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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

How can we build a "Women's" philosophy?

Anne-Marie McCallion

Department of History, Politics and Philosophy, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, United Kingdom

Correspondence
Anne-Marie McCallion, Department of History, Politics and Philosophy, Manchester Metropolitan University, Rosamond St. W., Manchester M15 6EB, United Kingdom.
Email: a.mccallion@mmu.ac.uk

Abstract

Nancy Holland (1990, 1) defines "women's philosophy" as philosophical work that "arises from, explicitly refers to, and attempts to account for the experience of women." A "women's" philosophy, distinct from "feminist" philosophy, would depict the lived reality of women's experiences without an explicit or self-conscious desire to construct oppositional theories or arguments. This paper builds on Holland's discussion of a women's philosophy to propose a new perspective on the role and function of the philosophy curriculum. The paper shifts the conversation from one concerning whether a women's philosophy is "possible" to one that directly asks how we can *build* this philosophy. It argues that creating space for a women's philosophy need not require the reimagining of philosophical norms. Instead, the task should be understood as broadening perceptions of what *counts* as philosophy. The central claim is that we should witness curriculum construction as a tool for metaphilosophical intervention and as the first step towards building a women's philosophy. The paper shows how the incorporation of feminist autoethnography (a research approach and body of literature) into curriculums is particularly fruitful.

KEYWORDS

andragogy, autoethnography, curriculums, diversity, feminism, first-person, lived experiences, methodology, pedagogy, practice theory, qualitative, syllabi, teaching, women

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In *Is Women's Philosophy Possible?* Nancy Holland defines "women's philosophy" as philosophical work that "arises from, explicitly refers to, and attempts to account for the experience of women" (1990, 1). In contrast, Holland describes "feminist philosophy" as a mode of critique that draws attention to problematic social and philosophical norms. A "women's" philosophy, distinct from "feminist" philosophy, would depict the lived reality of women's experiences without an explicit or self-conscious desire to construct oppositional theories or arguments.

In this paper, I build on Holland's discussion of a women's philosophy and propose a new perspective on the purpose and function of the philosophy curriculum. I argue that creating space for a so-called women's philosophy need not require reimagining established philosophical norms. Instead, the task should be understood as broadening public and professional perceptions of what *counts* as philosophy. My central claim is that we should witness curriculum construction—and recent diversity-related initiatives regarding this—as a pragmatic pathway towards the construction of a women's philosophy. To do this, I show how the education of emerging generations of philosophers can be understood as integral to shaping future disciplinary trends.

In section 1, I outline Holland's critique of mainstream Anglo-American philosophy and describe what is meant by a women's philosophy. In section 2, I present data collected from the undergraduate curriculums of the top ten U.K. philosophy departments and show how they mirror Holland's criticisms of Anglo-American philosophy. In section 3, I propose what I call the "living practice" view of philosophy and argue that undergraduate curriculums not only reflect assumptions about what is considered "foundational" to philosophy but can also be understood to construct, create, and sustain established disciplinary norms. In section 4, I introduce a research approach known as feminist autoethnography and show how literature that employs this approach builds upon—and offers a feminist alternative to—the critiques Holland puts forward against mainstream Anglo-American philosophy. I conclude by arguing that recent initiatives to diversify the philosophy curriculum should be considered metaphilosophically poignant, as they have the potential to be transformative not just for the demographics of the discipline but also for the theoretical norms and practices of the discipline.

1 | DEFINING WOMEN'S PHILOSOPHY

Holland begins her discussion of women's philosophy with the claim "There is women's literature, women's music, women's history and so on, there is philosophy done by women and even feminist critiques of the philosophical tradition, but there is little that could unequivocally be called women's philosophy" (Holland 1990, 1). Drawing upon the work of feminist philosopher Alison Jagger, Holland argues that "abstract individualism" is primarily responsible for rendering mainstream Anglo-American philosophy incompatible with the exploration of women's lived experiences (17). She defines abstract individualism as a mode of theoretical inquiry that obscures the relevance of human community and social interactions to theoretical inquiry. Holland claims that a critique of abstract individualism is what unites distinct strands of feminist philosophy; from feminist philosophy of science to feminist epistemology, these branches of theory have in common an attempt to reveal how social relationships fundamentally shape reality.

Holland, following Jagger, maintains that abstract individualism contains assumptions about human life that depict it as independent and solitary, and this autonomous picture centrally reflects the privileged life experiences of wealthy white men. To be genuinely autonomous requires both social and economic privilege, and it is only within the context of this privilege that the assumptions of abstract individualism can be considered intelligible. For those who have had their reality entirely shaped or obstructed by oppressive social arrangements, the necessity to consider social and political contexts when conducting philosophical inquiry appears both obvious and necessary (Holland 1990, 5–9). Accordingly, in Holland's view, the norms and practices that make mainstream Anglo-American

philosophy distinctive as a body of knowledge reflect the lived reality of men's—as opposed to women's—experiences.

