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BOOK REVIEW

Where Are the Women? How Expanding the Canon Makes Philosophy Better

Sarah Tyson. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018 (ISBN: 9780231183970)

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As its title makes clear, Sarah Tyson's *Where Are the Women?* urges the inclusion of women in the history of philosophy, thereby enriching it. It does so by examining feminist strategies to recover and reclaim women's contributions to the discipline. Tyson identifies four theories of exclusion that inform these strategies: acceptance of masculine/philosophical norms; a call for new feminist/feminine forms of philosophizing; declamation as a path to reclamation; and (Tyson's preferred approach) recovery with an eye toward transformation.

The first reclamation strategy asserts that philosophy originated and was developed as a masculine discipline, both socially and conceptually. According to this view, philosophy is simply inherently masculine. Women may be successful within it, but only to the degree that they are able to accept and meet masculine intellectual norms. This reclamation strategy is informed by a recognition of women's conceptual exclusion from philosophy—launched ironically by one of the best-known women philosophers, Simone de Beauvoir. Following Beauvoir, Genevieve Lloyd and other feminists theorize that excessive social constraints placed on individuals identified as female lead them to become aware of their selfhood only in and through their differences from (and inferiority to) men/masculinity. Under this view, the best a woman can do is transcend her femininity and identify, intellectually at least, with "superior" masculine conceptual norms. Although this theory of exclusion appears to take feminists down a dead-end road on which women are incapable of engaging in philosophy, there is an opening in the gate, so to speak. If women check their femininity at the door, surrender the symbolic forms and social values that are identified with femininity, and instead embrace masculinity and its abstract forms of reasoning, they too can participate in philosophy. This will result in extraordinarily few women successfully participating in philosophy, past, present, and future. But the nature of the discipline itself, as we now know it, will remain relatively unchanged.

Related to philosophy's conceptual masculinity is the view that women need to establish a new/alternative form of philosophizing. This view is characterized by the work of Luce Irigaray. If philosophical concepts, norms, and values are irredeemably masculine, then the only appropriate/possible feminist response to philosophy is to fully reject such and embrace new forms of feminist/feminine discourse. This is a

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bold proposal, one that would, in Rorty's terms, "kick the philosophical props" out from under the discipline, at least to the degree that philosophy is a fiercely rationalized internal discourse dominated by masculine European-dominant culture. This approach also seeks to embrace a multiplicity of voices at the margins of society: women and cultural minorities.

There are some problems with this perspective in my view, however. First, Irigaray and others who embrace her view fail to explain what a feminine discourse would look like. My best guess has always been that it would be emotive/narrative in structure and style. In addition, although proponents of this view hint toward new forms of narrative that might suffice as philosophy for women, they aim to create an "alternative track" for women as such. They do nothing to prompt the discipline to abandon its masculinity.

Another more far-reaching problem with both of the perspectives discussed thus far is this: They present a bit of a caricature of European philosophy. There is much more breadth in points of view within the discipline than is recognized in both "the canon" and in the feminist critique of it. For instance, Aristotle's contemplation on friendship defies classic intellectual gender dichotomies (thought/feeling, abstraction/concreteness, and so on). Similarly, discussions of "fellow feeling" and "sentiment" in the work of Hume, Smith, and their colleagues in the Scottish Enlightenment are far from being "masculine" in any traditional sense of the word. We see another example in Royce's discussion of "beloved community," an endorsement of relatedness and empathetic connection if there ever was one. In short, there may be a more "feminine" tradition within the history of European philosophy than we tend to recognize, and it is frustrating that it has been underplayed. Why has political philosophy embraced Machiavelli's "realism," for instance, while ignoring a long-held "virtue" tradition in political thought? If the virtue tradition had been given more attention, we might have seen the first female political philosopher, Christine di Pisan (who did her work a full one hundred years prior to Machiavelli), being given her due. The fact that both (male) historians of philosophy and feminist critics have either ignored or been ignorant of these and other less "masculine" strains of thought is itself informative—and should be remedied.

Next in Tyson's discussion is the view that declamation can and should prompt reclamation of women's work. This view posits that there must be something of value in ideas that have been dismissed, denigrated, or ridiculed by (masculine) philosophy through the centuries. Therefore, these ideas deserve to be recovered and discussed *as philosophy*. Tyson's reasoning here is that if Eurocentric masculine philosophy has undervalued a set of thinkers or ideas, there must be a good (feminist) reason. Optimistically speaking, this dismissal points to the potential to discover valuable images, constructs, or concepts that challenge philosophy as we now know it and promise to transform it. In recent decades, thinkers whose ideas had been considered social theory or social/political critique—like Jane Addams, W. E. B. BuBois, Sojourner Truth, and Zitkala-Sa—are now being examined as philosophers. As a result, the very notion that ideas must develop in the ivory tower to be duly philosophical has been interrogated. Philosophy can also emerge and be worked out "on the ground" in and through political engagement.

