

Stockholm Workshop 17/18 April
Why are there so few women in philosophy and (why) does it matter?
Book of abstracts

Title: *The Neutrality Bias*
Cathrine Felix, Lund University

Compared to the last century when male domination was standard, women now tend to be near or above parity with men in many scientific areas. However, some fields continue to be highly dominated by males, for example mathematics, computer science, physical sciences and philosophy. In fact, a recent study showed that philosophy is *more* male than mathematics (Healy)). Why is this so? The answer to this is, of course, complex. My approach here, however, will be to attempt to give part of this explanation by focusing on the idea of neutrality.

Several studies by Pronin & al. reveal that one is much better at spotting biases in others than one is at seeing oneself as biased – while all the time believing that one is just as good at seeing biases in oneself as in others. I will call this the "the neutrality bias".

My idea in this talk is to couple the neutrality bias, people's tendency to believe that they think about themselves in balanced and neutral terms, with neutrality as a core ideal of science. Scientists are supposed to search for truths about the world without personal involvement, that is, they are supposed not to project their own biases on to their research and steer free from personal prejudices. Facts ought to be allowed to speak for themselves, and scientists are the people that let them have a voice. My approach here may be seen as somewhat speculative, but the question is whether or not we may find some kind of correlation between the ideal of neutrality in science and the neutrality bias in scientists. I.e. whether or not scientists within fields in which neutrality and objective data is at core of the field, like maths, physics and philosophy, are extra prone to have a neutrality bias. The idea is that because their fields of research are so dominated by this ideal they act under the illusion that their professional neutrality transmits to thoughts and activities *in general*. I question and explore the very idea of neutrality. My aim in doing this is to offer a possible reason for why women make up a minority in philosophy.

Title: *Female under-representation among philosophy majors: A map of the hypotheses and a survey of the evidence*

Tom Dougherty, University of Cambridge
Samuel Baron, University of Western Australia,
Kristie Miller, University of Sydney

Why is there female under-representation among philosophy majors? Several explanatory hypotheses have been proposed, which could point to either a single cause, or several causes that operate in unison. We survey the hypotheses that have been proposed so far, distinguishing the "Classroom Effects Hypotheses" that posit causes in tertiary level education from the "Pre-University Effects Hypotheses" that posit causes before tertiary level education. The Classroom Effects Hypotheses point to factors such as course content (Walker 2005), an aggressively adversarial style of argumentation in class (Moulton 1989); how the teaching of philosophy suits different learning styles; disrespectful, discriminatory, sexist or sexually harassing behavior by students or teachers (Haslanger 2008) and a lack of female role models (Paxton et al. 2012). The Pre-University Effects Hypotheses point to factors such as society-wide gender schemas (Calhoun 2009), a perception that philosophy is not useful for careers associated with helping others (Baron et al. ms) and a perception of philosophy as an unfamiliar subject (Baron et al. ms).

We then look at the evidence for and against these hypotheses. We discuss research into female underrepresentation in STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), drawing on the recent survey of the American Association of Women's investigation into female underrepresentation (Hill et al. 2010). This report describes evidence that supports the presence of stereotype threat, implicit bias, self-assessment, and "fixed" vs. "growth" mindsets. We then survey the empirical evidence specific to the philosophy discipline for and against various hypotheses, including controversial experimental findings concerning "male" and "female" philosophical intuitions (Buckwalter and Stich 2010), correlations between the number of women majoring in philosophy at a university and the number of female teachers at that university (Paxton et al. 2012), admittance data at Colby College (Calhoun 2009), questionnaire based studies at Georgia State University (Thompson et al. ms) and at the University of Sydney (Baron et al. ms). We end by suggesting future avenues for research into factors like gender schemas, and the efficacy of interventions. We propose re-framing the issue in comparative terms, thereby re-casting the central question not as "why do so few women choose philosophy?" but as "why do women disproportionately choose to major in other subjects rather than philosophy?"

