METAPHILOSOPHY

METAPHILOSOPHY
Vol. 46, No. 3, July 2015
0026-1068

INCLUDING EARLY MODERN WOMEN WRITERS IN SURVEY COURSES: A CALL TO ACTION

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Abstract: There are many reasons to include texts written by women in early modern philosophy courses. The most obvious one is accuracy: women helped to shape the philosophical landscape of the time. Thus, to craft a syllabus that wholly excludes women is to give students an inaccurate picture of the early modern period. Since it seems safe to assume that we all aim for accuracy, this should be reason enough to include women writers in our courses. This article nonetheless offers an additional reason: when students are exposed to philosophical texts written by women, they learn that women have been, are, and can be philosophers. Given how underrepresented women are in philosophy, this finding is significant. If we aim to change the face of philosophy—so that it includes more women—we must include texts written by women in our syllabi. The article considers various obstacles faced by those who work to respond to this call to action.

Keywords: Mary Astell, early modern survey courses, friendship, implicit bias, inclusive canon, male bias, pedagogy, stereotype threat, women in philosophy.

Introduction

There are many reasons to include texts written by women in our history of early modern philosophy survey courses. The most obvious one is accuracy. Early modern women wrote texts and engaged in debates that shaped the philosophical landscape of the time. Thus, to craft a syllabus that wholly excludes women is to give students an inaccurate picture of the early modern period. Since it seems fairly safe to assume that we all aim for as much accuracy as possible, this should be reason enough to include women in our survey courses.

In this article we nonetheless offer an additional reason: when women are excluded from syllabi it gives students the impression that women are not philosophers and that philosophers are not women. But we have found that including texts written by women in early modern survey courses changes the way that students think about women and philosophy. When students are exposed to philosophical texts written by women, they start seeing that women have been, are, and can be philosophers. Given just how underrepresented women are in philosophy, this finding is significant. It means that if we aim to change the face of philosophy—so

that it includes more women—we must include texts written by women in our syllabi. In other words, we cannot afford to exclude women from our history of early modern survey courses any longer.

In what follows, we offer evidence and arguments for the above assertions. Thereafter we consider the obstacles that those who aim to create an inclusive early modern survey course face. With respect to the former, we offer data from the (classroom) trenches. With respect to the latter, we consider the work of one early modern woman philosopher—Mary Astell—and show that implicit biases may hinder even the most well-intentioned of us from creating an inclusive canon, and consequently an inclusive survey course. We draw from Henry R. West's and Margaret Atherton's discussions of the exclusion of women from the canon, and the rich literature on implicit bias and stereotype threat. But to get started, we offer some statistics about the gender makeup of philosophy at present.

Why We Should Include Early Modern Women in Our Courses

Most readers will be aware of the statistics regarding the number of women in philosophy, but because the statistics are so alarming, they are worth repeating. According to the most recent surveys, only 27 percent of doctorates in philosophy are granted to women (Alcoff 2011).[1] Moreover, only 21 percent of employed philosophers are women (Alcoff 2011).[2] In other words, 73 percent of those who earn a doctorate in philosophy and 79 percent of those who are employed as professional philosophers are men. The numbers do not look much better when we consider the participation of women at the preprofessional level either. Here we see that roughly only 37 percent of students who earn bachelor's degrees in philosophy are women (U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics 2013).

Why are there so few women in philosophy? This is a question worth asking, and one that has garnered a lot of attention as of late. From the many high-profile sexual harassment cases covered by the national media in the past year, and some disturbing reports from the American Philosophical Association's Committee on the Status of Women's site-visit program, one could conclude that the main reason women leave philosophy is explicit sexual harassment. But when one peruses the "What Is It Like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?" blog, it begins to look as if the reason there are so few women in philosophy is not so clear-cut. Women leave philosophy for myriad reasons. Sometimes their leaving is due to explicit sexual harassment. Sometimes it is due to more implicit forms of exclusion. Very often it is simply because women feel as if philosophy is not a place where they

[1] This has been the average for the past fifteen to twenty years (Alcoff 2011).

