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## *Feminist Metaphilosophy*

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K. Dotson, R. Falkenstern, K. Glavic, D. Maffia,  
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## *Feminist Metaphilosophy*

- 1 *Feminist Metaphilosophy: An Introduction*  
Valentina Bortolami and Giovanna Miolli
- 15 *Metaphilosophy: A What and A Why*  
Kristie Dotson
- 33 *¿Es posible una recuperación de la fenomenología desde la filosofía feminista?*  
Danila Suárez Tomé and Diana Maffía
- 51 *De la revuelta feminista, la historia y Julieta Kirkwood*  
Alejandra Castillo
- 67 *Philosophy, Feminism and the Popular Field in Latin America*  
Luciana Cadahia
- 89 *La cita feminista: Nelly Richard entre feminismos, crítica cultural y filosofía chilena*  
Karen Glavic

- 111 *On the Uses and Abuses of Doing Feminist Philosophy with Hegel*  
Rachel Falkenstern
- 133 *Come nottola al tramonto: ipotesi su metodo e scopo delle future filosofie femministe*  
Damiano Migliorini
- 159 *A New Ameliorative Approach to Moral Responsibility*  
Michelle Ciurria
- 183 *On the Metaphilosophical Implications of the Naturalism Question in Feminism*  
Valentina Bortolami
- 209 *Composting Contemporary Metaphilosophy with Feminist Philosophical Perspectives: Towards an Account of Philosophy's Concreteness*  
Giovanna Miolli

### ***Book Reviews***

- 241 A. Balzano, *Per farla finita con la famiglia. Dall'aborto alle parentele postumane*  
(Giovanna Miolli)
- 248 R.M. Carusi, *Lacan and Critical Feminism: Subjectivity, Sexuation, and Discourse*  
(Elena Tripaldi)

- 255 D. Ferreira da Silva, *A Dívida Impagável*  
(Aléxia Bretas)
- 261 J. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*  
(Anna Guerini)
- 268 A. Stone, *Being Born: Birth and Philosophy*  
(Silvia Locatelli)
- 275 F. Vergès, *The Wombs of Women*  
(Sabrina Morán and María Cecilia Padilla)



# ON THE USES AND ABUSES OF DOING FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY WITH HEGEL

by Rachel Falkenstern \*

**Abstract.** *This article highlights the interplay between historiography of philosophy, its historical and social-political context, and the canon – its contents and its formation – and their influences on metaphilosophical issues in feminist engagements with Hegel. It argues for the importance of recognizing how professional practices are shaped by wider historical and social-political forces, and how norms and definitions of philosophy are influenced by such forces. Section 1 outlines background on the place of women in Hegel's philosophy and some early feminist engagements with it. Section 2 draws connections between metaphilosophical aspects of recent Anglophone feminist-Hegelian work, its historical contexts, and philosophy's culture of justification. Section 3 further develops ideas from the previous sections, using historiography of philosophy to connect them to the exclusions of women and feminist concerns from philosophy in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany, which continue to affect Anglophone philosophy today. Section 4 very briefly concludes to suggest that, despite the narrow definition of philosophy set by Anglophone norms, other traditions – such as continental feminist philosophy – serve as exemplars of existing alternative approaches. We ought to insist on the truth of philosophy's ever-changing definitions and recognize the benefits of its pluralism.*

**Keywords.** *Historiography; Feminist Philosophy; Metaphilosophy; Canon; Hegel*

## 0. Introduction

In this paper, and at various times throughout the week in my head, I grapple with the fact that G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy, about which I have written almost all of my published work, is sexist<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Another great disappointment was to find that Hegel's philosophy has very little sense of humor – at least not intentionally. One should note, however, that it is possible that Hegel himself did have a sense of humor; see, e.g., his choice

While it is a well-known fact that Hegel has influenced much feminist philosophy, as well as other anti-oppressive work, it is also no secret that Hegel's philosophy is not enlightened when it comes to race or gender. Further, the establishment of professional philosophy in 19th-Century Germany is partially responsible for the culture of justification, as defined by K. Dotson, which is pervasive in Anglophone philosophy today and in which I nonetheless willingly work<sup>2</sup>. These contradictions gave rise to this paper, which highlights the interplay between historiography of philosophy, its historical and social-political context, and the canon – its contents and its formation – and their influences on metaphilosophical issues in feminist engagements with Hegel. It argues for the importance of recognizing how professional practices are shaped by wider historical and social-political forces, and how norms and definitions of philosophy are influenced by such forces beyond philosophy. Thus, this essay reflects on working at the nexus of feminist and Hegelian philosophies.

Section 1 outlines some background on the place of women in Hegel's philosophy and some early feminist engagements with it. This paves the way for Section 2, which draws connections between metaphilosophical aspects of recent Anglophone feminist-Hegelian work, its historical contexts, and philosophy's current culture of justification<sup>3</sup>. Section 3 further develops ideas from the

of Halloween costume as a valet, in T. Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> K. Dotson, *How Is This Paper Philosophy?*, «Comparative Philosophy: An International Journal of Constructive Engagement of Distinct Approaches toward World Philosophy», III (1), 2012, pp. 3-29. Dotson's focus is how professional philosophy in the US is a difficult and an unwelcoming environment for diverse practitioners (to include under-represented populations, topics, subfields, approaches, etc.) and covers professional philosophy and diversity in philosophy more broadly than this paper does. This paper focuses only on Hegel's philosophy, feminist philosophies, and the gender of philosophers.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout, I use the term 'feminist-Hegelian' as shorthand to indicate philosophies that engage with both Hegel's philosophy and issues or topics related to feminist philosophy, gender, feminism, women's oppression and emancipation, or philosophy of gender in some way.

previous sections, using historiography of philosophy to connect them to the exclusions of women and feminist concerns from philosophy in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany, which continue to affect Anglophone philosophy today. Section 4 very briefly concludes to suggest that, despite the narrow definition of philosophy set by Anglophone norms, other traditions – such as continental feminist philosophy – serve as exemplars of existing alternative approaches. We do not need to reinvent philosophy, but instead ought to insist on the truth of its ever-changing self-definitions and recognize the benefits of its pluralism.