There is a problem with the reclamation-through-declamation view, however, aside from its tacit acceptance of the claim that there has been one uniform (masculine) history of philosophy. It assumes that European masculine philosophy can dictate the terms—although it does so in a negative sense: Feminist/feminine or nondominant strains of thought continue to stand in contrast to "philosophy" in Tyson's

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reclamation-through-declamation view. Like both the exclusion/absence and alternative discourse strategies, this view poses the risk of endorsing a two-tier system or a parallel history of philosophy—a process that already appears to be well underway, with the publication of works on women philosophers, African American philosophers, Latinx philosophers, and Native American philosophers in recent decades.

The fourth option is related to the third, but is a bolder and more expansive version of it. As noted, it is also Tyson's preferred approach: reclamation of women's work *as philosophy* with the aim of transforming the discipline. Rather than open the door to a small minority of women who are able to transcend their gender, as with the reclamation strategy, or give up on philosophy as a phallogocentric form of discourse, as with the second strategy, we should embrace the third strategy: include women and minority thinkers whose work we find valuable, and hit the reset button. In this way, we will transform philosophy as we now know it.

In this discussion, Tyson makes a case for reconceptualizing the history of philosophy by using a uchronic/hypothetical approach. Here, she identifies women, like the ancient priestess Diotima and the abolitionist Sojourner Truth, who have not been included in the canon. Tyson looks at the value of the ideas of these and other women and urges us to imagine what philosophy could have gained by including them. I am sympathetic to this effort, and Tyson's arguments here are compelling. My only lament is that her project focuses so narrowly on identifying shortcomings in reclamation strategies that she does not take more time to celebrate our colleagues who have indeed already begun to expand the philosophical canon in recent decades. Pioneers in feminist philosophy, some of whom Tyson mentions, like Mary Ellen Waithe, Therese Dykeman, Eileen O'Neill, Charlene Seigfried, Kathryn Sophia Belle, Denise James, Vivian May, and Penelope Deutscher have explored the work of women social reformers, educators, and political activists *as philosophy*.

Many of the moves that those of us engaged in reclamation have made are not without controversy: These thinkers do not fit neatly within a specific philosophical tradition; they do not always establish a classic "thesis," work out arguments, justify claims, anticipate objections, or address them in advance. In addition, their work often violates genre boundaries. Intellectuals outside the historical bounds of "philosophy" have often engaged in discourse through speeches, letters, poetry, fiction, folklore, sermons, spiritual visions, news articles, or political tracts—literary forms that fall outside the philosophical norms of our day. Feminists working to expand the canon have not always agreed about where disciplinary and genre boundaries lie. I personally have difficulty overcoming genre concerns—how can I decipher poetry or folklore *as philosophy*? Yet I have great respect for my contemporaries who have produced discussions of women's philosophical poetry and narrative. Similarly, colleagues have gently nudged me that political activists whom I have discussed *as philosophers* might more aptly be considered "social theorists" or "women of ideas." More discussion of feminist successes so far in canon-expansion may help to clarify where and how new boundaries are being drawn. This in turn would help to establish some guideposts as we aim to transform philosophy in the future.

Overall, I deeply appreciate the analysis Tyson has provided in *Where Are the Women?* It will be of great value to both specialists and advanced students in philosophy, gender studies, and intellectual history. In my view, it could (and should) be required reading in graduate courses in the history of philosophy and in cross-disciplinary courses on the construction of knowledge (specifically gendered knowledge). Reading this book led me to further evaluate my own reasons for making

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distinctions between "philosophy" and other intellectual constructs, such as "pedagogy," "social thought," "feminism," and "political activism." In fact, Tyson's critique led to some late-stage revisions of one of my writing projects, which would otherwise have been hampered by genre boundaries. The spirit of her discussion, it seems to me, is that "philosophy" is not simply a set of ideas worked out by men in solitude in the ivory tower using discrete and narrowly defined intellectual tools. Rather, philosophy is (or at least can be) ideas-in-action worked out on the ground, in public life through action, reflection, and dialogue. Women have had an especially good track record at developing ideas in and through public engagement, so it is time to include them in the history of the discipline—and thus to transform philosophy.

Dorothy Rogers is a Professor at Montclair State University in New Jersey, where she chairs the department of religion and teaches in the gender studies program. She has published a number of articles in *Hypatia* and is the author or editor of books on women in philosophy in the US. She recently completed a two-volume set, *Women Philosophers: Entering Academia in Nineteenth-Century America*, published by Bloomsbury. She also has interests in social/political activism and recently contributed a chapter on the Sanctuary Movement to *Law and Religion in the Liberal State*, edited by Md Jahin Hossain Bhuiyan and Darryn Jensen (Bloomsbury/Hart, 2020).

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