

Symposium: Why Historicize the Canon?

In her anchor-piece on historicizing the canon, Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee appeals to professional philosophers to develop several tools that can be implemented in historicizing the canon. Amy Donahue, David H. Kim, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and Kris Sealey tessellate different aspects of this call. Donahue augments Rosenlee's argument by braiding together Dharmakīrti's "anyāpoha" theory and Charles Mills' ruminations about "white ignorance"; Kim explores some of the nuances of Rosenlee's account for a post-Eurocentric philosophy; Maldonado-Torres ruminates about the larger social context in which thinking can be decolonized; and Sealey uses the work of Kristie Dotson to acknowledge the possibility of multiple canons.

In putting on the table a number of questions, concepts, and approaches to canon-building, the symposium aims to contribute to what is by now a large array of similar reflections and engagements in different parts of the world.

Key words: revisionist history; white ignorance; Dharmakīrti; Confucian feminism; transformative inclusiveness; decolonization of philosophy; catastrophe of coloniality; decolonial turn; de-canonizing the canon; culture of praxis

A Revisionist History of Philosophy

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With Bryan Van Norden's *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (2017) calling for a fully integrated multicultural curriculum, there seems to be a renewed hope for reckoning in the academic discipline of Philosophy, which has been stubbornly persistent in its monolithic approach to the teaching of its own self-defined genealogy, its origin, its methodology, and its essence. As Norden and others have pointed out, Philosophy has a serious diversity problem; only a handful of graduate programs have full-time faculty teaching non-western philosophy (Wimmer, Bernasconi, Hountondji, and Norton-Smith 2015; Garfield and Norden 2016; Norden 2017). No other branch in the humanities or social sciences, other than those specifically named Anglo-Euro-focused area studies, has been so lopsided in its curricula and its student make-up as Philosophy, which is resolutely and decisively Anglo-Euro-centric: in the US, 86% of its PhDs are granted to non-Hispanic whites (Cherry and Schwitzgebel 2016; Norden 2017).

Compounding the Anglo-Euro centrism in the discipline of Philosophy is its phallo-centrism; in the US, among all the humanities disciplines, Philosophy has the lowest percentage of female doctoral students. Philosophy manages to graduate even fewer female PhDs than math, chemistry, or economics—a stunning revelation that the academic discipline of Philosophy has the problem of not only cultural exclusion, but also gender exclusion to a much greater degree than other academic disciplines that are intuitively perceived as masculine proper (Haslanger 2013; Cherry and Schwitzgebel 2016). Faculty-wise, Philosophy has not fared much better either; only around 20% of Full Professors are women, a figure that has hardly changed since the 1990s (Haslanger 2013; Cherry and Schwitzgebel 2016). To say Philosophy is in crisis is hardly an overstatement or a feminist hyperbole. But the problem goes beyond just recruiting more minority students, hiring

more female professors, or adding more non-western philosophy courses. The problem is methodological and structural. Hopefully, the day of reckoning for Philosophy to take a critical turn onto itself is now.

1 Hegel's History of Philosophy

The claim that the practice of philosophy is culturally specific, western and Greek in origin, might sound intuitively correct to many, not just to those who specialize in Anglo-Euro philosophy or are Anglo-Euro descents. Even in those few handful of graduate programs that have non-western components, non-western philosophy has more been tolerated than celebrated in its own right. The status of non-western philosophy in the academic discipline of Philosophy is akin to an adopted child waiting to be accepted into a large and yet dysfunctional family whose members are constantly bickering among themselves about who they are, what they do, or what counts as a family business. But at the same time, they are quite resolute in excluding those who have no family resemblance from even getting a foot in the door. This analogy was first proposed by Carine Defoort in 2001 in her provocative essay "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy: Arguments of an Implicit Debate." Defoort argues that the name "Chinese philosophy" is a misnomer, a label retrospectively applied to Chinese thought in the nineteenth century as a result of western influence, since philosophy is an "exclusively Western discipline," a "Western cultural product," and is "founded in Greek soil" (Defoort 2001: 396, 407). Furthermore, it is an "irrefutable fact that philosophy is a well-defined discipline that came into existence in Greece" (Defoort 2001: 396).

Now, to those who are specialized in the field of Asian and comparative philosophy, Defoort's assertion might sound outrageous, seemingly an ignorant comment made by those who have no linguistic or philosophical skills to navigate Chinese philosophy. But surprisingly, Defoort herself is a sinologist and her article was published in the journal *Philosophy East and West*, whose audience is primarily in the field of Asian and comparative philosophy. Even more surprising is that Defoort received her MA in philosophy from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, one of the few institutions that has a compulsory requirement on non-western philosophy. It is mind-boggling to know that Defoort's claim went unchallenged until 2006 by Rein Raud in his short rebuttal published also in *PEW*.

As much as it stuns us, Defoort, a sinologist, was not alone in her intuitive claim that philosophy is western in practice and Greek in origin, and "Chinese philosophy" is not philosophy since it fails to satisfy the "conditions of philosophy" such as systematicity, reflection, and rationality (Defoort 2001: 396). In 2003, while five month pregnant, I was invited to partake in the "Conference on the *Lunyu*" at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, an author-meets-critics panel discussion on Bryan Van Norden's edited 2002 anthology *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, a rigorous, philosophical study of the *Analects*. Such a work was rare at the time, since Confucianism was and still is taught mostly as a religion or ethnic study and its texts were treated as literature, not philosophy (Rosenlee 2003). Norden's effort in applying philosophical rigor to the *Analects* surely was noteworthy. But unfortunately, even in Norden's own anthology, the *Analects* was twice referred to as more akin to a religious text than a philosophical text (Yearley 2002: 239; Norden 2002: 230-1), and Confucius himself is said "to lack the degree of systematicity that we typically associate with philosophers" (Norden 2002: 230). Systematicity, just as claimed in Defoort's 2001 essay, is one of the conditions of philosophy, a condition Confucius as well as Confucian texts seem to have failed to satisfy in the eyes of philosophers. And hence, even among sinologists, Chinese philosophy is said to be occupying a different academic space than Philosophy.

Although it is true that the condition of systematicity that Defoort laid out in 2001 and Norden echoed in 2002 is not met by many Confucian texts, what is less clear, as Rein Raud in his 2006 short rebuttal to Defoort points out, is why this should be the necessary condition of philosophy (Raud 2006: 622). What Defoort listed as conditions of philosophy—“Philosophy must give the appearance of systematicity, reflection, and rationality; it must differ from science and religion and it must be divisible into various subdisciplines such as metaphysics, logic, and epistemology” (Defoort 2001: 396)—is in fact a list of what western philosophers usually do. And hence the conditions of philosophy that are used to exclude Chinese philosophy are tautological in nature: philosophy is what western philosophers usually do, and hence Chinese philosophy is not philosophy. What is left unexamined is the assumption that what western philosophers usually do is what philosophers should do. This exclusion of Chinese philosophy from philosophy, however, is more than just a result of personal prejudice or a lack of linguistic and philosophical skills to navigate the complexity of Chinese texts, as is clear from the examples of Defoort in 2001 and Norden in 2002. Rather, the problem is methodological and structural; it is time that we philosophers take a critical look at what we have been taught and what we are still teaching about our own discipline.

Thanks to Peter Park’s 2013 exhaustive study on the systematic exclusion of Africa and Asia from the history of philosophy, we now know that the claim of the Greek origin of philosophy also has its own historical origin. It is in fact a revisionist claim in the face of ample contrary textual evidence historically available to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers such as Hegel who engaged in a revisionist effort to construct an exclusively western genealogy of philosophy, which is then echoed by twentieth-century philosophers such as Heidegger, Husserl, Gadamer, and Derrida, among many others (Bernasconi 1995; Park 2013; Wimmer, Bernasconi, Hountondji, and Norton-Smith 2015; Norden 2017). Their effort obviously has been successful, since this revisionist history of philosophy has been preserved and perpetuated in nearly all of the academies in the Anglo-European world, and has now become intuitively true to many of us philosophers, even among those with sinological training. It is a family myth that has been taught to us and passed down in perpetuity since its revisionist inception in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century.

Take a quick look at the compulsory requirements for philosophy majors and one is bound to find a history of philosophy requirement, which usually has three components: ancient, medieval, and modern philosophy. All these courses are taught strictly and exclusively western, usually divided into three historical periods starting with the pre-Socratic Greeks, the Middle Ages, and then the sixteenth through eighteenth century from Descartes onward, as if philosophy—passing by the rest of the world—only started with the ancient Greeks and from there moved straight onto the philosophical developments in the Anglo-European world. This is the story that has been fed to us philosophers wherever we are trained in the west regardless of whether or not the program itself has additional non-western components. It is indeed no surprise that the claim of the Greek origin of philosophy seems intuitively true even to sinologists.

Little did we know that the seemingly “natural” division of the history of philosophy into three historical periods in the west is in fact a revisionist claim, constructed by Hegel in his lectures on the history of philosophy (Knox and Miller 1985: 183). Despite the ample contrary textual evidence historically available to him at the time, and despite his own knowledge and interest in Indian philosophy, Hegel nevertheless proceeds to construct an exclusively western genealogy of philosophy, a progressive genealogy that works in concert with his larger philosophical project of spirit, where the abstract universal becomes the self-conscious universal concretely realizing its own essence, which is rational freedom (Moellendorf 1992; Bernasconi 2000a; Park 2013). This progressive development is only possible in the west. To Hegel, the African character is one of

slavery; not only are Africans sold by Europeans as slaves, Africans themselves exist in their natural state as slaves and allow themselves to be sold without knowing the rights or wrongs of it (Moellendorf 1992: 246, 253). The “Oriental” character is one of fear and despotism where freedom is realized only by the despot, and hence the unfree still characterizes the east despite its somewhat higher degree of development compared to the slavery state of Africans (Knox and Miller 1985: 173). Americans are feeble savages (Knox and Miller 1985: 51).

Only the west has the right kind of temperament, the right kind of political and social institutions for freedom to emerge, and since to philosophize for Hegel requires the freedom of self-consciousness, only the west can philosophize. The history of philosophy for Hegel is the same as the progressive development of reason itself, and since only the west is able to progress, the genealogy of philosophy can only be exclusively western and Germanic in particular, excluding not just the entire non-western world, but also the Slavic (Park 2013: 121).

Obviously, Hegel’s history of philosophy is informed by his theory of race in which humanity is divided into four distinct races: African, East Asian, American, and European (Eze 1997: 109-49; Bernasconi 2000a: 195). However, Hegel is not the first to articulate such a view. Thanks to the works of Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Robert Bernasconi, and many others, now we have a better understanding of how the “scientific” concept of race came about in the late eighteenth century, in no small part through the persistent effort of critical philosophers such as Kant (Eze 1997; Loudon 2000; Bernasconi 2002; Eigen and Larrimore 2006; McCarthy 2009; Elden and Mendieta 2011; Mikkelsen 2013; Vial 2016; Boxill 2017).

More importantly, we now understand how the theory of race factors into the philosophers’ larger philosophical projects that are canonical to us philosophers. For instance, as shown earlier, Hegel’s history of philosophy is made possible only through his theory of race in which each of the four races is generalized with a set of developmental characters, which in turn correspond to the sort of social/political institutions that are deemed possible given their inherent racial characters. The understanding of the intertwining of Hegel’s history of philosophy and his theory of race surely gives rise to a new understanding of the famed master-slave mortal struggle for recognition in Hegel’s larger philosophical project of spirit. Slavery for Hegel, although it is unjust, is historically necessary for the full development of the *Geist* (Moellendorf 1992: 253; Hoffheimer 2005: 207). This is a case where the understanding of the contexts of origin helps understand the philosopher’s larger philosophical project, which has been, by and large, sanitized.

2 Kant’s Theory of Race

The same goes for Kant as well. The division of humanity into four races correlating with four geographical localities and with four distinct skin colors, in large part, is made possible through the nearly four decades of teaching and writing by Kant, an important figure in the discipline of philosophy during his time and today. Kant’s three *Critiques* are part of the must-read philosophical canon, and his critical philosophy is synonymous with the discipline of philosophy itself, which at the minimum level is to foster critical thinking. Yet Kant’s role in the formation of the “scientific” concept of the four races—which influenced Hegel’s history of philosophy, which in turn gives us the exclusively western genealogy of philosophy—is still largely unknown in the larger philosophical community. As Norden notes, not until he attended Park’s conference presentation in 2017 did he come into contact with the depth of Kant’s racism (Norden 2017: 169, footnote 65). Unfortunately, Norden’s late introduction to Kant’s racism is not atypical. As late as 2018, when I did a conference presentation on Kant and race, even the Kantian scholar in the audience didn’t know about Kant’s

own writings on race and the extent to which the theory of race plays in Kant's larger philosophical project. Kant, in fact, is one of the key figures who helped establish the "scientific" concept of race, a concept that delineates the four distinct, hereditary, and permanent races—white, black, red, and yellow—that are still in use today. Moreover, Kant's race theory cannot be extracted from his larger philosophical project without at the same time dismissing a large sum of his own writings on the subject of history, anthropology, physical geography, religion, teleology, and even ethics.

Kant deliberately chooses to write about race and writes about it in a certain way, despite being confronted and challenged by his contemporaries—such as Johann Gottfried von Herder in the multivolume works *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humankind* (1784) and Georg Forster in "Something More about the Human Races" (1786)—for his faulty race theory in his first race essay "Of the Different Human Races" (1775/1777) and second race essay "Determination of the Concept of a Human Race" (1785). Kant not only continues to rebut his contemporaries' criticisms of him—for instance, in his two harsh reviews of Herder's multivolume works in 1785—but also further develops his race theory in his third race essay "On the Use of Teleological Principle in Philosophy" (1788), written in part as a response to Forster's criticism of his second race essay. Kant develops his race theory deliberately and alongside his other critical projects. In 1785, when Kant publishes the second race essay, he also publishes the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and in 1788, when the third essay surfaces, Kant also completes the second Critique, *Critique of Practical Reason*. In fact, his third race essay, "On the Use of Teleological Principle in Philosophy," can be seen as a prelude to his third Critique, *Critique of Judgment* (1790).

Kant's interest in the topic of race is not only deliberative, but also persistent. Kant's first race essay (1775/1777) was initially written as a course announcement for physical geography, a course Kant taught from his first year of teaching in 1756 until his retirement in 1796. In 1772, Kant started to offer anthropology as a separate course from physical geography, both of which were immensely popular courses taught most frequently by Kant—surpassed only by logic, metaphysics, and moral philosophy, which were however required courses (Louden 2000: 4-5). It is worth noting that Kant helps to construct physical geography and anthropology, two new academic subjects in the mid-eighteenth century, with the aim to furnish students with the "*knowledge of the world*," where both nature and human beings "must be considered *cosmologically*," since this world knowledge serves to procure "the *pragmatic* elements" for all other sciences and skills that become "useful not only for *school* but rather for *life*?" (*Of Different Human Races* 2:443, emphasis original; Zoller and Louden 2007: 97). And it is through teaching these courses that Kant first develops his race theory, in which the seemingly infinite diversity in human groupings is summarily organized into four distinct races that are hierarchically and teleologically ranked, a view that he holds till his last known manuscript, *Opus postumum* (21: 213-14; Forster 1993: 66-7), completed in 1801 and eventually published in 1882-4.

Initially, in his first race essay, Kant lays out four races correlated with four distinct skin colors (white, black, red, yellow) and four geographical localities (Europe, Africa, America, India) as a result of climate adaptation at the early stage of human migration. Racial characters are hereditary and are not subject to change in the second transplantation. In other words, racial distinctions are a result of human biological adaptation to the environment made permanent. But the manifestations of one's racial characters are not just limited to the physical forms, but also to one's dispositions and temperaments. In Kant's estimation, the red race is a weak, perishing race and the negro race is "lazy, soft and trifling" (*Of Different Human Races* 2: 438; Zoller and Louden 2007: 92-3). The white race diverges the least from the original human formation and is well adaptive to all subsequent transplantations (*Of Different Human Races* 2: 441; Zoller and Louden 2007: 95), implicitly laying the ground for the realization of Kant's later proposed cosmopolitan ethical community where Europeans "will probably someday give laws to all the others" (*Idea for a Universal History* 8:29-30;

Zoller and Louden 2007: 119) and where Christianity as the only true religion will provide the moral legislations for humanity to realize “the (moral) kingdom of God on earth” (*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* 6: 51-2, 6: 101-2; Wood and Giovanni 1996: 95, 135-6). A long story short, the concept of race for Kant is a regulative concept that we impose onto nature so that it is possible for us to grasp the world as a system, and that racialized system forms the basis for Kant’s progressive concept of world history with a cosmopolitan aim, and provides an empirical evidence for the validity of his teleological judgment in the third *Critique*, which, in Kant’s own words, is the completion of his “entire critical enterprise” (*Critique of Judgment* [170]; Pluhar 1987: 7).