To demonstrate this, Holland dissects central themes in the work of both John Locke and David Hume to reveal a series of male biases that she argues have proliferated throughout mainstream philosophy. She claims that the empiricist work of both Locke and Hume should be understood as a continuation of the Cartesian rationalist project, as they each necessitate an abstract, individualistic, and solipsistic theoretical starting point. In taking up the Cartesian question "How do we gain knowledge of the external world?" as opposed to deconstructing it, both Locke and Hume inherit a series of dualisms that centre around the "inner" and "outer" distinction. This in turn gives rise to further dualisms such as mind/matter and reason/emotion.[1] These dualisms have been a central subject of feminist concern, as they appear to directly contradict the lived experiences of women (Holland 1990, 36), and feminist scholars from across the social sciences have explored the problems that this dualistic framework presents for the study of women's lives.

Val Plumwood, for example, has argued that a more socially embedded lived experience, one that is characteristic of the way women are typically socialised, would provide a very different philosophical starting point than the isolated introspection that is necessitated by the Cartesian framework (see Plumwood 1991, 1993a, and 1993b). Holland (1990, 9) presents the experience of pregnancy as a direct feminist challenge to the Cartesian inner/outer and subject/object dualisms; she describes how pregnancy is at best insufficiently accounted for—and at worst conceptually impossible—according to this framework. These dualisms and the abstract individualism they exhibit represent central disciplinary assumptions within mainstream Anglo-American philosophy. In sum, for Holland, mainstream Anglo-American philosophy is distinguished from other branches of knowledge by its tendency to abstract philosophical questions from their embodied, social, historical, and political contexts.

For Holland, there is something uniquely contradictory between these mainstream philosophical norms and the in-depth exploration of women's first-hand lived experiences. To illustrate this, she uses philosophical discourse surrounding the subject of abortion as one example of how male biases suppress the exploration of women's experiences and concerns. Holland (1990, 170–73) contends that philosophical discourse on the subject of abortion echoes the Lockean depiction of inalienable rights, which, she argues, chiefly expresses the way men—as opposed to women—experience abortion. This depiction of abortion presents the matter as one of competing "rights" between the mother and the foetus. A women's exploration of abortion, the kind that could be facilitated by what Holland calls a women's philosophy, would begin from an *embodied* perspective, and it would foreground the social and political reality that shapes women's decisions surrounding abortion. A disembodied exploration of abortion, one that presents abortion as a matter of competing rights—or as a dilemma between the needs of the mother and the foetus—is an inadequate portrayal of the issue. As Holland writes:

> [W]hile it is cross-culturally true that women will abort or kill a child to increase their own well-being or to improve the lot of other, already existing children, it is also true that such a choice indicates that they live in a society that creates that dilemma for them.… Abortion is the product of coercion and scarcity, natural or man-made. Given this understanding of the social nature of the abortion problem, it becomes increasingly clear that to debate the "rights" or the personhood of the foetus is a sadly inadequate response that avoids, rather than serves, women's most basic human needs. (173)

[1]Holland also claims that because Locke and Hume inherit a Cartesian theoretical starting point there are deep philosophical connections that run throughout their work. For example, in both Locke and Hume discussions about the Cartesian problem of other minds as well as the distinction between that which is "clear and distinct" and that which is imbued with the "sensuous" and "imaginative" are pronounced (Holland 1990, 29).

For Holland, a women's philosophy would investigate the subject of abortion by locating it squarely within the embodied social and political reality of women, and this kind of exploration would involve concerns regarding the social and economic pressures of having a child. To clarify, what Holland is saying here is not simply that mainstream Anglo-American philosophy is hostile to women or women's experiences; her point is rather more subtle than the blunt claim that mainstream Anglo-American philosophy is incompatible with feminist (or women's) thought. Women's lived experiences cannot be adequately articulated or contextualised within a theoretical framework that normalises situational abstraction or individualism. To illustrate this tension, consider Judith Jarvis Thomson's seminal work "A Defence of Abortion," in which Thomson succeeds in developing a seminal argument in favour of the moral permissibility of abortion:

> You wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back in bed with an unconscious violinist.… He has been found to have a fatal kidney ailment and … you alone have the right blood type to help.…[L]ast night the violinist's circulatory system was plugged into yours, so that your kidneys can be used to extract poisons from his blood as well as your own.… The director of the hospital now tells you, "… To unplug you would be to kill him. But never mind, it's only for nine months. By then he will have recovered from his ailment, and can safely be unplugged from you." (Thomson 1971, 48–49)

The cleverness of Thomson's argument is located squarely within its abstraction from surrounding social and political contextualities: Thomson succeeds in illustrating the permissibility of abortion without reliance on any prior political, theological, or legal frameworks. This tendency to abstract questions from their embodied, social, and political context—along with the use of thought experiments more broadly—has received considerable feminist criticism (Schwartzman 2012; Pohlhaus 2015; Lanphier and McKiernan 2019), but it is precisely this contextual abstraction that makes Thomson's seminal work so persuasive as a defence of abortion as well as so easily identifiable as a work of Anglo-American philosophy.

