

In Defence of Different Voices

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Abstract: Louise Antony draws a now well-known distinction between two explanatory models for researching and addressing the issue of women's underrepresentation in philosophy – the 'Different Voices' (DV) and 'Perfect Storm' (PS) models – and argues that, in view of PS's considerably higher social value, DV should be abandoned. We argue that Antony misunderstands the feminist framework that she takes to underpin DV, and we reconceptualise DV in a way that aligns with a proper understanding of the metaphilosophical framework that underpins it. On the basis of that reconceptualisation – together with the rejection of her claim that DV posits 'cognitive' differences between women and men – we argue that Antony's negative assessment of DV's social value is mistaken. And, we argue, this conclusion does not depend on *endorsing* the relevant feminist metaphilosophical framework. Whatever our metaphilosophical commitments, then, we should all agree that DV research should be actively pursued rather than abandoned.

Keywords: feminism, metaphilosophy, women, diversity.

1. Introduction

Louise Antony's paper "Different Voices or Perfect Storm: Why Are There So Few Women in Philosophy?" (2012) distinguishes between two distinct broad explanatory models for researching and addressing the issue of women's underrepresentation in philosophy, which she terms the 'Different Voices' model (henceforth DV) and the 'Perfect Storm' model (PS). She argues that "we ought to commit ourselves to the Perfect Storm model and that we ought to abandon the Different Voices model" (2012, 232) on the grounds that "the social value of research guided by the Perfect Storm will be considerably higher than that entailed by the Different Voices model" (2012, 232).

Our aim in this paper is partly critical and partly constructive. The critical aim is to show that Antony's claim that PS research has a "considerably higher" social value than does DV research is mistaken. A major source of the mistake, we shall argue, is her misconception of the nature and aims of DV. The constructive aim is to show that a new conception of DV – one that is firmly rooted in the actual position of (as Antony puts it) "feminist philosophers who have argued, over the past three decades or so, that philosophy as it is practiced is 'gendered'" (2012, 228) – has the potential to deliver a research programme aimed at explaining and ameliorating the underrepresentation of women that easily musters sufficient social value to merit further investigation.

Our main disagreement with Antony, then, concerns the theoretical underpinnings of DV. While Antony takes DV to be rooted in a particular strand

of feminist philosophy, her argument for DV's lack of social value reveals a conception of DV that departs significantly from the agenda that those feminist philosophers were (and are) pursuing. In particular she takes DV to be underpinned by empirical claims about 'cognitive' differences between women and men, and she takes those claims to be both lacking in confirmation and politically risky ones to make – risky because they are apt to be misread as claims about differences in 'natural', 'immutable' or 'essential' properties and for this and other reasons misused to serve conservative or reactionary agendas. Our alternative conception is, we think, truer to the feminist roots to which Antony refers. Thus conceived, DV's theoretical underpinnings are provided by a broadly feminist metaphilosophical view: a view about what philosophy *should* be – and, in particular, a view about which 'voices' should be counted as legitimate and properly philosophical rather than at best peripheral or, at worst, not philosophy at all. This conception of DV's theoretical framework delivers an explanatory model for women's underrepresentation that is not rooted in dubious or politically risky empirical claims about 'cognitive' differences between women and men, and hence is a model to which Antony's negative assessment of DV's social value does not apply.

Lest any readers who are disinclined to accept the theoretical framework just described are tempted to stop reading at this point, we stress that our argument for our positive assessment of DV's social value does not presuppose *endorsement* of that theoretical framework. It merely requires the kind of broad-minded tolerance that philosophers are generally good at extending to philosophical positions or perspectives that they do not share, or even take themselves to have good reasons to reject. One might – and philosophers typically do – take, say, modal realism or pragmatism or consequentialism to be wholly misconceived, and yet happily respect, regard as entirely legitimate, and even encourage work in that area. Assuming our arguments hold up, agreement with our positive assessment of DV's social value merely requires the same kind of tolerant attitude towards the theoretical framework that underpins it.

The paper proceeds as follows. In §2 we sketch the way in which Antony conceives the PS and DV models. We also introduce four dimensions along which one might measure the social value of a research programme – *likelihood*, *R&D costs*, *practical applications*, and *political risk* – and explain why Antony takes PS to outperform DV on all four measures. In §3 we explain why Antony's own conception of DV is incoherent. We articulate what we take to be the proper theoretical foundations of DV – which we'll call 'DV-Meta' – and explain how those foundations differ from the basis in empirical claims about 'cognitive' differences between men and women that Antony takes to be distinctive of DV. In §4, we turn from metaphilosophy to explanatory models, that is, from DV-Meta to DV (thus reconceived) itself, and give a flavour of the kinds of specific explanations for the underrepresentation of women in philosophy that DV-Meta suggests. In §§5-7, we reconsider how DV fares in comparison to PS when it

comes to *likelihood* (§5), *R&D costs* and *practical applications* (§6) and *political risk* (§7). In §8, we sum up and return briefly to the issue of tolerance mentioned above.

Our conclusion when it comes to social value is pretty modest; we do not claim to show that the social value of DV is higher than – or even, as things currently stand, as high as – that of PS. We merely claim that it is sufficiently high that, *pace* Antony, it should be actively pursued rather than abandoned. In fact – though we lack the space to cash this out – someone who actively *endorses* DV-Meta will take herself to have good reason to think that the social value of DV is considerably higher than that of PS. But, since our main aim is to persuade those who *don't* endorse DV-Meta, we shall maintain neutral on that front throughout.

2. Perfect storms, different voices, and the social value of research programmes

We begin by seeing how Antony defines the two rival explanatory models, starting with DV. In the context of discussing Wesley Buckwalter and Stephen Stich's claim that there are differences in intuitions between female and male students when it comes to some standard thought experiments (2014), Antony says:

... let me call the kind of model that Buckwalter and Stich are proposing the 'Different Voices' model. Buckwalter and Stich are not the first theorists to offer a Different Voices explanation for the skewed gender balance in philosophy. They join company with quite a few feminist philosophers who have argued, over the past three decades or so, that philosophy as it is practiced is 'gendered,' embodying or reflecting a distinctively male perspective. This male perspective has been held to manifest itself in a number of ways—in distinctively philosophical rhetoric or methodology, in philosophers' choice of problems to study, or in the range of thought and experience on which philosophers rely. These feminist philosophers, like B&S, presume that the features of philosophy that (on their view) make it alien to women are features that were detrimental to the practice of philosophy itself, so that it is the discipline that needs changing, not the women. (2012, 228)

According to Antony, DV posits “substantive intrinsic differences” between men and women (2012, 231). By contrast:

The Perfect Storm model ... seeks to explain women's low representation within philosophy as a kind of interaction effect among familiar kinds of sex discrimination that are operative throughout society, but that take on particular forms and force as they converge within the academic institution of philosophy. (212, 231)

The root of PS lies in Virginia Valian's (1999) claim that there is a conflict “between gender schematic norms of femininity, on the one hand, and characteristics held to be necessary for success in academia, on the other, [which] can result in women's work being neglected or undervalued, with predictable

consequences for women's careers" (Antony 2012, 231-2). The basic cognitive mechanism at work here is implicit bias. As Valian puts it, "the gender schemas that we all share result in our overrating men and underrating women in professional settings, only in small, barely visible ways: those small disparities accumulate over time to provide men with more advantages than women" (2005, 198). Antony adds to this account the idea that philosophy constitutes a 'perfect storm', in that there are many and various ways in which gender schemas can converge and interact with, and be intensified by, other factors that are peculiar to philosophy – or at least more prevalent in philosophy than in other disciplines.

Antony's overall claim is that "we ought to commit ourselves to the Perfect Storm model and that we ought to abandon the Different Voices model" (2012, 232). But her claim about what we "ought to commit ourselves to" is – she is careful to explain – not merely a matter of which of the explanatory models is more likely to be true; she has in mind something more like a commitment to a research programme, where whether or not a programme merits being pursued is to be determined on the basis of its relative "social value" (2012, 240). We think it is helpful to think of Antony's reasons for thinking that the social value of PS is significantly higher than that of DV as falling into four categories: *likelihood*, *research and development (R&D) costs*, *practical applications*, and *political risk*.

