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Philosophy Disturbed: reflections on moving between field and philosophy

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In *Women Who Make a Fuss* (2014), Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret reflect on their field-based approach to philosophy and write that

> [w]e worked this way because we imagined that philosophy should be done this way … because this is what we hoped for it to be: it was in doing philosophy this way that we showed that it was possible … Most of all we did it because this freedom of movement, for us, was the good fortune of philosophers.[1]

For philosophers interested in the possibilities of the field, their work acts as an important guide to ways of experimenting with method, topic and approach. Yet, while emphasising the freedom one might find within philosophy, they also suggest reasons for caution. In particular Stengers and Despret describe a range of overt and covert forms of disciplinary policing that they have encountered in their efforts to work in the ways that they do. This is attributed, in part, to 'the philosophers' routine of judging that most of their colleagues are not "true" philosophers'.[2] So while philosophers arguably have the good fortune of practising a profession that in one light appears to encourage dissident thinking and following unlikely paths, in another light they also have the misfortune of working within a profoundly constrictive discipline that polices who can claim to be a member.[3]

While Stengers and Despret are reluctant to call out academic philosophy for its discriminatory practices, it is clear that the routinized dismissal they identify is not experienced by all philosophers equally. Instead, as has been highlighted by a range of critics, philosophy is rife with assumptions that bolster idealized versions of elite white masculinity, while discriminating against many other groups and intersections thereof. This includes work that discusses racism and sexism within philosophy;[4] the ways prejudices can intersect, such as in the experiences of black women;[5] as well as challenges to core philosophical concepts for their bias in terms of ability, sex and race.[6] For Kristie Dotson and Gayle Salamon, the fact that dismissals of other philosophers are embedded within long histories of exclusion, leads them to develop a more generalized account of what they term philosophy's 'culture of justification'.[7] They highlight the pervasive expectation within disciplinary philosophy that no matter what kinds of moves one might make they must still be actively justified in terms of dominant norms. In contrast to the

freedom that Stengers and Despret highlight, they discuss a constrictive environment that has little time for people, approaches and methods that are deemed incongruent with these norms. Indeed Salamon declared that, as a result, her form of freedom of movement would consist of leaving the discipline for a more supportive environment elsewhere.[8]

Given the opportunity to reflect on my own experiences at the Paris workshop on *Field philosophy and other experiments,* what preoccupied me was how the fledgling approach might find ways to wrangle with the force of this culture of justification. Efforts to develop creative engagements between field and philosophy take place within a context that is profoundly restrictive, and field philosophy has been announced as a form of freedom from this. Indeed when making the case for their own approach to field philosophy, Robert Frodeman, Adam Briggle and J. Britt Holbrook propose it as a mode of 'philosophy unbound',[9] as 'philosophy dedisciplined',[10] or as 'reaching escape velocity' from capture by the neoliberal university.[11] These modifiers and metaphors, while inspiring, do not sit easily with me given the context I have already outlined. As such, in this article I contribute a more conflicted account to the literature by tracing my own movements on the path from PhD candidate to field philosopher. As Frodeman and Briggle point out, such experiences are rarely reflected on or written up, but are needed if future philosophers are to benefit from them or for them to be built upon and perhaps even institutionalized.[12]

The modifier I have chosen to frame my remarks moves from a philosophy unbound, to a philosophy disturbed. My use of this term arises from two different sources. Both point to the isolation, discomfort or even trauma that is often experienced by the one who disturbs, while also holding on to the new possibilities that a disturbance may open up. As Salamon notes, for example, the queer philosopher who also works on queer philosophy often experiences a refusal, sometimes violently so, to see the combination of both queer and philosophy as coherent. Rather than being able to find a location where such an approach might find a home, she writes that 'sometimes the relation of queer work to philosophy is perceived in an additive way—I work on queer theory and philosophy—but sometimes queerness is understood as an agent of bifurcation—I work on queer theory and thus the philosophy that I do is not quite philosophy'.[13] To disturb the coherence of the discipline is thus to be excluded from it. Even so, in comments that resonate with wider feminist theorising about complex identifications, hybridity and boundary crossing,[14] Salamon writes that while her mode of doing philosophy 'sometimes disturbs presumptions of proper identity or proper place, perhaps that disturbance can be a means of forging hopeful new modes of knowledge and methods of inquiry from the old'.[15] Thus part of what I address in my account is how an attempt to develop a field-based practice—which may also be seen as additive or as a bifurcation—uncomfortably breaks assumptions of the proper identity and place of the philosopher. But I also suggest that such an approach might

more hopefully work back on philosophy in order to support more liveable options for those experiencing painful incongruities within the discipline.

