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Recent Work in Early Modern Women's Philosophy: Some Implications for the Canon

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In this article, I critically examine a number of recent editions of philosophical works by early modern women. I argue that the proliferation of such texts is likely to have positive implications for the study of early modern philosophy. By taking a historical-contextualist approach to women's writings, these editions contribute to the goal of a thorough, unbiased, and impartial account of early modern thought. Their accessibility and teachability also draw attention to historical-philosophical ideas, methods, and genres that could have worth and relevance today. Above all, these texts are valuable for helping to correct a one-sided, male-biased understanding of the philosophical past.

Archimedes of Syracuse once supposedly ran naked through the streets exclaiming '*eureka!*' in celebration of a new discovery. Upon submerging himself in the bath, he observed that the water levels rose and he subsequently devised a new method of measuring volume. We might think that in the twenty-first century, the study of early modern women's philosophy has attained its *eureka!* moment with a steady rise in the number of texts over the past few decades. We now have a proliferation of accessible online editions via public databases such as Google Books and Gallica (BnF), and by subscription through Early English Books Online and Eighteenth Century Collections Online, among other fabulous resources. Compared to twenty or thirty years ago, there are many reasons to leap out of the bath. At the start of the century, an apologetic editor rejected one of my proposals on the grounds that women were

not studied in the history of philosophy. The reason they were not studied was because there were so few texts—it was a vicious cycle (not to mention a vicious blow to my junior aspirations). But historians of philosophy can no longer justify their neglect of early modern women by citing a lack of texts. They can no longer pretend that women never had a history of philosophy; the evidence shows that women did have a history, it was just subsequently forgotten and neglected. It has taken until recently for their works to be properly rediscovered.

Nevertheless, there may not be cause for naked celebration in the streets just yet. While many early modern women's original texts are available online, they have not all been rendered intelligible and comprehensible to the present-day reader. Foreign typography, archaic terms, unknown interlocutors, forgotten debates, obsolete idioms, obscure references, and strange abbreviations—all of these oddities serve to alienate anyone lacking serious scholarly expertise in the area. In their original form, many early modern texts are simply inaccessible to readers. This is why a spate of recent critical editions of early modern women's philosophy is worthy of special notice (Cavendish 2019, 2020; Grouchy 2019; Macaulay 2020; Shepherd 2018, 2020). These new editions are worth recognition because they do not just contribute to a rise in the water levels but to an improvement in overall quality—they make everything less murky, as it were. Through their critical apparatus, these texts enable better teaching and better understanding and evaluation of these women's ideas; they contribute to the creation of new knowledge in the field. The texts achieve this through editorial details that provide much-needed contextualisation: they offer introductory essays and annotations with lucid explanations of long-forgotten philosophical debates, clarifications of historical events, figures, and sources, and definitions of obscure terms, as well as chronologies, glossaries, notes on the texts, bibliographies, indexes, and lists of further reading. More than this, these resources have been compiled by leading world experts

in the field—scholars who possess a deep and expansive knowledge of early modern philosophy. By sharing their knowledge, they have helped to render the inaccessible accessible.

One might wonder: what kind of impact could these expertly prepared editions have on the study of early modern thought? The history of women's philosophy has been gathering momentum slowly over the decades, and what was once a dripping tap now appears to be a cascade. Could these texts (and others like them) be the surge needed to shift things in a momentous way, to see a significant change in standard canonical accounts of early modern philosophy? My purpose here will be to examine these editions in response to that question.

Before I begin, it will be useful to discuss the common goals and methods of history of philosophy as a sub-discipline, to shed light on the overall value of the texts. As philosophers, generally speaking, what do we want our histories of philosophy to achieve? And methodologically speaking, what do we think is the best way to attain those goals? There are many possible answers that might be given, depending on one's historiographical viewpoint (see Rorty 1984; O'Neill 1998; O'Neill 2019, pp. 8–11). Some scholars suggest that the goal of history of philosophy is to 'spark' solutions to problems in contemporary philosophy or to pillage historical texts for original concepts and arguments that might hold relevance today (O'Neill 2019, p. 8). To attain this goal, some historians of philosophy read the texts through a contemporary lens, while others take a more nuanced, historically sensitive approach. But regardless, their goal remains the same: to excavate forgotten ideas and arguments so that they might yield interesting results today. As examples, one might think of recent republican theorists drawing on historical variations of the idea of liberty as non-domination, or recent virtue ethicists gleaning moral insights from ancient Hellenistic sources. But one pioneer of early modern women's philosophy, the late Eileen O'Neill, has warned that if we take a purely present-oriented approach to neglected figures, we are in

