-women groups.<sup>6</sup> At the other extreme from this historically narrow conception of feminism, we have the historically and geographically broad conceptions that locate feminism in ancient Greek texts, as well as in medieval, Renaissance, and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European literature.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Nancy Cott, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism:' or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 76,3 (Dec., 1989): 809–29:

The very point of historians'[sic] using the word *feminism* or *feminist* should be to distinguish among women's choices in reform. For no era is the need to make such distinctions more pressing than for the early twentieth century, when the word feminism first came into use. The mainly young and educated women who seized the word felt that they were a new generation venturing beyond the goals and outlooks of predecessors; they differentiated themselves from earlier participants in the "woman movement" or the "cause of woman." They regarded their constellation of demands for female individuality, political participation, economic independence, and sexual freedom as a new challenge to the social order. For that era, when women's political practices and interest groups were taking on modern form, it is especially necessary to disaggregate what was considered feminist and thus named for the first time. The concept of social feminism does exactly the opposite—it blots out the rise of feminism as a discrete, self-named movement in the 1910s. (p. 821)

<sup>4</sup>Karen Offen states: "The earliest origins of the French word *féminisme* and its derivatives are still obscure," in "On the French Origin of the Words *Feminism* and *Feminist*," p. 45. See also her *European Feminisms, 1700–1950*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>Nancy Cott, "What's In a Name," p. 826.

<sup>6</sup>Nancy Cott, "What's In a Name," p. 821.

<sup>7</sup>See Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, 1 (Autumn, 1988): 119–157, pp. 130–31, especially the bibliographical information in footnotes 24–28.

Ian Maclean's *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610–1652* is representative of this way of conceiving of feminism. In this work he admits that “although it is true that in nearly all feminist works of this period some relaxation of the marital and social oppression of women is advocated, no far-reaching reforms are suggested.” Despite this lack of overt challenge to male domination via social reform, and thus contrary to Cott's account, Maclean holds that feminism may “be described as a reassessment in woman's favour of the relative capacities of the sexes.” Karen Offen has cited Maclean's text as an example of literary history in which the terms ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist’ are used “anachronistically and with great abandon”.<sup>8</sup>

An intermediate position between Cott's and Maclean's accounts of feminism can be found in the early work of Claire Goldberg Moses. There, Moses understood feminism to be “based on the recognition that women constitute a group that is wrongfully oppressed by male-defined values and male-controlled institutions of social, political, cultural, and familial power. The ultimate vision of feminists is revolutionary. It demands the end of patriarchy, that is, the end of a political relationship of the sexes characterized by masculine dominance and female subordination.”<sup>9</sup> But while Moses' account of feminism bore a strong resemblance to Cott's, in that she “distinguished those [she] called feminist from others who were merely compassionate,” Moses did not read pre-twentieth century history in the way that Cott did. Rather, while “Christine de Pisan and Marie le Jars de Gournay, who argued for increased opportunities for women, fell outside of [her] definition because they had not linked women's status to men's power,” Moses recognized the seventeenth-century François Poullain de la Barre as a feminist “because he was the first writer in the French language to link women's oppression to patriarchy.” So, Moses—even in her early writing—took feminism to have a history that predated the early twentieth century, contra Cott.

In her later work, Moses' account of feminism became more nuanced, such that both Christine de Pisan and Marie de Gournay had significant roles to play in the history of feminism. Moses later noted that it was

the Renaissance *querelle des femmes* that created a transmittable literature about women's place in society. The seeds of modern feminist criticism were planted at this time. Early in the fifteenth century, Christine de Pisan formulated what would be the primary demand of feminists for centuries to come: that women be permitted to obtain a serious education. She defended her sex against the misogynist attacks of Jean de Meung (*Le Roman de la rose*) and set the precedent for an outpouring of writings, the net effect of which was to create an opinion in intellectual circles more favorable for women than the medieval view.... One must be careful, however, not to exaggerate the Renaissance defense of women. Although

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<sup>8</sup>Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610–1652* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), p. viii; Karen Offen, “Defining Feminism,” p. 130.

<sup>9</sup>Claire Goldberg Moses, *The Evolution of Feminist Thought in France, 1829–1889* (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1978) p. 7; cited in Moses, “Debating the Present, Writing the Past,” p. 85.

these writers had named a problem and thereby created a new social issue, few moved beyond the demand for increased opportunities. Most failed to question the patriarchal understanding that the “correct” relationship of the sexes required the dominance of men over women. Marie le Jars de Gournay, who in 1622 wrote *Egalité des hommes et des femmes*, went further than most. The mental and intellectual abilities of women, she wrote, would equal the degree of excellence attained by men if only women could be freed from their handicapped status, which was the result of faulty instruction and social limitation.<sup>10</sup>

More recently, many historians have come to understand the contributions of Christine de Pizan and Marie de Gournay, within the cultures of medieval and Renaissance France, as fully feminist ones, and they have adjusted their accounts of what lies at the core of feminism accordingly. For example, Karen Offen, in her chapter, “Reclaiming the Enlightenment for Feminism,” in her *European Feminisms, 1700–1950*, writes:

Claims for the equality of the sexes, grounded in the Christian doctrine of equality of souls and in appeals to reason, were a long-standing feature of European intellectual debate since the early fifteenth century, when, by invoking Lady Reason, Christine de Pizan first challenged French male writers who demeaned women in print. By the seventeenth century, this argument for sexual equality had been explicitly stated by writers such as Marie Le Jars de Gournay, in her treatise *De l'égalité des hommes et des femmes* [On the Equality of Men and Women, 1622]. Gournay insisted on shifting the terms of argument to emphasize the natural equality of the sexes, based on their common possession of Reason [with a capital R]. She criticized the sexual hierarchy that had developed, insisting that women's lack of education and knowledge was to blame for the inequalities that could be observed in their condition. This “cultural” argument was destined for a brilliant future. Equality of condition did not imply sameness or imitation, however. Marie de Gournay objected strongly to the notion that the best option for women was to strive to resemble men. That, to her, was not the point. Nor has it been the point for most feminists since. Feminist appeals to equality and reason were made throughout the sixteenth century, as Constance Jordan has beautifully documented....<sup>11</sup>

Offen concludes:

Enlightenment debate can thus be seen as a spawning ground, not simply for the positioning of “woman,” as some have complained, but for asserting women's equality to men, for criticizing male privilege and domination, for analyzing historically the causes and constructions of women's subordination, and for devising eloquent arguments for the emancipation of women from male control. These were all defining features of that critical tradition we now call feminism, but which at the time remained a critique that had no name.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman, in their collection of essays, *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, hold that “the new historical research of the past decades has

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<sup>10</sup> Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the nineteenth Century* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1984), pp. 7–8.

<sup>11</sup> Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950*, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950*, p. 31.

convincingly demonstrated that the early-modern history of feminism is not one of isolated examples or lone precursors of a history that 'really' begins only in the nineteenth century."<sup>13</sup> They follow the lead of the late Joan Kelly who, in the early 1980s

...put forward the bold thesis that there was a European feminist tradition that antedated the era of the French Revolution and could be traced all the way back to the beginning of the fifteenth century. She saw the Renaissance *Querelle des femmes* as the principal genre of early-modern feminism.... Right at the beginning of this line of thinking Kelly situated the imposing figure of Christine de Pizan who was the first to draw attention to the sexist partiality implicit in the whole extant body of misogynist literature, from classical antiquity to Latin Christendom. Pizan's work marked a turning point because she refocused the old medieval debate on marriage and female vices onto the issue of misogyny itself and because she did so as a woman speaking on behalf of the entire female sex. A new debate was opened, and it was opened to women as active participants.<sup>14</sup>

The present volume similarly takes the modern history of European feminism to go back at least as far as Christine de Pizan, and it follows Akkerman and Stuurman in their proposal that the following are core components of feminism:

1. criticism of misogyny and male supremacy
2. the conviction that women's condition is not an immutable fact of nature and can be changed for the better
3. a sense of gender group identity, the conscious will to speak 'on behalf of women', or 'to defend the female sex', usually aiming to enlarge the sphere of action open to women.<sup>15</sup>

To be sure, this is not meant to provide an *analysis* of the concept of feminism. And even as something like a "working definition," it will leave us with many problematic cases. For example, can we genuinely read Anna Maria van Schurman's *Dissertatio De Ingenii Muliebris ad Doctrinam, & meliores Litteras aptitudine* [Dissertation on Women's Native Capacity for the Study of Arts and Sciences] (1641) as a feminist treatise? In this work Van Schurman provides Aristotelian syllogisms to argue for the appropriateness of education for *some* women. Thus, she does aim to enlarge the sphere of action open to *some* women. But this aim is not tied to a broader criticism of male supremacy. Further, it is not at all apparent that Van Schurman has a sense of gender group identity, and she is quite explicit that she is not speaking on behalf of *all* women. She restricts her arguments in defense of women's fitness for education solely to *Christian* women, and more narrowly to those who have sufficient leisure time to dedicate to study, the financial resources to afford the education, and the proper goals in mind, viz., the salvation of their own

<sup>13</sup> *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman (London/New York: Routledge, 1998) p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History*, ed. Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman, pp. 9–10.

<sup>15</sup> *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History*, ed. Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman, pp. 3–4.

souls, being able to better educate and guide their family, and being better able to be useful to their “whole sex, to the extent that this is possible.” Finally, it is not clear that Van Schurman even thinks that many women’s lack of knowledge is *not* an immutable fact of nature. For she restricts her arguments concerning women’s fitness for learning solely to those who “have at least a mediocre ability” and who are not “utterly inept at learning.” The implication here seems to be that some women may be utterly incapable of intellectual training. It begins to look doubtful that Van Schurman’s text can count as a feminist treatise, given our working definition. And yet, given the historical circumstances within which she is writing, her treatise was strategically constructed to open up a conversation among the learned (men) about the topic of the value and appropriateness of education for women; further, this strategy was successful. But perhaps most importantly, because of this published treatise, Van Schurman opened up a conversation on a variety of topics with numerous European female intellectuals, including Marie de Gournay, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Bathsua Makin, and Dorothy Moore, among others. She created a community of female scholars within which discussions about women’s fitness for education, and the most advantageous type of education for women, could be discussed. This may incline us to agree with Sarah Gwyneth Ross that, in addition to the constituent elements of the “explicit” feminism, which Akkerman and Stuurman have suggested,

there are two other ways in which learned women contributed to the history of feminism. The first might be termed “celebratory” feminism. In emphasizing their particular status as scholars, undertaking various forms of self writing (from prefatory self-fashioning to literal autobiography), and celebrating other learned women, female authors strengthened the new category “woman as intellect.” The second contribution that women intellectuals made was their direct engagement with men in literary culture, what I am calling “participatory feminism”.... [Their] participation in the world of letters made a case for the equality of the sexes in matters of the mind.<sup>16</sup>