[2] This is in stark contrast with the rest of the humanities, where roughly 41 percent of those employed are women (Alcoff 2011).

belong. It is worth noting that the biggest drop in the participation of women in philosophy occurs between introductory-level and advanced undergraduate courses. The numbers drop from roughly 50 percent to 30 percent.[3] While sexual harassment may be a part of the story at that early stage, it is also likely that "simply feeling as if they don't belong" is the reason so many women decide to pursue other fields. And while there can be many causes for feeling as if one does not belong, a rather obvious one is that most undergraduate syllabi do not include texts written by women. Thus, half of the students in any given introductory-level undergraduate philosophy course do not read texts written by authors who are relevantly like them. Moreover, both male students and female students get the impression as a result that women simply are not philosophers.

While we cannot present any concrete statistics about the inclusiveness—or rather exclusiveness—of undergraduate course syllabi, one can get a sense of the exclusion of women from required reading lists by reflecting on one's own courses and speaking with colleagues.[4] Moreover, one can see evidence for the claim that students consequently get the impression that women do not count as philosophers by considering the following anecdote. Ever since Gordon-Roth started including early modern women philosophers in her survey course, she has begun the semester the same way: by asking the students to write down the first three names that come to mind when they hear the word "philosopher." Students then have the opportunity to turn to the person sitting closest to them to discuss their lists, before writing their lists on the board. Without fail, the class list includes numerous references to Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Nietzsche, Rousseau, Sartre, Hobbes, Rawls, Kant, Socrates, Leibniz, and Newton. Some years not one woman makes it to the board. Other years Simone de Beauvoir and Ayn Rand are included on the list.

When students are asked why there are no (or very few) women on the list, most report that they have never heard of women philosophers. They are then asked why this might be. Some claim that there were no women philosophers in the past (including the modern and ancient periods). Others claim that it is because women have not written treatises, or did not write anything at all. Others claim that it is because no works of past female philosophers have survived intact. Still others point to women not being formally educated in the past, thus being blocked from philosophical dialogue. Slowly but surely the students elucidate nearly all of the reasons that Henry R. West outlines in the foreword to Karen Warren's textbook

[3] While most introductory-level philosophy courses attract roughly equal numbers of men and women, the number of women in upper-level undergraduate courses drops to 30 percent (Freeman 2014, 9).

[4] Nahmias's project suggests that on average women compose less than 10 percent of the authors included in philosophy course syllabi at Georgia State University (see Flaherty 2013).

An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy: Conversations Between Men and Women Philosophers. But through reading West's essay students discover that most of the reasons they have given for why women are not included in the canon can be applied to many whom we consider philosophical "Greats." As West points out, Epicurus's only surviving works are letters, and Socrates wrote nothing at all. Plato's most quoted texts are his allegories, and we have only fragments of the Pre-Socratics' works (West 2009, xii). West then goes on to claim that the reason women have been omitted from the history of philosophy is male bias: that is, a preference for, or favoring of, what men think, say, argue, and create, over what women think, say, argue, and create.[5] West expounds: "[T]he best explanation for why these women have been omitted from the history of philosophy or, if included, not recognized as philosophers is male bias. When male pre-Socratics are quoted by Aristotle, their work, although only fragments, is attended to. When Socrates says that Aspasia was his teacher of rhetoric and that Diotima taught him the Ladder of Love, these statements are dismissed without attention" (West 2009, xii). What women contribute to the history of ideas is just not seen as philosophical. In other words, the "transmission" is not being "received." Moreover, this can be the case even when, despite the odds, a woman's contributions are recognized as important, and philosophical, during her own time. As Margaret Atherton points out, the women included in *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period* were part of the philosophical dialogue. They were also recognized as such by their male peers:

> Whatever the motivations that may have led these women to write philosophy, it is important to emphasize that they were involved in ongoing philosophical debate, and that they did so by accepted means. Moreover, each of them was able to find a place within a recognized philosophical community. They were able to find men who treated their ideas seriously and respectfully. Many of these women were recognized, in their lifetime, for their intellectual accomplishments. If their views have been forgotten, it cannot be attributed directly to any bias against women existing at the time they wrote. More complicated factors have been at work. . . . (Atherton 1994, 4)

Surely Atherton does not mean to suggest that the women of the early modern period did not face biases or obstacles. They did! Some women were able to overcome them, however, and be seen *as philosophers* in their own time. Nevertheless, the way that we tell the history of philosophy is through the lens of male bias, making said women and their contributions invisible. Thus the women who are not excluded from philosophy during their own time are wiped out later, as we create, shape, and modify the canon.

