

Texts Less Travelled:

The Case of Women Philosophers

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This chapter discusses several possible reasons why works by women philosophers have traveled significantly less than those written by men, although women's contributions go back to the start of European history of philosophy. Differentiating between geographic, linguistic, historic and philosophical travels, Tove Pettersen claims that gender is particularly significant with regard to historical and philosophical traveling. As the case of women philosophers clearly demonstrate, gender hampers the circulation of certain texts and inhibit transhistorical exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Keywords: non-traveling texts, gender and reception, feminist history of philosophy, women philosophers, feminist critique of the philosophical canon

Ce chapitre examine plusieurs raisons possibles pour expliquer pourquoi les œuvres de femmes philosophes ont "voyage" beaucoup moins que celle des hommes, bien que la contribution des femmes remonte au début de l'histoire européenne de la philosophie. Distinguant entre plusieurs façons de voyager – géographique, linguistique, historique et philosophique –, Tove Pettersen soutient que le "genre" est un facteur particulièrement significative par rapport au voyage historique et philosophique- Comme le démontre clairement le cas des femmes philosophes, leur genre nuit à la circulation de certains textes ainsi qu'à l'échange transnational du savoir et des idées.

Mots-clés : textes ne traversant pas les frontières, genre et réception, histoire féministe de la philosophie, femmes philosophes, critique féministe des canons philosophiques

1. DEFINING 'TRAVEL'

The term 'travel' does not refer exclusively to how texts written in one country are translated, promoted and read in other countries (geographic and linguistic travel). It also alludes to travel through time (historical travel), and to what genre and discipline texts are travelling in (genre travel). Although the various ways texts travels are not always aligned with one another, gender influence all these different journeys. Gender can affect how texts are read, promoted and translated. Gender can also prevent texts from travelling in certain genres, and sometimes from travelling at all. This is indeed the case for women in the European history of philosophy. The main focus in this article will be on how philosophical texts authored by women have travelled far less well through history (historical travel), and still do not travel as philosophical texts (genre travel) into the standard European canon and history of philosophy on equal footing with men's writing – despite the fact that women's philosophical contributions go back to the start of our history.

In what follows, I discuss several *possible hypotheses* why there is such a striking gender difference in the historical and philosophical travelling of texts written by women. These hypotheses are organized in three groups. The first group includes reasons related to the authors of the texts; the second concerns the readers; while the third relates to institutional and discursive structures. I do not aim to present an all-inclusive list of arguments, or to argue for a single, exhaustive, explanatory hypothesis. Women's exclusion is a complex phenomenon,

and several factors are undoubtedly working in conjunction. My aim is to show how gender not only affects how texts are translated, promoted and read, but also, as in the case of women philosophers, determines whether they are allowed to travel at all.

2. THE HARM OF EXCLUSION

As feminist philosophers have been documenting for decades, there have been women philosophers in every age and epoch.¹ Texts written by women philosophers are currently easy accessible on several scholarly websites for anyone who wish to include them in their works and teaching.² Many feminist philosophers have argued in favor of including more texts written by women.³ Still, traditional portrayals of the European history of philosophy – and indeed compilations of European philosophical canons – reveal a striking lack of works written by women. The history of philosophy is generally portrayed as there were no, or only a few, women philosophers between Socrates and contemporary philosophy. It is not uncommon, even today, for students to be handed all-male, and frequently all-white, reading lists by their philosophy departments. Indeed, women are conspicuous by their absence even in newly minted books on the history of philosophy. *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, for example, published in 2015, presented 2,400 years of philosophy over 1,200 pages with absolutely no mention of any female contributions before the mid- 20th century.⁴ This work is no exception. Antony Kenny's 2012 *A New History of Western Philosophy* contains not a single

woman but was nevertheless praised by the *Times Higher Education Supplement* as “wonderfully authoritative.”⁵

