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Discrimination in philosophy

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THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS IN
PHILOSOPHY. AN OVERVIEW

Abstract

In introducing the present issue, I clarify in which sense knowledge and philosophy can discriminate and marginalize some individuals. In the first part, I focus on the traditional exclusion of women from philosophy and explore some feminist projects of re-reading the philosophical canon. In my analysis, I pay particular attention to the gender gap in philosophy and the so-called “demographic problem” in academia. In the second part, I examine the best practices for remedying these forms of injustice and promoting diversity in philosophy.

As various feminist epistemologists and philosophers of science have argued, our practices of knowledge attribution, acquisition, and justification can systematically disadvantage women and other subordinated groups. In fact, dominant knowledge practices can discriminate individuals in different ways: by excluding them from inquiry; denying them epistemic authority, denigrating their modes of knowledge; elaborating theories that depict them as inferior or deviant; devolving social theories that make gendered power relations invisible; strengthening gender bias and social hierarchies. Our scientific practices can marginalize certain social groups even when they do not take sufficient account of the economic-social impacts and consequences their theories may have on the lives of individuals that belong to those categories¹. The failure to integrate some individuals into the knowledge processes often reflects even an inequality of the opportunities to access economic resources and reinforces social advantages². This kind of marginalization takes on – many feminists point out – the characters of

¹ Fine 2010.

² Harding 1986.

discrimination because it excludes certain groups and social categories from the enjoyment of some fundamental rights³. Furthermore, science may be hopelessly sexist: it may fuel certain stereotypes, strengthen gender bias, devalue women's participation or interests and deny their point of views⁴. In order to promote a conscious knowledge of the prejudices that it might be based on and encourage an awareness of the injustices that knowledge might generate, the questions we need to ask are: when we talk of knowledge, whose knowledge are we talking about⁵? Namely, what kind of epistemic subject are we referring to⁶? *All* humans? Men or women? Westerners? In wider terms, whose knowledge counts?

In what follows, my aim is provide the reader with an overview of such and similar questions by exploring how and what we should do in order to promote diversity and inclusiveness in knowledge. More precisely, I will be focusing on the issue of diversity and inclusiveness within philosophy with respect to those strategies and best practices (i) to improve the climate in the field for women, people of colour, and other underrepresented groups; and (ii) to decrease the effects of biases more generally. Before doing that, in the next paragraph, I will consider the traditional exclusion of women from philosophy and the negative characterization of the feminine offered by the Western tradition.

1. The philosophical canon and the canon revision

The idea that women and men are vastly different, physically and physiologically, is widespread among ordinary people. Traits such as chromosomes, genitalia, body size and strength typically – we believe – contrast between genders. Also, psychological attributes are commonly thought to determine our membership in a gender and make us different: men are strong, active and independent; women are emotional, passive and cooperative. This stereotypical and fake picture dominates popular mass media too: men are often portrayed as more competitive than women; women as more nurturing than men. Yet, it is often argued that women and men communicate and think very differently: while women regulate their actions by the arbitrary inclinations and opinions, men use logic to solve problems.

Although not as widely accepted universally among philosophers, this view – which argues that women and men are very different and takes femininity as the mark that qualifies women – is also extensively held within the

³Tuana 1989.

⁴Longino and Doell 1983.

⁵Harding 1991.

⁶Nelson 1990.