danger of overlooking the nuances and richness of their overall positions (O'Neill 2019, p. 8). Compared to theorists such as Locke and Hobbes, little interpretive work has been done to understand early modern women on their own terms. If we approach their philosophy solely for the sake of achieving present-day goals, then we might distort or simply fail to notice women's own historical agendas. We might also be at risk of anachronism, the inappropriate use of historical ideas and concepts outside of their original context.

As an alternative, many historians of women's philosophy favour engaging in historically contextualised analyses of authors' texts. This means that they examine the works with reference to an author's own strategic purposes and assumptions, with sensitivity to the original historical, political, and social contexts, as well as the relevant schools and traditions of the time, and the author's philosophical system as a whole (O'Neill 2019, p. 10). One key benefit of this methodology is that it helps to realise certain feminist goals. That is to say, it enables feminist historians of philosophy to correct the historical record and demonstrate that the discipline has not always been a wholly masculine enterprise with purely male-biased thoughts and practices (see Shapiro 2004; Witt 2006; Witt and Shapiro 2015). Feminist scholars see intrinsic worth in the thorough examination of 'how the other half thought': how women injected their own lived experiences and woman-centred concerns into philosophical debates, from their unique vantage point as members of a disadvantaged social group.

This kind of examination can hold meaning and relevance for how we think of philosophy today. By using a historically contextualised approach, philosophers need not leap from the frying pan of anachronism straight into the fire of obsolescence. By examining marginalised female figures and themes, we can demonstrate that there have been many varied philosophical traditions through the ages, not just the ones that happened to survive into contemporary philosophy. We can bring a different perspective to the standard histories of philosophy—a perspective in which marriage, motherhood, childrearing, women's

education, and women's freedom frequently occupy central places. Some women's writings also demonstrate that present-day feminist concerns—such as epistemic injustice, internalised subjugation, and implicit bias—were debated and discussed in the past, albeit in a different terminology (see Broad and Detlefsen 2017, pp. 4–5). And so, a present-oriented history of philosophy and a more contextualised approach need not be mutually exclusive enterprises.

In my view, a combined approach to the history of philosophy can be useful not only for the sake of attaining feminist goals, but for the sake of achieving something like the Academic Sceptics' ideal of 'intellectual integrity'. The ancient sceptics—Arcesilaus, Carneades, and Cicero, among others—were not sceptics in the modern-day sense; they did not claim that there was no such thing as knowledge or that reason could never find truth (see Vogt 2018; Hickson 2017, 301–5). Rather, they were distinguished by taking a particular argumentative approach to philosophy, with a specific intellectual goal: they used reason to examine the *pro* and *con* positions in a given dispute, for the sake of making judgements that were free from prejudice. Toward this end, they strived to be anti-dogmatic, open-minded, and disinterested; they were honest, sincere, and charitable in their presentations of arguments; and they thoroughly weighed up both the strengths and weaknesses of any given position. In their approach to disagreements, the Academic goal was to render rational and probable judgements, and, above all, to do so with integrity. The aim was not to make positive declarations concerning truth and knowledge; rather, the aim was to be thorough, to ensure that any judgements were made freely on the basis of reason, and without partiality, bias, or prejudice.

Generally speaking, these recent critical editions of early modern women's philosophy demonstrate the value of taking a contextualised approach to texts for the sake of attaining freedom from prejudice in our historical narratives. If we regard the philosophical tradition as one long series of disagreements (and what else is it, really?), these texts give

timely recognition to women's part in those disagreements, thus providing a more complete picture of the different sides *pro* and *con* in the history of philosophy. These new editions show how early modern women often significantly departed from the ideas of their male contemporaries by providing critiques or alternative viewpoints in moral, metaphysical, epistemological, theological, and political debates. With their historical contextualisation of early modern women's ideas, the editors help us to make judgements about women's philosophical contributions without the distorting lens of contemporary ideas; they help us to be open-minded and disinterested, as well as honest and sincere in our examinations of the texts. In turn, these careful examinations bring to light hitherto unexplored concepts, ideas, and arguments that could have bearing on philosophical issues today.

