The Methodology and Ethics of Literature Reviews in Philosophy and the Humanities

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Introduction

Philosophy is a discipline defined by relentless self-examination. It scrutinizes its own concepts, methods, and assumptions with a thoroughness unmatched in other fields of inquiry. The contemporary metaphilosophical literature – from Williamson's (2007) naturalistic defense of philosophy as continuous with science, to Cappelen, Gendler, and Hawthorne's (2016) survey of its irreducibly plural methods, to D'Oro and Overgaard's (2017) argument that methodological choices reflect deeper metaphilosophical commitments – attests to a vibrant culture of methodological reflection. Yet there is one scholarly practice that philosophy has largely failed to examine: the literature review itself. Every philosophical article positions itself within a tradition, surveys prior work, and selects which voices to include or exclude. These citational and synthetic acts are deeply consequential – they reproduce canons, distribute epistemic recognition, and shape what counts as the state of the art. But philosophers have produced almost no explicit theorizing about what makes a literature review good, what purposes it serves, or how it can go ethically wrong.

This review synthesizes insights from seven domains – metaphilosophy, review methodology, epistemic injustice, canon formation, hermeneutics, the sociology of philosophy, and research ethics – to construct an argument about the methodology and ethics of literature reviews in philosophy and the humanities. The scarcity of direct literature on this topic is itself a central finding. A dedicated search for work on the purpose, epistemology, and methodology of literature reviews in philosophy yielded only six papers, most from adjacent fields such as health information science (Grant and Booth 2009). Philosophy's failure to theorize the literature review constitutes a significant blind spot – one that is all the more striking given the discipline's otherwise relentless self-scrutiny, recently reinforced by Denecke's (2024) call for deep metaphilosophical reflection on what counts as philosophy across world history.

The stakes of this blind spot extend beyond methodology. If literature reviews enact epistemic justice or injustice through their citational choices – as Fricker's (2007) foundational framework on testimonial and hermeneutical injustice suggests they can – then the absence of explicit normative reflection on review practices leaves a consequential scholarly genre unexamined in precisely those dimensions where it matters most.

The review is organized around three questions: What makes a good philosophical literature review? What purposes do literature reviews serve? Can literature reviews be ethically deficient? Section 1 examines the methodological landscape, arguing that competing metaphilosophical commitments yield fundamentally different conceptions of what a review should accomplish, and that the hermeneutic dimension of interpreting and representing others' work adds a layer of complexity absent from empirical review methodologies. Section 2 turns to the ethics of selection, arguing that literature reviews are sites where epistemic injustice is enacted through citational choices, canonical reproduction, and structural gatekeeping. The review concludes by identifying specific research gaps that the project addresses – gaps that emerge not from a single domain but from the failure to integrate resources that already exist across multiple philosophical subdisciplines.

The Methodological Landscape – Competing Conceptions of Philosophical Literature Engagement

There is no settled methodology for conducting literature reviews in philosophy. While adjacent disciplines have developed explicit, replicable frameworks for surveying and synthesizing prior research, philosophy has produced almost nothing of the kind. This absence is not accidental. It reflects a deeper problem: the question of how to review philosophical literature is parasitic on the contested question of what philosophy is and how it proceeds. Different metaphilosophical commitments – about the nature of philosophical evidence, the possibility of philosophical progress, and the boundaries of the discipline – yield fundamentally different conceptions of what a literature review should accomplish. To these methodological questions, the hermeneutic dimension of philosophical engagement adds a further layer of complexity: a literature review does not merely catalogue positions but interprets and represents them, and interpretation is itself an ethically fraught practice.

The Missing Genre – Philosophy's Unreflective Review Practice

The methodological literature on research synthesis is extensive – but almost entirely outside philosophy. Grant and Booth (2009) provide a widely cited typology of fourteen distinct review types, from systematic reviews to meta-analyses to critical reviews, analyzed through their SALSA framework (Search, AppraisaL, Synthesis, Analysis). This taxonomy offers a structural vocabulary for describing what reviews do and how they differ. Arksey and O'Malley (2005) develop a complementary framework for scoping reviews, emphasizing the mapping of key concepts, the identification of gaps, and the iterative clarification of research questions – aims that arguably align more naturally with philosophical inquiry than the hypothesis-testing orientation of systematic reviews. Yet both frameworks assume an empirical research paradigm in which "evidence" consists of data gathered through replicable methods and "quality appraisal" involves assessing methodological rigor in a relatively standardized sense.

