

"CANON, GENDER, AND HISTORIOGRAPHY"

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If any period in the history of philosophy has a philosophical canon, it is the period from roughly 1580-1780, or the early modern period. While the situation on the ground is rapidly shifting, it is still the norm within the English speaking world for both the teaching of early modern philosophy and continuing scholarship in the history of philosophy of that period to focus on seven key figures: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. These seven figures constitute the early modern philosophical canon. For quite a number of years now, historians of philosophy have recognized that this canon excludes women. How to remedy this exclusion is my particular concern here. I consider three strategies: focusing on women related to canonical figures; identifying women whose greatness was overlooked; and recognizing that much of the philosophical work of women across the history of philosophy is best characterized as, to use Charles Mills' term, non-ideal theory. By reflecting upon this canon, I suspect we can learn something not only about the history of European philosophy but also about philosophical canons more generally. What we learn may well help us in moving beyond this canon but also prove instructive about the norms of historiography of philosophy more generally.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2020
1:00 P.M. EDT.

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