Imagine, by way of an analogy, two rival potential research programmes, R1 and R2, aimed at finding a cure for some contagious disease D. The government has a fixed amount of money to invest in one or other of the programmes. The most obvious first question to ask – the *likelihood* question – is: given the current evidential situation, which programme is more likely to succeed in discovering the true cause of the disease and hence – in principle – a possible cure for it? Obviously if the assumption about the cause of D that R1 is presupposing is more likely to be true than R2's rival assumption then, other things being equal, investing in R1 would have much greater social value.

Other things are rarely equal, however. Another question concerns *R&D costs*. Suppose that the R&D phase of R1 would be much cheaper than R2, saving the government money that they could spend on other socially valuable initiatives. On the other hand, suppose also that according to R1's assumption about the cause of D, the only possible cure would be hugely expensive to mass-produce and therefore very likely to benefit a tiny minority of the people who have or are likely to get D – so R1 fares badly when it comes to *practical applications* – whereas, according to R2's assumption, the cure would be much cheaper and therefore benefit vastly more people. Clearly *R&D costs* and *practical applications* are both relevant considerations in assessing the respective overall predicted social values of R1 and R2.

Finally, we have *political risk*. Suppose that D afflicts only women, and that preliminary research by R1 indicates that the only way to cure it would be via posthumous organ donation by men. Suppose further that the political climate is one in which misogyny is on the rise, and developing and producing such a cure

would be likely to provoke a huge backlash – for example, it would be likely to lead to large numbers of men ripping up their donor cards – which would have knock-on effects for other illnesses whose cures rely on organ donation. Some of them would inevitably video themselves doing so while having a misogynist rant (“now the evil feminists want to harvest our organs!”) and uploading them to YouTube, where they would, equally inevitably, be very widely watched and shared by incels, MGTOWs, and other misogynist online ‘communities’. That would further stoke the fires of misogyny and would therefore be bad for women in general – and especially bad for women with D, who would, with sad inevitability, become targets for misogynist abuse and death threats on social media, have to run the gamut of protestors on their way to treatment centres, and so on. Again, that – alongside the opposite consideration of the injustice done to women with being D being denied a potential cure because of high societal levels of misogyny – would be highly relevant to an all-things-considered judgement about the respective overall predicted social values of R1 and R2.

So much for the analogy; let’s get back to Antony’s claim that the social value of PS is higher than that of DV, and hence that “we ought to commit ourselves to the Perfect Storm model and... we ought to abandon the Different Voices model”. Antony’s claim is that PS beats DV on all four of the dimensions just described. PS wins when it comes to *likelihood* (“[t]he preliminary data are equivocal; there is no strong reason to believe that the [DV] research will bear fruit” (250)), *R&D costs* (DV research would be “difficult to design and implement” (250)), and *practical applications* (it is “not at all clear what interventions would make any difference if the Different Voices model turned out to be correct” (251)). Finally, there is *political risk*: claims of gender differences are “apt to be misinterpreted in ways that prove detrimental to women – ways that encourage essentialist and biological determinist thinking” (251). If Antony is right, it follows that PS has greater social value overall than DV. We’ll argue that this view is mistaken – or at any rate she significantly overstates the relative social value of PS compared to DV.

Of course, even if Antony is right about relative social values, her claim that we “ought to abandon” DV does not follow. It only follows if either (a) we are forced to put all our eggs in one basket – which we are not – or (b) DV doesn’t merely fare worse than PS but is, all things considered, socially *disvaluable*. (b) may indeed be Antony’s view; in particular, she may think that the political risk associated with DV is sufficiently serious that pursuing it as a research programme would be actively harmful rather than merely a suboptimal use of limited resources. (We’ll argue in §7 that she is wrong about that.) In fact, however, it is unclear that this is her view. After all, she herself says that her “hope, really, is to raise the salience of the Perfect Storm alternative in hopes of generating some tangible support for the research program it suggests” (232) – which suggests that her real aim is merely to encourage PS research rather than

to establish that DV research is actively harmful and hence should immediately cease.

Nonetheless, even if Antony's call to abandon DV research was intended to be read merely as a hyperbolic way of encouraging PS research, we are concerned that it is, in fact, being taken at face value by those engaged in researching the underrepresentation of women in philosophy and hence may in fact have had the effect of stifling DV research before it has even seriously begun. (We return to this issue briefly in §8.) We find the possibility that Antony's paper has, perhaps unwittingly, led to the marginalisation of DV research into women's underrepresentation not only ironic – given DV's roots in the concern that 'different voices' have been excluded from *philosophical* discourse – but also alarming. Antony's hope was to generate support for PS; ours is to generate support for DV. We do not, however, recommend that PS research be abandoned. We are merely deeply sceptical that PS-based interventions on their own will come even close to solving the underrepresentation problem.

3. Different Voices and feminist metaphilosophy

In this section we take the first step in our argument that Antony is mistaken about the relative social value of PS and DV. We argue that she mischaracterises both the nature of the claims and the aims of the work of "feminist philosophers who have argued, over the past three decades or so, that philosophy as it is practiced is 'gendered,' embodying or reflecting a distinctively male perspective".

As we saw in §2, Antony's conception of DV aligns this feminist literature with Buckwalter and Stich's 2014 paper, which claims empirical support for the idea that there are differences between male and female students when it comes to intuitions concerning a range of thought experiments. This alignment, we shall argue, is misguided. While it is true that both Buckwalter & Stich's paper and the feminist tradition that Antony mentions take philosophy to embody or reflect "a distinctively male perspective" in some way, the theoretical underpinnings of explanations for women's underrepresentation that stem from that feminist tradition are radically at odds with those presupposed by Buckwalter and Stich. Our aim in this section is to articulate that difference in theoretical underpinnings.

The upshot of the alignment just mentioned is that the 'DV model', as Antony understands it, lacks the kind of unified theoretical outlook that *any* coherent research programme – the kind of entity whose social value it makes sense to try to assess – must have. This being so, the *coherent* research programme whose social value we *should* be trying to assess in comparison with PS is the one that arises from the feminist tradition that Antony – mistakenly, we shall argue – aligns with Buckwalter and Stich's paper. We'll call *that* research programme 'DV'. (Our choice of terminology may seem unnecessarily confusing since we mean something different to what Antony means; however, we think of it as the best satisfier of Antony's term, given that her own use of the term 'DV'

fails to pick out a coherent research programme at all.) We'll proceed in reverse order, first explaining roughly what the relevant feminist tradition looks like and how Antony mischaracterises it, and then explaining on that basis why a research programme that attempts to incorporate both that tradition and Buckwalter and Stich's work would be internally incoherent.

Our starting point is the thought that, in conceiving DV as an explanatory model from the get-go – where the phenomenon to be explained is the underrepresentation of women in philosophy and the explanation is to be found in 'intrinsic' differences between women and men – Antony glosses over the deep theoretical differences between the perspectives of Buckwalter and Stich on the one hand and the strand of feminist philosophy she cites on the other. As we shall explain, that strand of feminist philosophy is not, and never was, intended as an explanatory model for women's underrepresentation in philosophy. Instead, it enshrines a *metaphilosophical* assessment of the norms, practices and assumptions that guide philosophical research and scaffold the tradition. In some cases, feminist philosophers have opposed certain practices and assumptions on the grounds that they marginalise women's voices, and in other cases they have simply questioned the impact of stereotypically masculine traits on the formation of these norms and practices. Many feminist philosophers have also made normative claims about the proper content of philosophy – including its methods of enquiry, given that questions about what philosophy is and should be are at least in part questions about which methods it does and should accommodate. And feminist projects in philosophy have traditionally attempted to do philosophy in that way, shorn of its narrow – and, according to feminist philosophers, masculine or patriarchal – assumptions about what philosophy should be.

That said, our overall concern in this paper *is* with explanatory models: we share Antony's aim of articulating and assessing the prospects for rival views concerning the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in philosophy. This being so – one might object – in claiming that the work of the feminist philosophers Antony cites should not be conceived as offering an explanatory model in the first place, surely we are in effect taking that work off the table all together when it comes to articulating and assessing explanatory models, rather than (as we claim we will be doing) offering a reconceptualisation of DV. Our response at this stage is: bear with us. In order to get our reconceptualised version of DV – *qua* explanatory model – up and running, and therefore to assess its social value, we have to get straight on the theoretical framework that underpins it. That is our project in this section. Only then can we see what the relevant explanatory model might look like – a task we'll come back to in the next section. In an attempt to make this clearer, we'll distinguish between 'DV-Meta' – the metaphilosophical view just mentioned – and DV itself, the explanatory model to which DV-Meta lends itself.