This type of abstract exploration of abortion, however, is exactly what Holland takes to be the issue with the norms of mainstream philosophy. In light of this, Holland advocates for the development of new methodological frameworks that she claims are essential to the construction of a women's philosophy. The first involves a feminist deconstruction of the history of mainstream philosophical discourse that aims to expose the male biases (or male perspectives) that are tacitly embedded in dominant theories and discussions. The second framework involves the development of a global phenomenology capable of encompassing women's experiences from all over the world, and the third involves the construction of a feminist hermeneutics aimed at providing new linguistic tools and styles of writing capable of effectively communicating insights about women's first-person experiences (Holland 1990, 167). Holland deliberately leaves questions concerning what exactly a women's philosophy would look like open and maintains that such questions can only be answered following the development of her proposed feminist deconstruction, women's global phenomenology, and women's hermeneutics. For Holland, these prerequisite projects lay the necessary foundations for the development of what will ultimately become a women's philosophy.

2 | ABSTRACT INDIVIDUALISM IN THE CURRICULUM

An obvious and rather immediate objection to Holland's claims here might be to question what exactly she means by "Anglo-American philosophy."[2] The mere possibility of a unified

[2]Holland uses the term "Anglo-American philosophy" consistently throughout her 1990 work and positions her discussion on women's philosophy as a direct response to it (1990, 15, 19, 83–84, 116, 121, 170, 173,176).

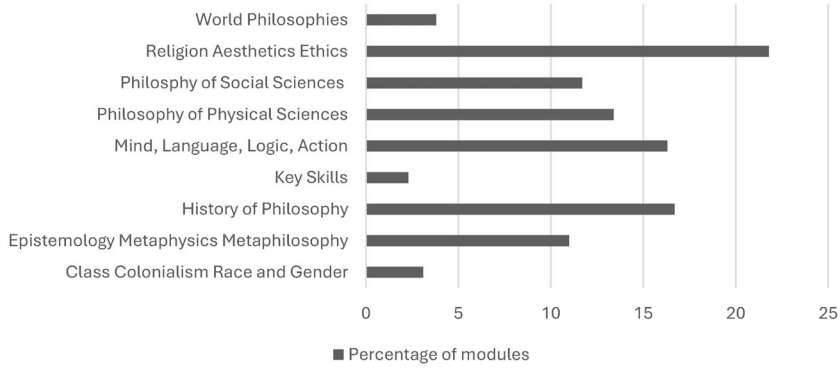

FIGURE 1 Curriculum topics in the United Kingdom's top ten philosophy departments in 2020–21.

target for her inquiry is difficult, if not impossible, to verify. One domain in which Holland's remarks about mainstream philosophy appear to be both verifiable and correct, however, is on undergraduate curriculums. In this section, I present the results of a systematic survey I conducted in 2021 in collaboration with the *Diversity Reading List*, an online platform that provides materials to aid in the diversification of philosophy curriculums. For this survey, I analysed the lecture schedules and reading lists from the top ten philosophy departments in the United Kingdom according to the *Times Higher Education* 2021 rankings. In total, amongst these departments there were 377 undergraduate modules; I analysed the module titles, lecture schedules, and reading lists and arranged them into the following broad thematic categories: World Philosophies; Religion, Aesthetics, Ethics; Philosophy of Social Science; Philosophy of Physical Science; Mind, Language, Logic, and Action; Key Skills; History of Philosophy; Epistemology, Metaphysics, Metaphilosophy; and Class, Colonialism, Race, and Gender.

In cases where a module clearly fell into a certain thematic category, a point of 1 was assigned to the category. If a module was clearly split between two thematic categories—as might be the case with, for example, a Metaphysics of Race and Gender module—a point of 0.5 was assigned to each relevant category. For ease of analysis, in cases where modules were split between more than two thematic categories, a judgement was made regarding which two categories were the most noticeable within the module, based on the available lecture schedule and reading lists. All of the materials used for this research (module reading lists and lecture schedules) were provided by the universities themselves for the academic year 2020–21. Figure 1 depicts the percentage of modules within each thematic category.[3]

The category that is of relevance to my discussion of Holland's remarks regarding Anglo-American philosophy is the Class, Colonialism, Race, and Gender (CCRG) category. Measuring CCRG content is a way of assessing the extent to which social and historical contexts are considered in the philosophy classroom. Given that social and historical considerations are part of what Holland highlights as central to women's philosophy—from the data presented here—we can see that there is a distinct lack of this content in philosophy as far as undergraduate curriculums are concerned. Just over 3 percent of the 377 modules investigated focus on any content that could be said to address CCRG content. In short, on average, the top U.K. departments offer just one module on CCRG topics.

Figure 2 represents the percentage of CCRG content contained within modules that were not explicitly dedicated to CCRG themes. For example, if one lecture throughout a traditional

[3]The full findings from this study are available online at Fokt and McCallion 2022.

