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The Past and Future of the Present

> I want to draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography, and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World – without the mandate of conquest.
>
> (Toni Morrison)[1]

Methodology exercises a certain perennial fascination for historians of philosophy. For many of us whose philosophical practice concerns historical figures or, for that matter, ideas of history, conversations about what Edwin Curley has so aptly called our "dialogues with the dead" remain alive both because the work of our predecessors continues to inspire reflection and because our dialogues with ourselves, that is, our self-understandings, and the intellectual and institutional contours of our field change.[2] Discussions of method investigate how we understand the historical situatedness of thinking, our own relations to the texts and the intellectual inheritances and formations in which we encounter them, and what our interest in the past might say about our relation to the present and the future. If philosophy itself is dialogical, in the sense of constituting itself through ongoing discussions and debates, scholarship about historical works of philosophy enters into these dialogues, joining the conversation from its own moment and horizons. The history of the past is thus a history of the present and a projection into the future.

In what follows, I consider some prevailing models and current problems for historians of philosophy. I have argued elsewhere for a mixed method: contextualist, hermeneutic, and genealogical methods all figure in my own approach to reading texts in the history – or better, histor*ies* – of philosophy.[3] Here, I briefly review those approaches in order to turn to broader questions of boundaries, canons, and our conceptualization of what counts as philosophy. Specifically, what would it mean to adopt a decolonial point of view? My answer is twofold. First, we need an expanding and expansive notion of philosophy and philosophical literacy. No one – no single scholar, no single department or program, no single institution – can aspire to truly comprehensive knowledge, so we will

[1] Morrison 1992. 3.
[2] Curley 1986.
[3] Klein 2013.

need to think what philosophical literacy means and to explore new modes of collaboration and cooperation. Second, rethinking what counts as philosophy – roughly, the historically- and culturally-inflected efforts of human beings to make sense of themselves and the world when other discourses do not suffice – entails shifts in attention and resources. We need to commit material resources to reshaping not simply our ideas, but our institutions. In reflecting on the need for an expanding, less homogeneous and more inclusive approach to philosophy and its histories, I make no claim to completeness and write, as will be clear, primarily from my own perspective as a scholar of medieval and early modern philosophy and from my own position as a North American academic. My range of references reflects my particular intellectual peregrinations and and efforts to think them through. Finally, it must emphasized from the outset that many, many colleagues have devoted themselves and continue to devote themselves to a decolonial, increasingly global, and pluralistic sense of philosophizing. If as philosophers we have been ignoring their work, the fault is our own.[4]

I. SOME PREVAILING MODELS

For Anglophone readers, arguments for unabashed antiquarianism, rational reconstruction and appropriation for contemporary use, and varieties of contextualism have been the predominant ways of framing our relationship to our predecessors' works.[5] The precise boundaries of these models are, to be sure, not always easy to determine. At the extremes, perhaps, the difference between, on the one hand, transmuting historical works into contemporary terms to make them responsive to current problems and, on the other, trying to read historical works on their own terms and carefully marking differences between their worlds and our own is clear. It is, for example, one thing to appeal to authors in translation, transplant them into a contemporary philosophical idiom, and/or investigate historical texts primarily for their relevance to contemporary concerns. It is another to learn languages, grapple with how meaning changes over time and study the dynamics of transmission, and consider the intellectual setting or environment of a text or debate. To pick a very obvious example, if we un-

[4] Thus Bryan Van Norden introduces the term "less commonly taught philosophies" in *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (2017) precisely to remind readers of the gap between what exists (and scholars who study it) and what happens in mainstream American philosophy departments. Van Norden's "LCTP's" include not only philosophy from Asia, Africa, India, and the Indigenous Americas, which are the primary focus of the book, but also "African American, Christian, Continental, feminist, Islamic, Jewish, and LGBTQ philosophy" (Van Norden 2017. 3).

