3 How to Change a Philosophical Canon

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Historians of philosophy of the early modern period now recognise not only that the philosophical canon of the period is entrenched but also that this entrenchment is a problem. This recognition comes from two connected directions: (a) a move to contextualise the history of philosophy,[1] understanding the substance of philosophical views in light of the larger intellectual and social historical context in which it advanced, and (b) a sense of stagnation in the interpretations of canonical figures. Looking at the larger context enriches interpretations of canonical figures, and at the same time it alerts us to figures that have been neglected if not wholly forgotten by the canon. This work to reconsider the early modern canon has drawn attention to figures such as Arnauld, Malebranche, More, Bayle and

1. I cannot provide a proper history of this contextualist turn here, and if I were to try to do so, I most certainly would omit some key works. I do want to highlight some work that current scholarship might well have started to pass over: in metaphysics and epistemology, Richard Watson, *The breakdown of Cartesian metaphysics* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987), and Richard H. Popkin, *The History of scepticism : From Savonarola to Bayle*, rev. and expanded (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). (Note that Popkin's work was first published in 1960, revised in 1979 and revised again with the most recent edition being 2003); and in moral philosophy, Jerome Schneewind, *The invention of autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). and accompanying two volume anthology of primary sources J.B. Schneewind, *Moral philosophy from Montaigne to Kant: An Anthology* (2 Vols.) (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). I briefly touch on Schneewind's work. Daniel Garber, *Descartes' metaphysical physics* (Chicago UP, 1992), signalled a shift to situating the history of philosophy within the history of science, joined by others at the vanguard of this effort, including Roger Ariew, Desmond Clarke, Alan Gabbey and Gary Hatfield. It is interesting that these works preserve European philosophy as a white male domain. Around the same period, however, women's historians were also increasing awareness of women intellectuals of the period. See for instance Erica Harth, *Cartesian women: Versions and subversions of rational discourse in the old regime* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).; Londa Schiebinger, *The mind has no sex? Women in the origins of modern science* (Harvard University Press, 1989) and Joan Kelly, Early feminist theory and the Querelles Des Femmes in *Women, history, and theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). *Sandra Lapointe and Chris Pincock's Innovations in the history of analytic philosophy* (London: Palgrave, 2017) is an interesting example of how these contextualist methods can inform the writing of a relatively very recent history of philosophy.

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Mandeville,[2] who have been recognised by intellectual historians as central to the philosophy of the period, even as the canon discounted their work. But it has also resulted in attention to some of the many women philosophers of the period, such as, writing in English, Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway, Damaris Masham and Mary Astell,[3] and writing in French,

2. This note provides a sketch of a period of about a decade where the contextualist turn resulted in new editions and scholarship that opened up lines of research. A new translation of Arnauld and Pierre Nicole's *Logique, ou l'art de penser* appeared in 1996. See Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic, or the art of thinking*, trans. Jill Vance Buroker (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). At the same time a collection of scholarly essays was published: Elmar Kremer, ed., *Interpreting Arnauld* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). This enabled a small wave of scholarship. Olscamp and Lennon's translation of Malebranche's *La recherche de la verité* was reissued in 1997: Nicholas Malebranche, *The search after truth*, trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). At the same time, a translation of the *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion* was published. Nicholas Malebranche, *Dialogues on metaphysics and religion*, trans. Nicholas Jolley and David Scott (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Two monographs around the same time have helped to generate a fulsome body of secondary literature. See S. Nadler, *Occasionalism: Causation among the Cartesians* (Oxford UP, 2011) and Tad M. Schmaltz, *Malebranche's theory of the soul: A Cartesian interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). While there have been limited modern edition of Henry More's works (see Henry More, *The immortality of the soul*, ed. A. Jacob (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff), 1987), interest in More's correspondence and his intellectual networks has generated a good deal of interest. Hackett's re-issue of the out-of-print Bobbs-Merrill edition of Popkin's translation of excerpts of Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* has made Bayle's writings accessible again, and scholarship has been aided greatly by a digital edition of his Oeuvres Complètes. See Pierre Bayle, *Historical and critical dictionary: Selections*, trans. Richard Popkin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1991) and Pierre Bayle, *Bayle Corpus – Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Antony McKenna and Gianluca Mori (Paris: Classiques Garnier Numérique, 2012).
3. I highlight these four English women because the initial resources developed by ProjectVox.org focused on them. Eileen O'Neill's edition (Margaret Cavendish, *Observations on the experimental philosophy*, ed. Eileen O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). has enabled a full body of scholarly literature on Cavendish's. Similarly, the modern edition of Conway (Anne Finch Conway, *The principles of the most ancient and modern philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) has engendered scholarship on Conway. Interest in Masham derives from her relation to Locke, her correspondence with Leibniz, as well as Astell, and has benefited from this edition: Lady Damaris Cudworth Masham, *Philosophical works of Damaris, Lady Masham*, ed. J. Buickerood (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005). Like Cavendish and Conway, there is now a large body of secondary literature addressing various elements of Astell's philosophy, aided by re-editions of primary sources. See Mary Astell, *Astell: Political writings*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Mary Astell, *A serious proposal to the Ladies. Parts I and II*, ed. P. Springborg (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002); Mary Astell, *The Christian religion, as professed by a daughter of the Church of England*, ed. Jacqueline Broad (Iter and the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2013). For Cavendish, Conway and Astell, the scholarly discussion is now entering a new phase, in which interpretations are debated, further contextualised and made more nuanced. This is in part due to monographs that have presented these women as systematic thinkers. See, for instance, Lisa Sarasohn, *The natural philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and fancy during the scientific revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); David Cunning, *Cavendish* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016); Deborah Boyle, *The well-ordered universe: The philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) and Jacqueline Broad, *The philosophy of Mary Astell: An early modern theory of virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Gabrielle Suchon and Emilie du Châtelet.[4] More recently, attention has been directed to writers of African descent in the early modern period, such as Anton Wilhelm Amo, Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoano and Phillis Wheatley,[5] who have been completely missing from the history of philosophy, even if they have been included in Literature and African American Studies programmes.