Many arguments can be given to explain why the non-traveling of texts written by women philosophers is highly problematic. One is that the silencing of women’s contributions and their dialog with male philosophers entails a false narrative of the history of philosophy, as if it consisted solely of men discussing with other men. In fact, the lack of gender balance and diversity in the portrayal of the European history of philosophy implies that only male members of highly homogeneous social classes with access to higher education contributed to the intellectual development of the West. That would be untrue. People from marginalized groups of philosophers—women, slaves, and people of color—have contributed to our thinking about central ideas such as freedom, oppression, rights, justice, care, and the relationship between individuals and communities.⁶

Moreover, when the texts that are not traveling systematically belong to specific groups, a grave *epistemic injustice* is committed, not only to the individual authors, the group they represent, but also to the circulation of knowledge as such.⁷ By robbing students and researchers of insight into, among other things, the philosophical development of questions across a broad range of topics, the formation of the canon, and the mechanisms that have driven certain texts into oblivion, philosophical progress is prevented.

Also, the non-traveling of women's texts most likely concerns the underrepresentation of women in the discipline today. As Jessica Gordon-Roth and Nancy Kendrick have noted, one reasons why there are so few women in philosophy today is that they feel "they don't belong there," because, among other things "most undergraduate syllabuses do not include texts written by women," creating the impression in "both male and female students [...] that women simply are not philosophers."⁸ This impression is sustained by the canonical philosopher's portrayal of women as emotional rather than rational beings. As phrased by Miranda Fricker: "in a context where rationality is strongly linked to be considered a human, one is degraded and humiliated qua human being by such testimonial discredit."⁹ Failure to acknowledge the contributions of past women philosophers might also contribute to women's underperformance and the absorption of implicit bias against women and their works also today.¹⁰ Recent studies of citation practices in philosophy show that not only are women of the past not referred to, "works by women are cited proportionally far less than works by men" even today.¹¹ The non-travelling of women's philosophical texts is not only a question of correcting past wrongs, but matter of justice to past as well as to current generations of women. The philosophical and historical travel of women's texts concerns the contemporary discipline's self-image, truthfulness and accuracy, its future progress and credibility as producer of knowledge but also the transhistorical exchange of knowledge and ideas.

3. GENDER AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRAVEL

Whether or not texts are allowed to travel into the canon and the portrayal of an academic field's history is not a minor matter, as both are decisive for the discipline. Focusing here on philosophy, "canon" can be explained as a list of authoritative texts within the discipline. It is authoritative because, among other things, it is how students in the formative years of their education are introduced to the foundation of their subject field. Everyone within the discipline is expected to be familiar with these selected works, and be able to discuss, relate, and refer to them. Together, canonical texts constitute the textual tradition with which philosophers are in conversation through criticism, endorsement, development, refinement, or comparison. Moreover, inclusion in the canon is a sign of quality; these texts are taken to represent standards of excellence that deserve to be emulated, to travel across time and cultures, and to act as regulatory standards with regard to what kind of philosophy is handed down from one generation to another. Canonical texts are exemplary. The selection process is not solely about which philosophers to include, it also concerns which topics are to be included, as well as the boundaries between philosophy and other disciplines such as the history of ideas, theology, psychology, and literature.¹² Moreover, the canon is highly influential regarding the philosophical genre of writing. Not all forms and styles are approved of, even though the questions discussed are philosophical. Letters, poetry, and plays are considered to be at odds with what is now regarded as the proper form a philosophical text should take.¹³

“The history of philosophy” is broader than “the canon” and is traditionally presented as a chronological account of the historical development of what are considered to be the philosophically significant questions. Philosophers are expected to know how ideas have developed, even if—in contrast to canonical philosophers—they have not studied every single philosopher thoroughly. While the canon consists of original philosophical works, the history of philosophy is compiled, authored, and edited by one or several philosophers. However, neither a canon nor a history of philosophy is written in stone. Philosophy departments make changes in both by including some and excluding other philosophers. Differences between institutions exist, and there are national variations. Despite this variation, the marginalization of women is a common feature.