[5] On these positions and variations thereof, see four well-known collections: Jonathan Rée et al. 1978; Rorty – Schneewind – Skinner (ed.) 1984; Sorell – Rogers 2005; Lærke – Smith – Schliesser (ed.) 2013.

critically export a post-Kantian concept of the a priori to ancient and medieval thinkers, we will be exceptionally confused. Similarly, if we fail to recognize the distinctively Christian history of the ideas of volition and free will and import them uncritically into our readings of Aristotle, Maimonides or Averroes, let alone to Buddhist or Native American philosophy, confusion and ignorance are sure to follow. Yet our practice tends to be more mixed and harder to articulate and limn, for the simple reason that we inevitably read from where we are, that is, from our formation and in light of our own inner archives and training. Reading itself is interactive: no one approaches texts with an empty mind, and our minds are receptive and productive in all sorts of ways. It is surely folly to believe that we can become perfectly transparent to ourselves, and therefore better to believe that vigilance and care will serve us better.

Thinking this way, both the texts we read and we as readers have contexts. Susan James has emphasized that "works of philosophy are best understood as contributions to ongoing conversations or debates",[6] that is, as engaged with constellations of participants (named and otherwise), produced at historical times and places, and embedded in networks of texts, concepts, and problems. Mogens Lærke makes the same point more expansively, arguing that to read contextually is to hold that

> Texts communicate in all possible ways, by reinforcing, contradicting, dismissing, overruling, correcting, expanding, re-appropriating, misconstruing, or confronting each other. In this way, the texts within a given contextual cluster form interpretative perspectives on each other – perspectives that can inform us about the historical meaning of each of them within that specific context…. [T]he meaning of a past philosophical text can be determined by considering the internal, structured argument of the text as a singular response to a given external context of writing established within particular historical circumstances, by considering the text as a structured contribution to a given philosophical controversy. (Lærke 2021. 7.)

Reading contextually thus demands linguistic precision, tracing both the internal lexicon of the author and text we wish to understand and reading widely enough to be alert to intertexts. Because the texts we study emerge in intellectual contexts and specific historical times and places, considerations of the institutional structures, technologies and scientific disciplines, social conventions, literary and aesthetic cultures, and political and economic power or lack thereof that frame philosophical activity and scholarship about it are all relevant. The history of the book, the history of universities and societies or networks beyond its walls, the dynamics of empire, cross-cultural exchanges, political and other crises, technological change and so on all come to mind in enriching our reader-

[6] James 2012. 5.

ly efforts. Spinoza's overly political form of philosophizing makes him an easy case for this kind of approach. Yet he is hardly a unique case when we begin to think of philosophy as part of culture, a situated, connected pursuit carried out in times and places beyond the Athenian port, the stoa, the monastery, the school or university, the seat of power, the scientific society, even the salon. The internal dynamics of philosophical dialogues and intellectual networks need to be thought in tandem with other features of their settings. Far from a historicist *reductio ad contextum*, with its invitation to visit a museum of the past – and presumably to return to our far superior present – reading contextually makes texts legible and lively.

Thinking in terms of context permits us to avoid the pitfalls of overly rigid conceptions of tradition, with their presumptions of identity or self-sameness, closure and unity, and directionality or developmental progress. If we are to think in terms of *traditio*, it seems better to think in terms of concrete transmissions and the way modes of experience and understanding sediment, inevitably unevenly, and shift or disappear. Context can be hermetic and relatively isolated or quite internally diverse, marked by cross-cultural exchanges and hybridizations through travel, exploration, commercial contact, and the dynamics of empire. At scale, studying context moves us beyond generic references to the "East" or the "West," the "North" or the "South," as if such places are clearly demarcated, internally homogeneous (even monolithic), or inevitably opposed to one another.[7] In a similar way, thinking in terms of contexts avoids some obvious problems of periodization; what might meaningfully be called, for example, "medieval" in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophy does not all coincide on a single calendar, nor is the meaning of "modern" entirely singular. Compared to traditions, conversations and debates point to greater fluidity, involving both persistence and change, producing multiplicity, variation, and disruption or divergence as well as – and often simultaneously with – continuity. As Lisa Shapiro has observed, conversations generally presume some shared *topos*, but even common starting points frequently do not provide inevitable ends. Rather the range of conversation is indeterminately wide, open to digressing or developing (depending on one's point of view) through agreements and disagreements, reconsiderations and refinements or displacements of presuppositions and positions,

[7] Edward Saïd's landmark study *Orientalism* pillories the prevailing western view of East and West: "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Saïd 1994. 40). Recent scholarship in medieval philosophy shows the distortion introduced by the categories of "western," in the sense of European, and "eastern." Where do they leave us with respect to the development of philosophy in the Islamic world, whose medieval geography extends from Cordoba to Baghdad and whose impact is immense in the European centers of Latin philosophy? Early modernists, too, are beginning to break down inherited ideas of philosophical geography by studying how works by European authors are received by non-European readers and how works from beyond Europe are received by European readers.