The second inspiration for the term disturbance arises from a particular type of field philosophy, specifically philosophical ethology.[16] In their paper 'The Phenomenology of Animal Life', Dominique Lestel, Jeffrey Bussolini and Matthew Chrulew discuss cases of an orangutan who ties knots and cats who break child-proof locks on refrigerators to eat chilies. Behaviours like these are usually excluded from ethological accounts of a species' capacities, since they have arisen due to living closely with humans. These behaviours have thus been thought of as unnatural, abnormal or disturbed. Indeed these animals are thought to be 'contaminated' by their close association with humans.[17] When talking about behaviours developed by intensively farmed animals to cope with stress,[18] such negative connotations may make sense. But for Lestel, Bussolini and Chrulew, attempting to develop an account of a pure set of behaviours, specific to a species removed from wider relations, denies the capacity for creativity demonstrated in multi-species interactions. Studying knot-tying and chili-eating challenges the urge to isolate species in order to understand them, and suggests instead that ethologists investigate the 'commingling of worlds and its productive transformations'.[19] Under their model, those living outside their 'proper' domain need not be read as disturbed, but as expressing their capacities for invention and meaning-making with others.

This second concept of disturbance offers an evocative, if unexpected, way of reframing the relation of field philosophers to a broader discipline that, like ethology, is caught up in fiercely policing its boundaries. Involving significant engagements with people, places and problems found outside traditional philosophy departments, researchers employing this approach inevitably stray away from their discipline-mates. They develop insights within commingled worlds, and take part in hybrid communities that complicate loyalties and responsibilities. In doing so they rarely fit easily into the disciplinary mould, if they ever did to begin with. Ideals of universal knowledge and truth are put into question by contexts where the specific and the situated make particular claims on one's work. Thus to begin to venture into the realm of field philosophy is to confront the disturbance this creates in the notion of a properly behaving philosopher. Yet, as with Salamon's account, Lestel, Bussolini and Chrulew, point to the possibilities within disturbance and incongruence. Indeed they highlight skills, capacities and interests that may never have arisen if it hadn't been for the diversity of interactions experienced.

These and other themes work their way through the reflections I offer in this paper. Rather than focusing on one specific argument, I have traced some of my own movements within and outwith philosophy, highlighting some of the difficulties and opportunities of this approach. These movements adopt an arc that includes leaving, transversing and circling back. Within these

movements, I am particularly interested in the labours involved in adopting new methods and when working in new sites of enquiry. Alongside the uncertainties and anxieties that arise, I suggest that bringing your expertise and even identification as 'philosopher' with you when you move sites is far from automatic. Working without clear legitimating structures, or supporting legacies that might guide your activities, means that reconstituting ourselves outside of our traditional habitats is intense work. Still, I suggest that field philosophers should lay claim to the boundary policing question 'how is this philosophy?' when discussing their work, not as an attempt at justification, but in order to proliferate accounts of what philosophy is and can be. In doing so, I offer my own hope for what philosophy might be, namely that it adopt a more open and unexpected relationship to the future, turned more strongly towards supporting diversity rather than defending purity.

Leaving

To the eyes of those outside the discipline, I would appear to have a straightforward and legitimate relationship to academic philosophy in that I have completed my PhD in the subject. This was a rather traditional doctorate at the University of New South Wales in Australia, where I wrote a five chapter thesis that incorporated a lot of exposition and analysis, both of feminist philosophy and of Jacques Derrida's work. In it I looked at the interrelations between concepts of time and concepts of community. There were a few border skirmishes, including suggesting that philosophical approaches to time failed to address what social scientists called 'social time', but my criticisms were safely contained in the first chapter and so less disruptive than they might have been. Even so, what those inside the discipline will know is that my work on feminist deconstruction had already put me well on the margins. Indeed one colleague told me that in choosing to focus on both feminism and deconstruction, I had guaranteed that no philosophy department would ever hire me.