Our present aim, then, is to spell out – in broad terms – what we just called ‘DV-Meta’. We’ll proceed by example, starting with Janice Moulton’s piece (1983) on what she calls the “adversary method” and Antony’s appraisal of it. According to Antony, “Janice Moulton argued ... that philosophy’s ‘adversarial method’ was off-putting to women” (2012, 229); “Her view presumed that women, as a group, were uncomfortable with a contentious style of interaction” (2012, 238). In fact, nowhere in her paper does Moulton suggest that the adversarial method – or the kind of aggressive behaviour she suggests that it encourages – is “off-putting to women” or something that they are not “comfortable with”. Indeed, the only claim she makes in this general ballpark is precisely the one that Antony makes in connection with PS – that, thanks to gender stereotypes, women are disadvantaged merely by virtue of their gender: when a woman displays aggressive behaviour “it may be considered all the more unpleasant because it seems unnatural” (Moulton 1983, 150; cf. Antony 2012, 239).

The point of Moulton’s paper is instead to challenge what we may think of as a liberal feminist position, according to which women can and should be as adversarial as we stereotypically think men are if they want to be successful in an arena where adversarial behaviour is the norm. As she says in her introduction: “Some feminists dismiss the sex distinction that views aggression in a female as a negative quality and then encourage females to behave aggressively in order to further their careers. I am going to, instead, question the assumption that aggression deserves association with more positive qualities” (1983, 150).

She does not do so on the basis of the claim that women are, in fact, typically less disposed towards adversarial or aggressive behaviour than men, or indeed on the basis of any claims about women’s intrinsic features. Instead, her main focus is on what she calls the “Adversary Paradigm”, according to which “the philosophic enterprise is seen as an unimpassioned debate between *adversaries* who try to defend their own views against counterexamples and produce counterexamples to opposing views”, and “it is assumed that the best way of presenting work in philosophy is to address it to an imagined opponent and muster all the evidence one can to support it” (153). And – connecting the Adversary Paradigm to aggression – she says that the paradigm, “perhaps tricked by the conflation of aggression and competence, incorporates aggression into its methodology” (151).

Moulton argues that the Adversary Paradigm has had an unhealthy effect on philosophical progress: historical figures “who cannot be recast into an adversarial mold are likely to be ignored” (155); in ethics “it has been assumed that there must be a single supreme moral principle” (157); and, more generally, philosophy “presents a distorted picture about what sorts of positions are worthy of attention, giving undue attention and publicity to positions merely because they are those of a hypothetical adversary’s and possibly ignoring positions which make more valuable or interesting claims” (158). What makes

this a claim that belongs to the DV-Meta tradition, as opposed to the liberal feminist position that Moulton is criticising, is not that it appeals to any difference in intrinsic features between men and women. Rather, it is the fact that – unlike the liberal feminist position, which takes the status quo when it comes to philosophical method to enshrine gender-neutral norms, and claims that women are hindered by social forces from playing the game on a level playing field with men – Moulton takes the status quo itself to be gendered: it elevates stereotypically male traits and norms to a universalised standard rather than questioning whether those traits and norms are valuable ones to have adopted in the first place.

More generally, it is this rejection of the unquestioned universalisation of stereotypically male traits and norms within the philosophical arena that we take to be distinctive of the strand of feminist metaphilosophy that we’re calling ‘DV-Meta’. And it is this rejection – rather than an appeal to differences in intrinsic features between women and men – that is meant by feminist theorists when they claim that philosophy is ‘gendered’.

We now turn to Carol Gilligan. Antony takes the term ‘different voices’ from Gilligan’s seminal work *In a Different Voice* (1982), where, according to Antony, she elaborated an account of moral psychology which established a gendered division in moral reasoning, and defended women’s preferred mode of moral reasoning against sexist claims of inferiority. We believe that this assumption, although by no means confined to Antony, constitutes both a simplification and a misrepresentation of Gilligan’s work. Gilligan’s primary aim was to criticise the dominance of a certain paradigm within moral psychology. This paradigm enshrines a “conception of morality as justice”, focussing on “rights and rules” (73) and centring on abstract universalisable principles, as opposed to a conception of “the moral problem as a problem of care and responsibility in relationships” (73) that stresses the importance of social context in moral decision-making. As Gilligan states in the introduction to *In a Different Voice*:

The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women’s voices that I trace its development. But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex. (1982, 2)

We take Gilligan’s point here to be a broadly metaphilosophical claim – or, perhaps better, a metapsychological claim that can be, and has been, put to the service of feminist metaphilosophy.

The metapsychological claim is, roughly, that the a “mode of thought” that takes moral problems and decisions to be resolved by considering the moral demands of “care and responsibility in relationships” is, in fact, a legitimate,

potentially sophisticated and fully mature way to think about moral problems – and not, as was assumed by the dominant paradigm, a mere phase in moral development that one passes through on the way to a fully developed, mature conception of “morality as justice”. The corresponding *metaphilosophical* claim is roughly that we should not assume that the aim of an ethical theory is to uncover universal principles – Kantian categorical imperatives, the greatest happiness principle, or whatever – that apply in all possible situations and abstract away from the messy, localised social relations of care and responsibility in which actual human beings stand to one another; instead we should take those relations as our starting point for ethical theorising. The view constitutes a *feminist* position – of the kind that falls within the DV-Meta tradition – because the marginalisation of the latter view is of a piece with the general tendency to regard abstract reasoning concerning universal principles – stereotypically the preserve of men – as *better*. Gilligan’s aim – as with the other feminist theorists Antony cites, including Moulton – was to question this and, in doing so, to expose it as a gendered *assumption* rather than a necessary feature of ‘good’ moral reasoning or theory construction. In other words, it was to trouble the universalised elevation of abstract reasoning – when compared with relational or situational considerations – by revealing it as something that can and should be questioned.

In claiming that Gilligan’s work should be conceived as (or as closely related to) metaphilosophy, we are not claiming that she was uninterested in empirical questions. On the contrary: she was centrally concerned to respond to empirical research conducted by Lawrence Kohlberg, who claimed that there was a slower rate of moral maturation in girls – who, he claimed, tend to overemphasise situational details in moral decision-making. And she herself conducted empirical research in the form of in-depth interviews, the content and analysis of which permeate *In a Different Voice*, where she did indeed observe gender differences (see also Gilligan and Attanucci 1988). This being so, it is easy to see how one might interpret her work – as Antony does – as being primarily concerned to argue that women’s modes of thought should not (*contra* Kohlberg) be thought to be inferior or under-developed on the basis of (allegedly) empirically verified differences between men’s and women’s moral thinking.

Nonetheless, as we say, we think Gilligan’s work is *not* best interpreted in this way. For example, her aim in conducting her own interviews with women in *A Different Voice* was clearly to use them as a means of further understanding the ‘different voice’ – the mode of moral reasoning that incorporates social context into moral decision-making and stands in stark contrast to the paradigm of universalist moral philosophy. And then, as we saw above, there is her insistence from the outset that “the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex”. As she later clarified in a 2012 interview:

If I wanted to write about women specifically, I would have called it 'In a Woman's Voice'. I didn't ... (Gilligan 2012)

The other feminist theorists that Antony cites as belonging to the DV, such as Naomi Scheman, Lorraine Code and Jennifer Hornsby, have all been engaged in a very similar form of metaphilosophical criticism. That is, they have sought to critique the hierarchy of reason which places appeals to universal principles over and above situational, relational and context-dependent considerations. Indeed, this is also a part of Moulton's charge against the Adversary Paradigm: the practice of pitting two (real or imagined) 'opponents' against each other, in requiring that one party make *universal* claims whilst the other attempts to disprove these claims by finding counter-examples, "presents a distorted picture about what sorts of positions are worthy of attention" (Moulton 1983, 158).