And, as Carol Pal has recently demonstrated in *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century*, Van Schurman certainly celebrated and mentored other learned women, as well as engaged with men in literary culture, thereby helping to establish the emerging category of “early modern female intellectual.”<sup>17</sup> But Pal herself does not refer to Van Schurman and the other figures in her study, who formed a female republic of letters in the seventeenth century, as feminists. Perhaps we should worry that referring to Van Schurman as a feminist is anachronistic, even if we endorse the broad working definition of ‘feminism’ of Akkerman and Stuurman, enhanced by Ross’ addition. How one decides such a case, will depend in part on the methodology one uses in doing feminist history of philosophy.

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<sup>16</sup> Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).



## 1.2 The History of Modern Philosophy: Methodologies and Genres

Philosophy was traditionally divided into the sub-disciplines of logic, metaphysics, natural philosophy and moral philosophy. But with the institutionalization of philosophy in European universities in the eighteenth century, the history of philosophy came to be recognized as a sub-discipline in its own right. Historiography—i.e., the philosophy of the history of philosophy—emerged as a philosophical topic, at the same time. In recent decades, the topic of the appropriate philosophical methodologies for research in the history of philosophy has received a fair amount of attention in the philosophical literature.<sup>18</sup> My remarks here can only highlight a few of the main methodological divisions, and some of the main genres of history of philosophy that make use of these differing methodologies.

Philosophers have always read philosophical texts from the past as a way of triggering their own work of answering current philosophical problems. In such cases, the philosophers may *not* be using a “historically contextualized methodology.” That is, they may be “mining” past philosophical texts for answers to current problems, without attending to the aims and projects of the authors of those texts, or to

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<sup>18</sup>With respect to the historiography of ancient philosophy, see Michael Frede, “The History of Philosophy as a Discipline,” *Journal of Philosophy* 85, 11 (November, 1988): 666–72 and “Introduction: The Study of Ancient Philosophy” in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. ix–xxvii; Wolfgang-Rainer Mann, “The Origins of the Modern Historiography of Ancient Philosophy,” *History and Theory* 35, 2 (1996): 165–95. For discussions of the historiography of modern philosophy, or of the full history of philosophy, see Jorge Gracia, *Philosophy and Its History* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992); *Doing Philosophy Historically*, ed. Peter H. Hare (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1988); *Philosophy, Its History and Historiography*, ed. A. J. Holland (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985); Paul O. Kristeller, “Philosophy and Its Historiography,” *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985): 618–25; Maurice Mandelbaum, “On the Historiography of Philosophy,” *Philosophy Research Archives* 2 (1976): 708–44, and his “The History of Philosophy: Some Methodological Issues,” *Journal of Philosophy* 74 (1977): 561–72; Gregorio Piaia, “Brucker versus Rorty? On the “Models” of the Historiography of Philosophy,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 9 (2001): 69–81; Richard Popkin, “Philosophy and the History of Philosophy,” *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985): 625–32; *Philosophy and Its Past*, ed. Jonathan Rée, Michael Ayers and Adam Westoby (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978); Richard Rorty, “The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres,” in *Philosophy in History*, ed. Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 49–75; *Analytical Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Tom Sorrell and G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); Richard Watson, “A Short Discourse on Method in the History of Philosophy,” *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 11(1980): 7–24; John Yolton, “Some Remarks on the Historiography of Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 571–8, and “Is There a History of Philosophy: Some Difficulties and Suggestions,” *Synthese* 67 (1986): 3–21. For further bibliographical material on the historiography of philosophy, see Gracia’s *Philosophy and Its History*, as well as: James Collins, *Interpreting Modern Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Craig Walton, “Bibliography of the Historiography and Philosophy of the History of Philosophy,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 19 (1977): 135–66; and the work that has most greatly influenced my discussion here, Gary Hatfield, “The History of Philosophy as Philosophy,” in *Analytical Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Sorrell and Rogers, pp. 83–128.

the assumptions, body of knowledge, and standards of philosophical evaluation of the era in which the texts were written. Given this methodology, the philosopher reads past texts through the lens of her own current philosophical aims, assumptions and standards of evaluation. Such a lens frequently distorts the structure of individual arguments and of a past text as a whole. But this is not seen as a serious problem by users of this methodology, since the philosophical goal here is not to illuminate our understanding of past philosophy, but to jump-start or inspire current philosophical work. Reading Descartes' Sixth Meditation may result in a contemporary philosopher constructing a new "Cartesian" argument for mind-body dualism. But the word 'Cartesian,' in this case, can only mean "triggered by a reading of Descartes or one of his followers," and not that the argument shares significant philosophical features with Descartes' own. If that argument is philosophically quite close to Descartes' own, this will be by coincidence. Those eschewing a historically contextualized methodology are unconcerned with reconstructing the arguments and overall project of the historical Descartes.<sup>19</sup> For these reasons, this type of engagement with philosophical texts of the past falls outside of what we will take in this volume to be "history of philosophy."