Philosophy proceeds differently. Its primary modes are conceptual analysis, normative argument, and critical interpretation, not data collection. Philosophical "evidence" – if the term even applies – includes intuitions, thought experiments, historical texts, and logical entailments. The translation problem here is fundamental, not incidental: one cannot simply adapt a systematic review protocol designed for randomized controlled trials to a field where the central question may be whether a concept is coherent rather than whether an intervention is effective.

The most telling evidence for philosophy's methodological gap is the sheer scarcity of literature addressing it. A systematic search for work explicitly theorizing the methodology of philosophical literature reviews yielded only a handful of papers, none of which develops a dedicated framework for philosophical contexts. This silence is itself a finding. It reveals that philosophers treat literature engagement as tacit knowledge – a skill absorbed through graduate training and imitation rather than a methodological problem requiring explicit theorization. As Shan (2022) argues, examining philosophy's own methods and assumptions is essential to responsible philosophical practice; yet the literature review, one of philosophy's most ubiquitous scholarly practices, has escaped this self-scrutiny.

Metaphilosophical Foundations – What Philosophy Is Determines How to Review Its Literature

The absence of explicit review methodology in philosophy is not simply a lacuna waiting to be filled by importing frameworks from elsewhere. It reflects the fact that the prior question – what philosophy is and how it works – remains deeply contested, and different answers to that question imply different models for what a good literature review looks like.

Williamson (2007) offers the most influential contemporary defense of naturalistic anti-exceptionalism: philosophy is continuous with science, employing broadly abductive methods to seek the best explanations of all available evidence. If this view is correct, philosophical literature reviews should function analogously to scientific reviews – surveying competing theories, assessing evidence for and against them, and tracking cumulative progress. The implication is that philosophical literature constitutes a body of knowledge that grows over time, and reviews should chart that growth.

Against this, the contributors to D'Oro and Overgaard's (2017) Cambridge Companion emphasize that methodological choices in philosophy are theory-laden, reflecting deeper metaphilosophical commitments rather than neutral procedural decisions. A phenomenologist's literature review will differ fundamentally from an experimental philosopher's, not because they survey different papers but because they disagree about what constitutes evidence, what counts as progress, and what the relevant literature even is. The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology (Cappelen, Gendler, and Hawthorne 2016) reinforces this point through sheer variety: conceptual analysis, formal methods, experimental philosophy, and phenomenological approaches each imply different relationships to existing work. The Handbook's pluralism about method suggests

that there may be no single correct way to conduct a philosophical literature review – the review's form must be responsive to the methodological commitments of the inquiry it serves.

Lewin (2021) deepens this picture historically by reconstructing Kant's metaphilosophy, in which philosophy is understood both as a distinctive rational activity and as an architectonic system. The Kantian distinction between philosophy as activity and philosophy as system suggests that engaging with the literature is not merely a preliminary step – a survey conducted before the real philosophical work begins – but is itself constitutive of philosophical inquiry. One reviews literature not to clear the ground but to participate in a tradition of reasoned investigation. This implies that literature reviews should be understood as philosophical acts in their own right, not as pre-philosophical housekeeping.

Denecke (2024) exposes a further dimension that Williamson's naturalism and Lewin's Kantianism alike leave underexplored: the politics of the question "what counts as philosophical literature?" She argues that current efforts to globalize academic philosophy are deadlocked because they operate within Western metaphilosophical assumptions about what philosophy is. Four problematic diversity paradigms – "The Same," "The Subaltern," "The Samaritan," and "The Area Studies Silo" – each fail to achieve genuine pluralism because they take Western philosophy as the default against which other traditions are measured. If Denecke is right, then the seemingly neutral methodological question of which literatures to include in a review already encodes exclusionary assumptions about whose thought qualifies as philosophy. No review methodology can be adequate that does not confront this problem.

As Nado (2017) argues in a meta-methodological register, prescriptive methodologies for philosophical practice cannot be developed independently of examining how that practice actually functions – but descriptive accounts alone do not vindicate existing practices. Both empirical investigation and normative reflection are needed. This insight applies directly to literature reviews: understanding what philosophers currently do when they review literature is necessary but insufficient for determining what they should do. The absence of any empirical study of actual philosophical review practices makes the normative task harder still.

The Hermeneutic Dimension – Reading, Representing, and the Ethics of Interpretation

A philosophical literature review does not merely list works or tabulate results; it interprets and represents the positions it surveys. This interpretive dimension distinguishes philosophical reviews from their empirical counterparts and introduces ethical complexity that standard review methodologies do not address.