The aforementioned feminist theorists, then, have argued in diverse ways – throughout a variety of philosophical subdisciplines – that appeals to atemporal universal patterns or principles in theory-construction do not reflect an apolitical unbiased exercise of reason, but are instead politically problematic precisely because they mask the intrinsic relevance of structural and historical injustice to many important theoretical questions. They thereby take a positive normative stance towards approaches to philosophical questions that dismiss structural and historical details as irrelevant: such approaches come to be seen as approaches that philosophy not only does but *ought* to adopt to those questions. What DV-Meta theorists are attempting to undermine are the forms of thought that presuppose abstraction from surrounding social and material context as the optimal terrain for philosophical insight – a presumption that can be identified in various incarnations throughout philosophical discourse and methodology globally, but pervasively within the analytic tradition. According to DV-Meta, it is in the interest of women – as well as every other subjugated class – to dismantle attempts to construct theories or knowledge that attempt to render invisible the relevance of social, relational and historical facts; and *this* is the basic metaphilosophical feminist point.

With this in mind, let's return to Antony's own conception of DV, and in particular to her inclusion of Buckwalter and Stich's 2014 paper within that broad research programme. The reason for that inclusion, we think, is that Antony has conflated feminist metaphilosophical enquiry – what we have been calling 'DV-Meta' – with an attempt to directly explain women's underrepresentation in philosophy by appealing to women's 'cognition', when in fact the relevant feminist philosophers are engaged in feminist critiques of, and developing alternatives to, the dominant philosophical paradigm.

Buckwalter and Stich, by contrast, *do* hypothesise that (alleged) differences between individual men's and women's cognition – specifically, judgements or 'intuitions' about a range of standard philosophical thought experiments – may contribute to explaining the high attrition rate of women undergraduates (2014, 307). This bears no connection to DV-Meta. On the

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contrary: the kinds of thought experiment that Buckwalter and Stich consider mostly fall squarely within debates that are a part of the dominant philosophical paradigm that is the target of DV-Meta: Twin Earth cases, Gettier cases, and so on. The point here is not so much about the subject-matter of the thought experiments, but the role that thought experiments are overwhelmingly taken to play within those debates:

When a philosopher invokes a philosophical intuition in a philosophical argument, the intuition (or, more accurately, the propositional content of the intuition) is typically being used as *evidence*. Philosophers rarely argue that the propositional content of an intuition they are invoking is true. Rather, they take the propositional content of the intuition to be *obvious*, and they use the proposition as a premise in the argument they are constructing. (Buckwalter and Stich 2014, 332)

(Very often – though not always – intuitions play the role of counter-examples. We all know how this goes. You come up with a definition of knowledge; I sock you with the Gettier case. You revise your definition; I sock you with a revised Gettier case. And so on.)

This is the framework within which Buckwalter and Stich develop their claim that there may be a ‘selection effect’ that puts female undergraduates off philosophy:

it is plausible to suppose that some women facing this predicament will be puzzled or confused or uncomfortable or angry or just plain bored. Some women may become convinced that they aren’t any good at philosophy, since they do not have the intuitions that their professors and their male classmates insist are correct. If the experience engenders one or more of these alienating effects, a female student may be less likely to take another philosophy course than a male classmate. (2014, 333)

And if this general line of thought is correct, “as students in philosophy courses are repeatedly exposed to the practice of using intuitions as evidence, we should expect to find enrolments of women dropping off” (*ibid.*).

Buckwalter and Stich do therefore claim that the “practice of using intuitions as evidence” is potentially problematic; but – at least for the purposes of their paper – it is taken to be problematic *only* because it may cause women to drop out of philosophy; they are not concerned to uncover any *metaphilosophical* concerns with that practice. It is this that sets their paper not only apart from, but in opposition to, DV-Meta. As Gaile Pohlhaus puts it:

Here, then, is where Antony is wrong to align Buckwalter and Stich not only with Gilligan, but also with philosophers such as Lorraine Code, Linda Alcoff, Iris Young, and Alison Jaggar. These philosophers do not advocate eliminating from philosophy all claims found to be obvious to some but not others, nor do they claim that women have innate intuitions that make them different from men. On the contrary, they argue that differences in social location might make some things appear more obvious to women, but that these things can be made more obvious to men, and they ought to be made more obvious to all

philosophers. Moreover, they engage in the difficult task of developing concepts for making what is not yet obvious to some more so, and they demonstrate how philosophical thinking that begins from a different set of concerns can bring into focus whole aspects of the world previously unnoticed or disregarded by philosophers. This kind of work can be seen as enriching our epistemic, moral, and political lives generally speaking, by expanding philosophical attention to more aspects of the world. (Pohlhaus 2015, 15)

Antony's alignment of Buckwalter and Stich's work on gender differences in philosophical intuitions is thus antithetical to the broad feminist metaphilosophical framework that the feminist authors she cites have defended and developed. This being so, DV as Antony conceives it fails to constitute a coherent research programme, since it fails to be underpinned by a coherent theoretical framework. We shall therefore, from this point on, take 'DV' to refer to a (currently largely merely hypothetical) research programme that *is* underpinned by a coherent theoretical framework, namely DV-Meta.

4. DV as an explanatory model

Though the aforementioned DV-Meta theorists do not in fact deploy that framework as an explanation for women's underrepresentation in philosophy, in this section we will sketch an outline of what it would look like if DV-Meta *were* to be deployed as the basis for an explanatory model for women's underrepresentation in philosophy. That is, we shall move from DV-Meta to a basic articulation of DV itself, where DV is conceived as a broad research programme – underpinned by DV-Meta – aimed at both explaining and practically addressing the underrepresentation problem. This will provide a new basis for assessment of the social value of DV, to which we'll turn to in subsequent sections.

The basic claim of DV-Meta is that, in very many respects, philosophy as it is actually practised rules out the possibility of examining the broader epistemic impact of structural injustices by obscuring them from the domain of relevance to central philosophical questions. It is this practice that is by and large responsible for the distinction, which several feminist philosophers have pointed out and criticised, between that which *is* and that which is *not* philosophy (Jenkins 2014) – a distinction which holds that 'real' philosophy transcends social arrangements, injustices, and historical contingencies. In light of such a distinction, then, feminist philosophy, queer theory, critical race theory (to name a few) are domains of enquiry which do not constitute 'real' philosophy precisely because their supposed foundational assumption – that history and structural injustices have a direct bearing on philosophical questions – is at odds with the practice of philosophy and with central disciplinary assumptions. 'Different voices' are not heard – or at any rate, are not heard as 'proper' philosophy, or indeed as philosophy at all.

In line with the spirit of Antony's approach, we conceive both DV and PS as broad research programmes (though, as will become clear, DV is currently more of a potential research programme than an actual one). The socio-cognitive theoretical framework that underpins PS (see §2 above) is, roughly, Valian's work on gender schemas, which lead to implicit biases against women in professions where traits that are generally deemed valuable or important are more closely associated with men than with women. PS supplements this model with the idea that "either a unique set of biasing factors converge [in philosophy], or else philosophy intensifies the impact particular factors have on women's academic lives" (Antony 2012, 232). Thus conceived, PS constitutes a broad research programme, with many potential avenues of empirical investigation opened up by different hypotheses concerning what the various biasing factors are, how and in what settings they are manifested (class discussion, the wording and length of letters of reference, judgements about teaching competence or research quality, and so on), and how they interact with each other; and, correspondingly, many potential interventions that might serve to improve the situation. DV should be conceived as following the same basic recipe:

- (1) Start with a broad theoretical framework (namely DV-Meta)
- (2) Formulate empirically testable hypotheses concerning why the relevant features of academic philosophy might contribute to the underrepresentation of women
- (3) Test the hypotheses
- (4) Formulate, test and implement potential interventions.

There are very many ways in which one might deploy the resources of DV-Meta in pursuit of (2) – that is, the formulation of specific, testable hypotheses that would, if true, (partially) explain the underrepresentation of women in philosophy. We shall propose a couple of sample hypotheses shortly, but first we want to give two anecdotal examples that give a flavour for the kinds of ways in which dominant conceptions of how philosophy ought to be done – or what the remit of 'proper' philosophy is – might in principle affect the representation of women within the profession.