One obvious shortcoming with these women's texts from early modern England and Europe is that they tend to ignore the perspectives of Black women and non-Christian, non-western female thinkers of the time—proper integrity would demand the inclusion of their voices too (among others). Like the privileged gentlemen of this era, the privileged gentlewomen also express prejudices and biases when it comes to questions of race, class, religion, and other topics. But despite their shortcomings, these volumes still shake up the notion that early modern philosophy was solely a history of men's ideas. In this respect, they contribute to the goal of being thorough and impartial in our examinations of historical-philosophical debates. While these multiple publications are only one small step for diversity, they are one giant leap toward integrity: by bringing women's ideas to the fore, they provide an important corrective to a wholly one-sided, male-biased account of the philosophical past.

To substantiate these points, let me now turn to the editions themselves. I will begin with Deborah Boyle's 2018 edition of Mary Shepherd's *Selected Writings*, because Shepherd (1777–1847) is perhaps the least well known of the women philosophers in question. A Scotswoman by birth, Shepherd wrote in the early nineteenth century but her focus was

squarely on the previous century and especially on the British empiricists George Berkeley and David Hume. (LoLordo does not classify Shepherd as an 'early modern' [Shepherd 2020, p. 2], but I give her that label for the purpose of this essay and because of her early modern focus.) Boyle includes selected passages from Shepherd's *Essay Upon the Relation of Cause and Effect* (1824) and her *Essays on the Perception of an External Universe* (1827), as well as her shorter magazine articles on vision (1828) and metaphysics (1832). Boyle omits the *Enquiry Respecting the Relation of Cause and Effect* (1819) due to a lack of evidence that this work was by Shepherd. This omission seems entirely sensible. Misattributions are a common problem in online databases, so cautious scholarly attributions are yet another benefit of good critical editions. Boyle's chosen excerpts are excellent: they enable first-time readers to avoid the longwindedness of Shepherd's original prefaces, her exegeses of obscure controversies, and several unnecessary quotations, and go straight to the philosophical heart of her work— Shepherd's core metaphysical arguments. The excerpts are grouped under topic headings, including causation, knowledge of the external world, mathematical and physical induction, miracles, God, mind and body, and vision. This is a useful thematic structure that demonstrates Boyle's synoptic understanding of Shepherd's philosophy as a whole. Accessible, scholarly, and intelligently organised, this volume provides excellent material for a gender-inclusive undergraduate course on the Scottish Enlightenment.

What kind of impact could this volume have on the history of women's philosophy? Needless to say, a study of such selected passages—reproduced in isolation from their larger works—may not yield the kind of intensely contextualised history that O'Neill (2019) envisaged. A serious Shepherd scholar will likely *want* to study the prefaces, the background debates, and the verbatim textual references, as laborious as that might sound. They will want to examine Shepherd's texts as a whole, with the aim of understanding her meaning, her presuppositions, and her overarching strategic purposes. But this volume will nevertheless be

useful for delivering a concentrated serving of Shepherd's philosophy in relation to dominant themes in the discipline today. As an introductory text for a first-time Shepherd reader, it is perfect.

To further appreciate Shepherd's uniqueness, readers should turn to Antonia LoLordo's 2020 edition of Shepherd's *Essays on the Perception of an External Universe*, the first critical edition of this neglected work. While Boyle's volume offers only selected snapshots from the *Essays*, LoLordo's volume is the whole unabridged album, plus even more (it includes the full text of the *Essays* as well as 'Lady Mary Shepherd's Metaphysics' from 1832). The *Essays* consist in a book-length critique of Humean scepticism concerning the external world, and a series of shorter essays on varied subjects, including a critical appraisal of Berkeleyan idealism (Essays 1–3). In her introduction and annotations, LoLordo admirably meets the aims of the Oxford New Histories of Philosophy, an OUP book series initiated by O'Neill, Christia Mercer, and others, to bring a new diversity of historical perspectives to the discipline. LoLordo's work is a model of scholarship that is intended to help present-day readers navigate unfamiliar and under-studied content. Her wonderfully clear and precise exegeses of Shepherd's arguments vis-à-vis Hume will help to facilitate her inclusion in existing historical-philosophical narratives.