Western philosophical tradition⁷. As it is well known, at least since the time of Plato, the woman is portrayed as inferior to the man or as an incomplete man. Several canonical philosophers argue explicitly that rationality is masculine and associated to men. Along the line of this prospective, rationality needs to be defined in contrast to femininity: women are portrayed as emotional, more intuitive than men, guided by feeling and not by reason. According to that tradition, women were generally seen as irrational and therefore not made for activities such as science and philosophy. In addition, there are no women in philosophy or – if there are any – they are unimportant. Along the line of this thought, as several feminist philosophers highlight, philosophical norms like “reason”, “objectivity” or “rationality” are traditionally associated to maleness and defined in contrast to femininity. Thus, one of the most important aims of some feminist projects was (and still is) to challenge the negative and oppressive characterization of “woman” and “feminine” that the philosophical tradition, implicitly or explicitly, has offered. Thus, many feminist philosophers have criticized the historical exclusion of women from philosophy by showing that the philosophical picture this tradition gives us is incomplete: women are not absent ‘in the history of philosophy’ and we should add them to the “canon”. Still, several feminist philosophers claim, the canonical tradition is conceptually flawed and biased because it relies on gendered notions⁸. In short, feminists’ conclusion is that the absence of women in the canonical tradition is the effect of gender bias and social-political discrimination: women were excluded also because in the past they were not allowed to pursue university studies.

Thus, the question of the canon is a major concern in feminist theory. A core idea shared by most feminist projects is that most of the canonical philosophical notions require critical analysis. By and large, feminist philosophers are engaged in the project of re-reading the philosophical canon and re-writing the history of philosophy. But, what is exactly a philosophical canon and what does it mean to re-form or extend it? What criterion should justify the choice of a particular canon or a canonical philosopher?

There is a genuinely disagreement among feminists concerning how to evaluate the entire Western philosophical tradition and the criteria of interpretation we should use for its evaluation. As a consequence, there is no unity in the feminist canon revision. Continental and analytic feminist philosophers, in fact, interpret the tradition from two distinct perspectives. Many continental feminists think that gender is a useful notion to apply to the history of philosophy. From this perspective, our tradition is conceptually flawed because its core concepts (“reason”, “objectivity”, “truth”, “logical consistency”, “justice”, etc.) are all male

⁷ Lloyd 1993, 2000, 2002; Tuana 1992; Witt 1996, 2006, 2007.

⁸ It is known that many feminists have widely criticized the association of reason with men and nature with women.

gendered and therefore not useful for the feminist purposes. Consequently, we should reject the philosophical tradition so far and think of the main canonical philosophers (Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Quine, and so on) as sexist. By contrast, feminist philosophers in the analytic legacy disagree and consider many traditional philosophical notions as valuable. More specifically, these notions are not in *themselves* “masculinist” – even though they have often been misinterpreted or distorted within that analytic tradition itself – and do not necessarily carry gender implications. Rather, analytic methods and concepts – like the use of logical notions and linguistic analysis – can be significant to counter sexism and androcentrism. The logical and linguistic analysis can provide us – analytic feminists argue – rational and objective basis (i) to show that some views about women or oppressive to women are deeply mistaken and, consequently, (ii) that they should be rejected. Moreover, according to this approach, it is possible to consider traditional philosophical notions as concerning gender from a neutral point of view. If so, then the feminist canon revision should re-conceptualize notions as “reason” or “objectivity” rather than reject them.

Yet, what does it mean for a concept or a notion to be gendered? The issue of how to define gendered notions is a disputed topic within feminists philosophy and feminists mean by gendered notions or concepts different things.

To uncover the gender bias in the philosophical tradition, according to Charlotte Witt, we should distinguish between *extrinsically* and *intrinsically* gendered notions. Following this distinction, an intrinsically gendered notion «is one that necessarily carries implications regarding gender»⁹, namely it is a «notion that is connected with gender and sexual difference»¹⁰. For example, one might say that Aristotle’s notions of “form” and “matter” reflect sexual differences: the former is *intrinsically* linked to “being male” and latter to “being feminine”. This gender association poses a problem for feminists: Aristotelian matter and form are not treated as equal and the form has priority over the matter. If so, we might conclude, the sexism of the distinction between form and matter is inherent to Aristotle’s metaphysic.