First, here is Kristie Dotson, in the course of criticising Graham Priest's conception of "philosophy as critique" (Priest 2006, 200):

What if the positions arising out of criticism of current theories lie so far afield from or are so alien to my own inquiries, as a black feminist, that to engage them would be a complete waste of time? I cannot tell you how many times I asked myself that question in graduate school. (Dotson. 2011, 406)

We can extrapolate from Dotson's quote the working hypothesis that at least *some* women leave the profession because they do not identify with the predominant concerns, interests, and pursuits in mainstream philosophy – that is, for reasons that align with DV. To illuminate this further, here is one of us

(McCallion) explaining the disenchantment she felt as an undergraduate when expected, as undergraduates typically are, to find her way into the philosophy of mind through exposure, in the very first lecture, to the *cogito*:

The notion that the 'body' was separate from the 'mind' and that this was by and large supposed to be self-evident just did not sit well with me. I simply never felt that I understood this idea. I always, somehow, felt that there must have been something I was missing, something I was failing to grasp that rendered this idea so intuitive to seemingly everyone else. As a woman, as a mixed-race woman, so much of what I experienced in the world arose as a result of the labels others imposed on my body: their judgements about my appearance, their uninvited unprovoked guesses about where I was 'actually' from. I never viewed the things I thought or did as entirely separate from these experiences. My subjective experiences were not safe 'inside' from all the 'outside' hostility, violence, sexualisation or racist sexist pseudo-flattery. My thoughts and inner world were not independently blossoming as my body was compressed and repressed.

I was convinced this must have been just me though. I had been repeatedly implicitly and explicitly told that my experiences of these things and the questions I had which resulted from these experiences were irrelevant. A central part of my philosophical education was to learn that it did not matter how I lived or actually how anyone lived – no matter how exploited or marginalised – the concerns I had about central philosophical questions were not seen as philosophical concerns. I had to learn that my philosophy tutorials were not the place to voice these concerns because they were simply not relevant to the discussion at hand. The reason they seemed to be relevant to me, as I thought at the time, was simply because I was not a very good philosopher. Good philosophers did not object to self-evident ideas like the mind-body dichotomy – especially not on the grounds of something as trivial as lived experience. Good philosophers questioned the right stuff and I was clearly questioning all the wrong stuff.

On the assumption that the experience just described is not wildly idiosyncratic, we hypothesise that the lesson that many students are taking away is that such considerations are not 'philosophical' or academically rigorous. We believe this message, and the impact it has on students, should play a central role in DV as an explanatory model for women's underrepresentation: women's social location may create a tension between some central philosophical ideas and practices and their lived experiences and inclinations.

This is not, of course, the same thing as saying that all women feel this way about all philosophical ideas they encounter as undergraduates – indeed, one of us (Beebee) didn't – nor is it to say that *only* women feel this way. It is merely to suggest that an individual's social location will have some bearing on what they are inclined to pursue or not pursue, and more broadly the way they see and navigate the world. For all our disagreements, every feminist would agree that women are united by their marginalised status, and this status brings with it a set of lived experiences which in turn impact upon the way women view and

navigate within the world. Though feminists radically diverge on what they think these lived experiences are and the impact of these experiences on women's worldview, this is the very minimal feminist commitment. Similarly, we do not think it controversial to claim that someone's lived experience – the ideas they are exposed to and the problems they encounter – will influence the kind of philosophy they are inclined to pursue and the kinds of ideas they are likely to gravitate toward. These two claims – that women are united by their social location, and that our social location has an impact on the kinds of ideas we are likely to endorse or find interesting or worthwhile – are all that is required to entertain DV as a promising explanatory model for women's underrepresentation in philosophy.

To give a more concrete flavour for the kinds of – we think promising – explanatory hypotheses that might fall within DV, here are two: (i) women leave philosophy because the types of questions they want to ask and the kinds of ideas they want to pursue are dismissed, and (ii) women leave philosophy because they consciously object to the privileging of supposedly 'real' philosophy over subjects like feminist theory. (Again, the obvious caveat: not *all* women, and not *exclusively* women. The claim is merely that, as a matter of statistical fact, (i) and (ii) apply *more* to women than to men. Also, the claim is not that (i) and/or (ii) constitute the *only* reasons why women leave philosophy; nor, more generally, that *all* such reasons fall within the DV model rather than the PS model.)

In view of DV-Meta, the question of the overall shape that potential interventions ((4) above) might take is straightforward: DV-Meta enshrines a pretty developed view about what philosophy *ought* to be; so, pending some evidence in favour of explanatory hypotheses such as those just mentioned – an issue to which we turn in §5 – potential interventions would, broadly speaking, aim at making philosophy more like *that*. We'll have more to say about this in §6 below.

With the basic shape of DV – conceived as we think it ought to be conceived – in place, in the next three sections we'll return to the dimensions of social value with which we began, in order to reassess DV's prospects. Before doing so, however, we want to make an important point about what is required, in terms of metaphilosophical commitments, in order to conceive DV as a viable explanatory model for women's underrepresentation in philosophy. One might be tempted to think that, since DV is underpinned by a distinctive metaphilosophical claim about what philosophy ought to be, one needs to endorse that metaphilosophical claim in order for DV to constitute a legitimate research programme by one's own lights. We think this would be a mistake. One does, of course, need to consider DV-Meta to be a *legitimate* metaphilosophical perspective; but that's a different matter to *endorsing* it. Philosophers are generally pretty good at maintaining this distinction when it comes to philosophical disagreements. Generally, we're entirely capable of regarding, say,

utilitarianism or modal realism or dualism as wholly mistaken – and indeed regarding whole approaches to philosophical issues (virtue ethics, say, or pragmatism, or revisionary metaphysics) as misconceived – yet nonetheless *also* regarding them as entirely legitimate and worthwhile positions or broad philosophical approaches to defend and develop.

We see no reason why someone who is sceptical about, or even flat-out disagrees with, DV-Meta should not adopt that same conciliatory attitude towards it. There is, after all, a great deal of relevant feminist literature that attempts to justify DV-Meta. Moreover, the conception of what philosophy should be which DV-Meta is opposed is a conception of philosophy that has historically been, and continues to be, mostly merely tacitly *assumed* to be correct. Indeed, part of the point of DV-Meta is to challenge the idea that the historical dominance of the latter conception of philosophy is grounds for thinking that it's the *right* conception. We therefore take it that DV-Meta merits – at the very least – the status of *legitimacy* in the sense just described.

5. Likelihood

As we explained in §3, the theoretical underpinnings of DV – as enshrined in the broad feminist approach we've been calling DV-Meta – are not rooted in empirical claims about differences between men and women. Instead, DV-Meta is a broadly normative view about how philosophy *ought* to be done in the light of the kinds of feminist metaphilosophical critiques we discussed in §3; as such, empirical confirmation or disconfirmation is not on the cards. Nonetheless, *qua* explanatory model DV itself *does* enshrine claims that are susceptible to empirical confirmation or disconfirmation, since the relevant explanatory hypotheses are empirical claims about the underlying causes of human behaviour. Our task in this section is to argue that Antony's pessimistic assessment of DV's likelihood, which she sums up as follows, is unwarranted:

I trust that no one now takes seriously such causal and empirically ungrounded claims as Kant's assertion that women are "scarcely capable of principle". But better motivated and more specific claims about gender differences in cognition have fared no better. (2012, 243)

She then goes on to discuss empirical results that cast doubt on – for example – the Kohlberg results that Gilligan uses as her starting point, and Buckwalter and Stich's findings concerning differences between men and women when it comes to standard philosophical thought experiments (243-50).

Given that we've already excluded Buckwalter and Stich from DV, we can immediately discount Antony's concerns about their empirical claims. Our more general criticism of her pessimistic take on the epistemic standing of DV is her assumption that DV relies on claims about "gender differences in cognition":

... claims about different cognitive style between men and women simply failed to pan out. In their review of existing literature on 'women's ways of knowing,'

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Mary Brabeck and Ann Larned identified serious methodological problems in the few studies that claimed to find gender differences in cognition generally, and cited many other studies that ought to have found such differences if they exist, but did not. (2012, 244)

Our claim is that DV does not – or at least need not – rely on gender differences in *cognition* at all. We argued in §3 that the strand of feminist philosophy that underpins DV – DV-Meta – does not make claims about gender differences in cognition; that argument, however, does not straightforwardly transpose to DV itself. After all, we claimed that Antony’s fundamental error in understanding the theoretical underpinnings of DV was that of taking the relevant strand of feminist philosophy to be an explanatory model, as opposed to metaphilosophy where empirical claims about intrinsic differences between women and men are not in play. But now, having shifted the focus away from DV-Meta and back to DV itself, the question of gender differences re-emerges. For example, while – we argued – Antony is mistaken in thinking that Moulton herself makes empirical claims about differences in dispositions towards or tolerance of aggression, if one were to claim that women leave philosophy because of the aggressive argumentation styles prevalent in the seminar room, that *would* be a claim about gender differences, and so the question of whether they are ‘cognitive’ or not is on back the table.