Taken together, Boyle and LoLordo's volumes also help to illuminate Shepherd's own original and distinctive philosophical vision. To give one example, in the *Essays* there are several passages that explore familiar issues to do with the mind-body relation, questions of personal identity, and the immateriality of the mind (Shepherd 2018, pp. 239–50; 2020, pp. 92–5, 183–91). These passages reveal that Shepherd's philosophy of mind is closely connected to her key causal principles and wider metaphysical and theological commitments. In her view, the mind and body are not substances but rather two different types of causal capacities. The mind is a continuous capacity for conscious perception (or 'sensation', as

Shepherd calls general perceptions of the mind), and the body is a capacity to cause perceptions of extension and solidity in the mind (Shepherd 2018, pp. 240, 243; 2020, p. 93). These capacities inhere in mysterious 'natures' or 'continued existences in nature', the real essences of which 'we know not' (though we might conveniently term them 'immaterial' and 'material' things). From this account of the mind as a causal capacity, Shepherd develops a theory of the self as a 'continued existing capacity in nature (unknown, unperceived)'. This self is the 'compound mass' or 'complicate being' in which our capacity for conscious perception inheres; it is all our disparate memories and sensations of present objects brought together in union (Shepherd 2018, p. 239; 2020, pp. 92–3). The result is a conception of the self that resembles Locke and Dugald Stewart's theories (see Boyle 2020), but has strikingly unique features of its own. Boyle claims that Shepherd regards the 'mind' and 'self' as interchangeable concepts (Boyle 2020) but, on my own reading, the passages on the resurrection suggest yet another conception of the self, one that might be distinguished from the mind as a simple causal capacity for conscious sensation (see Shepherd 2018, pp. 242–7; 2020, pp. 183–8). This is a moral-theological conception of the self—a being who will endure till the resurrection, a continued existence that is capable of making crucial moral improvements through time, and moving toward 'a state of moral amelioration' (Shepherd 2018, p. 244; 2020, p. 185), even if it is unable to remember every step of the way. God, at least, will regard this subject as a united whole, worthy of reward or punishment.

It may be that this self is just a variation on Shepherd's broader conception of the mind/self (Boyle 2020, p. 107)—an even thicker moral-theological notion of the mind, perhaps. But in any case, one can see why LoLordo suggests that one version of the mind-body problem is dispelled in Shepherd's writings—the problem of interaction between two heterogeneous substances (Shepherd 2020, p. 19). From Shepherd's point of view, the mind and body are not two distinct things with mutually exclusive properties, but rather two

complementary powers. Once mind is defined as a continuous capacity for conscious perception, and body becomes the capacity to cause perceptions of extension and solidity, there is no longer a problem of interaction between two seemingly incompatible substances: the thorny knot of this particular mind-body problem is disentangled. There is still a mystery, of course, about what exactly lies beneath those capacities—the nature of those unperceived natures—but that gives rise to a different problem. Overall, this issue underscores the value of reading Shepherd's work as a tightly knit epistemological, metaphysical, moral, and theological whole. Shepherd has a rich and sophisticated philosophical vision, ripe for further examination and exploration. Boyle and LoLordo's texts are both good places to start. A first-time reader might begin with Boyle's edition and then move onto LoLordo's, as one might proceed from a *mezze* platter to the main meal; both are equally satisfying.

The seventeenth-century figure Margaret Cavendish (1623–73) also provides a unique perspective on the mind-body problem, among several other metaphysical issues. In his edition of Cavendish's *Essential Writings* (2019), David Cunning highlights the great originality of Cavendish's thought, while also expertly situating her ideas in relation to those of her contemporaries, Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Nicolas Malebranche, Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth. Among his selections from Cavendish's voluminous output are passages from her major philosophical works, *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655), *Philosophical Letters* (1664), *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy* (1666), and *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (1668). Cunning divides his chapters according to Cavendish's titles rather than her themes, but nevertheless provides a helpful summary of central topics and relevant sections at the very beginning. Familiar topics include the materialism of the mind, individuation, primary and secondary qualities, the intelligence of animals, knowledge of God's existence and nature, and free will. This expert thematic

overview will assist any instructor who wishes to incorporate women philosophers into an early modern survey course.

