

Difficult Women in Philosophy: Reflections from the Margin¹

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Abstract: In this paper we connect diversity with being on the margins of philosophy. We do this by reflecting on the programme that we, as diverse philosophers, designed and taught in a small university. Recently, the programme was closed. We examine some of the circumstances for the closure, in particular the impact of league tables. We argue that an idea (or ideal?) of objectivity, as a method in both science and philosophy, plays a role in establishing and maintaining the outsider status of the philosopher at the margins of the discipline. As a counterpoint to objectivity, we offer concrete examples of our experiences to illustrate what it is like to be at the margins of philosophy. We end with an examination of topics that are common to academics, i.e. issues of time and resources, that are compounded at the margins. Our paper seeks to show what is lost by the closure of our programme, and what philosophy loses when marginalised philosophers are silenced and/or excluded from key academic discourse. We argue that the particular contribution of the philosopher at the margin offers an important and irreplaceable contribution to discourses on the identity of philosophy and on the value of diversity.

Keywords: diversity, margin, objectivity, merit, science, philosophy.

1. By means of introduction, where we are now

We started working on this paper in the same week in which we taught the last classes of the small philosophy programme in which we worked for more than ten years. After this week, all that is left is marking essays and dissertations, then graduation. There may still be a few students and final assessments of course, but all the usual work for a degree will have ended in a month.

It has been painful to witness the end of a programme in which we invested so much of our energy and creativity, a programme that was praised by students and external examiners, that featured innovative modules and

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assessments, that defied being classified as either European or analytic, that was for the larger part run by two women, neither of whom identify as 'White British', at a university that is in the lower parts of the league table. It has been painful too for our current students and even for graduates from years ago, who have experienced the closure as a personal slight on important and formative years of their lives.

To be a small department at a little-known university comes with difficulties, but also with blessings. It allows us to know each of our students by name. In a time when more students are suffering from mental health issues, it can help them to know that their lecturers also know them. For us, it has been gratifying to witness the development of new students into mature, critical thinkers. We have offered students the opportunity to not just learn about philosophers' arguments, but also to find their own and to apply their philosophical skills, be it in dialogues, in ethical reviews of scientific proposals or in creative pieces. On top of that, we even managed to do some research ourselves.

Our approach to teaching and doing philosophy has developed in response to a diverse student body. For that reason, we have been careful not to relegate diverse voices to the last classes of modules, but instead let it inform our modules from the very start. An important inspiration has also been our activities as public philosophers and especially a practice of Socratic dialogue (cf. Altorf 2019). Philosophy we recognise to be about "understanding this deeply puzzling world", as Mary Midgley (2013) once put it. It is to find one's own position, to know where you stand and to assess your reasons. This is not easy. It is not easy to find your voice, rather than to express a general opinion or to demonstrate book learning (cp. Jantzen 1998, 1). It is also not easy to know where you stand exactly in a situation that is concrete rather than abstract or imaginary. This asks for careful perception and imagination and it makes you vulnerable (cf. Bolten 2003, 39; Altorf 2019, 5-7, 8). It is difficult especially for people in the margin, because there may not be a vocabulary yet to describe where they stand. Thus, in our philosophy programme we tried to create a community in which mostly first-generation students were introduced to philosophical ideas and philosophy's history, without losing themselves in clever puzzles.

The experience of the last few years in particular has shown us the necessity of this kind of programme, as well as the sheer impossibility of maintaining it. Our article reflects on what it is like to work in institutions with fewer resources and limited time for research. We are in particular concerned with apparently objective measurements which limit the space for the concrete individual and diverse people. We recognise such measurements in league tables and in modelling philosophy on science. As a wry reflection of the years in which we ran the programme, we find that again, in this article, our focus is on the impossibility more than the necessity of running such a programme, even when

we appreciate that it was our situation in the margin that made it possible to develop such a distinctive programme.

The argument proceeds as follows. In §2, we reflect on an important factor for the closure of the programme, its position in the league tables. In the United Kingdom, universities are ranked every year in league tables, which are published online and in newspapers, like *The Guardian* and *The Times*. These tables are primarily aimed at prospective students and take into account a number of criteria, such as student satisfaction and spend per student. We argue that the current league tables are most of all indicators of existing privileges and inadequate for their purpose. Moreover, they can be harmful, in particular for plural positions and marginal programmes. In §3 we move from the example of apparent objectivity in league tables to considering the role of objectivity in philosophy. Again, we argue that the objectivity is apparent. §4 offers examples from our experience of working in a small department, as means to challenge any apparent claim of objectivity. Finally, §5 examines common issues of time and resources. In all this we seek to bring to the fore the experience of being at the margins. In so doing we hope to show why our particular contribution, as philosophers in the margin, can offer a valuable, irreplaceable contribution to the discourse on the identity of philosophy and on the value of diversity.