We’ll take as our working example the ethics of care – a recent tradition in ethics that is rooted in feminism and has obvious affinities with Gilligan’s work. In the 2013 preface to the second edition of her book, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Nel Noddings comments on its former subtitle – which used the word “feminine” rather than “relational” – as follows:

Hardly anyone has reacted positively to the word *feminine* here. In using it, I wanted to acknowledge the roots of caring in women’s experience ... the connotations of “feminine” are off-putting and do not capture what I intended to convey. *Relational* is a better word. Virtually all care theorists make the relation more fundamental than the individual. Virginia Held comments: “The ethics of care ... conceptualizes persons as deeply affected by, and involved in, relations with others; to many care theorists persons are at least partly constituted by their social ties. The ethics of care ... does not assume that relations relevant for morality have been entered into voluntarily by free and equal individuals as do dominant moral theories” (Held 2006, 46). (Noddings 2013, p.xiii)

Recall our sample explanatory hypotheses that women leave philosophy because (i) the types of questions they want to ask and the kinds of ideas they want to pursue are dismissed, and (ii) they consciously object to the privileging of ‘real’ philosophy over subjects like feminist theory. Starting with (i): the relevant empirical claims in the context of the ethics of care are, first, that women who are interested in moral philosophy are, on average, more inclined than men towards working on moral theory from an ethics-of-care perspective rather than (say) a deontological or consequentialist perspective; and, second,

that the former approach is one that has been marginalised: routinely ignored in undergraduate syllabi, harder to publish in top journals, regarded less favourably on appointment and promotion panels, or whatever. The latter claim obviously does not appeal to any cognitive differences between women and men. While it is perhaps slightly less obvious, nor does the former. The fact that, for broadly socio-political reasons, caring roles have historically been – and continue to be – more central to women’s lives than to men’s, and that men have been socialised to disguise or downplay the importance of relationships to their lives, would suffice to explain why women might (on average) take more of an interest in the ethics of care than men (on average) do. The explanandum here is, of course, an *empirical* claim; but it is no way undermined by – for example – evidence from psychology that there are no relevant *cognitive* differences between men and women. (We return to the issue of cognitive differences in §7.)

In the previous section we presented a couple of pieces of anecdotal evidence for DV. While cursory inspection of relevant recent literature reveals a host of similar examples, anecdotal evidence on its own does not, of course, count as strong confirmation of DV. Before examining the more robust kinds of evidence that might in principle confirm DV in particular, we’ll briefly discuss some of the empirical studies that *have* been carried out with the aim of explaining women’s underrepresentation in philosophy. This is still a very young area of investigation, but there is a growing literature based on such studies.

One striking feature of the vast majority of the studies – which overwhelmingly have undergraduate students as their subjects – is that the explanations that have been tested fall squarely within the PS model. Dougherty, Baron and Miller (2015) provide a useful taxonomy of existing explanatory hypotheses concerning the steep decline in the proportion of women between introductory philosophy courses and philosophy honours (majors), which they divide into five broad categories: *course content hypotheses*, *teaching method hypotheses* (e.g. implicit bias and Buckwalter-and-Stich-style hypotheses concerning gender differences in philosophical intuitions), *hostile atmosphere hypotheses* (e.g. discrimination and sexual harassment), *internalised stereotypes/gender schema hypotheses* (e.g. stereotype threat), and the *impractical subject hypothesis*. Of these, nomenclature alone should make it fairly obvious that only members of the first category – *course content hypotheses* – might in principle count as DV-based hypotheses. In fact, of the two specific hypotheses that Dougherty *et al* mention in connection with this category – the ‘role model hypothesis’ and the ‘subject matter hypothesis’ – only the latter might in principle fall within the DV model. And, when it comes to Dougherty *et al*’s survey of the existing evidence for the various hypotheses (2015, §4), *none* of that evidence relates to the subject matter hypothesis.

Morgan Thompson (2017) similarly offers a broad categorisation of existing explanatory hypotheses: discrimination; gender differences in abilities; gendered schemas; stereotype threat and implicit bias; ability beliefs; and

academic belonging, comfort, and confidence. All of these fall squarely within the PS model – as do Thompson’s recommendations for future research.

When it comes to their overall assessment of the existing evidence for and against (some of) the various hypotheses, Dougherty *et al*’s basic conclusion is that most of the evidence – that is, evidence concerning PS-based explanations – is, as things currently stand, somewhat weak and/or mixed. We think a fair summary of the results so far is that *some* specific explanatory hypotheses arising from the PS model have garnered some weak empirical support, though in many cases such hypotheses have been tested and failed to be confirmed. (We do not mean to suggest that there is only weak evidence for the existence of such phenomena as implicit bias and stereotype threat – or indeed outright discrimination or sexual harassment – or that there is only weak evidence that such phenomena are prevalent in philosophy. We only mean that there is, by and large, at best only weak confirmatory evidence for hypotheses according to which those phenomena explain why women drop out of philosophy between introductory and major/honours-level courses.) In a nutshell: there is *some prima facie* evidence that *some* PS-based explanatory hypotheses are true.

When it comes to DV, however, we haven’t really progressed beyond anecdote. That’s hardly a resounding endorsement of DV’s empirical credentials, obviously; on the other hand, nor is it grounds for pessimism. There are no *a priori* or empirical reasons to think that DV-based explanatory hypotheses are all false. What is striking, however, is that the amount of research so far devoted to exploring the empirical standing of DV and PS respectively is *hugely* unbalanced in favour of PS. As we mentioned in §2, it’s hard not to notice the irony of what, in practice, amounts to the marginalisation of DV within the discourse concerning the underrepresentation of women in philosophy, given the fact that DV is itself firmly rooted in the concern that ‘different voices’ have been excluded from *philosophical* discourse.

6. R&D costs and practical applications

Why has research aimed at assessing the likelihood of DV been so lacking, while in the last handful of years there has been a minor explosion of research on PS? Well – and this brings us onto the second dimension of social value introduced in §2, *R&D costs* – here is one practical reason (which of course does not rule out the possibility that there are other, non-competing reasons as well): DV research is, as things currently stand, likely to be more *costly* than PS research. Here we agree with Antony when she says that DV research would be “difficult to design and implement” (2012, 250) – though her target is specifically research into gender differences in philosophical intuitions, which, as we argued earlier, is not DV research, properly conceived.

Why might DV research be more costly than PS research? Well, consider the dominant method for PS research: undergraduate surveys. For example, Baron, Dougherty and Miller (2015) tested a range of explanatory hypotheses,

falling broadly within the PS model, by surveying undergraduate students at the beginning and end of a first-year course. Similarly, Thompson, Adleberg, Sims and Nahmias (2016) – who explicitly deploy PS as their theoretical framework – conducted a ‘climate survey’ amongst a large number of undergraduates towards the end of their Introduction to Philosophy course. Any such survey aimed at uncovering evidence for or against DV-based explanatory hypotheses would have to look for gender effects of studying the kind of philosophy that DV-Meta recommends compared with the ‘mainstream’ philosophy to which DV-Meta stands opposed. Given the *de facto* nature of the vast majority of introductory philosophy courses and introductory readers and textbooks, that in itself severely limits the potential for conducting such surveys: one would have to conduct a survey, then change the entire curriculum, re-run the survey, and compare the results. This would not only be very costly when it comes to the investment of staff time, but would also be likely, in many departments, to be met with scepticism on the grounds that it would, in effect, be treating students as guinea pigs without any prior reason to think that any of them will actually benefit as a result.