Within the text, Cunning's commentaries explain Cavendish's metaphysics in relation to the development of her mature philosophy across several texts, as well as in relation to her wider system, the views of her philosophical 'nemeses' (Descartes, Hobbes, and More), and the similar views of those who came after her (such as Leibniz, Conway, and Hume). Like Boyle, Cunning provides us with an impressively synoptic vision of a woman philosopher's corpus across a range of selected passages. Skilfully annotated and philosophically rich, Cunning's volume is an invaluable resource. There are no unabridged modern editions of Cavendish's major works, the *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* and *Philosophical Letters*. This volume places us in excellent standing until those gaps are filled.

In his introduction and annotations, Cunning touches on the ways in which Cavendish significantly deviated from her intellectual peers, and thus contributes to the goal of providing a thorough-going account of perspectives in this historical period. Cavendish especially stands out from the crowd by discussing gender issues and animal suffering, long before these topics were of modern political and moral interest. If we look to the male philosophers, it is difficult to find an early modern ethical theory that gives weight to animal sentience and intelligence as morally salient features in themselves. If theorists do oppose animal cruelty, they tend to use anthropocentric arguments or Scripture-based justifications for kind and humane treatment instead (Thomas 1983). Cavendish is distinctive for arguing that animals have a sense and reason of their own, and that human beings have no reason to think of themselves as special or morally significant in this regard; their moral double standard towards animals is unjustified. From her materialist point of view, all of nature is made up of a material substance composed of a thorough commixture of reason, sense, and inanimate matter. It follows from this theory that every part of nature has a mental and a

sentient aspect—'Rational and Sensitive Matter, are in every Creature', she says (Cavendish 2019, p. 63)—not only human beings, but also non-human animals. Interestingly, in her volume of correspondence, Karen Green identifies a similar angle in Catharine Macaulay's treatment of animals, when she notes that 'Macaulay takes seriously the moral status of animals as sentient creatures' (Macaulay 2020, p. 22). Macaulay criticises Hume for restricting his notion of utility to benefits for the human species alone; she also explains why it is that we have moral obligations to animals, even though they have no duties to us in return. One wonders if, with further research, this topic could emerge as a common motif in women's philosophical writings of the early modern era, and thus form the basis of a revised—more humane—history of animal ethics.

So far, then, it appears that this spate of recent editions promises to raise both the quantity and quality of material on early modern women thinkers. Collectively, these volumes will help to achieve the goals of a thoroughly contextualised history of philosophy: to increase the number and variety of texts we can draw on, to avoid partiality and bias in our historical-philosophical narratives, and to thereby make better-informed judgements concerning long-standing philosophical disagreements.

We might think there is a problem, however, with studying these women through the lenses the men have made (see O'Neill 2019, p. 16; Shapiro 2004, pp. 222–4). All the volumes in question examine and evaluate women's ideas in relation to the standard philosophical canon and familiar topics, such as philosophy of mind, theories of the self, the mind-body problem, and issues to do with animals, and so on. But one wonders: is this approach really conducive to the elimination of partiality and bias in the long term? As an undergraduate, one of my professors once said to me 'there are no mute inglorious Miltons out there'. By this, he meant that there were no undiscovered geniuses still to be unveiled—that we had found them all and that the philosophical canon was now set. The statement

always bothered me because it made the history of women's philosophy seem pointless, hopeless, and obscure. No woman would ever rise to the heights of Milton (or Descartes, Hobbes, or Locke), so why bother? Men will always be the standard bearers in the discipline and women will just have to follow along behind. But now I tend to think that the men are deemed so important because their works have defined *what* is important in the history of philosophy. Metaphorically speaking, they have owned the philosophical Mint—they have had possession of the factory that manufactures currency in philosophical debates. To pass as bona fide coinage, an idea or a topic must be created in its mould; otherwise, it is merely funny money, it has no real value, and it carries no weight. This Mint-ownership problem has blinkered historians to a number of exceptional female philosophers of the past, especially those who have focused on themes crucial to women but neglected by men. And so, here is another way in which these new editions might have a decisive impact on the study of early modern thought: by showing what is original and distinctive in women's texts, even when the topics in questions were uninteresting to the men. Crucially, they also reveal that philosophy can be found in a wider range of genres, using a wider range of methodological tools than those we see in the classic treatises of men.