This recognition of the entrenchment of the early modern canon has raised a number of different questions. Who else should be included in the canon? What constitutes a philosophical canon anyway? Why do we have the canon we do? That is, how did we arrive at the canon that we have found ourselves stuck with? Where is a philosophical canon? That is, is a philosophical canon aligned with national and nation-building interests?[6]

4. Michèle Le Doeuff drew attention to Suchon in her *Hipparchia's Choice* (2007). A modern translation of Suchon (Gabrielle Suchon, *A woman who defends all the persons of her sex selected philosophical and moral writings*, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)) drew attention to her work, and there is a growing body of secondary literature on her. Similarly, interest in Isaac Newton as a philosopher led to the rediscovery of du Chatelet, as her translation of the *Principia* into French is still the standard today. She has engendered tremendous interest in France and Germany (with plays and operas being produced about her life and work), and modern English translations have further sparked scholarship. See Émilie Du Châtelet, *Selected philosophical and scientific writings*, ed. J. P. Zinsser & I. Bour, trans. Judith P. Zinsser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009). And Katherine Brading's complete translation: Émilie Du Châtelet, *Foundations of physics*, 2018, www.kbrading.org/translations. See also Katherine Brading, *Emilie Du Châtelet and the foundations of physical science* (New York and London: Routledge, 2019).
5. Amo engaged with Leibnizian themes in the early eighteenth century, and while Amo was recognised at least as early as 2004, recent work by Stephen Menn and Justin E.H. Smith has mobilised early career scholars such as Dwight Lewis, Julie Walsh and Chris Meyns. See William E. Abraham, 'Anton Wilhelm Amo' in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu (Blackwell, 2004), 191–199. Anton Amo, *Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophical dissertations on mind and body*, ed. and trans. Stephen Menn and Justin E.H. Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). Equiano, Cugoano and Wheatley have been familiar to literary scholars for quite some time, but they each also engaged directly with foundational philosophical questions through the lens of slavery. Essays in volumes focused on African American studies make this clear. See for instance essays in Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, eds., *A Companion to African-American studies* (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2006); Audrey Fisch, ed., *Cambridge Companion to the African-American slave narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), particularly those by Rowan Ricardo Phillips and Stefan Wheelock. It is interesting that Amo is not mentioned, and Wheatley and Cugoano are barely mentioned in Tommy Lott and John P. Pittman, eds., *A Companion to African-American philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003).
6. See, for instance, Mary Ellen Waithe, 'On Not teaching the history of philosophy' *Hypatia* 4, no. 1 (1989): 132–138; Eileen O'Neill, 'Disappearing ink: Early modern women philosophers and their place in history' in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*, ed. Janet Kourany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 17–62; Eileen O'Neill, 'Early modern women philosophers and the history of philosophy' *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 185–197; Eileen O'Neill, 'Justifying the Inclusion of Women in Our Histories of Philosophy: The Case of Marie de Gournay' in *Guide to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Eva Kittay (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); 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 (Kluwer, 2004), pp. 219–250; Lisa

In this chapter, I ask: how? But I ask not how a canon is created but rather how to change a canon. I assume that the early modern philosophical canon needs to be changed, but I try not to assume any outcomes, for instance, whether particular figures should be added. This 'how' question has two senses. The first is a very real practical how-to question about what needs to be undertaken in order to do things differently. The second is a normative historiographical question about methods in the history of philosophy and in particular about ensuring the assumptions intrinsic in writing the history of philosophy are not hidden from view. While my focus is squarely on the history of early modern philosophy, my hope is that the discussion here will be helpful to (re-)writing the history of philosophy in general.

1. The How-To Manual

Philosophers are not always known for their practical skill set. We often get distracted by debates about concepts, and so instead of doing what it takes to change the status quo in the history of philosophy we can get embroiled in controversies about, for instance what constitutes a canon. As we will soon see, it is important to discuss some concepts central to a canon – who counts as a philosopher, what counts as a work of philosophy and what counts as a philosophical question. However, I want to insist that we do not need to reach consensus before starting the project of changing what we are doing with respect to the canon. Moreover, we ought not to wait to reach consensus, for doing the work that needs to be done can help to inform our analysis of key concepts. Instead, I propose thinking about the history of philosophy as a practice and about changing the narrative of the history of philosophy as a practical project, a quite complex one. As with any complicated project, we can enumerate some basic steps.

