

© The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Hegel Society of Great Britain. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Philosophy and its Institutions: Politics at the Heart of the Canon

Giulia Valpione

Abstract

This article highlights the importance of new research on women philosophers and addresses some methodological issues to be taken in consideration. The thesis presented here is that through this new line of research it is possible to analyse the close connection between philosophy, politics and institutions. The paper opens with a critique of the assumption that philosophy has until recently been the exclusive property of men, giving the example of some forgotten women philosophers who lived in Hegel's time. After considering the risk of ghettoization inherent in Women's Studies, the author closes by showing how the reconsideration of women philosophers can help to question the methodology and the status of philosophy in general, and in particular to question the philosophical canon. The text serves as an introduction to a special issue of the *Hegel Bulletin* dedicated to women philosophers in Hegel's time.

I. The institutions of philosophy

For a long time, femininity has been associated with sensibility as opposed to rationality, which was considered in turn to be the domain of masculinity (Bovenschen 1997). Consistently, the exclusion of women from philosophy in the past has long been considered justifiable: men are assigned to the world of culture, civil society, philosophy and politics, while women are relegated to the domestic space.

This division, between female sensitivity and male philosophical rationality, is present also in some feminist reflections, which seek to claim for women the predominance of a cognitive realm and an epistemology different, if not opposite, to that of men. See for example Michèle Le Doeuff's *The Philosophical Imaginary* (1989), according to which women do not approach philosophical practice because of an intrinsic 'masculinity' within philosophical practice.

More broadly, a long feminist tradition has considered the awareness of women's exclusion from the cultural world as the starting point from which to

begin their struggles for emancipation. From this point of view, the words of Simone de Beauvoir are emblematic: ‘they [men] have created values, customs, religions; women have never disputed this dominion. A few isolated women [...] have protested against the harshness of their destiny; [...] but the Roman matrons banding together against the Oppia law or the Anglo-Saxon suffragettes only succeeded in exerting pressure because men were quite willing to undergo it’ (de Beauvoir 1976: 222). These positions, later reformulated in French ‘difference feminism’ (e.g., Luce Irigaray), advocate an opposition between male and female, which justified the idea that women have always been excluded from politics and culture, spheres that were both subject to the empire of men.

Echoing de Beauvoir, women have been relegated to the domestic sphere and excluded from the world of culture. Hegel’s centrality to the development of these reflections within the philosophy of difference is undeniable (Stone 2018: 173–224; Felloj 2021; Mussett 2017):¹ among other things, the dialectics of recognition and the idea that women have always been excluded from civic life because this dimension is reserved for men, are both taken from Hegelian works. Certainly, the valuable role that Hegel or the philosophy of difference plays (and can play) even today is indisputable. It is equally certain, however, that the image of women as historically barred from culture and philosophy until more recently has been proved simply wrong. As this volume will show, in the same years in which Hegel was living, in Germany there were women philosophers writing, debating and discussing.

Mary Ellen Waithe’s pharaonic work—the four volumes she edited, *A History of Women Philosophers* (Waithe 1987–95)—has turned on the light in an abandoned attic where philosophical works written by women of the past and now forgotten were stored: writings hidden by the dust deposited by time and of whose vastness Waithe manages to give us an idea. The grandeur of the archive that she helped to rediscover led to the questions: why has the work of these women philosophers been forgotten? Why, if women had access to philosophy and were themselves philosophers, do we not easily find any trace of them?

Eileen O’Neill attempts to answer these questions in her ‘Disappearing Ink’ (1997),² in which she claims that women were not excluded from philosophy as such, but that they have been cancelled from the histories of philosophy; or rather, women were excluded from some of philosophy’s institutions,³ including, under this category, also its historical reconstructions. Histories are not neutral or objective narratives: on the contrary, many philosophers, but also questions and currents have been excluded from histories of philosophy. Admitting that politics also has to do with the selection and hierarchization of knowledge, these omissions encompass a political aspect. The political character of institutions emerges in Adrian Daub’s article published here: when the members of the so-called ‘Hegelian left’ were excluded from the German university system, they joined women

philosophers in seeking other institutions (notably journals) that would allow them to reach a wider audience.

Following O'Neill, from the end of the eighteenth century, women authors were excluded from the cultural and political debate, as a reaction to the relevance women had in France during the Revolution (Deasan 2019). But there are also other reasons for the removal, from the nineteenth century onwards, of women philosophers from histories of philosophy. First of all, the topics addressed by women were not suited to the new vision of philosophy, as women were associated with a philosophical tradition (Neo-Platonism and Scholasticism) that did not adhere to the empirical and scientific approach with which men were associated (Gatens 2017). Moreover, there was a process of 'purification' that separated strictly philosophical works from other writings on religious, mystical or theological topics, often written by women. In the same period, following Elystan Griffiths, efforts increased towards the biological connotation not only of sexual differences, but also of the characteristics and intellectual faculties associated with each sexual gender (Griffiths 2013: 140; Reill 2005: 221–33), limiting the role of women to the domestic sphere.