On the other hand, some philosophers *will* utilize a historically contextualized philosophical methodology with the main goal of using past philosophy to help solve current philosophical problems. Such philosophers may believe that if one is going to use philosophy of the past in current philosophical projects, one should at least do one's best to get the history right. They may on the one hand reconstruct and evaluate the arguments and projects of past philosophers by situating them within the philosophical, broader intellectual, theological, and political contexts of the past era, while on the other hand treating past philosophers as if they are contemporary colleagues. For example, they may criticize the work of past philosophers in light of twenty-first century assumptions, arguments, and standards of philosophical evaluation.<sup>20</sup> However, insofar as the main philosophical goal here is to make progress in contemporary philosophy, we will not count these philosophical projects as pure examples of "history of philosophy," where the latter is a discipline in its own right, whose main goal is making the philosophical past cognitively accessible to us.

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<sup>19</sup> Interpretations of past philosophical texts, using a non-historical methodology, for the main purpose of furthering contemporary philosophical discussions range from unhelpful "historical mythologies" (such as Gilbert Ryle's reconstruction of Descartes' "ghost in the machine") to philosophically stimulating texts such as Jerrold Katz's *Cogitations: A Study of the Cogito in Relation to the Philosophy of Logic and Language and a Study of Them in Relation to the Cogito* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Texts, such as Katz's, often spawn replies by genuine historians of philosophy, which are equally philosophically stimulating, but which also get us closer to understanding the views of the past historical figures. See, for example, Gareth Matthews' reply to Katz in the former's "Descartes's *Cogito* and Katz's *Cogitations*," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1987): 197–204.

<sup>20</sup> Arguably Bernard Williams' *Descartes and the Project of Pure Enquiry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978) and Jonathan Bennett's *Learning From Six Philosophers: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001)—especially vol. 2—utilize a historically contextualized philosophical methodology with the main goal of using past philosophy to help solve current philosophical problems.

A third methodological division will consist in the utilization of a historically contextualized philosophical methodology, aiming foremost to reconstruct and critically evaluate the arguments and projects within a text, and entire philosophical programs of past thinkers, in light of the motives, presuppositions, and argumentational strategies and standards of the past era. This “pure” history of philosophy, understood as a sub-discipline of philosophy in its own right, requires that historians not only study the full *corpus* of a past philosopher in the original languages, but also that they study the major and minor predecessors and successors of the past philosopher, as well as something of the theology, *belle lettres*, science, medicine, politics, and law of the era in which the past figure lived. The aim of such history of philosophy is to reconstruct the past philosophy within the terms of the past—to the extent that this is possible. To do so requires situating arguments within larger projects, which projects are themselves responses to philosophical problems and tensions. These tensions are inherited from earlier philosophy, and also arise from the interaction of philosophy with other disciplines, as well as with the historical context more generally. This does not mean that the history of philosophy is mere antiquarianism or exegesis. As Gary Hatfield has noted, “genuine history of philosophy... cannot establish the ‘facts’ or ‘explain’ the positions of past authors without critically engaging and rethinking the philosophical content of those positions: there is no such thing as setting forth ‘the plain facts about what an author thought and said’...without substantial (historically sensitive) philosophical reconstruction.”<sup>21</sup> All of the essays in this volume are examples of this “pure” history of philosophy: the use of historically contextualized philosophical methodology, in the service of an accurate reconstruction of, and critical engagement with, past philosophy.

There are many genres of pure history of philosophy. The genres can be distinguished in terms of the goals, number of texts, or temporal scope involved in the historical project. These genres include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (i) Reconstruction of a past thinker’s individual arguments and overall project(s) within a single text.
- (ii) Reconstruction of a past thinker’s philosophy as a whole, as expounded within the thinker’s entire *corpus*.
- (iii) Construction of diachronic histories of central philosophical concepts, such as causation, space, time, matter, identity, etc., which chronicle conceptual change over time and provide philosophical explanations for this change.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Gary Hatfield, “The History of Philosophy as Philosophy,” p. 94, fn. 20, quoting Robert C. Sleigh, Jr., *Leibniz and Arnauld: A Commentary on Their Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> A good example of this genre is the series, *Oxford Philosophical Concepts*, which is under the general editorship of Christia Mercer. The series consists of individual volumes dedicated to tracing the historical trajectory and change over time of a central philosophical concept.

- (iv) Construction of diachronic histories of a type of argument, such as ontological arguments for God's existence, causal arguments for the existence of an external world, transcendental arguments, sense illusion arguments, etc.
- (v) Construction of diachronic histories of philosophical movements or schools of thought, such as Platonism, empiricism, pragmatism, feminism, etc.
- (vi) Construction of revised canons of major philosophical figures, and the reshaping of the history of philosophy to include philosophically significant, but forgotten, minor figures—where this revision and reshaping is not entirely motivated by present philosophical views and standards, but also the result of the application of historically contextualized methodology.

The chapters in this volume are examples of some of these genres of pure history. All of the chapters are examples of genres (i) and (ii): reconstructions of philosophical motives, arguments, projects and systems. None are examples of genres (iii)-(vi), since diachronic histories of philosophical concepts, argument types, philosophical schools or movements, as well as constructions of revised philosophical canons cannot be written in the space of a chapter. Nonetheless, some of the chapters provide new material for histories of philosophical concepts, such as those of substance, causation, virtue and freedom. Other chapters contribute new material for histories of a type of argument, such as cosmological arguments for God's existence. Many of the essays provide new chapters for our histories of philosophical movements or schools, such as Platonism and rationalism. Finally, each of the chapters provides philosophical grounds for including in our histories of philosophy the philosophical figures treated in this volume—some, as *major* contributors to the discipline.

