

# APA Newsletters

NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

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FROM THE EDITOR, MARGARET A. CROUCH

ABOUT THE *NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY*

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

## ARTICLES

JANE DURAN

“Teaching Globally: Using Global Feminisms in a Variety of Contexts”

GAIL PRESBEY

“Teaching ‘Philosophy of Feminism’ from a Global Perspective”

STEPHANIE RIVERA BERRUZ

“Constructing Philosophical Worlds: Theorizing Through a Latin American Lens”

FULDEN IBRAHIMHAKKIOGLU

“Embodied Affective Experience in Saba Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety*:  
Reformulating Agency for an Inclusive Transnational Feminism”

## BOOK REVIEWS

Charlotte Witt: *The Metaphysics of Gender*

REVIEWED BY PETER HIGGINS

Janet Kourany: *Philosophy of Science after Feminism*

REVIEWED BY JOANNE WAUGH

## CONTRIBUTORS





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## FROM THE EDITOR

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Academic philosophy is in a constant state of change. At this moment in time, philosophy, like nearly everything else, is being impacted by globalization. One of the features of globalization is the integration of peoples and ideas from around the world. What does this mean for philosophy, in general, and for feminist philosophy, in particular? What forms can and should the incorporation of global issues and ideas into feminist teaching and research take?

Recently, there have been excellent books and journal issues addressing the “global turn” in feminist philosophy. Alison Jaggar’s issue of *Philosophical Topics*<sup>1</sup> is excellent, and *Hypatia* has been very good about publishing global material.<sup>2</sup> However, many of our colleagues, both feminist and not, continue teaching and doing research in philosophy as though only Western perspectives and Western ideas were philosophically significant.

While academic feminist philosophy has been broadening its scope, much of the attention to global issues is from a distinctly Western perspective. This is a significant contribution to feminist philosophy; however, the engagement of feminist philosophy with the rest of the world can go further. Some are integrating a comparative, global perspective into their teaching and scholarship, shifting their focus from the national or parochial to a broader framework that includes both the local and the global. It is the work of philosophers with such a perspective that constitutes this issue.

Developing a comparative approach to feminist philosophy is not easy. Many of us have some formal education in non-Western philosophy, but many do not. Furthermore, in seeking to revise a course, for example, from predominantly Western philosophical approaches to include approaches of other traditions, one immediately faces a very fundamental problem. Not all traditions conceive of philosophy as those trained in the West do. For example, I teach an applied ethics course in global ethics. The course introduces students to various traditions of ethical thinking, including Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Islam alongside Western ethical theories. In a course solely from a Western perspective, I would teach utilitarianism, deontology, perhaps care ethics and virtue ethics, and then apply these theories to various contemporary ethical issues. However, the non-Western traditions I introduce do not have established secular ethical theories, and they do not have an academic practice of applying their ethical approaches to “ethical issues.” In other words, both the definition of “ethics” and the definition of “ethical issue” are called into question immediately. Furthermore, these traditions are religious traditions, and I struggle to develop something comparable to the secular Western ethical theories. One must shift one’s entire

approach to ethical thinking, and incorporate the dominant Western approach into that framework.

Incorporating the writings and voices of non-Western feminist philosophers into one’s courses or scholarship is analogous. There are the well-known difficulties of comparing various non-Western conceptions of feminism with Western feminism traditions. As we see in the articles below, the definition of “philosophy,” and that of many of the foundational concepts of Western philosophy, must be addressed in the class. There is a good deal of fascinating work written by women from non-Western backgrounds that is of help with conceptions of gender and feminism, and there is some on comparison of approaches to philosophy. For those of us trained in Western philosophical traditions, a shift in our orientation, and a good deal of research, is required in order to develop such courses.

The articles below all address how to think about global issues in feminist philosophy. Jane Duran, author of the important *Ways of Knowing: Global Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 2001), discusses the challenges of integrating a comparative approach into a philosophy course. Duran’s book is one of the few to help with just the difficulties described above. Gail Presbey describes her comparative “Philosophy of Feminism” course, providing very useful practical advice and materials for those interested in globalizing similar courses. Gail emphasizes that this comparative approach is justified by feminist philosophy itself. The voices and perspectives of people from all over the world should be included in such a course. Stephanie Rivera Berruz’s article is an example of how questions of the definition of academic philosophy arise when one seeks to compare traditions of thought developed outside North America and Europe with those developed within. She argues that Latin American thought challenges the North American and European philosophical canon and its conventions. Berruz recommends that we approach Latin American philosophical thought from a perspective developed out of Latin American feminist scholarship. By so doing, the significance of the spatial location of the development of philosophical thinking is revealed, and the conventions of academic philosophy in the United States, in particular, is recognized as shaped by its white, male origins.

Book reviews of very important works in feminist philosophy round out the issue. Peter Higgins reviews Charlotte Witt’s *The Metaphysics of Gender*, while Joan Waugh reviews Janet Kourany’s *Philosophy of Science after Feminism*. Both books mark significant advances in their areas, and in the field of feminist philosophy generally.

### Endnotes

1. Alison Jaggar (ed.), *Global Gender Justice*, *Philosophical Topics* 37 (2009).
  2. See, for example, the special issues *Responsibility and Identity in Global Justice*, edited by Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Hypatia* 26 (2011), *Crossing Borders*, edited by Sally Scholz, *Hypatia* 28 (2013).
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## ABOUT THE *NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY*

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The *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* is sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). The *Newsletter* is designed to provide an introduction to recent philosophical work that addresses issues of gender. None of the varied philosophical views presented by authors of *Newsletter* articles necessarily reflect the views of any or all of the members of the Committee on the Status of Women, including the editor(s) of the *Newsletter*, nor does the committee advocate any particular type of feminist philosophy. We advocate only that serious philosophical attention be given to issues of gender and that claims of gender bias in philosophy receive full and fair consideration.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

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**1. Purpose:** The purpose of the *Newsletter* is to publish information about the status of women in philosophy and to make the resources of feminist philosophy more widely available. The *Newsletter* contains discussions of recent developments in feminist philosophy and related work in other disciplines, literature overviews and book reviews, suggestions for eliminating gender bias in the traditional philosophy curriculum, and reflections on feminist pedagogy. It also informs the profession about the work of the APA Committee on the Status of Women. Articles submitted to the *Newsletter* should be limited to ten double-spaced pages and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language. Please submit essays electronically to the editor or send four copies of essays via regular mail. All manuscripts should be prepared for anonymous review. References should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**2. Book Reviews and Reviewers:** If you have published a book that is appropriate for review in the *Newsletter*, please have your publisher send us a copy of your book. We are always seeking new book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send the editor a CV and letter of interest, including mention of your areas of research and teaching.

**3. Where to Send Things:** Please send all articles, comments, suggestions, books, and other communications to the editor: Dr. Margaret A. Crouch, Department of History and Philosophy, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI, 48196, [mrcrouch@emich.edu](mailto:mrcrouch@emich.edu).

**4. Submission Deadlines:** Submissions for Spring issues are due by the preceding September 1st; submissions for Fall issues are due by the preceding February 1st.

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## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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During the Spring of 2012, the APA Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) launched a stand-alone website

([www.apaonlinecsw.org](http://www.apaonlinecsw.org)) that is linked to the APA website ([www.apaonline.org](http://www.apaonline.org)). On the CSW website, you will find:

- The CSW mission statement
- Monthly profiles of women philosophers
- CSW committee members and contact information
- Publications information
- Data on women in philosophy
- The status of women at individual departments with graduate programs
- Information on advancing women in philosophy (hurdles and best practices)
- Sample syllabi for diversifying philosophy courses
- Advice on publishing feminist philosophy
- Information about the role of the APA ombudsperson for nondiscrimination
- The APA statement on nondiscrimination
- The APA statement on sexual harassment
- Information on the APA Committee on Inclusiveness in the Profession
- Posters and merchandise featuring and advancing women in philosophy
- Links to feminist philosophy groups, women in philosophy groups, lists, list-serves, blogs, and wikis

As was announced in the Fall 2011 *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, the APA CSW is establishing a site-visit program. The goals of the APA CSW-sponsored site visit program include:

- Gaining information in a systematic way about the range and variety of women's experiences in philosophy at each level (undergraduate, graduate, faculty/lecturer) that contribute to the ongoing underrepresentation of women in the field.
- Educating departments about challenges women philosophers and other underrepresented groups face, drawing on first-person reports and social science research.
- Making recommendations based on programs that have been shown to be successful in other departments, both in philosophy and other fields where women are substantially underrepresented.

Some of the funding for the seeding of this program has already been provided by the Pacific Division of the APA, the APA Inclusiveness Committees, and the University of Dayton. The CSW is proposing that the Executive Board of the APA also contribute to this initiative.

The APA CSW and the University of Dayton are jointly sponsoring a "Diversity in Philosophy" conference, to be held May 29-June 1, 2013, at the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio. This conference will include two days of papers and panels. Session papers and panels will be both invited and submitted for acceptance to the conference programming committee. A third day will be devoted to training site-visit volunteers to create a large, well-trained pool of site-visit team members. Hopefully, participants on the conference program can use their own travel funds. But the CSW expects that many will not be fully funded. The CSW hopes to supply travel supplement grants of \$500 for as many participants as funds will allow. Conference details and a call for papers are available on the CSW website at [www.apaonlinecsw.org](http://www.apaonlinecsw.org).

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## ARTICLES

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### ***Teaching Globally: Using Global Feminisms in a Variety of Contexts***

**Jane Duran**

*University of California at Santa Barbara*

A number of lines of argument have recently come to the fore asking us, as feminist thinkers, to be concerned about globalization and its effects. Some of these lines are policy-oriented, and much work has been done, for example, on NGOs, health issues, jurisprudential matters, and so forth. Other lines of argument have more to do with matters of philosophy as traditionally conceived—some have argued that we ought to think in terms of the amelioration of feminist ethics, epistemology, or metaphysics along the tracks of the work of other cultures. There are even recent efforts devoted to global feminist aesthetics, and it is probably the case that virtually any rubric could be brought to bear on the issue as a whole. Those of us who teach in area studies departments, rather than departments of philosophy as traditionally conceived, however, might have a special role to play—we could be in a strong position (particularly if we teach courses that already have a non-Euro cultural emphasis) to articulate matters of concern with respect to feminism and the global, and, more to the point, we might be able to recapitulate how such efforts inform teaching. Several years ago, while teaching African Diaspora courses in one of the ethnic studies departments at a campus of the University of California, it occurred to me that it might be interesting to try to set out how a global look at feminist epistemologies alters our understandings of key concepts in use currently, such as standpoint theory or feminist empiricism. Fortunately, the courses I taught already had intersections with both literature and Africana philosophy as broadly construed. On the basis of my teaching and my longstanding desire to meld some of the experiences of my travel and work during the sixties and seventies—particularly in India and Nepal—into an overview, I wrote *Worlds of Knowing*.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Teaching Culturally**

In using the material both from *Worlds of Knowing* and from papers that led up to it in courses both in area studies and feminist studies, I noticed that one particular problem came to the fore with some urgency. Students seemed interested in the material (and since many students on the West Coast have cultural backgrounds from either Latin America or the African Diaspora, that material was indeed relevant), but they experienced great difficulty in trying to see how the original structures of cultures might inform worldviews. In other words, many students simply did not know or had trouble grasping the fact that a great many of the world's cultures, however that phrase is employed, are originally oral, and they had still more difficulty understanding how the concept of a metaphysics derived from an oral tradition culture might differ from a metaphysical view taken from a culture with a written language, wherever that culture is located. Thus, quite a bit of groundwork was necessary to tie a number of concepts together—to get across the concept of oral tradition, I used not only information from South Asia that later came to form some of the early chapters of the book (although this region is marked, in any case, by the existence of many written language cultural views), but I spoke of the importance of storytelling, jest, playacting, and so forth in cultures with which the students already had some

passing familiarity, such as those of a number of First Nations or indigenous groups. Then, with the help of background work on the concept, it was easier to try to make clear that stories told about original beings in such communities, or about how humans came to be, are themselves a sort of metaphysics, and are worthy of our attention. *Worlds of Knowing* is centrally about epistemologies, so the eventual goal was to be able to talk about how standpoint theory, for instance, with its central focus on a Marxian-derived account of the division of labor, might have an instantiation in Mexico or Guatemala, or in Dravidian India.

Students respond more easily to material that has a basis in work with which they are familiar, and teaching culturally with an emphasis on philosophical concepts, and then with an added emphasis on the feminist orientation of some concepts, seemed to work best when the starting point was something already known. Trying to relate current work in Mexico, for example, to the Guadalupana tradition with its emphasis on appropriations of the *Virgen* as empowering images was of great assistance to many students because so many Latina/o individuals are already familiar with the tradition of the Virgin of Guadalupe from a variety of contexts, and there are very few students who have not encountered this material. Women's work seen first as a form of silencing from the male-dominant culture and then, after appropriation, as a form of empowerment, turned out to be much easier to teach with the use of examples with which the students were already acquainted.

#### **Teaching the African Diaspora**

After spending a great deal of time teaching both the philosophy and literature of African Diaspora cultures, I realized that the traditional roles of women in the West African cultures that form the background of African-derived communities of the New World should be a focal point of analysis. Feminist epistemologies that fail to take into account the strength of the concept of the female trader or individual in the marketplace in the Yoruba community, for example (one of the largest communities in today's Nigeria), do not do justice to the impact that these views have on our classification of how individuals become knowledge-acquirers, or how they function in a community. More important, perhaps, for teaching, is that a number of the literary efforts of contemporary Black writers in the New World can also be of assistance here, along with the many fine anthologies of Black philosophy and the other works usually cited. Gayle Jones's *Corregidora*, a novel that alludes to the slave trade in Brazil, helps to make real for students the notion that New World African-derived cultures are a melding of many different strands, including, in some cases, Iberian constructs, those of indigenous persons, and traditional West African thought patterns from the Igbo, Yoruba, or other groups.<sup>2</sup> All of these elements are related to any feminist epistemology that tries to link to an African-derived community. Once literature helps to clarify some of the conceptual apparatuses at work, students often find the straightforward philosophical analysis to be more meaningful and conceptually clearer.

It also helps greatly for the African Diaspora work that we would like to be able to relate to global feminism that a number of contemporary Black women thinkers—some trained as philosophers, and others working in a variety of disciplines—have used the concept of womanism as a way to explain a sort of feminist view that diverges from what might be termed a white feminist overview. Although many have linked the original use of the term to the work of Alice Walker, a number of other novelists, as well as sociologists, political scientists, and philosophers, have used the term. Womanism, in a sense, can become an exemplary concept for working with global feminisms because this view is based on evidence taken from contemporary American life, at least to some extent, and is

again familiar to most students. Although a student may have difficulty visualizing rural life in Nepal or India's Assam, the media help us out a great deal with life in the United States, and feminist work can be tied to evidence that we already have.

### Teaching *Worlds*

I found that teaching the material used for *Worlds of Knowing*, both before and after the book was published, helped me get across key concepts to the students in ways that provided clarification and greater understanding of the importance of the use of the phrase “globalization” in a number of contexts. Students saw that feminisms come in a variety of guises, and many were surprised to see that feminist views could make use of materials ready to hand in a culture such as religious views or daily rituals, and that, in many cases, they themselves already knew of such materials. Talking about visits to Indian villages, the uses of such concepts as *shakti*, and how women make use of the construct to alter their lives today, brought home to students that an epistemological view can be enlivened and brought to a high level of awareness.