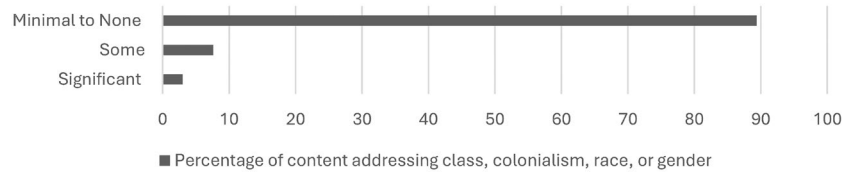

FIGURE 2 Content addressing class, colonialism, race, or gender.

epistemology course was dedicated to feminist epistemology, it would be counted as CCRG content, but this one lecture would not be sufficient to render the traditional epistemology module suitable for inclusion in the CCRG thematic category (illustrated in Figure 1). Instead, Figure 2 represents the percentage of CCRG-related lectures/topics on modules not explicitly dedicated to CCRG themes.

The categories of engagement in Figure 2 are defined as follows:

- Minimal or none: the module contains no CCRG content, or only token content appears in the last week of teaching.
- Some: at least one non-token lecture is substantially focused on CCRG content.
- Significant: at least 30 percent of the module is devoted to CCRG content.

While this data does not in and of itself demonstrate that Holland is correct about the general scope of Anglo-American philosophy—or its tendency towards abstract individualism—it does present a picture of what is considered "basic" or "foundational" to philosophical practice. A basic assumption of curriculum construction is that curriculums should expose students to "foundational" discipline-specific knowledge that can later be built upon or challenged if a student chooses to go on to further study. This in turn raises questions about what "foundational" amounts to. Unlike representation in academic journals, for example, what is presented in undergraduate curriculums is not the most cutting-edge research. And curriculums are not typically subjected to rigorous or self-conscious metaphilosophical scrutiny. Instead curriculums tend to be the product of received opinion regarding what is considered "foundational" or canonical to the discipline.

This approach, which I call here the Inherited Theory (IT) view of curriculum construction, depicts the norms and practices of philosophy as inherited from canonical theories and thinkers. Upon this view, the task of curriculum construction is one of developing material that accurately reflects these disciplinary inheritances and as such is capable of equipping students with the foundational knowledge and skills that render them philosophically literate. Interpreted through the lens of the IT view, the data above do represent evidence in favour of Holland's remarks concerning abstract individualism and mainstream Anglo-American philosophy, at least in so far as andragogical assumptions are concerned.

Another way of interpreting the data, which I spend the rest of the paper discussing, is as a reflection of how central disciplinary norms—such as the abstract individualism Holland highlights—are *constructed*. From this perspective, the topics and ideas that emerging generations of philosophers are exposed to dictate future disciplinary trends by laying the foundations for what the next generation of philosophers are more likely to reproduce in their research. We can therefore interpret the data not just as an arguably weak body of evidence in favour of Holland's claims; we can understand the data as an explanation for how central disciplinary norms—like tendencies towards abstract individualism—are constructed and sustained. In the following section, I develop this view by describing how the picture

of philosophy provided to undergraduates is "made real" by the norms and practices that newer generations of philosophers go on to adopt and employ in their research. In so doing, I stretch Holland's theoretical discussion on whether a women's philosophy is "possible" into a practical paradigm and situate changes to undergraduate curriculums as a pragmatic pathway to building a women's philosophy.

3 | PHILOSOPHY AS A LIVING PRACTICE

The aim of this section is to extend the perceived role and function of philosophy curriculums from introductory andragogical frameworks to metaphilosophical instruments that directly construct and constrain future disciplinary trends. To do this, I develop what I call the Living Practice (LP) view of philosophy and contrast this against what I called above the IT view.[4] Unlike the IT view, which depicts philosophy as distinguished by a set of inherited norms and theories—and the task of curriculum construction as adequately representing these inheritances—the LP view depicts philosophy as a contingent social practice demarcated by a shared set of norms and assumptions. These norms and assumptions constitute the "rules" of the discipline, and the full set of these rules makes up the field of philosophy.[5]

On the LP view, philosophy is created and sustained by the people who populate the profession. Those who produce the research and do the teaching are responsible for the reproduction of the field: decisions involved in the selection of research specialism, curriculum construction, and peer review are all constrained by—and contribute to maintaining—the rules of the field. The totality of actions taken by the individuals who populate the profession is the "ontology" of philosophy. In other words, the LP view depicts philosophy as created through a series of individual actions and decisions that collectively reproduce the theoretical norms and assumptions that make it distinctive as a body of knowledge; the reproduction of these norms—brought about by an adherence to the rules of the field—is what creates the discipline. This can be contrasted against the IT view, which presents the central norms and theories of philosophy as inherited and therefore static.