Step 1: Notice That Things Are Missing

The very first step is to think about why a project of changing a canon comes up in the first place: insofar as scholars and students are focused on a

Shapiro, 'Revisiting the early modern philosophical Canon' *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2, no. 3 (2016): 365–383; Bruce Kuklick, 'Seven Thinkers and how they grew: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz; Locke, Berkeley, Hume; Kant' in *Philosophy in History*, ed. R. Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Q. Skinner (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Alberto Vanzo, 'Empiricism and rationalism in nineteenth-century histories of philosophy' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, no. 2 (2016): 253–282. Recent years have seen increasing interest in these historiographical questions. See the articles in the January 2015 issue of *The Monist* (Vol. 98, Issue 1), edited by Ruth Hagengruber and Mary Ellen Waithe, devoted to the history of women's ideas, and those in a 2020 issue of *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (Vol. 28, Issue 3), edited by Leo Catana and Mogens Laerke, focused on historiographies of philosophy 1800–1950.

limited set of figures – in early modern philosophy, it is seven figures – we leave out a large number of philosophers. We know the names of many men who were very much in conversation with the seven heroes of the early modern canon but who have been marginalised by the way we have told the history of philosophy: Nicolas Malebranche and Pierre Bayle are perhaps the most astonishing because they were so influential in their time. But here are just a handful of others: Pierre Nicole, Antoine Arnauld, Henry More, Bernard Mandeville and John Toland. Completely excluded from even this list are the women thinkers of the period. In fact, until very recently, the women had been so excluded that there were experts in the field who thought there simply were no women philosophers prior to the twentieth century. Some probably still think that is the case, despite there now being familiarity with and a robust body of secondary literature on such women as Margaret Cavendish, Émilie du Châtelet, Mary Astell, Anne Conway and Damaris Masham, and increasingly awareness of many other women.[7] While the process of acknowledging that there were women philosophers is now well underway, many of us are only just learning about Africana philosophers of the early modern period. Anton Wilhelm Amo's works engaged directly in controversies around Cartesian metaphysics;[8] whereas Ottobah Cugoano not only provides a forceful argument against slavery, he does so by drawing on metaphysical themes, like human nature and the role of memory in identity.[9] Phillis Wheatley, a formerly enslaved woman, famous in her own time for her poetry, which is inflected with considerations of identity and virtue, has also started to draw philosophical attention.[10]

We will no doubt continue to find more categories of philosophers who have been excluded from our histories. So, the first step is to notice that things are missing – philosophers occluded from view – in our histories of philosophy. Moreover, we are unlikely to realise everything that has been missing at once. Rather, recovering what has been lost will be a process, not unlike an archaeological dig at which first one artefact is uncovered and, as

7. I am focused on the early modern period, which I take to end around 1780. Here are a handful of additional women philosophers of the period: Marie de Gournay, Anna Maria van Schurman, Jacqueline Pascal, Marguerite Buffon, Gabrielle Suchon, Catherine Trotter Cockburn, Laura Bassi, Maria Gaetana Agnesi, Marie Thiroux d'Arconville and Catharine Macaulay. If we were to extend a little later, to the post-revolutionary United States and France, the most recognisable name that would be included is Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft is often taken as the originator of modern feminist thought, but with awareness of women writing in the centuries before her, we would better appreciate the intellectual tradition of which she is a part, even as she manages to capture the imagination in a new way.
8. Amo, *Anton Wilhelm Amo's Philosophical dissertations on mind and body*.
9. See Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and sentiments on the evil and wicked traffic of the slavery and commerce of the human species*, 1787.
10. See Aaron Garrett, 'Phillis Wheatley and the limits of history of philosophy' in *Routledge handbook of women and early modern European philosophy* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

sense starts being made of it, another will be found, and so on; the more we find the more we come to see the past in a new way.

Step 2: Identify Blind Spots

In so far as we have ignored a very large number of philosophers for over a century, we ought to reflect on why we were blind to these things. In so far as we are philosophers, that reflection involves explicating the tacit assumptions we make that might lead to the exclusionary patterns of which we are starting to become aware. Two assumptions are easy to identify.

First, the early modern canon is driven by issues in metaphysics and epistemology. The way we write the history of the period assumes that these questions – about the basis of knowledge, substance-mode ontology, the relation between God and nature, the nature of mind, the nature of body, the relation of mind and body and causation – are the most central philosophical questions. With the exception of metaphysical questions about the nature of free will, we discount questions in ethics and political philosophy, and in discounting the questions, we also deem the authors most interested in these questions less important. Following on his two-volume anthology of primary sources in modern moral philosophy,[11] J.B. Schneewind aimed in *The Invention of Autonomy* to offer a corrective to the privileging of metaphysics and epistemology, constructing a narrative through which natural law accounts of morality developed through a number of moments – including social contract theory and concern with self-mastery – to culminate in Kant's account of morality as grounded in the form of self-determination proper to autonomy.[12] Interestingly, rather than complicating the narrative of early modern philosophy, Schneewind's efforts created a new historical narrative stream running parallel to the standard one, one that is typically found in curricula through self-standing courses in the history of ethics offered separately from early modern philosophy courses. Schneewind's work has helped to enrich our understanding of autonomy and its place in moral theory, but it has not challenged the Kantian distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy. This effort to recognise questions in moral philosophy of the period has left the early modern canon very much intact, effectively supplementing it with a parallel canon. It is not clear that blinders have really been lifted.