Perhaps because time has no disciplinary holdfast,[20] and the study of it is often described as intrinsically interdisciplinary, I found that after my studies I was able to move fields in quite unexpected ways. Leaving made the incongruity that was such a problem in my home discipline into something more positively received. My first academic position was at an interdisciplinary research centre called the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) at the University of Manchester. Here I found myself surrounded by fellow 'misfits' (as one centre director described us) who came mainly from anthropology, sociology and history. In this new environment I started thinking more about method, with a key strand of research at the centre revolving around 'the social life of methods'.[21] Methods were something we had never spoken about during my PhD, much to the horrified curiosity of my new colleagues. I also came up against a certain disdain for the arrogance of philosophers, and their abstract approach to problems. Being given room

to think more about the approaches I used, as well as being challenged to engage more with the empirical, opened up possibilities for me that had been unavailable in my former surrounds.

My new environment allowed me to start looking at topics I would have never dared to before. In particular, freedom from the boundary policing I had been used to allowed me to start challenging the split between my interests and what counted as a specifically philosophical interest. I was able to bring more of myself into my work. Others seem to have found this too. Despret, for example, in her own account of becoming a field philosopher, talks of no longer having to amputate parts of herself to practice philosophy, and being able to follow the experiences that deeply interested her.[22] In my case, while before my volunteer work with peace organisations and community-based environmental groups had been a distracting side project, these interests could now be brought more centrally into my research without having to turn them into traditional political or environmental philosophy. Moving away from a home where I often felt unwelcome became a movement towards experimenting with ways I could bring more parts of myself into my work. I began exploring a range of social science methods, and over the course of a few years I was awarded funding to look at issues such as the role of time in activist communities, more-than-human methods, extinctions and local food (the first two I will discuss further below). Even so, I struggled with working out how to operate confidently between philosophy and social science, and worried that I was amateurishly dabbling in a whole lot of areas that I had never been trained in.

The opportunities afforded by field philosophy, as an approach that enables the integration of a wider range of one's concerns and experiences, operate alongside related difficulties as well. This is particularly so in regard to the status of one's work with others within the discipline. Discussing their similar venture into strange topics that do not look philosophical, Stengers and Despret write that 'we know that for certain men (and women!) our topics are suspect, or susceptible to dishonouring philosophy. Hypnosis, addicts, witches, the Arabian babbler, peasants, the uneasy dead … problems that are neither serious, nor conventional'.[23] They argue that their hope for what philosophy might be was part of what encouraged them to focus on such topics. However despite their optimism they point out that, 'we know that our works are not referenced in our profession, in the sense that citing them does not help those who cite them to be recognised as true philosophers'.[24] Indeed as Dotson argues 'the profession of philosophy requires the practice of making congruent one's own ideas, projects and … pedagogical choices with some "traditional" conception of philosophical engagement'.[25] Positive status is dependent upon proving this congruence via the accepted processes of legitimation.[26]

Within the culture Dotson describes then, the field philosopher might easily come to look a little like the chili-eating cat, a disturbed creature who

encourages suspicion. Unable to legitimize themselves through standard processes, they also risk being unable to receive or offer recognized status within the discipline. This is particularly the case for those who are already marginalized by not fitting the dominant model of elite white masculinity within philosophy. One of the key questions for those interested in supporting the growth of field philosophy is how to respond to this culture of justification and in particular who might be expected to carry the burden of destabilising norms. For example what might be done to provide career paths for junior scholars and PhD students interested in this approach, but who are rightly wary of the risks involved?[27] In the early stages of my own career, being unable to make my interests congruent with accepted patterns, meant that the question of 'how is this philosophy?' was very raw. So much so that it seemed easier to give up claiming that I was still somehow a philosopher and instead present myself as an interdisciplinary scholar. What this suggests is that negotiating one's relationship with one's home discipline is part of the key work of a field philosopher, but as I want to discuss next, leaving does not lay this task to rest.

Transversing

By and large, philosophy presents itself as a discipline interested in the pursuit of universal knowledge and principles. Neither the body one inhabits nor the location one finds oneself in should have any bearing on the work a philosopher produces. Transcending the particular, the merely ontic, the situated, is very much the name of the game. Mainstream philosophy thus has little to say about the problem of how a philosopher might transverse a new site or field, and how such movements might fundamentally transform how one approaches the task of philosophy. Critical philosophers and scholars from a range of social science disciplines have, however, paid particular attention to this problem, and formulating an approach to it represents another part of the key work to be undertaken by a field philosopher. I've already suggested that in moving from a school of philosophy to an interdisciplinary research centre, I also made changes in methods, topics and even academic identification. But it was when conducting fieldwork for the various projects and then writing this up that the harder edges of resistance to this movement across fields became felt. While Thierry Bardini, reflecting on Dominique Lestel's work, proposes that 'as soon as a philosopher neglects for a while his or her beloved exegesis, he or she de facto transforms into a field philosopher',[28] my experience suggests that while we may change sites, bringing the 'philosopher' with us and trying to reconstitute it outside its traditional domain is far from a fait accompli.