Perhaps the most salient point to be derived from an attempt to merge traditional lines of feminist inquiry with global work and thought is that any student can probably find relevant examples from her or his own life—either from a cultural background that may prove fruitful for analysis, from travel, or from observation. If we can get our students to understand that—to rephrase themes from the ecology movement—thinking globally is to think locally, then we can begin to develop at least some global feminisms.<sup>3</sup> Much has already been done in this area, and much remains to be done. It may very well be the case for many of us that our students will drive us to do our most thorough work.

#### Endnotes

1. *Worlds of Knowing: Global Feminist Epistemologies*, New York: Routledge, 2001.
2. Gayle Jones, *Corregidora* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).
3. Global feminist aesthetics is currently receiving a great deal of attention, and books are scheduled to be published within the next year or two addressing these issues.

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## Teaching “Philosophy of Feminism” from a Global Perspective

Gail Presbey

University of Detroit Mercy

It is important to ensure that a course on any aspect of feminism takes into account the perspectives of women from a variety of races, ethnicities, classes, countries, and sexual orientations. There is no monolithic “woman,” and the movement for women's rights is not homogeneous. In this *Philosophy of Feminism* course, the emphasis is on issues of feminism as they are explored by philosophers; but the perspectives of social scientists, as well as other scholars from the humanities, are also incorporated.

There are better and worse ways of incorporating topics having to do with women's rights around the globe into a course. Consider a typical ethics textbook's treatment of the topic of relativism.<sup>1</sup> The text asks the student to imagine that they (in the U.S.) meet a neighboring family who are Muslims from Sudan, and that they tell them that they plan to have their daughter excised, as is the custom in their country. The physical aspect of the practice is detailed in the text, as well as the point that it is considered a tradition that upholds purity in Sudan. The

author addresses the reader in second person, and presumes the reader's reaction: “You are shocked . . . you argue that the practice is mutilation. . .”.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the author of the textbook had his reasons for choosing this kind of example; but is it wise? First of all, by using African practices of clitoridectomy as his first example, he puts the average U.S. reader in the position of thinking relativism must be wrong, because such a reader would probably reject such practices (unless the reader is a Muslim from Sudan). Now, citing such an example to problematize relativism would be all right if the second example were designed to put the average American in a position of questioning his or her own values' universal applicability. But the second example, quickly alluded to, and receiving chapter-long treatment later, involves Japanese whalers who think whaling is part of their island's culture (and who like the strong-tasting meat) versus “Western environmentalists.” So, twice, the reader, if an American student, is likely to presume that his/her values should be universalized, while those of other cultures should not. Contributing to this conclusion is the fact that both examples involve practices that have been outlawed by the U.S. government.

In addition to the message that relativism is problematic because U.S. values are universal is the reinforcement of stereotypes about Africans. Here, an arguably cruel practice in Africa is highlighted, with no alternative perspective on Africa.

This quick grasp of clitoridectomy to instruct beginning college students in ethics is an example of what Ivorian philosopher Tanella Boni describes as a “colonialist perspective.” Not only American ethics professors in 2009, but even Western feminists at the Copenhagen conference in 1980 (who used shocking images of clitoridectomy to help galvanize a movement to stop the procedure), were found by African women to be “grandstanding” and patronizing. Women delegates from the South questioned the motives of the Northern feminists. After all, there is a long-standing practice of considering “other people's sex” as strange—witness colonial creation of, and interest in, the “Hottentot Venus.” But Boni carefully notes that to respond by defensively holding to a position of non-interference on the excision issue would be an unhelpful over-reaction. She carefully recommends that the practice should be reduced and stopped.

The use of the practice of clitoridectomy as presented in the ethics textbook is not a good way to globalize feminism in the classroom. It is much better to, for example, use Boni's article with Ousmane Sembene's film, *Moolaadé* (2002), because it provides context for the practice, and shows disagreements among African women about the practice. It also shows African women activists against the practice (so that African women are not reduced to victims with no agency). In fact, the film has a feminist agenda on several levels, addressing the issue of women's power within families more broadly. But it's also important that excision should not be the first topic raised in the context of African women's issues and feminism. That way, it can be seen as one part of a much larger and complex topic, rather than as the course's “coverage” of feminist issues in Africa.

If one wanted to address relativism in an ethics (or any other) class using an example from Africa, one would do better to choose an example that shows U.S. values as problematic. A good example is of Africans practicing a generosity far beyond the average American, making Americans look stingy in comparison. For example, the Gabra (camel herders in northern Kenya and Ethiopia) have a practice called *dabarre* in which, if a man has lost his camel herd due to drought or other hardship, he can ask a stranger for a camel—he hopes to obtain a female camel about to give birth. This can help him to replenish his

herd. To respond positively to this request is considered a virtue. It is important to contextualize this behavior by emphasizing that the camel is the main source of livelihood for both the gift giver and its recipient. It is also significant that, though those who give and receive from each other might not know each other, they know of each other—a web of relations is tended and maintained.<sup>3</sup> To transfer this example to a U.S. context, we can imagine that a friend has a car that breaks down. The friend cannot get to work without a car. How many neighbors would say, “Come, look at the cars in my backyard, I will give you one”? Or, imagine a university colleague whose computer crashes. How many colleagues respond by saying, “Let me give you my spare computer”? Why not? This example does not in itself decide the question of relativism one way or the other, but it can get students to engage in the question without feeling, at the same time, that Americans are the ones with the correct moral values, while the rest of the world is deficient.

The Maasai of Kenya have practices to help barren women in their community. If the *olamal* (“fertility” ceremony created and hosted by the women is not successful and the particular woman remains barren, a woman with several children who feels the pain of this woman will offer her own child to the barren women, to raise as her own.<sup>4</sup> Does this happen in America? While some women do give up their children for legal adoption in the U.S., there is no general practice of families who are able to raise their children nevertheless giving one over to a childless family just to reduce the distress of the childless woman. Now, one can argue that the reason it happens in Kenya is because of the patriarchal nature of Maasai life. Women cannot own cattle, and cattle are the main source of livelihood. If a woman does not have a child, she will have no one to care for her once her husband dies. Knowing the extent of her vulnerable situation, and how much her life depends on having a child (as well as the intimacy and happiness she would experience if she had a chance to nurture a child), other women realize the extent of desperation the woman may be experiencing. While this form of patriarchy definitely introduces stress and hardship into women’s lives, it does not take away from the exceptional generosity involved in giving up one’s own child to be raised by another woman.

Feminists in the United States have focused their efforts more in winning economic equality and independence for women, as well as suggesting that women find fulfillment in ways other than child-rearing, and even in relationships that are alternatives to heterosexual marriage. Western feminists have also often charged that social norms influence women to be too self-giving, with a woman sacrificing her life to cater to her husband and children—so even if great generosity is exhibited by women of other cultures in order to assure family inter-generational survival, it may be under-valued by some American feminists. Perhaps because of these historical developments, women in the U.S. who want children (especially infants) are left with the options of legal adoption (which is sometimes difficult due to shortage of infants), or expensive and technologically complex fertility or surrogate arrangements. The woman is left with her own or her nuclear family’s monetary and legal resources in getting an infant, and women are not organized, as they are in Maasailand, to assist her through their own voluntary effort and self-sacrifice. Without special attention to context and perspective, a largely American audience could end up belittling the commendable role of Maasai women in organizing among themselves in solidarity to help each other be successful in having children, while turning a blind eye to the gaps in our own country’s practices regarding helping women who want children to have them. Again, when such examples are introduced into a classroom, the context must also be discussed at length.

The necessity of contextualizing examples necessitates emphasizing that one should not presume that Maasai systems of patriarchy are the same as Western systems. While men own the cattle, and have rights to keep children in case of any separation with the mother of the children, Maasai women have rights, and can play some roles, that women do not play in Western European and American traditions. For example, if a Maasai woman does not bear a son, but has a daughter, her daughter can remain in the home, unmarried (while having lovers), and her progeny will continue the family line (patriline) just as a son’s progeny would have done.<sup>5</sup>

One does not have to reach all the way around the world to Africa to find “bizarre” behaviors, moral (and often legal) in their context, but immoral from the perspective of the average American. One can look to Western Europe for such examples. Here’s a hypothetical example from the Netherlands:

Allie van Damme wakes up in the evening, after sleeping all day, to begin her night shift. She commutes to the Red Light District and takes her position in a store window, offering her body and sexual favors for sale to anyone who can afford her price. After all, she is in the Netherlands, the home of modern banking innovations. Under capitalism, everything has a price, and if the market is unhindered, there is a place to sell access to one’s body and one’s sexual labor. Engaging in such work is consistent with contemporary understandings of personal liberty, and doing so in a context of legality improves the safety of women who choose this profession.

Now, I don’t really want to encourage close-minded American judgments of Europeans, adding them to the list of people who don’t do things the American/“right” way. I just want to point out that we don’t have to go all the way to Africa to find people who don’t live by mainstream and/or conservative American values, if that is the scenario which a philosophy professor thinks will most help students ponder the topic of relativism. Of course, one could just as easily find other European examples that, like my African examples, would show U.S. practices as deficient by comparison, such as countries that provide extensive parental leave for pregnant and nursing women, and provide government subsidized child care.<sup>6</sup> It may be, however, that the reason we don’t use Europeans’ moral practices and laws that are different than our own for our relativism examples is because it is more flattering to Americans to find contrasts between supposed “savages” and “civilization” when discussing morals and relativism.

This discussion of how not to globalize philosophy courses introduces some of the problems one encounters in globalizing feminist philosophy courses.

I usually begin my course with a discussion of feminist critiques of the concept of philosophy. A look at my “Philosophy of Feminism” syllabus (abridged)<sup>7</sup> will provide you with an overview of the structure of the course. I will then describe the different sections of the course, its rationale, and its goals.

### **Description of “Philosophy of Feminism” from the course catalog:**

The course presents some key feminist critiques of the male philosophical canon, and then follows key themes such as the conceptions of gender, the body, sexual orientation, justice and care. Feminist philosophical approaches will be applied to current problems such as racism, environmental destruction, war and violence, and human rights violations. The course surveys feminist challenges in North America, Asia, Islamic societies, Latin America, and Africa.

### **Overview of the Course’s Themes:**

The course will introduce students of Women’s and Gender

Studies to the particularly philosophical approach to women's issues, and will introduce the student of philosophy to the uniquely feminist approach within the field. First, we will realize that before we can unproblematically apply philosophy to the topic of feminism, we must interrogate what is meant by "philosophy." Feminist philosophers have challenged our idea of what philosophy is and should be. Thus, we will briefly look at some of the key feminist critiques of the male philosophical canon, paying close attention to the tension posited between "reason" and "emotion" or even "love." We will then pay attention to key themes in philosophy of feminism, such as the conceptions of gender, the body, and sexual orientation. We'll ask how gender justice is further problematized by the intersections of race and class with gender, drawing on the writings of African American and Native American authors. We'll discuss feminism in an international context, raising issues of whether there can be universal, or only culture-specific, ideas and practices of treating women fairly and with dignity. We'll draw upon authors discussing Islamic societies, India and Latin America, with a more extended study of Africa.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES** (incorporates language of University of Detroit Mercy's Core Curriculum Objectives, which borrows terminology from *Bloom's Taxonomy*<sup>8</sup>):

Through a combination of the quizzes, in-class assignments, in-class exams, class participation, and paper assignments (and possibly service learning), students will demonstrate:

1) The ability to recognize and identify the key philosophical points made and positions held by our various authors (Comprehension) and the ability to summarize the main ideas and key details of written texts (Analysis).

2) The ability to see and contrast two positions on a philosophical issue, and to evaluate each position fairly (Application).

3) The ability to develop one's own position on an issue and to argue for it fairly, providing rational support for one's own position (Application). This involves creating a thesis statement and main claims and supporting claims for academic presentation and argument (Synthesis).

4) The ability to express a basic knowledge of a variety of cultures and the issues and challenges experienced (Comprehension).

5) The ability to recognize the intellectual and spiritual limitations of their own cultural assumptions and biases by attaining new perspectives and demonstrate an understanding of diverse ways of knowing (Application).

6) Cultivate intercultural competence (Application).

7) Express greater interpersonal understanding, recognizing that human differences, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ableness, and other identity categories, are complex and varied (Comprehension).

8) Interpret ways in which group identities are formed in a heterogeneous society (Application).

9) Evaluate the issues arising from inequity, prejudice, and exclusion in contemporary societies (Evaluation).

### Required Texts:

Alison Stone, *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy* (Polity, 2007), ISBN-13: 978-07456-3883-6

Articles (listed below in the schedule of readings) that will be made available to students.

**Schedule of Readings** NOTE: Each class period requires about 15-20 pp. reading. Come prepared, having read each of the following readings in time for us to cover the topic in class on each day mentioned below.

Sara Ruddick, "Love's Reason," from her book *Maternal Thinking*; Aristotle, *Politics* Book 1, 1-5 excerpt; Rhoda Hassadah Kotzin, "Ancient Greek Philosophy," in Alison Jaggar and Iris Marion Young (eds.), *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy* (CFP) (Blackwell, 1998), excerpt, pp. 18-20.

*The Life and Maxims of Skendes* (Anonymous, Ethiopia), excerpt from Claude Sumner, *Classical Ethiopian Philosophy* (Commercial Printing Press, 1985), 168-197.

Nancy Tuana, excerpts from *Woman and the History of Philosophy*, pp. 1-8; Moira Gatens, "Modern Rationalism," excerpt CFP, 21-29.

Hobbes, *Leviathan* (excerpt), and Carol Pateman, "Hobbes, Patriarchy and Conjugal Right," from James Sterba, ed., *Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives* (Wadsworth, 2002).

Alison Stone, Introduction, 1-29.

Stone, Chapter 1, Sex, 30-54.

Stone, Chapter 2, Gender, 55-84.

Oyèróké Oyèwùmí, "Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects," from *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (AGS) (Palgrave/MacMillan, 2005), 3-22.

Barry Hallen, *A Short History of African Philosophy* (2nd ed.), pp. 121-137.

Mary Kolawole, "Re-Conceptualizing African Gender Theory: Feminism, Womanism and the Arere metaphor," from Signe Arnfred (ed.), *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa* (Nordic Africa Institute, 2006), 251-268.

View film, Sembene Ousmane, *Moolade*; documentary.

Tanella Boni, "Wounded Bodies, Recovered Bodies: Discourses around female sexual mutilation," *Diogenes* 225: 15-21 (2010).

Margot Badran, "Body Politics: Women, Power, and Sexuality in Egypt," from *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oneworld, 2009), 168-187.

Elvia Alvarez, "Marriage Campesino Style" and "Taming Macho Ways," from *Don't Be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart* (1987); excerpt from Adrienne Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras* (U of CA Press, 2008).

Jose Antonio-Orosco, "Refusing to be Macho: De-Centering Race and Gender," from *Cesar Chavez and the Common Sense of Nonviolence* (U of New Mexico Press, 2008), 71-96 (excerpt).

Stone, Chapter 3, Sexuality, 85-111; Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop," 275-79; some quotes from *Gay American History* (Revised edition, 1992).

Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi and Willam E. O'Brien, "Revisiting 'Woman-Woman Marriage': Notes on Gikuyu Women" in AGS, 145-163.

View the film on Wangari Maathai, *Taking Root*.

View film *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo or Monsoon Wedding*.

Excerpts from Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1997); excerpts from Jenny Sharpe, "Gender, Nation and Globalization in Monsoon Wedding and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge," in *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 6/1 pp. 58-81.

Stone, Chapter 5, Essentialism, 140-166.

Donna-Dale L. Marcano, "The Difference that Difference Makes: Black Feminism and Philosophy," in Davidson, Gines, Marcano (Eds.), *Convergences: Black Feminism and Continental Philosophy* (SUNY Press, 2010), 53-67.

Stone, Chapter 7, Feminism, 192-208, and 213-14.