Second, we assume we know what a philosophical text looks like, and specifically we assume that philosophical works are treatises. It seems we take Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (as well as the other two *Critiques*) as paradigmatic. I suspect that we do that because each of these works is

11. Schneewind, *Moral philosophy from Montaigne to Kant: An anthology*.
12. Schneewind, *The invention of autonomy*.

systematic.[13] They start by articulating a fundamental set of assumptions and lay out accounts that purport to be comprehensive of human understanding and human nature that in some sense follow from those assumptions. We can thus add Spinoza's *Ethics*, Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*, Leibniz's *Monadology* and Berkeley's *Principles of Human Understanding* to the list as reflective of the desirable systematicity, even if they might not be quite the form of the a treatise.

It is worth highlighting that we have to do a fair bit of manoeuvring to preserve this assumption of a standard philosophical form because it is unclear *within the period itself* how philosophy ought to be written. Descartes' *Principles* only makes sense alongside the *Meditations*, which, if taken with the *Objections and Replies* with which it was originally published, is a truly odd blending of philosophical genres. Perhaps Spinoza's most impactful work was his *Theological-Political Treatise*, and while '*tractatus*' is in the title, the work is highly polemical, and its systematic nature elusive. Leibniz's philosophy is famously found in an array of works, most of which are unsystematic essays and articles (and even marginalia!), and the shifts in his views over time are also well known. Though Leibniz is a systematic thinker, his system is one that is always in a state of revision. Similarly, Berkeley's writings were quite wide ranging, with dialogues and scientific essays figuring prominently.

These considerations make it seem that the genre of philosophical writing is less important than the systematicity of a philosopher's thinking. This point invites a question of what constitutes systematic thinking: does being a systematic thinker entail starting from a metaphysical foundation and building out? Or does it entail simply articulating a set of basic assumptions and remaining consistent with them? We can see how articulating tacit assumptions of the early modern philosophical canon invites further questions. At the same time, it is important to note that articulating assumptions need not entail rejecting them. We may want to revise our assumptions, but alternatively we may be able to justify them.

Step 3. Look for What Is Missing

In order to articulate the tacit assumptions of our histories and to evaluate them, it helps to have some perspective. Part of the way a philosophical canon works is that it is self-justifying: we read the philosophers we read because we take them to be great, and they remain great because, having read them so carefully, we end up valuing what those philosophers take to

13. Mogens Laerke, 'Structural analysis and dianoematics: The history (of the history) of philosophy according to Martial Gueroult' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 58, no. 3 (2020): 581–607, https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2020.0052 argues that in Martial Gueroult's writing of the history of philosophy, he demarcated the domain of philosophy by the development of a system to address a set of philosophical questions.

be important. But if we start reading philosophers who have gone missing will we end up valuing philosophical work differently? To address this question, we need to acquire some knowledge of what is missing. There are lots of ways to do this. We can read correspondence of the canonical figures, discovering whom they had substantive exchanges with and the works that arose from engagement with those canonical figures. Correspondence provides helpful context for better understanding of the philosophy of the period. It can also help to dislodge some prejudices. For instance, there are women involved in these correspondences: Princess Elisabeth and Queen Christina corresponded with Descartes, Sophie, Electress of Hanover, corresponded with Leibniz, and was his patron, and Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham corresponded with Leibniz in defence of Locke. Though these women are particularly well-placed socially, they invite us to start searching for other women engaged in philosophy.

That search is not for historians of philosophy to undertake on their own. For many decades now, other disciplines have undertaken to recover women intellectuals of the past. Historians of philosophy need to consult the work of an array of historians – intellectual historians, archival historians and women's historians – as well as of scholars of literature. I am most familiar with the work of scholars of English literature and French literature, because of my own research interests, but no doubt there are those working on the literary histories in other languages who will be helpful to consult. Interdisciplinary collaboration is just as important for the recovery of the work of other groups who have been excluded from the history of philosophy. There are a handful of experts in Africana philosophy in philosophy departments, yet more recovery work on Africana intellectuals has been thriving in African-American Studies programmes (in the United States) and Africana studies programmes, as well as in History programmes, along with programmes in African Studies. Similarly, we ought to consult specialists in Asian Studies for insight into the array of philosophers in various Asian traditions (Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and so on): specialists in African Studies for insight into the intellectual work of the variety of African traditions. And we ought to look to our colleagues in Indigenous Studies for insight into Indigenous philosophies. As my focus has been and continues to be on European women philosophers of the past, I will focus on that recovery effort here, but in doing so, I do not want to discount the work that has been and needs to be done in other domains.

Step 4. Build Infrastructure

Steps 1–3, in many ways, involve doing what philosophers and historians of philosophy have been trained to do. Thinking about the canon requires explicating tacit assumptions, recognising implications of those assumptions and interrogating whether the assumptions have merit. Working to destabilise the canon involves raising objections to those assumptions and

beginning the work of articulating alternative frameworks. These theoretical reflections, however, only go so far. Challenging the dominant paradigm of the history of philosophy so that it is not simply destabilised theoretically but changes *in actuality* involves making it materially possible to relate alternative histories and to do things differently.