Another factor that contributed to the oblivion of women philosophers was the attitude of modesty that women had to assume, which forced them to sign their work with a pseudonym or hide their work behind the name of their husband, father or brother. For example, Karoline von Günderrode signed some of her works as Tian; Caroline Schelling-Schlegel and Dorothea Tieck are not mentioned as collaborators for the translations of Shakespeare's works into German that bore the signatures of August Wilhelm Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck (Stone and Valpione 2023 forthcoming) and Dorothea Veit-Schlegel published her *Florentin* under the name of her husband Friedrich Schlegel.

Another crucial factor for the disappearance of women philosophers from historical reconstructions is the emergence of a literary genre peculiar to philosophy, which expressed not only a particular conception of knowledge and truth, but also the privileged relationship between philosophy and a specific institution: the university—an institution from which women were basically excluded (Valpione 2020: 136). The literary genre that imposed itself as the proper expression of philosophy was the treatise and, moreover, the philosophical system.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a rich debate between German philosophers was ignited: they debated in what institution knowledge should be researched and taught. The university was identified as the institution proper to philosophy. Moreover, philosophy was seen as necessary for the structure of universities. Only philosophy could criticize other knowledge and faculties, giving the university a superior value with respect to other institutions of education and research;⁴ only philosophy guaranteed to the university the systematicity and unity that the sciences needed;⁵ only philosophy guaranteed that university

teaching would not only imply the imposition and assimilation of a theory, but also the ethical education essential for being a *Gelehrte* (*GA I.8*: 59–139, *GA I.10*: 347–75, *GA II.11*: 65–170). Women, long excluded from universities,⁶ did not have access to all this. They did not have direct access to the systematic material being taught, and even if in some cases the texts of the lectures were published and thus made available to the wider public, women still did not have the opportunity to present to the public their own attempt at a systematic philosophy: at most they were expected to write short texts to be published in journals.

The new and strict bond between philosophical system and university goes together with the downgrading of different genres, closer to the literary form, poetry, or fragments, or, more generally, to non-systematic philosophical reflections. What Jonathan Rée writes is a consequence of this: before the closure of philosophy in university institutions, male philosophers seemed much more likely to admit women as their peers in discussion (Rée 2002: 643): now, only systematic (and academic) philosophy was to be considered philosophy as such.

This does not mean that women's philosophy did not belong to any institution; rather, it went through other paths of institutionalization. The genres preferred by women writers at the time were short essays, easily published in journals, literary works such as novels or plays, or letters. Letters, above all, were probably the favourite instruments for women in Hegel's time for expressing thoughts and reflections. Whether they were letters for private correspondence,⁷ or their adaptation for a publication (as in the case of Bettina von Arnim, who published a reworking of her correspondence with Karoline von Günderrode (*AWB 1*: 295–746), with Goethe (*AWB 2*) and with her brother Clemens Brentano (*AWB 1*: 9–294)), this literary genre was entrusted with women's philosophical thought.

All this shows that philosophy as such never excluded women: the exclusion was perpetrated by certain institutions in which philosophy was to be preserved and disseminated, namely universities and the histories of philosophy.⁸ Women philosophers were entitled to other 'spaces': some journals, salons,⁹ epistolary correspondence¹⁰ and, only gradually and slowly, the publishing houses. But the historical reconstructions of philosophy did not look at those institutions.

In 1783, a few years before the birth of German Romanticism and Idealism, Sophie La Roche had already criticized German men for their inclination to erase women from the history of science (and of knowledge in general) in which women, and not only men, excelled: Juliane Berner (author of a treatise on hunting, fishing and falconry, *Pom.* 4: 368), Catherine Macaulay (who dealt with English history, *Pom.* 4: 369), the physicist Laura Bassi (*Pom.* 6: 536), Maria Angela Ardinghelli (translator and scientist, *Pom.* 6: 536) and many others were never mentioned in historical reconstructions of the development of sciences. In a similar vein, she accused German men of trying to hide the fact that as many men as women attended Abbé Nolle's lectures (*Pom.* 2: 137). La Roche also pointed out that, in

the same years, the five volumes of the *Histoire littéraire des femmes françaises* (Pom. 2: 144) were published in France, a history which she hoped would soon be written on German women writers, too.

La Roche's criticism seems entirely justified. A few years later, although women participated in the 'symphilosophical' discussions of the Romantic circles, Friedrich Schlegel himself made no mention of any women in his philosophical-historical reconstructions. Nevertheless, the brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel declared that philosophy is a collective enterprise (a 'symphilosophy') in which women should participate.¹¹ Their exclusion in the historical-philosophical reconstructions is all the more surprising because despite the crucial importance given in these histories of philosophies to Fichte and his *Wissenschaftslehre*, and despite Schlegel's desire to point out that Fichte's conception of the 'I' is to be criticized, the Romantic philosopher never mentioned the *Florentin* (written by Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, his wife), or Sophie Mereau's *The Blooming Age of Sensation* (1794) or Sophie Tieck-Bernhardi's *The Old Man in the Cave* (1800) in which a criticism of Fichte's idealism (and in particular of his philosophy of the self) is evidently expressed.

