

Moulton, Janice. "A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method." In *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, edited by S. Harding and M. B. Hintikka. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1989.

Rooney, Phyllis. "Methodological Issues in the Construction of Gender as a Meaningful Variable in Scientific Studies of Cognition." In *Proceedings of the 1995 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, vol. 2, edited by D. Hull, M. Forbes, and R. M. Burian, 109–19. East Lansing, MI: Philosophy of Science Association, 1995.

———. "Philosophy, Adversarial Argumentation, and Embattled Reason." *Informal Logic* 30, no. 3 (2010): 203–34.

———. "When Philosophical Argumentation Impedes Social and Political Progress." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 43, no. 3 (2012): 317–33.

Saul, Jennifer. "Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat, and Women in Philosophy." In *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?*, edited by K. Hutchison and F. Jenkins. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Tannen, Deborah. *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*. New York: Random House, 1998.

———. "Agonism in Academic Discourse." *Journal of Pragmatics* 34 (2002): 1651–69.

Warnke, Georgia. *Debating Sex and Gender*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Wilson, Robin. "Women Challenge Male Philosophers to Make Room in Unfriendly Field." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 14, 2013. <http://chronicle.com/article/Female-Philosophers-Shake-Up/136629/>.

Philosophy's Climate Problem: A Primer

Daniel Susser

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Women and minority philosophers are all too often expected to do the work of explaining the climate problem in philosophy to their colleagues and their students, to host workshops and training sessions, write materials for teaching practicums, and so on. That this labor is rarely recognized as labor is, of course, part of the problem. What follows is meant to ease some of that burden. It is a pedagogical tool—a short, readymade primer. It aims to explain to allies and potential allies of women and minority philosophers what the climate problem in philosophy is, why it matters, and what, in very broad but concrete terms, one can do about it. In the final section, I address a common response to discussions about the climate problem in philosophy offered by those who believe that no such problem exists.

ON THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

What is the "climate" in which we do philosophy, and why does it matter? The climate in which we do philosophy comprises the entire set of situations, interactions, institutional structures, social circumstances, attitudes, evaluations, expressions of belief, expressions of judgment, stereotypes, social and professional hierarchies, privileges and deficits of privilege which shape the way individuals understand themselves as *philosophers* and their standing with respect to others in the discipline. Obviously, such enormous structural problems as the ratio of men to women faculty members in philosophy departments, as well as such gross misconduct as sexual harassment, professors sleeping with students, overt favoritism, and so on, all fall squarely within what I've just described and negatively affect the climate in which we do philosophy. Indeed, such factors are likely the most significant contributors to

philosophy's climate problem. In what follows I will assume that those reading this guide are aware of those issues and aren't engaging in any patent abuse, but are concerned, rather, with how to improve our climate's more subtle features.

To make things more concrete, the following are examples of things which contribute to and shape the climate in which we do philosophy:

- calling on male students more often than female or non-cisgendered students in a graduate or undergraduate seminar
- listening to, thinking about, and responding to one student's "abstract and objective" comments, while brushing off or dismissing as "unphilosophical" another student's comments about his or her experience
- joking in the hallway about how people working on [insert marginalized philosophical question, figure, or sub-discipline here] aren't "really doing philosophy"
- denying that there is a climate problem for women and minority philosophers on account of the fact that you "know women and minority philosophers who don't believe such a problem exists"
- perceiving a man who argues vehemently as smart and philosophically capable, while perceiving a woman who argues vehemently as aggressive and unlikeable
- telling a woman that you "admire her passion, but disagree with her claim," instead of just offering a counterargument
- assuming that just because a philosopher is a woman she ought to specialize in feminist philosophy or work on a purportedly "feminine" issue, such as the philosophy of emotion
- a department with few or no women or minority faculty members
- a conference program with few or no women or minority presenters
- a course syllabus with few or no texts by women or minority philosophers
- the fact that few philosophy departments require that their majors take a course in feminist philosophy

The way all of these things shape how individuals understand themselves as philosophers and their standing with respect to others in the discipline should be fairly obvious, once you think about them. Never being called on in class or being told that your comments are "unphilosophical" tells you that you're in the wrong place, that your thoughts and your voice are less important than those of your colleagues, that you aren't *really* a philosopher.¹ Hearing people cliquishly joke about the problems or figures you work on tells you that your work is *by definition* second-rate, that no matter

how clever or rigorous or deep is your analysis, no matter how clear or edifying is your writing, your work is worse than others' work simply on account of its subject matter. Not seeing anyone like you on a conference program or course syllabus tells you, rather straightforwardly, that you don't belong here.