### 1.3 Feminism and the History of Philosophy

The rise of a new wave of feminism in the 1970s affected the academy, and historical scholarship in particular, in profound ways. For one thing, it led many historians of religion, art, music, literature, and science, as well as intellectual, and social and political history, to challenge the absence of women in these histories, and to begin to recover and evaluate past women's contributions to these fields. It led to critiques of canonical male artists' and thinkers' misogynist views about, and representations of, women, as well as to critiques of the feminine gendering of various concepts, metaphors and images that have historically aided in the subordination of women. It also spawned new historical projects, such as the writing of histories of gender construction, and the revisioning of histories of feminism. The history of philosophy did not remain unaffected by feminist scholarship either. Charlotte Witt has noted,

feminist philosophers have criticized both the historical exclusion of women *from* the philosophical tradition, and the negative characterization of women or the feminine *in* it. Feminist historians of philosophy have argued that the historical record is incomplete because it omits women philosophers, and is biased because it devalues any women philosophers it

forgot to omit. In addition, feminist philosophers have argued that the philosophical tradition is conceptually flawed because of the way that its fundamental norms like reason and objectivity are gendered male.<sup>23</sup>

In what follows, I will describe some of the many genres of feminist history of philosophy and indicate those that are included in this volume. Given the specific historical projects taken on by the volume contributors, some chapters are examples of more than one genre.

(a) *Critiques of Sexist Views in the Texts of Canonical Male Philosophers of the Past*

Among the earliest genres of feminist history of philosophy, and one that remains in the recent literature, is the reevaluation of the work of canonical male philosophers, in light of their false underlying assumptions, fallacious arguments, and poorly constructed theories about women. This genre also includes critiques of the feminine gendering of concepts, images and metaphors that these male philosophers have used in constructing their philosophy, which have aided in the continued subordination of women.<sup>24</sup> Some of the texts in this genre are critical examinations of the views about women in the work of a single or several canonical male philosophers; others examine the canon within a particular period of philosophy, such as the Middle Ages or the Enlightenment. Some restrict their focus to the canon of a particular sub-discipline of philosophy, such philosophy of religion, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, and philosophy of science.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Charlotte Witt, "Feminist History of Philosophy," in *Feminist Reflection on the History of Philosophy*, ed. Lilli Alanen and Charlotte Witt (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), pp. 1–2.

<sup>24</sup> The following texts provide feminist critiques of canonical male philosophers' assumptions and arguments about women, as well as critiques of the gendering of key philosophical concepts, images and metaphors: but many of these texts also include other genres of feminist history of philosophy: Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987); Michèle Le Doeuff, *The Philosophical Imaginary*, tr. C. Gordon (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989); Nancy Tuana, *Woman and the History of Philosophy* (New York: Paragon Press, 1992); Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1988); Vigdis Songe Møller, *Philosophy Without Women: the Birth of Sexism in Western Thought* (London: Continuum, 1999); Penelope Deutscher, *Yielding Gender: Feminism, Deconstruction and the History of Philosophy* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997); Robin May Schott, *Cognition and Eros: A Critique of the Kantian Paradigm* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); *Engendering Origins: Critical Feminist Readings in Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Bat-Ami Bar On (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994) and *Modern Engenderings: Critical Feminist Readings in Modern Western Philosophy*, ed. Bat-Ami Bar On (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Critical treatments of canonical male ethical philosophy include: Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Virginia Held, "Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50, 3–4 supplement (Fall 1990): 321–44 and her "Feminist Reconceptualizations of Ethics," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 92–115. Such treatments of canonical male phi-

None of the essays in this volume will be an example of this genre of feminist history of philosophy, nor will the present volume contain examples of the following second genre of feminist history of philosophy.

(b) *Reinterpretations of the Philosophy of Canonical Male Philosophers and the Appropriation of Some of It for Contemporary Feminist Philosophy*

The research on how canonical philosophy has sometimes produced erroneous theories concerning women and the feminine gender, and how the discipline historically has kept women who attempted to be philosophers in the margins, has changed how historians engage with the canonical figures. For example, rather than finding Aristotle's views about gender and animal reproduction so embarrassing that they are just neglected, Aristotle's biology and its relation to his larger metaphysical and physical views has become a growing area of research. In short, feminist history of philosophy has helped to motivate a variety of historical projects on canonical figures. One of these projects might be understood in terms of "not throwing the baby out with the bathwater." Even if, after understanding much better the interrelation between Aristotle's biology, metaphysics, physics and politics, and after taking into account the historical context in which he was writing, we still find his view of females as deformed males unacceptable, we might wish to develop a feminist virtue ethics that would share a good deal with Aristotle's. This second genre of feminist history of philosophy is the use of a historically contextualized methodology for the purpose of identifying those resources within canonical philosophy that can be appropriated for contemporary feminist philosophical projects.<sup>26</sup> If the genuine aim

