

Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences 3

Sigrídur Thorgeirsdóttir  
Ruth Edith Hagengruber *Editors*

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# Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy

 Springer

# **Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences**

Volume 3

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As the historical records prove, women have long been creating original contributions to philosophy. We have valuable writings from female philosophers from Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and a continuous tradition from the Renaissance to today. The history of women philosophers thus stretches back as far as the history of philosophy itself. The presence as well as the absence of women philosophers throughout the course of history parallels the history of philosophy as a whole.

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Sigrídur Thorgeirsdóttir · Ruth Edith Hagenruber  
Editors

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# Series Foreword

## Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences

The history of women's contributions to philosophy and the sciences dates back to the very beginnings of these disciplines. Theano, Hypatia, Du Châtelet, Agnesi, Germain, Lovelace, Stebbing, Curie, Stein are only a small selection of prominent women philosophers and scientists throughout history.

The Springer Series *Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences* provides a platform for publishing cutting-edge scholarship on women's contributions to the sciences, to philosophy, and to interdisciplinary academic areas. We therefore include in our scope women's contributions to biology, physics, chemistry, and related sciences. The Series also encompasses the entire discipline of the history of philosophy since antiquity (including metaphysics, aesthetics, and philosophy of religion). We welcome also work about women's contributions to mathematics and to interdisciplinary areas such as philosophy of biology, philosophy of medicine, and sociology.

The research presented in this series serves to recover women's contributions and to revise our knowledge of the development of philosophical and scientific disciplines, so as to present the full scope of their theoretical and methodological traditions. Supported by an advisory board of internationally esteemed scholars, the volumes offer a comprehensive, up-to-date source of reference for this field of growing relevance. See the listing of planned volumes.

The Springer Series *Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences* will publish monographs, handbooks, collections, anthologies, and dissertations.

Paderborn, Germany  
Cleveland, USA  
Vercelli, Italy

Ruth Hagengruber  
Mary Ellen Waithe  
Gianni Paganini  
Series editors

# **Introduction: Methodological Reflections on Women’s Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy**

The history of women philosophers stretches back as far as the history of philosophy itself. There exists a vast amount of philosophical writings and ideas by and about women philosophers from antiquity to the present (Waithe 1987–1995). However, the history of philosophy has hitherto mostly been told as a history created by men. This still holds true not only with regard to the established idea of philosophy as it is presented in the tradition of Western philosophy. All over the world, philosophy continues to be presented more or less as a male genre. Intensive research of women philosophers from the last 30–40 years proves that the history of women philosophers exists, that it is as old as any tradition in philosophy and that it has shaped the tradition of philosophy all along (Green and Hagenhuber 2015).

The questions raised in that context were initiative for reflecting on methodological issues regarding the dismissive practice in the history of philosophy around the participation of women, and the inclusion and incorporation of women thinkers into the history of philosophy. In 2015, Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir as the Jane and Aatos Erkkö professor at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Sara Heinämaa who leads the Subjectivity, Historicity, Communitarity Research Network at the University of Helsinki, and Martina Reuter from the University of Jyväskylä organized a conference on *Women in the History of Philosophy: Methodological Reflections on Women’s Contributions and Influence*. The questions raised gave reason for gathering philosophers to reflect on methodological questions regarding the dismissive practice in the history of philosophy around the participation of women, and the inclusion and incorporation of women thinkers into the history of philosophy.

Contemporary research into forgotten women philosophers confirms that women throughout the ages participated more actively than commonly acknowledged in the development of philosophical thought. Women thinkers were less solitary figures in philosophical communities than commonly assumed. They were thinkers who responded to their philosophical predecessors and their contemporaries. They had impact on the philosophical thinking of their times. The rewriting of the history of philosophy by telling “her story” therefore displays a more complex picture of the past than “his story” has shown up to now.