The effects of these sorts of behaviors and practices on individuals in philosophy are well documented. Studies of implicit bias have shown that identical CVs are judged less impressive if headed under a woman's name than a man's (likewise with applications, articles, etc.). Stereotype threat has been demonstrated to cause women and members of minority groups to perform suboptimally in situations where they are underrepresented. If you are interested in concrete and specific stories about how the climate in philosophy impacts women, you can read hundreds on the blog, [What Is It Like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?](#)

HOW TO FIX IT

Many will respond to the above by rolling their eyes and throwing their hands in the air. "It would seem that *everything I do* contributes to the climate in philosophy! Should I rigidly police myself then? Count the number of times I call on each student? Never make a joke to a friend, on account that it might negatively affect someone else's philosophical self-conception?" The short answer is "yes." Most of what we do with, to, or around others in the department and the discipline more broadly (including conferences, conversations on Facebook and philosophy blogs, etc.) shapes their experience of philosophy. And while we needn't rigidly police ourselves as a result, there are several things we can do.

First, and most importantly, *pay attention* to how your comments and behaviors affect your students and colleagues. The simple act of attending to how we affect those around us can be a powerful corrective. Look around and see if anyone seems put down by your jokes. Think about why your women students rarely speak up in class, and if it might have anything to do with the way you frame philosophical problems or the way you respond to their comments when they do. Ask yourself if you've ever read a book by a female philosopher (that isn't about a male philosopher). If you haven't, ask yourself whether that might be in part because none was ever assigned to you in a course. Try and remember the last comment made or question raised by a woman or person of color in a graduate seminar. If you draw a blank, consider whether or not you were really listening when they spoke.

Second, work to correct negative habits and behaviors as best you can, without obsessing over everything you say or do. You don't have to count the number of times you call on each student in class (though that too can be a useful strategy)—just *assume* that you aren't calling on women and people of color often enough and strive to call on them more. Try to be less discouraging of others, in general. Your joke about how *ridiculous* it is to take [insert marginalized topic] as an object of philosophical analysis probably isn't very funny. Your friends laugh because they want to look like they get it, but the person in the next room in the middle of a brilliant dissertation on that subject is already

pretty demoralized (because: middle of dissertation) and doesn't need to be kicked while she's already down.

Third, call others out when they behave badly. This doesn't have to mean public admonitions. But when you see your friend or close colleague behaving in some of the ways mentioned above, pull them aside or send them an email and point out what they're doing and some of the harms it can cause.

ADDENDUM: WHY CLIMATE MATTERS FOR ADVERSARIAL PHILOSOPHY

One of the most common responses to criticisms of the climate in philosophy is that the critics are just trying to obscure the fact that they can't hack it in a discipline which has been adversarial since its inception. Putting aside the fact that in most cases that obviously isn't true, that it's often just coded language meant to signify that the people challenging the status quo are somehow less rational or less capable of rational argumentation than those being challenged, etc., I want to briefly draw attention to the ways in which the climate in philosophy is relevant and important even if we believe that philosophy is by nature an adversarial activity. Or, to put this another way, many philosophers assume that in spite of the climate problems which may exist in the places where we do philosophy, *philosophical activity itself* is immune from them. I want to show why that assumption is mistaken.

When people say that philosophy is by nature adversarial, I think they mean something like this: philosophy is a rational pursuit, which is to say, one aimed at revealing the truth, and the most reliable method for doing so is to produce an argument and then to try as best we can to expose that argument's flaws. By going through this process repeatedly, ad infinitum, our arguments have progressively fewer flaws, and thus they bring us ever closer to the truth. In practice, what all of this looks like is people making arguments and their adversaries making counter-arguments. Socrates and his interlocutors, and so on.

Again, I'm not disputing any of this. Although I think there are other, non-adversarial ways of doing philosophy that are just as truth-yielding, I recognize the value of taking an adversarial approach. What I want to point out is that *the success or failure of doing philosophy in this way—of adversarial philosophy—rests, in part, on it being done in the right climate.*

That is because the success of adversarial philosophy rests not only upon our capacity to make good arguments but equally upon our capacity to *judge* them. Consider the following: Who gets to decide which is the better of two arguments? In some cases, of course, the winner is self-evident. But in many cases it isn't. Absent a *reductio*, the difference between the forces of two arguments comes down to which is more persuasive to those present. Note: I'm describing an epistemological, not an ontological, phenomenon. I'm not claiming that the truth is whatever the majority agrees to. Rather, I'm claiming that what we believe to be the best argument is what we believe to be the best argument. Yet such beliefs are important. What

we judge to be good and bad arguments, meaningful and meaningless counterarguments, and so on, determines the course of the adversarial process.