Although it is true that prejudicial remarks regarding various human subgroups can be found throughout human written records, what is new here is that a race-based grouping has become a “scientific” endeavor instead of a mere anthropological observation in a travel report. The newly found “scientific” concept of race was still fluid during Kant’s time, and hence it was imperative for Kant, after the first race essay in 1775/1777, to provide a conceptual clarification in his second race essay, titled “Determination of the Concept of a Human Race” in 1785, an essay written in part in response to Herder’s criticism of him. The fluidity of the concept of race even in the late eighteenth century can also be seen in Forster’s 1786 rebuttal to Kant’s second race essay that is supposed to determine the concept of race once and for all, a rebuttal that is mockingly titled “Something More about the Human Races.” What makes Kant’s race theory “scientific” is that it purportedly enables us to distinguish what is permanent from the mere accidental in human diversity, and the permanency of racial characters that are hierarchically and teleologically ranked in turn helps establish a cosmopolitan view of the world as well as the realization of the ultimate ethical end of humanity as a rational species. The intertwining of Kant’s race theory with his teleology, history, ethics, and cosmopolitanism are just beginning to be noted by scholars (Larrimore 2008; Louden 2011; Boxill 2017), despite the fact that Kant had a nearly four-decade long teaching and writing career on the subject.

While Kant is developing his faulty “scientific” theory of race, his contemporaries are busy rebutting his and writing abolition works. Kant is not unaware of the abolition movement; in fact, in his third race essay (1788), Kant specifically references James Ramsay—his *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) is an impassioned call for abolition and racial equality—and yet Kant mocks Ramsay and sides with an anonymous writer whom we now know refers to James Tobin (Bernasconi 2011: 308), a slave-owning planter, in order to lend support to Kant’s own racist view that neither Negroes nor Indian gypsies are able to improve themselves, despite their relocation to Europe. As Kant writes:

But those who were driven there have never been able to bring about in their progeny (such as the Creole *Negroes*, or the *Indians* under the name of the gypsies) a sort that would be fit for farmers or manual laborers.*

And in the footnote, Kant continues to write:

*The last remark is not put forward here in order to prove something but is nevertheless not insignificant. In Hr. *Sprengel’s* Contributions, 5th Part, pp. 286-92, a knowledgeable man, adduces the following against Ramsay’s wish to use all Negro slaves as *free* laborers: that among the many thousand freed Negroes which one encounters in America and England he knew no example of someone engaged in a business which one could properly call *labor*; rather that, when they are set free, they soon abandon an easy craft which previously as slaves they had been forced to carry out, and instead become hawkers, wretched innkeepers,

lackeys, and people who go fishing and hunting, in a word, tramps. The same is to be found in the gypsies among us. [...] Should one not conclude from this that, in addition to the *faculty* to work, there is also an immediate drive to activity [...] which is especially interwoven with certain natural predispositions; and that Indians as well as Negroes do not bring any more of this impetus into other climates and pass it on to their offspring than was needed for their preservation in their old motherland [...] (*Teleological Principle* 8: 174, emphasis original; Zoller and Loudon 2007: 209).

In other words, racial characters, including the drive to work, are part of our natural predispositions, passed down from one generation to the next, and hence no progress is possible for the inferior races such as Negroes and Indian gypsies regardless of the changes in their material circumstances—free or enslaved, in their motherland or in the second migration.

Kant's racial hierarchy, which is implicit in the first race essay, is clearly spelled out in *Physical Geography* (1802)—commissioned by Kant and edited by his friend and colleague, Friedrich Theodor Rink—based on Kant's own manuscripts as well as students' notes on the course, a subject that Kant taught throughout his entire teaching career. As Kant writes under the heading "Human Beings Round the World Considered in Relation to their Other Inborn Characteristics":

In the torrid zones, humans mature more quickly in all aspects than in the temperate zones, but they fail to reach the same [degree] of perfection. Humanity has its highest degree of perfection in the white race. The yellow Indians have a somewhat lesser talent. The Negroes are much lower, and lowest of all is part of the American races (*Physical Geography* 9: 316; Watkins 2002: 576).

And as noted earlier, even in Kant's last known work, *Opus postumum*, Kant continues to assert the same racial hierarchy that he has established very early on in his teaching and writing career.

Opus postumum is a major work that Kant undertook in 1798 and completed by the middle of 1801 in order to fill the "gap" that Kant saw in his critical philosophy after the publication of his third *Critique* in 1790 (Forster 1993: xvi). The remaining gap, as Kant explains, is the transition "from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics" and with that work "the task of the critical philosophy will be completed and a gap that now stands open will be filled" (quoted Forster 1993: xvi). After Kant's death, the manuscript that was meant to fill the remaining gap in his critical philosophy was eventually published in 1882-4 as a series of journal articles (Forster 1993: xix-xx). Under the heading "Division of Physical Bodies According to A Priori Concepts. They are Either Organic or Inorganic," Kant uses teleological principles as *a priori* concepts to provide classification for physical bodies, including different races. As Kant writes:

One species is made for the other (the goose for the fox, the stag for the wolf), according to the differences between the races [...]. One can take the classification of organic and living beings further. Not only does the vegetable kingdom exist for the sake of the animal kingdom (and its increase and diversification) but men, as rational beings, exist for the sake of others of a different species (race). The latter stand at a higher level of humanity either simultaneously (as, for instance, Americans and Europeans) or sequentially (*Opus postumum* 21: 213-4; Forster 1993: 66-7).

In other words, just as the vegetable kingdom is teleologically made for and stands lower than the animal kingdom or the goose is teleologically made for and stands lower than the fox, Americans—

the weak, perishing race—exist for the sake of and are inferior to Europeans. Obviously, all throughout the years till his last major work, Kant did not change his mind nor have second thoughts on race, as some scholars would like to believe (Hill and Boxill 2001; Kleingeld 2007; Flikschuh and Ypi 2014).

3 Hume's National Characters

Kant's racism is deliberative and persistent, and this is true for Hume as well. Although the "scientific" concept of race is much more fully developed in Kant, Kant's idea of race as being hereditary and permanent is already present in Hume's "Of National Characters" (1748), where the terms "nation," "species," "breed," and "race" are used interchangeably, and where the formation of national characters is attributed to two causes: moral causes (such as government) and physical causes (such as climate). But the perceived uniform inferiority of those nations/races living near the tropics or beyond the polar circles poses a problem for Hume: despite differing moral and physical causes, they yet possess the same inferior national characters. A third explanation is needed here; Hume then proposes a racial explanation, an explanation that is biological in nature, rooted in the blood (Garrett and Sebastiani 2017: 36). As Hume writes, "The races of animals never degenerate when carefully tended; and horses, in particular, always show their blood in their shape, spirit, and swiftness: But a coxcomb may beget a philosopher; as a man of virtue may leave a worthless progeny" (*Of National Characters*; Miller 1985: 215). In other words, racial characters are biological and permanent, not merely accidental as the way a fool might give rise to a philosopher.

The permanency of racial characters in turn enables Hume to assert the inferiority of all nations that live near the tropics or beyond the polar circles. As Hume writes:

And indeed there is some reason to think, that all the nations, which live beyond the polar circles or between the tropics, are inferior to the rest of the species, and are incapable of all the higher attainments of the human mind. The poverty and misery of the northern inhabitants of the globe, and the indolence of the southern, from their few necessities, may, perhaps, account for this remarkable difference, without our having recourse to physical causes. This however is certain, that the characters of nations are very promiscuous in the temperate climates, and that almost all the general observations, which have been formed of the more southern or more northern people in these climates, are found to be uncertain and fallacious (*Of National Characters*; Miller 1985: 207-8).

Almost word for word, Hume repeats the same assertion of the uniform inferiority of these nations/races living near the tropics in the later essay "Of Commerce" (1752):

We may form a similar remark with regard to the general history of mankind. What is the reason, why no people, living between the tropics, could ever yet attain to any art or civility, or reach even any police in their government, and any military discipline; while few nations in the temperate climates have been altogether deprived of these advantages? It is probably that one cause of this phenomenon is the warmth and equality of weather in the torrid zone, which render clothes and houses less requisite for the inhabitants, and thereby remove, in part, that necessity, which is the great spur to industry and invention (*Of Commerce*; Miller 1985: 267).

In other words, to Hume, human diversity cannot be solely explained by moral causes (such as government) or physical causes (such as climate), since they are only one possible cause; there is also a racial explanation of biological nature rooted in the permanency of one's blood passed down in perpetuity in the way that different races of animals are generated and maintained. And it is in this context that Hume's infamous footnote 10 on black inferiority was appended to his "Of National Characters" in 1754.

With the racial explanation that is hereditary and permanent, Hume in the footnote is then able to assert that even Negro slaves dispersed in Europe—living under a different government (moral causes) and a different climate (physical causes)—are unable to make any progress in their self-improvement compared to the lower class whites who are able to pull themselves up as if by their own bootstraps. As Hume writes:

I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient GERMANS, the present TARTARS, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; though low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly (*Of National Characters*; Eze 1997: 33).

Racial diversity as Hume argues above is "an original distinction" made by nature, and this original distinction explains the uniform inferiority of all non-white races regardless of their physical locality, in Europe or in Jamaica. Hume's discussion of national characters of a people is more than just a numeration of accidental customs and habits around the globe. Instead, Hume is providing a list of permanent and hereditary racial characters that are hierarchically ranked in comparison with the civility of modern Europeans.

Albeit only a footnote, Hume's influence on the subject of race ripples long and wide. Hume's footnote, indeed, has stirred up quite a bit of debate among his contemporaries. As an avid reader of Hume, Kant echoes Hume's view on black inferiority, paraphrasing Hume's footnote in the *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764)—the book that Kant was mainly known for before the publications of his three *Critiques*. As Kant writes in reference to Hume:

The **Negroes** of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the ridiculous. Mr. **Hume** challenges anyone to adduce a single example where a Negro has demonstrated talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who have been transported elsewhere from their countries, although very many of them have been set free, nevertheless not a single one has ever been found who has accomplished something great in art or science or shown any other praiseworthy quality, while among the whites there are always those who rise up from the lowest rabble and through extraordinary gifts earn respect in the world. So essential is the difference between these two human kinds, and it seems to be just

as great with regard to the capacities of mind as it is with respect to color (*Observations* 2:253, emphasis original; Zoller and Louden 2007: 59).

And nearly 30 years later, in the *Dohan* Lectures of 1792, Kant again recites Hume's remarks on black inferiority. As it reads:

Hume says, that of the many thousands of Negroes who have gradually been freed, there is no example of one who has distinguished himself with a special skill. Something essential in the character of the Negro is a kind of vanity, arrogance—this is why no freed Negro cultivates the land, he prefers to live in a monkey-house or to become a servant (emphasis original; qtd Louden 2011: 153).

The ripple effect of Hume's footnote can also be seen in Lord Kames, a patron of Hume, his *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774), which is a comprehensive commentary on Hume's note (Garrett and Sebastiani 2017: 39). Edward Long, a slave-owning planter, in *History of Jamaica* (1774) uses Hume's footnote to assert black inferiority and to defend the practice of slavery (Garrett and Sebastiani 2017: 39).

On the other hand, James Beattie, a member of the *Philosophical Society* or *The Wise Club of Aberdeen*, poses a question to the club on March 22 and May 10, 1768 to repudiate Hume's claim in the footnote, and the question reads: "Whether that superiority of understanding, by which the inhabitants of Europe and of the nations immediately adjoining imagine themselves to be distinguished, may not easily be accounted for, without supposing the rest of mankind of an inferior species?" (qtd Garrett and Sebastiani 2017: 40). Beattie's response to Hume's footnote is then published in *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (1770). James Ramsay, as noted earlier, in his abolition work *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784), also references Hume's footnote, along with Hume's sentiment of white supremacy expressed in Hume's other writings in order to repudiate it (Ramsay 1784: 198-99, 214, 238, 245). And of course, as we have already seen, Kant echoes Hume's footnote in his *Observations* (1764), mocks Ramsay's abolitionist stance in his third race essay (1788), and retains his racist hierarchy till his last known work, *Opus postumum* (1801/1882-4). Indeed, Hume's footnote is not to be dismissed as trivial.

In fact, Hume's collections of essays are widely read and highly influential to his contemporaries. Today, Hume is studied primarily for his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739/1740), published in his late 20s, and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), published posthumously, but these two works of Hume were hardly read at all by his contemporaries. Instead, it was Hume's multiple-volume work *The History of England* (1754-1762) and various collections of essays (1741-1777) that firmly established Hume's reputation among his contemporaries (Miller 1985: xi-xii). Right after the publication of his poorly received *A Treatise*, Hume spent his entire adulthood on writing and revising his various collections of essays from his late 20s till his death in 1776. While Hume was gravely ill, he was still making arrangements for the posthumous publication of his two suppressed essays: "Of Suicide" and "Of the Immortality of the Soul." The popularity of Hume's collections of essays can be attested not only by the various translations of the essays into German, French, and Italian and their appearance in America, but also by the 11 editions of some of the essay collections by 1777 (Miller 1985: xiv). In fact, according to Hume's own autobiography, *My Own Life* (1777), the copy-money that Hume received was so substantial that it had enabled Hume to "become not only independent, but opulent" (qtd Miller 1985: xv). Indeed, the writing and revision of these essays were not a casual matter to Hume, nor were these essays merely popular yet

peripherally philosophical. As John Home, Hume's close friend, writes after Hume's death, "His Essays are at once popular and philosophical, and contain a rare and happy union of profound Science and fine writing" (qtd Miller 1985: xvii). Hence, a balanced understanding of Hume's philosophical project will need to include a careful reading of Hume's immensely popular and influential collections of essays, and not even a footnote is to be dismissed.

It goes without saying that Hume's racism is not limited to one infamous footnote or one essay. For instance, in "Polygamy and Divorce" (1742)—one of the earlier essays—in comparing the advantages as well as the ill effects of polygamy as practiced among eastern nations (such as Turks, Persians, and Chinese) vs. monogamy in modern Europe, Hume pronounces that "Barbarism, therefore, appears, from reason as well as experience, to be the inseparable attendant of polygamy" (Miller 1985: 185), hence in effect linking the east with barbarity and Europe with civility. To be fair, in pointing out the ill effects of polygamy on children raised in a household with a tyrannical husband and servile wives, Hume also says that these children later become either tyrants or slaves themselves and "are apt to forget the natural equality of mankind" (*Polygamy and Divorce*; Miller 1985: 185). One might argue that in this passage, Hume is condemning the practice of polygamy due to the perceived ill effects it has on the practitioners and their progenies, but is not asserting the barbarian nature of the east. This explanation only holds true if Hume also holds the view that what he terms "the national characters" of a people are amenable to progressive developments. Yet, as is clear, for Hume racial characters are of a biological nature (i.e., rooted in the blood) and hence the racial inferiority of those from the east is hereditary and permanent.

There is, however, a larger issue here: how is Hume's view of the permanency and the hierarchy of racial characters interlaid with Hume's other writings, such as those on human nature, ethics, and religion? It is inarguable that Hume's understanding of human nature is inductively derived from experience and observation, and due to its empirical nature, our knowledge of human nature is not absolute. As Hume cautions, "any hypothesis that pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature, ought at first to be rejected as presumptuous and chimerical" (*A Treatise*, "Introduction"; Mossner 1969: 44). But at the same time, Hume sees his *Treatise* as a revolutionary work in human understanding laying the foundation for the new science—the science of Man—which is foundational to all other sciences, including natural science, math, and religion:

Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another. Even Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of Man; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties (*A Treatise*; Mossner 1969: 42).

With "a cautious observation of human life," Hume asserts that this science of man "will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension" (*A Treatise*; Mossner 1969: 45-6). In other words, Hume's philosophy of human nature derived from a careful reflection on experience and observation, and its principles are applicable to human life here and now, not a hypothetical engagement in abstraction; to Hume, the utility of the science of man is what marks its superiority compared to all other areas of human knowledge. And hence Hume's anthropological observations of the racial characters of a people express more than a trivial sense of curiosity; rather it is an attempt to establish general ethical principles for life here and now in our encounters with others.

For instance, in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), Hume explains the utilitarian origin of the virtue of justice: "The use and tendency of that virtue [i.e., justice] is to

procure happiness and security, by preserving order in society” (*Enquiries*; Nidditch 1978: 186), and the two exceptions where the virtue of justice is rendered useless are when society suffers from extreme necessity or is blessed with an abundance of material comforts. “Thus,” as Hume writes, “the rules of equity or justice depend entirely on the particular state and condition in which men are placed, and owe their origin and existence to that utility, which results to the public from their strict and regular observance” (*Enquiries*; Nidditch 1978: 188). In other words, it is that public utility that grounds the necessity of our strict and regular observances of the virtue of justice or equity. And just like in the case of extreme necessity where self-preservation takes precedence over the rules of justice/equity, in the case of war between civilized nations and barbarians who observe no laws of war, Hume argues that civilized nations “must also suspend their observance of them [i.e., the laws of war], where they no longer serve to any purpose; and must render every action or reencounter as bloody and pernicious as possible to the first aggressors” (*Enquiries*; Nidditch 1978: 187-88).

Who then are the barbarians that Hume speaks of? Hume after the above remarks offers a hypothetical scenario where humans encountered another rational species but with much inferior strength, both of the body and mind, such that they were incapable of all resistance against us even at our highest provocation, and in that case, Hume argues that justice/equity should also be suspended. As Hume writes,

[...] the necessary consequence, I think, is that we should be bound by the laws of humanity to give gentle usage to these creatures, but should not, properly speaking, lie under any restraint of justice with regard to them, nor could they possess any right or property, exclusive of such arbitrary lords.