The principle of charity provides the canonical starting point. Davidson (2001) argues that charitable interpretation – attributing largely true beliefs and rational coherence to those we interpret – is not merely advisable but constitutive of understanding itself. On this view,

massive error cannot be coherently attributed to a speaker, because the conditions for interpretation require substantial agreement between interpreter and interpreted. Applied to literature reviews, this would mean that reviewers must by default attribute rationality and coherence to the positions they survey, reconstructing them in their strongest form before assessing their limitations.

Yet the application of charity is more contested than Davidson's constitutive account suggests. Vandevelde (2021) argues that charity is both an epistemic and a moral virtue, not a mechanical principle. Drawing on Gregory the Great's sixth-century hermeneutics, Vandevelde contends that representing others' views requires moral qualities of the interpreter – an orientation toward the good in the text – not just technical skill in reconstruction. Similarly, De Caro and Vaccarezza (2020) develop a "principle of phronetic charity" that integrates Aristotelian practical wisdom with interpretive practice. On their account, charity is context-sensitive: good interpretation requires judgment about when and how to apply charitable reading, not invariant rule-following.

These refinements of charity leave its fundamental orientation intact: interpret generously. But Lewinski (2012) identifies a structural paradox that destabilizes even this orientation. In any multi-party dispute, being charitable to one side often requires being uncharitable to the other, since the parties disagree. A literature review synthesizing competing positions faces this paradox acutely. If one reconstructs the compatibilist's argument in its strongest form, one may thereby make the incompatibilist's objections appear weaker, and vice versa. Neutral charitable representation of all parties may be impossible in principle, not merely difficult in practice.

The most searching challenge to interpretive charity comes from Lockard (2023), who identifies a "charitability gap" in academic philosophy. Lockard argues that charitable interpretation is selectively applied: generously extended to canonical (often white, male) authors, even when they espouse racist or sexist views, while withheld from the work of marginalized scholars. This selective deployment means that charity, far from being a neutral interpretive virtue, can function as a mechanism of epistemic oppression – creating conditions for testimonial smothering, serving as an "orientation device" that enforces disciplinary conformity, and requiring resistant philosophers to remain in oppressive interpretive worlds. Lockard does not advocate abandoning charity entirely, but her analysis demonstrates that interpretive norms operate within power structures and cannot be assessed in abstraction from them.

The connection between hermeneutic theory and the specific practice of writing literature reviews remains almost entirely implicit in the existing scholarship. Yet the stakes are considerable. If literature reviews are interpretive acts – and they are – then the norms governing interpretation directly shape whose work is represented fairly, whose positions are reconstructed charitably, and whose contributions are rendered invisible through ungenerous reading. Lockard's critique raises the question of whether the interpretive norms that guide literature reviews need not merely to be applied more consistently but to

be fundamentally rethought in light of the structural inequities that shape scholarly practice.

The Ethics of the Literature Review – Injustice, Exclusion, and the Politics of Selection

If the previous section established that there is no settled methodology for philosophical literature reviews, this section argues that the stakes of this absence are not merely methodological but ethical. Literature reviews are not neutral surveys of pre-existing knowledge. They are practices through which epistemic recognition is conferred or withheld, canons are reproduced or contested, and the boundaries of "legitimate philosophy" are policed. When a reviewer decides what to include and what to omit, these decisions carry ethical weight – they can enact precisely the forms of epistemic injustice that philosophers have identified in other domains but have rarely applied to their own scholarly practices.

Epistemic Injustice and Citational Practice

Miranda Fricker's (2007) foundational framework identifies two distinctively epistemic wrongs: testimonial injustice, in which identity prejudice causes a speaker to receive deflated credibility, and hermeneutical injustice, in which gaps in collective interpretive resources prevent marginalized groups from making sense of their experiences. Citation is a form of testimonial recognition. Who gets cited, whose work is treated as authoritative, and whose contributions are rendered invisible all reflect and reinforce patterns of epistemic injustice. To exclude a scholar's work from a literature review on the basis of prejudice – whether explicit or implicit – is to wrong them in their capacity as a knower.