By the contrast, Witt notes, an *extrinsically* gendered notion is «typically does carries implications concerning gender, but not necessarily so»¹¹. Some feminist philosophers have argued that, for example, the distinction Aristotle makes between form and matter is not *intrinsically* connected with gender differences and, even if it is, this sex distinction is not *necessarily* involved in the rest of Aristotle’s theories. If this is correct, we might evaluate Aristotle’s theories differently and think that not all his theses have to be rejected because they are not intrinsically biased against women. Rather, we might state that Aristotle’s

⁹ Witt 2007; 2004: 8.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Witt 2004.

texts are misogynist (because of what he said on women was simply mistaken or false) but take most Aristotle's theories as not necessarily connected to what he said on women. Consequently, we might just ignore his considerations on women but argue that his other theses could be of value for feminist purposes.

Otherwise, Sally Haslanger has argued that saying that a concept is masculine or feminine does not simply mean that the concept is gendered because of its association with men or women. More specifically, we are not simply saying that – since Plato – rationality has been associated with the male and irrationality with the female. If it were so, it would be easy to eliminate this gender association and argue that the sexism of the canonical tradition is not intrinsic to, for example, the account of rationality the tradition has offered. Thus, we cannot just say that the femininity notion the tradition offers to us is mistaken. Rather, Haslanger notes, norms are gendered «by providing ideals that are appropriate to the roles constituting gender»¹². If a notion is gendered or not depends on how we defend genders. Let us consider the notion of rationality or reason. In order to say that this notion is gendered, we should first examine how the ideals of rationality are grounded (or not) in gender. According to Haslanger, we should define genders in terms of social relations. Following her, concepts or notions are gendered «insofar as they function as appropriate norms or ideals for those who stand in these social relations»¹³.

Let us go back now to the issue mentioned above on the theoretical aspects of gender disparity in philosophy. The main questions that arise are: are feminists right or does the gender gap in philosophy really reflect systematic differences in the way individuals belong to different genders are or think? And, if there are indeed systematic differences among women and men, might this explain why few women are working in academia? And how can we make gender equality a concrete reality in philosophy? In what follows, I will focus on the underrepresentation of women in philosophy departments.

2. *The exclusion of women from the Philosophers' Club*

Despite some serious affirmative efforts, as is well known, few women achieve high academic positions in philosophy faculties, and academic authorities often automatically consider men as the first candidates for posts of responsibility¹⁴.

¹² Haslanger 1993: 217.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Data indicating the number and percentages of women in the leading Philosophy Departments (in the US, the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) are available on the website *Philosophical Gourmet Report* (<http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/>) or on *PhilPaper* (<http://philpapers.org/surveys/>). Also see Haslanger 2008. According to these data, men make up almost 80 percent of faculty staff (Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Readers and Professors). The Joint Brit-

What are the causes of this gender disparity? Do women dislike rigours argumentation or simply are less interested than men in philosophy? Do gender differences help explain the gender gap in philosophy departments?

In recent years, in particular in the United States of America and Northern Europe, there has been an increasing debate over the causes of gender inequalities in academia¹⁵. This debate aims at addressing the issue of why philosophy (as a discipline and a profession) seems to have a problem specifically with gender disparity more than other scientific fields. This debate raises the question of whether the gender gap in philosophy is (i) a phenomenon that has to do with the fact that the discipline is still mostly thought, even by professional philosophers, as an expression of that rationality of which men would be *by nature* more capable than women; or (ii) a phenomenon that concerns not only cultural and social facts but also the discipline in itself. More precisely, some philosophers argue that some features of philosophy as a discipline, for example some of its argumentative models or the nature of the issues addressed, might be inherently discriminatory and that philosophy might (as a discipline) implicitly reinforce gender inequalities.