shifting understandings, and so on.[8] Convergence, consonance, and creativity are possible, but also antagonism and mis-hearing, divergence and dissonance, failures of communication and recognition, and frustration or exhaustion, not to mention sheer *aporia*. The contextualist reader must accordingly be a discerning listener, alert to the many ways conversations can go. When we think in terms of conversations, attention to this generative many-wayness thus becomes a kind of method, that is, a met-*hodos*.

Powerful as the idea of context is, especially in conjunction with the models of dialogue, debate, and interaction, context itself is by no means self-evident. Far from being given, context must rather be, quite literally, woven together, and judgments about what constitutes relevant context are contingent and debatable.[9] Whether we delimit context by time, by place, by language, by thematic unity or pursuit of what we see as related problems, by library lists, or by some other factor, delimitation is a matter of judgment. Further, what is the relationship between our ideas about context and our ideas about the meaning of a text we are studying? Judgments about appropriate context for any text or set of texts we seek to understand seem intertwined with our interpretive ideas: ideas about our primary object(s) of study guide ideas about context, and vice versa. Thus it seems difficult, perhaps impossible, to make a clean separation, such that the past is always in some sense our image of the past. For this reason, considerations from hermeneutics, whether oriented by Heideggerian facticity and occlusions of the *Seinsfrage* or in a more Gadamerian vein of reflection on *Bildung* and the production of self-understanding through recovering tradition, and ideas of genealogy, whether more Nietzschean or more Foucauldian, can be of help to historically-oriented scholars. Deconstructive reading, precisely as problematizing ideas of self and other, inside and outside, may similarly be of use. Thinking in terms of hermeneutical circles and/or genealogically calls attention to our own constitution and moment as readers. These questions of readerly constitution, which pertain both to our own formation and to the formation of the times and places in which we conduct our scholarship and articulate our arguments, are both too often under-theorized and exceedingly difficult.

In analyzing the way understanding arises from our historical situation, Gadamer emphasizes that we remain enmeshed with the tradition(s) that have produced us and so oriented by a set of prejudices – literally pre-judgments *(praeiudicia, Vorurteile)* – that shape our experience and understanding. If tradition provides the initial horizon for understanding and interpretation, dialogue, pre-

[8] Shapiro 2004. See especially 237–38.

[9] Spinoza studies supplies a perfect illustration in this regard. His work has been contextualized in terms of Cartesianism, Hobbesian philosophy, Marxisms of different kinds, Dutch politics and political philosophy, stoicism, Jewish and Islamic Aristotelianism, Sufism, and Chinese philosophy (on Chinese philosophy see Lai 1985). Needless to say, one of the challenges of Spinoza scholarship is the wide range of texts at Spinoza's disposal.

cisely as an encounter with another discloses our presumptive commitments and affords a space for reflection. As a space of negotiating difference, conversation can produce displacement and change, not merely repetition, entrenchment, and the dynamics of dominance. On the one hand, Gadamer's analysis combines both a subtle account of our situatedness and insists that our "others" both deserve respect and may actually hold superior views, such that we can and should be moved to a more complex relation to our own tradition(s).[10] On the other hand, Gadamer's notions of horizonality and the "fusing of horizons"[11] raise questions about how other others can be, that is, about the limits of recognition; if fusion is required, whither radical difference and irreducible multiplicity? On the question of alterity, Gadamer is hardly alone is this predicament.

In a very different idiom, Foucault defines genealogy as a practice devoted to exploring "the history of the present"[12] as a contingent formation and as concerned with "the insurrection of subjugated knowledges." Genealogy directs us to "historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systematizations that mask confrontations and struggles" and "a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity."[13] Foucauldian investigations aspire not to "positivistic returns to a form of science that is more attentive or more accurate," but instead to exhibiting the implicit and explicit paradigms and "power effects characteristic of any discourse that is regarded as scientific."[14] Each genealogical account, moreover, remains open to future disruption and reconfiguration. Far from presuming an order or narrative, genealogy is "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary" and "operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times."[15] It is a form of disruptive reconsideration that does not aspire to finality.