Through the work New Narratives in the History of Philosophy project,[14] we identified six distinct yet interconnected ways to create this possibility. It is important to note that researchers of Africana philosophy have been engaged in parallel projects of building infrastructure to facilitate further philosophical scholarship.[15]

First, to facilitate research on non-canonical figures, their writings need to be made accessible to researchers, both digitally and through modern editions. The advent of digital technology has made this much easier. It is no longer the case that to begin one's research one must travel to distant libraries to consult works that have long been out of print, or else to be at the mercy of someone else having already been interested in a particular work and commissioned a facsimile so that one can read a work through a microfilm or microfiche reader.[16] Databases like Early English Books Online (EEBO) and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) have made many works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in English, held at various research libraries in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, readily accessible to researchers whose institutional libraries subscribe to those databases. Increasingly, within these databases, digital images of the work (essentially digital versions of microfilm) have been turned into text files with the assistance of optical character recognition (OCR) and machine

14. New Narratives in the History of Philosophy was originally funded as a Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSRCC) Partnership Development Grant (2015–19) and was squarely focused on recovering women in European philosophy of the early modern period (though at the outset we were not so self-aware as to make explicit that the project was one of European philosophy). Its successor project, Extending New Narratives in the History of Philosophy, is funded by an SSHRC Partnership Grant (2020–7), and aims to extend the temporal arc to roughly 1200–1940 and to expand the scope of marginalised figures we are recovering. Through the successor project, we are also engaged in a continual process of reflecting on methodological questions in the history of philosophy. Information about both projects can be found at http://newnarrativesinphilosophy.net. The original project is archived at http://newnarrativesinphilosophy.weebly.com.
15. Chike Jeffers and Peter Adamson have developed an extensive podcast series on Africana philosophy from ancient Egypt to the twentieth century as part of the *History of philosophy without any gaps* podcast, and these episodes will soon be published in companion volumes. https://historyofphilosophy.net/series/africana-philosophy. I cannot provide an extensive bibliography here but select resources include Lewis Gordon, *Introduction to Africana philosophy* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Mia E Bay et al., eds., *Towards an Intellectual history of black women* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Melvin Rogers and Jack Turner, eds., *African-American political thought: A collected history* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).
16. I realised that I was getting old when, several years ago, an MA student asked me what microfilm and microfiche were.

learning tools that can correct the mis-transcriptions due to the irregularities of font and period orthography, further facilitating research. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France, through its Gallica database, has been a pioneer in providing open access digitisations of an astonishing number of texts in its collections. Other European national libraries are following its lead. Individual researchers are increasingly undertaking digital transcriptions of works that have not yet been institutionally digitised.[17]

Second, digital access to some portion of texts is a great aid to research, but we must recognise it is only the beginning, and that digital editions do not replace modern scholarly editions. Scholarly editions of canonical texts derive from a tremendous amount of labour, comparing editions, reviewing correspondence, understanding reception, contextualising the context of publication. All this research remains to be done for many of the writings of non-canonical authors to produce the scholarly editions that will enable further research into these figures.[18]

Third, it is all too possible to digitise a text without reading it, and we need to read these texts. As noted earlier, efforts to destabilise the canon challenge us to rethink how we count some works as philosophical and exclude others, that is to rethink the boundaries of philosophy. We cannot do this work, however, simply by looking at covers or reading titles: we need to read the works themselves with an eye to their engagement with recognisable philosophical questions and with the controversies of the period in which they were written. There is, however, so much to read.

Fourth, to help organise the vast amount of information available as well as that remaining to ascertain, and to assist in formulating future research questions, the New Narratives in the History of Philosophy project developed a bibliographic database to catalogue the works of women identified as intellectuals of the early modern period that were arguably philosophical.[19] This database allows us to begin to track the impact of a work – by registering each edition – as well as to discover intellectual networks – by noting authors of prefaces and dedicatees, among others. It also includes links to digital editions (though updating this information has proven labour-intensive), and it includes the capacity to record philosophical topics treated in

17. Marguerite Deslauriers' project website http://querelle.ca includes transcriptions of texts in Italian, Latin, English and French from the pro-woman side of the *querelle des femmes,* including texts by authors such as Marguerite Buffet, Marie de Gournay, Gabrielle Suchon, Moderata Fonte and Lucrezia Marinella, among others. A transcription of Gabrielle Suchon's *Du Celibat Volontaire* can be found in SFU's Digital Collections here: https://digital.lib.sfu.ca/newnarratives-217/du-celibat-volontaire-ou-la-vie-sans-engagement. Marcy Lascano has prepared a digital version of the 1663 edition of Margaret Cavendish's *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* here: https://cavendish-ppo.ku.edu; and Corey Dyck has transcribed selections of the works of German women intellectuals: https://publish.uwo.ca/~cdyck5/UWOKRG/women.html.
18. The *Oxford New Histories of Philosophy* series is undertaking to publish new scholarly editions of previously marginalised works.
19. In the continuation of the project, Extending New Narratives in the History of Philosophy, we are expanding the bibliography beyond European women of the early modern period.

a work (using the fixed language of the PhilPapers database). Collecting this information in a bibliography has the effect of laying bare the degree to which the early modern philosophical canon has discounted the work of women, as well as just how much work there is to be done. In doing so, it can help to counter a tendency simply to add to the existing canon or to exchange one canonical figure for another. The bibliographic database, in presenting some portion of the historical record of women's publications, issues a call to think about how to tell the history of philosophy differently.