The methodological questions that the study of women in the history of philosophy raises are manifold if we understand methodology as the theoretical analysis of the methods applied in the research of women thinkers in the past. A methodology offers the theoretical foundations for understanding which methods are most suitable to this type of scholarship within the history of philosophy. Obviously such a methodology is a feminist one that has a point of departure in the view that women have been silenced, marginalized, and excluded in the writing of histories of philosophy and in canons as represented in lexica, compendiums, and academic curricula. The ideology of sexual difference that has permeated the philosophical tradition may explain the prejudiced view of women as lesser thinkers than males is not applicable to the study of women in the history of philosophy. Women's philosophies cannot be understood as the negative counterpart to male philosophies in the historical study of philosophy. Neither can women thinkers be seen as a unified group pitted against a unified group of male thinkers. There is no duality in the history of philosophy with women representing one clearly demarcated stream of thought and men another one. The past of philosophy is, like the study of women thinkers shows, a much more pluralistic history. The past of the history of men philosophers is also more pluralistic in terms of ideas about sexual difference than often assumed from modern and contemporary perspectives. There is at times a latent feminine voice in texts that also needs to be excavated, like a several of the authors in this collection point out. The study of women philosophers and their works sheds light on an all too simplified view of this past, disclosing new possibilities of understanding it, yielding a richer picture of the human being than the traditional dualistic schemes of sexual difference offer. The pariah position of women in philosophy was often also as a source of freedom for many of the rediscovered thinkers experimented with different styles of philosophizing. We encounter attempts to broaden the notion of the ideal of the philosopher and efforts to extend the idea about what counts as philosophy. Latent or overt attempts of extending the ideal of the philosopher can be seen in symbolic figures such as Diotima, the goddess in Parmenides' poem, Sophia, and Lady Philosophy, as discussed in several of the contributions in this collection.

The contributors to the volume examine women thinkers as inventors and developers of ideas and as initiators of new modes of asking philosophical questions. That generates questions on how and why the disappearance of female contributions has affected philosophy, and the ways in which their re-emergence can transform the field of academic philosophy in terms of canon, curricula, and philosophical styles. The incentive for the contributions to this volume is to reflect the methodologies, both those that have caused the exclusion of women in philosophy and those that made it possible for them to become a part of the history of philosophy.

The following contributions on methodological reflections regarding the inclusion and exclusion of women in the canon and curricula of philosophy are divided into three sections. In Part I "Methodology", the authors who have all done extensive work in this area reflect on canonical exclusion and methodologies of inclusion in the writing of the history of philosophy. In Part II with the heading



“Rewriting the History”, the contributing authors reflect on the early stages of the philosophical tradition and on how this initiation was already branded by a sexual difference that determined the further historical development of philosophical culture and discourse. In Part III on “Reflecting the Content”, philosophers of the twentieth century who decisively shaped the course of contemporary philosophy are examined. Two of the contributions in this collection are written from a transcultural perspective, bringing together Eastern and Western perspectives on these questions of methodology. These contributions are a further indicator for the work that is ongoing in introducing other philosophical cultures to predominantly Westernized philosophy traditions. At the same time, they shed light on commonalities in the concerns of women philosophers across cultural borders, beyond their shared love of wisdom.

We are grateful to the authors to have been willing to contribute to an overview on the methodical reflection on the history of philosophy, on how women have influenced this history, and how and why the methodical instruments of the commonly known historiography of philosophy have to be rethought in light of this challenge. Their methodologies represent their philosophies of the diverse methodologies of analyzing women's exclusion and contribution to their respective philosophical traditions.

Finally, last but not least, we thank Catrine Val for the permission to include some of her suggestive pictures of women philosophers of the past. In her photographs, Catrine Val imagines how women philosophers and their ideas can be interpreted in art. These pictures and many more from her work on *Philosopher Female Wisdom* were exhibited at the University of Helsinki during the conference this book grew out of.