Title: *Pre-College Causes of Women's Underrepresentation in Philosophy*
Chris Dobbs, Georgia State University

Louise Antony has described the phenomena that cause the underrepresentation of women in philosophy as a "perfect storm."¹ The perfect storm for women in philosophy is made up of about a dozen familiar discriminatory forces that "converge, interact, and intensify" to keep women out of philosophy. For example, Antony posits that one component of the perfect storm is the schema clash experienced by women participating in philosophy's infamously "pugilistic" argumentative style. Philosophy values "assertiveness, persistence, [and] tenacity," and these qualities are at odds with the gender schema for women, who are expected to be passive, deferential, and cooperative.

Antony frames her perfect storm model in contrast to Buckwalter and Stich's so-called "different voices" model, which argues that women have different philosophical intuitions than mainstream philosophers. Antony and other thinkers have mounted convincing arguments against Buckwalter and Stich, but both of these models share at least one attribute: they both feature forces that have effect in the philosophy classroom and on the college campus.

Cheshire Calhoun's 2009 essay on the underrepresentation of women in philosophy suggested that something that occurs before women enter college might be responsible for philosophy's distance from gender parity.² Calhoun speculated that women are more likely to leave philosophy as an undergraduate because they're less likely to see studying philosophy as a valuable or viable career option. She argued that women have a lower attachment to studying philosophy as a result of boys' and girls' socialization process. Young women suspect that the schema for "woman" and the schema for "philosopher" are in tension, so they avoid majoring in philosophy.

Calhoun lends support to the assertion that women are less likely to take philosophy as a serious option from a young age by citing statistics from her home institution, Colby College. She found that about two-thirds of first-year students that *intended* to major in philosophy were men. Men also earn about two-thirds of Colby's philosophy degrees.

My research of American first-year students has returned similar results. Using data from CIRP's "The American Freshman" survey, I found that significantly more men than women indicated that they intended to major in philosophy.³ "The American Freshman" survey gathers data from American

¹ Antony, "Different Voices?" 227.

² Calhoun, "Pipeline Problem," 218.

³ "The Freshman Survey," Higher Education Research Institute, accessed 17 Dec. 2014, <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/cirpoverview.php>.

incoming first-year students either the summer before they start their first year at college or within the first month. Between 2004 and 2009, 7,301 students intended to major in philosophy, about 0.4% of all incoming students. 4,838 of those students were male, 2,463 were female. Of the students that intended to major in philosophy before they started college, men outnumbered women about 3 to 1, despite the fact that over 55% of the sample was made up of women.

Before women experience counter-intuitive thought experiments and before they're faced with philosophy's pugilistic argumentative style or any other component of the perfect storm, they're cool on the prospect of pursuing philosophy. It's not that women experience a lack of female role models, departments that are unsympathetic to childcare demands, and non-blind philosophy journals, *then* decide that they shouldn't continue in philosophy. Instead, it seems that women have decided not to pursue a philosophy degree before they even get into a philosophy classroom. My paper will discuss the ramifications of these statistics. It will discuss the possible causes of women's lower intention to major in philosophy. I will argue that philosophy departments are the main source of schemas about what it means to be a philosopher, and that these schemas bleed into the non-academic world and influence young women. Future department diversity programs should be aware that their internal policies shape the intentions of future college students.

Title: *Why does it matter why there are so few women in philosophy?*

Anca Gheaus, Department of Philosophy, University of Sheffield and Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Umea University

By now the scarcity of women in philosophy is well documented. We know that at all levels – from graduate students to full professors – men outnumber women in philosophy. The explanation of this fact is more contentious. Candidates explanations include: explicit discrimination against women, implicit biases against women in philosophy and the hypothesis that women's typical socialisation makes them either less fit for, or less tolerant of, the confrontational manner in which much (analytic) philosophy is conducted. In what follows I refer to these as: 'Explicit Discrimination.'; 'Implicit Bias' and 'Different Voice'.