In the First Romantic Circle, therefore, the position of women was not clear: on the one hand they took an active part in the discussions at meetings and sometimes also signed articles published in the *Athenäum*, but on the other hand they received little recognition within the historical reconstructions of philosophy. Therefore, there was no real equality between men and women in the Romantic intellectual world. Although their participation in culture was by no means passive, the role of women was often seen as merely that of facilitating the philosophical development of men. Although F. Schlegel argued in his *On Philosophy* that the intellectual difference between men and women is not caused by a natural difference but by a difference in habits (women are accustomed to the repetitiveness of domestic and reproductive life, while men are confronted with the differences and changes inherent in a life dedicated to society, work and politics, Schlegel 1975, 42–43), he linked the female figure more to a functional role in the *Bildung* of the man than to a philosophical voice worthy of being remembered as such. This is also represented in his novel *Lucinde*, in which confrontations with the female characters are reduced to occasions for the personal development of the male protagonist.

II. The institution of 'women's philosophy': pros and cons

Since the publication of Mary Ellen Waithe's works, it is no longer possible to argue that women could not be part of the development of philosophy. Considering the ever-increasing quantity of material on women philosophers over the last

twenty-to-thirty years, it is clear that their works cannot simply be relegated to the abandoned attic mentioned above: a much larger space must be devoted to them. But how to manage this space? To exit the metaphor, it is necessary to ask whether these women philosophers constitute a specific section in the history of philosophy and whether they constitute a philosophical tradition as such. So, as we speak of ‘analytical philosophy’, or of ‘materialist philosophy’, is it possible to speak of ‘women’s philosophy’? This would imply that there is a common element in their philosophies which would allow us to identify them as a unitary group. Is there a common problem underlying their reflections, or even some key words which, although changing meaning in the course of the ages, return in their works?

The advantage implied in the possibility of tracing a consistency and unity within philosophical works written by women is relevant, especially considering that they still receive little attention within academic research: as Charlotte Witt (2020) writes, a conceptual unity or a common problem facilitates the introduction of academic courses, the publication of volumes or the implementation of research dedicated entirely to women philosophers; this unity would facilitate their institutionalization, thus strengthening the longevity of such studies and their recognition within the academic world. All of this would be achieved in an even more consolidated way if it were possible to identify a theme that not only unites women philosophers in the past, but over time up to the present day. This genealogy would lead to an important recognition effect for the women readers that would allow today’s women philosophers to gain the strength of an historical-philosophical identity, increasing their weight and presence in the world of philosophical research and teaching (Witt 2020).

Following Karen Green and Ruth Hagenruber, ‘there is at least one genealogy of themes and arguments deriving from women which is still very much a matter of modern debate; this is the genealogy of feminism’ (Green and Hagenruber 2015: 4). All reconstructions that seek to find the first traces of feminist thought can be read in this perspective (Offen 2000). One of the merits of these interpretations is to draw a contrast between, on the one hand, the exclusion of women from certain institutions in philosophy and, on the other, their participation in philosophy as such (Hagenruber 2015). Indeed, women’s (philosophical) reflections on their own condition—of their being excluded from some institutions of philosophy—actually gives them a place in the new narratives of the history of philosophy.

The question as to whether the women philosophers considered in this volume are representatives of this history of women’s consciousness or not, is therefore fully justified. In Germany, in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, women certainly reflected on their social condition, their education, their ability to access culture and science, even if their position on a more radical claim to emancipation towards a greater consideration in society and politics was

not always clear-cut. This uncertainty in their positions was due, depending on the case, either to the authors' lack of support for equality between men and women, or to their awareness that they had to adapt to their social situation or to their desire not to create any scandal. Through their writings and biographies, we can see that while women certainly played an active role in the culture and philosophy of the time, their participation in these spheres was the playground for a constant negotiation. As in the case of Early German Romanticism, on the one hand women were an integral part of the early Romantic circle, on the other hand they were not always recognized as the authors of their works and translations.

Sophie La Roche's works give an example of the awareness of this continuous contention and of the liminal position of women in relation to the institutions of philosophy. In her preface to the first issue (1783) of *Pomona für Teutschlands Töchter*, a journal she edited, she strongly criticized the education imposed on women by men. Those pages contain an opposition to prohibitions that prevented women from having a role in the cultural world in the same way as men: 'The *Journal for Women (Magazin für Frauenzimmer)* and the *Yearbook of Memorabilia for the Fair Sex (Jahrbuch der Denkwürdigkeiten für das schöne Geschlecht)* show my female readers what German men consider useful and pleasing for us. *Pomona* will tell you what I, as woman, think of it' (*Pom.* 1: 3). The radicality of this statement attests to her awareness that men played the leading role in the development of the cultural image a society should have. Men enclosed women in the domestic sphere and women's access to science and philosophy was carefully filtered and censored in order to prevent any education that could go beyond the fulfilment of the role entrusted to them. With that sentence, however, Sophie La Roche broke away from this image and imposed herself as a woman who spoke out about what education she and other women should receive.

At the same time, Sophie La Roche did not totally abandon the idea that men should play an important role in women's education, as mediators of content, as messengers of historical events or accounts of their travels, as she argued a few pages further on (*Pom.* 1: 133; Griffiths 2013). Whether this ambiguity in La Roche's position is due to her personal indecision on this point or to her need to avoid attracting the male reader's malevolence, or whether it is an iteration of a conventional ritual of feminine self-deprecation (Rée 2002: 643), is an unresolved debate (Griffith 2013).