## Part I Methodology

**Mary Ellen Waithe's** *A History of Women Philosophers* that started in 1987, providing a four-volume impressive presentation of more than seventy philosophers, from 600 BC to the twentieth century did more than anything else to open up the field of contemporary research into women in the history of philosophy. After a long period of silencing women, the reader found names, texts, and interpretations of women thinkers from all major eras of philosophy. The recovery of the works by women philosophers that has taken place since has caused a significant change in the professional perspective on philosophy's history. Waithe's opening article of this volume “Sex, Lies, and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy” consists in a methodological reflection on the reasons for an exclusive canon and how it has been changed with the inclusion of women philosophers. Sex, lies, and bigotry were the causes of ostracizing women and the reason for how the “true” canon of philosophy was sabotaged. Waithe distinguishes between a historical canon as the canon that has excluded women thinkers and a compendium of philosophical works which includes lost and unknown, as well as forgotten and omitted works and those works

that have not “withstood the test of time”. Waithe assumes that from this compendium, a true canon can emerge, if the process of emergence is not disturbed by contextual or damaging interests. Categories of race or gender have functioned as excluding categories that damaged this selective process and the canon we have is shaped by it. Waithe urges us to rethink the canon because a reweaving of the tapestry of the historical canon is needed in the interest of philosophy, to recover from a “toxic” tradition. This tradition became more toxic with the onset of the modern era, print media, and the institutionalization of sciences within modern universities. The exclusion of women philosophers and their works became more systematic as apparent in encyclopedias and histories of philosophies. Waithe concludes that we need time to rethink our history and our canon of philosophy in light of the thousands of works omitted in the historical canon.

In “Women in the History of Philosophy: Methodological Reflections on Women’s Contribution and Influence” **Charlotte Witt** explores the question of how common ideas about the history of philosophy relate to the question “Why the history of philosophy matters to feminist philosophy?” Debates over methods and purposes of those philosophers who engage with the history of philosophy usually oppose the reconstructive method of the contextualists and the analytic approach of the “appropriationists”, and it is questionable if this discussion is fruitful for the feminist approach. According to Charlotte Witt, there is no doubt that philosophy is a combination of both methods, as philosophy is in itself always an intrinsically historical discipline insofar as the dialectical discourse of the present consists in an engagement with the past. However, as Witt adds, with this approach the exclusion of women from the history of philosophy and the refusal to recognize feminist research cannot be grasped. The historic retrieval of women philosophers of the past is a work of *recognition* in itself that makes the feminist approach special in its own way. History demonstrates the inadequate representation of women which shows an epistemic and a political bias of philosophy. Feminist work consists in the intellectual act of seeing what has been invisible and encourages the normative act to recognize this. The new method Witt presents provides a critique of the canon, the appropriation of canonical philosophers, and a revision of the history of philosophy as we are used to it, like Witt illustrates with the example of Kant. On the one hand, we admit our indebtedness to Kant, but on the other hand, we can no longer whitewash or overlook Kant’s racism and sexism.

In “‘Context’ and ‘Fortuna’ in the History of Women Philosophers: A Diachronic Perspective” **Sarah Hutton** discusses how the resonance of women in the history of philosophy is itself a result of a historical approach in philosophy. The history of their reception is their “Fortuna” that cannot be separated from their original historical context. Hutton comes to this insight by reflection on the development of the study of women philosophers of the past. The first era of the contemporary study of women philosophers was motivated by the concerns of the women’s movement. There was a lack of awareness of the philosophical and historical context, resulting in readings that implanted modern ideas into earlier thinkers. Feminist interpreters highlighted themes particular to women in hopes to “reconstruct a women’s tradition in philosophy”, presupposing that women think

differently. This approach resulted in a widespread negative view of rationality which was seen as masculine. The opposite was the case at the beginning of the contextual approach. Women philosophers were often interpreted as minor peers of the great male thinkers they were associated with. Elisabeth of Bohemia, Emilie Du Châtelet, and Anne Conway were in such historical reconstructions hardly visible for feminist discourse, but viewed in their productive contributions for philosophical discourse. Thus, the segregation of the history of women thinkers is an essential aspect of the recovery of their past contribution. The later phase of the contextual approach enables us therefore, so Hutton, to discuss women's philosophies of the past without assigning minor status them. Fortuna and context therefore both need to be considered in reworking, retracing, and re-applying the arguments and ideas of women philosophers of the past. There is necessarily a mismatch, a diachronic perspective, a gap between past and present interpretations that is integral to the study of the history of philosophy. Not only does it lead to the recovery of many figures who formerly were lost. The recovery of many thinkers who emerged from the contextual scenery was a result of a "mismatch" of historical context and present day philosophical interest. This requires us to ask, why we read today, as we read today and inspires us to reflect on the transformation we undergo on our view of the past and present of philosophy.