When works of women philosophers are excluded from reading lists and new “authoritative” books on history of philosophy, students are given the impression that there are no (good) women philosophers.¹⁴ This view still serves as an explanation for the absence of women’s texts in philosophy.¹⁵ Given the fact that the existence of women philosophers is well documented, and the harm of omitting them are severe, how can we explain the gender gap in how texts travel into the discipline’s canon and the portrayal of its history? Just as past texts written by women are not allowed to travel philosophically, contemporary feminist philosophy is also marginalized.¹⁶ Consequently, new feminist publications on history of philosophy do not reach the center of the discipline where decisions on the curriculum is made. Today’s

students are meet with the same arguments I received as a student 30 years ago when questioning the absence of women's texts in philosophy.¹⁷ However, even without being fully familiar with the recovery of past women philosophers, these arguments do not, as we shall see, hold up to scrutiny.

4. AUTHOR CENTERED ARGUMENTS

The historical lack of opportunities for women to train as philosophers sounds on the face of it a plausible explanation for those not familiar with feminist philosophy. With the exception of women in monasteries, and to a lesser extent, women in royal courts, it was not until the 17th century that women were allowed some modicum of education. But it was generally designed to develop and strengthen what were taken as women's 'natural predispositions,' such as sensitivity, modesty, chastity, obedience, innocence and a capacity to care – all of which contributed to women's passivity. As a view, it was endorsed by prominent philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. Women, Kant argued, were not fit for philosophical reflection: "her philosophical wisdom is not reasoning but sentiment."¹⁸ Of Anne Dacier, who translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and other classics from Greek and Latin to French, and the Marquise du Châtelet, a renowned philosopher and translator of Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, Kant stated, they might "as well also wear a beard; for that might perhaps better express the mien of depth for which they strive."¹⁹ Given the historical exclusion

of women from higher education, and the alleged conflict between philosophical thinking and the female gender, it seems reasonable to suggest that since women could not become philosophers they made no texts available for travelling.

But in addition to being proven untrue the assumption is problematic for other reasons. First, it implies that the author needs a formal philosophical education in order to write a philosophical text. However, although neither Plato nor Aristotle had university degrees in philosophy, both are now canonical. In contrast, none of the women philosophers who were active in the classical and medieval periods, such as Aesara of Lucania, Diotima of Matinea, Hildegard of Bingen, and Catherine of Siena, are included in standard representations of the history of philosophy. Moreover, although women had very restricted access to formal education in philosophy even after it was institutionalized, there was extensive activity by women outside academia during the entire Renaissance. There were networks of women philosophers who communicated by letter; philosophical journals, pamphlets, and treatises were published and read by women. There were salons, clubs, and convents in all of which women discussed matters of philosophical significance.²⁰

Another possible explanation for the exclusion of women from philosophical travel is that the topics and questions they wrote about were not considered philosophical.²¹ A closer examination, however, reveals that women philosophers have been concerned since antiquity with the same variety of philosophical topics and questions as male philosophers: natural

philosophy, political and moral philosophy, metaphysics, free will, freedom, education, philosophy of mind, and so on. This holds true for the philosophy of gender as well. How to organize women's and men's roles in the private and the public sphere and their right to education and political participation was a central philosophical topic for both sexes.

For example, relations between the sexes were important to Plato as well as Aristotle, who laid the foundation for two dominant views on sex and gender in our culture: Plato by arguing in the *Republic* that women and men (except for their role in reproduction) are equal by virtue of being rational human beings, and Aristotle by arguing that women and men, also in terms of reason and rationality, are essentially different. Furthermore, the complementary and extremely influential view of the sexes, i.e. that women and men are fundamentally different and meant to supplement each other, can be traced back to antiquity and Pythagoras' tables of opposites. This was the view advocated by, among others, von Bingen in her 12th century work *Causae et Curae*, Rousseau in *Emilie* (1762), and Kant in *Observation* (1764), and *Anthropology* (1798) – a view Mary Wollstonecraft forcefully opposed in *A Vindication of The Rights of Women* (1792). Relations between the genders are also discussed by Harriet Taylor Mill, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Fredrick Engels, Emma Goldman, to mention a few.