## Description of the Above Syllabus Readings

I always like to begin with Sara Ruddick's moving personal account of coming to terms with the pros and cons of a career in philosophy, a discipline devoted to detached reason, "objectivity," and self control. Clinging to reason out of fear of her irrational "passions," she used reason to stand her ground against her father, as well as to dismiss or intimidate others by charging them with "irrationality"—as did the men in the field. Later, she realized that much of what she did was unjust, and that she had been blind to her own race and class privileges. She began to see how men used reason to justify their acts of violence in war and other contexts. She saw how her attempts to identify with male philosophers involved her in self-hating misogyny and feelings that she was a fraud. Only when she was able to turn to women's practices of reasoning did she sort out the good from the bad, seeing the skills of self-reflection, clear speech, and attentive listening as blessings.

Ideally, one would have a half or even whole semester to cover feminist critiques of the famous men in the philosophical canon. But given that I had many topics to cover and only one semester to do so, I settled for focusing on Aristotle, the Old Testament, Ethiopian Christian monks, Descartes, and Hobbes. I like to start with Nancy Tuana's "Reading Philosophy as a Woman" because, not only does she draw on an Old Testament reading, "Susanna and the Elders," but she illustrates the multiple layers and perspectives of any story. Susanna resisted the sexual advances of the old men against her, despite their threat to her that if she would not give in to them, they would publicly falsely accuse her of adultery, a charge punishable by death. Tuana contrasts the way the story is usually understood—the pious version, glorifying God and giving credit to the man who helps Susanna by rejecting the old men's testimony—rather than acknowledging Susanna's righteousness and courage. She then encourages us to read texts differently than we normally do, taking special note of how the story MIGHT seem from the perspective of a woman. Also, we should note which conception of "woman" is being advocated by the story so that we can subject it to critical analysis. I follow this up with a story about women—and men—on which students can practice their newly found method. *The Life and Maxims of Skendes* was written in Ge'ez in Ethiopia around 1434-1468 C.E. There were earlier versions of the story in Arabic and Greek, but Claude Sumner, S.J., argues that the story has been made into an Ethiopian one by making the protagonist an Orthodox Christian. In addition to being an intriguing—albeit misogynist—storyline, Skendes gives some definitions of men and women (see especially answers to questions 24, 25, 89, and 90 in the text) that can become subjects for the kind of analysis Tuana advocates.<sup>9</sup> Also, it's important to indirectly debunk stereotypes of Africa that presume that there was no writing of texts there until the era of European colonialism.

Rhoda Hadassah Kotzin's coverage of Aristotle includes his ideas on biological sex and procreation: since a man's semen contributes motion (due to heat) and a woman contributes matter, a female is the result of lack of enough heat to make a male. Therefore, woman was understood to be a deficient male. She goes on to cover his argument that it is "both natural and expedient" that a husband should rule his wife, just as slaves should be ruled by their masters. She also covers the topic of whether virtues are gendered. Several centuries later, Moira Gatens finds Descartes' dualism of mind and matter reinforcing sexist thinking in philosophy. The "thinking thing" (*res cogitans*) was considered the essential self, while the body and passions did not contribute to human knowing. Gatens surveys a host of feminist critiques of Descartes, including Genevieve Lloyd and Janna Thompson, Susan Bordo, Michele de Doeuff, and Luce Irigaray.

I then like to discuss at least one feminist critique of Hobbes, relying on Carol Pateman's argument (as anthologized in the Sterba textbook—a book that is, by the way, a great source of many more feminist critiques of the male philosophical canon). Pateman draws distinctions between different versions of patriarchy, based on rule of the father or rule of the husband. While it may seem as if Hobbes, by arguing that the rule of husband over wife is contractual, not natural, gives feminists grounds for suggesting that the contract could be changed, Hobbes, nevertheless, cannot explain how all men conquered all women so as to go from his originally posited "state of nature" to the current context.

While there are many other men in the philosophical canon who could benefit from feminist critique, in my most recent versions of the "Philosophy of Feminism" class, I limit it to the ones mentioned above, so as to give more time to what Alison Stone calls the "new concepts" created by feminist philosophy. She discusses the topics of biological sex and gender, sexuality (dealing with attraction and behavior), sexual difference (understood on the symbolic level), birth, and the problems of essentialism (in this context, whether all women have anything in common). For each of her sections, I pair her chapter reading with women who give their perspectives on the same topic, coming from backgrounds as diverse as African, Native American, Muslim, and Chicana. While Stone herself has a small section on Global Feminism in chapter 7 (pp. 208-213), I think the treatment there is too brief, and so I make her small theme into a main theme of my course by adding supplemental readings.

Stone's chapters 1 and 2 focus on the distinction between biological sex and gender (the latter being a social construction, involving social expectations and assumptions as well as psychological traits and self-understanding). She covers the history of the use of the term "gender," noting that this specific use of "gender" only began in the 1960s. She also explains that the sex/gender distinction in this technical sense is not understood by the larger society, which uses these terms loosely and interchangeably. She also surveys many feminist thinkers who hold, for a variety of reasons, that one can't make a clear demarcation between "natural" biological sex and socially constructed gender. Stone herself wants to uphold the conceptual distinctions between sex and gender, while conceding that due to gender norms, people acquire habitual ways of acting that can actually shape bodily features.

These debates about sex and gender are addressed by Oyèrònké Oyèwùmí, who argues that Africans are less inclined to believe in biological determinism than are Westerners. She says that while Western feminists have drawn distinctions between sex and gender, in fact they are not able to separate them, because all of their thoughts about gender are influenced by ideas of biology. She gives examples of Yoruba social hierarchies that don't fit Western-style gender roles, and complains that the "one-size-fits-all" model of some Western feminists is really just ethnocentrism. Barry Hallen gives a good and quick overview of several Nigerian women scholars (including Ifi Amadiume and Nkiru Nzegwu) who each have their versions of critiques of Western feminism.<sup>10</sup> Finally, Mary Kolawole sheds light on why the relations between Western and African feminists around the topic of "gender" are often so contentious. African women are tired of being the "voiceless subaltern"—they want to speak for themselves. Yet Kolawole notes that Yoruba traditional values describe women as naturally talkative, and they counsel women to learn silence, or else they will stink like the "arere" tree. She describes the African women poets and writers who try to overcome this counsel of silence, embracing Alice Walker's call to "womanism," because it's

a case of self-naming rather than accepting ideas and terms articulated by others.

It's only after these larger issues are addressed that we turn to the topic of female excision, using the Ousmane Sembene film and Tanella Boni article that I mentioned earlier. Margot Badran also gives a historical overview of feminist projects surrounding this same issue in Egypt and in a Muslim context (since Sembene and Boni focus on West Africa). I then move on to discuss gender roles, and liberation from stereotypical gender roles, by having students read Elvia Alvarez's account of poor Honduran women stuck in narrow, unfulfilling gender roles, while suffering in a context of machismo. I follow with José-Antonio Orosco's analysis of how "machismo" came to be, according to some Chicana feminists (who saw it as a "coping mechanism" for men's underemployment and anxiety), as well as the best way to challenge machismo in the movement for social change. He describes the "alternative masculinity" advocated by Cesar Chavez.

In Stone's chapter 3, she surveys work done by European and American theorists regarding sexuality, especially sexual orientation. The chapter tackles the issues of lesbianism and heteronormativity and the importance of these themes for Western feminism. Paula Gunn Allen refers to what we know of various Native American communities' practices regarding gender roles and sexual orientation. She argues that many people of the world have had very different ideas of gender expression and sexual relationships, but they were condemned and put into the straightjacket of heterosexual normativity by colonizing Christians who imposed their morality on everyone.

I also cover Njambi and O'Brien's study of the practice of woman-woman marriage in Kenya. While these relationships should not be misconstrued through a Western lens as "lesbian" relationships, they are nevertheless relationships of intimacy among women hoping thereby to avoid male domination found in the heterosexual family structure. The researchers highlight the egalitarian nature of these marriages, and also the fact that they are accepted within the context of tradition (thus debunking more stereotypes of Africa as uniformly intolerant of non-heterosexual unions).<sup>11</sup> The film on Wangaari Maathai is not directly related to woman-woman marriage, but Maathai is an activist from the Kikuyu community (the focus of Njambi and O'Brien's study) who focuses on women's empowerment.

Stone's chapter 3 also covers questions of sexual domination, as she surveys Catherine MacKinnon and other authors to discuss cultural conflations of dominance and submission with sexual desire and activity, so this is a good place to cover the topic of sexual violence against women from a global perspective. At this point, one could stick with the African theme and show Lisa F. Jackson's *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo* (HBO, 2008). Jackson recounts her personal story of being raped in the U.S. to establish some rapport with women raped in the Congo (thus, showing the problem is not restricted to Africa<sup>12</sup>). If you want to pair it with a European account of rape used as a weapon of war, PBS has a good documentary in its *Women, War and Peace* series about the Bosnian women who took their perpetrators to court, called *I Came To Testify* (2011). Another possibility is to explore sensitive topics of molestation in the Indian context, using director Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), and pairing it with Uma Narayan's helpful chapters that explain how to, and how not to, understand domestic violence in Indian and American contexts. Narayan contends that rates of Indian women dying from domestic violence (understood as the culturally laden "dowry murders") and U.S. women dying from domestic violence are roughly the same, debunking the idea that the U.S. is light years ahead of other countries when it comes to protecting women's rights.

In conjunction with Stone's chapter 5, which covers the topic of essentialism (by which she means, specifically, whether there is any uniformity among women that could serve as the basis for a uniform feminism), I complement these readings by including Donna-Dale Marcano's essay in which she comments on philosophy's "silent exclusions" of the voices of black women. She shows that while the social construction thesis that rejects naturalization or essentialism might be helpful in deconstructing gender roles, it is harmful when applied to issues of race, because it has a tendency to "dissolve" race as something unreal and, therefore, something unimportant to be forgotten. She later moves on to other important themes, such as the way that philosophy's "entrenched abstractness" belittles the lives and concerns of black women, and makes it harder for black women philosophers to fit in the field in academia. On this topic, it is good to consult the work of Kathryn Gines on the problems with the race/gender analogy (an article in the same anthology as Marcano), and her role in creating a Collegium of Black Women Philosophers.<sup>13</sup>

I would like, now, to turn briefly to the format of the assignments of the class. From the syllabus:

### **Grading:**

Based on a possible total of 100 points.

30 - 15 reading quizzes or in-class assignments, 2 pts. each

20 - midterm in-class exam

20 - final in-class exam

20 - book analysis paper, 5-6 pp., or service learning project and paper, 5-6 pp.

10 - class participation

### **Further descriptions of some of the above assignments:**

**20 POINT ASSIGNMENT:** Either in-depth book report/paper or service learning.

#### **Book report/paper**

Choose a book (in consultation with your instructor). Read this book on your own, taking notes and writing down your reflections. Look up at least one scholarly article that analyzes your book. Submit at least five online (using Blackboard) one-paragraph reflections on your book as you are reading it. See me in my office to discuss your reflections on the book at least once (maybe more) before you begin writing your paper. (Bring your written notes with you). Then, drawing upon the secondary articles you've read, as well as integrating what you've read into the work of other authors we've read during the semester, write your paper summarizing as well as analyzing the book.

#### **Service Learning Project**

This involves ten hours of service. You will choose a site (through collaboration with the Leadership Development Institute office) that involves your working with women. You will keep a journal (online using Blackboard) to write down your reflections as they are fresh in your mind. Try to make your online journal submission within two days of your service. (I suggest roughly one paragraph per hour or two of service). Don't just give a summary of all of your activities. Talk about your insights, what you witnessed (perhaps small details), and whether you were challenged by anything that happened. Try to make connections between our course material and your experiences. Come see me in my office at least once before you begin writing your paper. The grade is based on making regular entries into your journal, the completion of the ten hours, as well as your final paper. (5 points possible for the online journal, 15 points for the paper.) See list of available volunteer sites for Service Learning: ACCESS Community Health and Research Center; Alternatives for Girls; C.O.T.S. Domestic Violence Transitional

Services Program; Heartline; Interim; McCauley Health Center; Mercy Education Project; Vista Maria; Ruth Ellis Center.

### Explanation:

There are many small group discussions that counted as two-point assignments. These encourage students to keep up with the readings, and also helped them to encounter the various perspectives of their classmates. The course was also created with a service learning component so that students could meet and work with local women who needed special help and were often marginalized or under-served. Also, service at the Ruth Ellis Center helps students see the struggles of gay, lesbian, transgender, and questioning youths, many of whom are runaways, and offer help and support. This helps the students experience the issues discussed in class as concrete and addressing compelling current realities. But, since not all students wanted to do service learning, they were also given the choice of doing an in-depth study of a book. Some of the book titles gave students opportunities to explore global feminist issues in greater depth.<sup>14</sup>

I think this course succeeds in covering the basic concepts important in any “Philosophy of Feminism” class while addressing them in ways that include the multiple perspectives of women in many parts of our world. No course is exhaustive, and this course also has its limits, but given a time frame of one semester, I think it addresses many of the basic necessary issues. I also learned a lot from the frank sharing of perspectives among the students, who were diverse in age, gender, race, culture, and sexual orientation.

### Endnotes

1. Here, I have used Peggy Connolly et al., ed., *Ethics in Action: A Case Based Approach* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), referring especially to “A Brief Overview of Ethical Theory” by David R. Keller, pp. 11-49.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 22. Note that the example presumes that the reader (a university student, probably studying in the U.S.) is not an immigrant from a country where clitoridectomy is practiced.
3. David Maybury-Lewis, *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World* (New York: Viking Adult, 1992).
4. Ulrike von Mitzlaff, *Maasai Women: Life in a Patriarchal Society; Field Research among the Parakuyo of Tanzania* (Munich: Trickster Verlag/Tanzania Publishing House, 1988/1994), 160. Melissa Llewelyn-Davies, “The Woman’s Olamal: The Organization of a Maasai Fertility Ceremony,” BBC, 1985. See also, for example, Aud Talle, “Maasai,” in *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender: Men and Women in the World’s Cultures*, edited by Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember (New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 612.
5. Von Mitzlaff, *Ibid.*, p. 118.
6. See Chris Tilly and Randy Pearl Albelda, *Glass Ceilings and Bottomless Pits: Women’s Work, Women’s Poverty* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1997). See also Michael Moore’s film *Sicko* (2007) and the website related to the film, <http://www.michaelmoore.com/books-films/facts/sicko/> for more information.
7. For purposes of this article I sometimes combined aspects of earlier syllabi of the same course with the most recent version of the syllabus.
8. <http://www.bloomstaxonomy.org/>
9. I realize that copies of Sumner’s collection of Ethiopian philosophical texts are hard to find. The version published by Adey in Los Angeles in 1994 is in fifty libraries worldwide (according to WorldCat.org), and the Addis Ababa Commercial Printing Press version that I have has no ISBN and is listed in only one library (in Denmark). If you can’t get a hold of it, you could have students look at my article that gives a synopsis of the story and subjects it to critique. That’s in “Should Women Love ‘Wisdom’? Evaluating the

Ethiopian Wisdom Tradition,” *Research in African Literatures* 30:2 (Summer 1999): 165-81, reprinted in P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, ed., *Philosophy from Africa*, 2nd ed. (Capetown, South Africa: Oxford University Press, 2002), 361-72.