In "The Stolen History—Retrieving the History of Women Philosophers and its Methodical Implications" **Ruth Edith Hagengruber** insists that the history of women philosophers is as long as the history of philosophy. The forgetting and excluding of women in the tradition of philosophy deprived women of constructing their own identity. Re-reading and re-evaluating history is much more than a contextual assessment of the relevant conditions of a specific time period. Doing history is not collecting contextual narratives from facts to serve the interpretation of the present dominant agenda. Doing history as a methodical and methodological approach to philosophy is a unique and indispensable means to widen contemporary insights by becoming aware of facts. The history of philosophy is no quarry of ideas from where you extract the narratives that provide the concepts you are interested in. This narrow-minded approach is a methodical misuse of the power of history. Much more than a quarry where you obtain the material you asked for and consolidate the opinion you have already formed, the reading and re-reading of history can be an instrument for change, for thinking anew, for doubting convictions and for gaining new insights. Everything history delivers may turn out differently from what is expected. And the rarer the ideas one is able to embrace, the more revealing their reception within the history of ideas can become. The mind widens, so Hagengruber concludes, as it develops the ability to embrace different points of view.

In light of the above, research into the history of women philosophers brings to the fore new facts of a rich tradition. Including the findings of this research in the book pile that contains the history of philosophy, provides a kingdom of new ideas to look for insights that offer alternatives to conventional ones.

## Part II Rewriting the History

As a scholar of ancient Greek philosophy **Vigdis Songe-Møller** has written widely about notions of femininity and how women are viewed as superfluous in ancient philosophical thought. Women are quite present as characters in tragedies and comedies, but not in philosophical literature. There are however two important exceptions. In Parmenides's poem, a goddess has the central role of speaking the truth to the young philosopher, and in the homoerotic gathering of the *Symposium* of Plato, Diotima has as a priestess the role of indicating truth as the goal of Plato's philosophy. In both cases, these female figures represent the other who educates the young man in the poem and teaches Socrates. Songe-Møller displays how the feminine other is represented by the goddess as difference, birth, and death. The goddess nevertheless teaches the philosopher the denial of origin and change for the sake of timeless presence of true being. Powerful thinking is defined as transcending the needs of the human world which seems to contradict the female character. Parmenides, who narrates the journey of the philosopher, confronts him with the metaphors of light, unveiling and birthing, symbolized in passing by the vaginal cleft. When the young man has arrived at the imperium of the goddess, he has to listen to her commands, to preserve and pass her story. Here he learns that being and thinking are the same, mutually dependent and mutually constitutive. So "ironically" the goddess teaches the young man a truth which expels the female. In Plato's *Symposium*, Songe-Møller observes a dialectical change that goes in an opposite direction to the poem of Parmenides. Diotima's speech presents an active part instead of the passive love of beauty. In her story, the traditional roles of the sexes, presented in Penia and Poros, resource and need, become inverted. Penia is active and even rapes the passive Poros. Songe-Møller calls it a "radical feminization of Eros and thus of philosophy" as Eros' activity is said to be the one that belongs exclusively to women, namely giving birth. Reproduction is what mortals have in place of immortality. Songe-Møller hence concludes that in the poem of Parmenides, the goddess is used to expel the feminine, and in the *Symposium*, Diotima is used to include the female in Plato's philosophy. Her interpretation is hence an example of a methodology of uncovering the uses of ideas associated with women and the feminine. She uncovers the feminine in these texts, and displays how it is undermined by the male order in these ancient Greek texts.