The centuries-long and cross-continental debate *Querelle de femmes* (1400–1789) over women's rationality, virtues, and education is further testament to the influence of discussions about sex and gender in our history.²² This broad debate is, in origin and core, a philosophical

dispute linked to a shift in which the Neoplatonism of the Renaissance and the rediscovery of Plato's arguments for gender equality challenged the medieval Aristotelian philosophy in which male supremacy is central.²³ And for the record, not all women argued for equality, and not all men were against it – even though the vast majority of canonized philosophers were. Historically speaking, “the woman question” was not seen as a particularistic question of interest to women only, but as one concerning broad and classical philosophical questions such as “who are we?” and “what is uniquely human?”²⁴ The argument that the non-travelling of women's texts is due to their preoccupation with idiosyncratic questions, and insignificant particulars, does not hold true.

One may therefore ask if the striking gender difference in how well text travel philosophically has to do with the fact that women philosophers have taken positions that are now outdated and thus of only historical interest.²⁵ If the history of philosophy was written on the assumption that it should only include questions and theories of direct relevance to today's debates, this argument might have some force. But this is not how the history of philosophy is written. Nor is it how philosophical texts are canonized. New students do not read about Aristotle's four causes, Plato's world of ideas, Descartes' arguments for the existence of God, or Kant's twelve categories because these theories represent true knowledge or have direct relevance today. As a matter of fact, some male philosophers' opinions on outdated topics are represented in the canon, while women philosophers writing on issues still of relevance, such

as, gender roles, virtues, ethics, right to life and education are excluded. To say that women philosophers are omitted travelling because their positions are outdated is therefore not a credible argument.²⁶

Another reason for women's exclusion from philosophical travelling, one might suggest, is that they were not sufficiently influential and recognized in their own time to deserve a place in the history of philosophy, let alone the canon.²⁷ It is not enough, one might assert, for them to merely have written philosophy. They also need to have been acknowledged as philosophers by contemporary philosophers, and taken part in contemporary debates, in order to be allowed to travel. This suggestion is also problematic. The fact is that even the most influential, recognized, discussed, and renowned women philosophers in their day, have still not travelled into contemporary canon or history of philosophy.

Sophia's essay *Woman Not Inferior to Man*, published in 1739,²⁸ is a good example. In the same year a 'Gentleman' published a response titled *Man Superior to Woman* and in 1740 Sophia countered with a second essay, *Women's Superior Excellence of Man*. These texts were reprinted several times in England over the next fifty years.²⁹ Many of the issues Sophia grappled with most likely animated other contemporary philosophers, including David Hume. Both are empiricists, interested in the character of women and men, and both assign an important role to habit in the formation of gender. Like Sophia in her 1739 essay, Hume too draws attention to the 'is/ought' fallacy and the idea of an 'impartial spectator' in his *A Treatise*

of *Human Nature* (1739-1740). There are reasons to believe Hume knew of Sophia, and probably read her work, although he never mentions her.³⁰ *Woman Not Inferior to Man* was translated into French several times. Madeline de Puisieux, a close acquaintance of Denis Diderot, probably translated the 1751 version of Sophia's text. If so, and given the close relationship between Diderot and Rousseau, Sophia's work was very likely known to Rousseau. It may perhaps have prompted him to create the character of Sophie presented in book V of *Emilie*.³¹ Despite the linguistic and geographical travels of Sophia's texts in her own time, she is not mentioned today other than in specialist works on women philosophers. Sophia belongs to the forgotten philosophers, while Hume and Rousseau, whom she preceded, are canonized.