For one, even the simple fact that a field philosopher finds themselves as a humanities scholar pursuing their work 'outside' creates all kinds of incongruence.[29] In one project that looked at participatory research with non-humans,[30] a group of us found ourselves in North Devon engaging in a range of activities with/in the River Torridge. This included testing for the mixing

of salt and sweet water at the river mouth, searching through culm grasslands for the river's source, wild swimming, and playing poohsticks.[31] We had a lot of fun, and we also learned things, discussed ideas, argued about concepts, and refined approaches to problems. All of these activities are parts of our normal research work, but still our location opened us up to concerns that we could potentially be read as academics using taxpayers' money to fund a jolly.[32] In particular we noted that certain activities opened us up to this more than others. Salinity testing, as fellow participant Niamh Moore observed, looked like a legitimate and appropriate activity in the field because it appeared scientific. But the poetry recital offered by artist Timothy Collins while we were wild-swimming did not so easily read as 'proper' research. As the geographers J.D. Dewsbury and Simon Naylor note, 'much work in the social history of science has paid attention to the theme of bodies in the field—in particular, who is allowed to conduct fieldwork, who isn't, how one acts in the field to produce information that is trustworthy and replicable, how one deals with other bodies that shouldn't be in the fieldsite, and so on'.[33] Humanities scholars, including philosophers, arguably form part of the set that is to be excluded, or are simply assumed not to be interested. There is thus a lack of readily-available legitimating structures or frameworks for this kind of work.

Secondly, this lack of structures or frameworks for moving between such sites raises questions about how one's expertise is to be mobilized. Indeed, finding yourself in a new place can feel as though you have strayed outside the boundaries where your expertise makes sense. A colleague, Kate Pahl, who is a literacies scholar, led another project funded by the same scheme that looked at fishing in youth work and connected the work of philosopher Ernst Bloch with coarse fishing in Rotherham. In her fieldnotes, which she generously shared with me after discussing this issue, Pahl describes feeling uneasy and useless. She writes that during the field visits she felt that was not contributing very much. Unable to catch a fish, and unable to adopt her usual research methods of analysing the situation with others—the talking disturbed the fish—she writes that 'I did not do anything useful, in fact … This perhaps was my role within the project – to erase myself, in order for the "real work" to happen'.[34] Pahl's reflections raise important questions for field philosophers about the place (and emplacement) of expertise. Her account suggests that it is not enough to have been an expert in one site for this expertise to be carried to another. Encountering other places and people, and being immersed in their forms of knowledge and expertise, means that the field philosopher not only needs to negotiate with their home discipline, but also has to reshape their expertise in the new contexts they find themselves in.

Pahl's account resonates with me because I had also felt a reticence about contributing my expertise, as the work of translating philosophy between such different sites was not something I had properly considered. I perhaps felt similar to Despret who, when writing about her research in Israel, which

focused on biologist Amotz Zahavi and his work on babblers, notes that '[m]y objective was simple: to do in the field what philosophers did with respect to texts. I did not intend this to be a significant change in my research, except inasmuch as it would lend an anthropological dimension to the study, which I hoped would be original. And I would certainly take more pleasure in observing scientists in beautiful desert landscapes than in reading about them in libraries'.[35] I too enjoyed the opportunity to meet fascinating people and visit many beautiful sites across the UK and Australia in my projects, and yet I too did not think through how my expertise, including in particular methods and forms of research, might need to be reconsidered.

Frodeman, Briggle and Holbrook have discussed the philosopher's work in terms of a certain 'subterranean quality', and suggest that the field philosopher's interventions may remain 'half-hidden and interstitial in nature'.[36] For them our work in the field continues to be 'revealing concealed premises, drawing out implicit contradictions, and connecting disparate insights'.[37] How one actually goes about this is nonetheless an open question. Learning when to intercede and when to keep quiet, when to listen and when to challenge will be different within the specific community gathered by each research project. Philosophers' training in debating and argument styles more generally, which can be combative and off-putting,[38] may encourage unhelpful responses, including the aspiring field philosopher overcompensating for their disorientation and taking over the collective thinking process. Incorporating literatures from participatory research, which deals extensively with the problem of negotiating expertise with others, could thus be an important step in developing the approach.