Was Sophie La Roche's position isolated, or were German women united by a common reflection on their role in culture and society and by a desire for greater autonomy? Sophie Schubart-Mereau's *The Blooming Age of Sensation* (1794) offers another example of meditation regarding the equality between men and women. Nanette, the protagonist of Mereau's novel, in fact, 'demanded equal rights with the man she wanted to love' (Mereau 1794: 93, see Daub 2012: 215f).

The woman who lived in those years and is most often associated with women's demands for independence and freedom is, without any doubt, Caroline Schlegel-Schelling. In 1786, in a letter to Lotte Michaelis (Letter 70), she expressed her inability to be enthusiastic about love and religion, the two spheres to which female passions were expected to be devoted; in the letter, however, there is no criticism of this expectation, and the melancholy and dissatisfaction felt are traced back to a precarious state of health and her own vanity.

Three years later, newly widowed, Schlegel-Schelling expressed her longing for autonomy and her will to preserve her new freedom acquired by the loss of her husband (Letter 91). She then moved to Mainz with her daughter Auguste and pursued her (also economic) independence, albeit with many difficulties. Nevertheless, her enthusiasm for the political events that swept through Mainz seemed (at least initially) to be due to the possibility of witnessing events that would tear her away from her everyday life, rather than to her possible political involvement (Letter 112). Even her imprisonment was caused by her relationship with Georg Forster (who endorsed French republican ideas) and probably not by her own support for French republicanism. On the contrary, Caroline Schelling-Schlegel explicitly aimed at the anonymous and private sphere, which, according to her, was the space suited for women: it was inappropriate for women to be heroines (Letter 128). Therefore, on one side she strove for her independence, but on the other she did not want to be the protagonist of a political transformation. A few years later Schlegel-Schelling asserted equal rational faculties for men and women, but at the same time she claimed that only men are entitled to politics (Letter 256). However, she influenced the political ideas of other Romantic philosophers and in particular she was the source of Friedrich Schlegel's interest in republicanism (Speight 2021).

Like Schlegel-Schelling's, Dorothea Veit-Schlegel's opinion on women's condition in society was not always firm. Juliane, a character in Veit-Schlegel's *Florentin*, recognized the domestic sphere as the proper one for women; but on the other hand, Veit-Schlegel expanded the boundaries of the domestic sphere to the point of allowing a vast space for women to act (Allingham 2011).

Over the years, in the constellation of German Romantic philosophers, the positions of women philosophers on their claim to emancipation became increasingly clear. Günderröde expressed her unease, as a woman, at not being able to play a greater role in history. In her play *Hildgund*, the eponymous protagonist escapes from Attila, who wants her in marriage, and returns to her family home in Cabilorum. This escape is not, however, a liberation from any form of constraint, but rather the passage from a condition in which brute force (*rohe Macht*) rules (*herrschet*) to one in which custom (*Sitte*) does (*GSW* 1: 87). This was indeed the fate of women, for Günderröde: their future was never in their own hands, but followed necessity, someone's will or customs (*GSW* 1: 98). Nevertheless, the

play closes with a twist that is announced and not represented in the play: Hildegund succeeds where the other male protagonists have failed, namely killing Attila. This reveals a different model of agency between men and women:¹² in Günderröde's plays the male characters want to dominate (*herrschen*) (*GSW* 1: 187), to be masters of their own destiny (*GSW* 1: 236) and oppose their free will to divine and natural necessity, thus failing in their attempts. Hildegund differs from this model because she follows the nature that speaks in her heart (*GSW* 1: 290), without becoming a heroic subject. Hers is not a heroic act like those attempted by male protagonists, but rather a virtuous act (*GSW* 1: 449) that does not go against nature or the divine and is not proclaimed as the imposition of someone's will on fate. It does not seek to submit destiny to the subjectivity of the hero. It is rather a hidden act that exploits the hidden opportunities that history (and the play) offers behind the scenes and does not distort the necessity of events by confronting them blatantly.

The discomfort in women's social constraints to which Günderröde refers, becomes indisputable under the pen of a close friend, Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, to whom the articles by Alison Stone and Anne Pollok published here are dedicated. Through Brentano-von Arnim, it is possible to tie together the biographies and intellectual influences that the women and men philosophers of this period had on each other: granddaughter of Sophie La Roche, sister-in-law of Sophie Mereau (who married her brother Clemens Brentano in her second marriage), close friend of Karoline von Günderröde and reader of the works of the early Romantics, she also met Goethe, Schelling and Jacobi, knew Hölderlin and had an intense correspondence with Henriette Herz. Her interest in politics is evident in all her works, which are mainly composed of (radical) adaptations of her private correspondence with Günderröde, Goethe and her brother Clemens.¹³ Her passion for French revolutionary writings, her defence of the Tyrolean cause, the meditations on the political role of the Prince (*Fürst*) in the State, her investigations of the conditions of the poor people, her accusation against the State as responsible for their material status and moral behaviour: all this bears witness to her involvement in the social and political transformations of her time.