Furthermore,

Our intercourse with them could not be called society, which supposes a degree of equality; but absolute command on the one side, and servile obedience on the other. Whatever we covet, they must instantly resign: Our permission is the only tenure, by which they hold their possessions: Our compassion and kindness the only check, by which they curb our lawless will: And as no inconvenience ever results from the exercise of a power, so firmly established in nature, the restraints of justice and property, being totally *useless*, would never have place in so unequal a confederacy (*Enquiries*, emphasis original; Nidditch 1978: 190-91).

Hume sees this hypothetical scenario of two parties with lopsided, asymmetrical abilities of both the body and mind applicable to the encounter between men and animals as well as between males and females (*Enquiries*; Nidditch 1978: 191). There is no contest that these two applications mentioned above for Hume are factual, not hypothetical.

Hume also then applies the hypothetical scenario of the encounter of two parties with lopsided, asymmetrical abilities of both the mind and body to the encounter between civilized Europeans and barbarian Indians: “The great superiority of civilized Europeans above barbarous Indians, tempted us to imagine ourselves on the same footing with regard to them, and made us throw off all restraints of justice, and even of humanity, in our treatment of them” (*Enquiries*; Nidditch 1978: 191). Some have argued that Hume’s above remarks are merely a thought experiment, not an endorsement of unjust treatment against Indians (Valls 2005). But, again, this view only holds true if Hume in effect also sees all human races on equal footing with similar abilities and natural endowments capable of progressive developments. As we have already seen earlier, that is not the case. Hume believes in the permanency and heredity of racial characters, and

in Hume's own words, "in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites" (*Of National Characters*; Eze 1997: 33). The virtue of justice/equity is not applicable between two parties with lopsided, asymmetrical abilities of both the mind and body, as it is the case between men and animals or between the male and female. This is also true between civilized Europeans and barbarian nations.

Hume's claim of the barbarity of non-white races can be found not just in "Of National Characters," "Of Commerce," "Polygamy and Divorce," or *Enquiries*. In *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), Hume sees all the "savage tribes of AMERICA, AFRICA, and ASIA" as polytheist idolaters and as "barbarous nations" (*Natural History of Religion*; Flew 1992: 109-10). Polytheism, as Hume argues, is "the primitive religion of uninstructed mankind" (*Natural History of Religion*; Flew 1992: 113). Monotheism, on the other hand, is the natural conclusion from a careful contemplation of nature as a whole. As Hume writes, "All things in the universe are evidently of a piece. Every thing is adjusted to every thing. One design prevails throughout the whole. And this uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one author" (*Natural History of Religion*; Flew 1992: 113). However, such a grand contemplation of nature, the pure love of truth, is beyond the narrow capacity of barbarians who are immersed in the ordinary affections of human life (*Natural History of Religion*; Flew 1992: 115-16, 119).

Even though in antiquity Europeans were also inflicted with polytheism or superstition, and women today are still the "leaders and examples of every kind of superstition" (*Natural History of Religion*, emphasis original; Flew 1992: 120), Hume nevertheless sees the progress that modern Europeans have made from the dark age of polytheism to today's enlightened monotheism (*Natural History of Religion*; Flew 1992: 122). Yet this kind of progress doesn't seem to be possible for non-white races who are still in the stage of polytheistic barbarity and superstition. As Hume writes:

In very barbarous and ignorant nations, such as the AFRICANS and INDIANS, nay even the JAPONESE, who can form no extensive ideas of power and knowledge, worship may be paid to a being, whom they confess to be wicked and detestable; though they may be cautious, perhaps, of pronouncing this judgment of him in public, or in his temple, where he may be supposed to hear their reproaches (*Natural History of Religion*; Flew 1992: 168-9).

In short, not only does Hume's racist hierarchy intersect with his writings on human nature, ethics, and religion, Hume's anthropological observation of racial hierarchy in fact informs his other writings, as the way the science of Man serves as the foundation for all other areas of human knowledge.

4 Re-Reading the Canon

The point here is not just that Hegel, Kant, and Hume's remarks on race are racist and appalling. It is that their views on race and racial hierarchy are integral to their other, more well known philosophical projects, but that connection is more often than not brushed aside as if it was not worthy of any serious philosophical investigation. For instance, Hume's infamous footnote on black inferiority has been vigorously defended by some as being *racial*, instead of being *racist*, and Hume's *racialism* is said to be irrelevant to Hume's *core* philosophy (Valls 2005). In fact, it is claimed that Hume's racial prejudice can be easily corrected by Hume's own philosophy on the universality of human nature and our original equality (Valls 2005). If so, then it sure begs the question as to why Hume doesn't seem to be bothered by the glaring inconsistency in his own philosophical writings,

and why Hume retains the faulty view of racial hierarchy in his careful revision of the influential footnote in 1776 before his death—taking out only the phrase “and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds)” and retaining the rest some 20 years later after its first publication in 1754. To understand the importance of Hume’s view on race in his own philosophical system, one must, first of all, accept the intentionality of Hume’s remarks on race instead of dismissing them as if they were an unfortunate oversight by an otherwise brilliant philosopher. The same can be said of Kant and Hegel as well.

Yet as philosophers, we know so little or care so little about knowing this sort of thing, since philosophy as it is taught to us is about the great western canon as defined institutionally, not about the contexts of origin; it is about the rational unfolding of arguments, not about personal prejudice. But by ignoring the contexts of origin and the philosopher’s own prejudice, we are bound to dismiss a whole lot of the philosopher’s own writings as irrelevant and hence handicap our own understanding of the philosopher’s entire philosophical system. Or worse yet, we become apologists for a philosophical system with a racist lineage. Our lack of understanding in western philosophers’ own conscious involvement in the making of a revisionist history of philosophy, the “scientific” concept of race, or the permanency of racial hierarchy, in turn, leads us to an unfounded sense of superiority where the image of western philosophers is one of rational, systematic, and reflective thinkers compared to other parts of the world where their thinkers are deemed to be inferior intellectually, in part due to their perceived involvement in perpetuating some oppressive social/political practices.

For instance, Confucianism in the feminist discourse has long been faulted for its perceived causal connection to misogynic practices in China and elsewhere. Until quite recently, with the publication of a series of anthologies on comparative feminist studies (McWeeny and Butnor 2014; Pang-White 2016; Foust and Tan 2016), the incorporation of Confucianism into any feminist theorizing has long been a rejected proposition by feminists and philosophers alike (Rosenlee 2006). To “regular philosophers,” the field of comparative feminist studies usually arouses more suspicion than intellectual curiosity. Yet there is no comparable rejection when it comes to the incorporation of Kant’s ethics or cosmopolitanism, for instance, into modern discourse, despite Kant’s persistently racist and misogynistic writings. This disparity in approaching western and non-western philosophical texts only works to reinforce the notion of racial hierarchy formulated, in a large part, by Hume, Kant, and Hegel.

As Hegel points out in his lectures on the history of philosophy, each philosophy is indicative of a particular stage of development of reason, and each philosophy derives its meaning from its specific place in the entire system (Knox and Miller 1985: 49). Hegel’s exclusively western genealogy of philosophy serves its purpose by lending support to his progressive movement of reason, starting in Greece where the freedom of self-consciousness first emerges and then unfolding itself in the rest of the Germanic world, which in turn enforces the superiority of his own Germanic identity in conformity with his race theory. The purpose of Hegel’s history of philosophy is clear. But what then is our purpose in continuing to enforce Hegel’s exclusively western genealogy of philosophy and in perpetuating Hume and Kant’s racial hierarchy? How does the utterance of the Greek origin of philosophy contribute to our own identity as philosophers in this already racialized world? As Bernasconi writes back in 1995 on Heidegger’s involvement in perpetuating the myth of philosophy as western and Greek in origin, insofar as we choose to repeat this revisionist history of philosophy, we are all implicated (Bernasconi 1995: 251). It is time for us philosophers to think about how the discipline of Philosophy is structured in our own home institutions and the sort of methodology that we use to discern what is genuinely philosophical or relevant when we teach the great Anglo-European canon.

Indeed, we need a careful re-reading of this exclusively western genealogy of a revisionist history of philosophy that has been handed down to us. But the moment of reckoning in Philosophy goes beyond just the great canon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For instance, as revealed in previously unknown diaries, manuscripts, and letters, Simone de Beauvoir's seduction of her own young students and her disparaging remarks of them, as well as the enabler role that she played in passing on the young, beautiful students that she seduced to her lover Jean-Paul Sartre raises questions as to how to interpret Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex* (1949) and how to assess her place in feminism (Kirkpatrick 2019), not to mention, for both Beauvoir and Sartre, their association with Gabriel Matzneff—a well-known writer and publically confessed pedophile—and their signing of his petition in 1977 to free three other accused pedophiles (Chrisafis 2019). As shocking as this might seem, Beauvoir and Sartre's moral failures are not exactly completely concealed from the public, as their open signing and association with Matzneff demonstrates. This is also true for Heidegger as well. Heidegger's joining of the Nazi party and his refusal to condemn the Nazi movement even after the war are well-known. But Heidegger's grave moral failures are not just limited to his actions and irrelevant to his writings; the publication of his previously withheld "black notebooks" reveals his unmistakable anti-Semitism (Oltermann 2014).

But some prejudices are simply laid plain for all to see, and yet are seldom raised by contemporary philosophers, in part due to the lopsided racial and gender make-up of the discipline of Philosophy. In his Vienna Lecture on "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity" in 1935, on which his book *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936) is based, Husserl asserts that Europe cannot be understood geographically but only spiritually, and in the spiritual sense, "the English Dominions, the United states, etc. clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos, or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe, do not" (Carr 1970: 273). Furthermore, the potential of humanity lies in European civilization, and that European uniqueness is recognized by all other human groups who are thus motivated to "Europeanize themselves," but Europeans, "if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves, for example" (Carr 1970: 275).

Echoing Hegel and Heidegger, Husserl also sees philosophy as a culturally specific achievement of the west originating in Greece. All other non-western "philosophies" such as Chinese and Indian philosophy are not properly philosophical, since they are concerned with "a vocation-like life-interest," instead of "a universal ('cosmological') life-interest" (Carr 1970: 280). Only the west possesses the genuine sense of rationality that represents a radical break from the rest of humanity. And hence, even though in the broad sense of rationality "even the Papuan is a man and not a beast," European philosophical reasoning nevertheless "represents a new stage of human nature and its reason" (Carr 1970: 290). In other words, humanity lies in the west, and so does the rational essence of philosophy. This sure explains why even today, only a handful of graduate programs have full-time faculty teaching the so-called "non-western philosophy." For there is nothing else but "Western-European philosophy," a term Heidegger sees as "in truth, a tautology" (*What is Philosophy*; Kluback and Wilde 1955: 31).

5 Conclusion

Surely, philosophers both past and present are only humans; we make mistakes and we have our own unexamined assumptions and personal prejudices that expose our human-all-too-human aspects in spite of our persistently philosophical façade of always being in possession of a rational, systematic, and reflective thinking. Each philosopher we revere is bound to fail us morally or

conceptually. But if we choose to ignore topics that might not fit our narratives of great philosophers, past or present, we do it at our own peril. The day of reckoning for Philosophy is now. It is not just that we need to recognize the value of other ways of thinking that fall outside of our family resemblance by taking in adopted children who more or less can fit into our preconceived notion of what a philosopher should do. We need to take a critical turn onto ourselves and examine the intertwining between our self-identity as philosophers and the way in which philosophy is structured, as well as the sorts of topics that we deem as philosophically worthy.

In the US-American context, given the composition of the discipline of Philosophy, when 86% of PhD holders are white and 20% of Full Professors are women, it is no surprise that the topics of race and gender are deemed irrelevant to our study of the great philosophical canon. Kant's writing and teaching on the topic of race, for instance, spanned nearly four decades, and yet the way that we were taught about Kant and the way we continue to teach Kant excludes a critical analysis of the role race plays in Kant's entire philosophical system. This is also true for Hume, whose legacy of the heredity and permanency of racial hierarchy that is echoed by many of his contemporaries, including Kant, is largely whitewashed and made irrelevant to Hume's other famed writings on human nature, ethics, and religion. This is true for the topic of gender as well. The topic of gender is only taught in a few designated courses and then is conveniently left out of other "regular" courses where the great canon and philosophers are studied, reflected, and analyzed. Feminist philosophy, even today, is considered by many "regular" philosophers as not philosophically worthy. This is even worse for those of us who are engaged in comparative feminist studies; it is a sub-field that occupies the margin of an already marginalized field that is not taught in the 90% of the 118 graduate programs in North America (Garfield and Norden 2016). What all this adds up to is a picture of a discipline that is persistent in preserving the myth of philosophy as a rational, systematic, and reflective way of thinking that has a universal appeal and yet at the same time is a culturally specific achievement of a few great white men.

As daunting as the task of changing the entire discipline of Philosophy methodologically and structurally might seem, things have changed, at least among philosophers with sinological training; Defoort's 2017 essay "Chinese Philosophy' at European Universities: A Threefold Utopia" is now an impassioned call for a greater inclusion of Chinese philosophy at European universities, and Norden's 2017 *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* urges an inclusion of not just Chinese philosophy but all non-western philosophy into the curriculum. All these are indicative of the gradual but important changes that at least some philosophers have made over the last two decades in getting non-western philosophy not just taught but also recognized as philosophy in its own right. As a Confucian feminist, I would urge sinologists to also engage the feminist communities and feminists to reciprocally engage the Asian and comparative communities. If philosophy, as Heidegger writes, when traced to its linguistic source should sound "*philosophia*," then shouldn't we philosophers as the lovers of wisdom follow the beloved wherever it takes us, regardless of the geographical locality in which wisdom is found? (*What is Philosophy*, emphasis original; Kluback and Wilde 1955: 29).

But to recognize the wisdom of the beloved who speaks with a different accent requires more than just sufficient linguistic skills; it requires a rethinking of the myth of the great white men clothed in the race theory that has been handed down to us, the progeny of the European Enlightenment in this post-colonial world that has been conventionally dissected into the third world, developing, and developed world, a common division that more or less corresponds to the notion of racial hierarchy cemented by great philosophers such as Hume, Kant, and Hegel, in which European descendants occupy the highest stage of human development, followed by the "Orientals" who have limited development, and at the bottom are the Africans who are still in the

undifferentiated stage of childhood. With this racial map in mind, it would be hard for us, the lovers of wisdom, to see philosophical wisdom in these purportedly inferior races who are supposed to have produced inferior intellectual traditions as well. Before we philosophers can become genuine lovers of wisdom, we will have to rid ourselves of this racial map of the world and reclaim a sense of intellectual curiosity that had so often accompanied intercultural exchanges before the rise of race theory in the late eighteenth century. After all, the ancient Greeks had no problem crediting the Egyptians for their knowledge of philosophy, and the seventeenth-century Jesuits when they first translated the Chinese Classics had no problem recognizing Confucius as a philosopher (Bernasconi 1995: 241; Defoort 2001: 395; Raud 2006: 619).

We moderns need to do better and have to do better.

An *Anyāpoha* Diagnosis of White Ignorance in Professional Philosophy

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Professor Rosenlee implores practitioners of academic philosophy to examine our self-identities as “philosophers” and how these identities structure the discipline and the sources and methodologies the discipline deems “philosophical.” As she observes, professional philosophy in the United States and elsewhere is, in terms of practitioners and content, doggedly monochromatic. Further, this has remained so despite widely established and by no means only recent revelations that certain imaginings that prop up disciplinary self-conceptions are not just false but are also inextricable from supremacist ideologies. So, what can one say or do about a profession that brands itself as “the love of wisdom” while structurally, methodologically, and obstinately embracing not just ignorance, but sorts of ignorance that are among the most pernicious? More on this below, but suffice it to now say that professional philosophers could take Professor Rosenlee’s advice to turn inward, engage in critical self-reflection, and revise enacted conceptions of “what it means to be a philosopher” and “what it means to do philosophy.” The following brief response hopes to support and augment Rosenlee’s proposal by coupling her call for self-critique and practical concept reformation with Dharmakīrti’s seventh century Buddhist “*anyāpoha*” theory of concepts and Charles Mills’ twenty-first-century social epistemological diagnosis of “white ignorance.”

1 Dharmakīrti’s *Anyāpoha* Theory and Three Pernicious Images

Dharmakīrti argues that conceptualization—of words such as “philosophy,” for example—is enacted, and is enacted through sequences of momentary and unique subjective images. Specific thirsts, background tendencies, and other conditions generate particular imaginings, which propel practices of exclusion that contingently determine conceptual reference. Conceptual determination succeeds according to this “*anyāpoha*” (“exclusion of other”) model insofar as it steers from particulars that do not quench motivating thirsts while arriving at particulars that do; as Dharmakīrti tends to put it, successful conceptual understanding allows one to obtain the desirable or avoid the undesirable.¹

Stock examples that Dharmakīrti, his commentators, and his successors use to explain these practices of conceptual determination are quotidian objects such as “water jug,” “cow,” and “the road to Śrughna.” The basic picture for Dharmakīrti can be summarized as follows. Hearing a verbal utterance or touching a real particular reflexively generates a particular mental form or image. This initial image (*ākāra*) is the nonconceptual (*nirvikalpaka*) product of contact between a sense organ and a sensory object, along with other subjective conditions. When conceptualization occurs, some such nonconceptual image activates a subjective imprint (*vāsanā*) that produces a conceptually loaded (*savikalpaka*) cognitive image that then motivates purposeful action. This purposeful action amounts to avoiding particulars whose apparent capacities conflict with one’s expectations and interests.