Here I remain agnostic on the question of which of the above is the right explanation. I believe that several, or all, of the explanations may be correct. Instead I turn my attention to the normative significance of these explanations. While the normative implications of 'Explicit Discrimination' are straightforward, the other two explanations raise interesting and, in the case of 'Implicit Bias', new philosophical issues.

Implicit bias (and stereotype threat) are widely discussed mechanisms through which unconscious gender norms operate. To the extent to which they are responsible for women's under-representation in academic philosophy, this raises two fascinating normative questions. First, it is tempting to think that one engages in morally wrong behaviour only to the extent to which they are responsible for their action; but it is difficult to attribute responsibility for unconscious beliefs. If implicit bias really is universal, does this mean that we all should assume that we are going to act on it and thereby be held responsible to minimise its influence on our behaviour as well as we can? Second, what does 'Implicit Bias' mean for appeals to state neutrality as a way to bloc policies meant to advance gender justice? Many liberals believe that states ought to be neutral with respect to their citizens' conceptions of the good and this entails that they ought to allow explicit discrimination within voluntary associations *to the extent to which individuals themselves endorse such discrimination*. But if we hold implicit biases, this means that we are also discriminating against some individuals *against* our best judgement. If 'Implicit Bias' is correct, it may be good news for the permissibility of affirmative action on behalf of women in academic philosophy.

The 'Different Voice' explanation appeals to explicit gender norms that regulate women's and men's behaviour. I argue that three questions about gendered behavioural difference are normatively relevant:

1. Is the gendered difference in question generating disadvantage? (The answer, in this case, looks positive.)
2. Is it possible to change the gendered difference in question, and at what cost?
3. Is the gendered difference in question, in itself, morally desirable, morally undesirable or morally neutral? Some gender norms require behaviour that seems, in itself, praiseworthy but which puts women at a disadvantage if they alone follow the norm. This suggests we should universalise, rather than abolish, the norm.

If 'Different Voice' is correct, I shall argue, this supports the conclusion that we ought to change the overly competitive and confrontational manner of many philosophical exchanges.

Title: *Why We Should Stop Considering the Problem of Women in Philosophy as the Problem of Women in Philosophy and Start Being Virtuous*

Marie van Loon & Melanie Sarzano, Université de Genève
Département de Philosophie

It seems that when referring to the causes of the lack of women in philosophy, one considers it to be a problem specific to the research community: one tends to think that “philosophy’s problem with women” is philosophy’s problem, not only in the sense that it is a problem for philosophy, but also that the problem stems from philosophy itself. I argue that tackling the problem under this angle, as if “philosophy’s problem with women” was different from ordinary sexism, holds us back from recognising it as what it really is, where sexism really stems from and, above all, from enabling us to overcome it in our field

In order to argue so, (i) I describe why it looks like philosophers approach the problem as if it were particular to philosophy, and (ii) I review the reasons that might be responsible for such approach. These reasons have to do with several facts. First, there is the fact that the majority of – if not all – philosophers come from an educated socio-cultural milieu in which we have all been taught about and warned against crude forms of sexism: we have learned the language of political correctness and understand the problems linked to explicit sexist beliefs. Second, there is a self-image philosophy has historically created for itself with the idea of philosophers as being rational people as well as in building up the cliché that philosophers are “white bearded men”. Third, it might be the case that women philosophers have the impression that they experience more sexism in philosophy than in other contexts because most often we are taken seriously by non-philosophers, since we are skilled when it comes to standards of discussion and debate. Fourth, it might be that the literature and debates around the lack of women in philosophy consciously avoid using the term of “sexism” because it is a little off-putting.