Another example is Wollstonecraft, whose philosophical influence on European and American women's rights movements was immense. Her *Vindication* was published first in London 1792, then in two separate editions in Boston and Philadelphia in 1792, two more separate editions in Philadelphia in 1794, and five in New York in 1833, 1845, 1856, 1890, and 1891 respectively.³² In 1792, *Vindication* was also translated into French and German, with several German translations appearing in the subsequent decades. In 1796, it was translated into Dutch, and in 1900 into Portuguese.³³ Rousseau is one of Wollstonecraft's contemporaries, and *Vindication* was translated and published in time for Kant to read it before writing his *Anthropology*. Wollstonecraft's work has not made it into the present-day canon, despite being

read, translated and debated by her contemporaries, and having developed a philosophical position that not only refutes the views of Rousseau and Kant on gender, but remains highly relevant today. Yet another example of an influential, but forgotten female philosopher, is Catharine Trotter Cockburn, who during her lifetime was publicly acknowledge and admired for her philosophical abilities by significant philosophers such as John Locke and Gottfried Leibniz.³⁴

As these select examples illustrate, although philosophical texts written by women addressed much-debated topics, and travelled geographically as well as linguistically in their own time—not unlike men’s philosophical texts with which they were in (thematic) dialog – they did not travel across time as contributions to the discipline. The fact that texts written by women philosophers have not traveled historically and philosophically cannot be explained by women’s failure to participate in or to influence contemporary philosophical debates.

Could it be that the gender-gap in travelling is a matter of quality? Today, the form and writing style of contemporary analytical philosophy resemble what Genevieve Lloyd (1984) portrays as the conception of ‘maleness’, which in turn is similar to how ‘philosophy’ is commonly understood in Western philosophy: Since Plato, reason, objectivity, and the universal have been associated with maleness, and femaleness with what philosophy must transcend.³⁵ Perhaps women are simply not as good as men in ‘male’ reasoning and writing? Or, as research on the effect of implicit bias and stereotypes suggests, perhaps

underperformance is to be expected “by those stereotypically taken to be less good at philosophy.”³⁶ Maybe women’s choice of writing style is considered non-philosophical?³⁷ If women, for whatever reasons, did not write in accordance with the norms of ‘good’ philosophy, this could explain why their texts have not travelled down the years as philosophical works. However, before accepting this explanation, we need to discuss what counts as good philosophy, and who sets the standard.

Today, conceptions of good philosophy are closely related to a particular form, more precisely an analytical style in which clarity, precision, logical structure, abstraction, and impersonality are central. In the 16th and 17th centuries, however, certain genres were considered masculine while others, such as short stories and poems, were considered feminine.³⁸ If we examine the style of texts by philosophers of the period, in which women took part in philosophical discussions outside academia, several belong to the “feminine genre.” These writings contain not only rational arguments and deductive conclusions presented in the rigorous form we expect from today’s philosophers. They appeal to the readers’ emotions and imagination, and are often quite personal. Concepts are not always used unambiguously, and the style of writing can be familial and explorative, as opposed to confrontational and authoritative. Catherine Macaulay, for example, presented her ideas on freedom of the will and the relationship between ethics, politics, and education, in the form of personal letters addressed to a fictional female friend.³⁹ Margaret Cavendish experimented with

different genres, and alternated between fictitious correspondence and poems, and a more analytical style of writing when she discussed Descartes' dualism, materialism, vitalism, vegetarianism, and God.⁴⁰ In her nine plays, she explores the notion of freedom by asking how a woman in the seventeenth century can be free.⁴¹