On the IT view, philosophy is reproduced via a top-down process, and the defining norms of philosophy are themselves what distinguish it from other branches of knowledge. Research that does not adhere to the inherited canonical norms or theories of philosophy may very well constitute good sociology, good anthropology, or good literature, but it cannot ipso facto be good philosophy. Although this IT view may be more readily associated with the ideals of the "traditional" philosopher, it is in fact a view that is latent within the picture of philosophy Holland provides. In locating the barriers to a women's philosophy in the historical inheritances of the discipline as opposed to the practices, habits, and preferences of its contemporary practitioners, Holland depicts the barriers to women's philosophy as primarily *theoretical* as opposed to practical. This is further evidenced by her call for the development of new feminist philosophical methods and tools she claims are necessary to facilitate the possibility of a women's philosophy. The same male biases that Holland identifies as responsible for theoretically precluding a women's philosophy would, however, also preclude it practically. In so far as Holland is correct to note that these male biases structure mainstream

[4]This discussion is based on sociological practice theory, which, in very broad terms, proposes that social structures both influence and *are influenced by* the actions of the individuals within them. Section 3 below has a particular debt to the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who in *The Logic of Practice* (Bourdieu 1990) lays out a schema for how social structures are created and maintained by shared social practices.

[5]I use the term "field" here both in its colloquial and in its technical sense. In its colloquial sense, field refers to a discipline—for example, the field of history or the field of literature. In its technical sense, I borrow from the work of Bourdieu, who uses field to describe the totality of social rules that are responsible for sustaining a social structure (Bourdieu 1990, 66–68).

Anglo-American philosophy, then even if a women's philosophy were possible, in the absence of a significant shift in shared assumptions about what *counts* as philosophy, any women's philosophy would not have enough uptake to be "made real."[6]

That is, the wider philosophical community would be unlikely to engage with such work, and peer reviewers would be unlikely to accept this work into, at least, mainstream philosophy journals. Adopting the LP view of philosophy draws attention to these bottom-up processes that are responsible for shaping disciplinary norms, and makes visible the practical processes and procedures that are responsible for constructing the disciplinary norms of philosophy. Holland's tendency to locate the barriers to a women's philosophy in the theoretical norms and inheritances of the discipline—as opposed to the practices and assumptions of contemporary philosophers—obscures from view the practical barriers to the development of women's philosophy. Adopting the LP view of philosophy makes visible a variety of bottom-up processes that shape disciplinary norms, and this in turn highlights pragmatic points of entry/access for disciplinary change.

In this vein, we can interpret the data outlined in section 2 above as an illustration of how shared assumptions about what is foundational to philosophy are "made real" within the professional domain of the discipline. Students who are educated in institutions that neglect CCRG content—and continue with philosophy after their undergraduate studies—inherit a narrow perspective of what philosophy is. This narrow perspective is then enacted—or "made real"—through the positions they go on to occupy within the profession. Assumptions about what philosophy *is* directly influence the research that emerging generations of philosophers choose to pursue at postgraduate level, and this in turn dictates their future career trajectory, future teaching practices, and future peer-review decisions. These decisions and actions dictate the ongoing trends and direction of the field.

If emerging generations of philosophers are predominantly exposed to content that presents a disembodied, apolitical, and socially disconnected picture of philosophy, it follows that this is the picture of philosophy they will be more likely to go on to reproduce. In this respect, decisions about philosophy-curriculum construction can be understood as part of the gate-keeping practices of the field: what students are exposed to at this level shapes what is possible for the future direction of the discipline. In light of this, we can think about alterations to the undergraduate philosophy curriculum as a pragmatic strategy for desirable disciplinary intervention. Thinking about curriculum construction in this way draws directly upon the "teaching-research nexus" whereby researchers in higher education are encouraged to design curriculums that reflect their research pursuits. This differs substantially from other levels of teaching, where curriculums are developed by national exam boards and are themselves corseted by strict policy guidelines; university curriculums adhere to no such external checks and balances and are unconstrained to facilitate "research-led" teaching.[7] Alteration to philosophy curriculums is therefore a particularly pragmatic strategy for building a women's philosophy, because the inclusion here of content—which directly challenges more established disciplinary norms—can be presented with minimal external scrutiny. This differs from Holland's theoretical approach to building a women's philosophy because it does not rely, in the same way, on the uptake of established professional philosophers.

[6]Katharine Jenkins (2014) presents a good discussion on how the shared social and theoretical norms of philosophy often preclude the possibility of feminist research entering into the mainstream.

[7]Although the "teaching-research nexus" describes a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, it has rightly come under considerable scrutiny, and several leading scholars of education have spoken out against the impracticality of such expectations. Turning feminist attention towards the material constraints on the construction of amended curriculums is itself a worthy enterprise that extends from the purview of this paper.

4 | FEMINIST AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

In this section, I introduce a research approach known as feminist autoethnography and show how Holland's concerns regarding mainstream Anglo-American philosophy—as well as her desire to create appropriate feminist alternatives—can be witnessed within the literature that employs this approach. My central claim is that the inclusion of feminist autoethnography in undergraduate curriculums should be considered a first step towards building a women's philosophy. The inclusion of this material in undergraduate philosophy courses would expose emerging generations of philosophers to poignant feminist critiques of widespread philosophical norms and practices, as well as providing them with an alternative method for knowledge construction. This in turn would broaden their understanding of what philosophy was and influence future decisions about research specialism.