Anne M. Thell's Broadview Press edition of Cavendish's *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (2020) captures this thinker's complexity in all its breath-taking eccentricity. The volume offers the first unabridged edited version of this important treatise, the most mature statement of Cavendish's philosophy of nature. Thell's introduction provides a wonderfully lucid and accessible overview. As an Associate Professor of English, Thell goes beyond the usual ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological focus of standard philosophical treatments of Cavendish, to discuss wider issues to do with health and disease, God and religion, and Cavendish's use of different literary devices. Thell's introduction thus provides Cavendish with the kind of expansive 'out of the box' treatment that her work demands, focused on her

imaginative forays into philosophy. The discussion of Cavendish’s approach to the etiology of disease is particularly illuminating, situating the *Grounds* in the context of a fraught transition period between ancient Galenic medicine, on the one hand, and the new ‘iatrochemistry’ (chemistry applied to medicine), on the other. To assist the reader’s understanding, the volume also includes an appendix containing selected passages from Jan Baptiste van Helmont’s *Oriatrike*, a principal target of Cavendish’s criticisms of iatrochemistry, as well as other selections from early modern authors.

These added readings help to enhance our appreciation of Cavendish’s stark originality. Thell highlights a lengthy appendix at the end of the *Grounds*, which reads more like science fiction than philosophy. One part includes an argumentative dialogue between the different parts of Cavendish’s mind (Cavendish 2020, pp. 212–22). These parts debate the possibility of ‘Restoring Beds’—devices that are capable of resurrecting the dead and reversing the effects of decay—as well as ‘Breeding Beds’, exterior ‘wombs’ capable of producing new life. In this dialogue, Cavendish rather presciently anticipates a number of issues to do with pluripotent stem cells, those cells that are capable of developing into different cell types and tissue. She talks of the ‘Roots and Seeds of the dead Animal Body’, which might be nurtured and grown to resume ‘their proper Order and Form’ (pp. 215, 216). This dialectic extends her materialist conception of matter as alive, self-moving, and perceptive ‘all the way down’, and builds on her claim that there is no true annihilation in nature, only the dissolution of parts. But the piece also explores issues to do with personal identity, since some parts of her mind argue that any subsequent creations would be new productions and not the same creatures brought back to life; there’s also a dialogue concerning the ethics of using artificial rather than natural methods to prolong and restore life. Above all, the debate is reflective of Cavendish’s anti-dogmatism and her conviction that human knowledge can only ever be provisional—the dialogue ends in angry disagreement

between the parts of her mind. Thell's volume thus helps to highlight what is original and distinctive in Cavendish's texts—those topics and approaches that we do not typically find in the canonical male philosophers. Cavendish's dialogue pushes the conventional boundaries between philosophy and fiction, reminding us that philosophy can take many different forms.

With Sandrine Bergès and Eric Schliesser's newly translated edition of Sophie de Grouchy's *Letters on Sympathy*, we are once again reminded of those rare perspectives that women thinkers bring to early modern disagreements. This is not the first scholarly edition of the *Letters* (originally published in 1798), but Bergès and Schliesser's edition (2019) has several exceptional selling points. Above all, the introductory material and footnotes are models of lucid and philosophically precise scholarship. With her translation from the French, Bergès has aimed to strike a balance between readability and faithfulness to the original language and tone of the period. The commentaries are informed by Bergès's in-depth knowledge of the philosophy of the French Revolution and of Grouchy's republican milieu, as well as Schliesser's formidable expertise on the political thinker Adam Smith. This volume will have particular appeal to those scholars wishing to examine the reception of Smith's work in late eighteenth-century France: Grouchy's *Letters* represent both a homage to and a critique of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

This edition holds great interest for what it tells us about an eighteenth-century woman's perspective on the concepts of sympathy ('fellow feeling') and utility (as 'public good') in this period (see Letters I and II). Unlike Smith, Grouchy (1764–1822) gives an important role to relationships of dependence in the causal acquisition of sympathy as a form of fellow feeling or 'the disposition … to feel in a way similar to others' (Grouchy 2019, p. 59). For Grouchy, the most important early relationship is that between an infant and her nurse, that is, the person who feeds and comforts the child. Through this connection, and especially an infant's physiological response to the nurse's presence or absence, a human

being learns personal sympathy for another individual. Later, this sympathy develops into a more mature 'moral' sympathy (a sympathy for humanity as a whole) through repeated experience, memory, imagination, and reflection on the physiology of pleasure and pain. It follows from Grouchy's naturalistic theory of the causal origins of sympathy that early moral education is thus integral to the peaceful flourishing of society as a whole. Only through the proper cultivation of sympathy can human beings hope to develop the virtuous disposition needed for 'the true good of social life' (Grouchy 2019, p. 65). Sympathy also plays a crucial role in Grouchy's vision of an ideal republican society, one in which relationships of inequality and unjust domination are eliminated in order to ensure the cultivation of moral sympathy (and compassion and humanity) toward others.