From a hermeneutic standpoint, our relation to canonical, "major" works or, roughly speaking, the Kuhnian "normal" discourse of our field, is complicated by how their influence has shaped and continues to shape our thinking. It is difficult to read the mainstays and classics (however we identify the list) as distinctive, even parochial or peculiar, rather than as natural or obvious. At the same time, our unreflective, uncontested commitments and horizons operate, in Foucault's sense, to disqualify so-called minor and peripheral works as incom-

[10] See especially *Truth and Method* II.4. Elements of a Theory of Hermeneutic Experience (Gadamer 2004. 268–306).

[11] Gadamer 2004. 305–06.

[12] Foucault 1979. 31.

[13] Foucault 2003. 7. Some readers may prefer the model of Foucauldian archeology.

[14] Foucault 2003. 9.

[15] Foucault 1980. 76.

prehensible, even unphilosophical. Non-comprehension and disqualification are hardly starting grounds for productive conversation. Assimilation, illegibility, and inattention are hardly promises of a past with a future. The most obvious result is that many forms of philosophical research are rendered inapt for career-building. The exigencies of securing reliable employment, publication, research support, and other forms of professional status and prestige point in other directions. To be clear, the pressures operate in implicit and explicit ways. The prestige economy in philosophy demands not only quantity but, increasingly, attention to impact metrics and rankings. It is inevitable that scholars will align themselves in relation to the perceived status quo and its norms of permissible variation, even its norms for what represents "originality," "novelty," or that increasingly corporatized word, "diversity." And it is equally inevitable that scholars will accommodate themselves to institutional structures that reward sub-specialization over breadth, publication over teaching and so-called "service," i.e. the critically important work of shaping curricula, organizing conferences, mentoring, and so on. The absence of robust support for translation as a central philosophical activity should also be singled out as an obstacle to expanding our ideas of philosophy. Despite these pressures, reading outside one's field, even when it does not produce something that meets our institutions' ambivalent desires for "interdisciplinary scholarship," attending talks in other disciplines, and all of the other ways of exploring ideas beyond the limits of our own habitual environments and expertise are essential for rethinking the history of philosophy and the future of philosophy as a field.

II. VICTORS' HISTORY

We can also juxtapose Foucault's "subjugated knowledges," taking note of its focus on the operations of power, with Benjamin's critique of historicism as the narrative of victors:

> With whom does historicism actually sympathize? The answer is inevitable: with the victor! And all rulers are the heirs of prior conquerors…Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal process in which current rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried in the procession. (Benjamin 2003. 391.)

Benjamin's critique of victors' history directs our attention to the question of what our histories consign to the margins or even oblivion and whether it is possible to establish a more open practice that interrupts and pluralizes narratives. Benjamin's own historical inquiries undermine reigning divisions between the precious and the discarded, the ephemeral and the historical, the central and

the marginal. This open practice would require us to investigate both what has been omitted from, even written out, of the records and archives and what is encrypted or obscured within them. When we read "the great geniuses" it is easy to miss "the anonymous toil of others who lived in the same period." So many of the dead are simply voiceless: silenced by social structures, displaced by empire and enslavement and all of the cultural destruction they wreak, or simply lost to the ravages of time. Reading with Benjamin, the question is how histories and temporalities emerge and be rethought in their difference and multiplicity as we twist free of both salvation history and "secular" progress in its Kantian, Hegelian and post-Hegelian forms? Benjamin's Angel of History, "propelled backward into the future, ever keeping its gaze on the past" and the related notion of "weak messianic power"[16] direct us to the memory of the oppressed and the possibility of some progress, but withdraw both the image of completeness and the promise of redemption.[17]

In the scholarship on early modern philosophy, Eileen O'Neill's classic essay, "Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History," exemplifies the project of reversing disqualification. Interestingly O'Neill proceeds under the sign of Benjamin's Angel of History to restore thinkers and texts excised by historiographers in the wake of the French Revolution. O'Neill calls for their reinstatement not under the banner of a more accurate, more comprehensive history of philosophy on the model of *Geistesgeschichte*, but as part of a continual rethinking of what counts as philosophy and what matters in its history.[18] "Perhaps a philosopher," O'Neill suggests, in possession of a detailed, comprehensive compendium of figures and positions in the history of philosophy, might think of herself as being "in the best position to evaluate philosophical arguments and projects, for she then would be able to judge which were the most innovative, strategically useful, and elegant moves in the game called 'philosophy'." On the contrary, she argues,