The few examples given here (many other women philosophers could have been named, such as Germaine de Staël, Henriette Herz, Rahel Varnhagen, etc.) make it possible to trace in the works of women writers and philosophers of Hegel's time a common point of reflection, although they were not always moved by an equally strong yearning for emancipation.

Nonetheless, the investigation towards the identification of first traces of feminist positions in these authors is fully justified. A side effect of this investigation is the impulse it gives to new philosophical research aiming at the rediscovery of women philosophers, since they were the protagonists of these reflections. It also contributes to writing a history to feminism, helping to consider new problems

and solutions not yet investigated in feminist theory. At the same time, however, the historical reconstructions of a coherent tradition of feminism in the works of these women philosophers can be limiting. Indeed, they risk failing to see the divergences between different ways of thinking about women's freedom, projecting contemporary categories onto the past (O'Neill 2019: 8). For example, assuming the categories of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist philosophy, which in turn draws on Hegelian philosophy, all the philosophies that cannot be traced back to Hegelian dialectics are automatically excluded (Green 2020).

Moreover, there is the risk of 'reducing' women's thought to feminism. For example: why consider women's reflections on freedom as part of a history of feminist philosophy, and not (or rather: not also) of the history of idealism and romanticism itself, or at least why do we not put them on the same level as the reflections on freedom of Fichte, Kant or Schelling? The contribution of women in the history of philosophy, in fact, did not only concern issues that uniquely affect women.¹⁴ Focusing all attention on the evolution of feminism risks overshadowing the many other aspects of the thought of these philosophers. Contrary to Simone de Beauvoir's position cited at the beginning of this text, women did in fact participate in the cultural world of their own era, and they cannot be allowed to go missing in studies on the history of philosophy in general.

In conclusion, the historical reconstructions of feminist positions are unavoidable and necessary, but they are only the first step towards a broader and more radical understanding of women philosophers in our history. Philosophy is the result of an interweaving between men and women philosophers. This interweaving bears the traces of the problematic social conditions of women—their limited freedom and their greater difficulty in gaining access to educational and scientific institutions in comparison to men are only examples—but this should not overshadow that women did not 'only' write about that: the history of philosophy and culture in general (and not only in the specificity of 'feminist philosophy') cannot ignore them.

III. Against the ghetto: rethinking the institutions of philosophy

The conception of women's philosophies as a unified whole thanks to their common feminist position therefore has advantages as well as risks. The richness of the German women philosophers' reflections during what we designate in the title of this issue as 'Hegel's time' is decidedly extensive, and in many respects still unknown: a richness that cannot be limited to their more or less radical feminist views. There is also a second risk inherent in initiatives that seek to shed light on the history of women's philosophy: to consider it as a section of Women's Studies, isolated from the other historical reconstructions of thought. In other words, there is a risk that the present volume (and other similar ventures) will

be seen as a subsection in the catalogues of the histories of philosophy. For this reason, the present issue of the *Hegel Bulletin* is to be considered as a step towards the *inclusion* of women philosophers in the institutions of philosophy—university courses, manuals, historical reconstructions, etc.

In spite of the difficulties and caution that this new line of research requires, these cannot, however, hold us back: it is not possible to claim that, in Hegel's time, philosophy did not concern women. The study of the history of philosophy of Hegel's time can no longer avoid taking women philosophers into account; moreover, the philosophical research cannot avoid the question why women of that period are almost always excluded from our scientific consideration. Any analysis that does not take them into account is inevitably partial and the result of a prejudice that has no reason to exist.

Despite the vast amount of research that still needs to be undertaken to better understand the philosophy of women who lived in the same period as Hegel, various initiatives are already enabling its institutionalization within the world of philosophical research. New research centres, editions and permanent seminars established over the years enable the expansion of scientific research and interest in German women philosophers who lived between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These new studies face the same problem that always returns in every process of institutionalization: if on the one hand the inauguration of an institute allows the stability and duration of the practice that is thus institutionalized, on the other hand this stability must go hand in hand with the possibility of renewing and modifying this practice, or it will dissolve. The same potentiality, but also the same risks are inherent in the processes of the institutionalization of new histories of philosophy that include women philosophers. The potentialities have been listed above; the risk is that of a ghettoization of this philosophical research, which, locked in its own identity, never overcomes the barriers of its own niche, making itself impermeable to practices of renewal and critical analysis.¹⁵ One of the antidotes against this is the consideration of women philosophers not only as philosophers who talk about women and their condition, but as actual members of the history of thought *tout court*.

As far as the period considered in this volume is concerned, much is still to be done in that direction. Let us give some examples. In studies devoted to *Naturphilosophie*, even the most controversial male figures are at least hinted at in the reconstructions of the debate. Nevertheless, at least until very recently, Karoline von Günderrode was never mentioned. She was indeed not only the author of poems appreciated by her contemporaries, or of plays in which her reflections on cosmology, Eastern philosophy and religion mingle with her ethical and political reflections (Ezekiel 2022). Günderrode was also a philosopher of nature whose originality and theoretical depth are in no way inferior to her better-known contemporary male philosophers (Trop 2021; Nassar 2022). With another

example, despite the almost endless number of studies on the relationship between philosophy and art in nineteenth-century Germany, there are still very few studies on Bettina von Arnim's philosophy of music (one exception is Eshbach 2020).