Karen Green's scholarly collection, *The Correspondence of Catharine Macaulay* (2020), highlights yet another eighteenth-century woman's unique republican vision. Green's edition constitutes the first edited collection of the complete correspondence of Catharine Macaulay (1731–91). This volume will generate much excitement among Macaulay scholars, given that many letters were discovered only in 1992, when they first appeared at auction in the United States. By bringing these pieces together, and by providing the apparatus needed to understand them (including biographical notes on a number of obscure figures), Green has produced a volume of lasting significance. Other epistolary collections, such as *The Correspondence of John Locke* and *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, are still widely read and discussed by scholars today—and not only by scholars of Locke and Hobbes. This outstanding volume will have the same enduring impact and wide appeal. Above all, it enables us to have a proper appreciation of the extent of Macaulay's influence, beyond the shores of England and Scotland, to France and America.

To my mind, Green's rich and detailed introduction suggests that Macaulay may in fact be the 'undiscovered Milton' my professor warned me about. In her several

publications—ranging from her widely influential *History of England* to her respected works of political, moral, and educational theory—Macaulay developed her own systematic philosophy, one that Green describes as 'Christian eudaimonism' or 'rational altruism' rather than republicanism in the conventional sense (Macaulay 2020, p. 11). This is a moral and political philosophy born of the insight that true liberty cannot amount to mere license or libertinism, but must be informed by reason and virtue, for the sake of human moral accountability. Summarising this position, Green writes that

> Combining the eudaimonist tradition according to which the highest good is happiness, with a Christian inflection of the Stoic claim that this highest good is coincident with virtue, the Christian eudaimonist interprets this virtue and happiness as depending on participation in God's goodness. (Macaulay 2020, p. 11)

This moral-theological approach gives Macaulay much in common with other women philosophers of the period, including Catharine Trotter Cockburn and Mary Astell (see Green 2015). Like these women, Macaulay emphasises the importance of education as a means of obtaining wisdom and virtue for the sake of happiness—a moral and intellectual education that should be extended to women as well as men. In this volume, once again, we find suggestions of a distinctive strand of women's thought in the early modern period, further underscoring the benefit of examining women's texts on their own terms, outside of the traditions the men have made.

To conclude, I will now return to my original question: what kind of impact could these critical editions (and others like them) have on the study of early modern thought? Could they lead to significant changes in the canonical history of early modern philosophy? In my opinion, these expertly edited texts reveal the many benefits of taking both a present-oriented and historically contextualised approach to early modern women's philosophy. With

the help of their critical tools, we can appreciate the unique ideas and arguments that these women brought to past philosophical disagreements; we can also uncover what interested the women themselves, without forcing their ideas to fit the mould of current concerns. In turn, these critical editions can influence us to think outside the box when it comes to contemporary philosophical concepts and genres. Some editions (such as Shepherd 2018 and Cavendish 2020) also suggest the benefits of making women's philosophical works available as teaching texts. By appealing to younger educators and the next generation of scholars in the field, early modern women's ideas are likely to have greater currency in the coming years.

On the whole, this recent proliferation in texts could substantially contribute to the goal of intellectual integrity: both integrity in the sense of wholeness or completeness and integrity in the sense of truthfulness and veracity in our historical-philosophical narratives. Of course, we cannot expect a dramatic shift to take place in the philosophical canon overnight. But generally speaking, the more expert critical editions we have, the greater the change we might expect, in the same way that a powerful stream of water can more effectually wear down a rock than a mere dripping tap. These six superb volumes will contribute to the eventual 'wearing down' of dated themes and notions in the history of philosophy, toward the goal of a more accurate, diverse, and unbiased account of human thought. It might not be time to start streaking down the street just yet, or crying out loud in joyous celebration, but we are on the path to building a genuinely inclusive history of philosophy—a history that will be transformed by the consideration of multiple perspectives, and especially those of the 'other half' of humankind.[1]

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