[5] As we will see, male bias can be seen as a form of implicit bias (favoring males).

West and Atherton are exactly right. We take it as given that because we can trace the existence of female philosophers back to the Pre-Socratics, know that female philosophers have had a profound impact on the history of philosophy (where would Descartes have been without Elisabeth?), and also know of many women who write informed, convincing, and relevant philosophical texts today, it has to be the case that male bias has shaped our canon. Women philosophers are excluded not because they do not exist. Nor are they excluded because they are not good enough, or are less philosophical than men. Nevertheless, their exclusion makes it seem as if this is the case. Every course that we design that excludes women sends this message. Importantly, this message is sent to men and women alike. This has to have an effect on the number of women who decide to pursue philosophy. It also has to have an effect on how seriously the women who try to make a home in the profession are taken. In an essay from the volume *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?* Katrina Hutchison points out the difficulties women face in being perceived as philosophical authorities, and she suggests that this contributes to the low number of women in academic philosophy today.[6] A quick glance at the literature on implicit bias and stereotype threat shores up this assertion.[7] If one never, or rarely, reads the texts of women philosophers, one assumes, despite one's other explicit commitments to equality, that women just aren't philosophers. Moreover, if a student never reads the texts of women philosophers but happens to be interested in philosophy, she receives the message that women just aren't philosophers even more loudly and clearly. She then spends much of her time worrying about whether she is in fact equipped to do philosophy, or whether her perspective on a given philosophical topic is relevant. She is likely to underperform—at best. At worst, she will drop out of philosophy altogether.

This suggests that if we want to change the status of women in philosophy—if we want to improve it—we should change the way in which we design our courses (particularly at the introductory undergraduate level). This is not to say that if we include women in history of early modern philosophy survey courses we will arrive at gender parity in the profession. As mentioned above, there are many interwoven reasons why women are

[6] See Hutchison 2013 and Saul 2013. Saul explains the force implicit biases have in preventing women from advancing in professional philosophy.

[7] Implicit biases are the assumptions we subconsciously make about members of a group, despite our explicit commitments to equality. Although we are discussing the implicit biases that we have in favor of men (male bias) and against women in this article, it should be noted that there are all sorts of implicit biases tracking differences in race, sexuality, class, and so forth. Stereotype threat is the worry or fear that one's performance could confirm a negative stereotype that society holds about a group to which one belongs. Often the worry becomes so distracting that this is precisely what ends up happening, despite one's abilities, past performances, and so on. Again, this applies not only to gender but also to race, class, and so forth (see Steele 2010).

underrepresented in philosophy. But making our description of philosophical debates inclusive of the women who have been contributing to them is likely to help. Below we offer some evidence that suggests that it does.

Recently, a group of students in a survey course on the modern period were asked how studying women philosophers shaped their understanding of the early modern period.[8] Surprisingly, many took the opportunity to express how studying these women affected their understanding of philosophy more generally. Here are some of their responses:[9]

> Reading female philosophers helped me not only understand and appreciate the role of women in philosophy . . . it also expanded and challenged my understanding of many philosophers. For example Catharine Trotter Cockburn's defense of Locke expanded on some vague points Locke made (which could be what Locke meant to say). So it opened my eyes to the possible implications of Locke's arguments. Princess Elisabeth presented faults and questions about Descartes' work which I would have never thought of myself and so it helped and inspired me to dig into Descartes' arguments and all subsequent arguments in the class . . . which gave me a deeper understanding of the early modern period as a whole.
>
> Reading female philosophers from the early modern period has shown me that there actually were female philosophers around that time and they just aren't discussed as much. . . .
>
> Reading the works of . . . women philosophers . . . really changed my impression of . . . philosophy as a whole. All I had ever read prior to this course were male philosophers and it made the impression on me that those were the only people thinking philosophically at that time. Now I feel I have a fuller understanding of philosophy. I enjoyed seeing that women philosophers were just as intelligent and cunning as the men were. For example, Descartes, the philosopher most people know, had no valid response for Elisabeth's objections to his arguments. . . .
>
> I feel I have learned many things from this course. First of all, I learned that it has not only been men asking the difficult questions throughout history, but many women have as well. Women have just not been given the spotlight . . . men have. . . .