### 1. *Feminist-Hegelian (Meta)philosophy*

For the past few decades, Anglophone feminist-Hegelian philosophy has been reflecting on two related metaphilosophical issues in ways that earlier scholarship in this area seems not to have done. There are explored in this paper<sup>4</sup>. First, recent feminist-Hegelian concerns itself with the correct way to read or the proper method(s) of interpreting Hegel. Second, it reflects on the possibility and value of doing feminist philosophy with Hegel – often even while doing that very thing. Such questions might be prompted by the negative descriptions of women in Hegel's work. For those less familiar with Hegel, an overview of the ideas in his philosophy that are problematic for feminist purposes, open to feminist criticisms, or even rejected completely by feminist philosophies might be helpful to better appreciate this aspect of the complex and often contradictory nature of doing feminist-Hegelian philosophy.

Hegel's philosophy consistently paints pictures of women's intellectual capacities as limited (and inferior to that of men). This is found most explicitly stated in his *Philosophy of Right* and *Philosophy of Nature*, although it can be found elsewhere. For example, in *Philosophy of Nature* Hegel aligns the female with materiality and the

<sup>4</sup> I do not argue these are the only two possible metaphilosophical aspects, or that all recent Hegelian-feminist scholarship is doing metaphilosophy.

male with the concept (and thus with mind, subjectivity, and spirituality), and he describes the difference between the male and female sexes as one of activity and passivity, respectively, which is related not only to sexual but also to intellectual functions<sup>5</sup>. Throughout his corpus, women are described as having a nature of immediacy, or lack of differentiation, while men have a nature of difference – that is, men differentiate between self and other<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps nothing sums up his view on this topic better than the following infamous passage:

Women are capable of education, but they are not made for activities which demand a universal faculty such as the more advanced sciences, philosophy and certain forms of artistic production. Women may have happy ideas, taste and elegance, but they cannot attain to the ideal. The difference between men and women is like the difference between animals and plants. Men correspond to animals, while women correspond to plants because their development is more placid and the principle that underlies it is rather the vague unity of feeling<sup>7</sup>.

Points such as these unsurprisingly lead some to see Hegel's philosophy as endorsing problematic forms of reductionism or essentialism<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, ed. by F. Nicolin and O. Pöggeler, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1959; trans. by A.V. Miller, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830), Translated from Nicolin and Pöggeler's Edition (1959), and From the Zusätze in Michelet's Text (1847)*, Oxford-New York, Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 412-413 (the Zusätze to § 368 of the 1830 ed. of the *Encyclopedia*).

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Berlin, Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1820; trans. by T.M. Knox, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, London-Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1967, § 165. (This volume will be referred to as PR).

<sup>7</sup> PR § 166R.

<sup>8</sup> For explanations of how his work is in fact not essentialist in the way traditionally conceived, but nonetheless still problematically gendered and *also* able

In Hegel's social and political philosophy, women are tied to the private spheres of ethical life and excluded from the public spheres<sup>9</sup>. This is probably most famously found in Hegel's discussion of Sophocles' *Antigone* in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Antigone is aligned with family and Creon with the state<sup>10</sup>. And, something like an ouroboros, being stuck in the home entails that women would not be able to fully attain self-actualization according to Hegel's social theory of subjectivity. On the flipside, men are able to fully realize their individual freedom and subjectivity via their various engagements in the public spheres of society, their superior intellect, and active nature. With clear masculine/feminine binaries that, more damagingly, seem to entail a hierarchy, these ideas from Hegel give feminist critique a lot to work with, and some easy targets at that. And these are just the most clear or well-known examples; similar, related points can be found in most other areas and eras of his work.

But of course, there's much more to Hegel's philosophy, including his enormous positive influence on feminist philosophies. This begins at least with S. de Beauvoir's seminal 1949 *The Second Sex* and her *The Ethics of Ambiguity* published a year earlier. *The*

to be used for feminist purposes, see A. Stone, *Hegel on Law, Women and Contract*, in *Feminist Encounters with Legal Philosophy*, ed. by M. Drakopoulou, London-New York, Routledge, 2013; and K. Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, Cambridge (UK)-Malden (MA), Polity Press and Blackwell Pub, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., PR § 165: «The *natural* determinacy of the two sexes acquires an *intellectual* and *ethical* significance. This significance is determined by the difference into which the ethical substantiality, as the concept in itself, divides itself up in order that its vitality may thereby achieve a concrete unity».