10. I use Hallen because he gives a quick and clear overview of complicated topics, which is helpful in a survey course like this. If you had more time/space to devote to these topics, you could find more primary sources in Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, ed., *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (AGS) (New York: Palgrave/MacMillan 2005), as well as Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, ed., *African Women and Feminism: Reflections on the Politics of Sisterhood* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003).
11. For a book that surveys the breadth of variety of marriage and intimate relationships in Africa, see Will Roscoe and Stephen O. Murray, *Boy Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities* (New York: Palgrave, 1998).
12. Human Rights Watch reports that in many cities of the U.S., not only are rapes frequent, but also there is a low arrest rate for the crime, and tens of thousands of “rape kits” (containing evidence about the rapist) are never examined. See Human Rights Watch, “Testing Justice,” March 2009, [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/rapekit0309\\_insert\\_low.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/rapekit0309_insert_low.pdf)
13. See <http://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2007/10/29/collegium-of-black-women-philosophers/>. Another excellent article on essentialism addressing culture rather than race is Uma Narayan’s “Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism,” in Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding, ed., *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 80-100.
14. As a few quick examples of possible titles, there are Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Ann E. Cudd and Nancy Holmstrom, *Capitalism For and Against: A Feminist Debate* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2000); Mary Hawkesworth, *Feminist Inquiry: From Political Conviction to Methodological Innovation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Nadje Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

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## Constructing Philosophical Worlds: Theorizing Through a Latin American Lens

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It has been a primary concern of Latin American philosophy to question its identity as a “philosophy.” Specifically, there has been a lot of ink dedicated to considering the authenticity, originality, and potential universality of the ideas and theories of a philosophy that titles itself uniquely Latin American. If there is such a thing as Latin American philosophy, then what are the criteria by which we measure its canon? More specifically, how should we understand the travel of ideas in what has been historically a unidirectional North-South movement?<sup>1</sup> These sorts of questions point toward the ever-present need of Latin American philosophy to legitimate itself within a North/Western paradigm of academic philosophy. In its desire to break away from its colonial ghosts, Latin American philosophy struggles with the very foundations of its existence. As a result, four major approaches to the topic have been developed: the culturalist, the universalist, the critical, and the ethnic. Each of these methods

of analysis centers on considerations regarding the ideas and theories produced alongside their histories and locations as well as their contextual sites of production. However, amidst these philosophical considerations, I contend that Latin American philosophy, with its overwhelming philosophical concerns about its ontological status, could greatly benefit from a dialogue with its fellow Latin American feminism(s).

In an ever growing, globalized, capital-driven world, Latin American feminism has been considering the travel of theory and ideas, specifically within a North-South direction. This process tends to occur upon the transference, translation, and appropriation of theory as it is mediated by language(s) and the incommensurable elements of language. Through the works of Ofelia Schutte, Nelly Richard, Claudia de Lima Costa, and Maria Lugones, this paper will seek to put into dialogue these two distinct, yet overlapping, discursive forces, in hopes that the “philosophy” that Latin America seeks to identify can be understood as a category of analysis that has been “lost and found” in its southern translocation, and not just as an imperialistic, Eurocentric category, but as a potential productive site of disruption and authenticity.

The scholarship of Claudia de Lima Costa, Nelly Richard, and Ofelia Schutte provides this analysis with a theoretical foundation interested in interrogating the travel of theory across borders, the incommensurable elements of language most notable in the translation process, and the materially situated nature of knowledge production and knowledge acquisition. The scholarship of these three Latina feminist philosophers reveals the complexities involved in the processes of translation, transference, and appropriation of ideas. In revealing these complexities, this paper aims to adopt an understanding of philosophy and theoretical praxis as a method of “world traveling.” I contend that the notion of “world traveling,” as proposed by María Lugones, allows us to read the category of “philosophy” in a new and unique manner that does not erase the complexity of migratory ideas, but rather engages them through an understanding of travel interested in retaining the importance of location while simultaneously embracing the complexities this might bring about.

Using philosophy as a method of “world traveling” means allowing ourselves to venture into other forms of knowledge and thought in a manner that does not reinforce hegemony, but rather disrupts it. In this sense, Latin American philosophy needs to view itself reflectively as a site of authentic philosophy by which different discursive mechanisms can provide the grounds for “world traveling” through its production of thought which heavily reflects the Latin American context.

Ultimately, this process of analysis aims to disrupt the very category and project of the term “philosophy” such that its mechanisms of constitution are revealed in terms of what it has necessarily excluded to create its “world.” This project aims to unravel the discursive mechanisms of philosophy through analysis of its “southern” translocation, which inevitably has revealed a history of exclusion that has occupied the projects of numerous Latin American scholars seeking to locate the philosophy produced in and by Latin America as part of the philosophical canon. In doing so, I am proposing a method of “re-thinking” the term “philosophy” as a space oriented around maleness and whiteness, that has been constructed at the exclusion of philosophies like Latin American philosophy. This socially produced space becomes disoriented by the presence of a Latin American philosophy and its practitioners within its world, thus opening new avenues from which to theorize.

## **I. The “Philosophical” Predicament of Latin America**

Latin American philosophy has given tremendous consideration

to its status as a philosophy. In response to this analysis we can identify four major approaches which attempt to resolve the tension that exists by calling Latin American philosophy a “philosophy.” The first has been called the universalist position and is exemplified by the work of Risieri Frondizi (Gracia 2010, 259). Frondizi upholds a view of philosophy that serves to identify the term as a universal discipline that creates itself only in “purely philosophical contexts, without putting such activity to the service of political or literary or any other interests and concerns” (295). Therefore, the outcome of what would be a Latin American philosophy should be the production of ideas whose applicability is universal, cross-cultural, and enduring through time. According to this position, Latin American philosophy has failed at creating itself.

The second approach to the topic is the culturalist position, which is espoused by Leopoldo Zea (Gracia 2010, 259). According to the culturalist position, philosophy is a contextualized production of knowledge that is dependent upon the perspective of the individual engaging in the activity. Therefore, even if Latin America adopted or co-opted ideas from cultures outside of its range of experience, the philosophical result is different because the cultural context in which it is being *applied* has been shifted. In Zea’s words:

The Latin American, upon adopting specific philosophizing and philosophies to face the problems raised by his [*sic*] reality, gave to what was adopted a different meaning from the one it had for its creators. Even in imitation, there was creation and re-creation. The philosophizing adopted took thus another sense which, compared to the models, resulted in “bad copies of the originals” but were originals with respect to the problems that they tried to solve, thus resulting in different philosophical utterances than those of the adopted models. In this adoption, adaptation, and utterances, a peculiar mode of expression would be evident in those who had used philosophies alien to their experiences. (41)

The third approach to the consideration of Latin American philosophy is what has been called the critical approach (Gracia 2010, 259). This position is articulated best by the work of Salazar Bondy who regards the existence of Latin American philosophy as centered on the “borrowed” nature of the philosophy of Latin America. In other words, Latin American philosophy is heavily dependent on ideas and theories that have traveled into the Latin American context, but did not originate there. Thus, the philosophical discourses produced and engaged in this context are subservient and inauthentic in so far as they are not discourses “native” to Latin America. Rather, they are a result of a culture of domination which has imposed itself upon Latin America. If Latin America is ever going to have an “authentic” philosophy of its own, it must rid itself of this cultural domination.

The last approach is the ethnic, proposed by Jorge J.E. Gracia, which views Latin American philosophy as the philosophy of a Latin American ethnos (260). According to Gracia,

It is only necessary that Latin American philosophy be whatever the historical circumstances that originated it and the ethnos that produced it made it. Because the unity of Latin American philosophy is historical and contextual, it becomes easier to account for its variety and for the inclusion in it of texts and figures that traditional Western philosophy might not consider philosophical. . . The criteria for inclusion are historical and contextual, and open to change and development. (260)

Expressed throughout these positions is the need to designate what counts and what does not count as Latin American philosophy. They are normative claims about how to approach the nature of the philosophy and not the philosophy itself, leaving much room open for debate (Gracia 2010, 260). Central to these positions are issues regarding the authenticity and originality of philosophical theory and practice, as well as the implications of “borrowed” philosophical discourse from a culturally “dominant” group. The culturalist and ethnic stances on the issue are a bit more open to the possibilities of originality and authenticity given their appreciation of historical/cultural contexts and the possibilities of an *ethnos*. However, the culturalist and ethnic stances do not discriminately consider the fact that at stake in these conversations is not simply authenticity or originality, but the conceptualization of “philosophy” within a “North/Western” framework. This conceptualization of philosophy inhibits the possibility of a critical analysis of what is potentially lost when constructing philosophical paradigms within a dominant culture’s framework and language. In order to consider this predicament of Latin American philosophy a bit further I want to turn to the work of several Latin American feminist authors who have been considering the issues of cross-cultural incommensurability, the unidirectional travel and transference of theory, and the possibilities of authenticity given the nature of migratory ideas.

## **II. A Latin American Feminist Lens: Transference, Translation, and Appropriation**

The consideration of whether or not Latin American philosophy is “philosophy” is loaded with a set of assumptions regarding the term. First, the philosophical models which are sought for Latin American philosophy are configured in completely different cultural contexts, and are themselves migratory conceptions of what a philosophy should be. The universalist approach toward these considerations argues rather definitively that the “philosophy of any country or time has to be, in the first place philosophy” (Fronidizi 2003, 299). However, it never critically confronts what this “philosophy” is, if anything other than the production of philosophical discourses socio-historically located in a particular context. No philosophy is innocent, no philosophy is ever produced in a vacuum, and, whether we like it or not, philosophy comes with baggage.

A look toward the work of Claudia de Lima Costa regarding the travel of discourses across different hemispheric borders sheds some light on what is really occurring when ideas become transient. Of first mention is the concept of cultural translation, which she takes to be “premised upon the view that any process of description, interpretation, and dissemination of ideas and worldviews is always already caught up in relations of power and asymmetries between languages, regions, and peoples” (Costa 2006, 63). Therefore, any concept of philosophy that is borrowed from the Northern/Western hemisphere is already laden with power differentials that seek to mask themselves in concepts of universal applicability. Furthermore, it is those theories that articulate high level of abstraction, and pay little attention to context, which tend to travel the furthest, and as they travel they are appropriated and transformed by their local readings (Costa 2006, 63). It is, therefore, of no great surprise to find that Latin American philosophical dialogue has dedicated a great deal of ink to determining its ontological status as a philosophy. The term “philosophy” is by far one of the most de-contextualized concepts circulating in the theoretical market, making it seem like an extremely appropriable term. However, the reflective concerns of Latin American philosophy over its own philosophical status is a mark of the invisible baggage that the term “philosophy” carries with it as it treads into new

contexts. According to Costa, borrowing from the work of Hillis J. Miller:

Concepts carry with them a long genealogy and a silent history that, transposed to other topographies, may produce unanticipated readings. . . Theories are ways of doing things with language, one of them being the possibility of activating different readings of the social text. When introduced to a new context, the kinds of readings a theory will enact may radically transform this context. Therefore, translations, besides being intrinsically mistranslations will always entail defacement; when a theory travels, it disfigures, deforms and transforms the culture and/or discipline that receives it. (71)

We could ask ourselves, along similar lines, what has happened with the concept of philosophy as it has been transferred, translated, and appropriated by the Latin American context? The reflexivity with which Latin American philosophy has responded points to the fact that what it means to be a “philosophy” already entails a certain genealogical history that has sought to exclude and discriminate against certain subjectivities and theoretical discourses deemed culturally inferior. Latin American philosophy must demonstrate that it is worthy of being counted within the canon of “true” philosophical worth.

The task that Salazar Bondy puts forth for Latin American philosophy is emblematic of this concern. According to Bondy, Latin America must overcome the culture of domination and rid itself of its imitative practices if it ever wants to attain true philosophical status. Uninhibited authenticity and originality are the only ways to attain this status, according to Bondy. However, this Sisyphean task is one which overlooks the fact that in its migration and appropriation to new Latin American topographies, the term “philosophy” has acquired new meaning, as well as new visible baggage.

The concept of cross cultural incommensurability proposed by the work of Ofelia Schutte provides a site of explanation for how this new baggage of migratory concepts might be created. Schutte explains:

The culture with the upper hand will generate a resistance in the group that fails to enjoy a similar cultural status, while the culture of the subaltern group will hardly be understood in its importance of complexity by those belonging to the culturally dominant group unless exceptional measures are taken to promote a good dialogue. Even so, it is my view that no two cultures or languages can be perfectly transparent to each other. There is always a residue of meaning that will not be reached in cross-cultural endeavors, a residue sufficiently important to point to what I shall refer to more abstractly as a principle of (cross cultural) incommensurability. (56)

There are simply certain elements of a culture that cannot be translated; something is always lost in translation. Translating a concept such as philosophy across diverse borders proves to be no different. Therefore, the outcome of its movement will be potentially different than it was in its moment and location of origin, as will its application and appropriation of the concept. However, does that mean that Latin American philosophy should be disqualified from using the term in a way that meaningfully describes its production of discourse, theory, and ideas? Absolutely not. It is in this very process of translation via the mechanisms of transference and appropriation that Latin American philosophy finds its disruptive ground.

What lies beyond translation is the theoretical challenge of how to interpret the problem of cultural transference with regard to the category of philosophy as applied by Latin America (Richard 1993, 454). Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard reminds us that “theoretical reflection is a materially situated activity that always bears the marks of the circumstances that locate its subject in the narrative of the production and the social reproduction of knowledge” (453). Consequently, “philosophy” as a conceptual term which is intended to denote a particular category of knowledge is one that will always wear the marks of circumstance; however tenuous the visibility of this mark may be, it is always ever-present. Making this circumstantial mark visible should not be the work of Latin American feminists alone, but rather a multi-faceted project of all academics in global dialogue that seek to disrupt hegemonic philosophical practices by engaging in activities of “translation that make visible the asymmetrical geometries of power along the local-regional-national-global nexus” (Costa 2006, 75).

If done properly we can view translation as a method of “world traveling,” in which we engage in the transference of ideas and philosophies in a manner that allows us to understand the baggage that theory carries with it as well as the migratory checkpoints it has traveled through (Costa 2006, 75). Following Costa’s proposal, we can also view philosophy itself as a method of “world traveling,” which takes into consideration all of the temporal contexts through which the term has traveled, all of the baggage it has come to carry, as well as all of the new meaning(s) it has acquired. For María Lugones, the concept of “world traveling” is understood as an acquired flexibility in shifting from a mainstream construction of life to another construction of life with a playful attitude (Lugones 1994, 632). The term “worlds” is used openly and can be comprised of people (imaginary, real, or deceased), of constructed or unconstructed items, of any vision of life, complete or incomplete. In Lugones’ words:

There are “worlds” we enter at our own risk, “worlds” that have agon, conquest, and arrogance as the main ingredients in their ethos. These are “worlds” that we enter out of necessity and which would be foolish to enter playfully. But there are “worlds” that we can travel to lovingly and travelling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone’s “world” is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their “world” we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes.* (637, author’s italics)

Using philosophy as a method of “world traveling” means allowing ourselves to venture into other forms of knowledge and thought in a manner that does not reinforce hegemony, but rather disrupts it. In this sense, Latin American philosophy needs to view itself reflectively as a site of authentic philosophy by which different discursive mechanisms can provide the grounds for “world traveling” through its production of thought which heavily reflects the Latin American context. Akin with Lugones’ point, Latin American philosophy can help us understand what it truly means “to be ourselves in their eyes.”

Found in translation, Latin American philosophy needs to acknowledge its own authenticity, not as a second copy of an original master text, but as its own original creation. It needs to view the category of philosophy, which it has sought so desperately to belong to, as a loaded term with movements along multiple temporal hemispheric axes that give it various meanings, and simultaneously thwart any possibility of universality and neutrality.