[8] Specifically, Gordon-Roth asked her students the following question on their final exam: "How did the reading of female philosophers shape your understanding of the early modern period?" Students were given this, and *all* other questions, prior to the final exam. Moreover, students were told that the nature of their answer did not matter as much as the support they used. So, for instance, if they wanted to say that their understanding of the early modern period wasn't affected by the inclusion of women, that would be fine, though they would have to explain *why*, and so on.

[9] These findings were first reported on the Feminist Philosophers blog.

> Prior to this class Martha Nussbaum and Judith Butler were among the few I knew. . . .
>
> In general, reading female philosophers in this class provided me with a well-rounded understanding of the sort of writing and thinking that emerged from the modern period. It was encouraging to know that not only did the philosophy written by the famous men of the period reach women, but women actually engaged in it and affected those very men. . . . Being able to understand how the social, political and religious environment affect the content of philosophy from a particular period, and to see how often philosophers respond to, refute, or praise the questions and arguments raised by others, showed me how philosophy is more of a network of conversation, rather than a collection of independent unrelated works. . . .

These selections come from both male students and female students, and they represent the tone of the responses from the class as a whole. These responses thus provide evidence that the inclusion of women in the early modern canon has a profound effect on the way students think about the history of philosophy, and what it means to be a philosopher more generally. Including women in our courses gives students—regardless of gender—the impression that women have been, are, and can be philosophers. Given the current status of women in philosophy, and recent calls to improve the discipline, this should come as welcome news. *It should also come as a call for action*. In what follows we consider the challenges faced by those who feel moved by this call to action.

Challenges to Creating an Inclusive Course

As we have seen, including women in early modern courses can do more than provide students with a more accurate understanding of the philosophical issues of the period; it can also start to change the way students think about women and philosophy. Moreover, the works of early modern women philosophers are readily available in anthologies, in recently published modern editions, and in electronic databases. Why, then, are the works of early modern women not regularly included in course syllabi? And why might even teachers who are moved by the above argument struggle to include women in their survey courses? One answer may be that though the texts have become more accessible, the limited scholarship on these writers makes the start-up costs of including them quite high. We are not experts in every figure we teach in a survey course; we rely on the well-rehearsed philosophical narratives provided by several generations of scholars to fill out our rough spots. But with no (or very little) scholarly history, a work like Mary Astell's *The Christian Religion, As Professed by a Daughter of the Church of England* is difficult to insert into a syllabus. Imagine trying to teach Locke's *Essay* without the philosophical framework provided by

three hundred years of Locke scholarship![10] Teaching the works of early modern women writers is—and will continue to be—hard work.

But this is only a part of the story. A more worrisome reason women are excluded from course syllabi may be the implicit biases—which we all have, despite our explicitly egalitarian commitments—that continue to keep women's philosophical voices from being heard. As the original responses from students noted above indicate, philosophers are seldom thought to be women; likewise, women are seldom thought of as philosophers. Though much of the recent scholarship on implicit biases focuses on the difficulties contemporary women face in being recognized as philosophical authorities, the arguments apply to women in the history of philosophy as well: if implicit biases keep us from seeing contemporary women as philosophical authorities—and studies have shown that both men and women operate with some implicit biases against women (Saul 2013, 40)—then it is likely that these biases will also keep us from identifying historical women as philosophical authorities, and this will adversely affect how their works are read. The philosophical interests and arguments of women writers may simply go unnoticed, and this may keep even the best intentioned of us from effectively reaching the goal of presenting students with an inclusive early modern canon. In this section, we show how implicit biases may be at work in rendering invisible some aspects of Astell's philosophy.