**Robin R. Wang** has been influential in introducing ideas about sexual difference in the history of Chinese philosophy, both in the Confucian and in the Daoist traditions. In "A Journey of Transformative Living: A Female Daoist Reflection" Wang illuminates the primary role of the feminine and the maternal in Daoist thought, originating from Laozi's *Deadeness or Classics of Way and Its Power* (that possibly dates from as recently as the third century B.C.E.). She also argues for its necessity as an intervention into sexism and gender inequality in Chinese contemporary culture. This may at first sight strike as odd given the fact that Daoist and

Confusion traditions have throughout the centuries justified and legitimized patriarchy. By disclosing the potential of Daoism for feminism and equality concerns, Wang goes against mainstream patriarchal interpretations of these interpretations and uncovers a more pluralistic philosophical past as a resource for feminist thought and for the sexes to rethink their gender identities. Wang's interpretation also offers an interesting intercultural perspective. The gendered world of Daoism is different from Aristotle's male-female cosmos which is characterized by a strict hierarchical order of the active masculine and the passive feminine. There are no male images such as father/son or force, strength, and aggression that are associated with Dao. Daoism however makes the philosophical imaginary of the feminine a privileged locus of an embodied, experiential way of thinking and knowing. The rhythms of nature inherent in the feminine are important, the soft and the yielding that Dao represents, for making women and men aware of their relation to femininity, and to help them overcome the denial of maternal origin that is basic to any patriarchal thinking.

With her interpretation of Lady Philosophy in the early medieval text of Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, **Sigrídur Thorgeirsdóttir** offers a novel reading of Philosophy as a feminine personification in this text which was one of the most widely read texts of the middle ages. Here a symbolic womanly figure is interpreted as representing a philosophy that accounts for sexual difference. The title of "The torn Robe of Philosophy" refers to how Lady Philosophy describes how fake philosophers have torn her robe and adorned themselves with pieces of it as if it were their own philosophy. This metaphor of the torn robe can be seen as a metaphor for how philosophies of women have been treated in the history of philosophy. It can also be seen as a metaphor for the interpretations of Philosophy as a woman in the history of the reception of Boethius' text. Lady Philosophy's historical background in the goddess Sophia is repressed. It is necessary, so Thorgeirsdóttir, to interpret this figure as a tension between remnants of pagan elements and Christian-Platonic views. The history of interpretations of Boethius's text displays efforts to neutralize and degenderize the figure of Philosophy. This fact testifies to the no-place of women and the feminine in the history of philosophy that Luce Irigaray has discussed in her readings of classical texts of the Western philosophical canon. In her interpretation, Thorgeirsdóttir discusses the figure of Philosophy in terms of embodiment, the feminine and maternal origin. The imprisoned Boethius who awaits his death sentence in confinement has a dialog with Philosophy in which she sings for him, recites, and ponders on the question of life, death, and fortune. She works with feelings in thinking and thinking in feelings to help Boethius figure out the big questions of life and death to come to terms with his grim destiny. Thorgeirsdóttir argues that Philosophy represents ancient meanings of the noun *sophia* that include practical, embodied, and sensual knowledge and not mere theoretical wisdom.

### Part III Reflecting the Content

In “Reconsidering Beauvoir’s Hegelianism” **Karen Green** discusses how Hegelian philosophies of history have permeated histories of philosophy as histories of a masculine spirit that silence women’s contribution to the development of philosophical thought. One of the reasons why the history of women in philosophy is a relatively new field may have to do with the fact that Simone de Beauvoir’s philosophy of sexual difference is also determined by the Hegelian model according to which the womanly is identified with the other and the objectified according to Hegel’s master-slave dialectics of historical progress. Beauvoir did acknowledge how thinkers like Christine de Pizan defended their sex against the misogynistic tradition. Beauvoir’s Hegelianism remains nevertheless intact in terms of her view of the misogynistic history, and she does not, so Green, encourage research into the history of women in philosophy.