> This historical narrative itself never attains closure; it must be revised as philosophy itself changes its rules and even, perhaps, the very goals of the game. The evaluation

[16] Benjamin 2003. 392. On the history of culture as barbarism, see also Convolute N of the *The Arcades Project*: "Barbarism lurks in the very concept of culture – as the concept of a fund of values which is considered independent not, indeed, of the production process in which these values originated, but of the one in which they survive." (Benjamin 1999. 467–68.)

[17] On the question of whether in fact Benjamin retains a vestigial, if dialectically problematized notion of progress, see Allen 2017.

[18] O'Neill 1997. 42. For O'Neill's view that (presumably) more traditional Marxist historical materialism and "postmodern intertextualism" undervalue western philosophy's commitment to justification as an ideal, see her footnote 108.

> of moves in the game, thus, cannot be made after the detailed history is completed; the evaluations must be made as we go along rewriting the history of the discipline – as we "brush history against the grain". (O'Neill 1997. 40.)[19]

Like Benjamin, O'Neill holds that the Hegelian promise of seeing historical time from the perspective of its culmination never materializes. No Spirit recollects itself into temporal events, realizing them as moments of its own self-development and thus transforming the contingencies of history into "a slow-moving succession of spirits," a panoramic gallery of the moments of history as images endowed with the wealth of spirit that the self must "digest" into itself in absolute knowledge.[20] At the same time, as O'Neill recognizes, Benjamin's angelic position is also not ours. The Angel is thrown about, unable to stop the violent storm "which we call progress." Benjamin suggests that it is precisely the Angel's powerlessness that afford him a clear view. We, by contrast, are in possession of only partial sight and a "weak messianic power," each insufficient to do justice to the past and each suggestive not only of our inheritance of spoils, but of our implication in the disasters of the present and future. Adorno makes this point with great force at the end of *Minima Moralia*: "The more passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world." The question, then, is how thinking can become both more responsible and more aware of its failure and irresponsibility, not how it can become angelic.[21]

In *medias res*, then, O'Neill's encyclopedic doxography and bibliography of early modern women serves "to overwhelm you with the presence of women in early modern philosophy. It is only this way that the problem of women's virtually complete absence in contemporary histories of philosophy becomes pressing, mind-boggling, possibly scandalous."[22] To face the scandal, we must explore the archives, read, edit and translate, for only making the texts available to scholars can generate new narratives and assessments: "we are at a point…where a rewriting of the narrative of philosophy is called for – one in which a number of the women cited here, and some of the forgotten men, will emerge as significant figures."[23] Twenty five years after "Disappearing Ink," multiple "new narratives" projects are flourishing, changing how we think about philosophy and its

[19] Benjamin 2003 refers to "brushing history against the grain".

[20] Hegel 1997. 492.

[21] I thank Yannik Thiem and Idit Dobbs-Weinstein for many conversations about Benjamin. On Adorno's formulation of responsibility and irresponsibility, see Thiem 2009. On bringing together Benjamin and Adorno's critical historico-philosophical concerns together with the history of medieval and early modern philosophy in Europe, see Dobbs-Weinstein 2015. Eric Schliesser 2019 also comments on O'Neill's invocation of Benjamin.

[22] O'Neill 1997. 32.

[23] O'Neill 1997. 43.

professional-institutional futures.[24] O'Neill's efforts are reflected in the success of projects such as "New Narratives in the History of Philosophy",[25] Project Vox, the Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists at Paderborn University, and a plethora of scholars, centers, and research groups working in many languages, locales, and periods. Research in this area reflects, moreover, the recognition that gender is an historically produced category, intersecting with factors such class, race, and coloniality, such that we cannot unreflectively turn to history with our current categories.[26]