It is not unusual to consider the works of early modern women writers only insofar as they are critics or defenders of their better-known and better-appreciated male colleagues.[11] This is a case of male bias that limits women merely to the position of satellites around their male contemporaries: women are foils to men. They fine-tune and help clarify the thoughts and arguments of male thinkers, but their own philosophical interests and arguments often remain unseen. In Astell's case, this is apparent in some of the scholarly commentary on her correspondence with John Norris. The correspondence began in the autumn of 1693 when Astell wrote to Norris to criticize a link he had made between a metaphysical thesis and a moral thesis.[12] The metaphysical thesis was that God is the only efficient cause of our sensations (occasionalism); the moral thesis was that God is the sole object of human love. Astell objected to Norris's insistence that the first thesis provided the justification for the second. She argues, first, that Norris's view leads to the untenable position that God would be both the

[10] A simple name search in the *Philosopher's Index* (14 July 2014) yielded the following number of articles, books, or reviews of books on the following thinkers: Descartes: 6,170 results; Astell: 34 results; Hume: 6,318 results; Trotter Cockburn: 8 results; Leibniz: 4,086 results; Gournay: 7 results.

[11] See Broad (2003, 127), who notes that this tendency may lead to a failure to take account of women's thought.

[12] The correspondence was published in 1695 as *Letters Concerning the Love of God, Between the Author of the Proposal to the Ladies and Mr. John Norris*.

object of our love (on account of his causing our pleasure) and the object of our aversion (on account of his causing our pain). Second, she draws a distinction, which Norris had not drawn, between pleasure and good, and thereby concludes that what makes God the sole object of human love is not that he is the cause of our *pleasure* but that he the cause of our *good*. This makes it possible for God to be the cause of our pain (which may be for our good) without being an object of aversion.

In their editorial introduction to the Astell and Norris *Letters*, E. Derek Taylor and Melvyn New present Astell primarily as Norris's disciple: she does not offer much by way of serious criticism, they claim, but merely proposes extensions to Norris's positions (2005, 23). Though they do pay attention, as do all commentators, to the criticism that opens the correspondence, their focus is directed to congratulating Norris on his open-mindedness in "accepting correction from a woman" (24) and to imagining Astell's satisfaction at pointing out a flaw in the reasoning of an established philosopher. This approach is fairly common among biographers and literary critics: Richard Acworth, Norris's twentieth-century biographer, notes that this part of the exchange provides "an excellent example of [Norris's] willingness to learn from sympathetic criticism" (1979, 173). Writing more recently, Christine Mason Sutherland praises Norris for being "honest and generous enough to acknowledge that he has benefited . . . from the correspondence" (2005, 48).

The narrative of female thinkers as assistants to and/or disciples of male philosophers is common in the scholarly literature. Astell is portrayed as delighted "at having an established philosopher accept the efficacy of her corrective" (Taylor and New 2005, 24), but she is not thought to have much to contribute in terms of philosophical originality to the correspondence. Acworth writes that she "came to accept on every point Norris's analysis of the soul and its activities" (1979, 173), and Taylor and New claim that the pair are "generally in complete agreement" (2005, 25)—so much so, they say, that one can barely tell the difference between a passage written by Astell and one written by Norris. Furthermore, Astell is frequently portrayed as passive, the beneficiary of Norris's superior philosophical skill. Sutherland notes: "He correct[ed] her procedures and clarif[ied] her ideas," and she "meekly accept[ed] his criticism" (2005, 47). Even when commentators represent Astell and Norris as intellectual peers by noting, for example, that Astell "reserves the right to disagree with him" and that she is "not afraid to challenge him" (Sutherland 2005, 48), it is still Norris's ideas that are the subject of disagreement and challenge. The center of their epistolary universe remains Norris's philosophy. Even in the philosophical literature, which examines her arguments for and against occasionalism, Astell is portrayed as reactive rather than proactive. Her arguments are still *responses* to Norris's.