What the above suggests is that, while the idea of leaving the discipline of philosophy was enticing, I had actually been moving in a more transverse fashion, operating across my old competencies while working to develop new ones. This became particularly clear when I moved to writing up. Here I was confronted most strongly with the disciplinarity that remained. The flexible academic identity that I had so eagerly constructed throughout the development and running of my projects ran up against the inflexibility of norms around writing style, evidentiary proof and what counts as a significant contribution. I had previously felt troubled about adapting methods from sociology and anthropology, such as qualitative interviews, focus groups and short-term ethnography. There had been some territoriality, particularly from anthropologists who held the notion of ethnography particularly dear, but in general I had been encouraged to look for ways of making these methods my own. When I came to writing up, however, I found I couldn't, and in fact didn't want to, write like a social scientist. I wasn't sure if I could prove I had a representative sample, or that I had immersed myself sufficiently with my so-called 'informants'. Despite it all, the veneer of the interdisciplinary scholar fell away and I wanted what I did to be philosophy somehow, although admittedly a significantly reworked version of it.

To share some of my worries at the time, I quote from a paper I gave in 2015 at the University of Wollongong, where I explained these dilemmas to an audience of geographers:

> So I might as well be honest and say that I'm presenting myself here before you today in a bit of a muddle, particularly about how I'm going to work with the materials I've gathered for this project … Part of this muddle is because I'm a philosopher who can't answer the questions she's interested in through close readings of philosophical texts. As a result I've become a bit ill-disciplined. That is, I've been out visiting people, having conversations with them and taking note of interesting things that happen while I'm there. Portions of these conversations have been recorded and transcribed, and some of these transcriptions have even been inputted into NVivo. At this stage, if you are a social scientist there will be a whole range of options for what you might want to do next. You'll have learnt many of these in your undergrad and PhD. You'll be able to turn to the refresher videos on YouTube if you've forgotten some of the particulars, but most importantly you'll probably feel a connection with your fore-mothers and fathers who have developed these methods, critiqued them, refined them and passed some of these complex histories on to you. Sitting in front of my computer, playing with the functions on NVivo, I was instead wondering how I could work with what the project's participants had contributed without attracting accusations of producing the dreaded 'bad social science' that often (and quite rightly) is levelled at those like myself who make forays outside of their assigned disciplines.

In particular I was hoping for feedback on how a philosopher might draw on conversations and experiences in the field (more often known as interviews and participant observation) in their work. What kinds of claims would it be reasonable for them to make? What does a philosopher do with interview transcripts, conversations that are developed in the moment, when so many of our methods are focused on analysing arguments that have been worked out in detail, and revised/rephrased to respond to counter arguments? These, and other related questions, are ones I have yet to find a satisfactory answer to.

Circling back

What kind of movement produces the field philosopher then? Neglecting exegesis for a time, as Bardini suggests, might be an initial step, but it is not quite enough, nor is simply changing topics and location. Indeed, adopting too simple an idea of the philosopher's freedom of movement risks reasserting the universality of philosophical knowledge that many field philosophers would want to critique. That is, it risks reasserting the knower free of location

and context and thus able to move without friction. Moving, in and of itself, is not enough because as geographer Jennifer Hyndman points out, 'the experience of being there does not in itself produce knowledge and expertise about a place and people'.[39] Instead as Dewsbury and Naylor argue, drawing on Bruno Latour, 'knowledge production is sited. It is made in particular spaces through the labours of myriad human and non-human entities, and only moves beyond those spaces through yet more labour'.[40] Similarly our particular modes of philosophy do not transfer neatly from one site to another. Instead we need to explore what this 'yet more labour' entails and experiment with how philosophy might be practised in/from the field. As others have insisted, this means that philosophy's methods, core questions and forms of evaluation need to reimagined and reworked.