According to Green, there are two options for studying the history of women philosophers. One of them is to study women thinkers that have been closely affiliated with famous male philosophers “which requires immersion in the male stream from which they run as minor tributaries”. The other option is an alternative history of women’s ideas, which like women’s studies, most men choose to ignore. Green therefore comes to the conclusion that what is needed is a “cultural double helix, a sophisticated history in which we recognize both the evolution and development of men’s ideas, and the evolution and development of women’s ideas, as well as the complex interaction between them.” For Green, this task is of the utmost importance for philosophy because the solidarity of women is impossible without a history of philosophy that omits its women. The remembering of future women philosophers also depends on recovering this past.

With Hegel as the last great thinker of a philosophical system, **Tove Pettersen’s** interpretation of Beauvoir’s philosophy as a rejection of philosophical systems comes as a testimony to the diverse ways in which Beauvoir reacts to Hegel’s philosophy. In *Simone de Beauvoir and the “Lunacy Known as ‘Philosophical System’”* Pettersen shows how Beauvoir distanced herself from philosophy by denying to call herself a philosopher (which delayed that she was taken seriously as a philosopher in her own right). She has this in common with many great thinkers, be it Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, or Arendt who were critical of institutionalized and some canonical forms of philosophical thinking. What was of utmost importance to Beauvoir, as Pettersen makes clear, was that she felt she could not be true to her own experience and her feminine condition in her philosophizing given the parameters of traditional philosophical methods, concepts, and definitions. The traditional voice of philosophy is a masculine one. These struggles that Pettersen traces back to her early *Diary* helped her to open up a new field: feminist philosophy. Her commitment to cultivating one’s different voice is beautifully illustrated in her remark that the woman “who chooses to reason, to express herself using masculine techniques, will do her best to stifle an originality she distrusts. ... She may become an excellent theoretician and a reliable scholar; but she will make

herself repudiate everything in her that is 'different.'" The point of philosophy, of the past and of the future, is to explain the mystery of the "universe and of my own existence" like the young Beauvoir writes. So Beauvoir speaks against the traditional voice of philosophy as a masculine voice that presents itself as representing a neutral stand and speak on behalf of mankind. Her perceptive view of philosophy, she claims, stems from her lack of philosophical originality. She views herself as a literary person because it allows her to express her lived experiences. This self-defamatory view is based on her critical view of philosophy as abstract system building, out of touch with experience that she claims to be nothing less than a form of lunacy. So Pettersen comes to the conclusion that Beauvoir did not want to be termed a philosopher based on how philosophy was measured by the traditional standards. Reading Beauvoir's oeuvre in this way, like Pettersen does, shows how women thinkers have reshaped and reformulated the domain of philosophy by transgressing accepted methods and styles. One of the tasks of the study of women in philosophy is hence to show how our philosophical past is broader and more pluralistic than hitherto acknowledged, including an oeuvre like Beauvoir's that includes philosophical, literary, and essayistic texts. Overseeing this plurality amounts to a testimonial injustice inherent in canonizations and histories of philosophy.

Along with Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt is certainly among the most significant thinkers of the twentieth century. Like Beauvoir, Arendt maintains a distance to philosophy with her claim that she does political theory. In her paper on "Arendt, Natalty, and the Refugee Crisis" **Robin May Schott** also discusses a thinker who has a critical view of the feminist movement of her time. The reason was that she thought that the feminist movement was occupied with small issues and disregarded larger political systemic injustices. Feminist interpreters have nevertheless not been unified in their view of Arendt's philosophy which has both been interpreted as phallogocentric and as gynocentric. Having left these debates behind, Arendt's philosophy emerges as an important toolbox for feminist analysis of diverse political phenomena. Arendt's concept of natalty makes in Schott's view a revolution in philosophical thought, with its inherited focus on mortality as the horizon on which meaning takes place. Schott employs the concept of natalty to reflect methodologically and normatively on the current refugee crisis. Like Pettersen's interpretation of Beauvoir, Schott shows how Arendt's philosophy is transformative for philosophy in general by taking the feminine experience of birth (although she does not discuss actual physical birth) and to be born to bring a new perspective on life, birth, and death to a mortality-centered philosophical tradition that ranges from Socrates to Heidegger. Schott's application of the concept of natalty sheds light on the limits of the influential philosophical concepts of biopower and biopolitics for analyzing phenomena like the refugee crisis. This comparison is also interesting from the perspective of questions of methodology because it reveals both the disregard and the belated acknowledgement of the impact of women thinkers like Arendt. Arendt's concept of natalty as a concept to analyze critically actual humanitarian crises and their political backgrounds illustrates moreover a change that has taken place within Western philosophy over the last half a century or so.