Limiting Astell to being an assistant or foil to Norris is a way to regulate her philosophical authority. Though commentators are correct to

note that Norris "was greatly assisted by Astell['s]" insights (Acworth 1979, 172), they overlook the fact that Astell was also *directing* the correspondence, leading Norris to consider philosophical issues of importance to her. In making the conceptual distinctions that helped Norris, Astell was also laying the groundwork for several philosophical positions of her own. Some of these would resurface in the *Letters*; some would receive fuller exposition in later works. The salient point is that the failure to see Astell as a philosophical *agent* has the effect of blinding commentators to *her* philosophical concerns and arguments. This, then, may lead either to excluding her works altogether from an early modern survey syllabus or to including them only insofar as they highlight the philosophical concerns of the canonical male thinkers. A case in point is Astell's theory of friendship: it has remained largely invisible to commentators.[13]

Astell's claims about friendship in the *Letters* arise in the context of Norris's insistence that God is the only proper object of human love. Norris had not meant to deny that humans also love each other: God is the object of a certain kind of love—love of desire—while the creature is the object of another kind of love—love of benevolence. This distinction had a long philosophical/theological history, reaching back at least to the time of Thomas Aquinas (Carmichael 2004, 102), a history that both Norris and Astell were aware of. Love of desire pointed to the indigency in human nature, to the need to have one's love requited, whereas love of benevolence pointed to the selflessness in human nature, to the ability to offer love with no expectation of return. Norris argued that God is loved with desire, not benevolence; the creature is loved with benevolence, not desire. In fact, he claimed, we should abandon "all desire" for the creature.

Astell took up this last claim in her second letter, and her remarks have received much attention—unfortunately, none of it philosophical. She explains to Norris that she finds it difficult to abandon her desire for the creature: "It is a very difficult thing for me to love at all, without something of Desire." She goes on to note that she has a "strong Propensity to friendly Love" and therefore does not wish to abandon "all Thoughts of Friendship." At the same time, she explains to Norris that she is troubled by this "strong Propensity," fearing that it points to more than "pure benevolence." She wonders whether it is a "fault" and asks Norris to suggest a "remedy for this Disorder" (Taylor and New 2005, 80).

This "confession," as many commentators refer to it, in conjunction with Astell's calls for renunciation throughout the *Letters*, her insistence that the creature should be "banish[ed] from our hearts" (Taylor and New 2005, 103), her lament that her offers of love have met with "ungrateful Returns" (80), and her apparent worry concerning a "Disorder" have all

[13] Many commentators have written on Astell's *actual* friendships (see Perry 1986), and some have written on the importance and utility of female friendship in Astell's *Serious Proposal* (see Broad 2009 and Kolbrener 2007). But no one (so far as we know) has provided an analysis of Astell's theory of friendship.

led biographers, literary critics, philosophers, and others to read the second letter in a personal light and to imagine that Astell is suffering the pangs of unrequited romantic love. Bridget Hill, for example, sees in Astell's words a confession of passionate love for a woman, a hypothesis that has been taken up by several subsequent commentators (1986, 8).[14] Ruth Perry expresses caution around the specifics of Hill's claim by noting that intense spiritual friendships between women were common in the late seventeenth century; nonetheless, she reads the letter in terms of Astell's struggle to control her feelings of romantic love (1986, 140). Taylor and New, while dismissive of Hill's claim, do not provide an alternative reading of the passage (2005, 25; see also Taylor 2001). Historians of philosophy follow suit in failing to read Astell's remarks in a philosophical light. Jacqueline Broad, a knowledgeable Astell scholar who has written on Astell's views on friendship, notes the attention her remarks have received but offers no philosophical analysis of them (2009, 68). Catherine Wilson, also a meticulous scholar of the early modern period, sees in Astell's words an expression of disappointment in romantic matters with men, and she chastises Astell for "embarrass[ing] us by dwelling on the miseries of unrequited love in what is supposed to be a metaphysical discussion of causal efficacy" (2004, 292).