Auto (self) ethnography (social theory) is a research approach that centres the personal lived experiences of the researcher and directly challenges the positivist pursuit of a disembodied objectivity. Beginning in the late twentieth century, social scientists scrutinised the assumptions involved in positivist research methodologies and became increasingly sceptical of the positivist approach's potential to facilitate research on marginalised groups—such as women and Indigenous people—due to its tendency towards disembodied and socially abstract inquiry. The result of this scepticism and scrutiny was the development of autoethnography: a critical qualitative research approach that centres narratives derived from the researcher's first-person perspective.[8] In the early twenty-first century, the autoethnographic method became increasingly identified as a feminist research approach. In her work *Autoethnography as a Feminist Method*, feminist sociologist Elizabeth Ettorre writes:

> When I first started to look at autoethnography as a feminist method, I became increasingly mindful that disenchantment with the dominant Cartesian paradigm of rationality at the heart of modern social sciences led us as scholars to narrative. We did this because narrative emphasizes plurality of truths that all cultures claim about themselves. Narrative shifts or pushes us from notions that there is a single cultural perspective revealing an irrefutable set of truths; and through narrative, any scholar can achieve an understanding of personal experiences. (Ettorre 2017, 1)[9]

Ettorre (2017, 8) distinguishes autoethnography from autobiography by claiming that the aim of autoethnography is to *theorise*, not tell, our stories, and we do this by situating our stories within a broader historical and political context. This practice of theorising our stories can be understood as the methodological accompaniment to the feminist mantra "The personal is political," and it speaks directly to Holland's discussion on the possibility of a women's philosophy by foregrounding the personal experiences of the researcher and situating these experiences within a broader social and political context. Further to this, Ettorre argues that the autoethnographic approach enables feminist researchers to articulate and explore truths about their experiences that are traditionally silenced by established academic writing styles and research practices.[10]

[8]For a full discussion on both the history and the applications of autoethnography as a research method see: Ellis, Adams, and Bochner's 2010 work, *Autoethnography: An Overview*.

[9]It is relevant to note here that in employing the term "feminist," Ettorre (2017, 1) is not specifically referring to those theorists who self-identify as producing feminist research as such. She is instead referring to the broad church of ideas that may be noted or acknowledged as feminist.

[10]There is a vast feminist literature in sociology that addresses gender biases within science and how the scientific ideal can exclude perspectives of the marginalised. Some of this literature, including the work of Lorde (1982) and Moraga and Anzaldûa (1981), is discussed in the subsequent pages of this section. Some examples of this literature, particularly the works addressing standpoint epistemology, have been left out of my discussion, as they are beyond the scope of this paper. Some useful works for further reading include Hartsock 1983, Harding 1986, and Rose 1994.

Indeed, much of what Holland describes as prerequisite projects for the development of a women's philosophy can be directly witnessed in feminist autoethnography.[11] For example, in "To Be a (M)other: A Feminist Performative Autoethnography of Abortion," Shelby Swafford (2020) uses performative autoethnography to explore the issue of abortion through a non-linear first-person perspective. Swafford's work offers a desirable alternative to the treatment the issue has received within mainstream Anglo-American philosophy, which, as Holland claims, tends to situate the discussion in a framework of competing rights abstracting it away from the embodied, social, and political reality of women's experiences of abortion. This approach is turned on its head in Swafford's analysis: with a mixture of academic language and poetic prose, Swafford describes the politically charged climate surrounding abortion in the United States by documenting her first-hand experience:

> My abortion teaches me what it means to be a (m)other, to live in/as a body colliding with internal and external expectations, to inhabit a cultural space between motherhood and not. From this liminal position, I turn to feminist auto-epistemologies and body-writing practices to disrupt the functionality of the US American abortion debate…I center my body as a site of epistemological value to story my abortion experience between constricting, conflicting, and dichotomized "Life" versus "Choice" discourses. I am taking back my body's story. (Swafford 2020, 96)

What is central to Swafford's autoethnographic depiction is the socio-political history of her narrative. Her story and experiences are not presented as irrelevant facts to be sidestepped in the pursuit of a more universalisable non-biased judgement on the permissibility of abortion; instead her story is positioned as the theoretical starting point for the construction of new knowledge about the issue. Autoethnography allows the researcher to contextualise her perceptions by discussing how her social status, class, race, and gender have shaped her observations and experiences. This presents a direct alternative to the norms that Holland is concerned to critique. By incorporating phenomenological perspectives on women's experiences and situating these perspectives in a broader social and political context, feminist autoethnography—as illustrated by Swafford's performative autoethnography—embodies a rejection of the abstract individualism and the hierarchical dualisms Holland aims to deconstruct.