As Marina Sbisà illustrates in her contribution on the controversial debate over the underrepresentation of women in philosophy and what we should do to actively challenge gender disparity, Louise Antony distinguishes two different approaches to analyse and contrast women discrimination: “Different Voices” (according to which women are discriminated in philosophy because of their difference) and “Perfect Storm” (according to which such discrimination is caused by a combination of independent factors). According to Antony, the first model is committed to «the antecedent existence of *intrinsic* gender differences»¹⁶; the second model is the one we ought to adopt: it «seeks to explain women’s low representation within philosophy as a kind of interaction effect among familiar kinds of sex discrimination that are operative throughout society, but that take on particular forms and force as they converge within the academic institution of philosophy»¹⁷. Among the independent factors that play a role in the “Perfect Storm”, Sbisà argues in defending Anthony’s picture, there are also some “internal” aspects of the relationship between being a woman and

ish Philosophical Association/SWIP UK Committee for Women in Philosophy also published a report on gender imbalance in the UK: <http://www.swipuk.org/notices/2011-09-08/>. For more data on gender schemas and the accumulation of advantage, see the gender tutorial site at <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/gendertutorial/aboutus.html>. On gender equity and why so few women are at the top of their profession, see Valian 1998, 2005. On data about the situation in Italy, see Sbisà in this volume.

¹⁵ Antony 2012; Haslanger 2008; Valian 2005.

¹⁶ Antony 2012: 229.

¹⁷ *Ivi*: 231.

doing philosophy («such as the normative role of gender stereotypes, the role of care-giving in society [...], women's difficult path towards the indispensable condition of being autonomous subjects and agents»).

Indeed, our profession does not represent the diversity of our current population. This discriminatory situation is extremely serious at present and affects not only women but also other marginalized social groups. This is what Linda Alcoff¹⁸ calls the “demographic problem” in philosophy, namely the problem of representation and marginalization in the discipline. As we have noted above, the issue of diversity and inclusion in philosophy is indeed an *internal* matter to the discipline, since it deals with some forms of resistance. As Shannon Dea explains, canonical philosophers (such like Aristotle, Augustine, Hume, Spinoza, and Schopenhauer) deprecated not only women's capacity for reason, but also the rational capacity of various radicalized groups (Blacks, Latinos) or disabled people. Consequently, in order to fight the marginalization and exclusion of all minorities, we should review our philosophical pedagogy and methodology by taking diversity seriously in our professional practices and creating welcoming cultures that *value* inclusion. Following her suggestion, our pedagogy and philosophical methodology should be informed and enriched by insights from “deep pluralism”. Unfortunately, things are not so easy and changes are not always instantaneous or easy to reach. As we said, there are internal obstacles that prevent the practical efforts to positively (and concretely) respond to the “demographic problem”. In order to clarify the phenomenon of minorities' marginalization, IAN JAMES KIDD analyses the different forms of resistance and suggests a typology of resisters (the *naïf*, the *conservative*, the *proud*, the *hostile*) – viz. generalised types of person who resists to the efforts «of those trying to introduce ameliorative measures» – by mapping their modes of resistance.

In what follows, we will briefly see how these forms of resistance are also deeply embedded in the way we come to exercise (or fail to come) authority and linked to the linguistic discrimination.

2.1 Trust, authority, and speech acts

Another fundamental question in the debate on discrimination in philosophy and one of the main topics currently discussed is the related issue: how can we challenge the narrowness of what is understood as “philosophical knowledge” and how “good knowledge” is evaluated? Should the concept of knowledge be considered in connection with notions such as trust, reliance and testimony? Should we need to re-imagine what “authority”, “credibility” or “testimony” are, and revisit the ways in which we measure quality, ability, credibility and reliability?

¹⁸ Alcoff 2003

Some answers to these questions are the focus of the contributions from Fiona Jenkins and Jacopo Domenicucci. In the context of the gender equity debate, Jenkins offers an accurate depiction of the relevant and interesting critical insights on some of the major themes in recent debates on women's discrimination in philosophy, namely the relation between women's marginalization and the ways in which we measure excellence and quality in our discipline. The phenomenon of discrimination against women in philosophy and the under-representation of women in academia is also linked to the rankings of excellence and peer review processes. She proposes «an approach based in efforts to engage in socio-political regulation of discrimination» and shows how this regulation might inform and enrich our discipline and profession. In his contribution, Domenicucci shows the relation between trust, agency and discrimination, which is central to ethics and social ontology. He introduces a non-merely epistemic notion of trust by sketching a grammar of discrimination and shows how this might provide a better insight into a much-debated point in the epistemic injustice literature, namely what is distinctively morally harmful in discriminatory lack of trust and distrust.