I then show that there is nothing wrong with philosophy *in particular* and that the hardships women face in philosophy are simply typical of “classical” sexism: they meet issues concerning bodies, objectification and silencing. I explain how these typical issues are instantiated in the context of philosophical practices, namely by referring to the stories collected on the blog beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com. I show why these issues make philosophical activity particularly strenuous for women. Philosophy being largely constituted by practices such as talking, debating, arguing, presenting and evaluating people and arguments, being a philosopher implies always being socially engaged with others. In that sense I concede that philosophical practices do perpetuate many sexist behaviours, but only insofar as they constitute social practices in which sexism is crystallized. As a result, being socially disadvantaged comes down to being philosophically disadvantaged. Consequently, women (i) are kept from doing their work (ii) to the point where

philosophy loses its interest for these women, they will seek to do philosophy elsewhere or totally quit.

Finally, I suggest that on top of recognising this lack of contrast with the world outside philosophy, it is also by acting as *true* philosophers that we can go forward with overcoming sexism in philosophy. It is not (only) rationality and self-transparency that enable us to do so, but intellectual virtues such as humility and open-mindedness (insofar as it implies the willingness to listen to the other and to change one's point of view). Although these virtues are not always taught explicitly in philosophy, it is possible for us to acquire them from our philosophical practice. It is time for us, philosophers, to act up to our philosophical standards and start being intellectually – and socially – virtuous.

Title: *There is a lack of Feminist Theory in Political Philosophy*
Jennie Finnsbo, FLoV, Gothenburg University.

The perfect storm theory, as presented by Louise Antony (2012) provides the most reasonable arguments, according to my opinion, for why there are so few women in philosophy. According to Antony, it is the same pattern that is excluding women from philosophy that is excluding women from all traditionally male areas of society. Thus, the work needed to be done to even out this difference would accordingly be the same as in any other case of discrimination on the basis of sex. This paper proposal will not be dealing more with the question of why there is a lack of female philosophers, but on the question of why it matters. There are of course plenty of reasons for why it matters, and the thesis I will defend is only one of them, emanating from my interest in political philosophy. My thesis for this paper proposal is that *there is a lack of feminist theory within the branch of political philosophy that might have practical implications for women in society*. Gothenburg, Lund, Stockholm and Uppsala Universities all have exclusively male authors on their A and B courses of political philosophy, except from Lund providing an anthology in which there are two minor texts by female authors (and not dealing with the issue I raise here). On the A and B courses in political philosophy, that is, before the most notable decrease of women philosophy students occur, we read Rawls' theory of a just society and learn about 'fair equality of opportunity', where, regardless of social or ethnical background, all should have the same opportunity to reach the jobs and positions of society that they aim for. Merit decides who gets accepted and who does not, according to 'careers open to talents' (Rawls, 1999). This reasoning may sound fair, given that there are no other patterns in society to defer to. One such missing pattern seems to be the bearing and raising of children. Rawls (1999) is presupposing that the family is just. A presupposition that I claim to be false. As childbearing and raising is left unaccounted for in his theory, women and men (I am aware of the strict generalization I must make here to prove my point) do not have an equality of opportunity, they do not have the same opportunities for acquiring merit, and hence, the family can not be counted as just. There has been critique on Rawls' theory at this very subject (Cf. Arneson, 1999; Moller Okin, 1991). This critique, I plan to map out and relate to my own in order to argue for my thesis.

Another dimension to this problem, interesting in it self and yet another argument for why it matters that there is a lack of feminist theory in political philosophy, is that the state in times of declining production and economy often promotes childbearing. Such promotion often takes the form of incentives (Isaacs, 1995). An striking example of politicians promoting childbearing in the last century was Alva and Gunnar Myrdal (1934). Somewhat less conspicuous promotion occurs yet today (Isaacs, 1995). For the state to promote childbearing for securing it's economy and production is, at least in some way, for it to use women's bodies as means for producing labor. Ethical discussions on compensating for the bearing of children in general and the political promotion of the same in particular is something that is regularly left out in political philosophy and in theories of justice such as Rawls', and this is a lack of feminist theory in political philosophy that could result in an actual impact on women in society (Arneson, 1999; Okin Moller, 1991, Okin Moller, 1979). This because traditions of political philosophy is often guiding in the making of laws and policies.