### III. Inhabiting the Philosophical World: World Traveling Through Philosophical Space

The analysis provided aimed at problematizing the very category that Latin American scholars have sought in their work. In its southern translocations, the category of “philosophy” is unraveled in such a way that illuminates the ways in which it has been constituted, namely, in terms of what it is not. Therefore, when something like Latin American philosophy<sup>2</sup> attempts to enter into the “canon” it is met with resistance. This could be due to the fact that philosophy tends to become obsessive and those who practice its methodologies end up negotiating with themselves, but seem to be incapable of engaging in dialogue with other disciplines and their productions of ideas. Therefore, when topics of race, gender, sexuality, or geographic locations other than the North/West are considered as points of departure for analysis the response unequivocally is: That is *not* philosophy. This feature of the category of philosophy becomes illuminated when its discursive mechanisms of constitution are considered outside of its “original” context.

The scholarship dedicated to locating Latin American philosophy within the traditional philosophical canon elucidates the ways in which the canon itself has been constructed. In so doing, this Latin American scholarship has not only troubled the philosophical canon, but has also opened new avenues from which to understand what it means to “do” philosophy. Through its conflict with the category of philosophy, Latin American philosophy has in a very unique way paved the way for a re-translation of the term that understands “philosophy” as more than what it is not.

If we take my proposal to heart, namely, that we can view philosophy as a method of “world traveling,” new possibilities open up in terms of how we read the discipline of philosophy. If “doing” philosophy entails “world traveling” then we can simultaneously argue that to engage in philosophical practice creates spaces; worlds, that we can travel through and inhabit. As Lugones cautions us, some worlds are more dangerous than others to occupy due to our specific social location and embodiment. This method of understanding the discipline calls for a vision of philosophy as more than rationality transcending the body and its locations. I invite a reading of philosophy as a space that is socially produced and that space, or world, that is produced is contingent upon the orientations of bodies that inhabit that world.

The discipline of philosophy is built upon the possibilities of neutrality and universal truth that do not point back toward the universal truth producer. It is for this very reason that Latin American philosophers have toiled over whether or not their scholarship “counts” as philosophy. However, if we are to concede that philosophy is done by someone (a multiplicity of individuals), and that philosophical scholarship is the product of somebody’s labor, then it follows that philosophy is produced through bodily occupation of certain social spaces and those social spaces are shaped by said bodily occupations. Reading philosophy as a social space that embodies certain kinds of social relationships positions us in a location from which to consider the characteristics of the space that is forged by its practitioners. In other words, we can start to think about what kinds of bodies and what kinds of spaces are forged through philosophical activity. The relationship of bodies to space should then become an important touchstone from which to analyze the world of “philosophy” proper.

It is on this particular relationship between bodies and space that I find the scholarship of Henri Lefebvre most illuminating. In considering the relationship between bodies and space Lefebvre notes that “there is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the

body's deployment in space and its occupation of space . . . each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space" (170). In other words, to think of bodies and spaces as two separate entities that can come into contact with each other through human agency is faulty reasoning. The two are inextricably linked, the bodies that we occupy necessarily take up and produce space. To talk of spaces and the production of spaces is necessarily to talk about the bodies that inhabit those spaces. Therefore, to bring forth an analysis of philosophy as a space or a world necessarily entails illuminating the bodies that occupy that space and orient the discipline in particular ways.

Historically, philosophy has been inhabited by predominantly white male bodies and created a space that is coded in whiteness and maleness, yet comes packaged as universal and neutral. To be non-white and non-male in these spaces instantiates a moment of contact that disorients both the bodies that normally occupy the space and the discipline as a construction of those bodies. To talk about philosophy as a space entails accepting the fact that the world of philosophy has been constructed around white male bodies and their discursive productions. Philosophy is the furthest thing from neutral and universal; rather, it is male and white, and the bodies that fit or can pass within the molds of this space are not detained at any migratory checkpoint through its spaces. However, when I, a woman of color who studies Latin American philosophy, for instance, enters a classroom (either as teacher or student) I am "out of" place and the mere gaze of those around me functions as a method of reminding me that the burden of proof of belonging falls on me and my ability to argue beyond my racial and gendered body.

Up until this moment I have argued that philosophy can be understood as a space that is produced through the interaction between certain types of bodies. I now want to turn my attention to the topic of orientation in space. I contend that adopting an analysis that focuses on how bodies are oriented in space best explains why the world of philosophy has been and continues to be shaped as white and male.

According to Sara Ahmed, the concept of orientation functions in a way that "allows us to rethink the phenomenality of space—that is, how space is dependent on bodily inhabitation" (8). In other words, thinking through the concept of orientation allows us to engage with the relationship between the living body and space. If philosophy is a space, as I am suggesting, then we must also consider how it is produced by bodies and how those bodies are oriented in the production of space. Orientation illuminates the complex relationship that exists between bodies and their dwelling places (Ahmed, 8). To inhabit a space entails having orientation in that space such that the body does not feel disoriented, the body has its so-called "bearings." Therefore, to think of philosophy as a space entails thinking through the orientations of the bodies that call philosophy "home." Understanding the concept of orientation in space involves considering how the extensions of bodies into space occurs and how this occurrence shapes the space inhabited.

So, what does it mean to be oriented in a space? Orientation is the product of bodies extending into space that creates new folds or contours and situates the body in familiarity with the space through bodily-spatial interaction (Ahmed 2006, 11). Space always has an orientation by virtue of the bodies that inhabit, create, and sustain it. What needs to be assessed is how these directions and orientations are created and present themselves to us as familiar. Spatial orientations will be determined by what points of view present themselves as "givens" or "familiar" in such a way that directs life in particular

manners (Ahmed 2006, 21). To think of philosophy as a space entails considering what points of views or orientations shape its space and present themselves as givens.

Thinking through philosophy as a space in light of these theoretical considerations we can come to grasp what the shape of philosophy is and how it is oriented. If space is constituted through the bodies that inhabit it, as Ahmed has suggested, then philosophy becomes a space that acquires orientation and shape by virtue of its historical inhabitation by white men. This occupation of space creates a spatial orientation that reproduces and sustains whiteness and maleness as the "givens" of philosophical space that fall to the "background" for most of its inhabitants. The orientation of philosophical space and philosophical inhabitants is framed through these types of orientations. Whiteness and maleness is continuously reproduced in philosophical space through habit. Ahmed describes this phenomena as the body performing actions repeatedly and the sense that is gained through such actions that does not command attention (130). In other words, the body does not pose a problem to action; if anything it trails to the background of our consciousness as we engage in activity in space. The whiteness and maleness of philosophical space become oriented habits around which philosophy is constructed. Therefore, these characteristics do not show up as problematic and become coded as "neutral" and "universal." The very criteria which Salazar Bondy seeks for Latin American philosophy stems from the prevalence of this possibility of universality.

If we read the philosophical "world" as oriented around whiteness and maleness then we can further consider how the discursive field of Latin American philosophy and its practitioners disorients the space of philosophy. By virtue of its "southern" location and at times non-white, non-male inhabitants Latin American philosophy brings the philosophical world under scrutiny and enables considerations about how the very world of philosophy has been historically constructed. Engaging with the theoretical tools provided by Latin American feminist scholars further addresses the complex contingencies that constitute the world of philosophy and open avenues for questioning the very status of the term "philosophy."

#### **IV. By Way of Conclusion**

To ask "What is Latin American Philosophy?" as the culturalist, universalist, critical, and ethnic approaches have attempted is in my opinion to be asking the wrong question. While their approaches should be lauded for their respective attempts to ground a uniquely Latin American philosophy they are not without criticism. While the universalist approach and the critical approach fail to recognize the importance of context in the development of a distinctly Latin American philosophy, the culturalist and ethnic methodologies come closer to apprehending the importance of geo-historical terrain. However, all of these approaches fail to critically engage the concepts of translation, transference, and incommensurability as they apply to the nature of the term "philosophy," which is central to their inquiry. Opening a dialogue between these methodological considerations and Latin American feminist scholarship that addresses the complex dynamics in the process of theory travel and the possibilities of world traveling illuminates a fruitful framework from which to dis-orient the philosophical space that has been historically produced and oriented around whiteness and maleness, but packaged in the wrappings of universality and neutrality. The outcome of this orientation is the perpetual marginalization and exclusion of ways of "doing" philosophy that are premised upon racial/ethnic and gendered embodiment.

By proposing that we read "doing" philosophy as a method of "world travelling" through the scholarship of Maria Lugones

and Claudia de Lima Costa, I invite a re-reading of what it means to “do” philosophy and inhabit philosophical worlds. The construction of philosophical space around whiteness and maleness becomes disoriented and potentially reconstructed by the inhabitation of non-traditional bodies in its space. To engage in Latin American philosophy through the visions proposed by Latin American feminists and space theorists like Sara Ahmed we can pull to the forefronts the permeability and instability of space such that the possibilities of re-shaping the space of philosophy become possible through new worldly inhabitants and engagements with philosophies that find their origin in non Western locations.

#### Endnotes

1. This piece will focus primarily on the movement of ideas along a North-South axis. However, it should not be forgotten that this flow is not the only direction of theoretical transference along diverse hemispheric geographies.
2. I am thinking primarily of what we might call analytic philosophy here.

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## **Embodied Affective Experience in Saba Mahmood’s Politics of Piety: Reformulating Agency for an Inclusive Transnational Feminism**

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*“I have come to believe that a certain amount of self-scrutiny and skepticism is essential regarding the certainty of my own political commitments, when trying to understand the lives of others who do not necessarily share these commitments.”<sup>1</sup>*

Saba Mahmood’s provocative critique of secular and liberal frameworks in *Politics of Piety* revolves around the thesis that freedom is not a universal end, but rather a product of a prescriptive project undertaken by a particular political

imagination whose truth came to be assumed in a particular historical context.<sup>2</sup> She demonstrates this by a close examination of women’s mosque movement in Egypt, based on which she suggests, in Selim’s words, that “agency can be fully articulated in an embodied ethical practice,”<sup>3</sup> and thus, “there is no *inherent* reason why women must resist their oppression” (emphasis added).<sup>4</sup> Hence, by historicizing agency and underscoring cultural specificity, Mahmood’s account resists universalization of the desire for freedom, by way of exposing the limitations of its applicability.

There have been two main, and at times overlapping, strands of reading this project, both of which seem to worry feminists for different reasons. One tendency is to read it as a radical call for contextualization, that we must pay close attention to the historical specificities in order to give an account of the significance of certain practices within the given context.<sup>5</sup> In other words, categories that acquired their meaning in a specific historical and political context fail to be useful for us to measure up the practices that take place in another context. An immediate feminist worry that stems from such reading is the problem of cultural relativism.<sup>6</sup> Another tendency is to take Mahmood’s criticism as a call for radical change in feminist conceptions of agency and the dissociation of feminism from progressive ideals.<sup>7</sup> The feminist response to this interpretation comes with puzzlement, if not resentment, as to how such a view could have anything to do with feminism. Taken seriously, Mahmood’s argument seems at best irrelevant, and at worst contradictory to what feminism can hope to achieve.<sup>8</sup>

These two strands of reading come together in their agreement that Mahmood’s account is fruitless for feminism when pushed to its limits. In this paper, I will argue otherwise. A redefinition of agency by way of historicizing it is promising for transnational feminism insofar as it offers a capacious notion that is attentive to particular experiences (and the particularity of those experiences). So long as we read Mahmood’s account as opening up the notion of agency to accommodate the complexities of experience that are irreducible to a univocal category of “resistance,” that are not only relevant, but indispensably valuable, we can articulate this project as a reformulation of agency that offers a basis for cultural translation. I will demonstrate this first by presenting an overview of Mahmood’s anthropological study, and then lay out the ways in which Mahmood has been read by feminists and how these readings map onto larger debates about transnational feminism and agency. Finally, I will give a reading of Mahmood’s project as underscoring the complexities of experience, which becomes especially salient in her discussion of an embodied practice of ethics. I will then argue that a more inclusive notion of agency is fruitful for feminism so long as we are willing to pay attention to the ways in which experiences can be translated across cultures.

If we read Mahmood’s project in this way, we can address the problems identified within Mahmood’s account, by way of demonstrating that this is not necessarily a project which gives leeway to cultural relativism, but rather one that is amenable to cultural translation. Further, far from being irrelevant to feminism, by taking up *Politics of Piety* as an attempt to articulate a more capacious notion of agency, we can urge our politics to attest to the experiences that have previously been omitted by a restrictive framework.

### **Agential Practices in the Women’s Mosque Movement**

At the outset, Mahmood notes that the women actively involved in the mosque movement in Egypt “occupy an uncomfortable place in feminist scholarship because they pursue practices and ideals embedded within a tradition that has historically accorded women a subordinate status.”<sup>9</sup> The participants

of such movements, movements that have “come to be associated with terms such as fundamentalism, the subjugation of women, social conservatism, reactionary atavism, cultural backwardness,”<sup>10</sup> exhibit a dilemma for the feminist analyst: “[W]omen are seen to assert their presence in previously male-defined spheres while, on the other hand, the very idioms they use to enter these arenas are grounded in discourses that have historically secured their subordination to male authority.”<sup>11</sup> That is to say, women’s participation in such movements transforms the public sphere as women assert their presence, yet in committing to certain patriarchal narratives about “woman’s virtue” (and Mahmood suggests three: “shyness, modesty, and humility”) they seem to reproduce the very structures that uphold their own subordination. She notes that although the “false consciousness thesis” was dropped after the 1960s as an explanation of women’s participation in such movements, feminists “continue to frame the issue in terms of a fundamental contradiction.”<sup>12</sup> They ask, Mahmood writes, “[W]hy would such a large number of women across the Muslim world actively support a movement that seems inimical to their ‘own interests and agendas’, especially at a historical moment when these women appear to have more emancipatory possibilities available to them?”<sup>13</sup>

Mahmood draws attention to the normativity at work that renders this question not only intelligible, but also necessary. The assumption here that Mahmood sees as detrimental is the one which resembles a Weberian disenchantment; that religious commitments ought to disappear with the establishment of modern secular state and its apparatuses. Feminism as a politically prescriptive project is entangled with a liberal/secular framework which takes freedom as a natural universal end, without asking self-reflexively under what historical and political conditions this assumption came to be meaningful. She notes that we would be at fault if we attend only to those cases in which women resist the oppressive structures. By equating agency with autonomy and taking resistance to be its quintessential expression, Mahmood suggests, feminist analyses tend to foreclose a whole range of possibilities that could be of relevance to our understanding of agency. That is to say, resistance is not to be seen as the *only* mode of agency with significance of some kind, and the faulty view that it is arises from a specific historical and political context that disregards its own specificity by taking itself as universal.<sup>14</sup> The women’s mosque movement in Egypt negates this assumption, according to Mahmood, by way of exposing the contingency of beliefs such as “that all human beings have an innate desire for freedom,” or “that we all somehow seek to assert our autonomy when allowed to do so,” or “that human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms and not those that uphold them.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Feminist Reception of Mahmood’s Project: Problem of Cultural Relativism**

Mahmood’s attempt of historicizing agency in this way is applauded by a number of feminists as a compelling critique of Eurocentricism, yet at the same time received as an unsettling claim due to its dangerous proximity to cultural relativism and essentialism. Waggoner writes:

Muslim agency essentially differs in that its form is tied to the habituation of prescribed norms of the culture rather than to the expectation to question and individuate from society. . . . Furthermore, while Mahmood’s argument that Muslim desire differs from Western desire is based on the point that these two cultures represent different sets of historical conditions, thus they shape subjects differently, the

conclusion that desires differ along cultural lines tends to introduce an ahistorical claim: that there are fixed desires, goals, and subject forms unique to specific cultures. The empiricism of Mahmood’s method lends itself to the same kind of cultural essentialism she has sought to avoid.<sup>16</sup>

Waggoner notes that historicizing agency, pushed to its limits, denotes an ahistorical move that closes down each context onto itself by way of disregarding that culture is not fixed, but always on the move, that it is not unitary, but fragmented, that it is not self-contained, but dialectical. If this is where Mahmood’s project takes us, then we are left with a definition of culture that is thoroughly problematic. Challenging the universalization of a Western creation of “an innate desire to freedom,” an idea whose historical specificity remains widely unrecognized, need not entail taking a cultural relativist position that essentializes culture by way of positing two sets of desires that are irreconcilable.