Scholars who have already dealt with the reappraisal of the role of women in the history of philosophy are fully aware that the process of institutionalization might lead to ghettoization (Waithe 2015: 27–28). The risk is that all the works of women philosophers will no longer be locked away in an attic to be forgotten, but nevertheless they would be relegated to a small room, with no real connection to other parts of this hypothetical philosophical library—a small room accessed only by scholars interested in Women's Studies, reinforcing the permanent separation between men and women in philosophy and confirming their traditional lesser status with respect to the great male philosophical figures (Hutton 2015: 10). Once again, the category of 'women's philosophy' is useful in highlighting the presence of women in the history of philosophy, but at the same time it relegates them to the reflexive space where women or activists contemplate on the status and experience of women and not on all the other areas touched by philosophy. Nevertheless, 'inserting women into the mainstream alongside men risks diminishing their contribution', writes Hutton (2015: 16). It seems there is no way out.

Sarah Hutton's words involve the more general difficult relationship between 'minor' and 'canonical' authors, which affects every historian of philosophy, but emerges particularly clearly when it comes to women philosophers. A relationship that, if called into question, helps us to analyse the formation of a philosophical canon, inspecting its usefulness and limits, combining in one gesture a reflection on its theoretical conditions of possibility and a consideration of the social and political circumstances that led a group of authors to be included and others to be excluded from it. For this reason, the introduction of women philosophers is not only an addition to the list of philosophers we know of, but it changes the method used in the history of philosophy. Indeed, it entails a greater awareness of the historical and conceptual contexts in which various philosophies were practiced (Broad 2021: 4–5; Hutton 2015: 15): the consideration of the interweaving and role of 'minor' figures in the development of debates between 'major' figures in the history of philosophy inevitably moves away from a history of ideas that extrapolates from the conceptual transformations as well as from the political and social conditions underlying each philosophy.

This short text certainly cannot solve this problem, but some indications might help to understand the project that guided this issue of the *Hegel Bulletin*. The contributions published here speak not only of women philosophers, but of philosophy in general, in that they force the reader to rethink and question some of its categories. As pointed out already by Tyson (2018), the study of

women philosophers involves a radical critical positioning, i.e., not only the reclamation of women's work as philosophy as such, but the vindication of this reclamation by transforming the history of philosophy as a discipline and rethinking our concept of 'canon'.¹⁶ In other words, the inclusion of women in the history of philosophy does not simply imply the expansion of this institution, but a reflection on and a challenge to it.

First, research on women philosophers serves to question what a canon is, how it can be changed (if at all) and on what assumptions. Following Rée, 'the main thing that makes a work canonical [...] is the fact that it has traditionally been regarded as canonical' (Rée 2002: 645; see also Witt 2006), making it self-founding and impervious to change. However, it is possible to envisage the gradual introduction of new figures through the increasing establishment and repetition of university courses, publications and conferences on them.

The motivations for the introduction of these new figures in the canon are various. Some researchers take this initiative as a feminist action aimed at opposing misogyny within the history of philosophy (Bordo 1987; Spender 1982; Schiebinger 1991); others want to shorten the distance between the canon and the 'real' history of philosophy (Waithe 2020). Others still consider the canon above all as a pedagogical tool that must adapt to the intellectual needs of students. In this direction, it should be composed by works and philosophers that might provide the students with concepts useful to understand social, cultural and scientific transformations, but also by figures by whom they can feel represented (Rickless 2018; Schacht 1993).¹⁷

This issue has been prepared with the awareness of the usefulness of an institution of women's philosophy, with the conviction that this should not imply the relegation of this volume to a specialist study, but on the contrary, should help to change the way we think about philosophy and its institutions. Indeed, through the figures introduced here, it will be evident that the decision to consider the philosophical works of women involves considering the vastness of the forms that philosophy can take, forcing us to question the relationship between philosophy and its *Darstellung*, the boundary between philosophy and literature, its exercise as a solitary or as a social practice and reflection, the role of the subject who exercises the philosophical practice, the relationship between philosophy and nature, and the institutions in which it is exercised. This also entails the risk of losing sight of the clear boundary between philosophy and its outside, as it will not be possible to hold on to a canon that clearly divides what is philosophy and what is not. Nevertheless, this risk must be taken: as the pages of this volume will highlight, the history of philosophy understood as a search for the boundary between the inside and the outside of the canon of philosophy opens up a reassessment of philosophy and of its institutions. Questioning the canon of philosophy opens the way to an image of the

philosopher no longer centred on the white, European or North-American male subject, but it also leads us to ask (once again) what philosophy is, to question its role in society, its relationship with power.¹⁸

Giulia Valpione
University of Padua, Italy
giuliavalpione@gmail.com

Notes

¹ For the influence of Hegel on Simone de Beauvoir, see Green and Roffey (2010). For Hegel's interpretation by Luce Irigaray, see Chanter (1995: 80–126). For a more detailed discussion of the role played by Hegel in the work of German women philosophers in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Adrian Daub's article published here.