Title: *Implicit bias in Recruiting Processes*
Julia Sjö Dahl, Lunds Universitet

In *Implicit Bias and Scepticism* (2011), Jennifer Saul argues that the existence of implicit bias gives rise to a novel form of scepticism, namely bias-related doubt, and argues that what we know about implicit bias proves that we have every reason to doubt a great deal of what we think we know. Bias-related doubt is unlike traditional scepticism in that it does not consist of possibilities we are unable to rule out, but the fact that we are likely to systematically make errors on basis of stereotypes related to social categories.

A particularly interesting social situation that implicit bias seems to interfere with is recruiting processes; Saul's argumentation indicates that result of recruiting processes is likely made on completely wrong grounds, and in many cases probably simply incorrect. In many academic disciplines, philosophy included, there seems to exist some sort of non-spoken pattern in that women are less often represented as winners in recruiting processes for apparently no reason. The question is: given a group of applicants where we know that at least one is member of a typically unprivileged group, how can we know which is the best qualified for a position?

Use of positive discrimination, i.e. that out of two equally qualified candidates always to choose the candidate from the unprivileged group, is common practice in recruiting processes. The problem with this is, however, that the implicit bias possibly affecting the ranking is ignored. Given a situation where the applicant from the unprivileged group, possibly because of irrelevant and bias-related factors, does not reach the top two in the ranking, he or she will never be able to win. Further, although this method may be ethically justified, it cannot be said to be epistemologically justified, since the applicant from the unprivileged group may not necessarily be the best.

Instead, I will present a possible de-biasing solution based on examining previous rankings made by the relevant board. By using a notion of Borda score and contrast previous applicants from the unprivileged groups' scores with the same number of randomly selected applicants from the privileged groups' scores in previous lists, it is possible to find out the bias extension and further de-bias the relevant ranking in accordance to this.

Title: *Why Question Quotas? On the moral permissibility of preferential hiring.*
Christine Bratu, Lehrstuhl für Philosophie IV der LMU

Is it morally justified to establish quotas in order to ensure that more women make it to the top academic positions? This question will come up after the two puzzles at the core of this conference have been solved. There has been a lively debate on gender preferential hiring since the early 1970s, in which people arguing in favor of quotas find themselves forced to adopt a consequentialist (or „future-oriented“) approach (cf. Nagel 1973, Dworkin 1985, Rössler 1993, Boshammer 1999). This is because there is a rights-based argument against quotas for women and other underrepresented groups. In my talk I challenge this argument.

The rights-based argument against quotas for women in academia runs as following:

- (1) *The right to be treated as an equal*: It is just to treat people differently because of their sex only if there are strong moral considerations speaking in favor of it.
- (2) *The principle of academic potential*: The *sole* criterion of distribution for academic resources (such as jobs) should be academic potential; that is, we should distribute academic resources in such a way that the resulting distribution promises to realize the highest academic potential.
- (3) *What quotas do I*: Establishing quotas for women in academia implies treating persons differently because of their sex.
- (4) *What quotas do II*: Establishing quotas for women runs counter to the principle of academic potential, because it implies assessing the distribution of academic resources not only in terms of the principle of academic potential but also in terms of some moral principle such as equality of opportunity.

(C) *Conclusion*: Establishing quotas violates the right to be treated as an equal and is, hence, unjust. This is because establishing quotas for women in academia implies treating persons differently, even though there can be no strong moral consideration in favor of doing so, as the sole criterion that should matter in the distribution of academic resources should be the principle of academic potential.

Intuitively, (2) seems appealing: Why should we invest the funds we have on giving people jobs or research opportunities if they do not promise to deliver the most interesting scientific results? Would it not be a morally objectionable waste of academia's scarce resources if, in their distribution, we took moral considerations such as equality of opportunity into account as well?