What is going on here? We suggest that Astell's claims have been personalized and gendered by commentators who are too quick to see in them a "girlish" (Wilson 2004, 282) anxiety over romantic love rather than a concern with a philosophical matter. Astell is certainly concerned with requited or reciprocated love in the quoted passage, but she is not concerned with romantic love. Neither is she confessing "intimate problems concerning her own emotions" (Sutherland 2005, 50). She is expressing philosophical concerns about the nature of friendship, concerns that she will take up throughout the correspondence with Norris and in several other works. The "something of Desire" that she fears might be essential to friendship is the desire for *reciprocity*, for a return of love. Reciprocity and partiality were, of course, the defining features of the friendship bond as the classical Aristotelian tradition had understood it, and Astell, a Christian Platonist, found these Aristotelian features of friendship inconsistent with two important dictums of Christianity: first, that the love of benevolence is to be extended to enemies as well as to friends and therefore need not be *reciprocal*; and second, that the love of benevolence is to be extended to the vicious as well as to the virtuous and therefore need not be *partial*. Consequently, she argued for a notion of friendship that is non-reciprocal but nonetheless constitutes a bond, in contrast to the Aristotelian insistence that without reciprocity there is no bond and thus no

[14] See, for example, Johns (2003, 32–33), who discusses at some length Astell's (alleged) love for Lady Catherine Jones.

friendship. Relying on the distinction between love of desire and love of benevolence as well as her Platonist metaphysics, Astell argued that love of benevolence *is* friendship, and that because love of benevolence is grounded in love of desire, the friendship bond both depends upon and is authorized by God.

Many (male) Christian thinkers—including Thomas Aquinas and Aelred of Rievaulx, and in the seventeenth century Jeremy Taylor and Norris himself—attempted to reconcile (or not) Aristotelian and Christian conceptions of friendship. Yet in Astell's work, this philosophical enterprise is overlooked by otherwise thoughtful commentators who appear more ready to accept that she is fretting about romantic love—the culturally sanctioned vocation of females (Walker 2006, 220)—than that she is expressing a set of philosophical concerns. But Astell is a philosopher, not a lovelorn spinster. She had written to Norris not to confide that she had been "hurt . . . by the indifference and ingratitude of her friends" (Sutherland 2005, 50) but to confront the challenges an Aristotelian conception of friendship presents to a Christian thinker. Furthermore, she wanted to advance a sound theory of spiritual friendship. In *Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, which she was writing during the period of the correspondence with Norris, Astell proposed a "female seminary," an intellectual/spiritual academy for women. The female-female friendship bond, as she conceived it, would exist in her academy and was meant to offer to women an alternative to the male-female marriage bond. Female spiritual friendship, Astell wanted to show in the *Letters*, is—like marriage—sanctioned by God.

Astell's theory of friendship is a hidden gem inside the *Letters*, but like similar gems, it is not likely to be uncovered unless early modern women authors are perceived as philosophical authorities. We suggest that implicit biases may be rendering invisible the philosophical positions of women writers, and that this failure to even *notice* their philosophical concerns contributes to the general exclusion of women from early modern course syllabi. Sadly, even those who aim to create an inclusive canon face an uphill battle. Still, we must combat the implicit biases that keep us from presenting to students the contributions women make to philosophy. As we do, we face a pressing question: How do we include the texts written by women in our course syllabi? It is to this matter that we now turn our attention.

Most of us are well aware of the difficulties involved in trying to fit readings from Descartes through Kant into a twelve- or fifteen-week semester. Thus some readers might wonder how we expect teachers to include early modern women in already full-to-the-brim survey courses. Even those who are moved by the call to include texts written by women in their syllabi, and who are working to overcome the implicit biases that keep us from seeing these texts *as philosophical*, will still worry that there is just not enough time to do so.

But this worry rests on the assumption that we should take our existing survey course reading lists and pepper them with texts written by women. This approach, however, would fail on a number of counts. First, if this is our approach, it is likely that we will run out of time, and that the readings we remove to make up for lost time will be those written by women.[15] Even if we do not run out of time or cut the texts written by women, merely peppering our existing syllabi with women is an approach that fails to include the contributions made by early modern women *in a meaningful way*. Such an approach can send students the message that we are adding these texts because we think we have to, which could potentially negate the positive impact that thoughtfully including texts written by women can have on the way students think about women and philosophy.