² O'Neill (2005) returns to this point.

³ By the term 'institution' I mean here a group of practices that, established over time and through iterations and repetitions, survive the individuals who originated them. In this sense, not only the university is to be understood as an institution, but also journals, publishing houses, theatre, language, and so on. On this, the literature is extremely vast; see at least: Fauconnet and Mauss (1901) and Laval (2016).

⁴ See Kant (1996).

⁵ Schelling posits philosophy at the heart of the university institution but does not grant it a faculty separate from the others (*AA* I.14: 51–175). Schleiermacher, who reads and reviews Schelling's text, returns to a separation of the faculty of philosophy from the others (*SKG* I.6: 15–100, *SKG* I.4: 461–84). The two *Antrittsrede* by Hegel at the Universities of Heidelberg and Berlin are of course to be mentioned (*GW* 18: 1–8, 9–32).

Abbreviations used:

AA = Schelling, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. P. Leistner and A. Schubach (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976–).

AWB = von Arnim, *Werke und Briefe in vier Bänden*, ed. W. Schmitz (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986–95).

GA = Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, ed. E. Fuchs et al. (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1986–95).

GW = Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by the Rheinisch-westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968–).

GSW = von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien*, ed. W. Morgenthaler (Basel: Stroemfeld–Rotter Stern, 1990–91).

Letter = Schelling-Schlegel et al., *Caroline: Letters from Early Romanticism*, ed. and trans. by D. Stott. vol. 1: <https://www.carolineschelling.com/letters/volume-1-index/> and vol. 2: <https://www.carolineschelling.com/letters/volume-2-index/>. Accessed January 2021. The abbreviation is followed by the number of the letter.

Pom. = La Roche, *Pomona für Teutschlands Töchter* (Speier: Enderes, 1783–84). The abbreviation is followed by the volume and then by the page number.

SKG = Schleiermacher, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. U. Barth, et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980–).

⁶ Exclusion imposed by university regulations or by cultural and social conditions that wanted female education to take place within the household to preserve the modesty of girls and avoid the promiscuity of academies.

⁷ However, letters were meant to be read, shared and commented in cultural salons or among groups of intellectuals.

⁸ I include the history of philosophy among the institutions of philosophy because it involves the establishment of a philosophical canon that maintains its validity regardless of who established this canon in the first place. I recall here that for the theory of institution, this is not identical to an agency, but it can also refer to language, literature, etc. See note 3.

⁹ On this, see Ulrike Wagner's article published in this issue.

¹⁰ See Alison Stone's text published in this volume.

¹¹ 'We are both [Friedrich Schlegel and A. W. Schlegel] inclined to put our hopes on women' (*Letter* 202g).

¹² For a further perspective on agency in Günderrode's philosophy, see Ezekiel (2014).

¹³ On this, see Alison Stone's article published in this issue.

¹⁴ This position also assumes the objectionable idea that feminism is only about the emancipation of women, and not a radically different way of thinking about politics. On the importance in the history of political philosophy of women's philosophical reclamation of equality between men and women (which preceded and influenced the idea of the equality among men), see Karen Green (2021).

¹⁵ This aspect was also identified by Wendy Brown regarding the institutionalization of Women's Studies. See Brown (1997).

¹⁶ Not only the canon of philosophy, but also of literature, as Wernli writes in her article published in this issue.

¹⁷ Schacht, in a radical way, suggests breaking down the domain of the canon and thinking of it as something tailored every time to fit individually (1993: 435).

¹⁸ I would like to thank Karen Green, Arnaud François and Christoph Schuringa for reading a first version of this introduction and for their suggestions.

Bibliography

- Allingham, L. (2011), 'Revolutionizing Domesticity: Potentialities of Female Self-Definition in Dorothea Schlegel's *Florentin* (1801)', *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture* 27: 1–30.
- Bordo, S. (1987), *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*. Albany NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bovenschen, S. (1997), *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Broad, J. (2021–forthcoming), 'Recent Work in Early Modern Women's Philosophy: Some Implications for the Canon', *Mind*. Pre-print available online: doi:10.1093/mind/fzab057.
- Brown, W. (1997), 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 9:3: 79–101.
- Chanter, T. (1995), *Ethics of Eros. Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers*. New York: Routledge.
- Daub, A. (2012), *Uncivil Unions. The Metaphysics of Marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Deasan, S. (2019), 'Recent Historiography on the French Revolution and Gender', *Journal of Social History* 52:3: 566–74.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1976), *Le deuxième sexe*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Eshbach, R. W. (2020), "'For all are born to the Ideal": Joseph Joachim and Bettina von Arnim', *Music and Letters* 101:4: 713–42.
- Ezekiel A. (2014), 'Metamorphosis, Personhood, and Power in Karoline von Günderrode', *European Romantic Review* 25:6: 773–91.
- Ezekiel, A. (2022), 'Revolution and Revitalisation: Karoline von Günderrode's Political Philosophy and Its Metaphysical Foundations', *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30:4: 666–86.
- Fauconnet, P. and Mauss, M. (1901), 'Sociologie: objet et méthode', *Grande Encyclopédie* 30: 165–75.
- Felloj, S. (2021), 'Hegel's Master and Servant Dialectics in the Feminist Debate', in S. Achella, F. Iannelli, G. Baptist, S. Felloj, F. Li Vigni and C. Melica (eds.), *'The Owl's Flight': Hegel's Legacy to Contemporary Philosophy*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Gatens, M. (2017), *Feminist Methods in the History of Philosophy, or, Escape from Coventry*, in A. Garry, S. J. Khader and A. Stone (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Green, K. (2020), 'Reconsidering Beauvoir's Hegelianism', in S. Thorgeirsdottir and R. E. Hagengruber (eds.), *Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*. Cham: Springer.
- Green, K. (2021), 'The Rights of Woman and the Equal Rights of Men', *Political Theory* 49:3: 403–30.