If, for example, a friend asks you to fetch a water jug, your mind will not have a clear conception of “water jug-ness” or a vivid mental image of the particular water jug you aim to fetch. Instead, a fuzzy and subjective image of “a water jug” emerges in your cognition, and this image contains expectations and purposes that make you reflexively averse to some phenomena but not to

others. Therefore, you return not with a chair, a jug of milk, or a cremation urn, but with some specific object that your contingent and subjective image of “a water jug” did not viscerally exclude.

As John Dunne observes, Dharmakīrti’s theory of subjective imprints links with Yogācāra Buddhist theories of karma. *Vāsanās* are traces, impressions, or dispositions that are stored in one’s subliminal or “Storehouse” consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). Some such imprints are beginningless (*anādi*), while others are added (*ābhita*) through experience and conditioning. Imprints are dispositions that are acquired or innate. Regardless, these imprints prime persons to construe phenomena in some ways rather than others.

However, Dunne explains, *vāsanās* alone are insufficient to explain why some specific nonconceptual perceptual image causes some other specific concept-laden image. Sensations are conceptualizable in indefinitely many ways. For example, fumbling in the dark and feeling something textured, vertical, and firm could prompt either a conceptual image of “a wall” or a conceptual image of “an elephant.” Whether a nonconceptual perceptual image activates an imprint that produces the former rather than the latter depends, according to Dharmakīrti, on one’s specific background conditions, including one’s desires and interests. These then form part of the content of the fuzzy and subjective conceptual images that lead one to determine concepts in some ways rather than others. Hence, conceptual pictures exclude or are hostile to particulars that lack capacities to satisfy one’s thirsts. Acting on the basis of these images tends to sow more seeds in one’s Storehouse consciousness, which reflect one’s successes and failures in obtaining the desirable and avoiding the undesirable, and gives rise to further imprints (Dunne 2011: 99-102).

Dharmakīrti’s *anyāpoha* model of conceptual determination can provide a descriptive account of academic philosophy’s steadfast indifference to clear evidence that its foundational self-images are not merely ignorant, but pernicious. Rosenlee identifies three pernicious images that nonetheless motivate current determinations of the concept “philosophy” and the discipline of academic philosophy: 1) philosophy’s origins in Ancient Greece, 2) the racial map of the world that canonical eighteenth-century Anglo-European philosophers developed and institutionalized, and 3) the discipline’s supposedly characteristic commitment to “systematicity, reflection, and rationality” (Rosenlee 2020a: 122). Before returning to a descriptive *anyāpoha* account of academic philosophy’s adherence to these images, I’ll briefly discuss each in turn.

Rosenlee notes that the ubiquitous image of philosophy’s Greek origins is false. It is, she observes, “a family myth that has been taught to us and passed down in perpetuity since its revisionist inception in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century” (Rosenlee 2020a: 123). Yet, despite this image’s falsity, practitioners of academic philosophy in the United States and across the globe continue to structure curricula, research agendas, and hiring decisions around it. One pernicious product of this attachment is the structural marginalization of non-western philosophies and philosophers. As Rosenlee observes, when one looks across the discipline’s curricula, “one is bound to find” a history of philosophy requirement that is “strictly and exclusively western” (Rosenlee 2020a: 123). This requirement is typically divided between ancient, medieval, and modern philosophical periods, starting with the Ancient Greeks, as if “philosophy” had bypassed the rest of the world on a trajectory from Greece, through Europe and eventually to the rest of the Anglo-European sphere. It tends to appear even in philosophy programs that conscientiously aim to counter the marginalization of non-western philosophical traditions, such as my own, in which five of six full-time faculty specialize in at least one area of non-western philosophy. Through such asymmetries, current methods of practically enacting the concept “philosophy” reinforce an image that, as Rosenlee’s analysis makes clear, pictures philosophy as an expressway beginning in Greece and extending through the Anglo-European world; non-western and other marginalized philosophies generally appear as secondary roads and detours, if they show up at all.

Rosenlee emphasizes that this revisionist myth of philosophy's origins in ancient Greece is historically inextricable from a racial map of the world that late eighteenth-century "scientific" theories and theorists of race consciously promulgated, even in the face of sustained contemporary criticism. This racial map divides humanity "into four races correlating with four geographical localities and with four distinct skin colors"—"white, black, red and yellow"—and conceives of racial characteristics, not only in physical terms, but also in terms of "dispositions and temperaments" (Rosenlee 2020a: 124). Its main innovation is its assertion that these presumed racial characteristics are immutable and natural. And its main conceptual function is to warrant a natural mandate for white supremacy as an aim and as an imposed (military, economic, juridical, and epistemic) global order. "Humanity has its highest degree of perfection in the white race," Kant writes. "The yellow Indians have a somewhat lesser talent. The Negroes are much lower, and lowest of all is part of the American races" (Rosenlee 2020a: 127). Hence, it is just as warranted for Anglo-Europeans to impose their wills globally on persons of color, he concludes, as it is for foxes to impose their wills globally on geese.

Rosenlee stresses that one should not imagine that the development and promulgation of this racial map is ancillary to Hegel's, Hume's, and Kant's "core" canonical philosophical projects. Her point should be especially clear in the case of Kant. When teaching his philosophy, it is not unusual to mention his statement in the *Prolegomena* that Hume's skepticism interrupted his dogmatic slumber and set his philosophy in new directions, and to contextualize Kant's critical project by explaining how it seeks to navigate between the "two rocks" of dogmatism and skepticism. What Rosenlee's analysis of the racial map helps to point out, however, is that the latter of these two threats is, for Kant, specifically racialized and gendered. Despotism "under the administration of dogmatists" must be avoided. But so too must the "complete anarchy" of "the skeptics," whom Kant portrays in the first *Critique* in terms that might as well have been ripped straightforwardly from his "anthropological" descriptions of "the American races"—"The sceptics, a species of nomads, despising all settled modes of life," he writes (Kant 2007: A ix). This Charybdis to the Scylla of dogmatism is not only imagined as a racial threat, for Kant's critical project also seeks to steer from chaotic populism imagined as a gendered threat (presuming one recalls his comments about women in his voluminous practical anthropological writings)—"that loquacious shallowness, which assumes for itself the name of popularity" (*CPR, B xxxv*). Arguably, instructors distort Kant's critical project when we neglect to integrate Kant's racial map of the world into his core philosophy. Doing so deters students and new generations of philosophers from contending, for instance, with the question of whether contemporary philosophies with deeply Kantian roots (e.g., Rawlsian ethics) are also structurally, even if subliminally, invested in, rather than equipped to resolve, pernicious injustices such as white supremacy and male supremacy, as some anti-racist and feminist philosophers have argued.

Finally, Rosenlee points to the discipline's image of itself as characteristically committed to "systematicity, reflection, and rationality." For me, her comments bring to mind a short but profound piece in *Hypatia* by Elena Flores Ruíz, in which she articulates exasperation with the multiple ambient abuses that she and countless other "diverse practitioners" encounter in professional philosophy (Ruíz 2014: 196). Through an array of prosaic "regulative mechanisms like conference programs, grant awards, curricular perspectives and syllabi construction, tenure and promotion criteria, the replication of power structures in Research I universities, and so on," Ruíz writes, "somnambulatory practices" of professional philosophy police standards of systematicity, reflection, and rationality "without the burden of consciousness" (Ruíz 2014: 197-98, 199). As she notes, which philosophical contributions are judged "rigorous" and "philosophical" in these contexts has little to do with the systematicity, reflectivity, or rationality of contributions and much

more to do with the extent to which they jibe or conflict with barely conscious expectations and interests of the practitioners who employ these regulatory mechanisms. To establish this point, Ruíz contrasts, on the one hand, the disciplinary reception of Brazilian logicians' accommodations of inconsistencies and contradictory premises in the development of paraconsistent logic as "incontrovertible philosophy" with, on the other, the discipline's ongoing distaste for "the epistemic efforts of Black and Latina feminists, along with those of diverse philosophical practitioners, [...] to accommodate inconsistency, contradiction, and paraconsistent forms of reasoning in phenomenological accounts of lived experience" (Ruíz 2014: 199). Both threads of philosophy are carefully and systematically reasoned, but only one finds a convivial home in the discipline.

As Rosenlee makes clear, this self-image of philosophy as systematic, reflective, and rational is a relic of the myth of philosophy's Greek origins and "scientific" racism's racial map of the world. Professional philosophy does not appear as "a culturally specific achievement of a few great white men" because it is characteristically rational, reflective, or systematic (Rosenlee 2020a: 136); on the contrary—it appears "rational, reflective, and systematic" *because* it has been narrowly construed as white and male through a racist and heteropatriarchal lens. In Hume's and Kant's writings, whites are established as exemplars of reason and reflectivity only through contrast with ahistorical depictions of non-whites. As Hume writes:

I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences (quoted Rosenlee 2020a: 129).

The ahistorical character of Hume's claim, which as Rosenlee notes, Kant endorses, should suffice to establish the order of priority. Similarly, the epistemic efforts of Black and Latina feminists today are not excluded from professional philosophy because these efforts lack rigor; after all, no amount of rigor or systematic argument would suffice to reverse the exclusion. Rather, these efforts are deemed to "lack rigor" and are excluded from professional philosophy because they are the work of Black and Latina feminists. Few diverse practitioners in the profession who aim to ground their philosophies in praxis, and especially in marginalized lived experiences, remain unacquainted with hackneyed but practically incontestable charges that what they do "is not really philosophy" or lack colleagues, even in their own departments, who dismiss their philosophical interests as mere "politics," or who even shun them in petty ways while claiming for themselves the mantle of "being a serious philosopher." As Ruíz writes, the establishment in the profession of images of "philosophy":

makes possible the conditions under which diverse practitioners in the field experience the *systematic microaggressions* that alone can be methodically dismissed as isolated incidents, but which taken together create the spectral experience of alienation, professional estrangement, and on some days, normalized madness characteristic of inhabiting spaces ripe with ambient abuse (Ruíz 2014: 197-8).

One pernicious consequence of academic philosophy's prevailing image of its methods as systematic, reflective, and rational, then, is its "resolute monolingualism." Yet another is the systematic, somnambulatory abuse of diverse practitioners in the profession (Ruíz 2014: 197). Rosenlee's critique of these methodological presumptions seems to me to buttress this point.

Dharmakīrti's *anyāpoha* model of conceptual determination can offer a descriptive account of the discipline's dogged attachment to these false and pernicious images. First, it should be noted, a Buddhist such as Dharmakīrti would reject the notion that phenomena show up in the world already qualified as "philosophical" or "non-philosophical." Such distinctions are contingently enacted only on the basis of sequences of subjective and concept-laden images. As discussed earlier, the characteristics of these *savikalpaka ākāras* are determined, in part, by imprints (*vāsanās*) that are stored in the subliminal Storehouse consciousness. Given their roots in the eighteenth century, the imprints of "what it means to be a philosopher" and "what it means to do philosophy" undergirding the self-images that Rosenlee critiques are clearly "added" rather than "beginningless." They are dispositional artifacts of a revisionist academic program implemented by white supremacists and male supremacists in the eighteenth century that continues to be passed down and reinforced by quotidian professional practices, ranging from the content we teach in classrooms and the kinds of scholarship we are receptive to in our research to our evaluations of graduate student work, the questions we ask at conferences, our interpersonal interactions in our departments, and our reflexive impressions of prospective faculty hires (e.g., "she didn't seem friendly!"). Seeds of these imprints were likely passed to us as disciplinary recruits, and in turn, if we do not consciously reform them, we will tend to pass them along to future students through our own somnambulatory regulative practices, which Dharmakīrti aptly describes as "exclusion of others."

It should be noted that these imprints are accumulated not solely through professional activities, but through the entirety of our life experiences. Regardless of whether one is white or male, one naturally develops imprints by being acculturated in a society that is structurally racist and misogynist. (Contemporary psychologists appear to call these *vāsanās* "implicit biases.") Such imprints do not magically evaporate after one earns a PhD or enters the profession.

As discussed earlier, however, imprints alone do not generate the concept-laden images that propel the exclusions one enacts when practically determining the concept "philosophy." The specific fuzzy and subjective images that arise in one's cognition also depend on one's specific desires and interests. Like imprints, these desires and interests are subjective and specific to the person who enacts the concept. Likewise, they are not restricted to academic or professional concerns, but include the full range of one's personal thirsts, whether rational or irrational and conscious or unconscious. That these imprints and desires are private and specific to individuals should not lead one to doubt their ability to undergird structural determinations of "philosophy" or systematic disciplinary practices. Dharmakīrti's model of conceptual determination is intended to explain all conceptualization, and not only conceptualization of medium-sized objects such as water jugs and cows. Further, it theorizes all language use. Imprints and desires are unique and subjective, but as in the case of language, they may be produced by causes that pervade a context. As a result, imprints and desires are capable of generating subjective images and practices that, while ultimately heterogeneous, differ collectively from other imprints and desires and therefore seem to form a single set.

Dharmakīrti's *anyāpoha* model of conceptual determination consequently suggests that the images that Rosenlee urges professional philosophers to critique and reform are reiteratively produced by practitioners' accumulated imprints and desires. These images propel mundane and largely somnambulatory practices of exclusion that conventionally constitute the discipline and "what it means to be a philosopher" along doggedly narrow racial, gender, and methodological lines. However, it is key to note, for Dharmakīrti, all such concept-laden subjective images are ultimately false. Hence, no conception of "philosophy," or of philosophy's origins or methods, is ever strictly speaking "true," and pointing out their falsity can never suffice to dislodge them. At the conventional level—that is, the level at which concepts are determined through practices of

exclusion—the “truth” or “falsity” of any construal of concepts depends on the interests and desires that motivate it, or more specifically, on its success or failure in obtaining the desirable or avoiding the undesirable. Hence, on this solely descriptive *anyāpoha* account, a conception of “philosophy” is conventionally true only insofar as it satisfies the motivating desires of practitioners, and conventionally false only insofar as it fails to do so.

Academic philosophy has proven itself remarkably adept in some cases at revising its judgments of conventional philosophical truth. For example, for a time, the logical positivist movement was all the rage in the Anglo-American academy. But after a small number of concise interventions (e.g., Quine’s “Two Dogmas”), the positivist project was swiftly abandoned. Using Dharmakīrti’s model of *anyāpoha* descriptively, we can say that these interventions revealed logical positivism to be at odds with the discipline’s motivating interests. Logical positivism was, consequently, conventionally judged “false.” In contrast, however, the eurocentrism of philosophy and indifference of professional philosophers to non-western traditions and non-white and non-male practitioners has stubbornly resisted decades and, as Rosenlee establishes, even centuries of meticulous argument. Using Dharmakīrti’s model of *anyāpoha* descriptively, albeit only tentatively, we can therefore say that the profession’s resistance to these interventions establishes that images of philosophy’s Greek origins, the eighteenth-century racial map of the world, and of “philosophy” as characteristically systematic, reflective, and rational *satisfy* the thirsts that motivate professional disciplinary practice, and for this reason, no matter how blatantly ignorant or pernicious judgments based on these images are or are revealed to be, they are conventionally judged “true.”²

2 White Ignorance in Professional Philosophy

To shift beyond the purely descriptive, it is helpful to turn to Charles Mills’ concept of “white ignorance,” which I believe provides a useful framework to use in conjunction with Dharmakīrti’s *anyāpohavāda*, both to make sense of academic philosophy’s determined refusal to abandon these pernicious images and to develop practical concept reformation strategies. In the closing half of an epigraphical poem that opens a chapter titled “White Ignorance,” Mills writes:

*Imagine an ignorance that resists.
Imagine an ignorance that fights back.
Imagine an ignorance militant, aggressive, not to be intimidated,
an ignorance that is active, dynamic, that refuses to go quietly—
not at all confined to the illiterate and uneducated but propagated
at the highest levels of the land, indeed presenting itself unblushingly
as knowledge (Mills 2007: 13).*

This active, substantive, and aggressive ignorance is, of course, white ignorance, which he defines as a kind of “structural group-based miscognition” (Mills 2007: 13) in which “race—white racism and/or white racial domination and their ramifications—plays a crucial causal role” (Mills 2007: 20). From a social epistemological perspective, this ignorance is not a mere lack, or the absence of knowledge, but an active and positive commitment of persons—most especially white persons who are raised in societies structurally invested in white normativity—to *not know*.