Despret writes that her own process involved 'a long journey elsewhere before I could agree to return home', and to me this notion of circling back represents another key step in the movement towards a field philosophy.[41] Circling back signals a return of sorts, but a return that seeks to re-examine and reconsider. For myself, it was after the kinds of conversations I had in Wollongong and elsewhere that I belatedly went searching for a framework that might provide an opening for returning to philosophy on more amenable terms. It was only then that I came upon the idea of 'field philosophy', not as many others in this special issue did via philosophical ethology, but through the work of Frodeman and Briggle. Their bringing together of environmental philosophy, continental philosophy and participatory methods spoke closely to my concerns, as did their claim that philosophers should 'vary their material culture'.[42] Even more welcome, they wrote that 'philosophy needs to get outside more often. The sunshine will do it good'.[43] With this kind of backing I finally felt more confident in asserting the productive potential of my incongruence and in rejecting the narrowness of the culture of justification discussed by Dotson and Salamon. I found an opening onto new frameworks within which to validate my work to myself and others, ones that did not require attempts to produce congruence with traditional conceptions.

For Dotson, challenging the reliance on narrow disciplinary norms means moving philosophy towards a 'culture of praxis' where instead of a dominant set of legitimating norms there are 'a proliferation of disciplinary validations', helping to create environments where 'senses of incongruence become sites of exploration'.[44] Part of the 'yet more labour' for field philosophers, thus includes developing their own take on what counts as valid work and for whom, but within a wider framework that values diversity rather than purity. One possibility is to return to the question of 'How is this philosophy?' – not as a mechanism of purification as Dotson rightly critiques, but in the spirit of Stengers and Despret, of showing what is possible; in the spirit too of the philosophical ethologist engaging with the knot-tying chimpanzee or the chili-eating cats. By demonstrating creative, opportunistic and malleable behaviours, these singular animals expand the sense of what is possible. They

do this, not on their own, or isolated with others of their kind, but by living in multi-species communities. Such communities are not utopic by any means, and the role of domination and exploitation needs to remain a key consideration. Yet far from rejecting those whose lives have been modified by their interactions with others, Lestel et al. argue for an ethology that examines 'how animals, including humans, surmount, interpret, and move around their various limits in practices of freedom'.[45] From this perspective, asking a field philosopher to discuss the role of philosophy in their work could operate, not as a demand for justification, but as an invitation to share the ways that philosophy's various limits have been surmounted, interpreted and moved around in their collaborative work with others. To show how this might work I will offer two examples from my own projects.

The first example is a project I mentioned briefly above which looked at the potential for participatory research with non-humans.[46] Called 'In Conversation With … : Co-designing with more-than-human communities,' this project was inspired by one of the primary claims of participatory research, namely that those affected by research should be included in it. Our question was, if this is the case why should the definition of participants be bounded by the human? Nonhumans are also affected by research so would there be any benefits to them of being included as well? If so how might their participation be conceived and practiced? Our approach involved running experimental workshops that explored what might happen if various non-humans were invited into common methodological frameworks such as participatory design and participatory action research. Crucially we did not set out to prove whether or not more-than-human participatory research was possible. Instead we implicitly followed techniques found within philosophy, including conceptual analysis, thought experiments, and argument techniques like *reductio ad absurdum,* which enable researchers to begin with a 'what if' and explore the consequences that follow, no matter how strange or unlikely the starting premise appears to be. We thus participated in a range of activities with dogs, bees, trees and water, in a speculative and experimental way, and saw where the participatory methods opened up in interesting directions and where they seemed to fail entirely. Thought experiments within philosophy, such as the brain-in-the vat problem and the trolley problem, can be perceived quite negatively and have been used to criticize philosophy for a lack of empirical grounding and a useless fascination with impossible problems. In this case, however, borrowing the legitimacy given to speculation as a research method and translating it into a decidedly non-traditional field site, enabled a novel field philosophy project that was unlikely to find a supportive framework within more traditional social science approaches.[47]

My second example is another small project that looked at the question of time and sustainable economies. The idea here was that various economic forms are often thought to be associated with a particular dominant temporality, for example pre-capitalism with task-based time, early capitalism with

clock time, and late capitalism with accelerated time. Our question was what kind of temporal narratives might emerge from attempts to develop more sustainable forms of economic exchange. To study this I visited grassroots organizations, engaged in participatory observation, and conducted interviews and focus groups where members of the organizations and I discussed how time arose in their work. While such grassroots movements have inspired little, if any, philosophical work, within economic geography, there has been increasing interest in 'green niches', as small organisations like these have been termed. They are thought to provide incubation spaces for innovative sustainable technologies and approaches to develop outside of larger market pressures. While the tone of some of this work is quite technophilic, Gill Seyfang and Alex Haxeltine have argued that grassroots organizations might also be places where 'new social infrastructure and institutions, value sets, and priorities are practised in a value space which is distinct from mainstream society'.[48] Given that values, ethics, and visions of what constitutes the good life have been absolutely central to the discipline, my wonder was whether a further set of innovations that may be incubated in these niches may be philosophical in nature.