Fifth, a central element of recovering neglected authors and their writings involves reading and developing interpretations and developing a robust secondary literature on these figures and texts: this is another element of infrastructure. To create this body of scholarly literature, however, involves the cooperation of scholarly journals and presses. Editors and referees need to be willing to review and to publish materials on which they themselves may have no or quite little expertise. Some may worry that this weakens the review process, but there are two ways in which one might address this complaint. First, reviewers could simply read the works with which they are unfamiliar and evaluate the interpretations on their merits. If works are readily accessible, this need not be a problem. And even if reviewers feel less than perfectly qualified to evaluate an interpretation, they can attend to the methods adopted by the author, the ways in which questions are framed, and the arguments in favour of one interpretation or another. It is standard practice in philosophy to take issue with published interpretations, and so we can assume that faulty interpretations will be corrected as more philosophers read the authors and their works and develop interpretations.

Finally, high-quality scholarship requires a community of practice. Even if referees and editors need to be willing to take more risks in evaluating research, it is still the case that developing the infrastructure of scholarly resources cannot be done by researchers working in isolation. Communities of practice, however, do not simply appear out of nowhere. People build them. We can do that in ways that are both familiar, such as hosting conferences and workshops, presenting papers in large settings like the meetings of scholarly societies. We can also do it in less familiar ways, by incentivising researching underexplored figures: for instance, we can organise opportunities for early career researchers to receive feedback on works-in-progress that explore non-canonical figures and organise reading groups on underexplored, or even as yet un-explored texts. In addition, in philosophy we form a community in part through the curricula through which we have been educated, especially at the undergraduate level, as courses in the history of philosophy are standard in undergraduate philosophy programmes. Building resources through which non-canonical figures and texts can be incorporated into standard courses can make a world of difference.[20] Of

20. At least one recent anthology aims to make this possible. Lisa Shapiro and Marcy P. Lascano, *Early modern philosophy: An anthology* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2022).

course, in philosophy research and teaching are often closely connected. So, both building those resources and teaching these new figures can have the effect of providing direction for new lines of research, which can help to revitalise the way we do history of philosophy, and indeed the way we think about the discipline of philosophy itself.

2. The Methods of Production

In building this infrastructure, we are effectively building – producing – the history of philosophy, and our methods of production, just like those who came before us, will incorporate a set of assumptions, to which we, unlike those who came before us, need to attend. In particular, we need to be attuned to normative aspects of methods in the history of philosophy. In this section I reflect on historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot's ground-breaking work on the history of the Haitian Revolution, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995). Trouillot's critique of the practices of history begins with a point about double sense of the word 'history' itself. In one sense, history consists of, in Trouillot's expression, 'what happened', the people, places and things involved in the course of events. In another sense, history is 'that which is said to have happened', the ways in which the unfolding of the course of events is told, or narrated, as a story is constructed. Thus, '[h]uman beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators'.[21] For Trouillot, history, in both senses, is 'a social process, and involves peoples in three distinct capacities, as (1) *agents*, or occupants of structural positions; (2) *actors* in constant interface with a context; and (3) as subjects, as voices aware of their vocality'.[22] Trouillot's historiography and his history are focused on events, and the people, places and things involved in those events. The history of philosophy, however, is a particular form of a *history of ideas*, and I want to consider how Trouillot's historiographical framework might be applied to the history of philosophy. Before doing this, however, let me lay out Trouillot's framework in a bit more detail.

Trouillot's focus is the Haitian revolution, understood to have occurred between 1794 and 1805. In the sense of 'history' as 'what happened' in the Haitian revolution, we can talk about the slaves, landowners and representatives of the French government, as well as particular places (towns, plantations and so on), in, as it was called prior to the revolution, Saint-Domingue; we

21. He continues:

> In vernacular use, history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both "what happened" and "that which is said to have happened". The first meaning places the emphasis on the sociohistorical process, the second on our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process.
>
> (Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), p. 2)

22. Trouillot, p. 23.

can discuss how some individuals – Toussaint Louverture, but also others – led an insurrection; how the French responded, and how that response failed; and we can discuss how these individuals presented themselves and their actions, whether it be their own writings, descriptions of their actions by their contemporaries or artefacts that remain, for instance, painted portraits. In the sense of 'history' as 'that which is said to have happened', those who tell the story of what happened include not only professional historians but also those who produce the historical record, such as newspaper publishers, artists, civil servants, human observers of people and events that unfold before them. In this writing of 'history', there is always an implicit agency: the writers make choices about what to include and exclude. These individuals in selecting events to foreground always at the same time discount others, whether it be by consulting particular archives, depicting some individuals or events and using particular iconography in doing so, by determining the categories of official records, and in making notes, writing letters, keeping diaries and so on. In attending to these narratives and their choices – in engaging in this historiography – we lay bare how contingent our histories are, and how, as Trouillot's title makes explicit, they always involve silences. There are also the contingencies of the archives themselves – not simply what survives as historical record but what is chosen to be worthy of survival, for not everything can be preserved. These contingencies bring with them unavoidable silences: some things that happened will always be missing from the histories we write and tell about what happened.

Trouillot's history of the Haitian revolution and the correlated history of the Atlantic slave trade aim to give voice to these silences, and in doing so he highlights the third element of the framework, the subjectivity or self-awareness of these narrators of history. The stories that are told of our past reflect the distinctive perspectives of the storytellers – both their points of view and their interests – even as they aim to report on a course of events as if they have happened independently of those interests. More often than not, this subjectivity of the historian is left unspoken, and so again, there the particularity of the perspectives brought to bear in the narration of the past – in the writing of history – is silenced. Sometimes, these particular interests and perspectives are evident; sometimes they might have been evident at the time at which they were told, but over time have disappeared from view; and sometimes the particular perspectives may have always been obscured from view, especially that of those doing the narrating, as we all have our implicit biases. Each of these modes of subjectivity comes with their own silences. Trouillot's power as a teller of the history of Haiti is that even while he provides a history, he also marks (at least part of) how his own perspective and interests are brought to bear.