Some readers might object that they must include the canonical authors in their survey courses, and that if they fail to include them, they fail their students. In response we simply say that while it is the case that our students ought not to leave an early modern survey course without knowing who Locke is, it is just as important that they not leave the course wholly ignorant of the women who were philosophically active at the time. Moreover, we recognize that spending a little less time in class discussing Kant, or Locke, or Leibniz will come at a cost. But this cost is not so great when we consider the benefit of giving students a more thorough look at the early modern period. Perhaps what is really at issue is that we are asking people to rethink both the canon and the goal of any modern survey course. As we have suggested above, the canon is something that we create, shape, and modify; it is not some static authority to which we must bend. We make it, and we can therefore (to some degree) make what we want of it. The same goes for our history of early modern survey courses.

The liberating thing is that once we start seeing texts written by women *as philosophical*, many possibilities open up. We could design a course that challenges the distinction typically drawn between the rationalists and empiricists, with Mary Astell at its center. Or we could design a course focused on early modern conceptions of friendship. Or we could depart from the more traditional topics of metaphysics and epistemology, and focus on the topic of ethics instead. Or we could end up with a course that is very much in line with the metaphysics and epistemology (M&E) story that we were taught, but that is inclusive of the texts written by early modern women.

[15] It stands to reason that since most of us know less about texts written by early modern women, and there is less in the way of secondary literature on them, they will get cut before our go-to stories about Locke or Hume will. It is also arguable that if we merely peppered an existing course with texts written by women, we saw that course as complete but improved by the addition of the women. This would make it easier to cut the texts written by women than if we had reorganized the course in a more substantial way.

With respect to this last point, it is important to note that when we include early modern women in our survey courses this *can* mean changing the topics we cover in them, but it need not. Thus, if one is feeling restricted and frustrated by the M&E story one usually feels compelled to tell, one can use a more inclusive syllabus as a reason to change it. But if one is excited by the metaphysical and epistemological debates of the time, one can still craft a syllabus around those debates even when one includes women. To assume otherwise is to assume that early modern women were not interested in metaphysics or epistemology—that they were only interested in ethics or politics. But this assumption about early modern women proves to be just as ill founded as the assumption that women today do not care about metaphysics or epistemology and care only about ethics or politics. We have both designed inclusive courses that are M&E based. Gordon-Roth's course focuses on knowledge, God, and substance (or, more specifically, the mind-body problem). Kendrick's course focuses on realism and idealism, causation, and God.

How we create inclusive early modern survey courses is up to us, and should be shaped by our own interests—just like any other course. The important thing is that we do not feel so restricted by the existing (male) canon, or so limited by the supposed goals of a survey course, that we continue to exclude the important contributions that women made to the history of early modern philosophy.[16]

Conclusion

In this article we have argued that including texts written by women in our courses changes the way that students think about women and philosophy. Students begin to see that women have been, are, and can be philosophers. We have also argued that if we want to improve the discipline of philosophy—so that it includes more women—we must start including texts written by women in our syllabi. We have shown that doing so requires combatting implicit biases, rethinking the nature of the canon, and reconsidering the goals of our history of early modern survey courses. This project requires a great deal of work, but it is work that those who are committed to improving the discipline of philosophy must undertake.

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[16] Much of what we have argued in this article is friendly to a number of points Eugene Marshall makes in "How to Teach Modern Philosophy" (Marshall 2014).

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Acknowledgments

The seeds of this article were sown in a panel on the exclusion of women from the canon at the New School for Social Research in May 2014, which included Gina Luria Walker. We are grateful to Gina for her support and for her many years of work on this topic. We received helpful feedback on earlier versions of the essay from Rachel McKinney, John Whipple, Lisa Lebduska, Hyun Kim, and Dana Polanichka, for which we are thankful. Jessica presented this paper as part of the Lehman College Women's Studies Lecture Series, and Nancy presented the work on Astell at the Women, Truth, and Action conference at the University of Helsinki in October 2013. We are grateful to audience members for their questions, comments, and criticisms.

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