<sup>10</sup> The discussion of the *Antigone* in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is in Chapter VI (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1952; trans. by A.V. Miller and J.N. Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 266-409). Related, see PR § 166: «the difference in the physical characteristics of the two sexes has a rational basis and consequently acquires an intellectual and ethical significance [...] man has his actual and substantive life in the state, in learning and so forth, as well as in labour and struggle with the external world [...] Woman, on the other hand, has her substantive destiny in the family and to be imbued with family piety is her ethical frame of mind»; in the following remark, Hegel gives Antigone as the prime example of such piety.

*Second Sex* is in this respect famous for its original interpretation and application of Hegel's theory of recognition (encapsulated in her thesis that a person is not born as but becomes a woman). Her work also utilizes Hegel's logic, which challenges and purports to overcome forms of oppositional thought and binary logic, which keep us limited and locked in dualist categories<sup>11</sup>. However, de Beauvoir does not simply uncritically appropriate Hegel, as seen for example in her remarks on his *Philosophy of Nature*. Further, neither is de Beauvoir's own work immune to criticisms by *other* feminists who engage with Hegel – for example, by L. Irigaray<sup>12</sup>. And there are others, not only in the so-called Continental tradition, such as J. Butler, but also from a wide variety of perspectives, who use Hegel for their own, often very different ends, such as, R. Diprose, C. Pateman, and the authors of the diverse essays in the 1996 volume *Feminist Interpretations of Hegel*, the first Anglophone collection on this topic<sup>13</sup>.

This gloss on bits of Hegel's corpus and some of the first major contemporary feminist receptions of it serves to make the point

<sup>11</sup> Hegel's logic is laid out in G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften. Teil I, Wissenschaft der Logik*, Heidelberg, Verwaltung des Osswald'schen Verlags, 1830 (trans. by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris, *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991), and as an expanded version in G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Stuttgart-Tübingen, J.G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1832 (trans. by G. di Giovanni, *The Science of Logic*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., L. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 1985, and L. Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., J. Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1987; Ead., *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York, Routledge, 1990; R. Diprose, *The Bodies of Women: Ethics, Embodiment, and Sexual Difference*, London-New York, Routledge, 1994; C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988; and the collected volume P.J. Mills (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996. This short sample due to limited space in no way discounts other work in this area; please see additional works by the authors cited at the end of this article and consult the bibliographies of the works cited for more.

that despite the fact that his philosophy is not intentionally feminist – indeed, in my view, quite the opposite – it has nonetheless inspired a long legacy of feminist philosophies (one that, I'd like to emphasize, continues to evolve and is richly varied). It also serves to locate the two metaphilosophical aspects of recent Anglophone feminist-Hegelian scholarship mentioned above within their philosophical-historical context. These aspects are especially prevalent beginning in the late 1990s, i.e., in works appearing after those mentioned in this section. However, although I have not found examples of these metaphilosophical aspects in earlier works, I do not argue for an exact date when they emerge<sup>14</sup>. Instead, this indexical narrows this essay's focus and locates these works within two wider discussions, examined in the next section.

## 2. *Parallel Lines*

Much recent Anglophone feminist-Hegelian philosophy engages with norms of philosophy and interpretation as a result of being part of wider metaphilosophical discussions in professional philosophy, which are themselves intertwined with larger social, political, and historical issues. These discussions are embedded in a culture of justification at least partially as a result of these larger issues, regardless of any philosophical reasons. Dotson's 2012 paper *How is This Paper Philosophy?* defines a culture of justification as «a culture that privileges legitimation according to presumed commonly-held, univocally relevant justifying norms, which serves to amplify already existing practices of exceptionalism and senses of incongruence within the profession»<sup>15</sup>. It explains how the

<sup>14</sup> Further, if one were to find examples of these metaphilosophical aspects in earlier works, it would not take away from my overall point that I think there are good reasons for why they figure *prominently* in this particular contemporary context. Note that in Mills, *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel* – the first Anglophone feminist-Hegelian collection – eleven of the thirteen essays were previously published: ten between 1985 and 1991, and one in 1970.

<sup>15</sup> Dotson, *How Is This Paper Philosophy?*, p. 6. Dotson defines legitimation as «practices and processes aimed at judging whether some belief, practice, and/or process conforms to accepted standards and patterns, i.e. justifying norms», p. 5.

profession – by relying on normative, historical precedents that are presumed to be commonly held – stifles, confines, or altogether excludes areas of research in philosophy, and how it sets narrow parameters for what philosophy is, how it should be done, and who gets to do it. This is done (in part) by legitimizing as properly philosophical only those projects, works, topics, styles, etc. that conform to these norms. The title of Dotson’s paper, then, is not meant to be simply self-referential; it is the question posed when something (or someone) doesn’t fit those norms (in the asker’s view anyway)<sup>16</sup>. Unpacking relationships between the culture of justification and metaphilosophical discourses in feminist-Hegelian philosophy highlights how they are shaped by historical and social-political issues.

Newer or less established areas of philosophy often find themselves in the position of having to justify their status as philosophy. Feminist philosophy is one of those areas. In order to be granted access to areas of the profession such as publication, institutional recognition, course offerings, and jobs, they must prove they are legitimately philosophy according to the supposed prevailing standards of what philosophy is. Philosophy has dealt with issues of feminist concern as long as there has been sexism, misogyny, and so forth<sup>17</sup>. However, for these very reasons, it wasn’t until the early 1970s that feminist philosophy officially began to establish itself in the US and parts of Europe<sup>18</sup>. In general, this followed from historical factors such as women’s greater access to higher

<sup>16</sup> It is also the question that indicates that, after the talk, conference, meeting, class, or (probably worst of all) interview, you do not want to hang out with the asker afterwards. For multiple accounts of the pervasiveness of this question in the profession, see *ivi*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> M.E. Waite (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers: Ancient Women Philosophers, 600 B.C.-500 A.D.*, Vol. 1, Dordrecht-Boston, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987; Ead. (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers: Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment Women Philosophers, A.D. 500-1600*, Vol. 2, Dordrecht-Boston, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989; Ead. (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers: Modern Women Philosophers, 1600-1900*, Vol. 3, Dordrecht-Boston, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991. Section 3 discusses this in relation to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Germany.