How might we translate this framework to the history not of events but of ideas, and in particular to the history of philosophy? When historians of philosophy have turned their attention to the historiography of philosophy, more often than not, they have focused on justifying history of philosophy

as part of the discipline of philosophy itself.[23] When they have explicated the varieties of ways of doing history of philosophy the discussions focus more on describing what we do – doxographic cataloging, rational reconstruction, contextual insights into philosophical arguments – than on how those practices incorporate normative assumptions. In particular, until quite recently, there has been little consideration of what counts as philosophy in a particular historical period, and for us, as present-day philosophers,[24] as if it is obvious what constitutes philosophy.

Trouillot's framework helps us to open up this question. That is, we can note that philosophy, like history, has two intertwined senses: philosophy as it is practiced, and philosophy as it is said to have been practiced. There is a challenge straight away in explicating what philosophy as it is practiced is. It might be tempting to point to those who have some kind of professional status as a philosopher, for instance a university professor. Philosophy certainly may be practiced in an institutional setting today, but it is also, currently, not only done in monographs and journal articles but also through correspondence, conversations and public lectures, columns in newspapers and other public venues, and even arguably in plays, novels and even classrooms. It is thus hard to specify what it is to practice philosophy today, and it is even harder to determine what it was to practice philosophy in the past. Most of the canonical philosophers of the early modern period did not hold institutional positions and indeed were in conflicts with those who did. We thus cannot simply point to professional philosophers of the past. What is true of canonical philosophers is even more true of many others of the period; they interacted with one other in salons, and in societies, they corresponded widely, they published proceedings of their meetings, effectively founding journals, they experimented with many genres of writing.[25] Just as there are questions in the present about what counts as philosophy, so too there are questions about what counts as philosophy in the past.

23. See for instance the essays in Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Philosophy in history: Essays on the historiography of philosophy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Mogens Laerke, Justin E.H. Smith, and Eric Schliesser, eds., *Philosophy and its history: Aims and methods in the study of early modern philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
24. Eric Schliesser, *Ten neglected philosophical classics* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), implicitly if not explicitly, challenges assumptions we make about what counts as philosophy by drawing attention to works that have been occluded from view. A second volume adds to this work. See Eric Schliesser, ed., *Neglected classics of philosophy (Vol. 2)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).
25. Four well-known philosophers who play with many different genres come to mind immediately: Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* jumps around from genre to genre; Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* starts with a poem and moves into essays and more argumentative writing; Denis Diderot helped to develop the *Encyclopédie*, wrote philosophical letters, essays and fiction with a clear philosophical import; and Voltaire wrote essays, epistolary works, short fiction, satires, all with philosophical aims.

That brings us to the second sense of 'philosophy': philosophy as it is said to have been practiced. Just as Trouillot asks historians to reflect upon and analyse how history is produced, and so how the narratives of the past come to be what is said of it, we can ask how the narratives that dominate the history of philosophy come to get the hold they do. Recent work has made important strides in addressing these questions,[26] reminding us that histories of philosophy, insofar as they help to structure educational curricula, play a political role, that the structures of academic institutions – and in particular supervisor-student relationships – serve to amplify and entrench biases, that publishers are a part of this ecosystem, and that historians of philosophy often serve as gatekeepers in prioritising the conceptions of philosophy they do. The steps I outlined in Section 1 of this chapter ask us as contemporary historians of philosophy to strive for self-awareness about our own biases, our roles in our professional ecosystems and presuppositions about what counts as philosophy, and to continue to strive for that self-awareness as we set about transforming the history of philosophy.

In building the infrastructure required to transform the history of philosophy, we can also look to other practices that we often take for granted. Our histories of philosophy are largely based on standard editions of texts, and (in North America, certainly) available translations. The initial work of establishing texts of canonical figures was done long ago, but periodically it has been repeated. The very fact that the arduous process bears repeating is a result of discoveries of new material in archives, as well as, occasionally, mis-transcriptions. Translations appear as a figure gains currency, to make the work more accessible in teaching students who may not have the language proficiency, but quality of translation impacts interpretations. Even as we (and I do count myself among these historians of philosophy) have been focused on trying to get these texts well-established, we prioritise these efforts while ignoring others, and – here is where the silencing comes in – without even noticing that we are ignoring others. We need to do a better job of recognising what has gone missing. Tools like the digital bibliography of works by women philosophers can help to ensure that we recognise the large number of understudied works by women of the past that exist, even while we focus on a handful of them.

26. See Delphine Antoine-Mahut, 'Philosophizing with a historiographical figure: Descartes in Degérando's Histoire Comparée Des Systèmes de Philosophie (1804 and 1847)' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 533–552, https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1671797. Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, 'From a "Memorable Place" to "Drops in the Ocean": On the marginalization of women philosophers in German historiography of philosophy' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 442–462, https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1677216. Leo Catana and Mogens Lærke, 'Historiographies of philosophy 1800–1950' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (May 3, 2020): 431–441, https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1709153.