- Green, K. and Hagengruber, R. (2015), 'Introduction', *The Monist* 98:1: 1–6.
- Green, K. and Roffey, N. (2010), 'Women, Hegel, and Recognition in *The Second Sex*', *Hypatia* 25:2: 367–93.
- Griffiths, E. (2013), 'Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and Women's Education: the European Dimension of Sophie La Roche's Journal *Pomona für Teuschlands Töchter* (1783–84)', *Oxford German Studies* 42:2: 139–57.
- Hagengruber, R. (2015), 'Cutting through the Veil of Ignorance: Rewriting the History of Philosophy', *The Monist* 98:1:34–42.
- Hutton, S. (2015), "'Blue-Eyed Philosophers Born on Wednesdays": An Essay on Women and History of Philosophy', *The Monist* 98:1: 7–20.
- Kant, I. (1996), *The Conflict of the Faculties*, in I. Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. A. W. Wood, G. di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laval, C. (2016), 'The Fate of Institutions in the Social Science', *Revue du Maus* 48:2: 275–92.
- Le Doeuff, M. (1989), *The Philosophical Imaginary*, trans. C. Gordon. London: Athlone Press.
- Mereau, S. (1794), *Das Blütbenalter der Empfindung*. Gotha: Justus Perhtes.
- Mussett, S. M. (2017), 'Life and Sexual Difference in Hegel and Beauvoir', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 31:3: 396–408.
- Nassar, D. (2022), 'The Human Vocation and the Question of the Earth: Karoline von Günderrode's Philosophy of Nature', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 104:1: 108–30.
- Offen, K. (2000), *European Feminism: A Political History, 1700-1900*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- O'Neill, E. (1997), *Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History*, in J. A. Jourany (ed.), *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- O'Neill, E. (2005), 'Early Modern Women Philosophers and the History of Philosophy', *Hypatia* 20:3: 185–97.
- O'Neill, E. (2019), 'Introduction', in E. O'Neill and M. Lascano (eds.), *Feminist History of Philosophy: The Recovery and Evaluation of Women's Philosophical Thought*. Cham: Springer.
- Rée, J. (2002), 'Women Philosophers and the Canon', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 10:4: 641–52.
- Reill, P. H. (2005), *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rickless, S. C. (2018), 'Brief for an Inclusive Anti–Canon', *Metaphilosophy* 49:1–2: 167–81.
- Schacht, R. (1993), 'On Philosophy's Canon, and Its "Nutzen und Nachteil"', *The Monist* 76:4: 421–35.
- Schiebinger, L. (1991), *The Mind has No Sex?*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

- Schlegel, F. (1975), *Über die Philosophie. An Dorothea*, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. E. Behler et al., vol. 8. München: Schöningh.
- Speight, A. (2021), 'Friedrich Schlegel', in E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/schlegel/>
- Spender, D. (1982), *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them: From Aphra Behn to Adrienne Rich*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Stone, A. (2018), *Nature, Ethics and Gender in German Romanticism and Idealism*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Stone, A. and Valpione, G. (2023 forthcoming), 'Idealism and Romanticism', in K. Gjesdal and D. Nassar (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Trop, G. (2021), 'Karoline von Günderrode's Aesthetics of *Naturphilosophie*', *Symphilosophie. International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 3: 165–89.
- Tyson, S. (2018), *Where are the Women? How Expanding the Canon Makes Philosophy Better*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Valpione, G. (2020), 'Expanding the Canon. The Political Philosophy of Bettina von Arnim', *Symphilosophie. International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 2: 131–56.
- Waithe, M. E. (2015), 'From Canon Fodder to Canon-Formation: How Do We Get There from Here?', *The Monist* 98:1: 21–33.
- Waithe, M. E. (2020), 'Sex, Lies, and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy', in S. Thorgeirsdottir and R. E. Hagenruber (eds.), *Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*. Cham: Springer.
- Waithe, M. E. (ed.) (1987–95), *A History of Women Philosophers*, 4 vols. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Witt, C. (2006), 'Feminist Interpretations of the Philosophical Canon', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 31: 537–52.
- Witt, C. (2020), 'The Recognition Project: Feminist History of Philosophy', in S. Thorgeirsdottir and R. E. Hagenruber (eds.), *Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*. Cham: Springer.