As is well known, discrimination can take many forms and have different pathways leading to different results. As John Austin has argued, speech may constitute and cause subordination. Contributions from Claudia Bianchi, Bianca Cepollaro and Laura Caponetto respectively address the recent controversial debate over how language reflects and perpetuates subordination. In particular, they examine the ways in which language spreads discrimination. Bianchi focuses on hate speech by addressing the main objection to accounts of hate speech in terms of illocutionary speech acts, that is the *Authority Problem* and paying the attention to the social status of *both* the speaker and the audience. The subordinate acts are not made in a sort of social vacuum. Rather, they are made in a wider network of oppressive (cultural, social, economic and political) practices. In line with this perspective, Cepollaro maintains that given a presuppositional account of slurs we can make sense of their extra-linguistic effects on discrimination and shows how such analysis offers a good explanation of other non-linguistic phenomena. Slurs differ from other expressives (like "jerk", "asshole") and differ from explicit discriminatory statements. The best way to respond to hate speech and to mitigate their dangerous consequences is, Cepollaro highlights, to make explicit the derogatory content of epithets and then reject it. Caponetto instead examines pornography as a practice of discrimination based on sex that causes the silencing and subordination of women. As is known, according to Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon (1988), pornography can be defined as a systematic practice of discrimination on the basis of sex. Pornography may silence women by causing their speech act of sexual refusal to fail to be understood, or to be misunderstood. Caponetto clarifies this debate (i) by discussing the thesis according to which women's refusals fail because «men don't recognize women's authority»; and (ii) by showing why

this account should be rejected and (iii) presenting an alternative account of the failure of women's refusals (according to which women's refusals fail because men «ascribe to themselves the authority to order»).

*3. Can we remedy these forms of injustice? Some best practices to promote equality in philosophy*¹⁹.

In the light of what has been pointed out the following question can be made: what needs to change in our knowledge practices and profession? As several feminist philosophers maintain, we should take affirmative steps towards diversifying at two different levels: through the training of women and underrepresented minority philosophers, and through hiring and promotion practices. At the same time, we should also shape in a different way the intellectual community and improve the work environment in our departments. For example, we should (i) integrate information about implicit bias and stereotype threat (and explain how to avoid them) into our teaching methods course for students, and (ii) explore new approaches to teaching that might prove more inclusive. In order to address the problems affecting diversity in the philosophical profession, many philosophers argue, we should explore potential solutions²⁰. At the same time, we should encourage a supportive atmosphere and enforce policies prohibiting all forms of discrimination (like as harassment and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace) and assist members of the community in addressing these problems.

In the next paragraphs, I shall not address the issue of what causes gender gap in philosophy or the under-representation of women in philosophy departments, nor of how philosophy cannot be neutral with respect to gender and discriminate against certain social groups. Rather, I will explore some proposals and best practices that aim at finding a solution or at least mitigate the gender gap in philosophy and promoting a greater presence and participation of women (and marginalized groups) in academia. In what follows, precisely, I present an overview about (some of) simple things we could do to promote the full inclusion of minorities in careers in a field such as philosophy and achieving gender equality in academia²¹. As we will see, to encourage (or raise the awareness on)

¹⁹ See Feminist Philosophers Blog: "10 small things you can do to promote gender equality in Philosophy", <https://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/ten-small-things-you-can-do-topromote-gender-equityin-philosophy>.