Green niches are thus potentially a rich site for the field philosopher. For example, Thom van Dooren's account of field philosophy describes it as 'an effort to interrogate the structures of meaning, valuing, and knowing that shape our worlds'.[49] His particular approach moves from an 'applied ethics' that is still often too formalized to an 'emergent ethics' that builds knowledge through situated encounters that eschew universal claims.[50] Crucially, green niches, and similar organisations/movements, might enable the examination of structures of meaning, valuing and knowing, and not only as they are conceived now, but as they are caught up in processes of experimentation and transformation in response to a range of social and environmental concerns. Additionally, while van Dooren's account emphasises the possibilities of moving around the limits placed on subfields within philosophy such as epistemology and ethics, my approach in this project suggests that metaphysics too is ripe for rethinking from the field. While there is little work available on an analogous 'applied metaphysics',[51] the discussions my interlocutors and I had about their localized experiments with time arguably suggest openings towards an 'emergent metaphysics' that I hope to articulate more fully in future work.

Disturbing futures

Midway through my work on this paper I had an online encounter that demonstrates a response that I believe field philosophers will come up against repeatedly when they try to discuss their work with disciplinary colleagues.[53] Following an interview with Anita L. Allan in the *New York Times* about her experiences as a black woman in philosophy,[54] Justin Weinberg posted a query on the *Daily Nous* asking for wider comments on Allan's claim that inclusiveness in philosophy could be supported by responding to emerging

trends in research, such as philosophy of race, black feminist/womanist thought, and incorporating these new fields of specialization into the curriculum. Specifically he asked whether philosophy courses, in an effort to retain black women students, should address more diverse topics and what these topics might be. I suggested that the issue wasn't necessarily identifying specific topics, but challenging the culture of strictly policing what counts as 'proper' philosophy and developing more openness towards non-traditional approaches. Another commentator responded to me as follows:

> It comes as no surprise to me that those who care least about the threat of philosophy's disintegration in higher education (particularly in non-elite institutions) tend to be exactly those who are already doing interdisciplinary work, are the most likely to find a comfortable home in a non-philosophical department, and have the least personal and professional commitment to the preservation of the discipline. (*Daily Nous*, June 19, 2018, http://dailynous.com/2018/06/19/denigration-black-women-philosophers-fields-people-color/#comment-144965)

My point that boundary policing is damaging to philosophy, was met by the very boundary policing in question, including a denial that I might have any place in the future of the discipline. My incongruence signalled my disturbed nature, contaminated by interdisciplinary work and housed inappropriately away from my proper kin.

This foreclosure of philosophy's future in response to the claims of those who do not easily fit is something I have written about previously. In discussing the exclusion of women from the profession I argued that 'philosophy continues to be guided by a narrow vision of the future that only admits of a particular kind of philosopher. Rather than relating to the future as a force that may profoundly transform it in ways that cannot be anticipated in the present, the discipline stubbornly resists calls to change'.[55] Even so, attempts to colonize the future in this way do not contain all who have been or will be inspired by its possibilities. Instead incongruent philosophers are finding ways of moving out, athwart, and back; finding that the freedom of movement that is promised to philosophers is, as James Baldwin notes, taken not given. For me, field philosophy offers one way of moving towards such freedom. By working with a wider range of co-researchers (both human and more-than-human) to produce emergent knowledges it challenges the naive universalism that has excluded so many forms of experiences, lives, hopes and concerns from consideration. Moreover, I see field philosophy as one example of Dotson's proposal of a culture of praxis, offering one site for the proliferation of philosophical forms of validation and for a revaluing of incongruence. In pursuing this approach it provides a more liveable space for me within philosophy, even while also continuing to disturb, behaving improperly, associating with 'outsiders', and committing, not to a static preservation, but to a transformation of philosophy's limits.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] Stengers and Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss*, 15.

[2] Ibid., 45; see also Despret, "Not Read Derrida."

[3] Note that throughout this paper I am discussing academic philosophers in particular, while recognizing that work in community philosophy and other movements are grappling with these problems in different ways, and may also have much to teach those in the academy; see for example Tiffany et al *Community Philosophy*.