What, then, is the alternative? Are we doomed to either blind universalism or misguided cultural relativism? Merry’s discussion on human rights and violence against women offers another alternative that Mahmood’s project could be amenable to: that we must undertake the labor of cultural translation by working through the tensions. By taking up “culture as contested,” she suggests that we can in fact create this alternative and delegitimize claims of both universalism and relativism.<sup>17</sup> “Culture in this sense,” she writes, “does not serve as a barrier to human rights mobilization but as a context that defined relationships and meanings and constructs the possibilities of action.”<sup>18</sup> By pursuing this alternative, we are moving away from the kinds of detrimental universalism that Mahmood protests, yet not towards an uncritical position that advocates the blind preservation of a culture. Thereby, Mahmood’s attempts to demonstrate the historical specificity (rather than natural validity) of the “agency as autonomy” formulation must not take us to a point where we yield to the inherent relativism of the notion of agency. There are resources, indeed, within Mahmood’s project to reject cultural relativism and undertake the labor of cultural translation. That her account focuses on the participants of the mosque movement who reject what they take to be Western values and instead endorse what they take to be cultural authenticity does not mean that Mahmood uncritically agrees with them. We are to be cautious not to inadvertently dismiss the alternative of cultural translation that Mahmood’s project may elicit. We must take her seriously when she states that she means to gesture at “a mode of encountering the Other which does not assume that in the process of culturally translating other lifeworlds one’s own certainty about how the world should proceed can remain stable.”<sup>19</sup> This gesture does not refer to positing two essential, irreconcilable cultures, but rather points to a possibility of a transformative project of translation that the encounter may serve as the occasion to. We shall explore this possibility of cultural translation further in the last part of this essay, within the context of an alternative reading of Mahmood.

### **Feminist Reception of Mahmood’s Project: Problem of Relevance**

Another worry that feminists shared about this project regards its *relevance* to feminism. Mahmood draws attention to the importance of “analysis as a mode of conversation, rather than mastery, [which] can yield a vision of coexistence that does not require making other lifeworlds extinct or provisional.”<sup>20</sup> How can this be a feminist project, Selim wonders, as “if we were to shift the terms of this conversation from the United States to Egypt, the ‘lifeworld’ in actual danger of becoming ‘extinct

or provisional' is that of feminism itself—dissident, secular, and anti-colonial."<sup>21</sup> We are to recognize, Selim contends, although the pious Egyptian woman is positioned as the Other of the Western feminist and is at risk of being made "extinct or provisional," the Egyptian feminist, "dissident, secular, and anti-colonial," is at the very same risk within the context of Egypt. In a similar vein, Bangstad suggests that Mahmood is endorsing "a politics which subordinates the exercise of female autonomy and agency to the interests of a 'preservation of life forms,'"<sup>22</sup> and that her project cannot, in effect, have any relevance, let alone value, to feminism, for "there simply is no way of reconciling feminism with a perspective which appears to prioritize the 'preservation of life forms' over women's rights."<sup>23</sup> Van der Veer shares similar concerns as he writes: "While Mahmood's interpretation may help Western feminists to understand better the agency of Muslim women involved in the piety movement, it is not entirely clear to what extent this improved understanding will further or undermine feminism as an emancipatory movement."<sup>24</sup>

To what extent, then, is Mahmood's project 'feminist'? What is the value of her reformulation of agency for feminism? Do we cease our struggles over women's rights as Bangstad suggests if we embrace a conception of agency that is not equated with a strive for autonomy or liberty, but instead denotes "a capacity for action that historically specific notions of subordination enable and create?"<sup>25</sup> What can this redefinition do for us?

First, it must be pointed out that this definition by no means forecloses or undermines acts or possibilities of resistance, but instead shifts the focus from "resistance" to "capacities for action" or "inhabitation of norms." That is to say, Mahmood is not concerned with rendering secular/liberal projects of feminism obsolete by pointing to certain expressions of agency that are untranslatable in terms of a secular/liberal framework. Her aim, rather, seems to be to reformulate agency in such a way that it would become a more capacious concept that can attest to a set of experiences and practices that it previously omitted. In this sense, it is important to note that Mahmood is undertaking an *inclusive* project, in that various acts that are not primarily motivated by subversive ideals come to be recognized as agential under this reformulation, along with those acts that are as such. But is it feminist, necessarily?

Mahmood's distinction between two modalities of feminism—analytical and political—may help us address this. She suggests that our analytical projects of "offering a *diagnosis* of women's status across cultures" are not to be determined by our politically *prescriptive* projects that seek emancipation through "changing the situation of women who are understood to be marginalized, subordinated, or oppressed."<sup>26</sup> That is not to say that feminist diagnosis and prescription "should remain deaf to each other, only that they should not be collapsed into each other."<sup>27</sup> Mahmood writes: "By allowing theoretical inquiry some immunity from the requirements of strategic political action, we leave open the possibility that the task of thinking may proceed in directions not dictated by the logic and pace of immediate political events."<sup>28</sup> In other words, by refusing to conflate diagnosis and prescription, Mahmood accounts for a richer analysis that is not determined by one's political commitments. In this, she insinuates that insofar as one is concerned with enriching her diagnosis by freeing it from political determination, her account does not bear direct political implications—a claim which may also be said to pertain to Mahmood's own project. One may suggest that this denotes admission on Mahmood's part that her project cannot offer anything much of relevance to feminist *politics*, regardless of her own political commitments as a feminist. Yet it is also possible to read her suggestion that we ought not

conflate analytical and political modalities of feminism as *not* foreclosing the possibility of influence, but only determination: our diagnosis cannot *determine* our politics, but may very well *inform* it, and *vice versa*. We may, then, look at what her analysis contributes to diagnostic feminism, and from then on explore the ways in which the diagnosis that Mahmood offers may inform our politics.

### **A Third Alternative: Locating *Politics of Piety* within Feminist Discourse**

Mahmood's diagnostic claim is that if we attended only to the ways in which norms are contested or subverted, our analyses would prove sterile in accounting for the variety of the ways in which norms are inhabited. We now are going to explore what this insight can contribute to a feminist analysis. Since Mahmood's project is amenable to a poststructuralist feminist framework, Judith Butler's account would offer the needed contrast in demonstrating Mahmood's unique contribution.

Şeyla Benhabib has famously argued that by taking the subject as an effect of discourse, Butler's project cannot account for feminist aspirations, as subjectivity as such forecloses the possibility of "agency, autonomy, and selfhood" that are so central to feminist projects of emancipation.<sup>29</sup> To this, Butler responded that subject (and in turn, agency) is "the permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process."<sup>30</sup> Mahmood would side with Butler in this debate, as she sees Butler as an ally to the case she makes "for uncoupling the notion of self-realization from that of the autonomous will."<sup>31</sup> Yet, she also adds that her position indicates a significant point of divergence from that of Butler: "[T]he normative political subject of poststructuralist feminist theory often remains a liberatory one, whose agency is conceptualized on the binary model of subordination and subversion," whereas her account explores the "dimensions of human action whose ethical and political status does not map onto the logic of repression and resistance."<sup>32</sup> That is to say, to conceptualize agency "in terms of subversion or resignification of social norms" misses out on the complexities of experience that are not reducible to subversion or resignification. Thus, a Butlerian framework would not be fruitful for the kind of analysis Mahmood is willing to undertake. Further, Mahmood would also dismiss Benhabib's suggestion to posit autonomy as a precondition for agency, for Mahmood is interested in those modalities of agency which are inexpressible within, or simply irrelevant to, a rigid vocabulary of autonomy. Thus, Mahmood offers an alternative to the two positions of this debate—an alternative whose significance will now be explored through another feminist critique of Butler to which Mahmood's account can offer a response.

From a rather different perspective than that of Benhabib's, Magnus points to the inadequacy of the terms Butler offers for subjectivity.<sup>33</sup> Butler's claim that "[t]he subject is constructed through *acts of differentiation* that distinguish the subject from its constitutive outside"<sup>34</sup> (emphasis added) offers a negative account of subjectivity that highlights "differentiation," with the implication that the context through which the subject is constituted is necessarily oppressive.<sup>35</sup> Magnus suggests that this offers a negative conception of agency that entails "a limited conception of creativity."<sup>36</sup> In a similar vein to Mahmood's concern, Magnus writes: "Butler's reduction of agency to the performance of subversive speech acts implies that creativity may only be exercised in the form of resistance. Such a negative and restricted notion of agency neglects the possibility of other, more positive forms of creativity."<sup>37</sup> We may read Mahmood's account as a response to this need of articulating such positive forms of creativity, thereby offering a more extensive conception of agency that is not primarily negative. These creative modes of agency are especially

emphasized in Mahmood's discussion of an embodied practice of ethics that blurs the distinction between interiority and exteriority by way of a self-creating affective experience, whose connotations we will now explore.

In order to demonstrate how Mahmood's analysis of agency offers resources for a feminism of "the third alternative," we shall turn briefly to Sonia Kruks, who also proposes a third alternative to what she calls "discursive" and "Enlightenment" accounts of agency. Kruks's alternative is to attend to the "interconstituency of the biological, affective, cultural, and discursive domains"<sup>38</sup> that come to be lived as embodied experience, thereby accounting for "the experiential complexity"<sup>39</sup> that reductive frameworks of rationality or discourse fail to grasp. She writes: "[F]eminist theory must continue to hold onto the concept of experience and must attend to the ways in which experience can exceed discursivity" (emphasis added).<sup>40</sup> I argue that Mahmood's account does precisely that: through a display of the embodied ethical practices that the participants of the mosque movement employ, Mahmood not only makes room for but *centralizes* the positive affective experience for an analysis of agency.

Mahmood would agree with Kruks that poststructuralist feminism is inadequate, especially for the project at hand (that is, giving an account for "the imaginary of the mosque movement"), because of "the relationship it assumes between the body and discourse, one modeled on a linguistic theory of signification."<sup>41</sup> In explicating the embodied ethical practices of the women of the mosque movement, Mahmood suggests that we are to attend to "the different ways in which people live [moral] codes" and "not simply the values enshrined in [them]," so that we may see "what relationships [people] establish between the various constitutive elements of the self (body, reason, emotion, volition, and so on) and a particular norm."<sup>42</sup> Thereby, with this analytical shift the focus becomes "the *work* bodily practices perform in crafting a subject—rather than the *meanings* they signify."<sup>43</sup> In these embodied modes of self-creation, desire becomes a product of action, rather than its antecedent,<sup>44</sup> and emotions, similarly, are "acquired and cultivated."<sup>45</sup> Mahmood gives "fear of God" as an example, which is not "natural, but something that must be *learned*."<sup>46</sup> Ritual worship, Mahmood notes, is "both *enacted through*, and *productive of*, intentionality, volitional behavior, and sentiments."<sup>47</sup> Repeated action, in this sense, gives way to self-realization, a becoming of the pious self, through self-regulation that not only pertains to one's behavior, but also extends to her emotions. Through embodied practices that mobilize different modes of affectivity, then, formation and reformation of an ethical self is undertaken. An example of such practices that Mahmood gives is the various techniques the women employ in order to "develop one's capacity to cry spontaneously,"<sup>48</sup> which lead to "a reorientation of emotions"<sup>49</sup> through bodily reenactments that play a critical role in self-formation. The ethical self is, then, constituted through these embodied, affective<sup>50</sup> modes of action.

Mahmood notes that in this context the distinction between exteriority (of external impediment) and interiority (of affective experience) is obfuscated. As "convention as exterior" and "desire as interior" loses its significance, the dyadic resistance/domination model proves sterile in accounting for these agential practices. "[T]he outward behavior of the body constitutes both potentiality and the means through which interiority is realized."<sup>51</sup> Thus, one's authentic desires (for freedom, or otherwise) and "obligatory social conventions" do not represent a meaningful distinction "precisely because socially prescribed forms of behavior constitute the conditions for the emergence of the self as such and are integral to its realization."<sup>52</sup>

One may argue that the account Mahmood offers for the obfuscation of the interior and exterior by way of corporeal inhabitation of norms is formulated through poststructuralist terms whereby the discursive traditions constitute the subjects via seizure and transformation of interior manifestations of power (affects, sensations, desire, etc.). However, this would be a misreading since Mahmood is resistant to a prioritization of resignification in accounting for this pious experience. How these affects are experienced, for Mahmood, is not primarily understood as discursive effects. One would err if she disregards that "although subjects are constituted through discursive traditions, they experience, through their participation in social relations around these texts, various sensations, desires, and so on that are not themselves discursive,"<sup>53</sup> as Clare puts it in her reading of Mahmood. That is to say, although affectivity and corporeality partake in "the chain of signification," they are not *primarily* discursive, but are rather sites of extra-discursivity that underscore an irreducible experiential complexity grounded in materiality. By virtue of this complexity, they point to a beyond, an excess that is not readily captured by signifiatory analyses. Mahmood's account of corporeality, then, denotes an analytical shift: as Clare puts it, "[W]e move from the signification of the body to the *becoming of the body* through practice."<sup>54</sup>

This is precisely the point where Mahmood's project intersects with Kruks's: the body attests to the ambiguity of lived experience as interconstituted. Subjectivity is not simply a discursive production, but "a process of embodied becoming."<sup>55</sup> This is even more salient in one particular passage in *Politics of Piety* that concludes Mahmood's analysis by highlighting its unique contribution to the feminist debate on agency:

Insomuch as this kind of analysis suggests that different modalities of agency require different kinds of bodily capacities, it forces us to ask whether acts of resistance (to systems of gender hierarchy) *also devolve upon the ability of the body to behave in particular ways*. From this perspective, transgressing gender norms may not be a matter of transforming "consciousness" or effecting change in the signifiatory system of gender, but might well require *the retraining of sensibilities, affect, desire, and sentiments*—those registers of corporeality that often escape the logic of representation and symbolic articulation.<sup>56</sup> (emphasis added)

This passage raises at least two interrelated points that are consequential and that I have been tracing throughout this paper: First, Mahmood's commitment to an embodied account of agency and affectivity offers a third feminist alternative that is fruitful. Second, far from falling into cultural relativism, this project seeks to change the ways in which we analyze agency across cultures, thereby offering resources for undertaking the labor of cultural translation. Let us now explicate how exactly these play out in Mahmood's project.