Mills states that one can be motivated by white ignorance without being overtly or consciously, or even at all, racist. Regarding the latter circumstance, he writes, “racialized causality can give rise to what I am calling white ignorance [...] indirectly for a nonracist cognizer who may

form mistaken beliefs (e.g., that after the abolition of slavery in the United States, blacks generally had opportunities equal to whites) because of the social suppression of the pertinent knowledge, though without prejudice himself” (Mills 2007: 21). However, his analysis mostly attends to mechanisms that result in more active and comprehensive investments in white ignorance. He draws particular attention to perception, conceptualization, memory, testimony, and motivational group interest.

With respect to perception and conceptualization, Mills advocates a standard socialized or naturalized epistemological position. He notes that all practical perception is conception, and moreover, because individuals do not in general create concepts out of whole cloth “but inherit them from their cultural milieu” (Mills 2007: 25), all practical perception is also social conception. These social concepts tend to mesh together to form socially operative theories with their own specific orientations. As a result, these theories and orientations shape concepts and perceptions of fact, while also seeming vindicated by these very concepts and perceptions of fact. Beyond this standard coherentist position, however, Mills points out that this social epistemological model implies that societies—and academic disciplines—that are oriented toward white normativity (“the centering of the Euro and later Euro-American reference group as constitutive norm”) entrench western ethnocentrism “as an overarching, virtually unassailable framework” (Mills 2007: 25). Quotidian, somnambulatory practices in societies that are oriented toward white normativity tend to both reflect and reinforce “a conviction of exceptionalism and superiority that seems vindicated by the facts, and thenceforth, circularly, shaping perception of the facts” (Mills 2007: 25).

Mills notes that such an orientation not only privileges particular kinds of memory, but also privileges particular kinds of forgetting. Management of memory is pivotal in any social epistemological context, he remarks, for collective memory is needed to pass down social skills and understanding in any society. But in addition to acts of collective remembering, Mills argues that social epistemologies also demand acts of collective forgetting. “If we need to understand collective memory,” he writes, “we also need to understand collective amnesia.” Selective processes generate and convey collective memory; social phenomena and practices such as textbooks, ceremonies, official holidays, statues, parks, and monuments make collective memory manifest. However, because these ongoing selective processes are socially contested—they invariably involve social choices, after all—they produce not only specific forms of collective remembering, but also specific forms of collective forgetting. Mills therefore concludes that societies—and professions—oriented to white normativity create and sustain “white amnesia”—an active social commitment to *not remember* realities that challenge white normativity (Mills 2007: 28-9).

His argument is similar with respect to testimony. Whose words to trust or disregard is a pressing social epistemological concern, and any such determination occurs through selective processes. Consequently, to sustain specific forms of white not-knowing, communities that are oriented toward white normativity take preemptive and seemingly incontestable steps to discredit potential non-white sources (Mills 2007: 31-4).

Finally, Mills points to the role of “*white group interests*” in conveying specific forms of white ignorance. In particular, he points to whites’ collective motivational interest in preserving “wages of whiteness”—the material and social benefits that white persons regularly receive from systematic white normativity and white supremacy. These wages are significant, and white persons have active, albeit largely reflexive, interests in sustaining them. Consequently, white persons are collectively motivated in specific ways to *not know*, regardless of the facts one presents or the systematicity or rigor of one’s arguments (Mills 2007: 34-5).

Mills intends his concept of “white ignorance” to function normatively and not just descriptively. “The point of trying to understand white ignorance,” he writes, “is [...] the goal of

trying to reduce or eliminate it” (Mills 2007: 23). While white ignorance and white amnesia naturally arise in societies that are oriented toward white normativity, these are still instances of *miscognition*. From a normative epistemological perspective, they should, like all other instances of social ignorance, be regulated and corrected. For instance, Mills would argue that forgetting and amnesia occur in every social epistemological context. However, the phenomena and practices that societies forget *should* be non-actual and non-veridical. White ignorance is a form of miscognition not because it systematically forgets, but because it systematically forgets knowledge and systematically remembers falsehoods.

Mills seems more confident that blacks and persons of color will be apt to use the concept of “white ignorance” to shed their own reflexive investments in it. While whites in general can do the same, we tend to share motivational interests in not doing so, except insofar as our intersectional identities acquaint us with marginalization. From a normative epistemological perspective, however, we *should* do so no matter our personal experiences. Similarly, non-western philosophers, diverse specialists in non-western philosophy, and non-western philosophy programs in general may have a cognitive advantage in overcoming white ignorance in professional philosophy, because this interest does not tend to serve their group interests. Western philosophers, specialists in western philosophy, and exclusively western philosophy programs, in contrast, share a motivational interest in not overcoming white ignorance—nonetheless, they can and *should* reduce or eliminate it.

Most academic scholars today seem to read Dharmakīrti’s *anyāpoha* theory of concepts solely descriptively. However, while it is true that Buddhist liberatory concerns are not at the forefront of Dharmakīrti’s philosophical writings, there appears to be no textual reason to conclude that his philosophy of concepts has no normative dimensions. As Dunne notes, Dharmakīrti explicitly states that repeated meditation on concepts and conceptual images can powerfully transform experiences and practices of conceptual determination (Dunne 2011: 105). Further, Dharmakīrti’s theory of concepts is closely integrated with his theory of knowledge sources (*pramāṇas*). In turn, this *pramāṇa* theory is integral to his theory of philosophical debate (*vāda*), which is indisputably normative. As Pradeep Gokhale observes, destructive debate (*vitandā*) aimed at fomenting ignorance “was disapproved totally by Dharmakīrti.” Moreover, he notes:

Dharmakīrti condemned the use of any irrational devices (such as *chala*, a form of deceiving the other debater) in the course of debate, because for him the purpose of [*vāda*] was not to defend one’s own position by any hook or crook, but to benefit the other debater by removing his misconceptions and leading him to knowledge (Gokhale 1993: xv-xvi).

Consequently, the solely descriptive model of *anyāpoha* provided above is at best incomplete. Conventional practice may contingently establish pernicious kinds of ignorance as “true,” but the proper function of philosophical investigation and debate is to regulate pseudo-truths in ways that increase understanding and reduce unsatisfactoriness.

Earlier, I asked what one can say or do about a profession that brands itself as “the love of wisdom” while structurally, methodologically, and obstinately embracing not just ignorance, but sorts of ignorance that are among the most pernicious. Dharmakīrti’s *apoha* theory suggests that academic philosophers should repeatedly meditate on the images that Rosenlee identifies. Conventional meditation techniques may be effective, but so too could efforts by individual practitioners to research these topics, to directly acquaint ourselves and others with scholarship that establishes the pernicious consequences of these images, and to adjust our quotidian practices, whether professional or personal, accordingly. In this way, academic philosophers can work to dispel, rather than promote, white ignorance in our profession. The devotion of a coalition of non-

western philosophy programs, non-western philosophers, specialists in non-western philosophies, and exclusively western-trained philosophers with intersectional experiences of marginalization to such meditation and engaged research would have transformative effects. Nonetheless, Mills' analysis of white ignorance and Dharmakīrti's *anyāpoha* philosophy of conceptual determination also both strongly imply that most professional philosophers will, for the time being, remain viscerally and aggressively opposed to taking such steps. But such is to be expected. Cultivation of humaneness and the pursuit of wisdom have rarely if ever been majority concerns, and they certainly are not now in this era of what Linda Martín Alcoff has called "advertising culture"—"a culture that is structurally incapable of being sincere, accurate, or truthful" (Martín Alcoff 2010: 132). At their best, philosophy and philosophers can and will swim against such currents.

¹ Accessible introductions to Dharmakīrti's *anyāpoha* philosophy are generally available. The discussion here is grounded most directly in two pieces written by John D. Dunne. See Dunne (2011) and Dunne (2004).

² This solely descriptive account of Dharmakīrti's *apoha* theory does not yet take into account Dharmakīrti's theory of knowledge, which is designed to regulate uncritical judgments of conventional truth.

On Reckoning with Revisionism: Rosenlee on the Canon Problem

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Philosophy in the west has long had a diversity problem, and some philosophers sense the beginnings of a collective effort to rectify the problem. Perhaps we are indeed in the initial stage of a renovation of the profession, but at a minimum, an adequate response will require many decades of labor, since the profession needs many kinds of deep reconstruction.

Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee's work contributes to the hastening of this transition. She critically historicizes the professional canon, revealing its racist, patriarchal, Eurocentric, and importantly, revisionist structure. In doing so, she does not aim merely to offer an exposé but to problematize how the canon, though bounded by its modern European circumstance, plays an unquestioned criterial role in defining the nature of philosophy for all humanity. I am sympathetic to her position, so I offer some questions for further clarification and some in-house critical considerations. First, since critiques can provide some rough guidance for reconstruction, what are the implications of Rosenlee's account for salvaging, truncating, or transforming the modern canon in a post-Eurocentric profession? Second, as the title indicates, Rosenlee's account historicizes, critically, the western philosophical canon, but how does this process connect with that of decolonization, a theme that has been generating a great deal of interest in other sectors of the profession also seeking to reconceive the canon? In sum, I explore through her account some of the nuances of the reckonings she calls for and the reconstructions that are long overdue, and I invite her to expand her discussion of these matters.

Canons are fundamental conditioning structures of the profession. They determine what counts as philosophy, the story of philosophy, and the formative set of questions, answers, and approaches that constitute a discipline. Since generations of practitioners are socialized into these agendas, dialectics, and imaginaries, canons create communities of inquiry. So when they are skewed or problematic, or narrow the imagination, the negative impact is intensive. Moreover, since we tend to look *out of* fundamental conditioning structures, not at them, it may be very difficult to detect how distortions in these basic sources have shaped us. There is no contradiction in something being deeply problematic while being normalized or naturalized. Rosenlee's essay addresses this distortive basicity in the profession: she asserts that the diversity problem in the profession is "methodological" or "structural," requiring a reconception of the canon itself to properly shape more practically impactful practices, like hiring and pedagogy (Rosenlee 2020a: 122).

Working in an important vein of critical philosophical history (Bernasconi 1998; Eze 2001; Park 2013), Rosenlee highlights the pervasive and intensive racism of the modern philosophical canon. We get a concise and compelling account of the main racist concepts of Hume, Kant, and Hegel, and the wider import of these concepts, their centrality, for their respective positions. She clarifies how Hume's characterizations of non-European peoples were markedly racist and especially salient for his philosophical outlook, which had at its heart the "science of man." In addition, she explains how Kant's philosophical geography was profoundly racist, conspicuously relevant to his ethics, politics, and anthropology, and greatly influential for the formation of modern raciology. Moreover, she illuminates how Hegel's history of philosophy, intimately connected to his central concept of the progress of Spirit, has racist hierarchy in its infrastructure. Importantly, her account does not merely identify racism in these key figures of the modern canon. As the work of Peter Park demonstrates, modern philosophy rejected its earlier openness to non-western non-white

philosophy and developed a revisionist history in which philosophy was defined as a type of systematic rational inquiry that descended from Socrates and was maintained and enriched only by medieval and modern Europeans. So Rosenlee's essay reveals a powerful coalescence between a systematic racist raciology and a revisionist Eurocentric genealogy of philosophy.

Importantly, the message of the canon has become so normalized, so criterial for the nature of philosophy itself, that it is not only mainstream philosophers of the west who promulgate the troubling revisionism. Even practitioners of comparative philosophy—those whose work is marginalized by the revisionist canon—can regard philosophy proper as essentially Greek and European and thus do comparative philosophy in a way that privileges the European standard. Another expression of the problem, as she expounds, is the revealing disparity between how important philosophical flaws, like sexism in earlier traditions, are so easily overlooked, removed, or forgiven in the case of western philosophy but regarded as permanently staining in non-western traditions, like sexism in Confucianism. Lastly, she illuminates the extensiveness of the problem by tracing some very troubling elements in the continental tradition, not just Husserl's blatant Eurocentrism but also Sartre's sexual objectification of young women philosophers and Beauvoir's complicity in Sartre's predatory behavior. In spite of the bleak historical and conceptual portrait, Rosenlee remains "hopeful" that a "reckoning" will emerge in the profession, citing such recent work as Bryan Van Norden's multicultural manifesto and anthologies on Asian and feminist philosophy (Rosenlee 2020a).

1 Implications for Modern Philosophy

Even if the profession endorses Rosenlee's account, it is not obvious how it should reconceive itself. There will be much to do in the time of reckoning and many forks in the road ahead. Even if a critique underdetermines agendas of transformation, it may have a certain tendentiousness or directionality to it. What sort of modern canon does Rosenlee's account move us toward in a post-Eurocentric profession?

As backdrop for the discussion to follow, consider a distinction by Daniel Garber (2005) that has been making the rounds in the history of (western) philosophy, that of the "collegial" and the "antiquarian" approach to the history of philosophy. The former examines the history of philosophy in order primarily to recruit the insight of the past for advancing current discussions. The figures of the past are not philosophically dead; they can contribute as imagined colleagues in contemporary debates and thereby continue to be honored. The latter, as the name suggests, explores the past principally to understand it on its own terms. If the fruits of antiquarian inquiry prove to be useful for the collegial historian, that is fortuitous and the chief aim of the antiquarian remains that of contextual understanding. However, due to the structure of the antiquarian approach, one unique benefit it can provide the profession more generally is to give an unmanipulated, sensitive, and full portrait of how philosophy was once conducted so that present-day practitioners can get a keen sense of the contingency and historicity of their own intellectual efforts, a potential remedy to being trapped in "normal philosophy," in the Kuhnian sense, and presentist essentialisms about the nature of philosophy (Garber 2005:145-6). As Garber shows, even if Descartes' epistemology is widely rejected by current philosophers, a rich sense of his efforts distinctly circumscribed within the realm of Aristotelian metaphysical holdovers, the rise of new physics, and the continuing influence of the church offers current philosophers a special vantage point from which to think of themselves in a complex and evolving ecology of conceptual and social forces.

Thus, a common reply to Rosenlee may be an antiquarian affirmation of her critique of the racism of the moderns, a “collegialist” extraction of the offending elements, and a return to the usual.¹ The core of the thinking here seems to be collegialist: even if the moderns had racist views that were deeply connected to central positions in their philosophies, as Rosenlee in an antiquarian mode shows, those central positions retain their (1) distinctive philosophical character and (2) philosophical value, even brilliance, without the racist notions, warranting the continued study of the moderns. In fact, with the racism removed, the philosophical value of the central positions increases and becomes even more useful for our current debates. For example, Kant’s appeal to reason in ethics, categorical imperative conception, and universalization formulas may be deemed to be distinctly Kantian ways of thinking and their lasting value may be affirmed, and affirmed more strongly, when shorn of the raciological concepts, which are not necessary for his moral philosophy anyway.

I take it, however, that Rosenlee seeks also a redress of the revisionism and the correlated methodological Eurocentrism. So the canon must undergo a transformative inclusiveness that goes beyond the collegialist extraction of racism. A way to focus and concretize our thinking here is to conceptualize this problem in terms of the teaching of philosophy and the building up of a community of inquiry. So, given the general push of Rosenlee’s critique, what curricular changes must be made to western philosophy? If we focus on required courses, not merely electives, within a very finite curriculum, not a curriculum in the abstract, for the philosophy major or PhD, how should they be multiculturally reconstituted at both the course and the program-wide level? Also, assuming there is some curricular element for the history of philosophy, how should the common Greek to medieval to modern European history sequence, critiqued by Rosenlee, be properly supplemented within a very limited set of credit hours? Just as important, how should it be renovated? After all, the racial purification process of the canon/discipline requires systemic redress. The story of philosophy as western philosophy cannot follow a policy of mere inclusion, a strategy of “just add non-western thought and stir.”² A reframing of perspective will have to guide the post-Eurocentric pedagogical culling process for the narrative of philosophy, and it may appear to be a brutal process due to how much western philosophy will have to be relegated to electives in a very finite globalized curriculum of required courses. Such reframing will also permeate and normatively reconfigure the content of what “survives” this process and how to characterize the import of the selected content.³

Recently, an important service to the profession has come in the form of an anthology, *A New Modern Philosophy: The Inclusive Anthology of Primary Sources* (Marshall and Sreedhar 2019), which includes contributions not only from the canon, like those of Descartes and Kant, but also philosophical excerpts from women, like Margaret Cavendish and Mary Astell, and people of color, like Anton Wilhelm Amo and Ottobah Cugoana. As the editors note, the philosophy curriculum should be open to non-western traditions, and as they argue, it *should* include a modern philosophy course that is inclusive of formerly marginalized modern European voices (Marshall and Sreedhar 2019: ix-x). Does this thinking go far enough for addressing the “methodological” and “structural” problems of disciplinary Eurocentrism and philosophy’s revisionist genealogy? And given the limited number of compulsory courses for a philosophy major, where inclusive western courses must share space with an incredibly wide set of worthy non-western courses, should an inclusive modern European philosophy course, like that embodied in the anthology, be required, relegated to a worthy elective, or truncated and only a portion of it preserved in an intercultural multicultural modern course?

2 A Still Wider Historicization: Decolonization?

The perspective we gain from historical contextualization can be enhanced by amplifying the historical frame still further, and sometimes that still wider context can shape the framing of more local historicization. For example, it is helpful to situate Descartes' project not just within the intellectual scene of Aristotelian metaphysics but within the broader social and political milieu in which modern physics had emerged and the Catholic Church struggled to retain its power. So what about the wider historical context of the racist canonical content Rosenlee traces? What role did slavery and colonialism play in the unreason of the moderns' philosophical views, the unreason of the centrality they accorded these views, and the unreason of the uptake of their efforts? Of course, there is only so much that one essay can cover! But there is little mention of these phenomena, and I think how one views decolonization can make a difference for the more conceptual focal points in Rosenlee's essay.