Continental philosophy today, which allows a more narrative and explorative style than the analytic tradition, would have no problem in accepting Cavendish's writings as philosophy. Even current analytical philosophers would find it difficult not to acknowledge her texts as philosophical.⁴² Still, Cavendish's texts are not included in canon or the history of philosophy which even have room for male philosophers who violate today's acknowledged philosophical form. Plato, whose rightful place on the authoritative list is undisputed, wrote dialogues. He uses first-person narratives, anecdotes, examples from everyday life, and does not always draw clear conclusions. In *Méditations* and *Discours de la méthode*, Descartes deviates from the impersonal style by writing in first person singular, "I," in a style resembling a diary. Descartes demonstrates a variety of ways of expressing philosophical ideas. If it is possible to give Plato and Descartes a place in the canon despite their "feminine" writing style, one can hardly make a case against including Cavendish and Macaulay for using the same style. Both genders wrote in both genres. Still, texts written by male philosophers in both the feminine and masculine genres have travelled historically and philosophically, while women's texts in the both genres systematically have been discredited and excluded from travelling.

5. READER CENTERED ARGUMENTS

Several feminist philosophers argue in favor of another hypothesis to explain why women philosophers' texts do not travel in the history and canon of philosophy, namely that our Western cultural conception of gender, where men are perceived as human and women as females, negatively influences how women's texts are read, evaluated, promoted and received. Given our culture's gendered myths and binary gender ideology, associating women with the particular and men with the universal, actually makes the term "woman philosopher" an oxymoron.⁴³ In *The Man-Made World* (1911), Charlotte Perkins Gilman already questions why there are no columns discussing "masculine" literature and men's writings while there are plenty of discussions of "feminine" literature and women's writing. The reason for this, she asserts, is because "Men are people! Women, being the sex, have their limited feminine interests, their feminine point of view [...] Men having been accepted as humanity, women but a side-issue [...]."⁴⁴

Beauvoir makes a similar point in *The Second Sex* (1949): women give expression to the particular, not the universal, she states. Women and femaleness are associated with the emotions, the private, with nature, the subjective, the particular etc.— all that philosophy is not.⁴⁵ Consequently, translators, readers and reviewers tend to focus on the particular and contextual in philosophical works authored by women, and overlook these elements and accentuate the universal in texts by male philosophers.⁴⁶ Ironically, readers of the book in which

Beauvoir provides an explanation for the biased interpretation of women's writings, prove her hypothesis; she is accused of being "unsatisfied, cold, priapic, nymphomaniac, lesbian, a hundred times aborted, [and] an unmarried mother."⁴⁷ In his introduction to his English translation of *The Second Sex*, H.M. Parshley justifies removing approximately 100 pages of philosophy by declaring that "Mlle de Beauvoir's book is, after all, on women, not on philosophy."⁴⁸ Parshley's opinion testifies to the view that the universal and philosophical is considered incompatible with being, or writing about, women, and (literally) prevented Beauvoir's text from travelling as a philosophical text. The review of the 2007 Norwegian translation of Beauvoir's metaphysical novel *L'Invitée* provides a more recent example of this tendency to emphasize the particular, and downplay the universal dimensions in women's philosophical writings. In this text Beauvoir discusses classical philosophical questions such as determinism and free will, bad faith, the conflict between reason and emotions, and the limits of individual freedom. However, for the reviewer, "Simone de Beauvoir reveals the distorted picture of the romantic relationship to Jean-Paul Sartre, and offers readers a dark drama of jealousy in extremis."⁴⁹ Instead of being read as discussing philosophical questions, she is interpreted as fretting over personal romantic love.⁵⁰

The hypothesis that the reader is gender biased also explains why women philosophers are sometimes presented as rare exceptions to the rule.⁵¹ When it is impossible to ignore a gifted woman – be it Dacier, du Châtelet, Wollstonecraft, Taylor Mill or Beauvoir – they are deemed

extraordinary, deviations from nature's normal course. As O'Neill points out, normalizing such women philosophers would threaten the entire patriarchal order, the theoretical dichotomies as well as the cultural structures. On the one hand, accepting women as the equal of men in intellectual standing challenges the traditional arguments for confining women to the private sphere as domestic caretakers. On the other hand, since the philosophical ideas advocated by many women philosophers often explicitly confront the existing social order and gendered hierarchies, portraying them as deviations and pouring scorn on them serves to defuse the power of their thinking and radical ideas.⁵²