The existence of feminist autoethnography as a research approach—as well as its associated literatures—casts doubt on the need to, as Holland proposes, reimagine or reconstruct new theoretical foundations to facilitate a women's philosophy. In contrast to what Holland describes as "feminist philosophy"—which she is keen to distinguish *women's* philosophy from—feminist autoethnography does not seek to directly critique or muster oppositional force against social, theoretical, or political norms. While a critique of dominant norms often *arises* out of feminist autoethnography, the primary purpose of this research approach is to centre the first-personal experience of the researcher and to develop theoretical insights based on this experience. As a result of this, feminist autoethnography does not conform to any particular stylistic features or practices; instead the stylistic features of a feminist autoethnography vary depending on the particular experience that is being captured and theorised. This can be contrasted with what Holland identifies as "feminist philosophy," which she identifies as having as its primary purpose the critique of particular social, theoretical, or political norm(s).

[11]As outlined in section 1 above, Holland claims that a feminist deconstruction of the history of philosophy, a new global women's phenomenology, and a new feminist hermeneutics are all necessary prior to the development of a women's philosophy.

The robust development of feminist autoethnography as a research approach occurred close to twenty years after Holland's 1990 work on women's philosophy was published, and accordingly we can only speculate about whether—if she were still alive and writing today—Holland would consider feminist autoethnography to be an incarnation of what she called women's philosophy. Her own discussion locates the possibility of a women's philosophy squarely within the work of Continental philosophers like Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger. For Holland (1990, 98, 137), the process of deconstruction and the concept of Dasein offer essential tools for the development of an embodied and socially situated women's philosophy. In so far as we understand a women's philosophy to be the direct exploration of women's experiences in an embodied, politically, and socially situated way, feminist autoethnography appears to be a valuable representation of it.

If we are sympathetic to the criticisms Holland has levied against the abstract individualism of mainstream Anglo-American philosophy, then the question need not be one of whether a women's philosophy is *possible* but should instead be one of how philosophy is *perceived*. A pragmatic pathway towards the development of a women's philosophy is to adopt, consume, and subsume feminist literatures—like feminist autoethnography—that already exist within neighbouring disciplines and simply treat these literatures *as* a women's philosophy by incorporating them into undergraduate curriculums.

To introduce feminist autoethnography as a standalone module, however, would likely not be possible in most philosophy departments today, as it is still largely seen as a research approach that is not typically suited to philosophy. Nevertheless, this practical constraint would not preclude the possibility of, for example, including Swafford's work in an applied ethics course that addresses the subject of abortion. The inclusion of feminist autoethnography alongside more mainstream topics in undergraduate curriculums such as ethics, epistemology, and political philosophy would also demonstrate the direct philosophical relevance of feminist autoethnography to emerging generations of philosophers, thereby not only exposing students to the approach but also directly teaching them how to interpret and situate it within a broader context of philosophical ideas. This inclusion of feminist autoethnography in undergraduate curriculums catalyses the type of incremental bottom-up change to public and professional perceptions that can gradually facilitate the construction of a women's philosophy.[12]

Those who are sympathetic to the development of a more embodied and socially situated philosophy should therefore be strategic in their process of curriculum construction. This amounts not just to further inclusion of feminist content but, more important, also to research like feminist autoethnography that foregrounds the embodied, social, and political contexts of women's lived experiences. Exposing students to these ideas changes what is possible for future generations of researchers by altering what they consider to be possible within the discipline of philosophy. This pragmatic strategy offers a direct route to desirable metaphilosophical change because it side-steps the need to adhere to established disciplinary norms that have thus far been responsible for rendering a women's philosophy impossible.

5 | DIVERSIFYING PHILOSOPHY

In this paper, I have connected Holland's discussion of a women's philosophy to the practice of curriculum construction and proposed a new understanding of the role and function of teaching philosophy at the undergraduate level. Thus far, philosophical reflections on the task of

[12]Among the feminist autoethnographic works that can be considered for inclusion in philosophy courses are Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Lorde 1982; Cixous 1976; Ettorre 2007 and 2017; and Mackinlay 2022.

curriculum construction have largely centred around the issue of diversification and decolonisation (Maldonado-Torres et al. 2018; McCallion 2022; Taiwo 1993), and they have scarcely connected the discussion of curriculum construction to broader disciplinary trends. Philosophical work that has explicitly connected curriculum construction to broader disciplinary trends has thus far centred around concerns about the demographics—as opposed to the disciplinary norms—of philosophy. Jennifer Saul (2013), for example, has argued that the diversification of philosophy curriculums to include more women would have a positive impact on attracting more women into the profession of philosophy by combatting gendered stereotypes.

The changes to the philosophy curriculum that I have proposed in this paper—namely, the inclusion of feminist autoethnography in its various aspects—takes the ongoing dialogue regarding diversifying the philosophy curriculum one step further by highlighting how these changes have the potential to alter not just the demographic make-up of philosophy but also the norms and practices that shape the discipline itself. I presented data demonstrating that the abstract individualism Holland highlights within mainstream Anglo-American philosophy is reflected in undergraduate curriculums as a way of highlighting how the norms preventing the development of a women's philosophy are reflected in what is considered "foundational" and "basic" to the discipline. I further claimed that we can also interpret the data as providing evidence for how established disciplinary norms are constructed, and I argued that it is advantageous to those who are sympathetic to the issues Holland identifies with Anglo-American philosophy to adopt this view.