In the academy, work by postcolonial theorists and decolonial theorists posits a strong link between the global white imperium that emerged across the modern period and the more conceptual structure that we call Eurocentrism. The dominative power relations of global colonialism were shaped by and in turn reinforced the perspective of Eurocentrism. These theories are keen to link the continuing legacies of these political and conceptual regimes and to resist both as a process of ongoing contemporary decolonization (see, for example, Said 1978; Dussel 1985; Quijano 2000; Lugones 2011). It is interesting, then, to consider Rosenlee's critical historicization of the philosophies of the moderns in conjunction with the calls for the decolonization of philosophy, conceptual and otherwise, that have been ongoing for some decades. There are potentially many connections to be made.⁴ But, briefly, here are two thoughts on what it might mean for Rosenlee's form of historicization to be placed within a call for decolonization, and I invite her to comment on them.

First, within the context of modern global colonialism, the conceptual structure of Eurocentrism—precisely like that of Hume, Kant, and Hegel—turns out not to be simply one defective or constrictive ethnocentrism among many others, like Sinocentrism or Afrocentrism, and one that just happens to be our local variant. It turns out to be the one that contributed decisively to the formation of white supremacy as a global political system (Mills 1997) or the “coloniality of power,” the fundamental conditioning structure of the modern, racial, capitalist world, a structure that is the true reality behind modernity (Quijano 2000). Should we then regard Hume, Kant, and Hegel not simply as racist “children of their time” or merely “our” philosophical ethnocentrists but also as architects of coloniality?

Second, currently, we are seeing the profession reveal a bit of openness to Asian traditions over other ones, so does this reflect the hierarchy of dehumanization articulated by the moderns or something more? In Hume, Kant, and Hegel, the derogation of Asian peoples and philosophies is completely unacceptable, but their dehumanization of the peoples and philosophies of Africa and the Americas is worse and horrendous. Importantly, these conceptual derogations map onto politico-economic hierarchies that seem to be legacies of colonialism, where the most impoverished or “underdeveloped” regions of the world, the “global south,” are the places most demeaned by the moderns. If this is right, then the profession's reconstruction requires special attention paid to the philosophies and peoples of Africa, the Americas, and their diasporas. The increasing inclusion of Asian philosophies, though welcome and still far from sufficient, may not be indicative of the rise of philosophies of Africa and the Americas.⁵ Indeed, part of the rise of Asian philosophies in the profession may be due to their comparative approach in which the counterpart is western philosophy rather than one of the non-western philosophies of the global south.⁶ Perhaps one

upshot of these considerations is that the degree of intra-non-western philosophical integration and dialogue, like that between African and Asian philosophies, will offer a measure of the deeper undoing of the revisionism critiqued by Rosenlee.

¹ There is some irony in describing Roselee's account in an antiquarian way because her case has a potentially debunking effect on modern (European) philosophy, which is the very thing that Garber wished to show as special and valuable in promoting an antiquarian approach to its study.

² This phrase is adapted from the memorable feminist critique of "just add women and stir."

³ I discuss these issues in some other related contexts: Kim (2019a and 2019b).

⁴ For some important efforts at linking decolonial and comparative philosophies, see Kalmanson (2015); Donahue (2016); and Kirloskar-Steinbach (2019). I have also addressed some facets of this issue in Kim (2015 and 2019b).

⁵ In fact, we may need to worry about whether the rise of Asian philosophies in the profession is *used* to delay the rise of the philosophies most deeply rejected by the moderns.

⁶ Correlatively, if the many emerging comparative approaches in philosophy make dialogue with the west the pre-eminent concern, we will have a subtle reassertion of Eurocentrism. Comparative philosophy becomes dialogue with the west and marginalization of the rest of the world.

Philosophy, Racist Reason, and Decoloniality

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“What can I do?
I have to begin.
Begin what?
The only thing in the world worth
beginning:
The End of the world, no less.”
Aimé Césaire, *Journal of a Homecoming/
Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*

On November 12, 2016, soon after the infamous 2016 elections in the United States, philosophy professors Simona Aimar and David Egan published a column in the *Times Higher Education* entitled “Donald Trump’s Victory Shows Why We Need Philosophy Students More than Ever” (Simona and Egan 2016). In it, they made a call for recognizing the value of philosophy and of education in the formation of a democratic republic, while advocating for a non-elitist view of philosophy that is less focused on intra-academic debates than in addressing important issues of the day. “The current political circumstances,” they wrote, “suggest that if philosophy really is a tool for critically engaging with issues and understanding them better, this is a good moment for bringing it out of the ivory tower” (Aimar and Egan 2016).

While Aimar and Egan have good reasons for identifying and countering what they see as “smugness and condescension from the educated elite” as well as the negative impact of “elitist reasoning” (Aimar and Egan 2016) in the field of Philosophy, they seem to ignore and completely sideline a more urgent problem: the influence of “racist reasoning” inside and outside philosophy as a field. Afro-Caribbean and African-American philosopher Lewis R. Gordon has identified the peculiar challenges of racist reasoning through the work of another Afro-Caribbean philosopher, Frantz Fanon. Gordon states that “Whereas for Husserl there was a nightmare of disintegrated reason, for Fanon there was the nightmare of racist reason itself—reason that leaves him out in the cold” (Gordon 1995: 8). For Gordon, the traumatic encounter and struggle with racist reason is a fundamental dimension of Black and African existence, and it helps to explain the prominence of the autobiographical medium of expression and the concern with existence in African letters—including in Fanon’s own *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008). This is important because the very racist reason that haunts Black subjects and communities, undermining at every step their full presence as producers of knowledge, is the same one that inspires reductive interpretations of the interest in autobiography and identity among people of color. While whites keep the monopoly of reason no matter how much they suffer or perpetrate suffering, people of color are often portrayed as condemned to epistemological blindness and to the most narrow forms of identity politics because of trauma or interpellation by the liberal state.¹

That racist reason does not seem to be on the map of Aimar and Egan’s call for a more public form of philosophy, and potentially, by extension, the humanities, is particularly worrying for two reasons: first, if the election of Donald Trump demonstrated anything, it was the strong presence of vulgar racism within a republic that prided itself for its political correctness, and, second, Philosophy happens to be one of the whitest fields in the academy—and certainly not only in the

United States, in spite of the absence of data in some countries—in terms of the composition of its graduates, faculty, and content. In fact, the racial profile of philosophy departments is even whiter than that of voters for Trump in the 2016 election (Pew Research Center 2018), although the same is probably true of most academic departments with the exception of ethnic studies fields. Problems with gender representation in Philosophy do not lag far behind either.

As Professor Rosenlee points out in her opening statement for this symposium, 86% of PhDs in Philosophy are granted to non-Hispanic whites and only about 20% are women. Prioritizing the problem of academic elitism instead of racism and sexism after the election of a President with a track record of racist and sexist statements who has energized white supremacists in the U.S. (Itkowitz 2019), especially when racism and sexism are also deeply entrenched in the very field of academic Philosophy, might very well be part of the problem that we all face. Given Philosophy's own track record and its current configuration, it was troublesome, if not frankly obscene, to read a title advocating for the need of having more "philosophy students" in the aftermath of the elections as a response to what transpired in them and the results. What could have been a moment of reckoning for Philosophy and a call for seriously engaging the critical voices of philosophers of color was taken as an opportunity to simultaneously deflect these issues and reassert the importance of the field. Unsurprisingly, academics in other areas across the humanities and social sciences did not respond, and have not responded, differently either: voices continue emerging everywhere in the academy that emphasize the importance of science and the absolute need for the perspectives of history and the humanities in face of assertions of "alternative facts." Philosophy, therefore, is by no means alone among academic fields in the tendency of transforming moments that could motivate deep and serious critical self-examination into strategies of deflection and declarations of their own indispensability and importance. The larger fields of the western sciences, liberal arts, and humanities themselves do this frequently.

Not a few times in the last century, and even more so in the last forty years, the humanities are said to be in one type of crisis or another. These are crises that challenge the perceived value of the humanities and that put in question the support that they receive. Overwhelmingly, the crises are met with questioning the source of the dismissive views, be they the reification of the scientific method, the scientific power of prediction, or the imposition of criteria of productivity and success derived from the market. They also lead to multiple declarations of the unparalleled contributions of the humanities. Questions about the complicities of the humanities with racist reasoning and with a racial division of labor in the university, where overwhelmingly white bodies do research and brown and black bodies provide the indispensable, yet low-pay work of cleaning offices and offering other janitorial services, rarely cause the same degree of concern or are given the status of a crisis.

Crisis are moments of decision that can motivate the need for reckoning. They interrupt a flow of thoughts and actions and are taken as serious enough to motivate reflection. Once recognized, their challenge raises the need to decide. Gordon has also shed light on the relevance of crisis to understand Africana existence. "From Fanon's experience," he writes, "we learn that the twentieth-century person of color embodies a crisis of Europe and of Euro-reason" (Gordon 1995: 6). However, it is consistent with Gordon's analysis that racism and racist reasoning undermine the possibility that people of color get to be taken as generators of actual crises. How else to understand that in face of people of color, the systems of authority in place (the state, the university, disciplines of study within the university, the market, etc.) engage in a perpetual postponement of any moment of reckoning and a reaffirmation of permanent war?

In western modernity, a moment of decision in face of people of color—much less voluntarily changing paths—goes entirely against the fundamental presuppositions and expectations of citizen subjects and arguably most academics. The reason is that the solution to any problem

appears to be already embedded in western modernity. “Inside of modernity everything; outside of modernity nothing,” one hears in proud affirmation or semi-secret murmurs. This spatial metaphor—of the inside and outside of modernity—and mode of operation is complemented with a double movement in the coloniality of time in modernity: while the “primitive” is continually identified, left behind, put in “its place,” or annihilated, modernity represents a present that always already anticipates its own future. The result is stasis, paralysis, decadence, and elevated violence lived under the impression of progress, rapid movement, and a form of “development” that other people must be hard at work trying to emulate. In this context, there are not many other alternatives for people of color to challenge modernity/coloniality than organizing and engaging in open defiance. Even then, their achievements are far from guaranteed and their losses oftentimes too great to remember without great sadness and pain. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Steve Biko, Berta Cáceres, Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, Marielle Franco....

There are two reasons why the challenges posed by people of color and by their frequent traumatic encounters and denunciations of racist reason in the academy do not tend to rise to the level of a recognized crisis, and therefore, to a significant moment of decision: on the one hand, the very presence of racist reasoning in the academy makes it impossible to conceive issues about race seriously and people of color as significant questioners, and, on the other, the racial division of labor is consistent with the long history of the western humanities, which means that many of the effects of racist reasoning tend to appear as accomplishments rather than as problems.

Too many altars to “western civilization” and its accomplishments have been created along the way for the humanities to seriously consider the possibility that they are responsible for, and not only a victim of, extremely problematic dynamics that can put their very existence into question. Instead, the humanities—and the liberal arts and sciences for that matter as well—tend to approach the question of racial disparities, privilege, and damnation as matters of “diversity and inclusion” within the existing framework of the humanities and the division of knowledge in the globalized modern/colonial humanities and universities. “Diversity and inclusion” is only the most recent discourse seeking to demote the challenges that emerge from the underside of western modernity. Multiculturalism is not far behind, which is why calls for multicultural philosophy education and humanities tend to miss the gravity of the situation and fail to address the manifold implications of racist reasoning in the academy.

If the existence and effects of racist reasoning in the academy fail to reach the level of systemic crisis, it is because their existence generates and is sustained by the system of institutionalized and globalized racial western knowledge in institutions of primary and higher education. Considerably worse than a crisis, the system of institutionalized academic western knowledge is built on a catastrophe: the epistemological and ontological demotion of people of color below the line that defines the fully human, which is fully rational and autonomous. Taken as less than fully human, people of color always fail to appear as significant and legitimate questioners.

Catastrophe in this context refers to the construction of a world where a significant number of potential interlocutors who happen to be the majority of the world’s population are conceived not as interlocutors, but as beings who have to permanently struggle to demonstrate their humanity—defined according to the globalized western humanities. Modern/colonial catastrophe is an epistemological and ontological downturn with an impact that has global dimensions. It is so fundamental that it is inscribed in the most basic references for making sense of space and time, such as world maps and the globalized Gregorian calendar.

In the catastrophe of the modern/colonial world, the world of the western humanities and the modern Kantian-Humboldtian research university, people of color cannot possibly put modernity, philosophy, or the humanities in crisis. This is part of the catastrophic character of

modernity/coloniality and explains why the moment of reckoning that could shatter racist reasoning is, like the recognition of the humanity of people of color itself, perpetually postponed. Catastrophe demands exploring the inconceivable under the premises of the dominant views. Moving from it cannot but represent “the End of the world” (Césaire 2017: 107; Fanon 2008: 76).

Philosophers of color have not been silent with respect to the presence of racist reasoning in Philosophy. As Professor Rosenlee herself acknowledges, her contribution is part of an ongoing exploration by a wide range of scholars who have exposed and analyzed the racism of canonical authors. For about twenty-five years already at least, the English-reading public in the U.S. has counted with an increasing amount of scholarly reflections about the strong presence of racist reason in the canon of philosophy. Emmanuel Eze’s, Charles Mills’, Naomi Zack’s, Linda Martin Alcoff’s, María Lugones’, Ofelia Schutte’s, Eduardo Mendieta’s, and Lewis Gordon’s writings, among many others, have paved the way for serious explorations of the coloniality of knowledge within the field of philosophy. They have also sought to elaborate concepts that would address race, racism, sexism, and other forms of modern/colonial dehumanization today. We also find philosophical organizations such as Philosophy Born of Struggle and the Caribbean Philosophical Association that aim to provide spaces for reflection about and beyond the limits of racist reasoning.

Other regions did not have to wait for this important literature in English to engage in these debates. For example, the Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea started to address related topics as early as in 1941 in the context of the Second World War. The Second World War was, along with the second major wave of decolonization through Africa and Asia, a major moment of the decolonial turn, when the prestige and supposedly universal character of European values and ideas were deflated and contested (see Maldonado-Torres 2011b, 2017; Margarit Mitja 2004: 165). The impact of this moment of the decolonial turn towards the middle of the twentieth-century also helps to explain the systematic critique of Eurocentrism that one finds in the works of other Latin American philosophers such as Enrique Dussel (see Maldonado-Torres 2011a). There are also important works by Pablo Guadarrama, Felix Valdés García, and Maydi Bayona in Cuba, Carlos Rojas Osorio and Anayra Santory in Puerto Rico, Fausto Reinaga in Bolivia, Franz Hinkelammert in Costa Rica, Juan Blanco in Guatemala, and the Cuban Raul Fornet Betancourt, who has been a leader in the field of intercultural philosophy while working in Germany for decades now, among many others.

Enrique Dussel’s work is notable in the context of considering Professor Rosenlee’s reflection on historicizing the canon because, as both a historian and a philosopher, he has engaged in a threefold project that involves: a) demonstrating the relevance of European colonialism for understanding the work of modern European canonical philosophers, b) presenting modern colonialism as a massive historical ethico-political and civilizational project with wide-ranging implications for philosophy, including the theorizing of liberation and decolonization, and c) identifying the position of Latin America within a non-Eurocentric world history (see, for example, Dussel 1965, 1974, 1978, 1984, 1995, 1996, 2002, 2011; Dussel, Mendieta, and Bohórquez 2011).

While Dussel has not paid sufficient attention to racialization, his work provides indispensable tools to understand the connections between modern philosophy and the paradigm of discovery that gave birth to the modern conception of the planet and the primacy of the empirical sciences in it (see, particularly Dussel 1995). While historicizing the canon is important for Dussel, it is only part of his critical and creative repertoire in the effort to address Eurocentrism and the impact of modern colonialism in defining the hegemonic structures of knowledge in the last five hundred years. Historicizing the canon may be necessary, but it is not a sufficient activity, especially in contexts of catastrophe. After all, many continental philosophers pride themselves with

historicizing philosophy. The task of demonstrating the darker side of this history could be assumed without admitting that, at the end, there are no better or more original ideas to address this very dark history than the concepts found in the work of European canonical philosophers themselves. Therefore, it is possible to defend Eurocentrism after a revisionist history. Is this not what Slavoj Žižek (Žižek 1998; Sørensen 2015) has been claiming in his call for a Eurocentrism of the left?

To make matters more complicated, the most powerful sectors in philosophy departments practice analytic philosophy, not continental, and they are generally even less interested in the history of philosophy. Given the Eurocentrism of historical narratives in philosophy, this is not necessarily something bad; it could open the door to more widespread engagements with the philosophical dimensions and ramifications of racism. Some analytic philosophers of color have gone in that direction, but overwhelmingly analytical philosophers set aside questions of race, gender, and history when they engage questions of perception, philosophy of the mind, or logic.