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losophy of science include: Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1985); and Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989). With respect to aesthetics, see: *Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Hilde Hein and Carolyn Korsmeyer (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993) and Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Gendered Concepts and Hume's Theory of Taste," in *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics*, ed. Peggy Zeglin Brand and Carolyn Korsmeyer (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). For philosophy of religion, see: Rosemarie Radford Reuther, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); and Nancy Frankenberry, "Philosophy of Religion in Different Voices," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*, ed. Kourany. And with respect to social and political philosophy, see: Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche*, ed. Lorraine Clarke and Lynda Lange ((Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); *Women in Western Political Philosophy: Kant to Nietzsche*, ed. Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus (NY: St Martin Press, 1987); and Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> For examples of feminist reinterpretation and appropriation of the work of canonical male philosophers see: Annette Baier, *Postures of the Mind: Essays on Mind and Morals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) and her *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Lynn Hankinson Nelson, *Who Knows: From Quine to a Feminist Empiricism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Charlene Haddock Seigfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). While the following collections of essays make use of a variety of genres of feminist history of philosophy, they each contain the genre of canon appropriation: *Feminism and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Genevieve



here is mining past philosophy to solve current philosophical problems, this will be at methodological odds with what I have termed the “pure history” methodology that we are using in this volume. But I can imagine those engaged in pure history coming upon philosophical arguments or strategies in canonical works that they may want to use in their non-historical, contemporary work in feminist philosophy. Be that as it may, none of the essays in this volume will take as their main focus the feminist appropriation of the philosophy of canonical male philosophers. Instead, all of the essays will be examples of pure history of philosophy—history taken as a sub-discipline of philosophy in its own rights—and they will all be examples of the following third genre of feminist history of philosophy.

(c) *The Recovery and Evaluation of Philosophical Writings by Women of the Past*

One of the effects of feminism on historical scholarship was that it led scholars to question whether women of the past had not significantly contributed to the various arts and sciences, such that their virtual absence from the histories of these fields was justified. Scholars began to recover and evaluate the work of women of the past and to mount cases for the inclusion of many of these women in the histories of these disciplines. Intellectual and literary historians, as well as historians of science and philosophy, drew on each others' research in identifying women writers of the past. It was then the job of the historian of philosophy to identify the *philosophical* texts written by these women; to situate the texts within the historical context, by identifying philosophical sources and tracing the influences of these texts on later philosophy; to determine whether the female authors were involved in philosophical networks or salons, and whether these groups included other women; to assemble the women's full philosophical correspondence with male and female philosophers of the period; and to determine if the women's philosophical publications or circulated material were reviewed in contemporary publications, including (beginning in the seventeenth century) scholarly journals. Having situated the texts into their philosophical-historical context, historians of philosophy needed to analyze the texts and evaluate their philosophical merits. In some cases, this process of evaluation resulted in two further historical projects: (1) mounting the case for the inclusion of the text and its author in the history of Western philosophy, and (2) examining the reasons, those internal and external to philosophy, for the past exclusion of the text and its author from this history.

The present volume is an example of this genre of feminist history of philosophy. The genre is crucially important, given the aims of pure history of philosophy, because it does nothing short of shattering the long-standing myth that women's philosophical writings did not exist (prior to the twentieth century), and that if they did, they were never taken by the male contemporaries of the female authors to be worth publishing, responding to in print, or being valued as significant contributions

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Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Julie K. Ward (New York/London: Routledge, 1996; *Feminist Reflections on the History of Philosophy*, ed. Alanen and Witt; and a variety of volumes in the Re-Reading the Canon series, published by The Pennsylvania State University Press, under the general editorship of Nancy Tuana.

to the philosophical debates of the time. Although no individual chapter attempts to engage in all of the projects included in this genre, each helps to forward the project of recovering and evaluating women's philosophical texts. In some cases, women philosophers, with whom most philosophers today will be unfamiliar, are introduced, for example, Marie Thiroux D'Arconville. In other cases, a new analysis of the philosophical contributions of a familiar figure will be offered, as in the case of Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia. Since this is a single-volume work, it cannot give readers a complete sense of the number of past women philosophers, and of the scope and quality of their work. To accomplish this, readers are encouraged to examine the groundbreaking *A History of Women Philosophers*, in four volumes, completed under the general editorship of Mary Ellen Waithe, which identifies over one hundred women philosophers; my "Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History" and Lisa Shapiro's "Some Thoughts on the Place of Women in Early Modern Philosophy," for further references to women philosophers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries; as well as the references given in the footnotes for this Introduction and in the volume's bibliographies of primary and secondary sources.<sup>27</sup>

It is worth noting how the use of the methodology of pure history yields quite different results in recovering and evaluating the texts of women philosophers of the past from the results that follow from the use of different historical methodologies. Take, for example, Mary Warnock's 1996 publication, *Women Philosophers*. Her aim is to provide selections from the work of women philosophers of the seventeenth to the twentieth century, where "the women whose work appears in this collection...are (or were) mostly philosophers in the same sort of sense as, all would agree, Hume was a philosopher." She tells us that a philosopher claims "not only to seek the truth, but to seek a truth, or theory, that will explain the particular and the detailed and the everyday." In addition, a philosopher is "concerned not merely with

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<sup>27</sup> *A History of Women Philosophers*, ed. Mary Ellen Waithe, 4 vols. (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987–95); Eileen O'Neill, "Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*, ed. J. Kourany (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); and Lisa Shapiro, "Some Thoughts on the Place of Women in Early Modern Philosophy," in *Feminist Reflections on the History of Philosophy*, ed. Lilli Alanen and Charlotte Witt. See also the following collections of essays: *Hypatia's Daughters: Fifteen Hundred Years of Women Philosophers*, ed. Linda Lopez McAlister (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); *Presenting Women Philosophers*, ed. Cecile Tougas and Sarah Ebenreck (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2000); as well as the following selections of primary sources: *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margaret Atherton (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994); *Women Philosophers*, ed. Mary Warnock (London: J.M. Dent and North Clarendon, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1996). See also *The Neglected Canon: Nine Women Philosophers First to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Therese Boos Dykeman (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999). Finally, Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) offers an excellent introduction to the philosophy of the women of this period, especially English women; and Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) provides an outstanding synoptic picture of women's contributions to political philosophy.