<sup>18</sup> For an early self-assessment regarding the status of professional feminist philosophy, see C. Pierce, *Philosophy*, «Signs», I (2), 1975, pp. 487-503.

education at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, what is known as first and second wave feminisms, and other social movements (among other factors). Further, despite the increase of academic journals, other publications, organizations, conferences, and institutional programs for feminist philosophy that helped solidify it as a field in its own right in the 1980s, it nonetheless remained peripheral well into the 1990s, 25 years after its founding (and here we are, 25 years after that). Additionally, the belief that having some political view or purpose precludes something from being philosophy – because philosophy is supposedly unbiased examination of (usually objective and sometimes even universal) truth(s) or knowledge – acts as a justifying norm, casting ‘feminist philosophy’ as an oxymoron. In this ambivalent context, as feminist philosophy was simultaneously growing and marginalized, there was a surge of feminist metaphilosophy from a wide variety of perspectives<sup>19</sup>.

So, when recent feminist-Hegelian philosophy contends with doing feminist philosophy with Hegel, it’s not necessarily because of what his philosophy says about women, but often as a part of contemporary discussions about the status of feminist philosophy more generally. Like much feminist philosophy, it focuses on concepts often otherwise ignored in philosophy, such as gender, sex, marriage, family, and the body. When K. Hutchings and T. Pulkkinen state in their *Introduction* to the second Anglophone feminist-Hegelian collection that one of the main concerns of the volume is the «*value of reading Hegel from perspectives that take the philosophical significance of gender and sexuality seriously*», this clearly refers to the lack of acceptance of feminist topics, among other things, by so-called mainstream philosophy<sup>20</sup>. This might be related to the deficit of feminist or gender-related

<sup>19</sup> Representative of this variety are the 1996 special issue of the journal «Metaphilosophy», XXVII (1-2), 1996; the collection *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*, ed. by J.A. Kourany, Princeton (N.J), Princeton University Press, 1998; and A. Nye, “*It’s Not Philosophy*”, «Hypatia», XIII (2), 1998, pp. 107-115.

<sup>20</sup> K. Hutchings and T. Pulkkinen, *Introduction: Reading Hegel*, in *Hegel’s Philosophy and Feminist Thought: Beyond Antigone?*, ed. by K. Hutchings and T. Pulkkinen, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 1-18, p. 1, emphasis in original.

contributions in Anglophone Hegel collections and handbooks by major publishers such as Cambridge, Oxford, Palgrave, SUNY, or Blackwell (regardless of whether any editors or contributors are women)<sup>21</sup>.

N. Bauer's 2001 monograph responds on a few levels to the charge that 'feminist philosophy' is an oxymoron<sup>22</sup>. Bauer argues, first, that *The Second Sex* is a paradigmatic counter-example to the oxymoron charge in its radical reconceptualization of philosophy, which it does by dispelling the supposed contradiction between feminism and philosophy through simultaneously generalizing about humanity (philosophy) and addressing specific problems faced daily by particular individuals and communities (feminism), and, second, that *The Second Sex* is a challenge for philosophy to follow suit<sup>23</sup>. Bauer thus not only draws out metaphilosophical components integral to de Beauvoir's work, but also their implications for philosophy more broadly. As I read Bauer, there is a need to redefine philosophy because its prevailing norms are not flexible enough to account for human being's concomitant existence as both universal and particular, or to adequately address the lived problems we face. (Bauer's book itself thus might be a counter-example to the oxymoron charge against feminist-Hegelian philosophy.)

The culture of justification interrogates feminist philosophy when the latter bends norms of philosophical approaches and methods – for example, through its collaborations with other disciplines or by combining political philosophy with epistemology. This can impede its acceptance qua philosophy by philosophical

<sup>21</sup> The only exception I know of for collections is the 2015 *Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* with a chapter on feminism by J. Kneller. Again, there are the two collections completely devoted to Hegel and feminism already mentioned in this essay, but my point here is the lack of feminist philosophy and issues of gender in general Hegel collections.

<sup>22</sup> N. Bauer, *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy & Feminism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2001, among other things, looks at connections between de Beauvoir and Hegel in five of its seven chapters.

<sup>23</sup> See esp. Chapter 1 of Bauer, *Simone de Beauvoir*, for these claims, which the book defends.

organizations, educational institutions, and other sites of legitimization. This issue of categorization may be motivated by purely metaphilosophical reasons. As Linda Martín Alcoff puts it:

Part of the reason feminist philosophy is not included in mainstream texts and courses is that it differs on metaphilosophical ground from much mainstream philosophy and, as a result, has reconfigured the problematics in the various areas of study, as well as redrawn the relationships among the areas themselves<sup>24</sup>.

However, it is worth noting that it is possible – and history has shown – that there are cases where feminist philosophy is not included ultimately because of the justificatory attitudes described above. That is, the metaphilosophical differences are exactly what prompts the question of how a feminist essay, course, etc. is philosophy, and the interrogator's refusal to consider that there may be other norms at play than the presumably commonly held ones prevents their acceptance of it.