By attending to the interplay of the discursive and the extra-discursive within affectivity, Mahmood's project parallels Kruks's by way of showing "the inadequacy of discourse reductionism," as well as "the rationalist dismissal of embodied experience."<sup>57</sup> This enables us to position Mahmood within the Benhabib-Butler debate as a *third alternative*, given that they put emphasis, respectively, on "rational accountability,"<sup>58</sup> and "matrices of power and discourse"<sup>59</sup> in the formation of subjectivity. Rather than conducting a feminist analysis of agency by taking either "transforming 'consciousness'" or "effecting change in the signifiatory system of gender" central to the conception of agency, Mahmood urges us to pay close attention to "those registers of corporeality that often escape the logic of representation and symbolic articulation."<sup>60</sup> In this, Mahmood

sides with Kruks that these registers, “sensibilities, affect, desire, and sentiments,”<sup>61</sup> offer a new resource of analysis by attending to the corporeality, a site of interconstituency, through which we may recognize, as Kruks suggests and Mahmood attests to, “that emotions often exceed . . . discourse,”<sup>62</sup> and that “[s]entient, affective, and emotional experiences come to be a vital constituent of cognition, judgment, and speech”<sup>63</sup> (although cognition, judgment, and speech in turn shapes affectivity itself, according to Mahmood). Moreover, the two modalities of feminism (diagnosis and prescription) may both utilize and further explore the implications of this unit of analysis: whereas feminist diagnosis may concern itself with analyzing “the formation of sensibilities, sensations, and desires”<sup>64</sup> (as opposed to discourse analysis *per se*), feminist politics may understand itself as aiming at the transformation of these, or, in Mahmood’s words, “the *remaking* of sensibilities and commitments” (emphasis added)<sup>65</sup> and “*retraining* of sensibilities, affect, desire, and sentiments” (emphasis added).<sup>66</sup> Thus, far from giving an account that is irrelevant to feminism, Mahmood offers an experiential alternative through her account of embodied ethical practices that are entangled with an affective mode of self-transformation.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, Mahmood’s project does not fall into cultural relativism or employ essentializing modes of agency (by way of postulating an essentially Western and an essentially Muslim agency, as Waggoner suggests), precisely because she does not stop at a mere historicization of agency that in turn becomes untranslatable across cultural contexts, but rather, by seeking to transform the ways in which we think about agency, she *generalizes* her reformulation of agency as “a modality of action,”<sup>68</sup> and “the grammar of concepts in which its particular affect, meaning, and form resides.”<sup>69</sup> By taking up *resistance*, if we were to go back to Butler, as a particular modality of agency that “devolve[s] upon the ability of the body to behave in particular ways,”<sup>70</sup> Mahmood offers a corporeal basis to ground transnational feminist projects. This, again, parallels with Kruks’s suggestion of taking up “the role of embodied experience as an affective basis for solidarity among women.”<sup>71</sup> Mahmood’s project, then, may be amenable to feminist projects of cultural translation by virtue of its focus on embodied agential practices that mark the extra-discursive dimension of experience.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that *Politics of Piety* offers more than what its critics care to admit: the corporeal articulation of agency by attending particularly to positive (such as love and hope) and negative (such as fear) affective experiences<sup>72</sup> offers a third feminist alternative. Further, this alternative provides a basis for feminist solidarity that, for Mahmood, “could only ensue within the uncertain, at times opaque, conditions of intimate and uncomfortable encounters in all their eventuality.”<sup>73</sup> This uncertainty, or opacity, by no means precludes the possibility of solidarity; on the contrary, it constitutes the very condition that projects of cultural translation may gradually demystify. Thus, the corporeal basis for solidarity Mahmood offers, contrary to the convictions of her critics, has positive diagnostic and political implications that pertain to the projects of cultural translation that transnational feminist analyses undertake.

## Endnotes

1. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, xi.
2. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 1-10.
3. Selim, Samah. “Book Review: ‘Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject’” (online source).
4. *Ibid.*

5. Those who read Mahmood in this way include Sindre Bangstad, “Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism after Virtue” (28-54); Samah Selim, “Book Review;” Stathis Gourgouris, “Antisecularist Failures: A Counterresponse to Saba Mahmood,” (455-456); and Peter Van der Veer, “Embodiment, Materiality, and Power” (809-818).
6. Several readings of Mahmood bring up accusations of cultural relativism, including Selim, “Book Review;” Bangstad, “Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism after Virtue;” and Waggoner, “Irony, Embodiment, and the ‘Critical Attitude’: Engaging Saba Mahmood’s Critique of Secular Morality.”
7. For such reading see: Julius Bautista, “The Meta-Theory of Piety: Reflections on the Work of Saba Mahmood” (75-83).
8. Sindre Bangstad (in “Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism After Virtue,” 42-43) and Peter Van der Veer (in “Embodiment, Materiality, and Power,” 811) brought up this concern.
9. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 4-5.
10. *Ibid.*, 5.
11. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
12. *Ibid.*, 2.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Mahmood also notes that this tendency is prevalent in not only Western feminist analyses, but also those in the Third World.
15. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 5.
16. Waggoner, “Irony, Embodiment, and the ‘Critical Attitude’: Engaging Saba Mahmood’s Critique of Secular Morality,” 249.
17. Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence*, 9.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 199.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Selim, “Book Review,” (online source).
22. Bangstad, “Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism After Virtue,” 42.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Van der Veer, “Embodiment, Materiality, and Power,” 811.
25. Mahmood, “Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent,” 203.
26. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 10.
27. *Ibid.*, 196.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Benhabib, “Feminism and Postmodernism: An Uneasy Alliance,” 21.
30. Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism,’” 47.
31. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 14.
32. *Ibid.*
33. See Magnus, “The Unaccountable Subject: Judith Butler and the Social Conditions of Intersubjective Agency.”
34. Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” 46.
35. Magnus, “The Unaccountable Subject,” 84.
36. *Ibid.*, 88.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, 150.
39. *Ibid.*, 149.
40. *Ibid.*, 133.
41. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 159.
42. *Ibid.*, 120.
43. *Ibid.*, 122.
44. *Ibid.*, 126.
45. *Ibid.*, 144.
46. *Ibid.*, 144.
47. *Ibid.*, 131.

48. *Ibid.*, 130.
49. *Ibid.*
50. The choice to use the term “affective” here is not intended for an underestimation of the role of rational choice or judgment in these practices. What is offered here is not a dichotomy of emotion and reason, but rather a brief examination of the ways in which these overlap and/or interact. Thus, for instance, it is important to note that after having made the conscious decision to spontaneously cry, one still has to restrain her sensibilities in order to be able to do so. Affectivity, then, both exceeds and is influenced by rationality, which points to a complicated relationship that cannot be captured by a dualism.
51. *Ibid.*, 159.
52. *Ibid.*, 149.
53. Clare, “Agency, Signification, and Temporality,” 54.
54. *Ibid.*, 61.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 188.
57. Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, 144.
58. Benhabib, “Feminism and Postmodernism,” 20.
59. Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” 42.
60. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 188.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, 146.
63. *Ibid.*, 147.
64. Clare, “Agency, Signification, and Temporality,” 54.
65. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 197.
66. *Ibid.*, 188.
67. Mahmood also gives an account of the ways in which these embodied ethical practices transform the public discourse. Their political bearing calls into question the dimension of normativity, i.e., to what end are these sensibilities trained, or, more importantly, to what end ought they to be trained? Although questions such as these are beyond the scope of this paper, they are very much bound up with the conclusions that Mahmood draws, and are yet to be addressed for those conclusions to hold up.
68. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 157.
69. *Ibid.*, 188.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, 152.
72. Mahmood gives an account of these by calling them “the classical triad” invoked by the participants of the mosque movement (140). She notes that these affects are not merely motivational devices, but are “integral aspects of pious action itself” (140).
73. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 199.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### *The Metaphysics of Gender*

Charlotte Witt (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). 168 pages. \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-19-974040-6.

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This book is a defense of gender essentialism. However, the specific thesis Witt argues for in *The Metaphysics of Gender* is perhaps somewhat less provocative than the previous sentence suggests. It is that “gender is unessential to social individuals” (xiii), or in other words, that gender unifies a collection of “social position occupancies” into a single, new being—a social individual—in the same sense that the function of providing shelter unifies a collection of building materials into a house. This thesis is philosophically interesting in its own right, but it also provides guidance, Witt argues, for feminist practice and politics: namely, it entails that strategies for challenging the oppression of women ought to attend primarily to the structural elements of societies rather than to individual psychologies. *The Metaphysics of Gender* is meticulously argued, lucidly written, and highly thought-provoking. Though its sphere of concern is narrower than the title of the book suggests, its topic is at the heart of feminist theory, and for this reason it recommends itself to all feminist scholars.

What does “gender is unessential to social individuals” mean? Each of the first three chapters of *The Metaphysics of Gender* explicates a key term in this claim. Chapter 1 elucidates the sort of essentialism about gender Witt defends: Aristotelian unification essentialism. Unification essentialism (or “unessentialism” for short) is concerned with the question “What makes this an X, rather than a heap of parts?” Unification essentialism is distinct from identity essentialism, which asks “What makes this X *this* X rather than *that* X?” as well as from kind essentialism, which asks “What makes this an X, rather than a Y?” By saying that gender is unessential to social individuals, Witt is arguing, then, that gender unifies many disparate things into a single, new thing (a thing she calls a social individual).

The function of providing shelter causes a heap of wood, bricks, and nails to be a house. What is it that gender unifies?

In Chapter 2, Witt observes that agents occupy a variety of social positions or social roles (e.g., woman, mother, doctor, immigrant, etc.), which each have their associated social norms, at the same time and over time. Gender unifies these disparate social position occupancies, giving rise to a distinct, new, individual thing—a social individual. Social individuals are responsive to the social norms associated with the social positions they occupy in the sense that they react to (though not necessarily comply with) them, whether they are aware of doing so or not. Social individuals are evaluable under these norms not in an ethical sense, but rather in the sense that others will judge them in accordance with the norms of their social positions and are likely to impose penalties for non-compliance.

By “gender,” Witt means being a woman or being a man. Thus, being a woman or being a man unifies various social position occupancies, in Witt’s view, in addition to itself being a social position occupancy. Whether someone is a woman or a man is determined by the socially mediated reproductive function (what Witt calls the “engendering function”) that individual is recognized by others to perform. “Engendering” is a technical term for Witt, who uses it to distinguish the social aspects of having children and being or becoming a parent from the biological activity of reproduction. Precisely what Witt means by “engendering” remains slightly opaque in this book, but Witt employs an analogy that is quite helpful: “Engendering,” she says, “is to reproduction as dining is to feeding” (37), where dining is understood as the social elaboration of feeding, a purely animal function. “To be a woman,” Witt says, “is to be recognized to have a particular function in engendering, to be a man is to be recognized to have a different function in engendering” (39). However, Witt points out, which engendering functions define and distinguish men from women are both contingent and culturally variable.

As this indicates, it is Witt’s view that gender is externally ascribed or assigned; it is imposed by others rather than chosen. It is this aspect of Witt’s view that gives rise to its practical, political significance: Since social positions are externally imposed and individuals as responsive to and evaluable under the social roles associated with them, feminist political action should concern itself, Witt argues, primarily with changing social roles and the social structures that determine and organize them (in short, social reality), rather than with altering individual psychologies, biases, preferences, and choices. In fact, Witt argues (in the Epilogue) that it may be that accomplishing the latter can only be done by means of the former since the psychological workings of individuals are caused by the organization of society and social roles.

Witt is arguing, then, that in addition to human organisms and persons, there are social individuals. In Chapter 3, Witt defines social individuals as social position occupiers. This distinguishes them from human organisms (“members of the human species . . . who realize the human genotype” (54)) and from persons (“individuals who have a first-person perspective (or self-consciousness) and are characterized by the related property of autonomy” (54)). Given these definitions, several things follow uncontroversially: not all human organisms are persons; persons are not necessarily human organisms; not all human organisms are social individuals; and social individuals are not necessarily human organisms. Moreover, Witt argues, because social individuals are defined relationally as social position occupiers, and thus would not exist if the social world did not exist, persons are not necessarily social individuals and social individuals need not be persons. Meeting the criteria of personhood does not require the existence of the social world, and, in addition, someone could occupy a social position (e.g., grandchild) without yet being a person.

But, one may wonder, what can we do with social individuals in our ontology that we can’t with just human organisms and persons? The reason we need social individuals in our ontology, Witt argues, is that claims of gender essentialism cannot be formulated coherently in relation to human organisms or persons. Why? Gender is not appropriately attributed to human organisms or to persons, Witt maintains. It is a category mistake to attribute gender to human organisms because “the human organism is a biological entity whose behavior is subject to evaluation only in relation to biological normativity,” whereas “engendering is evaluable in terms of social normativity” (64-65). Moreover, a person is not the sort of being who could be essentially gendered not only because the capacities that define personhood are intrinsic, psychological properties (while gender is a relational social position), but also because gender requires embodiment, and persons are not essentially embodied. This leaves one challenge for Witt’s argument that social individuals exist: Why should we care whether or not claims of gender essentialism can be coherently formulated? Witt’s argument is this: “the centrality of the essentialism/anti-essentialism debate within feminist theory is indisputable, and its significance for a wide range of issues in feminist theory is beyond doubt” (68). Even those who reject gender essentialism as false do not argue, Witt says, that it is incoherent.

What remains for Witt to complete the central argument of the book is to show (1) why there need be anything that unifies social position occupancies into a single social individual, (2) how gender, or the engendering function, unifies social position occupancies into a distinct, new social individual, and (3) why there is not something else that is unessential to social individuals. She undertakes these tasks in Chapter 4. There must be something that unifies social position occupancies into a single social individual, Witt argues, else role conflict could not be explained: “If there were no one individual bound by both sets [of role-related norms] there could be no conflict” (84). Gender, the engendering function, unifies social positions as a “mega social role,” or principle of normative unity. To put this another way, one could say that gender has normative sovereignty over other social roles or positions. Not only is it the case that the social normative requirements of gender tend to trump the normative requirements of other social roles, but it is also true that gender defines and organizes an individual’s other social roles in societies like ours.

Gender is not merely *a* mega social role, *a* principle of normative unity, in societies like ours, Witt argues; it is *the* mega social role. The final element in Witt’s defense of her thesis is perhaps the most controversial, for in making these claims, Witt is denying that there are other social roles—for example, and namely, those related to race—that are the principle of normative unity among an individual’s various social roles. Though Witt cautions that her claims about gender and race are only contingently true of societies like ours, she presents several arguments to show that it is gender rather than race that is the principle of normative unity for social individuals in societies like ours. Even if Witt is correct, however, these arguments are not altogether successful.

Witt’s first argument is that while gender oppression and the categories it implies are universal, race oppression and race categories are not. Therefore, “viewed from a cross-cultural and trans-historical perspective, race seems like a weak candidate for the mega social role” (99). However, as Witt herself acknowledges, there can be cross-cultural variation in mega social roles. Thus, that race oppression and implied categories are not universal does not seem relevant to whether race is a mega social role or not.

Witt acknowledges that race could nevertheless govern important social functions in a racialized society, as the existence of racial miscegenation laws in the history of the U.S. and South Africa demonstrate. However, Witt counters, “the explicit racial restrictions on who can marry, engage in sex, and engender with whom already assumes the gender of the individuals in question” (99). In other words, these laws are connected with race in a merely contingent way; in contrast, Witt argues, the laws are connected by definition with gender—they are predicated on gender and gender categories. Contrary to Witt, however, there is no difference between gender and race on this point; restrictions on who can marry, engage in sex, and engender with whom are predicated on gender categories in a gendered society, but they are predicated on gender categories no more than they are predicated on race categories in a so-racialized society (e.g., the U.S. prior to *Loving v. Virginia*). That this is the case is evident from contemporary social and legal challenges to gender-defined marriage and engendering laws in the U.S. today.

Witt’s main reason for thinking that gender is the mega social role, and that race is not, is its unique relation to a necessary social function: “engendering is a necessary social function in the sense that it is required for a society to persist” (100). This is a perplexing argument, however. Though biological reproduction may be necessary for the “continued existence of society” (100), engendering, as Witt conceives it, is not a necessary social function; it is the social elaboration of biological reproduction. Perhaps what Witt means is that engendering defines or is an identity condition of our society, and thus, *this* society would cease to exist in the absence of differentiated engendering functions. This is plausible, but seems no less true of race (or economic class) in relation to our society. What is most puzzling is that as Witt continues the elaboration of her account in this chapter, she argues that, though there must be some principle of normative unity for social individuals to exist, that principle of normative unity need not be connected to the engendering function, which she illustrates through a hypothetical example of a society that reproduces by cloning: “If our ‘cloning’ world were no longer organized around engendering, gender would no longer be unessential to social individuals” (105-106). This example appears to contradict Witt’s earlier claim that engendering is a necessary social function.