stating his views, but with arguing for them.” In short, general and explanatory arguments are the hallmark of philosophy. Warnock proudly notes that “in putting together the collection I have hardly widened the scope of what is generally thought to be covered by the concept of philosophy.”<sup>28</sup>

Warnock clearly did not assemble her collection through the use of purely historical methodology. The philosophical standards by which she is counting texts as philosophical, and by which she is evaluating their merits, are her own contemporary ones. This has some distorting effects. For example, Warnock tells us that

from the seventeenth century onwards it becomes increasingly possible to exclude some writings from the category of philosophy and deem them instead to be either works of theology or works of a personal religious kind, works of piety. This has entailed that a number of women writers have been excluded from this collection who might have been thought to have some claim to philosophical status. And even of those included, some may seem to be almost too unquestioningly Christian in their outlook and approach, and the overlap between philosophy and religion too complete, for them to qualify.<sup>29</sup>

In consequence, for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Warnock can offer us only Anne Conway, Catharine Trotter Cockburn and Mary Wollstonecraft as examples of women philosophers; and from her last remark, we see that she is hesitant about even this short list. But, in fact, while Warnock seems correct in omitting writings that “rely more on dogma, revelation or mystical experience than on argument,” she seems off the mark in holding that in the seventeenth century that because “science began to be distinct from philosophy; philosophy itself could be distinguished from theology.” And she signals ambivalence on this very point by admitting that “it must not be thought that these three increasingly distinct subjects were necessarily, and from the beginning, at war with each other.” Warnock, it would appear, admits that what came to be known as philosophy—a discipline distinct from theology and science—was not distinct in this way in the seventeenth century. (Consider these questions: Was Malebranche a theologian or a philosopher? Was Descartes a scientist or a philosopher? If one holds, as these figures did, that metaphysical first principles and the very laws of motion are grounded in God, what sense would it make to think of philosophy as a discipline distinct from theology and science?) The perspective from which she views philosophy, and from which she evaluates the merit of philosophical views, is the vantage point of contemporary philosophy. From this vantage point, debates about whether God is the sole cause of the motion of bodies, or of our sensations, will appear to be purely theological

<sup>28</sup> Mary Warnock, *Women Philosophers*, pp. xxx-xxxi.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Warnock, *Women Philosophers*, pp. xxxi-xxxii. See the following examples of histories of the philosophy of gender that chronicle, and some of which critically engage with, past conceptions of “woman’s nature”: Sister Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC–AD 1250*, rev. edn. of 1985 original (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997) and her *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250–1500* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002); as well as Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman’s Nature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993);

debates that offer us nothing useful about the metaphysics of causation. So, Mary Astell's work on these issues will not be able to be included in our histories of philosophy. Similarly, from the present vantage point, arguments for the moral and intellectual equality of men and women rooted in interpretations of Genesis, according to which God created the human (both male and female) in his image, will hardly seem to make an important contribution to contemporary philosophical discussions about gender. This will mean that Christine de Pizan's work, Marie de Gournay's, and many other women philosophers' treatment of the equality of the sexes will also be left out of the histories of philosophy. And these results are a gross distortion of the history of Western philosophy, insofar as it is taken seriously as history, and is not simply a museum of past work that simply accords with current philosophical views, projects, and standards.

It will also be important to say something about whether the pure history of philosophy automatically precludes women prior to our time as counting as philosophers. For, we might wonder whether the category of *philosopher* was gendered as masculine in the past, or at least in the early modern period. There are some important points to note about this worry. First, the term "philosopher" was somewhat contested in the seventeenth century, especially in England. We do not, for example, see either Hobbes or Locke as referring to themselves or their work as philosophy, but rather as "Natural Philosophy." This term often was used to distance oneself from the scholastic philosophers (the philosophy of the schools) and to signify their alignment with the new science of mechanism. So, while Descartes and Malebranche, for instance, referred to themselves as philosophers and to their work as philosophy, it was not uncommon to find no mention of the term (except with reference to Aristotle or medieval philosophers) in the writings of those we clearly consider to be philosophers now.

This said, we might hold that a woman who self-identifies as a philosopher, or identifies her work as philosophy during our time period shows that the term was applicable to women as well as men. Cavendish identifies herself as a philosopher and her work as philosophy, as does Conway. More commonly, we find other people referring to the works of women writers as philosophy. For example, Leibniz writing to Thomas Burnett noted that his "philosophical views approach somewhat closely those of the late Countess Conway..."<sup>30</sup> Locke, writing to van Limborch in March of 1691 writes of Masham that "The lady herself is so much occupied with study and reflection on theological and philosophical matters, that you could find few men with whom you might associate with greater profit and pleasure."<sup>31</sup> And Joseph Glanvill writing to Cavendish notes "For your Grace hath convinced the world, by a great instance, that women may be philosophers, and, to a degree fit for

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<sup>30</sup> Hutton, *Anne Conway: A Woman Philosopher*, 233. Hutton cites Leibniz's letter in Gerhardt, vol. II, 217.