The culture of justification has impacted feminist-Hegelian philosophy in particular through a recent debate about Hegel interpretation, in what is known as the contemporary Hegel Renaissance in Anglophone philosophy. This is occurring at the same time as the establishment and rise of feminist philosophy - in fact, their timelines are practically parallel, with a few 1970s publications on Hegel considered to inaugurate this new era in Hegel studies, which gained momentum in the 1980s and flourished (or is flourishing?) in the 1990s and 2000s<sup>25</sup>. It is considered a

<sup>24</sup> L. Martín Alcoff, *Philosophy Matters: A Review of Recent Work in Feminist Philosophy*, «Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society», XXV (3), 2000, pp. 841-882, p. 841. This is the first review essay of feminist philosophy in «Signs» since Pierce, *Philosophy*.

<sup>25</sup> K. Hartmann, *Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View*, in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York, Anchor Books, 1972, pp. 101-124; and C. Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1975 are considered to have set it off, followed by other works from them and others such as T. Pinkard and

Renaissance because after World Wars I and II, Hegel was largely dropped from Anglophone philosophy, despite his great importance for British and American Idealisms and Pragmatism. While the back-story to the Renaissance may be familiar to readers of this article, it is important to point out that the generally accepted reasons for Hegel's disappearance are historical-political. These are mainly associations between Hegel and fascism or communism. While K. Popper's 1945 *The Open Society and its Enemies* is often cited in relation to this trend, it is only one instance among many. For example, the 1959 illustrated history of philosophy – yes, a coffee-table book – by B. Russell (who won the Noble Prize in Literature in 1950) proclaims Hegel's philosophy to be totalitarian, untenable, anti-individualist, and tyrannical<sup>26</sup>. Well before that, J. Dewey was twice explicitly critical of Hegel in relation to this political issue, despite Hegel's great influence on him: first in his 1915 *German Philosophy and Politics* and then in its 1942 republication. As J.A. Good argues, since neither of these instances provided solid philosophical evidence or argumentation to substantiate this criticism, Dewey must have been influenced by the political climate<sup>27</sup>.

This is not to oversimplify the complicated relationships between German, British, and American thought around the two World Wars. However, one reason these relationships are complicated for philosophers is that they were then – as today – simultaneously trying to navigate philosophical and political commitments on the one hand and, on the other, practical concerns of their own careers and personal lives. Because it was safer to distance oneself from Hegel during such tense and turbulent political times, for the most part, philosophers did just that. Further, when intellectuals are as well known in philosophy and as publically

R. Pippin, and R. Brandom and J. McDowell, inspired by W. Sellars' myth of the given, are known for starting a neo-pragmatist strand in the 1980s.

<sup>26</sup> B. Russell, *Wisdom of the West*, Garden City (NY), Doubleday & Company, 1959, pp. 246-254. This volume went through many editions, at least through 1986; so, even if he did not actually write it, it was extremely popular.

<sup>27</sup> J. Good, *Dewey's "Permanent Hegelian Deposit": A Reply to Hickman and Alexander*, «Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society», XLIV (4), 2008, pp. 577-602.

visible as the three just mentioned, they have great influence on the philosophical norms and narratives of their own day, as well those of subsequent generations (which can also have effects reaching beyond philosophy).

During this time then, while Hegel was in exile from the canon, it seems that those who wanted to do work on him had to justify engaging not only with a German, but one whose system centers on god (the object of philosophy for Hegel) and outlines the ways spirit appears in the world – concepts that didn't fit well with the more empirical or common-sense philosophies en vogue during what was to become the rise of analytic philosophy<sup>28</sup>. So, following prevailing norms of Anglophone philosophy, Hegel was reborn in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-Century by being placed into new, usually secular paradigms via interpretations with labels such as neo-pragmatist, non-metaphysical, realist, etc. These readings are then in turn criticized for taking such liberties by those such as F.C. Beiser, who takes a stricter philological approach<sup>29</sup>. However, regardless which side one takes in this debate, reading Hegel as having one fixed meaning or arguing that there is one proper way of interpreting Hegel remains dominant in Anglophone Hegel scholarship. Thus even when a primary goal of a work is to place Hegel within feminist discourses or use him for feminist aims, and not for a specific interpretation of Hegel, current feminist-Hegelian Anglophilosophy still finds itself addressing this issue. For example, Hutchings' monograph aligns itself with the anti-realist readings, which Stone criticizes – both, though, argue for otherwise

<sup>28</sup> In addition to political factors that have impacted Hegel reception, the philosophical nail in Hegel's coffin was the rise in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century of what is now known as analytic philosophy, which pretty much wrote off Hegel for reasons such as being too historical and for, well, his idealism. See K.J. Harrelson, *Hegel and the Modern Canon*, «Owl of Minerva», XLIV (1-2), 2012, pp. 1-35 for a detailed history going back to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Germany to trace the effects of neo-Kantian philosophers' construction of the history of philosophy on Anglophone Hegel reception, with a focus on philosophical, not political, reasons.

<sup>29</sup> F.C. Beiser, *Introduction: The Puzzling Hegel Renaissance*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. by F.C. Beiser, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 1-14.

compatible feminisms using Hegel<sup>30</sup>. In this way, the debate about norms of interpretation itself acts as a norm, asking Hegelian philosophers to position themselves in relation to it, regardless of any other philosophical concerns.