Kristie Dotson (2014) expands this framework in a direction that bears directly on literature reviews. Her account of epistemic oppression as operating through "irreducibly reliable" structural patterns shifts the focus from individual prejudice to systematic exclusion. When entire traditions or demographic groups are consistently absent from bibliographies, this cannot be explained by the failings of individual reviewers alone; it reflects structural features of knowledge production. The concept of contributory injustice – in which marginalized knowers are prevented from contributing to collective hermeneutical resources – applies with particular force to literature reviews, since these are precisely the sites where collective understanding of "the state of the art" is constructed.

Recent work has made these connections more explicit. Dadze-Arthur and Mangai (2024) identify citational justice as a facet of testimonial justice, arguing that citational patterns in academic journals reflect and perpetuate epistemic exclusion. Pratt and de Vries (2023) document three layers through which epistemic injustice operates in knowledge production: who produces knowledge, what theories are applied, and whose voices are sought. All three are operative in literature reviews. Yuan and Peterson (2025) argue that citation confers power and authority, making citational choices morally significant acts with consequences that extend beyond knowledge transmission.

Yet the demand for citational justice is not straightforward. Davis (2016) demonstrates that credibility excess – not just deficit – can constitute testimonial injustice. Simply increasing citation of marginalized scholars risks perpetuating injustice if done in identity-reductive ways: citing women only on gender topics, or scholars of color only on race, reduces them to group representatives rather than recognizing them as autonomous epistemic agents. Tokenistic inclusion does not achieve citational justice. Furthermore, Bruton et al. (2023) find in an empirical survey that social justice-motivated citation is controversial among scholars – many view intentionally citing underrepresented groups as ethically questionable "strategic citation." This reveals a genuine tension between traditional epistemic norms of merit-based selection and the demands of citational justice, a tension that literature review methodology must confront rather than elide.

Canon Formation and the Pre-Selection of "Relevant Literature"

Before any individual reviewer makes choices about what to include, the available "literature" has already been shaped by canon formation processes that embed historical exclusions. Park (2013) documents how the modern Western philosophical canon was constructed through explicitly racist exclusions of African and Asian thought in nineteenth-century German historiography. What presents itself as "the history of philosophy" was deliberately narrowed through racial arguments about who was capable of abstract thought. This is not an incidental bias to be corrected but a structural feature of the discipline's self-understanding.

Graness (2018) draws out the implications for philosophical methodology: writing a history of philosophy for African traditions requires "conceptual decolonisation" – questioning the very categories through which philosophy is defined. Literature reviews face an analogous challenge. The decision about what counts as "philosophical literature" is not a neutral bibliographic act but an exercise of definitional power that can reproduce or contest canonical boundaries. Connell and Janssen-Lauret (2016) show that even scholars who met all formal criteria for canonical status – women who published in major analytic journals and held philosophy positions – were nevertheless excluded through evaluative labels like "bad philosophy" or "derivative philosophy." This reveals that quality judgments in literature reviews can embed implicit bias while appearing to rest on neutral standards.

The decolonial literature raises the stakes further. Dhawan (2017) argues that simply "including" non-Western traditions within existing philosophical frameworks reproduces the epistemic structures that enabled their exclusion. The frameworks themselves must be decolonized. Elkind (2023) usefully distinguishes "canon-menders," "canon-expanders," and "canon-shredders," pressing the question of whether literature review reform should aim to broaden existing review practices or to fundamentally rethink what reviewing means. If canons are products of what Grosfoguel (2013) calls "epistemicide" – the destruction of entire knowledge systems through colonialism – then literature reviews operating on the resulting corpus are already operating on epistemically impoverished terrain.

Structural Conditions – What the Sociology of Philosophy Reveals

The ethical dimensions of literature reviews become empirically visible through the sociology of philosophy. Heidegren and Lundberg (2010) establish the foundational insight that philosophical knowledge production is socially situated practice. Literature reviews do not operate in a vacuum but within social structures that constrain what is visible and valued.

The empirical evidence is striking. Contesi, Chapman, and Sandis (2019) find that 97% of citations in elite analytic philosophy journals are to English-language work. Literature reviews drawing on these journals will mechanically reproduce this systematic exclusion of non-Anglophone philosophy. Leuschner (2019) documents that women philosophers submit work substantially less often due to indirect effects of social biases, meaning the corpus available for review already underrepresents women's contributions before any reviewer makes a single selection decision. De Bruin (2023) demonstrates that journal prestige hierarchies influence quality assessments – authors rate their own journals higher than non-affiliated authors do – suggesting that prestige functions as a self-reinforcing bias rather than an objective indicator.