Through interdisciplinary consultations and research, historians of philosophy can build bibliographies of names of neglected authors and their works. Decisions to move forward to build digital resources and scholarly editions, to build secondary literature, will require judgements about which works are more philosophically interesting, and those judgements import normative assessments about what counts as philosophy and so who counts as a philosopher.

Trouillot's framework exhorts us to reflect on the normative judgements contained in how philosophy is said to have been practiced that have gone into our histories. The narration of the history of philosophy over the past 100 years or so has been structured so that key philosophical topics have been identified and anchored in the works of key figures. These central topics may well have emerged from the particular socio-cultural-historical context in which the histories were being written, and certain figures came to be identified with particular positions with respect to those topics, established texts of their written works emerge, and those standardised editions further validate the authority of the figure, the primacy of the topics and the storyline itself. At a certain point, we lost track of this process of production, and the figures, their ideas and arguments, became completely abstracted from the context in which the topics they address become so important: at that point we certainly have a canon, if we did not before. In the past two or three decades, historians of philosophy have aimed to re-contextualise these historical figures. Doing so has disrupted the canon, for it has brought to light authors and works that have been overlooked by the narratives of the history of philosophy. At least initially, however, many of these contextualising efforts preserved the primacy of the canonical central topics and left the canonical central figures in their starring roles, determining the figures who had been rediscovered to be supporting actors. I noted earlier that the philosophical canon we have inherited imports a tacit assumption that philosophy entails certain systematicity, but I also noted that this assumption invites further questions, even if we only consider canonical thinkers. The work of building infrastructure problematises that assumption even more. While some women did write treatises, and develop a systematic philosophical programme, many women engaged in intellectual work that was not overtly systematic. These women wrote short stories, novels and plays; they devised educational curricula; they crafted essays, polemics, dialogues and conversations; they published letters to imagined correspondents. While these works do not take familiar philosophical forms, they often concern familiar philosophical questions, especially about ethics, virtue and the virtues, as well as political philosophy. Other works, however, concern currently less fashionable questions, such as those about education, and in attending to them we can be reminded that from Plato forward education has been a central philosophical question. For through education, we develop into reasoning beings, into ethical beings, with dispositions to act, and into political beings who participate in our communities.

When we look to others who have not been included in our histories of philosophies, we find similar varieties of genres. There is a particular challenge, however, in considering the philosophies of oral traditions, such as those of Indigenous peoples and of many African traditions. If these world views have been written down, it has often been by explorers and colonisers, attempting to get some understanding of the peoples they were encountering. If we, as non-Indigenous philosophers, try to learn about these oral traditions in a more contemporary context, it is imperative to follow appropriate Indigenous research protocols, including respecting those whose responsibility it is to keep Indigenous knowledge, and to take responsibility ourselves to attend to the relevant contexts of in which the philosophical views are put forward, and to ensure that we do not simply impose our own concepts in our efforts to understand Indigenous concepts. We need to take all these methodological challenges seriously.

In addition, while some have been working to retrieve the works of women philosophers, others have been working to recover the works of Africana philosophers. Looking to these thinkers lays bare all the assumptions that have been built into the histories of philosophy we have told: the proper form of a philosophical text, the fora in which philosophy is practiced, the central philosophical questions. Histories of philosophy until very recently have effectively silenced discussions about education, slavery, marriage, equality, friendship, discussions which are properly philosophical (at least if we take the discussions in Plato's dialogues to be properly philosophical), not to mention discussions of virtue, the passions, love, including love of God, self-knowledge and other topics which are quite familiar. In order to allow these authors count as philosophers, and their work as philosophy, these assumptions need to be challenged, at least indirectly, and sometimes directly.

Narrating a history of philosophy involves telling a story, and telling a story requires not only a set of characters – philosophers – but also ways of connecting those characters to one another. I think the best way to do that is through highlighting the questions philosophers are asking, for it is through those questions that we can see philosophers across history as in conversation with one another (whether that conversation is real or imaginary). Also, it is because we are asking similar philosophical questions that we find ourselves in conversation with these thinkers of the past. And as we create communities of practice working together to build resources through which we will rewrite our histories, it is our shared interest in a set of questions that constitutes our philosophical community.

It is important to recognise that there is no one narrative of the history of philosophy, no one history of philosophy. And indeed, there will be multiple communities of practice that emerge independently as many work to dislodge entrenched canons in different ways and focused on different historical periods. Nonetheless, these communities will sometimes overlap, and moreover, they can come together to share what they are finding, to tell their stories to new audiences and to articulate where their respective projects intersect.

And this is the last lesson from Trouillot that I want to highlight. Histories of philosophy, just as histories of events, are told by people with perspectives and interests. We become interested in the philosophical questions as we do because they matter to us in some way or another. However, that a set of questions matter to us does not entail they are the *only* questions that matter. In order to truly change the history of philosophy, we need to find ways of writing the history of philosophy that acknowledges both its and our own partiality. We need to understand more clearly both what has been silenced through existing narratives of the history of philosophy, and to become more self-aware about our own preferences in narrating the history of philosophy. The tellers of the tales of the history of philosophy are us, historians of philosophy and philosophers, human beings with interests, attempting to better understand the world we inhabit. We need to find ways of writing histories of philosophy that acknowledge that even the timeless questions that we take to be at the core of philosophy are raised from a particular perspective and that answers to these questions are all the richer with the full array of different perspectives a part of the conversation.

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