²⁰ In some departments, there has been curated a collection of information and resources on such issues in the Climate section of their web page, under the links on implicit bias, stereotype threat. For example, see the Rutgers Collection at: <https://philosophy.stanford.edu/groups/women-philosophy>.

²¹ I borrow some of the suggestions proposed here: <https://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/ten-small-things-you-can-do-topromote-gender-equityin-philosophy>.

gender equality in philosophy, some authors have suggested some practices and behaviours that we should concretely follow or take to improve the climate in the field for women and underrepresented groups, and promote diversity and pluralism in philosophy.

(i) *Organizing conferences and seminars.* Some philosophers suggest that, in organizing a conference or workshop, we should invite as experts not only male speakers. As research has shown, when planning a convention, the organizer might be strongly influenced (or affected) by gender in the choice of the guests. Some evidence suggests that what motivates this choice lies in the fact that competence and epistemic authority are commonly attributed mainly to men or some social categories²². Implicit biases impact, consciously or unconsciously, our choices²³. As some studies show, normally we prefer a man to a woman as an expert; in some cases we prefer a man even when his resume is qualitatively less competitive or prestigious than that of a woman. Women are often victims of this prejudices and psychological mechanisms. How can we then correct this discriminatory behaviour? Since these are mechanisms that sometimes act in an unconscious way, there is no escaping that risk. To draw up a more equitable list of possible invited experts, an aid may come from “The UPDirectory database” (Directory of Philosophers from underrepresented Groups in Philosophy)²⁴, where one can find lots of information on women or people from minority groups working in or out of the academy with reference to their philosophical competence and specialization area. This database is a useful tool for those who would like to invite a woman (or a member of minority groups) to a conference but do not know which women (or member of minority groups) work on the topic of the event that they want to plan. This database has been thought with the aim of limiting some of the negative effects of implicit prejudices that are often the cause of women’s poor visibility in academy. In addition, to support greater visibility of women, one good thing to do might be to organize at one’s own department a conference or a meeting over the issue of the gender equality and mechanisms that influence our choices.

(ii) *Attending conferences and seminars.* What can we do in practice when we are participating in a conference with only male speakers in the program? When we participate as speaker to a conference where all the speakers (or most of them) are males, we should report to the organizers the absence of women (or minority group). But, how should we report it? The suggestion is to “say something” about it in a way that is comfortable for us. The report should not be controversial but constructive. The best attitude is to make positive comments, be ironic and not aggressive towards the organizers. As pointed out by

²² Fricker 2007.

²³ McGlone and Aronson 2006.

²⁴ See here: <http://www.theupdirectory.com/>

Jennifer Saul (2014), we should remember that one might have a prejudice against someone without being aware of it. In fact, no one seems to be immune to prejudices, even those who share democratic beliefs or have egalitarian ideals. As Saul argues, therefore, we should not necessarily blame those who have gender bias since – in some cases – they might be not able to realize this nor be guilty for having been educated in a sexist society. Such prejudiced judgments, especially when they are unconscious, may therefore not always be rejected. At least, one can mitigate their harmful and damaging effects. Hence, the more aware we are of these mechanisms, the more possibility there is that we can handle them. In line with this perspective, some philosophers have engaged the so-called “Gendered Conference Campaign”²⁵, through which they contact the Organizing Committee of the conference where there are no women among the participants in order to report this exclusion.

(iii) *Editing a volume or a special issue.* When one is editing a volume or a special issue of a scientific journal, she or he should not forget to invite women to write a contribution. The best thing would be involving the same number of people in relation to their gender or minority memberships.

(iv) *Teaching.* When one gives a course, she or he should include in the program books or papers written also by women. This effort should be made – compatibly with the course taught – with the aim to offer to the students contributions by women and show them that also a woman can be a good philosopher. Despite the fact that today many women philosophers publish with prestigious publishers and on major scientific journals, they are not always included in the syllabi. This exclusion has the effect of reinforcing the false belief that women are not good at philosophy and that rational thinking is not appropriate for women or that philosophy is the expression only of male thought. Besides, including contributions of women in programs and discussing them during the class means presenting to female students a possible (an alternative) woman’s model to emulate. When this occurs, many more female students decide (at the end of their studies) to pursue a college career or start a Ph.D.