As Hutchings and Pulkkinen point out, the larger metaphilosophical issue surrounding the debate about Hegel interpretation is that in claiming there is one correct way of reading Hegel (or the particular part of Hegel under consideration), there is also an underlying position about the proper method of doing philosophy as such<sup>31</sup>. And, in this particular case of Hegel scholarship, the metaphilosophical issue is partially a result of social-political factors – namely, the political climates that sent him underground until relatively recently. Similarly, and perhaps more noticeably, the metaphilosophical issues feminist philosophy engages with as a result of the culture of justification outlined above are also a result of social-political factors beyond the profession. These cases illustrate how social-political forces impact prevailing philosophical norms – how the «culture that privileges legitimation according to presumed commonly-held, univocally relevant justifying norms» of professional Anglophone philosophy is shaped not by philosophical concerns alone<sup>32</sup>. So when so-called mainstream philosophy charges feminist philosophy with being politically motivated, it is being naïve at best.

### 3. *Napoleon Complex*

In addition to those of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, there are social-political forces impacting Anglophone feminist-Hegelian philosophical

<sup>30</sup> Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*; A. Stone, *Going beyond Oppositional Thinking? The Possibility of a Hegelian Feminist Philosophy*, «Res Publica», X (3), 2004, pp. 301-310 in a review of Hutchings details this difference in their readings of Hegel.

<sup>31</sup> Hutchings and Pulkkinen, *Hegel's Philosophy and Feminist Thought*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>32</sup> Dotson, *How Is This Paper Philosophy?*, p. 6. Dotson defines legitimation as «practices and processes aimed at judging whether some belief, practice, and/or process conforms to accepted standards and patterns, i.e. justifying norms», p. 5.

norms that go further back in history, to Hegel's own lifetime. The justificatory metaphilosophical discourses of these otherwise parallel areas of contemporary philosophy – Hegelian and feminist philosophies – are influenced by and intersect at a particular historical moment: the institutionalization of 19<sup>th</sup>-century German academic philosophy and its exclusions of women and feminist philosophy from the profession and from the canon<sup>33</sup>. As we have seen, a contemporary effect of these processes is one of the two forms of exclusion that contribute to the culture of justification as described by Dotson – namely, an incongruence between philosophical projects (e.g., feminist philosophy) and justifying norms that are presumably commonly-held. The second form, exceptionalism, is the unfounded exclusion of areas investigation «based upon the privileging of one group (or set of groups) and their investigations over others»<sup>34</sup>. Exceptionalism is seen not only in the contemporary culture of justification (with feminist philosophy as the focus of this paper), but, I posit, it is also partially rooted in and explicitly seen in 19<sup>th</sup>-century German academic philosophy in its exclusions of women and feminist philosophy.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, philosophy was being categorized as an academic discipline in new ways, positioning itself in distinct relationships to the (other) sciences, the arts, and religion. Through avenues granted via their professional status such as lecturing and publishing, philosophers in the German academy were influential in the creation of the boundaries of the discipline, its central problems, and even its style and tone. This is of course not the first or only time philosophers have positioned their practice in relation to other fields or shifted their focus on new problems, and a quick look at styles and forms of philosophy across the ages reveals a huge diversity even within European traditions alone. However, as P.K.J. Park argues in his historiography of European philosophy from 1780-1830, part of the agenda of Kant and his supporters in the construction of a new concept of philosophy was

<sup>33</sup> Throughout, by '19<sup>th</sup> century' I refer to 'the long 19<sup>th</sup> century', i.e., approx. 1789-1914.

<sup>34</sup> Dotson, *How Is This Paper Philosophy?*, p. 12.

to also construct a specific history of philosophy based on this very concept<sup>35</sup>. The norms of the concomitant concepts of philosophy and its history were driven by not only metaphilosophical concerns, but also by social, political, and religious ones, some of which impacted the professional and personal lives of philosophers, in a climate where holding the wrong view could cost you your university position, or worse<sup>36</sup>. Aside from religious debates and job insecurity, the social and political upheavals at this particular moment in Europe led its people, not least of all those in what is now Germany, to reflect not just on «the meaning of these changes for the history and destiny of humanity», as Park puts it, but also, in my view, on their meaning for philosophy and on philosophy's role in those very changes as well<sup>37</sup>. The teleological and Eurocentric history of philosophy – of a 'logical' progression from ancient Greece through Germany – that resulted from these reflections remains very influential and widely accepted today in Europe and the US.

Anglo-philosophy has inherited this canon. As a collection of definitive texts, a canon helps define what legitimate philosophy is – the word 'canon', after all, also means the criterion by which something is judged. As philosophy reconceptualized itself and its history at this time in Germany, the canon formed was a result of both philosophical and social-political concerns. Especially after Napoleon, creating canons of the various disciplines became a special concern for German-speaking states eager to carve out or hang onto their own cultural identities and intellectual spaces, with those such as Goethe, Schiller, Grimm, Fichte, and Herder at the helm of early efforts to canonize texts that reflected their views on connections between language, nationality, and race. However, as Park

<sup>35</sup> P.K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon, 1780-1830*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2013 describes how and why Kant, his contemporary supporters (e.g., Reinhold), and his immediate successors took philosophies from Asia and Africa out of the canon and of the history of philosophy.