This is where the climate in philosophy enters the picture, in two ways. First, in a climate where certain kinds of people aren't taken as seriously as others, where they are listened to and responded to less carefully, it simply isn't possible to decide impartially whether or not their arguments should be persuasive. If a student of color isn't heard, his or her argument won't be persuasive. If a woman is valued first and foremost for her appearance, then it is her appearance rather than her argument which will determine whether or not she is persuasive. If a subject matter, say feminist philosophy or queer theory, is considered "unphilosophical," then arguments presented under its auspices will be deemed unpersuasive from the start.

Second, when the judgments of women and minority philosophers about the arguments made by others aren't taken as seriously as everyone else's, then the arguments under consideration aren't given a fair trial. If a woman challenges an argument and is told that she simply "doesn't get it" or "isn't objective enough," then the mechanism by which the adversarial process is meant to do its work has broken down. When an African American or LGBT philosopher claims that a philosophical position ignores or does violence to his or her experience of the world, and is told in response that such experience is irrelevant, then the truth that position is meant to articulate is not everyone's truth (and thus is no truth at all). In other words, if only half the crowd (or less) gets to point out an argument's flaws, then many flaws are likely to be left uncorrected.

Thus, for adversarial philosophy to work, everyone must be considered *and treated* as an equal participant in the pursuit of truth. It must take place within a climate that grants each person the same standing—both for making arguments and for judging them. Otherwise philosophy is conducted in a white, male echo chamber, and we should have little reason to believe that its products are anything but a white, male image of the truth. Non-marginalized philosophers have only been able to operate under the assumption that climate is irrelevant to adversarial philosophy because our arguments and our counter-arguments have always been fully heard.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Sharon Meagher, Jane Jones, Matt Whitt, Frances Bottenberg, Eva Boodman, Celina Bragagnolo, Shannan Lee Hayes, Lori Gallegos de Castillo, Nathifa Greene, Oli Stephano, Serene Khader, Rachel Tillman, and Tim Johnston for their helpful comments.

NOTES

1. It's not that there isn't such a thing as an unphilosophical claim. But disciplinary boundary policing is more often than not used to silence people, rather than for the legitimate tidying of academic discourse.

BOOK REVIEWS

Re-visioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion: Reason, Love, and Epistemic Locatedness

Pamela Sue Anderson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012). 264 pages. \$39.95. ISBN 978-0-7546-0785-4.

Reviewed by Molly B. Farneth
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, MFARNETH@PRINCETON.EDU

In 1998, Pamela Sue Anderson published the first book-length treatment of feminist philosophy of religion, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion: The Rationality and Myths of Religious Belief*. In it, Anderson advanced a critical, feminist account of reason and rationality appropriate for the study of religion. Her guiding question—whether it is reasonable to hold a religious belief—was answered not through philosophical proofs or theological apologetics but through a reconfiguration of the concepts of reason, rationality, and objectivity that attended to the embodiment of subjects and the role of power relations in the construction of knowers and of knowledge.

In her latest book, *Re-visioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion: Reason, Love, and Epistemic Locatedness*, Anderson returns to these matters, surveying and assessing the vibrant conversation that she helped to launch fifteen years ago. Anderson marshals the resources of feminist and non-feminist analytic and continental philosophy of religion to craft an argument about the ways that gender operates in the field in the early decades of the twenty-first century. Her central claim is "that the field of philosophy of religion continues to be implicitly and explicitly gendering the moral and religious dimensions of human identities; this includes shaping human emotion, reason, and cognition" (1). Her constructive project advances conceptions of the divine, love, and reason that are better suited to the struggle for justice than the prevailing conceptions are.

As she did in *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, Anderson identifies sites where philosophy of religion remains "male-neutral," places where it presumes sex/gender impartiality while nevertheless deploying masculinist assumptions. She looks, for example, at the 1999 exchange between analytic philosopher A. W. Moore and continental philosopher Jacques Derrida on the infinite and the ineffable. Anderson applauds the bridge that Moore and Derrida build between analytic and continental philosophy of religion, and she finds Moore's attempt to specify the role of the ineffable in an epistemology that affirms truth and rationality especially promising. Anderson argues, however, that the Moore-Derrida exchange suffers from its lack of attention to how the infinite and the ineffable function as gendered categories. Opening the conversation to include feminist voices, Anderson shows how the infinite and the ineffable—and human beings' ways of knowing and relating to them—have been imagined and constructed as male or female. Feminist scholarship on mysticism, for example, shows how the specific bodily practices of female mystics in