(v) *Reviewing contributions for scientific journals.* If you are part of the editorial staff of a scientific journal or a member of its Scientific Committee, you should insist that the so-called blind review is practiced during the evaluation of a paper. As some data show, when the review is not anonymous, papers written by women are rejected at the first instance. This happens even for articles written by philosophers from universities considered less prestigious. Namely, the paper submitted to a journal by a man or someone who carries out his\her research activities in a university such as Oxford tends to be taken more seriously compared to the contributions submitted by a woman or a researcher

²⁵To learn more about it, see the link at: <https://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/gendered-conference-campaign/>

from not so famous a university. Even in this case, there is a bias in favour of important names and well-known philosophers (to whom we tend to be more benevolent with respect to objections that could be raised). Thus, anonymous review makes the evaluation process fairer both for women and for who belongs to certain social categories.

vi) *Giving credit to the scientific contribution of women.* We should have the habit of always giving credit to the work of a woman. According to some data, there is some reluctance to pay tribute to the scientific contribution made by a woman. This reticence has also to do with the different ways in which men behave during philosophical discussions. Many women have the tendency to be less bright during a talk in public or less involved in a philosophical discussion in a workshop. During a seminar or a conference, for example, women tend to make few questions or raise few objections. In order to eradicate this practice, during a seminar or conference, we should publicly say that the contribution that a woman is giving to the discussion is good (when it is so) and point it out to others participants (when they do not do it). Here too, the suggestion is to recognize the merit of a woman to participation in the philosophical debate in a way that is more suitable to us. For example, in a case such as the context of a seminar, one might think of – if she or he takes the floor – to anticipate what we have to say by making a remark like: “Maria was rightly stating something like this before ...”. This is important for stimulating women’s participation in the discussion. Another good practice is, when one is the chair in a discussion after a talk, to give first the floor to a woman. This encourages more women to raise their hands and make questions.

vii) *Speaking of the bias phenomenon.* Since bias and cognitive threat may be unconscious, we should discuss with colleagues and students about this phenomenon. For there is little awareness of this phenomenon among those who work in academia. Therefore, the more people become aware of the phenomenon, the more chance we have to counter the harmful consequences stereotypes might have on the victims. Recently, in some departments, they have curated a collection of information and resources on such issues in the Climate section of their web page, under the links on implicit bias, stereotype threat²⁶. Also, there are some blogs where women report their experiences of what it means doing philosophy and being a woman²⁷. Still, some philosophy departments have started a chapter on Minorities and Philosophy²⁸, which aims to understand issues related to minority

²⁶For example, see the Rutgers Collection at: <https://philosophy.stanford.edu/groups/women-philosophy>.

²⁷See “What is it like to be a woman in philosophy?” at: <https://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com>.

²⁸To learn more about it, see “Women in Philosophy Reading Group” on: <https://philosophy.stanford.edu/groups/women-philosophy>.

participation in academic philosophy and respond to theoretical issues concerning philosophy of gender, race, sexual orientation, class, disability.

Are these suggestions sufficient to find a solution for the gender gap in philosophy and promote diversity in philosophy? The answer to that question seems obvious. The awareness of the mechanisms that trigger certain prejudices is not enough to give to women and marginalized groups the recognition they deserve. Moreover, the fact that the activation of implicit stereotypes is often unconscious does not guarantee the end of the discriminatory behaviour towards women or minorities. As it has been argued, in order to fight culturally certain prejudices, a strong motivation is needed. Nevertheless, being aware of the mechanisms and the way they operate can be very helpful and an important starting point to counter (at least in part) the phenomenon of inequality in academy.

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