The gender biased reading hypothesis illuminates yet another tendency, namely to see women philosophers as mere disciples of male philosophers. Their thinking is not interpreted as original, but rather as an application or extension of their philosophical masters' thoughts. This reading deprives women of philosophical autonomy and agency, and see them instead simply as messengers. To mention just a few examples: Mary Astell has been perceived as a passive beneficiary of John Morris's "superior philosophical skills,"⁵³ and Cockburn "a simple mouthpiece for [Locke's] philosophy."⁵⁴ Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* has been read as a "wedding gift [where] she brings a singular confirmation of the validity of Sartreism,"⁵⁵ and as an "application of Sartre's 'phenomenology of interpersonal relationships.'"⁵⁶ The implicit bias in reading of philosophical works of women as mere responses to male philosophers has not

only prevented their texts from travelling as philosophical texts in their own right, but, as in the case of Trotter Cockburn, from traveling at all.

6. INSTITUTIONAL AND DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES

Whether or not readers of philosophical texts are gender biased is actually an empirical question. One might be inclined to say that even if some readers most likely are gender biased, it is unlikely all readers are biased. If not all are biased and some explicitly endorse the works of women, the explanation for women's exclusion might be structural, not individual. Prejudice and bias might be fueled and manifested through the discipline's norms, traditions, and institutionalized criteria for what counts as (good) philosophy where the philosophical canon, understood as a collection of the discipline's most exemplary and important texts is particularly important.

For several decades now, feminist philosophers have criticized and re-read the canon, and they have retrieved the works of forgotten women philosophers from oblivion. Notably, the works of Astell, Wollstonecraft, Cavendish, Conway, Macaulay, Cockburn, and Beauvoir have received substantial attention. Thanks to new editions of their works, commentaries, textbooks, journal articles, encyclopedia entries, collections of essays and conferences dedicated to their philosophy, works of these women have actually been granted a second chance to travel historically as philosophical works in their own right. However, even if works

of women philosophers are recognized in some circles, commonly among feminist scholars, they are still not recognized by the wider philosophical community as important contributions to the discipline's history and development. And although these texts, thanks to the efforts of feminist scholars, have started to travel philosophically, they are still travelling only in the margins of the discipline.

One reason why these texts remain on the outskirts of the discipline, one might suggest, is the canon's androcentrism. If "exemplary" philosophy is intertwined with central norms, values, and perspectives associated with men and masculinity, male bias is institutionalized. Not only does the bias inform the definition of (good) philosophy by favoring particular topics, styles, and perspectives rather than others, it is perpetuated by the manner in which core concepts and models are understood: autonomy as independence, "rational man" as a model of humanity for example. It is also sustained through engaging with an all-male canon, practiced through the selection and evaluation of projects in philosophy departments, exercised in classroom discussions, graduations, publication of articles in mainstream journals, etc. In other words, due to the discipline's masculine norms, writings associated with the feminine are discredited. Warren argues that women philosophers of the past remain "outside" the "canonical house" due to the unforgiving methodological problems of integrating them. "We cannot simply add the idea that the world is round to the conviction that the world is flat," Warren says.⁵⁷

However, even if the philosophical canon is androcentric, that does not explain the exclusion of all women. As argued above, not all texts written by women contradict the masculine norm. Not all men write in accordance with it. Women's texts cannot be labeled gynocentric per se. Moreover, the canonical work of male philosophers does not constitute a unified collection: not all male philosophers argue that the world is flat. True, the inclusion of some women's work will introduce new perspectives, challenges, and disagreements in the canon. But given that highly contradictory perspectives held by male philosophers already are integrated into the canon and the history of philosophy, the question is why disagreement with (some of) the canonical philosophers should constitute a structural obstacle for the integration of women? By questioning, rather than accepting, established authorities and conventions, even the most confrontational texts are part of a critical tradition that goes back to Socrates. In my view, it is not the discipline's institutional and discursive structures that prevent these texts from making it into the canon. Philosophy has room for critical thinking. The discipline's norms are not natural laws; they can be changed if necessary. Neither, as argued above, are texts written by women philosophers deficient a priori.