Gender is but one factor on account of which we ought to be overwhelmed with what has escaped or barely attracted our notice and so moved to rethink what might best be called the *histories* of philosophy. Religion has been another axis of exclusionary history, and scholars of medieval and early modern philosophy have moved away from an exclusively Christian focus to reconsider work by Jewish and Islamic thinkers. The histories of Averroism, the study of Hebrew and Arabic in early modern Europe, and the like have reshaped our sense of cross-cultural communication and exchange as well as suppression and exclusion.[27] Beyond these by now familiar borders, studying the translation into Latin by Jesuit missionaries of Confucius' *Analects*[28], the transmission of Buddhist philosophy, and the variety of African and Indigenous thought should become part of rethinking philosophy and its connections to religion by philosophers. I say "by philosophers" because much of this work has been pushed out to departments of religion, anthropology, and area studies programs.[29] Race is a further a paramount example. The entanglements of European and Anglophone philosophy with the politics of empires, missionary activities, colonization, and slavery has occasioned increasing scrutiny – and demands much more, both with respect to the texts we choose to read and teach and with respect to the historiography and formation of our field. Just as the patently patriarchal views of historiographers after the French Revolution wrote women out of the history of

[24] Sadly, O'Neill's early death in 2017 has left us without her brilliance, indefatigable curiosity, and generosity to colleagues.

[25] "New Narratives in the History of Philosophy" is lead by Lisa Shapiro (Simon Fraser University), Marguerite Deslauriers (McGill University), and Karen Detlefsen (University of Pennsylvania) and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The New Narratives group collaborates widely with scholars in and beyond North America. I am a participant in the project.

[26] The literature on the construction of gender is vast, and it is difficult to select a starting point. One brief, incisive sample is Spillers 1987.

[27] On the case of Averroes, see especially Hasse 2016. Malcolm 2019 and Bevilacqua 2020 are also very useful for early modernists.

[28] *Confucius Sinarum Philosophicus* (1687). On Leibniz's interest in and admiration for Chinese philosophy, see Perkins 2007.

[29] Much as I suggest here that our idea of philosophy should expand to include many hitherto excluded "others," it nevertheless remains to see if those "others" wish to count themselves as part of philosophy, however we (re)define it. The academic disciplines and divisions as we have them may require yet more radical rethinking and rearrangement.

philosophy, the patently racist, colonial views of, most prominently, Kant and Hegel have determined the history and content of academic philosophy in the Anglo-European world, effacing work by their predecessors and setting the basic frameworks so many of us have inherited.[30] In this regard, too, it must be noted that if we wish to study the history of the oppressed and disqualified, both Benjamin and Foucault themselves must be read "against the grain" and beyond their limits. They offer us resources, but neither sufficiently investigates the intersection of race and empire.[31]

As early medievalists and modernists, we can push philosophy's boundaries further, rethinking "early modern philosophy" as "early modern European philosophy" precisely because Europe can be, as Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*[32] proposes, decentered and queried by its "others". A truly decolonial view can and should overwhelm our thinking with the startling absence of Asian, African, Indian, and Indigenous American thinkers in the way we conceptualize our field. Indeed, their absence from our minds, in our capacities as scholars and thinkers and in our capacities for shaping institutions through hiring and funding, is "pressing, mind-boggling" and more than "possibly scandalous." This is especially the case in view of the immense efforts of scholars to produce monographs, anthologies, and even teaching suggestions in all of these fields. A short – mainly Anglophone and hardly comprehensive – list of essential scholars would include Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Kwasi Wiredo, Kwame Gyekye, Emmanuel Eze Chukwudi, Philip Ivanhoe, Bryan van Norden, Jay Garfield, Anne Waters, Dale Turner, David Martinez, and James Maffie. Peter Adamson's *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* project, which offers podcasts, bibliographies, and books that reach beyond Europe to classical Indian philosophy and

[30] For an overview of Kant's racism and the racist-colonial underpinnings of early modern European social contractarianism, see Mills 1997. On the historiography of philosophy, Park 2013 is as illuminating as it is distressing. Park shows that only a small minority of 18th century historians of philosophy saw philosophy as originating in Greece. Others placed the beginnings of philosophy in India or Africa; some saw both India and Africa as transmitting philosophy to Greece (76). Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* of 1825–26, however, proved especially influential in establishing ancient Greece as the birthplace of philosophy and German Idealism as its telos. India and China belong to philosophy's prehistory; medieval Latin philosophy, in contrast, plays a preparatory role. The *Lectures* notwithstanding, Hegel's relation to Indian philosophy is more sustained and complex than his treatment of other non-European traditions; see Rathore – Mohapatra 2017. Smith 2015 shows that Hegel's construction of the Greco-European essence of philosophy produced what we can call a "disappearing ink" effect in two ways: (1) blotting out prior historiography and entire fields of study and (2) solidifying the separation between philosophy and culture by depicting Greco-European thinking as the expression of reason itself. Smith 2020 considers the question of what a Leibnizian, as distinct from a Hegelian, the history of philosophy would be like.