Another challenge to the project of historicizing the canon is that historicizing, as an activity, can leave untouched the academic elitism that Aymar and Egan rightly identify as a problem. After historicizing the canon, it is still possible for both the activities of historicizing and that of philosophizing to remain trapped within a potentially more multicultural, but still alienated, ivory tower.

It is also important to consider in this context that multiculturalism itself seems to be more in line with a liberal project of “diversity and inclusion” than any substantial “day of reckoning” (Rosenlee 2020a: 136) that seriously addresses the “colonialidad del saber” (coloniality of knowledge; Lander 2000, Mignolo 2000, Walsh 2012). In that sense, for instance, a “multicultural manifesto” that calls for “an inclusion” of non-western philosophy in the curriculum could very well remain within the modern/colonial framework (cf. Rosenlee 2020a).

The meaning and practice of philosophy can be infused with multicultural tones and the existing canon challenged and expanded while philosophy remains largely ignorant of or unresponsive to the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality. Historicizing, multiculturalism, canon, and inclusion are all terms that continue to demand substantial critical interrogation. This is part of the challenge that the Caribbean-US American thinker and artist Audre Lorde—also self-described as “black, lesbian, feminist, poet, mother, warrior and sister outsider”—posed to us in her dictum: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Byrd 2009; Lorde 1984). Afro-Caribbean and African American philosophers have a history of engagement with this from which it will be important to draw in the search for an “other” conception and practice of philosophy (see, for example, Gordon and Gordon 2006).

The blindness and indifference of mainstream Philosophy to its whiteness as well as to the multiple critiques of scholars who address racist reasoning in the field is an intrinsic part of the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality. That is, coloniality affects the relation with land and identity, as much as it also affects knowledge. The catastrophe of modernity/coloniality is thus as much epistemic as it is also environmental, demographic, ontological, and metaphysical: it undermines the conditions of possibility for understanding and for creating epistemic communities across and beyond the lines of dehumanization that it has produced. In that sense, one may have to consider that, more substantial than epistemology *simpliciter*, it might be decoloniality that deserves to occupy the position of first philosophy (Blanco and Maldonado-Torres 2016; Maldonado-Torres 2016). This does not mean that every philosophical project needs to engage with the problem of racism or colonization explicitly, but that philosophy cannot come into full view or be practiced fully without epistemic, symbolic, and material decolonization. Without this, one would continually fail to address our peculiar, but global, form of catastrophe.

In addition to projects that seek to demonstrate the darker side of modern western philosophy, the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality demands multiple counter-catastrophic activities for such projects to avoid collapsing into extensions of modernity/coloniality. Any revisionist historiography that aims to seriously challenge coloniality and racist reasoning has to engage in and contribute to decolonial turns that seek to counter the epistemological and ontological downturn of modernity/coloniality.

One example that goes in this direction is the Caribbean Philosophical Association's project of creolizing the canon (Gordon 2014; Gordon and Roberts 2014; Monahan 2011). The creolization of the canon has been the main goal of the book series *Creolizing the Canon*, which is a result of a collaboration between Rowman & Littlefield International and the Caribbean Philosophical Association. In it, its co-editors, Jane Gordon and Neil Roberts, both of whom are former presidents of the Caribbean Philosophical Association, revisit "canonical theorists in the humanities and the social sciences through the lens of creolization" (Rowman & Littlefield 2020). The series "offers fresh readings of familiar figures and presents the case for the study of formerly excluded ones." For them, "Creolization means that the intellectual resources are mixed and explored at methodological levels" (Rowman & Littlefield 2020). Creolization, not canonization per se, is the most central activity of this series, and the act of creolization defines an-other kind of philosophizing: one that is far more inter- and trans-disciplinary than even a multicultural approach to philosophy can be.

Creolization is a crucial and inescapable activity in the "darker side of Western modernity" (Mignolo 2011) that seeks to "shift the geography of reason" (Gordon 2011). The creolization to which Gordon and Roberts refer to was born out of the demographic, environmental, and metaphysical catastrophe that has haunted the Caribbean for more than five centuries, which is also the same spirit of coloniality that has haunted the globe after the invention of the New World. This is a form of decolonial creolization that works as a counter-catastrophic technology of emancipation. Decolonial creolization is a way of generating discourse, meaning, and questions in contexts where certain speakers and doers do not appear as such, and where they have to struggle to reconstitute the basic features of their humanity.

While Modern European Philosophy is usually considered to be a response to the crisis of the authority of the Church and tradition in the west, Caribbean and decolonial philosophy, in general, emerge as a response to the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality. This is another way in which decoloniality, and not simply epistemology—or ontology, for that matter—can aspire to the status of first philosophy, given the encompassing and global character of western-centric philosophy. It may be said that we must do away with the idea of any first philosophy at all, yet it might be more useful to reconceptualize the meaning of first philosophy and turn it into a counter-catastrophic tool.

Understood through the lenses of decoloniality and the decolonial turn, philosophy can be understood, not simply as the love of wisdom, but as the search and struggle for love and understanding in a world under catastrophe (Maldonado-Torres 2016). Philosophy is part of a decolonial attitude that is as theoretical as it is also practical. This attitude is anchored in the love of love and the love of knowledge, which turns into epistemic, symbolic, and material projects for building "the world of *you*" (Fanon 2008: 206) in a context where the very possibility of emerging as a "you" is constantly denied to the majority of people in the planet.

This is the path that the decolonial turn introduces in Philosophy: advancing philosophy and decolonization, not by seeking to convince mainstream philosophers of their limits or by becoming multicultural versions of canonical authors, but by decolonizing thinking through participation in the unfinished project of decoloniality with others who are inside and outside philosophy departments

and academia. This points to a conception and practice of philosophy as loving decolonial transdisciplinarity (Maldonado-Torres 2015), best exemplified by groundbreaking projects and collaborations that simultaneously challenge the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being and that resist the logic of secular canonization and “inclusion” into philosophy, the humanities, and the liberal arts (García Salazar and Walsh 2017 is a wonderful example).

Breaking the walls of Philosophy, and not simply the internal divisions of the house to build more rooms or to accommodate more furniture, for the sake of doing philosophy decolonially and, therefore, contributing to the unfinished project of decolonization in the most consistent ways, remains a challenge. We need to grow warrior philosophers for this, and not only scholars, approaching those such as Lorde, Fanon, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith—from whom I took the term “growing warriors”—and many others like them as inspiration and example.² Here lie some of the most urgent tasks for philosophers in the south today—including the souths in the north, and the fourth worlds alongside and below our third worlds.

¹ It is also important to add that for Gordon the interest in the autobiographical has an important philosophical dimension that puts racist reason in trouble: “How could the black, who by definition was not fully human and hence without a point of view, produce a portrait of his or her point of view?” (Gordon 2000: 23). He refers to this as a “contradiction in racist reason” (Gordon 2000: 23). The “black autobiography” exposes racist reason for what it is and narrates multiple challenges to it. Consider, however, that for the black autobiography to exist, blacks must be alive. It will remain a major indictment of the early twenty-first century that white supremacy and antiblackness are so dominant and intractable that not only a “Movement for Black Lives” and the hashtag #blacklivesmatter had to emerge, but also that racist reason responds with its usual evasiveness and audacity: “All lives matter.” Add Trump’s victory in the 2016 election, the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the proliferation of anti-immigrant extreme right politics in the U.S., France, the Nordic countries, Germany, and other beacons of civilization in the west, as well as “emerging economies” like India, and the limits of the emphasis on “elitist reasoning” in our times appear in even more clarity.

² I take the notion of growing warriors from the Maori thinker and educational leader Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who used the term in her keynote lecture at the “Beyond Race and Citizenship: Indigeneity in the 21st Century” conference organized by the Center for Race and Gender at the University of California, Berkeley on October 28, 2004. She was referring to students who would be trained to become leaders and to defend Maori and indigenous institutions.

Where Does the Canon Go When We Historicize It?

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I'd like to frame my response to Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee's commentary by returning to Kristie Dotson's 2012 article, "How is This Paper Philosophy?" I do so primarily to direct our conversation to what, on my account, should be an integral part of its objective: "to [interrogate] the conditions that facilitate or hinder the success of diverse practitioners within professional philosophy as such." (Dotson 2012: 4). Without attending to these conditions, much of what Rosenlee identifies as the dangers of failing to historicize the philosophy canon remains. To be sure, our charge rests in uncovering the stakes of historicizing the canon—why this is vital to the very possibility of philosophy, and how philosophy's historical failure to do so stunts our capacities, as professional philosophers, to go wherever the pursuit of wisdom needs to take us (Rosenlee 2020a: 136). I see an important connection between these stakes that Rosenlee unveils and the stakes that Dotson foregrounds in her call to interrogate those conditions within philosophy (both as a discipline and as a profession) that hinder the success of diverse practitioners. In what follows, I aim to make this relationship clear, so as to (hopefully) deepen the imperatives/stakes in historicizing our philosophical canon.

1 What is the "Canon" When It Belongs to Philosophy?

So what *are* the connections between (a) the need to historicize the canon, and (b) interrogating the conditions in philosophy that make it unlikely for diverse practitioners in the field to succeed (and to contribute to the productive expansion of the field)? I'd like to begin addressing this question by thinking through another (related) one: Under what conditions does it become possible to name a philosophical "canon" as such, and what becomes of those conditions when that philosophical canon is "*historicized*"? To ask this differently, what, exactly, is conveyed in acknowledging the existence of a canon in our particular discipline of philosophy? In posing this question, I have in mind what Dotson names, in her paper, the "culture of justification" (whereby philosophical projects are required to be "congruent [...] with some 'traditional' conception of philosophical engagement") around which professional philosophy takes its shape (Dotson 2010: 6). And so, in posing this question about the conditions of possibility of there being a single *philosophical* canon, I also wonder whether the charge of this symposium (to think through the implications of historicizing the canon) is sufficiently radical to address the concerns that Rosenlee lays out in her analysis. In orienting things in terms of Dotson's culture of justification, is it that we are called to *historicize* the canon, or are we really faced with a somewhat different call to do away with the idea of a philosophical canon altogether? To be sure, it might be the case that, in historicizing the canon of philosophy, one essentially undoes the conditions of possibility for that canon's existence. In any event, these are the thorns through which Dotson's diagnoses might be able to guide us.

What does it mean (indeed, what do *we* mean) in identifying a canon *in philosophy*? I want to stress, here, that our attention needs to be on what the disciplinary (and cultural) norms of philosophy imply for there being a canon. In other works, there is an important difference between (on the one hand) what is represented by *philosophy's* canon, and what is (on the other) marked by the

idea of the so-called west's "great books" (Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Melville, etc.). We can (and should) be critical of how such a collection of works gets to be codified, but I think that there is an important difference to be mindful of, between the implications of a non-critical reception of the west's "great books" claim to canonization, and a non-critical reception of the philosophical canon's claim to canonization. To demonstrate this difference, allow me to quote from Joshua Landy's piece on the podcast series *Philosophy Talk: The Program That Questions Everything*. From his essay, "Should We Abandon the Canon?", Landy writes, "[The] canon stretches back to a distant past with attitudes [and prejudices] very different from those of our own [...]. At times, these texts even make arguments *defending* such prejudices, as when Aristotle infamously claimed that some human beings are born to be slaves. That wasn't just a *weak* argument; it was a *dangerous* argument, one that helped to license a centuries-long history of oppression" (Landy 2019).

What makes an argument like Aristotle's (the one to which Landy refers to about natural human slaves) not simply weak but *dangerous* is also what seems to be unique to the canon of works to which Aristotle belongs. In other words, we (rightfully, I think) identify Aristotle's argument as harmful (and not merely as an embarrassing blind spot of its time) because his *Politics* is part of a *philosophical canon* (*philosophy's* "great books," if you will), and not merely one of the great books of the so-called west. In philosophy, the canon consists of works that abide by what philosophy determines to be archetypal to its discipline, works that attend to certain criteria for rigor, works that can be assessed by certain metrics for critical thinking, and works that manifest sound intellectual engagement of the world (and the place of the human in it). Without fulfilling these requirements, it's difficult to imagine a body of work making it into what currently figures as the philosophical canon. So when Aristotle (along with his argument in support of natural-born slaves) continues to exist as a canonical *philosophical* text, the implication is that (problematics aside) this text continues to be archetypal in this sense. In other words, the *danger* of an argument like Aristotle's is that we are unable to historicize it (locate it in a way that allows us to read it as an embarrassing sign of its time) in a way that relieves it of its weight as a piece of canonical philosophy. In our discipline, with its working benchmarks (its "culture of justification," to quote Dotson here), dangerous arguments are dangerous because our canon is uniquely *ahistorical*.

A reader's comment to Joshua Landy's essay makes precisely this point. In the comment section of the post they write, "Shakespeare writes approvingly about kings, the Bible seems to accept slavery [...]. We don't read or teach these writers and books in order to endorse all their values, but to understand our own past [...]. We can engage them critically, and disagree with what they got wrong, according to our lights, but we'd be short-sighted to refuse to read them altogether because they saw some things different from us [...]."¹ Much like Landy does in his essay, this reader's comment seems to equate a canon in philosophy with other (non-philosophy) canons. And from that equating, their comment suggests that—in the spirit of critique—we could "read or teach [philosophy's canonical works] [not to] endorse all their values, but to understand our own past."

This moves to the heart of my concern (and to what, I think, is helpful in thinking through Dotson's work). What would it mean to read Aristotle's argument in support of natural-born slaves in a way that does not "endorse its value," save to read it *not* as philosophy (in our current meaning of the term), but rather as part of an historical archive of literary work, human exploration, etc.? On the other hand, to read that argument as part of the *philosophical canon* is to read its conceptual apparatus as timelessly valuable, and as a consequence, read what that conceptual apparatus supports (in this case, an argument in favor of natural-born slaves) as also timelessly valuable. In other words, because the canon in philosophy abides by certain ahistorical criteria for inclusion, reading them *as philosophy* seems to already endorse them as inherently (and ahistorically) philosophical in nature.

So, to this end, perhaps historicizing philosophy's canon requires that we de-canonize that canon altogether. Or perhaps we need to re-think what is named by a "philosophical canon." Invariably, this would have us radically re-imagine our working conception(s) of philosophy. Dotson's proposal for replacing the discipline's culture of justification with a "culture of praxis" puts us on a path toward this re-imagining. More significantly, it gives us a framework out of which philosophy can be a discipline that avails itself to becoming historicized without losing its "philosophical" nature. To be sure, what we would have to mean by "philosophical" here is an entirely different species of interrogation from the one with which we currently work.

2 Dotson on a Culture of Praxis

In identifying professional philosophy's culture of justification, Kristie Dotson draws an important relationship between this cultural commitment in our discipline, and on the role of legitimization in our discipline's stasis when it comes to correcting for "methodological and structural" shortcomings (Rosenlee 2020a). Dotson writes that legitimization "refers to practices and processes aimed at judging whether some belief, practice and/or process conforms to accepted standards and patterns" (Dotson 2012: 5). These accepted standards and patterns refer to those justifying norms that philosophy's culture of justification deploys to maintain the so-called boundaries of what is "properly philosophical." Such justifying norms that are deployed in legitimization practices seem to be what's at the foundation of Rosenlee's interrogation of the systematic exclusion of Chinese philosophies. She offers excerpts of Carine Defoorts' analysis of Chinese philosophy as "not [really] philosophy since it fails to satisfy the 'conditions of philosophy' such as systematicity, reflection and rationality" to then point out Defoorts' list of justifying norms are what *western* philosophy acknowledges for its own legitimization practices (Rosenlee 2020a: 122). And so, Rosenlee notes that "the conditions of philosophy that are used to exclude Chinese philosophy are tautological in nature: philosophy is what western philosophers do and hence Chinese philosophy is not philosophy. *What is left unexamined is the assumption that what western philosophers usually do is what philosophers should do*" (Rosenlee 2020a: 123, emphasis added).

Dotson's proposed shift from a culture of justification to a culture of praxis seems apt to correct for this kind of structural/methodological failing. From a culture of justification (Dotson tells us), philosophy operates with "a presumption of commonly-held [and] univocally relevant justifying norms" (Dotson 2012: 8). Taking this to Rosenlee's reflections on the exclusion of Chinese philosophy, we might say that philosophy assumes that those norms of western philosophy (systematicity, reflection, and rationality) are both commonly held and univocally relevant. To say this differently (in a way that more directly engages with Dotson's criticisms), there is an assumption that it is impossible to engage in a philosophical project that simultaneously rejects (or at least does not accept) those justifying norms that one assumes to be univocally relevant. From the culture of *praxis* that Dotson proposes, this impossibility falls away. And in so doing, we can imagine that those parochially western norms that Rosenlee references in her example are no longer positioned to do the kind of exclusionary work upon which Chinese philosophy is deemed "not sufficiently philosophical."