These structural conditions compound. Heesen and Bright (2021) argue that prepublication peer review creates gatekeeping that may exclude valuable work, while Katzav and Vaesen (2017) show that increasingly stringent review processes may reduce philosophical pluralism by concentrating power in mainstream scholars. Laakso and Polonioli (2018) find that half of ethics publications remain behind paywalls, biasing literature reviews toward what reviewers at well-funded institutions can access. Lisciandra (2025) argues that citation metrics fail to "carve science at its joints," imposing external categories that distort field-specific differences. When literature reviewers use citation counts to identify "important" work, they amplify rather than correct these distortions.

The cumulative picture is clear: literature reviews are ethically consequential practices. They can enact epistemic injustice through biased citational choices, they reproduce canons constructed through exclusion, and they operate within social structures that systematically advantage some voices while marginalizing others. These ethical dimensions are not incidental to literature reviews but constitutive of them. What remains almost entirely absent is systematic work connecting these insights to the specific practice of writing literature reviews – a gap this project addresses.

Research Gaps and Opportunities

The preceding analysis reveals a landscape in which extensive philosophical resources – from metaphilosophy to epistemic justice to hermeneutic theory – bear directly on the practice of literature reviewing, yet have never been systematically brought together for this purpose. Four specific lacunae emerge, each grounded in the evidence surveyed above.

Gap 1: No Explicit Methodology for Philosophical Literature Reviews

The most striking finding of this review is an absence. While Grant and Booth (2009) identify fourteen distinct review types and Arksey and O'Malley (2005) develop a scoping review framework, both emerge from health and social science contexts premised on empirical evidence synthesis. Philosophy has produced no comparable methodological literature for its own review practices. The metaphilosophy literature theorizes philosophical method extensively – Williamson (2007) defends philosophy's continuity with science, Cappelen, Gendler, and Hawthorne (2016) document its irreducible methodological pluralism, and D'Oro and Overgaard (2017) show how different traditions embed different metaphilosophical commitments – yet none of these works addresses the literature review as a distinct methodological practice requiring its own theorization.

This absence matters because it means that the norms governing philosophical literature reviews are transmitted tacitly through graduate training and disciplinary socialization rather than subjected to explicit critical examination. As Nado (2017) argues, responsible methodological reflection requires both descriptive understanding of actual practices and normative evaluation of their justification. Without explicit methodology, philosophical review practices remain resistant to the very kind of scrutiny that philosophy demands of other intellectual activities – a paradox for a discipline defined by self-examination.

Gap 2: No Integration of Justice Frameworks with Review Methodology

The epistemic injustice literature and the literature on review methodology develop in near-complete isolation from one another. Fricker's (2007) framework of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice has generated a vast body of work applying these concepts to testimony, credibility, and knowledge production broadly. Dotson (2014) expands the framework to structural dimensions through the concept of epistemic oppression. Dadze-Arthur and Mangai (2024) explicitly identify citational justice as a facet of testimonial justice. Yet almost none of this work addresses the specific practice of the literature review – the scholarly genre in which citational choices are most concentrated and consequential.

Similarly, the canon formation literature documents in rich detail how exclusionary mechanisms – racist historiography (Graness 2018), evaluative gatekeeping labels (Connell and Janssen-Lauret 2016), colonial epistemicide (Dhawan 2017) – shape what counts as "the philosophical literature." But this body of work does not connect its findings to the methodology of literature reviewing. The hermeneutic literature on charitable interpretation, including Lockard's (2023) incisive analysis of the "charitability gap," critiques interpretive norms without developing their implications for how scholars should construct literature syntheses.

The result is that literature reviews remain a practice where ethical failures go undiagnosed as such. When a reviewer systematically excludes non-Anglophone work – a pattern documented by Contesi, Chapman, and Sandis (2019), who found that 97% of citations in elite analytic journals are to English-language sources – this is treated as a

matter of scope rather than a potential injustice. Integrating justice frameworks with review methodology would make such patterns visible as ethical concerns, not merely practical limitations.

Gap 3: No Account of What Makes a Literature Review Ethically Bad

While the research ethics literature develops accounts of intellectual honesty (Miller 2022) and intellectual transparency (Byerly 2022), these accounts focus on individual scholarly virtues without applying them specifically to literature reviews. Kubota (2019) critiques epistemological racism in knowledge production, and Burrell et al. (2022) call for reflexivity about who produces knowledge and how, but both address research conduct broadly rather than literature synthesis in particular. Lockard (2023) identifies the charitability gap as a mechanism of epistemic oppression but does not develop a comprehensive account of interpretive ethics for the review genre.