[31] E.g. Stoler 1995 and Allen 2017.

[32] Chakrabarty 2007, which reflects long term work by the Subaltern Studies Collective. Spivak 1994 is a classic essay.

Africana philosophy, deserves mention as a philosophically sophisticated, erudite, and informal way to learn about material unfamiliar to us.[33]

As Justin E.H. Smith has suggested, historians of philosophy could begin to think about our work on the paradigm of "connected history"[34] and so treat dialogues, conversations, and traditions as locally-inflected, contingently and fluidly shaped and re-shaped efforts to understand with reality and our place in it. When we think this way, admitting the gaps and innumerable complexities that remain opaque and are perhaps permanently lost,

> There is no good reason not to presume full equality of all traditions at the outset, regardless of differences in their mechanisms of transmissions (e.g., textual, oral), or of the degrees of systematization of their commitments from within the traditions themselves. If there is less systematization, as in the case of Bantu philosophy, this simply means that there may be additional work for the scholar to carry out in order to draw it out in a way that will enable outsiders to appreciate it. But the simple difficulty of accessing something can be no evidence for its non-existence, any more than damaged portions of papyri, rendering bits of text illegible, may justify the conclusion that the missing words must have been the unimportant ones. Challenges are not grounds for neglect, but on the contrary for redoubled effort. (Smith 2015. 11.)

Rethinking Eurocentrism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, moreover, is not merely to admit new voices to speak about old problems.[35] There is, for example, no intrinsic reason to define philosophy in terms of systemization, which may be merely a post-Kantian preference; Nietzsche clearly stands as a European alternative. To be sure, expanding our archives and canons will offer new perspectives on familiar problems in metaphysics, epistemology, politics, aesthetics, and the other familiar subfields of philosophy. There is no doubt that comparative study will enrich us. But changing our reading will also introduce new issues, idioms, and conceptual resources, enabling us not merely to rethink presumptive problems, categories, and narratives, but equally to expand and potentially to redirect our philosophical attention. To avoid re-assimilating new ideas into familiar terms and, equally, to avoid fetishism and tokenism, we will need epistemic humility, modesty, and curiosity. What philosophy been, and what might it be in an increasingly global, decolonized future? To ask this question is to wonder what our successors will think of how we have situated ourselves in relation to the past, articulated our implication in the present, and generated or resisted possibilities for different futures.

[33] On the way Adamson radically reconceptualizes philosophy in the Islamic world, see Fraenkel 2017.

[34] Smith 2015. On connected history, see, for example, Subrahmaynam 2022.

[35] On this theme, see especially Dotson 2012 and Mills 2007.

III. CONCLUSION

I have argued here for a multi-directional approach to the histories of philosophy and for non-imperial curiosity. As Toni Morrison reminds us, domination distorts intellectual adventure and spoils efforts at map-making. Historical practice informed by contextualist, hermeneutical, and genealogical concerns offer, in my view, resources for thinking about what is required to think in and with languages, concepts, times, and places different from one's own. Our dialogues with the dead already take us out of ourselves and put the question of who "we" are in relation to "others" on the table. To the obvious objection that each of us will inevitably have limited scholarly tools and specific interests, it must be said first that literacy is not the same as expertise and that generating richer, more global understandings of the histories of philosophy and the variety of human philosophical endeavors will require new forms of academic collaboration and cooperation. Scholarly energy is finite, scholarly projects infinitely many. Along the same lines, our power to change disciplinary and institutional norms and practices is limited in many ways in the contemporary academy, but it is not non-existent. Changes in the way we study medieval philosophy and changes in the way we study early modern philosophy make it clear that redirection and expansion are possible. Difficult or unsettling as it may be to decenter our familiar philosophical temporalities and geographies, rethink the languages and contexts of philosophy, and alter our professional models, neither the Hegelian museum of *Geist* nor its posterity in our field is a viable paradigm for philosophizing now. Both we and our students after us can envision different futures for philosophy.

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