I called this the view of philosophy as a living practice and showed how it highlights a strategic pathway towards disciplinary intervention. This discussion brings to light the need to consider normative consequences of curriculum changes and to ask questions such as "What do we want philosophy to be?" when looking towards a more diverse philosophy curriculum. These questions are particularly important when considering the future development of feminist philosophy, which remains largely marginalised within mainstream discourse (Jenkins 2014). The extent to which established methods and stylistic practices of mainstream philosophy are capable of accommodating research that centres the lived experiences of women remains an open question. While feminist autoethnography may not be considered "philosophy" in any traditional sense, what I hope to have shown in my discussion here is that this need not always be the case. In so far as we perceive the development of a women's philosophy to be a desirable end, there is nothing inherent in the practice of philosophy that should preclude this: the task of constructing a women's philosophy consists largely of broadening professional perceptions of what philosophy is, such that it can accommodate research that embodies these methodological and stylistic practices.

When philosophy is understood as a living practice, the task of curriculum construction can be interpreted as a pragmatic pathway towards the type of disciplinary intervention that is necessary for this. I have shown how feminist autoethnography possesses several crucial components of a women's philosophy and—if introduced into undergraduate curriculums—would challenge established norms within the discipline and encourage the critical engagement of future scholars. In light of this, I have argued that this should be considered the first step towards building a women's philosophy. The proposed curriculum changes I have presented here represent an optimistic pathway to broadening the scope of philosophy and highlight the need for diversity initiatives to consider not just *who* philosophy reading lists include but also *how* philosophy is depicted/constructed through these andragogical practices.

6 | LIMITATIONS

Let me briefly consider some objections to the view I have so far been developing. I should first like to clarify that the inclusion of feminist autoethnography in undergraduate curriculums

is not the only way of building what Holland calls a women's philosophy, and other viable pathways may well include critiquing—as Holland has done—existing disciplinary norms. A good example of this can be found in the work of contemporary Wittgensteinian scholars such as Cora Diamond and Alice Crary. In "Anything but Argument?" Diamond (1982) argues that in so far as we believe the purpose of philosophical argument to be persuasion, then literary fiction—and other forms of art—should be interpreted as directly relevant to philosophy (particularly moral philosophy), as they provide a means of *showing*—as opposed to telling—the reader different ways of perceiving a given concern. In *Inside Ethics* Crary (2016) puts this principle into practice by presenting vignettes taken from works of fiction with the aim of shedding light on philosophical arguments.

The work of Crary can, in this respect, be understood as an enactment of the pragmatic strategy that I discussed in section 4: by employing less conventional methodologies—such as the use of literary fiction in philosophical argument—we contribute to shifting professional perception of what counts as philosophy. Philosophical attempts to make way for the inclusion of more vivid, emotional, and personal descriptions—such as those found in the work of Diamond and Crary—should also be considered relevant contributions to the process of building a women's philosophy. This endeavour to make room for first-personal lived experiences in philosophy highlights a further concern regarding my proposal: to what extent does feminist autoethnography really represent *all* women?

It is reasonable to suppose that many of those who construct autoethnography today—although certainly not all—are from economically privileged backgrounds or, at least, are more likely to have benefitted from the advantages of formal education. This concern is not only a limitation with my proposal, it is also a limitation with Holland's original proposal, which depicts a women's philosophy as possible (at least in principle). A complete women's philosophy—that is, one which incorporates the lived experiences of all women—would require women to have equal access to training required to write philosophy or—in the case of my argument—training required to write autoethnography. Due to various economic and educational inequalities, however, this is not the case, and even if it were the case, these inequalities are likely to result in the amplification of certain voices over others.

In respect of the pragmatic strategy I have proposed, acknowledging this limitation foregrounds the necessity of highlighting autoethnographies written by those who have been most acutely overlooked in the process of knowledge construction. This extends the purview of my discussion, from women's philosophy and feminist autoethnography to other forms of social and political marginalisation, erasure, and oppression. Critical Indigenous scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith have highlighted how certain forms of universalist theorising can be traced back to histories of imperialism. Smith (2012) argues that centring Indigenous perspectives and experiences are vital to a more ethical research process. In this paper, I have largely focused on the development of a *women's* philosophy and *women's* lived experiences, but the inclusion of autoethnographies that emerge from a variety of oppressed and suppressed perspectives—in the undergraduate curriculum—can be witnessed as a pragmatic strategy to develop a more broadly socially critical and historically situated philosophy.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Anne-Marie McCallion is a lecturer in the philosophy of gender and race, based at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her work primarily addresses the diversification and decolonisation of philosophy, and her previous publications include a co-edited special issue *of Symposion* entitled *Diversity in Philosophy*, an autoethnographic study of women's experiences of undergraduate philosophy, and several reports on the composition of undergraduate philosophy curriculums. She is currently working with AQA (the British A-level exam board) to help diversify the A-level curriculum.

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