A normative account of what makes a literature review ethically deficient is needed – one that distinguishes failures of inclusion (citational injustice through systematic omission), failures of representation (interpretive injustice through biased or uncharitable engagement with included work), and failures of transparency (intellectual dishonesty about scope, limitations, and the reviewer's own positioning). Each failure type draws on existing conceptual resources but has not been articulated as such in the literature.

Gap 4: No Empirical Investigation of Philosophical Review Practices

The sociology of philosophy provides rich data on the structural conditions shaping philosophical knowledge production. Petrovich et al. (2024) pioneer mention extraction methods revealing influence networks beyond formal citation. Contesi, Chapman, and Sandis (2019) document language bias. De Bruin (2023) maps journal prestige hierarchies. Leuschner (2019) identifies gendered submission patterns as indirect effects of social bias. Yet no empirical study examines how philosophical literature reviews themselves are actually constructed – what search strategies philosophers employ, how they determine scope, what factors (prestige, accessibility, personal networks, language) influence inclusion decisions.

Without this empirical baseline, normative prescriptions risk being disconnected from actual scholarly practice. As Nado (2017) insists, methodological reflection requires both descriptive and normative components. The sociological work provides structural context – documenting the conditions under which reviews are produced – but the practice itself remains a black box. This gap represents a priority for future research, and the available bibliometric data can ground normative claims even as it highlights the need for more targeted empirical investigation.

Synthesis

These four gaps are not independent; they form an interlocking structure. The absence of explicit methodology (Gap 1) makes it difficult to identify ethical failures (Gap 3), because

there are no standards against which to measure. The separation of justice frameworks from review methodology (Gap 2) means that even well-intentioned reviewers lack conceptual tools for recognizing how their practices may enact epistemic injustice. And the absence of empirical data on actual review practices (Gap 4) means that both methodological proposals and ethical critiques proceed without grounding in how philosophers actually work.

Conclusion

This review has shown that the philosophical literature review is a practice simultaneously ubiquitous and unexamined. Philosophy's relentless self-scrutiny – its insistence on interrogating its own concepts, methods, and presuppositions – has not extended to one of its most basic scholarly genres.

Three key findings emerge from the literatures surveyed. First, there is no settled methodology for philosophical literature reviews because the underlying metaphilosophical questions remain deeply contested. If philosophy is continuous with science (Williamson 2007), literature reviews should track cumulative progress in the manner of scientific reviews. If philosophical methodology is irreducibly plural (Cappelen, Gendler, and Hawthorne 2016; D'Oro and Overgaard 2017), then different subfields may require fundamentally different review approaches. If the very question "what counts as philosophy?" is politically contested (Denecke 2024), then defining the scope of a review is already an ethically freighted decision. The hermeneutic dimension adds further complexity: representing others' views faithfully requires interpretive judgment that is itself subject to the charitability gap Lockard (2023) identifies, and to the paradox of charity that Lewinski (2012) diagnoses in multi-party disputes.

Second, literature reviews are ethically consequential. They enact epistemic justice or injustice through citational choices (Fricker 2007; Dotson 2014; Dadze-Arthur and Mangai 2024), reproduce or contest canons constructed through exclusion (Graness 2018; Connell and Janssen-Lauret 2016), and operate within social structures that systematically advantage some voices while marginalizing others (Contesi, Chapman, and Sandis 2019; Leuschner 2019; Petrovich et al. 2024). These ethical dimensions are not incidental to the literature review but constitutive of it.

Third, existing literatures provide rich but fragmented resources for addressing these questions. Virtue epistemology offers accounts of intellectual honesty and transparency (Miller 2022; Byerly 2022). Structural critique exposes mechanisms of exclusion from epistemological racism to epistemicide (Kubota 2019; Grosfoguel 2013). Hermeneutic theory illuminates the paradoxes and politics of charitable interpretation (Davidson 2001; Lockard 2023). But these resources have not been integrated into a unified account of what makes a philosophical literature review good – methodologically sound, interpretively fair, and ethically responsible.

The research project this review supports fills a genuine gap by bringing these disparate literatures into conversation. This matters beyond academic methodology. If literature reviews shape what counts as "the state of the art," determine which questions are taken to be open, and distribute epistemic recognition among scholars, then getting them right is not merely a matter of scholarly convenience but of epistemic justice.

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