[4] e.g. Babbitt and Campbell, *Racism and Philosophy.*; Hutchison and Jenkins, *Women in Philosophy.*

[5] e.g. Yancy, "Situated Voices."

[6] Pfeiffer, "Foundations of Disability Studies"; Lloyd, *Man of Reason*; Mills, *Racial Contract.*

[7] Salamon, "Justification and Queer Method"; Dotson, "How is this."

[8] Salamon, "Justification and Queer Method."

[9] Frodeman, "Philosophy Unbound."

[10] Frodeman, "Philosophy dedisciplined."

[11] Frodeman et al., "Philosophy Neoliberalism."; Frodeman and Briggle, *Socrates Tenured*; See also Frodeman and Briggle, "Strawmen at the Symposium."

[12] Frodeman and Briggle, *Socrates Tenured*, 4.

[13] Salamon, "Justification and Queer Method," 230.

[14] e.g Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera.*; Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes.*; Lorde, *Sister Outsider.*

[15] Salamon, "Justification and Queer Method," 230.

[16] Chrulew, "Philosophical ethology of Lestel"; Buchanan et al., "General introduction."

[17] Lestel et al., "Phenomenology of Animal Life," 126

[18] Wiepkema, "Abnormal Behaviours."

[19] Lestel et al., "Phenomenology of Animal Life," 144

[20] History is often put forward as one place that a time scholar might find a particular home, however as critiques within the discipline note, time is by and large taken for granted and treated as a background phenomenon by historians. For some of the debates around this issue see for example Ermarth, "Time is finite" and Jordheim, "Against Periodization."

[21] e.g. Ruppert et al., "Special issue."

[22] Despret, "Not Read Derrida," 97.

[23] Stengers and Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss*, 15.

[24] Ibid., 14-15.

[25] Dotson, "How is this," 6.

[26] Ibid., 7.

[27] Some of these problems are being addressed by the Public Philosophy Network (https://publicphilosophynetwork.ning.com/). See also the statement by the American Philosophical Association on Public Philosophy (https://blog.apaonline.org/2017/05/18/apa-statement-on-valuing-public-philosophy/).

[28] Bardini, "Preface," 6.

[29] See for example the beautiful Wild Researchers project which seeks to 'transport us outside the lab and into the landscapes where our researchers work' (http://www.wildresearchers.unsw.edu.au/). It features only one humanities scholar, fellow field philosopher Thom van Dooren.

[30] Funded under the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's Connected Communities scheme which brought many humanities scholars into unusual field sites

[31] See http://www.morethanhumanresearch.com/conversations-with-the-elements.html for details on the workshop and http://www.morethanhumanresearch.com/home/category/water for participant reflections. Note for those unfamiliar with Poohsticks, it is a game from the children's book Winnie-the-Pooh where sticks are dropped from the upstream side of a bridge and the winner is the one whose stick comes out first on the other side.

[32] For those not familiar with this term, a jolly is a project made to look like work, but actually undertaken only for enjoyment at someone else's expense.

[33] Dewsbury and Naylor, "Practising Geographical Knowledge," 257.

[34] Pahl, pers.comm. Fishing Fieldnotes 2018; Pahl, fieldnotes 4. 6. 2013.
[35] Despret, "Not Read Derrida," 98.
[36] Frodeman et al., "Philosophy Neoliberalism," 324.
[37] Ibid., 324.
[38] e.g. Beebee, "Women and Deviance"; McGill, "Silencing of Women."
[39] Hyndman, "Field as Here and Now," 266.
[40] Dewsbury and Naylor, "Practising Geographical Knowledge," 255.
[41] Despret, "Not Read Derrida," 93.
[42] Frodeman and Briggle, *Socrates Tenured*, 116.
[43] Ibid., 24.
[44] Dotson, "How is this," 26.
[45] Lestel et al., "Phenomenology of Animal Life," 134.
[46] Bastian et al.. *Participatory Research*; See also http://www.morethanhumanresearch.com
[47] Although for another example see anthropologist Anne Galloway's work, where she has incorporated speculative approaches from design and science fiction; E.g. Galloway, "Towards Fantastic Ethnography."
[48] Seyfang and Haxeltine, "Growing grassroots innovations," 389.
[49] van Dooren, "Thinking with Crows."
[50] Ibid.
[51] Although see Hawley, "Applied Metaphysics."
[52] See also Frodeman and Briggle, "Strawmen at the Symposium."
[53] Yancy, "Pain and Promise."
[54] Bastian, "Finding Time," 225.

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