In any case, it is unclear that quantitative survey methods would be appropriate for uncovering the kinds of disenchantment we anecdotally described in §4. Quantitative data that, for example, correlates answers concerning various aspects of undergraduates’ experiences on their course with answers concerning their enthusiasm for further study is not likely to get to the heart of *why* they drop out – at least if they drop out for DV-related reasons. What is required is data that provides insight into the thought processes of women who choose to leave, as well as those who choose to stay. This data then needs to be used as a starting point for a reflexive critical engagement with, for example, substantial changes to undergraduate curricula. The kind of data we have in mind would necessarily be qualitative in nature; only qualitative data taken from, for example, semi-structured interviews or focus groups can provide the level of insight necessary to draw generalisable conclusions regarding the likelihood of DV-based explanatory hypotheses.

The most direct approach would, of course, be simply to ask women why they are choosing to leave philosophy (if they are) or why they are choosing to stay (if they are). An attempt to implement this approach would face a multitude of methodological complications, and we acknowledge that any appropriate qualitative research strategy would have to account for these complications in both design and interpretation of data. In particular, as demonstrated in §4 by McCallion’s account of her own experience, it is entirely possible for an individual – especially an undergraduate who may lack the broad philosophical knowledge and conceptual tools to fully understand their own predicament – to misconstrue their own reasons for disenchantment with the discipline; difficulties with apt expression, too, are likely to come into play when discussing such sensitive topics. As with all qualitative research, the understanding that

people do not always mean what they say, and they do not always say what they mean, is vital. An appropriately trained researcher, who is able to account for these complications, will be a necessity for the appropriate collection and rigorous interpretation of such data. Our conclusion at this point is that, when it comes to *R&D costs*, DV probably does fare less well than PS.

The same is probably true when it comes to *practical applications*. By and large, the practical applications that flow from explanatory hypotheses within the PS model are very familiar, and are increasingly being implemented in philosophy departments: more women on reading lists and pictures of women in corridors and on websites, implicit bias training, encouraging a less hostile atmosphere in seminars, having clear policies on harassment (and actually implementing them), abolishing the use or reducing the importance of student evaluation surveys in hiring and promotion decisions, placing less importance on letters of recommendation, and so on.

On the DV side, practical applications might involve, for example, teaching epistemology or ethics or philosophy of science in a way that brings 'different voices' to the table as a fully integrated part of an undergraduate course rather than as a bolt-on at the end or not at all (Dea 2017); concerted attempts by editors of generalist journals to encourage and publish work in those areas; conscious efforts to ensure that publication in feminist philosophy journals is treated on a par with publication in other specialist journals in hiring and promotion decisions; and so on. Given the continuing *de facto* marginalisation of 'different voices', however, none of those applications are straightforward. The current environment means that broad curriculum changes may be resisted on principle by departments or by individual teachers – and even for those who are not resistant in principle, making those changes is a lot of work. More generally, widespread hostility to – or simply ignorance of – philosophy 'in a different voice' acts as a powerful impediment to efforts to establish it as of equal value to 'mainstream' philosophy in decision-making by journal editors and hiring panels.

That said, the situation is not, we think, even close to being as dire as it is portrayed by Antony when she says:

It's not at all clear what interventions would make any difference if the Different Voices model turned out to be correct. As medical ethicists and practitioners have long observed, it is useless or worse – potentially psychologically or physically harmful – to test for conditions for which there is no treatment. (2012, 251)

Again, her explicit target here is intervention based on research on gender differences in philosophical intuitions – which, as we've already said, does not in fact belong within the DV model. There *is* a treatment when it comes to DV. It is doubtless a medicine that many philosophers will find unpleasant or even unpalatable. But if we really, genuinely care about curing the illness, and *if* evidence comes to light that the treatment works, the rational response is to take the medicine – bitter though it may be to some palates.

7. Political risk

Political risk is the trickiest dimension of social value to navigate. Antony goes to some lengths to cash out the potential risks of DV research, which she summarises as follows:

There are dangers associated with claiming the existence of gender differences. Such claims are too readily accepted – evidence in their favor conform[s] to essentialist thinking about gender, and to specific stereotypes about gender, and so may be accepted because of confirmation bias rather than a dispassionate examination of the evidence. Claims of gender difference, because of the generic interpretation likely to be triggered by the invocation of gender categories, are highly resistant to counterevidence, if such emerges. Such claims, finally, are apt to be misinterpreted in ways that prove detrimental to women – ways that encourage essentialist and biological determinist thinking. (2012, 250-1)

The nub of the problem, Antony thinks, is that DV is committed to the “presumption that women (typically) share, for whatever reason, some particular intrinsic property” (230), whereas PS does not “posit substantive intrinsic differences between men and women in order to explain the demographics in philosophy” (231). Positing such differences is, she thinks, risky – “such claims have, as a matter of fact, almost always served conservative or reactionary purposes; most often they have been used to rationalize discrimination or to justify inaction about it” (241) – and it is very hard to mitigate the risk because it is all too easy to misinterpret claims of gender difference as “natural” and (therefore) “immutable” (*ibid.*). The worry, then, is that while DV does not itself imply that such differences are natural or immutable – obviously not, since the whole point is that they are a result of contingent social and political forces – it *does*, and indeed *must*, regard them as ‘intrinsic’, and so is apt to be misinterpreted and misused to serve reactionary agendas.

Let’s start by interrogating the idea that DV necessarily posits “substantive intrinsic differences between men and women” – aside, that is, from those differences that “fundamentally support the classification of an individual as a man or as a woman” (253, n.20). Antony is explicitly deploying a permissive conception of ‘intrinsic’ here:

I am not using ‘intrinsic’ as a synonym for ‘innate,’ ‘biological,’ or ‘natural,’ and I do not take the term to imply ‘necessary’ or ‘essential.’ I use the term ‘intrinsic’ in the sense current in contemporary analytical metaphysics, according to which a property is intrinsic if and only if it supervenes entirely on the state of the individual to whom the property is being ascribed. The causal etiology of the property does not matter, according to my usage, and so it does not matter whether the individual possesses the property ‘by nature’, or because of interactions with the physical or social environment ... I assume that dispositional properties can be, and typically are, *intrinsic*. (229-30)

Why does Antony think that DV is committed to positing intrinsic differences between men and women, while PS is not? The general idea, we take it, is that while both PS and DV seek to *explain* behavioural differences between men and women (since the target phenomenon is the underrepresentation of women) – and while those differences may themselves be manifestations of different intrinsic dispositions – the *explanations* offered by the PS model depend only on those intrinsic differences that “fundamentally support the classification of an individual as a man or as a woman”. If a woman’s CV is assessed more negatively than that of an equally qualified man, for example, that is merely because she is a woman and he is a man: it is not due to some *further* (intrinsic) difference between them. Similarly, if a woman suffers stereotype threat in a given environment and a man does not, the only difference between them that we need to posit is the brute gender difference. And so on. By contrast, DV-based explanations must posit *additional* intrinsic differences between men and women.

Is it true, as Antony claims, that DV-based explanations must do that – and, if so, does that entail the political risk described above? We think it *is* true, but that Antony misidentifies the reason. And this, in turn, undermines her claim about political risk.

Starting with the first question: despite her permissive conception of intrinsicity, in her discussion of DV Antony in fact focuses on differences in *cognition*. As we saw in §5, her pessimistic assessment of the likelihood of DV is rooted in the lack of evidence for empirical claims about gender differences in “cognition” or “cognitive styles” (243-4). In fact, however – as we pointed out in §5 – DV is not committed to any differences in *cognition* between men and women. For example, the fact that the kinds of questions that (some) women want to pursue are marginalised, and the fact that (some) women consciously object to the privileging of ‘real’ philosophy over (e.g.) feminist theory are indeed facts about their intrinsic features which do not “support their classification as women” – Antony is right about that. But they are facts about their beliefs, desires, preferences, conscious objections and so on, and are therefore not *cognitive* differences. (Admittedly with a sufficiently broad understanding of ‘cognition’, we might class them as ‘cognitive’ differences. But in this context we would want to resist doing that, for the kinds of reason that Antony gives for steering clear of claims about intrinsic differences more generally. We return to this below.) Moreover, they are – as Antony says – intrinsic differences that do not “fundamentally support the classification of an individual as a man or as a woman”, since they are effects rather than causes of such classification as women: it is that very classification, and its effects on women’s lived experiences, that brings about those beliefs, desires and so on. So we agree with Antony that the differences posited by DV-based explanations are intrinsic, though we deny that they are cognitive.