<sup>36</sup> For example, for Hegel's defense against the charge of pantheism, see *ivi*, chapter 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ivi*, p. 7.

details, this was not a homogeneous, one-sided effort; the narrative of philosophy as beginning in Ancient Greece that continues to be re-told originated at this time, but it was not the only story. Other existing and earlier histories and canons that had different approaches (e.g., comparative and cross-cultural), included a wider variety of philosophers, or placed philosophy's origins not in Ancient Greece but earlier and elsewhere were prominent. Nonetheless, for reasons that remain not fully explained as far as I can find, and perhaps can never be, the philosophical canon that won out then is largely the one now known across Europe, the US, and even other parts of the world.

Similarly, women and their concerns were being written out of philosophy in this moment of its reformation – of the canon, its history, the profession. Women in what is now Germany as well as in other parts of Europe and the US were not allowed university education until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or later<sup>38</sup>. The few who did attend university were unable to put it to much use, as women were barred from professions; those who did publish did so almost always in less respectable or less academic formats such as periodicals and books<sup>39</sup>. In light of this, one might surmise that Hegel's work was echoing the dominant view about women in his time or that he was unaware of the work of women philosophers. However, there were a number of women active in philosophy, as well as men and women who argued for women's rights and equality both during and before his time, such as the oft-cited Wollstonecraft and Hipple (though the latter, whose literature Hegel admired, published anonymously, his identity revealed only after his death, so Hegel probably wasn't aware that Hipple was a feminist)<sup>40</sup>. As is well known – and as S. Benhabib and Pinkard

<sup>38</sup> R.M. Schott, *The Gender of Enlightenment*, in *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. by J. Schmidt, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, pp. 471-487, p. 474.

<sup>39</sup> R. Whittle, *Gender, Canon and Literary History: The Changing Place of Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> For women who have been erased or are now considered to have not been doing philosophy, see: T. Pettersen, *Texts Less Travelled: The Case of Women Philosophers*, in *Gender and Translation: Understanding Agents in Transnational Reception*,

argue – Hegel knew of (or even knew personally) G. de Staël, K. von Günderode, B. von Arnim, and C. Schlegel, to name only the few more prominent figures<sup>41</sup>.

Although Hegel was aware of female philosophers and multiple viewpoints on issues concerning women, he has little to nothing to say about the women who go against his own picture of philosopher, successful female heads of state, or men or women who argue for feminist causes. With all this in mind, it is hard to argue that the absence of actual women intellectuals Hegel's work is a simple reflection of his time, as some suggest. Indeed, the status of women in Europe was anything but simple at the time of Napoleon. Many considered Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality to apply to women, but the Napoleonic Code, versions of which were adopted throughout Europe – said otherwise, which in turn caused some feminist backlash<sup>42</sup>. Hegel was aware of this debate, but for unknown reasons chose not to engage it as far as I know. Perhaps he simply agreed with one side and considered it settled, just as perhaps he was satisfied with the canon and history of philosophy he had inherited.

One way to describe this incongruence between history and Hegel in contemporary terms is willful ignorance. According to G. Pohlhaus, this is when «dominantly situated knowers refuse to

ed. by I.H. López, J. Akujärvi, C. Alvstad and S.S. Lindtner, Montréal, Éditions québécoises de l'œuvre, 2017; E. O'Neill, *Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History*, in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*, pp. 17-62; Waithe, *A History of Women Philosophers*; D. Nassar and K. Gjesdal (eds.), *Women Philosophers in the Long Nineteenth Century: The German Tradition*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2021; A. Stone and L. Moland, *Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century British and American Women Philosophers*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, forthcoming; and D. Rogers and T.B. Dykeman, *Introduction: Women in the American Philosophical Tradition 1800-1930*, «Hypatia», XIX (2), 2004, pp. viii-xxxiv.

<sup>41</sup> S. Benhabib, *On Hegel, Women, and Irony*, in *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. by P.J. Mills, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996; and Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*.

<sup>42</sup> U. Gleixner and M.W. Gray (eds.), *Gender in Transition: Discourse and Practice in German-Speaking Europe, 1750-1830*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2006; Whittle, *Gender, Canon and Literary History*.

acknowledge epistemic tools developed from the experienced world of those situated marginally. Such refusals allow dominantly situated knowers to misunderstand, misinterpret, and/or ignore whole parts of the world»<sup>43</sup>. 19<sup>th</sup>-century German women, without the vote, right to education, and so on, were clearly marginalized, and those in dominant positions who resisted uptake of their ideas did everyone a disservice. This is an epistemic problem because it restricts the scope of inquiry. Additional problems with this erasure of women from philosophy are that it is simply untrue, and it is a pattern perpetuated by the mutually reinforcing false narratives of the lack of women in philosophy and their intellectual deficiencies that prevents them from participation<sup>44</sup>. What Hegel doesn't say, what he omits, might be as damaging to feminist philosophy, to women in philosophy, or to philosophy as a whole as what he does say.

In these ways, 19<sup>th</sup>-century professional philosophy in Germany contributed to restrictions about what philosophy is and who can do it that permeate norms of Anglophone philosophy today. Its definition, history, and canon of philosophy are partial in both senses of the term – incomplete and not impartial. This contributes to the culture of justification through both forms of exclusion. And Hegel's philosophy as (again) part of the canon re-enforces gender biases and exclusions of women and their concerns from the profession. Such limited and unfounded notions of philosophy ultimately set the standards for our culture of justification, which «privileges legitimation according to presumed commonly-held, univocally relevant justifying norms, which serves to amplify already existing practices of exceptionalism and senses of incongruence within the profession»<sup>45</sup>.