<sup>31</sup> Locke, John. 1976. *The Correspondence of John Locke*. Edited by E. S. De Beer. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Letter 1375.

the ambitious emulation of the most improved masculine spirits.”<sup>32</sup> In addition to these personal attributions, we should also note that the topic of women philosophers was of such great interest in late seventeenth century France that in 1690 Gilles Ménage wrote *The History of Women Philosophers*. A volume that he dedicated to Madame Dacier and which included seventy classical philosophers. We should also note that women’s writings were discussed in philosophical encyclopedias and dictionaries of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Of course, these mentions become nearly non-existent by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, we can see that the method of pure history of philosophy coupled with a broad understanding of feminist commitments, rather than ruling out women as philosophers, will allow us to see the complex debates concerning the term “philosopher,” in addition to the way that gender and class have played a large part in the ways that women have been able to engage in philosophical pursuits. Moreover, it is only through the methodology of pure history of philosophy that we will uncover the various letters, manuscripts, notices, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other sources for tracing the ways in which women were engaged in philosophical debates and discussions in the period.

## 1.4 The Future of Feminist History of Philosophy

The recovery and evaluation of early modern women’s philosophical writings is well underway, and a new generation of philosophers are discovering that women need not be absent from our histories. It is quite likely that this recovery would not have been possible without feminism. Here, we must acknowledge the importance of feminism’s influence on the history of philosophy, and underline how feminism has made so many of us far better historians. Feminism has encouraged us to give up the view that by now we have discovered all of the philosophical figures that contributed in significant ways to the philosophical conversations carried out in print. As the seventeenth-century feminist, François Poulain de la Barre reminds us,

We would be mistaken in thinking that the most distinguished people of today are the ones who showed the most promise among their generation in the area in which they have made their name... On what grounds, then, can we be sure that women are less capable than ourselves [men], since it is not chance but an insurmountable impediment that makes it impossible for them to play their proper role in society.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cavendish, William, Duke of Newcastle, ed. 1678. *A Collection of Letters and Poems Microform/ Written by Several Persons of Honour and Learning, upon Divers Important Subjects, to the late Duke and Dutchess of Newcastle*. London: Printed by Langly Curtis in Goat Yard on Ludgate Hill, 135–6.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the reasons for this, see my article “Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History.”

<sup>34</sup> Desmond M. Clarke, *The Equality of the Sexes: Three Feminist Texts of the Seventeenth Century*

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, historians of philosophy began to uncover numerous philosophical works by early modern women, which were discussed, and often praised, in print by male and female philosophers of the day. But virtually none of these women even appear in the footnotes of our histories of philosophy. Anonymous publication, views that ultimately “did not win out” in philosophy, the use of outmoded literary styles, and countless other “reasons” are given for women philosophers’ total absence from the history of philosophy. Feminist history of philosophy has shown that it was not the bad luck of publishing important texts anonymously that led to women philosophers’ erasure from history, nor was it mere chance that women’s philosophy was viewed in retrospect as “weak” and always on issues that were no longer of philosophical interest. Women philosophers’ erasure from history can now be seen to be due to the “insurmountable impediment” that Poulain identifies: Religious, economic, political, and social forces, which reinforce tradition, custom, and “common sense,” create structural barriers to women being able to take their places in the histories of the arts, sciences, law, philosophy, etc. Feminism not only gives historians of philosophy the motivation to investigate whether our histories had any good reasons to justify the figures and texts that they had included, but it also explains how things like the “institutionalization of philosophy” in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—viz., the way in which philosophy came to be carried out almost exclusively in university settings—increasingly led to women’s virtual exclusion from philosophy. So feminism not only motivates historians to seek to challenge women’s almost complete absence from the histories of philosophy, feminist theorizing also offers historical explanations for the specific ways women have been barred from access to knowledge, and from making contributions to culture and society that would warrant recognition in history. Feminism encourages us to look at the history of our discipline through the lens of gender. When we do so, we become baffled at why we ever thought it was unproblematic that no woman appears in our histories of philosophy, and why we did not question why the seventeenth-century texts and arguments about “the equality of the sexes” were not included in histories of early modern philosophy. Feminism has challenged the story of the main players and main topics of philosophy in unprecedented ways.

In conclusion, feminism encourages us take up the metaphor of the historian of philosophy as one who beats the bushes—viz., one who, finding it curious that not a single woman ever contributed anything of philosophical value, flushes out the very able women of the past, who were acknowledged by their contemporaries as adding in important ways to the philosophical conversations of the day. Leland Thielemann—the feminist literary historian, who traced some of J.J. Rousseau’s views on inequality in his first *Discourse* to the influence of Mme Dupin’s views on the inequality of men and women in her large-scale project on the history of women—wrote: “Only by the threshing of history could truth be separated from prejudice.”<sup>35</sup> Feminism has

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 60–61.

<sup>35</sup>Leland Thielemann, “The Thousand Lights and Intertextual Rhapsody: Diderot or Mme Dupin,”

made many of us better historians of philosophy because it has made us suspicious that philosophy, history, and the history of philosophy have always acknowledged women's contributions and given them the appropriate credit. It has made us better historians because it urges us to thresh history in the service of separating truth from prejudice.

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**Part I**  
**The History of Metaphysics, Epistemology,  
and Natural Philosophy**