Arendt's rejection of belonging to what she analyzed as an apolitical approach of a philosophical tradition as well as her criticism of the idea that philosophers speak in a universal and neutral voice have become accepted even though Arendt as a motor of this change has not been adequately acknowledged.

In her text on "The Feminine Voice in Philosophy" **Naoko Saito** follows a similar path of undermining the philosophical idea of a detached, neutral, impersonal subject of philosophy. Like Luce Irigaray sees a great potential for growth and diversification in philosophical knowledge in an encounter between the sexes, Naoko Saito advocates an alternative mode of philosophical thinking that consists in a new conversation between the sexes. She bases this on her idea of philosophy as translation that implies that any meaning comes to be through the act of a translating in the very general sense of translating a sense into word, an idea into interpretation like a word into another language. The idea of translation destabilizes the philosophical subject as an autonomous agent and unsettles predominant ways of thinking. In her interpretation of Cavell's concepts of the father tongue (writing) and the mother tongue (speech), Saito develops further his ideas about recovering the feminine voice in philosophy that has been suppressed. She does not understand the feminine in any essentialist sense but rather as voice and language that destabilizes predominant ways of thinking that harden the dichotomies of reason and emotion, of justice and care, and of male and female. From the point of view of methodological reflections, the conversation Saito introduces needs to take place within philosophy in a similar manner she reads male thinkers like Cavell and Emerson, by making the feminine voice in their texts better explicit. Her own interpretation of these texts is hence a form of conversation that illustrates her point that the conversation is more than a sum of its parts because it generates something new. Her approach has implications for transgressing other borders and divides. Occidentalism and Orientalism also need to be freed out of an oppositional structure that discloses a space for something new to emerge. The virtues of such an approach are those of listening, responsiveness to difference, and a willingness for change.

Saito's focus on a sexual binary should in this context not be understood as a return and rehabilitation of a binary culture of two sexes. She is more interested in the oppositional and dualistic structures that have permeated philosophical thought. These dualities have for the most part been associated with a hierarchical duality of sexual difference. For that reason, the history of philosophy leaves us with a legacy that is permeated by conceptual pairs, schemes, and structures of oppositions that are based in ancient ideas about a sexual difference. These schemes need to be rethought.

In "Iris Murdoch on Pure Consciousness and Morality" **Nora Hämäläinen** takes issue with a recurrent theme of the twentieth century women thinkers discussed by the contributors to this collection. It is fitting that the last contribution in the collection offers perhaps the most radical idea of a philosophy that attempts to extend or transgress the given parameters of a philosophical tradition that concentrates on disinterested pursuit of knowledge, and the exercise of thought for its



own sake. Hämäläinen interprets Murdoch's philosophy of pure consciousness and morality as an interesting form of bridge-building between traditions and schools of philosophy. With her philosophy, Murdoch opens up a space between stifling divisions where new possibilities for philosophy emerge. This methodology illustrates quite well how a certain outsider position can be productive for philosophy. With her fresh approach Murdoch builds bridges between theoretical and practical philosophy, between impersonal abstract thinking and efforts to become a better person through philosophical reflection. Murdoch goes beyond the virtue ethics of Elizabeth Anscombe, Mary Midgley, Philippa Foot, and their analytic contemporaries by elaborating her own kind of moral phenomenology of pure consciousness. She does not focus on consciousness as a foundation of knowledge in the tradition from Descartes to Husserl. Her interest lies in reflecting the experience of moral life. It is not enough to ponder on philosophical arguments. Arguments are means to understanding but not the substrate of the type of philosophical thinking that she is interested in understanding. Her accomplishment lies in conveying an understanding of philosophy as a fairly technical pursuit and as a work on oneself, to understand oneself and one's desires, longings, and circumstances better. In that sense, Murdoch combines the personal and the impersonal aspects of philosophy in a novel fashion. Her philosophy relies in this regard on our innate ability for non-intellectual perceptiveness and natural virtue that we can connect with and can be a source for more abstract reflections. Murdoch hence produces something that Hämäläinen describes as a philosophy of intelligent wisdom, offering a bridge between contemporary philosophies of wisdom as a pursuit of a good life, and more abstract, theoretical philosophy. This attempt may be said to unify most of the women thinkers presented and discussed in this collection. Their common denominator is a sense for philosophy as borne out of lived experience that abstract philosophical reflection requires for getting closer to life as we live it.