The most likely explanation why texts written by women philosophers have not travelled through history as philosophical texts is, in my opinion, simply because women have written them. These texts are confronted with negative identity prejudices toward women, what Fricker describes as "widely held disparaging association between a social group and one or

more attributes, where this association embodies a generalization that displays [...] resistance to counter-evidence [...] resulting in [...] systematic testimonial injustice.”⁵⁸

This view, that the most likely explanation for the non-travelling of women’s texts is gender bias does not rule out the fact that there are practical and methodological challenges to their integration. But inclusion is achievable, and several feminist philosophers have suggested how this can be done. O’Neil, for instance, suggests two possibilities. One is a “historical reconstruction” which includes the philosophers of both genders that have contributed to issues of central importance to the relevant epoch. The other is a “rational reconstruction” which includes philosopher of both genders who are engaging in topics of relevance to today’s philosophical discussions.⁵⁹ O’Neill’s suggestions make it possible to have several gender-inclusive canons based on different topics. Warren argues in favor of a chronological and dialogical approach, where women and men philosophers are presented in conversation with each other,⁶⁰ an approach that expands the existing male canon by integrating women. It is also debated whether there should there be courses specializing in women philosophers, and if so, whether they should be optional or obligatory.⁶¹ Apart from differences on what the best solution to the methodological challenges is, there are in addition distinctive practical obstacles in each philosophy department depending on where they are located. But whatever the problems are, it is of the utmost importance to let the texts of women philosopher travel into

the canon and the history of philosophy. Practical and methodological challenges should not be allowed to prevent a solution to the problem of exclusion.

By focusing on how philosophical text written by women have travelled, or been prevented from travelling, severely challenged the belief that canons are formed through centuries of unbiased selection of the very best philosophical works based on their intrinsic merits. Women did not lose in this competitive process because their work was not worthy of being preserved for later generations, but because gender have a distinct impact on how text travels. Even today, texts written by women philosophers – ironically also on past women philosophers – are not traveling into the discipline’s center. Differentiating between different types of travel – geographically, linguistically, historically and in which genre – reveals that these various travels are not always aligned with one another. Sophia, Trotter Cockburn and Maccauly were all engage with their contemporary geographical and philosophical circles, they were translated and acknowledge. However, despite geographical, linguistic and philosophical travelling in their own time, they did not travel historically. Also, Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir’s text travelled geographically and linguistically, and to some extent historically. But with the exception of feminist scholarship, they have not travelled philosophically.

Gender might influence all the different journeys texts can take, but is particularly significant with regard to the historical and philosophical travelling of women’s texts and clearly demonstrates how gender hampers, and sometimes even inhibits, the circulation of

certain texts. Nevertheless, the study of the texts less travelled, as well as the mechanisms that have prevented them from traveling, also holds a potential for progress. It allows us to ask meta questions about methodology, epistemology, and ontology, scrutinize implicit biases in the concepts and premises of the discipline, ask new questions, and broaden our philosophical knowledge of several topics.⁶² It is time to let the works of women travel on an equal footing with men's works, in philosophy as well as other disciplines, so that we can achieve more accurate, just and diverse transhistorical exchange of knowledge and ideas.

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²⁸ Sophia is a pseudonym, and the identity of this author is not known. It has been suggested that it could be Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), or Lady Sophia Fermor (1720-1745).

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