My claim is not that Witt is incorrect about the role of gender; on this point, I am agnostic. It certainly is, as Witt amply demonstrates, a mega social role. And this is all Witt needs for the demonstration of her thesis that gender is unessential to social individuals. In this respect, then, Witt’s central argument is completely successful. This is philosophically significant, but not, it seems to me, the most philosophically significant aspect of this book. Witt frames *The Metaphysics of Gender* as a defense of gender essentialism, and invokes the idea of social individuals in support of gender essentialism. But one might understand the significance of the arguments of this book differently. Rather than thinking of the idea of social individuals as a supporting mechanism for the thesis of gender essentialism, one might think of Witt’s explication of the role of gender in our lives as a demonstration of the existence of social individuals. Human organisms and persons, after all, cannot carry the weight of gender, given its nature as described by Witt, and, therefore, we ought to acknowledge that, in addition to being human organisms and persons, we are social individuals.

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## ***Philosophy of Science after Feminism***

Janet Kourany (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). \$29.95. 149 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-973621-6.

**Reviewed by Joanne Waugh**

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The goal of this book, in the author’s own words, “is to provide the blueprint for a philosophy of science more socially engaged and socially responsible than the philosophy of science we have now, a philosophy of science that can help to promote a science more socially engaged and socially responsible than the one we have now” (vii). These goals are independent of each other. While Kourany may have achieved the first, it remains to be seen whether she will achieve the second, for ultimately that depends not on her but on practicing scientists. It is hard to shake the feeling that there are not many scientists who would take a more socially engaged and socially responsible philosophy of science as a catalyst for developing a more socially engaged and socially responsible science. And I fear that the same can be said of many philosophers of science taking up the more socially engaged and socially responsible philosophy of science that Kourany envisions. This reinforces the need for the blueprint that Kourany proposes, and raises questions as to why philosophers would resist a socially engaged and socially responsible science (SRS). Presumably they do not favor a socially irresponsible science, but have some reservations about the ways that social values are to work in the conduct. Their resistance is not for want of a good argument, and if neither philosophers of science nor scientists themselves are moved by the arguments Kourany presents, one must ask what or who is moving them.

The answer is suggested in chapter two: the legacy of twentieth-century philosophy of science. In the decades immediately preceding and following the Second World War, the philosophy of science carved out a niche in the English-speaking philosophical world, and “the philosophy of science” was dominated by Logical Empiricism. It “sought to engage and contribute to *science* . . .” (21) and to “articulate and even improve upon what lay at the very heart of its success, scientific rationality itself” (*ibid*). This was thought to be possible because of advances in symbolic logic, for it was the logic of science that most concerned the Logical Empiricists. It is true that in their early days as members of the Vienna Circle, most of them believed that science could—and would—be used for political and social liberation. But these were only anticipated *results* of science; the task of the philosophy of science—articulating scientific rationality—was solely *epistemological* and not social. This did not mean that philosophers and practitioners of science need give up the claim that science was a positive social good, leaving many a social benefit in its wake. Still, to fulfill their epistemological task, philosophers of science needed to accept the distinction between the context of discovery and that of justification, or as Reichenbach put it, philosophers of science need not be concerned with whatever “external” relations science “enters into with scientists or society” (1938, 3-8 cited on p. 22). This includes whatever “system of connections [were] actually followed in the thinking of scientists” (22). Rather, philosophers of science should strive to rationally reconstruct scientific thought processes “in a way they ought to occur if they are to be ranged in a consistent system” (1938, 5, p. 22). Still, if rational reconstructions aimed at maximizing the logical coherence and cogency of scientific thinking, this was not all that they needed to do: “the rational reconstructions would have to remain in correspondence with the actual thinking of scientists” (23).

Logical Empiricism's program for the philosophy of science proved vulnerable just because its focus was on the logic of science and not on the activities of scientists or scientific communities. It was as if scientific rationality happened without scientists, and science consisted of "disembodied observations and observation statements, experiments detached from the individuals and groups who design them, fund them, and carry them out: scientific explanations detached from their proponents, their purposes, their audiences, their effects" (27). Subsequent generations of historians and philosophers of science did point out that the history of scientific practice did not support the Logical Empiricists' claims about the construction of theories and how one adjudicates among them. Among the things that their program failed to recognize were the importance of novel predictions in support of a scientific theory, the under-determination of theories by data, the theory-laden character of observation, and that the unit of appraisal in science was not the theory but the research program, and those doing the appraisals—and the science—were not individual scientists but scientific communities. The upshot was that the fact/value distinction was no longer tenable, and scientific rationality could not be explained on the basis of logic alone. The task left to philosophers of science was to provide an explanation of what besides logic determined scientific rationality. Philosophers of science had to identify scientific values, distinguish scientific or (epistemic) values from those that were not, and determine what made a scientific (or epistemic) value, scientific (or epistemic).

If, by century's end, the philosophy of science had been "historicized" and "socialized," it had been less than successful in explaining the relationship between scientific values and their historical and social contexts. There remained a preference for dealing primarily or solely with epistemic questions. Indeed, Kourany suggests that the problem is that the philosophy of science had not yet been sufficiently "contextualized," "informed by an analysis of the actual way in which science interacts with the wider society with which it occurs" (29). It is on this point that Kourany believes that feminist philosophy of science and feminist science studies can lead the way. Feminist science studies arose because scientific claims to objectivity had been vitiated by sexism and androcentrism. Using the insights provided by feminist science studies, the goal is to provide an analysis of science that would be responsive to concerns not only of sexism and androcentrism, but also of racism and classism.

Philosophers of science, including feminists, were initially reluctant to give up in spirit if not in fact the ideal of a value-free science, science that guaranteed objectivity. They considered the possibility that the sexism and androcentrism that feminist historians and philosophers of science had uncovered in science were simply "bad science," the remedy for which was acquiring greater awareness of how pernicious values made their way into science. But a problem lay in explaining how feminist scientists could promote better science that was both feminist and objective—as they seemed to have done in biology, medicine, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and economics. For feminist historians and philosophers of science the task became one of explaining how feminist values increased—or redefined—objectivity in science.

One such explanation, considered by Kourany, is the social value management ideal of science identified with Helen Longino. Noting that values operate not—or not merely—on the individual level but on the levels of communities and societies, Longino proposed that all social values be admitted into science and that the redefined scientific community criticize the science they engender. The objectivity or rationality of a science will be

a function of the degree to which its practitioners engage in transformative criticism. Although the management of social values model for science may screen out the prejudices that have led to sexism and androcentrism and other nonegalitarian values, Kourany observes it also may not, and argues for a more explicit—and defined—political role for science.

The Feminist Empiricist Approach to science takes a more naturalist approach than the social value management approach. The former focuses on successful scientific practice in the hope of identifying the features that lead to and explain its success. One feature, or group of features, that feminist philosophers of science have identified is labeled "standpoint theory." According to Kourany, this theory, originally associated with Sandra Harding, holds that feminist science's success in eliminating sexism and androcentrism in science and thus increasing its objectivity, can be explained by the fact that women are in a better position to spot these failures of objectivity in part because they are women. As such, they also have less to lose in distancing themselves from the established order of things and criticizing its operations. An alternative empiricist explanation for feminist science's success focused more on feminist values than women's standpoints. It also takes the success of feminist science, both in eliminating sexism and in being more empirically adequate, as evidence that if scientific rationality is defined in terms of successful practice, science governed by feminist values is rational science, and fulfills epistemic and political roles.

Kourany has reservations about whether either of these feminist empiricist hypotheses can provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate its correctness. In explaining when and how women's standpoints confer epistemic advantage it seems that one must ultimately invoke feminist values, and the feminist values hypothesis must show that successful feminist science is due in every case to feminist values, and not to other factors. These hypotheses

show at most that the empirical ideal may be able to fulfill the epistemic and social roles of the old ideal of value-free science; they give us no strong reasons for thinking that the empiricist ideal *will* be able actually to do so. . . . If we are to pin our hopes for a science that is at once truly rational and truly a basis for social reform on a new understanding of scientific rationality (objectivity), we need a stronger candidate than these. (67-68)

We must ask, as does standpoint theory, why do we want this knowledge, and for whom is it going to count as knowledge?

Kourany's candidate is, of course, SRS. Feminist science and feminist history and philosophy of science were able to root out sexism and androcentrism, showing us that an egalitarian science is both possible and desirable. If social values enter into science, and it is clear that they do, we should actively pursue those that meet the needs of society, including justice, and promote human flourishing. SRS defines successful scientific practice as succeeding on both an empirical and social level. As an example of successful scientific practice that conforms to Kourany's conception of SRS, she cites the psychological research program of Carolyn West about intimate-partner violence in both African-American and Euro-ethnic American communities in the U.S.

Kourany anticipates objections from every direction. She takes up five challenges to SRS, which she characterizes as epistemological, historical, sociological, economic, and political. The epistemological challenge rests on the idea that any social interference with science inhibits, if not prevents, the search for truth. Perhaps the most familiar argument against the

social direction of science is Mill's free marketplace of ideas: the idea that survives competition and challenges from every other idea has the strongest claim to truth. An alternative version of the epistemic challenge claims that science must proceed in accordance with already agreed upon ontology, method, and a set of values—what Kuhn calls normal, or paradigm-directed science. Introducing values from outside the paradigm may not be possible, and if possible may hinder the progress of normal science. Yet another version of the epistemological argument derives from Polyani. He holds that attempts to direct science in socially beneficial ways will deflect from its advancement, because scientific advances often, if not always, require unpredictable moves. Any attempt to advance science in accordance with social aims—no matter how laudable—undermines its progress.

These epistemic arguments beg the question about what constitutes an advance in scientific knowledge. They are *a priori*: there needs to be empirical evidence that SRS would constitute an obstacle to advances in science, and the proponents of the epistemological challenges have offered none. (*Pace* Mill, there is no guarantee that in the free marketplace of ideas competition will be fair and challenges sound.) Those who offer the historical challenge point to cases in which social interference with science had negative, if not deadly results: Galileo, Lysenko, and German science under the Third Reich. But these examples of social interference in science, Kourany shows in an extended examination of each, are arguments against some kinds of social interference, but not against SRS. The sociological and economic challenges to SRS are that it is redundant. The early version of the sociological argument, formulated by Thomas Merton, asserted that science has its own *ethos* according to which social interference is not needed to ensure that science will be objective and socially responsive. Kourany finds the economic argument exemplified in Vannevar Bush's *The Endless Frontier: Report to the President on a Program for Post-War Scientific Research*. It concludes that basic scientific research drives applied research that, in turn, spurs technological advances. Thus basic research initiates a process that brings a host of social benefits, especially socioeconomic progress. On the economic challenge, SRS is, again, unnecessary. But these are empirical claims and, as Kourany notes, subsequent research does not provide evidence that Merton's *ethos* is entrenched in science, nor that scientific advances are necessary outcomes of such an *ethos*. Neither is there compelling empirical evidence regarding the truth of the linear model of innovation—basic research, applied research, technological innovation socioeconomic benefits.

The last challenge to SRS that Kourany discusses is the political objection: that social interference with science violates scientists' rights. Kourany points out that the documents that assert the rights of scientists—e.g., The Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union—also implicitly acknowledge rights such as the right to human dignity that may conflict with the right to freedom of research, and provide little or no guidance. There are provisions in such documents that limit scientific research in the interests of social goods such as equality and the preservation of the environment. How these limits are to be understood and applied is vague and incomplete; the challenge to SRS is to do a better job in developing procedures for establishing scientists' rights and constraints on them.

Kourany closes this work by citing the codes for ethical research formulated by various professional scientific societies as well as documented instances of violations—epistemological and ethical—that demonstrate the need not just for these codes, but also for SRS. The fact is that “science is a profound shaper of

science and a profound beneficiary of society” (68) and it makes sense to take the needs of society into account in a rational way, e.g., in funding priorities and restrictions. The alternative to the “social interference” of SRS is not the absence of social interference. It is social interference that is piecemeal, *ad hoc*, driven by values that may be good neither from an epistemic nor social perspective, and thus not part of a larger strategy about the sciences' role in society. No social interference is not an option; the question that needs to be answered is how and why members of society—or groups of them—decide what epistemic and social values must be maintained in scientific research and when.

However much twenty-first century philosophers of science might want to follow their predecessors in distinguishing epistemic from social values, what counts as an epistemic value is itself a social determination. The legacy of the European Enlightenment was an agreement that experimental and empirical methods, and mathematical and logical analyses, were to be given preference over religious, political, and social commitments in the practice of science, thus establishing them as epistemic values. What society brings together can be torn asunder. That there are vocal members of American society who urge the rejection of science for religious or political reasons demonstrates the need to reaffirm what will count as epistemic values, values that cannot be overridden for religious or social or political purposes. This underscores the need for scientists and philosophers of science to demonstrate the ethical importance of epistemic values in science. Equally important, they must demonstrate which social values are appropriate in making decisions in and about the sciences.

Some of the resistance to Kourany's ideal of SRS may be a function of the fact that philosophers of science continue to speak of “science,” rather than the “sciences.” The unity of science project was ultimately given up, but its talk of “science” with pride of place given to physics has persisted, albeit perhaps unconsciously. If the first thing one thinks of when the conversation turns to science are the mathematical natural sciences, then talk of SRS will sound odd. Kourany makes clear that when she speaks of “science” what she has in mind are not primarily or solely mathematical natural sciences. Surely, it would come as no surprise that social values are relevant to studies of societies. Still, she does speak of science, though much of her attention is devoted to concrete achievements in the various sciences. She is at her best when dealing with concrete cases, and this may not be accidental. We do not expect anyone to plump for socially irresponsible science, but it is not enough just to describe SSR in theory.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Peter Higgins** is an assistant professor of philosophy and department member in women's and gender studies at Eastern Michigan University. His main philosophical interests are in issues of global justice (especially transnational migration and poverty) and fundamental concepts of feminist theory, such as "oppression," "privilege," "social groups," and "intersectionality." These interests are combined in the book manuscript he is now completing, *Immigration Justice* (under contract with Edinburgh University Press, expected publication in 2013).

**Gail M. Presbey** is professor of philosophy at University of Detroit Mercy. Her areas of expertise are social and political philosophy as well as philosophy of nonviolence and cross-cultural philosophy. She has done research in Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, and India, having received two J. William Fulbright grants. Her most recent edited work is *Philosophical Perspectives on the 'War on Terrorism'* (Rodopi, 2007). She has a co-edited textbook, *The Philosophical Quest: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, and a co-edited book, *Thought and Practice in African Philosophy*. She has over fifty articles and book chapters published. She also has a longstanding involvement in peace and justice studies, and has been executive director and then president of Concerned Philosophers for Peace (2002-2010). Her home page can be seen at <http://presbegm.faculty.udmercy.edu/>

**Joanne Waugh** teaches philosophy at the University of South Florida where she is director of graduate studies for the Department of Philosophy and director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Hellenic Studies. She is a past editor of *Hypatia*, and the author with Roger Ariew of "The History of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Science" in the *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Science*. She has also published work in Greek philosophy, philosophy of art, and feminist philosophy.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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World Congress of Philosophy, August 4-10, 2013, Athens Greece  
<http://www.wcp2013.gr/en/universal/congress-filosofias.html>

Feminist Philosophies of Life, May 2-5, 2013, University of Alberta, Banff, Alberta, Canada

<http://www.philosophiafeministsociety.org/>