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# Contents

## Part I Methodology

- 1 **Sex, Lies, and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy** . . . . . 3  
Mary Ellen Waithe
- 2 **The Recognition Project: Feminist History of Philosophy** . . . . . 19  
Charlotte Witt
- 3 **“Context” and “Fortuna” in the History of Women Philosophers:  
A Diachronic Perspective** . . . . . 29  
Sarah Hutton
- 4 **The Stolen History—Retrieving the History of Women  
Philosophers and its Methodical Implications** . . . . . 43  
Ruth Edith Hagengruber

## Part II Rewriting the History

- 5 **The Goddess and Diotima: Their Role in Parmenides’ Poem  
and Plato’s Symposium** . . . . . 67  
Vigdis Songe-Møller
- 6 **The Torn Robe of Philosophy: Philosophy as a Woman  
in *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius** . . . . . 83  
Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir
- 7 **A Journey of Transformative Living: A Female  
Daoist Reflection** . . . . . 97  
Robin R. Wang

## Part III Reflecting the Content

- 8 **Reconsidering Beauvoir’s Hegelianism** . . . . . 113  
Karen Green

**9 Simone de Beauvoir and the “Lunacy Known as ‘Philosophical System’” . . . . . 125**  
Tove Pettersen

**10 Arendt, Natality, and the Refugee Crisis . . . . . 143**  
Robin May Schott

**11 The Feminine Voice in Philosophy . . . . . 159**  
Naoko Saito

**12 Iris Murdoch on Pure Consciousness and Morality . . . . . 173**  
Nora Hämäläinen

**Part IV Celebrating Women Philosophers in Art**

**13 Celebrating Women Thinkers . . . . . 187**  
Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir

**14 Catrine Val: Female Wisdom in Philosophy . . . . . 189**

**Part I**  
**Methodology**

# Chapter 1

## Sex, Lies, and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy



Mary Ellen Waithe

**Abstract** In “Sex, Lies, and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy” I explore several questions: What does it mean for our understanding of the history of philosophy that women philosophers have been left out and are now being retrieved? What kind of a methodology of the history of philosophy does the recovery of women philosophers imply? Whether and how excluded women philosophers have been included in philosophy? Whether and how feminist philosophy and the history of women philosophers are related? I also explore the questions “Are there any themes or arguments that are common to many women philosophers?” and “Does inclusion of women in the canon require a reconfiguration of philosophical inquiry?” I argue that it is either ineptness or simple bigotry that led most historians of philosophy to intentionally omit women’s contributions from their histories and that such failure replicated itself in the university curricula of recent centuries and can be remedied by suspending for the next two centuries the teaching of men’s contributions to the discipline and teaching works by women only. As an alternative to this drastic and undoubtedly unpopular solution, I propose expanding the length and number of courses in the philosophy curriculum to include discussion of women’s contributions.

It has been three decades since the appearance of Volume 1 of *A History of Women Philosophers*, part of a series that some have credited with causing western philosophers to question the accuracy of the Canon of Philosophy that forms the framework for higher education in that discipline. In 30 years a lot has changed in the profession, but hardly enough. The questions explored at the 2015 Helsinki conference merit serious consideration not only by those of us with research programs related to women and philosophy but by the entire profession. Accordingly, I will turn to questions addressed at that conference and share my thoughts.

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