Turning to the second question: is the positing of *those* kinds of intrinsic differences – differences in preferences, desires, conscious objections, and so on – apt to be misinterpreted as essentialist or ‘natural’ or ‘immutable’, and hence to further entrench reactionary agendas? It is, we think, considerably less prone to such misinterpretation than are claims concerning ‘cognitive’ differences between men and women, given that ‘cognitive’ differences are apt to be read as differences in brains, which in turn apt to “encourage essentialist and biological determinist thinking” (251): they are highly susceptible to be read as differences that are hard-wired (Fine 2010). (So whatever one thinks ‘cognitive’ means, this in itself constitutes a political reason not to count differences in preferences and so on as ‘cognitive’ in this context.) Mere statistical differences between men and women when it comes to desires, preferences and so on are commonplace, and we are – at least often, though doubtless not always – reasonably good at resisting the inference from the existence of such differences to the claim that they are innate or immutable. No philosopher (we hope) thinks that hard-wiring explains why women statistically prefer Biden to Trump, or prefer to do other things on a Saturday afternoon than go to the football, or prefer wine to beer. So it is unclear why there should be a specific problem with preferences when it comes to philosophy. And still less so – obviously – when it comes to conscious objection.

It would be naïve, however, to suggest that there is no risk at all here. Indeed, one of the authors of this paper (Beebee) did, in her younger days, think that feminist philosophy (about which she knew virtually nothing) was signed up to the idea that women just aren’t congenitally suited to, say, logic or analytic metaphysics – an idea to which she took great exception. Our firm hope, however, is that philosophers are generally clever enough to recognise, at least if they are open to persuasion and are given the opportunity to *be* persuaded, that that’s just a mistake. For example, consider the inference from gender differences when it comes to finding the ethics of care a less alien framework for thinking about moral philosophy than (say) deontology or utilitarianism – again, if there *are* such differences – to the conclusion that women are more ‘naturally’ suited to caregiving than men are. To put it bluntly, that would be a crass mistake. Philosophers are of course not immune to crass mistakes, but they do generally want to avoid them. It therefore behoves us – all of us, and not just feminist philosophers – to point that mistake out when we see it; and it behoves us all, more generally, to call out lazy and ill-informed inferences from claims about gender differences to claims to the effect that those differences are innate or natural or immutable. And we can also, of course, take steps to minimise the risk of misinterpretation – as Noddings came to appreciate when she was criticised for using the word “feminine” in the subtitle of her book (see §5 above).

It is also worth noting that PS is not completely risk-free either. One of us can report the following: the response of several members of the senior management of a university that we shall not name here, having undergone their

mandatory implicit bias training, can be summed up as “Oh, well, that’s it then: it’s all unconscious, there’s nothing we can do about it” – the exact opposite of the message that the trainer was attempting to convey. Similarly – and again the evidence here is merely anecdotal – the fact that women in philosophy are placed in stereotype-threat situations vastly more often than men are has been misread as the claim that women are inherently (naturally, immutably) more *susceptible* to stereotype threat than men are – delicate flowers that we are.

(“Surely”, one might object, “no *philosopher* would commit such a crass and ignorant error”. Well, perhaps not – but then we should expect the same when it comes to the inference from ‘gender difference’ to ‘natural and immutable gender difference’. Since we are in the business here of getting our own house in order here, the conservative and reactionary agendas that Antony is concerned about are, presumably, the conservative and reactionary agendas of *philosophers*.)

Our assessment, then, is that Antony significantly overstates the political risks associated with DV as opposed to PS. And – to be clear – that assessment does not depend on *endorsing* DV-Meta. It merely depends on a proper understanding of the kinds of claims about ‘gender differences’ that DV actually needs to invoke in order to explain women’s underrepresentation.

8. Conclusion

Our aims in this paper have been, first, to reconceive DV, so that it is underpinned by the metaphilosophical agenda pursued by the strand of feminist philosophy in which Antony locates its roots rather than by brute appeals to alleged ‘cognitive’ differences between men and women; and, second, to reassess the ‘social value’ of DV – thus conceived – along the various dimensions we identified in §2. Our overall conclusion is that Antony very significantly overstates the differences in social value between PS and DV.

When it comes to *likelihood*, serious empirical testing of DV has barely got off the ground – but there are no *a priori* grounds to think that the results of such testing would not confirm some DV-based explanatory hypotheses. By contrast, as we said in §5, there has been some empirical testing of PS and some (but by no means all) specific explanatory hypotheses arising from the PS model have garnered some weak empirical support. So perhaps PS is ahead on points as things currently stand – but only because, to our knowledge, no significant testing of DV hypotheses has actually been carried out yet. When it comes to *R&D costs* and *practical applications*, we grant that the potential costs of DV are probably higher, given that the kinds of change in disciplinary practices that would be required – both to test some DV-based hypotheses and to implement the changes that would recommend themselves were those hypotheses to be confirmed – would, in general, be difficult and time-consuming, and may be actively resisted by those who have an interest in maintaining the *status quo*. Finally, when it comes to *political risk*, Antony overstates the risks of DV –

significantly, we think – and understates the risks of PS. So perhaps PS is in the lead – but not by a huge distance, and certainly nowhere near far enough ahead to justify abandoning DV.

We want to stress again that the above constitutes an assessment of the relative social value of DV *from a neutral perspective*. That is, it is not an assessment that presupposes that the theoretical underpinning of DV – in the form of DV-Meta – is *correct*. Of course, if there are unassailable reasons to think that the theoretical framework of a research programme is completely mistaken, that in itself would be a good reason to think that the social value of that programme is negative, and that it should therefore be abandoned. Our assessment of the social value of DV requires only the assumption that there are no such unassailable reasons. There is undoubtedly widespread resistance to, and indeed outright hostility towards, DV-Meta within the philosophical community. We deny, however, that such resistance and hostility is grounded in unassailable *reasons* to think that DV-Meta is completely mistaken.

Why ‘unassailable’? Wouldn’t *good* reasons suffice? No. Or at any rate, not if one accepts – and, as we have already suggested, we think pretty much all philosophers *do* accept – that in general taking oneself to have good reasons to deny a particular philosophical or metaphilosophical view is not a sufficient reason for thinking that that view should be taken off the table all together: that it should not be taught, that philosophers should be discouraged from attempting to articulate, motivate or defend it, and so on. There is no *epistemic* reason not to regard DV-Meta with the same attitude of tolerance that philosophers generally extend towards philosophical positions that they take themselves to have good reasons to deny. This being so, *even by the lights of someone who takes themselves to have good reasons to reject DV-Meta*, the abandonment of DV research would *only* be legitimate if DV itself has social *disvalue* or if its overall social value is so *hugely* outweighed by the social value of PS that *all* available resources should be devoted to PS rather than DV.

Abandonment is of course precisely what Antony recommends. We suspect that that recommendation – whether sincerely meant or not – has already been taken up and is starting to affect research into the underrepresentation of women in philosophy. As we noted in §5, the main undergraduate studies (Baron *et al* 2015; Thompson *et al* 2016) almost exclusively focus on explanatory hypotheses that fall within the PS model – explicitly so in the case of Thompson *et al*. Of course, it’s possible that this is merely a reflection of the difficulty of garnering evidence concerning DV-based hypotheses via the most cost-effective methodology available (see §6 above). It is nonetheless striking that there is no discussion of DV-based hypotheses as legitimate potential alternatives to the ones the authors focus on – a fact that would be nicely explained by endorsement of Antony’s view but is otherwise somewhat puzzling.

Antony summarises the view to which she is opposed as follows:

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Which model should we prefer: Different Voices or Perfect Storm? It might be argued that there is no need to choose. The two models are not incompatible; they might each direct us toward different but equally necessary pieces of a complicated puzzle ... It also might be argued that we should not choose, given the current state of the evidence ... Why not, then, let a hundred flowers bloom? Let proponents of each model develop it as far as it will go; we'll just see how things pan out. (2012, 232)

We hope to have shown that this is, after all, the appropriate attitude to take.

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