Yet, although (2) looks plausible, our everyday practice shows that we do not endorse it in an unqualified way. In fact, we *do* accept some moral constraints on how we distribute our academic resources; for instance, research on stem cells or primates is strictly regulated or forbidden in most European countries, even though there can be no doubt that such research would yield interesting results. So (2) is too strong: The principle of academic potential is never the *sole* criterion for assessing the distribution of academic resources – other considerations and, in particular, other *moral* considerations are allowed to play a part as well. This shifts the burden of proof unto the side of the critics of quotas: They have to show why some moral considerations – like avoiding harm to sentient creatures – but not others, can act as a constraint on the principle of academic potential. In particular, why should the principle of fair equality of opportunity not play a similar qualifying role?

Title: *A Summer Program for Women in Philosophy: One Method for Plugging the Leaky Pipeline*

Amy Berg and Kathryn Joyce, University of California, San Diego Department of Philosophy

One obstacle to women's participation at higher levels of academic philosophy is the leak in the pipeline from undergraduate to postgraduate study. In the UK, the number of women decreases by nearly twenty percent in the transition to doctoral programs (Beebee and Saul 8). There are several explanations for this loss. Schouten argues that implicit bias and stereotype threat could partly explain the problem. Still, she says that philosophers need to collect more data (in addition to the data we have from the few existing philosophy-specific studies, anecdotal, and data from other academic disciplines) about the sources of the problem, as well as its potential solutions.

Our institution's Summer Program for Women in Philosophy is on the front lines of making things better for women in philosophy. Our two-week program, which combines classes, professional workshops, and social activities, is an opportunity for women to cultivate their confidence and skills in a non-threatening yet rigorous environment. At the same time, we're collecting the data that could identify how to plug the leaks in the pipeline. In our presentation, we will discuss how our program tackles some of the issues women face, what we've learned from the first year of the program, and the steps we can take to improve the program in future years.

We'll begin by talking about our program's design: the history of similar programs for women in STEM fields, the criteria we used to admit program participants, the courses and workshops we ran, and the decisions we made in designing and funding our program. After we outline the program's logistics, we'll turn to strategy: how we tackled stereotype threat and implicit bias by making women visible in our program's leadership, how we designed workshops and bonding activities to reduce the sense of isolation women sometimes face in philosophy, and how we ran our courses to avoid the problems associated with a stereotypically "masculine" way of doing philosophy. Next, we'll discuss what we've learned from the first year of the program. We'll share data we've collected from the hundreds of applications we received, as well as feedback we got from the women who participated in the program. To conclude, we'll also discuss our current plans for future years of the program and our long-term plans to collect data from program participants. Our hope is to use these data to understand the obstacles women face during undergraduate study, what factors have entered into their choice to continue studying philosophy, and our program's effect.

Although we're pleased with how our program went last summer, it was only our first year. As we go forward in future years (thanks in part to a generous grant from the APA), we will need input from other women in philosophy. We'll end our presentation by opening up some topics for discussion among the rest of the conference participants. We would like to get feedback on several areas, including long-term mentorship, intersectional issues, and data collection. For example, we hope to get feedback on participant admission. Should we admit only women who have expressed interest in graduate school, allowing for more targeted intervention? Or should we aim for those who are undecided or are not yet considering a career in philosophy, allowing us to attract talented women who wouldn't otherwise choose to go to graduate school? Throughout our presentation, we aim to facilitate a collaborative investigation that will help us improve our program and be of benefit to philosophers with similar goals.

Title: *Feminism's challenge to philosophy*
Linda Martín Alcoff, Hunter College, USA

In this talk I want to explore the question of how we imagine victory. That is, beyond maintaining a strong and vibrant community of feminist philosophers that continues to talk mainly to each other, as we do today, how do we imagine what may indeed be a possibility on the horizon if the groundswell of movement continues, a true mainstreaming of feminism in philosophy. What might be a positive vision of such a victory, not a diminution of our critical explorations but a responsible and cooperative leadership of the discipline informed by the benefit of the feminist work that we have been doing over the last quarter century in our supportive barrios? My argument will be that we need to inaugurate a change in how philosophy understands itself.