Perhaps the epitome of this are contemporary ad hoc arguments trying to restrict philosophy by dogmatically using ossified

<sup>43</sup> G. Pohlhaus, *Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance*, «Hypatia», XXVII (4), 2012, pp. 715-735, p. 715.

<sup>44</sup> E. O'Neill, *Justifying the Inclusion of Women in Our Histories of Philosophy: The Case of Marie de Gournay*, in *The Blackwell Guide to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. by L. Martín Alcoff and E.F. Kittay, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Dotson, *How Is This Paper Philosophy?*, p. 6.

19<sup>th</sup>-century norms, such as a recent article by C. Krijnen. In it he purports to uncover that those arguing for diversity and inclusion in philosophy are resting on a poor concept of philosophy, throughout evoking his interpretation of Hegel's definition of philosophy and philosophy of history as superior to the one the target of his article supposedly holds<sup>46</sup>. However, its lead and closing sentences belie its motivation and flawed logic: Krijnen labels the effort to diversify philosophy identity politics, and claims that this effort sullies philosophy. But Krijnen misses the fact (among others) that many such efforts by philosophers are not political agendas based on the philosophers' own identities, but instead on solid metaphilosophical grounds that the exclusions they seek to repair are themselves based on bias or flawed concepts of philosophy, i.e., definitions and systems of philosophy built on irrational principles or shaky foundations. Another problem with the article is that it simply rests on Hegel without considering that Hegel (or Krijnen) himself is guilty of identity politics, or that Hegel's concepts of philosophy and its history might be inherently flawed or historically contingent. There are additional problems with Krijnen's article than space here allows, and time is better spent constructively, so I will just say this: such a view is akin to being stuck in the phase of morality and not advancing to ethical life.

#### 4. *Concluding Metaphilosophical Postscript*

The abuses and disadvantages of doing feminist philosophy with Hegel have been outlined above in relation to the culture of justification. But some of the uses have also already been pointed to. Rather than a culture of justification, Dotson proposes instead a shift in professional philosophy to a culture of praxis. This is one «that not only lessens the effect of exceptionalism, but can also create an environment where incongruence becomes a site of creativity for ever-expanding ways of doing professional

<sup>46</sup> C. Krijnen, "What, If Anything, Has Not Been Called Philosophy or Philosophizing?" *On the Relevance of Hegel's Conception of a Philosophical History of Philosophy*, «Problemi International», IV (*Hegel 250 – too late?*), 2020, pp. 119-141.

philosophy»<sup>47</sup>. Not only do I fully endorse Dotson's proposal, but I also see it in action in much feminist-Hegelian philosophy, as well as in other areas.

Hutchings and Pulkkinen have pointed to this notion of creativity in reference to K. Deligiorgi's introduction to a Hegel collection (though one not focused on feminist issues), when they say: «Deligiorgi suggests that contemporary readings of Hegel [...] are philosophically creative and productive in their very disagreements about Hegel's meaning»<sup>48</sup>. Here they are referring to discussions within and about the Hegel Renaissance, though Deligiorgi is also looking further back, when she says: «the reception history of Hegel's thought is a history of reappraisal, rethinking, reinterpretation, and, indeed, of rehabilitation»<sup>49</sup>. These points crystallized for me the pluralist aspect of praxis that is implied in Dotson's proposal and how feminist-Hegelian philosophy contributes to this, in addition to their other stand-alone contributions to philosophy in general. While those working in the Anglo-tradition had to navigate some of the metaphilosophical norms outlined in this paper that perhaps those in the continental tradition dealt less with due to differing inheritances of Hegel reception, both have to navigate the contradictions inherent in doing feminist philosophy with Hegel. In cases where feminist-Hegelian philosophy is not a part of the particular debate about Hegel interpretation outlined in this article (such as de Beauvoir), they are nonetheless rethinking or rehabilitating his thought due to these very contradictions. And these contributions help reduce exceptionalism and aid in the creation of an environment of creativity and pluralism in professional philosophy.

I certainly do not claim that philosophy has fixed its current problems regarding diversity, inclusion, representation, or a welcoming, productive environment. (Here I seem to agree with Krijnen, that descriptively universities are not wellness centers –

<sup>47</sup> Dotson, *How Is This Paper Philosophy?*, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Hutchings and Pulkkinen, *Introduction: Reading Hegel*, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> K. Deligiorgi, *Introduction: On Reading Hegel Today*, in *Hegel: New Directions*, ed. by Ead., Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006, pp. 1-15, p. 2.

indeed far from it – but disagree apparently on what they and education should be)<sup>50</sup>. Thus, in closing I would like to point to the fact that the existence of this pluralism is both undeniable and a benefit to philosophy, and in some sense has always been there. Indeed, the changing status of Hegel within the canon is an example or a microcosm of change that happens at macro level. My suggestion is to keep this in mind along with Dotson's proposal of praxis. It seems undeniable that adding something to the conversation or to the world is necessarily in order to claim that what one is doing is worthwhile. I suggest to those who disagree on philosophical grounds to consider what social-political or questionable ethical motivations underlie their dogmatic intolerance, and instead I advocate for philosophical, academic, and professional generosity. What if, instead of building walls, we all planted trees?

<sup>50</sup> Krijnen, "What, If Anything, Has Not Been Called Philosophy or Philosophizing?", p. 126.