Through a culture of praxis, then, the philosophical enterprise begins with a question about "points of contribution" (Dotson's terminology) instead of questions pertaining to congruence with some set of "univocally held" norms. In this way, what philosophy considers as the "validation" of a philosophical project is not reducible to practices of legitimization (Dotson points out that "legitimation is but one form of validation" (Dotson 2012: 17)). In beginning this way, it is up to the

practitioner in question to establish how her particular project meets standards of validation, which, in a culture of praxis, refers to the kind of contribution(s) the project makes to a lived experience, historical context, or set of situated problems. With this shift, the problem of incongruence falls away (Chinese philosophy doesn't get left out of philosophy because it fails to meet *western* philosophy's legitimation practices), and instead, our discipline "becomes a site of creativity for ever-expanding ways of doing professional philosophy" (Dotson 2012: 16). Dotson tells us that, in a culture of praxis, "everyone's projects must contribute" (Dotson 2012: 17). I would add here that *no one's* project is above the requirement of demonstrating how and why a project meets such validation standards. So-called Chinese philosophy would need to establish its points of contribution. So-called *western* philosophy would need to establish its points of contribution. And so, without losing the capacity to determine what projects are philosophical (or "philosophy"), we rid ourselves of a discipline that claims to engage in "critical and systematic investigations" of fundamental assumptions, but does not interrogate the myopic norms that predetermines, in advance, what "investigations" should (and should not) look like (Dotson 2012: 10).

Through this reconfiguration or shift from a culture of justification to a culture of praxis, what shows up is not simply (or only) that philosophy's canonical figures have racist origin stories. More significantly, what shows up is that philosophy's commitment to *not being sufficiently philosophical* creates a set of disciplinary conditions that makes it conducive for us, practitioners of the discipline, to be uncritical about such racist origin stories.

To return to my earlier question about how historicizing philosophy's canon might ask us to think differently about the canon as such: In my comments above, I noted that when the canon in philosophy abides by certain ahistorical criteria for inclusion, it requires a specific reading of (and doing) philosophy as absolutely and ahistorically philosophical (or philosophically valuable). This way of reading and doing philosophy seems to map onto the consequences of a culture of justification. More specifically, this way of reading and doing philosophy seems inevitable, if one assumes the existence of a set of norms that are commonly held and univocally relevant. In a culture of praxis, on the other hand, there are no such assumptions. One's philosophical project is validated in terms of its points of contributions to a set of lived experiences that are historically situated. Dotson proposes that, in such a culture of praxis, "projects are not predetermined [as philosophical or not philosophical] and *canons are multiple*" (Dotson 2012: 18, emphasis added). And so, it does seem to be the case that historicizing the philosophical canon calls for a fundamental shift in what we mean by "canon," and how our ideas of a canon figure into the philosophical enterprise.

In other words, perhaps a truly historicized philosophical canon asks us to do philosophy in a way that makes room for more than one (philosophically relevant) canon. Perhaps multiple canons are called for so that the discipline of philosophy can allow us, "the lovers of wisdom" to "follow the beloved wherever it takes us to regardless of the geographical locality in which wisdom is found" (Rosenlee 2020a: 136). I would also add that a philosophical discipline that acknowledges the possibility of multiple canons no longer predetermines the racialized and gendered embodiment of that pursued beloved. This is because, in adopting the culture of praxis that Kristie Dotson describes, such that philosophical validation is in terms of real-world contributions to real-world communities of experience, the canon becomes both historicized and multiple. What the pursuit of wisdom should/should not look like becomes a moot point of consideration in this context, which means that, as a discipline, philosophy is able to support the success of diverse practitioners. All may follow their beloved wisdom in the modality of pursuit most fitting. And all are prepared.

¹ Landy (2019). This quote is from the first comment post.

**Response to Amy K. Donahue, David Kim, Nelson Maldonado-Torres,
and Kris Sealey on the Symposium: Why Historicize the Canon?**

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While I write this response, the number of COVID cases in the US has surpassed 1 million with over 60,000 deaths and 30 million US-Americans unemployed. As other countries have managed to flatten the curve and have resumed a cautious return to quasi-normalcy, the US is faltering spectacularly on many fronts. The devastation of this pandemic is played out on the news and close to home to each one of us daily. But unlike the vast majority of the working-class folks, most of us, the privileged intellectuals with tenured jobs, are shielded from the current economic plights. As the human cost as well as the economic cost continue to mount, I, for one, cannot help but be drawn to the question of utility: does what I do here, writing this response, really matter all that much that I shall be one of those spared from this economic free fall into the abyss?

In 2009, at the height of the global economic recession, I was called upon to write a short piece to reflect on the value of Asian and comparative philosophy for the *American Philosophical Association Newsletter* (Rosenlee 2009). Similarly, I wondered aloud about whether what I did as a philosopher was really all that worthwhile when others were struggling at the most basic level for survival. Surely, some might take flight into the pure love of knowledge/truth regardless of its earthly wages in the marketplace. After all, truth is eternal and philosophers, in particular, must rise above the petty concerns of the money-making and money-loving class, as Plato teaches us. As a kid growing up in a family of nine children, I knew all too well how these “petty” concerns could manifest in my lunch box: full or half-empty with nothing but rice. These vivid childhood memories, among other things, stay with me even though I am now sitting on top of the academic food chain, immune from all the earthly turmoil. The quest for utility is the anchor that I have learned to grab on to re-center myself and to shake off all the theoretical excess.

I really don't disagree on anything substantial with all my reviewers in terms of their careful analyses: Amy Donahue's insightful juxtaposition of white ignorance with conceptual exclusion discussed in Dharmakīrti's *anyāpoha*, Nelson Maldonado-Torres's passionate uncovering of the catastrophe of coloniality and its dehumanizing effect on the people of color, David Kim's in-depth probing into the guidance for a post-Eurocentric curriculum, and Kris Sealey's pragmatic proposal of decanonization through the culture of praxis. Each offers fresh venues to think about the cause for and the solution to the much belated reckoning in the discipline of Philosophy to supplant or to augment my initial proposal. I don't have a monopoly on the right way to bring about the day of reckoning in philosophy; their diverging viewpoints help shine a light on the multiple paths possible to reach that desirable end. The road to reckoning in philosophy will be difficult, but I am optimistic still that with enough of us committed to doing this, we will get there sooner than later.

In particular, I appreciate Donahue's weaving together the threads of race and gender with Kant's positioning of his critical project as navigating between the two threats of dogmatism and skepticism in both *Prolegomena* and the first *Critique*, where the imagery of a dogmatist is gendered as a despotic she and the imagery of a skeptic is racialized as a nomad whose mode of economy is said to characterize the American race (Donahue 2020: 140). Now that we know that the threads of race and gender are in fact extensively intertwined with Kant's critical philosophy, passages such as these are impossible to dismiss as a slip of the tongue. The imagery of a racist and sexist Kant sure doesn't

gel well with Kant's canonical status, and hence, as Donahue points out, there has been a persistent effort, and probably will continue to be, in the discipline of Philosophy to not knowing, perpetuating a type of ignorance that is consciously or somnambulatorily pernicious (Donahue 2020). That grim future might be true, but as a Confucian, I do have faith in the goodness of human nature, and I do believe that to hope for a better future in this world of ours, each of us will have to offer ourselves first as positive models by, as it were, ploughing the field and planting the seeds of virtue for the next generation to come. And with each of us committed to correcting the conscious and somnambulatory biases first in our own teachings, our own research methods, and our own institutions, the next generation will get to enjoy the righteous fruits of our labor today.

Similarly, Maldonado-Torres also questions the possibility of bringing about the day of reckoning in Philosophy due to the devastating effect of coloniality on the people of color who will never be able to dismantle the master's house with the master's tools (Maldonado-Torres 2020: 156). In addition, historicizing the canon by itself is not sufficient to bring down the house, as it were, since powerful branches of philosophy such as analytic philosophy insulate themselves from the question of race, gender, and history. Instead of a multicultural approach, decolonial transdisciplinarity should be termed as the first philosophy (Maldonado-Torres 2020: 156-7). As a person of color and as an Asian and comparative philosopher, I don't disagree with the importance of decolonality or transdisciplinarity; I am just a bit unsure that positioning anything as the first aprioristically is necessarily conducive to productive dialogues. I would like to have as many tools as imaginatively possible in our toolbox, going beyond the terms, concerns, and methods that have been taught to us from our white masters. And for me, that will have to be, at least, incorporating non-western cultural resources that are already available to us, but are oftentimes neglected or dismissed as insufficiently philosophical. I do believe that our ability to imagine theoretical alternatives could be infinitely enriched, if we dared to venture beyond the narrow confines of western thought—ancient, modern, or contemporary.

In dealing with the question of canonicity in the discipline of Philosophy, Kim probes into a possible guideline for restructuring the curriculum to include marginalized traditions, especially those from the global south, which is in a much more dire situation compared to Asian and comparative philosophy, and wonders whether less hostile treatment toward the latter, in turn, reflects the sense of racial hierarchy set up by canonical philosophers such as Hume, Kant, and Hegel (Kim 2020: 150). Kim inquires specifically how a post-Eurocentric curriculum would look: what would survive this brutal process of including marginalized others at the expense of the existing western canon? (Kim 2020: 149). For sure, this will not be an easy process, and many established programs will want to lean heavily on the side of the conventional practice of preserving the existing western canon; after all, in a discipline that boasts about its love of wisdom as its sole aim, no one wants to appear ignorant about the conventional set of western canon. But this façade of “keeping up with the Joneses” is precisely the problem; this is why even today so few graduate programs bother to teach their students anything non-western, since to be ignorant about non-western philosophy does not seem to be an impediment to their academic credentials. In one recent feedback that I have received, one editor appeared not to know what the difference was between Confucius and Confucianism. It would be unthinkable if a philosopher, regardless of her specialties, were to be ignorant of Kant, but to be completely unfamiliar with Confucius just seemed as a matter of course.

Of course, no curriculum can include everything, but I think, unlike other academic disciplines, the discipline of Philosophy, with our open-ended nature of the practice of philosophy, actually has a rare advantage in re-conceptualizing its curriculum. The aim of the discipline of Philosophy is not to introduce its majors to all the great books conventionally defined, but to introduce the students to a way of thinking, a skill that they can use for life, and there are potentially

infinite ways to think about the world and ourselves. The more intellectual traditions that we include into our teachings, the more well-equipped our majors would be to philosophize and later on to specialize in an area of their choosing, let it be Greek philosophy, Confucianism, or feminist studies. To confine our students to the western canon does our students and ourselves a real disservice by hampering our ability to wonder in the realm of infinite possibilities. Hence, the first step to restructuring the curriculum is to think of this process not as a zero-sum game of including the non-western at the expense of the western canon, but to think of it as a process of uncovering wisdom. In practical terms, that means we philosophers will have to practice what we profess: loving wisdom anywhere we can find for its own sake.

Unlike Kim, Sealey proposes to do away with the issue of canonicity in Philosophy altogether, let it be the so-called Chinese philosophy or western philosophy; everyone's projects will have to prove that they contribute in order to count, a sort of leveling the playing field by shifting the culture of justification to the culture of praxis that hinges on one pragmatic criterion of contribution to the understanding of our lived experiences, historical contexts, or problems (Sealey 2020: 162). As a Confucian and as a feminist, again, I don't disagree with the pragmatic aspect of Sealey's proposal. It is just not quite clear to me how we are able to make an evaluative judgment on whether Chinese philosophy can even contribute to the understanding of our lived experiences, historical contexts, or problems if we are unfamiliar with what Chinese philosophy is in the first place.

Given the lopsided way our curriculum has been structured, we do have a lot of catching up to do. For instance, Confucian texts in the vast majority of the academies in North America are still seen as either religious texts or literature (in one book proposal for an anthology to which I was invited to contribute, Confucius was grouped with some as religious, literary thinkers). So given that, I am worried that this sort of leveling the playing field without any conscious effort to teach the so-called "non-western" philosophy first will amount to overlooking anything that is unfamiliar to the western audience to begin with. After all, how is one to render judgment on whether Confucianism is compatible with contemporary progressive projects or is able to address our lived experiences such as marriage, friendship, or dependency care if Confucian texts are not even taught routinely in the first place? I am all in on historicizing, multiplying, or dismantling the existing canon, but we will need to know what available texts are there for us to historicize, multiply, or decanonize in the first place. And I hope non-western philosophy will not be excluded from whatever project that is deemed philosophically worthy aprioristically.

At the end of day, I circle back to the question of utility. If we all agree that the discipline of Philosophy needs to change, then what are we willing to do in our own classroom teachings, in our own research methods, and in our own institutions to bring about the changes that we all are eager to see and profess? For instance, if you are a philosopher, are you willing to stick your neck out to correct the compulsory requirements for philosophy majors as exclusively western? Are you willing to fully integrate the topic of race and gender into your syllabi when you teach canonical philosophers such as Hume, Kant, and Hegel, and not just in some topic courses? And are you willing to step outside your own specialties to learn about the so-called "non-western" philosophy and "comparative feminist" philosophy in conferences and to teach them in your own classrooms? To do all these things are hard since we all have a work reality to deal with: we are all caught up in the constant turning wheel of teaching, service, and research, and none of them rewards radical innovation and curiosity. To get ahead, for the most part, we must stay in our own lanes, our specialties, and keep our heads down, waiting for our turns to come. I understand, but as the Chinese would say, the time of crisis is also the time of transformative opportunity. I am asking all

of us to take that chance this time, and to start our own moment of reckoning beginning in our own classroom teachings, our own research methods, and our own institutions.

I can only offer myself as an example; I have spent the last three years taking a deep dive into the concept of race during the European Enlightenment period. I have taught the topic of race and have used Eze (1997) and Bernasconi et al. (2000b)'s anthologies on race in my classroom teachings, but never had the chance to systematically examine the intertwining of the concept of race and the philosophical canon. My own deficiency in this area, in part, has to do with the kind of training that most philosophers have received in North America, where the topic of race is oftentimes whitewashed (I recall that once in an Ethics class, the professor quickly dismissed the issue of race and colonialism in J. S. Mill's *On Liberty*, and when I raised my hand to follow up, the professor paused and then gave me the look of "oh no, not again," prompting laughter in the classroom), and partly, it has to do with the demands of my own specialties focusing largely on Confucian texts and contemporary feminist ethics.

As a specialist in Asian and comparative philosophy, I started the project with no specific publication intent in mind; in fact, it started out as a casual summer reading in 2016, and it soon snowballed out of control as the web of race and gender began to show itself to be a lot more intertwined with the great canon. My desk began to pile up with all the translations of Kant's writings that I could find. This project for three years had consumed all the available time I had and still I could not put it down. I let my monograph on Confucian feminism that is under contract with Columbia sit idly, and after I read all the books regarding race in Kant, I started reading Locke, Hume, Hegel, Marx, Mill, Heidegger, Husserl.... I simply could not stop.

Obviously, what drove me in part had to do with the fact that being a person of color and being a Confucian feminist in one of the whitest and one of the most male-dominated academic disciplines, I was constantly bombarded with the question of race and gender. My writings on Confucian feminism have at times been met with the most basic and dismissive questions: Is Confucianism a philosophy? Is a sexist tradition like Confucianism compatible with feminism? Is a feudal tradition like Confucianism relevant to the contemporary world? I often wonder why these sorts of questions don't come up more often when the western canonical texts are used in contemporary theorizing. For instance, why is it that more people do not ask whether pre-Socratic thinkers should be deemed as philosophers, since all we have of their writings are fragments; or whether Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* or *Politics* situated in a world radically different from our world today should still be relevant to us; or whether Kant's critical philosophy should be used to inform all sorts of progressive projects including human rights and feminism, due to Kant's overt misogyny and racism?

What then is the difference between the western canonical texts and the Chinese ones, or between Kant and Confucius, in our evaluative judgment regarding their relevancy to the world today and their philosophical prowess? My work on Confucian feminism more often than not arouses suspicion rather than intellectual curiosity from not only philosophers but also feminists as well, and everything I have done gets undone in an instant when the consciously or somnambulatorily biased attitude toward non-western philosophy preempts the need to understand any substantial argument that I have presented. Indeed, what need is there for a philosopher to know about Confucianism, which to most of the western audience is as deep as the fortune cookie sayings one gets at Panda Express!

Surely, my spending three years on researching and reading on the topic of race outside of my specialties with no specific publication intent in mind, in part, was motivated by the want to counter the simmering racial aggressions that I have met with in professional conferences and academic publications. But the outcome of this project also has an unparalleled liberating effect on

me; the radically liberating effect of this project goes beyond just the direct fallout from the concept of race in the philosophical canon. Sure, now I understand the extent to which the topic of race and gender intertwines with canonical philosophers' larger projects. But what is more rewarding is that now I am able to see past the sheer futility of the western philosophical canon and more broadly, the futility of policing the boundary of Philosophy as a discipline and philosophy as a specific cultural practice of the west!

Don't get me wrong; I don't necessarily think we need to discard any and all of the so-called "canonical philosophers," including Hume, Kant and, Hegel, but there is no need to preserve their canonical status either. After all, what is philosophy if not for the pursuit of truth and knowledge, which can come from any geographical locality and can be found in any modality. Taking away that consciously or somnambulatorily policed boundary for the discipline of Philosophy doesn't mean that it is a dissolution of the academic discipline itself; instead it is a radical opening, an invitation for us philosophers to now teach philosophy as the way it has been freely practiced by Confucius or by Socrates, through oral transmissions or in the marketplace. It is an exciting, open future awaiting us; I am ready, and with hope, as Sealey announces, all are prepared (Sealey 2020: 162).

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