Before we continue, we should perhaps explain that using 'we' does not imply that we agree on everything. We have to add this disclaimer, for too often it has been assumed that we are of the same opinion, or even that our views are interchangeable – perhaps not unlike the one minority person on a panel who is supposed to speak for their entire community. The 'we' used in this article comes from long conversations, and disagreements remain. In this article we identify as philosophers in the margin and we understand the margin as a place for creativity, as well as a strain (cf. bell hooks 1991). Working in a small university can come with room for innovation, but also less time and support and the added pressure of constantly having to defend the existence of a philosophy programme (see also §4 and §5). Yet, even though we identify here as philosophers in the margin, we also recognise our respective privileges. This complexity fits with Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 139) intersectionalist account, which offers a way to recognise that "categories of experience and analysis" cannot be treated as mutually exclusive. Crenshaw notes that the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of any one specific category on its own. Negotiating these complex categories, with associated similarities and differences between us, has come from the conversations we cite above, as well as from the acknowledgment of the need for solidarity. Our 'we' is located in shared spaces that we found, that we created, and that we carefully nurtured.

2. The curse of league tables, or the beginning of the end

We locate the beginning of the end of our philosophy programme with management's increasing concern with league tables. During one academic year,

we were repeatedly urged to explain the programme's low place in the league tables. We wrote a 6-page response, that included a short executive summary for busy managers. In the end, we were never given a chance to discuss it, as all the meetings inviting us to do so were cancelled. A year later the programme's closure was announced, because of 'numbers', though which numbers was not specified.

With the growing importance of league tables, it has become obvious that they come with many difficulties (see for instance Christie 2016; Goldstein and Spiegelhalter 1996; Barnett and Moher 2019). As it is neither possible nor desirable to discuss all those here, we focus on a few of the difficulties that affected us in particular. We aim to show that in their current form league tables promise objective criteria for quality, but in practice are means for disempowering both students and academics.

First, it is not certain what league tables measure exactly and it is highly questionable that what is being measured can be reduced to a single score. It is, for instance, not clear what student satisfaction means or even whether it is desirable. It may not even be an indication of learning (see especially Bailey 2017, 885; cf. Collini 2010). Yet, even if the different elements are clear and worth considering, the league tables fail by reducing a multidimensional reality to one dimension. Factors like student satisfaction or finding a graduate job are brought together in a single number. The makers of the table have made a decision about the relative importance of each factor. This means that a student whose preferences differ from the creators may end up at a university which is not in the top of the league table, though it could be top in the student's preferences. It takes courage to go against an official classification, especially when the classifications are reinforced by sixth form colleges, parents, and peers (Somerville 2018).

What is more, league tables are difficult to interpret. Reports in the news, but also in academic institutions, often resort to simplifications. When a league table is published, the news normally reports on changes in position between different years, on universities moving up and down a few places. Universities provide the press releases accordingly. If they have moved up, they will celebrate that in a press release. If they have not, they will adapt the message and for instance confirm that they are still in the top ten or twenty. Yet, such changes are probably not news at all, as it is dubitable whether they reflect any changes in reality.

Of course, this kind of spin is to be expected and the more widespread it becomes, the more it is normalised and to some extent accepted, but also the better people are at spotting it. What the reporting does not do, however, is take into account the more substantial fluctuation that affects especially universities and programmes in the middle and lower parts of the table. Universities and individual programmes can change ten, twenty or even fifty places from one year to the next. Yet, this does not mean that they have suddenly become much better

or worse. Rather, the differences between the different universities or programmes are so small that a negligible change in the overall score can translate into a drastic move in the league table.

Lastly, league tables add pressure to academic staff who are already balancing a heavy workload. Too often, the lecturers or the team are tasked with changing the programme's position in the league table and yet their influence is very limited. The *Guardian* league table, for instance, includes tables on satisfaction (overall, teaching, feedback), entry standards, career prospects, value added, spend per student and staff-student ratio. Of these, only the first can be argued to be within the scope of a lecturer and yet it is the other elements which often decide the place in a league table. This is clear when comparing the ranking of the individual factors of the tables, such as student satisfaction or career after 6 months, to the overall position. (The *Guardian* league table allows for such a comparison.)

Such considerations make it doubtful that these league tables provide much guidance for prospective students, even when they understand – as much as that is possible – what these tables can and cannot tell them. The league tables may strive to provide information, but as we note above, they can actually threaten student choice. We, as academics, have experienced the league tables as disempowering. As we have argued, academics' influence on the overall position is limited to student satisfaction and even this factor is unlikely to be an indication of offering a diverse curriculum or of good learning. As it happened, our overall student satisfaction score was very high. In one table, we were second on satisfaction, but two places from the bottom for staff-student ratio. Our possibility to change the overall position was thus negligible and yet we were tasked with changing the position, with explaining these statistics to our management, and then never given the opportunity to make the argument. What presented itself as an objective measurement of quality proved to be reinforcement of marginalisation. (See also Jenkins 2013 on the different ways in which meritocracy can hide bias.)

If league tables are to stay, they need a serious makeover. A first and simple change is to remove the final calculation from league tables and thus the overall score. The next steps could be to rethink the questions. The suggestion of excellence alone can be a threat to pluralistic approaches (Jenkins 2013, 89). We would want to suggest asking fewer questions that assume education is a product for an individual consumer and more questions that reflect the experience and expertise of students and academics. Perhaps to start generating questions that are of immediate significance for prospective students, we can ask *them* for their most pressing concern and ask graduate students what question they wish they had asked before embarking on their education. Academics can be asked for their professional insights and distinctions can be drawn between different disciplines. It is from such changes that an all too simplistic understanding of excellence can be challenged and space created for a plurality

of approaches. The primacy of league tables reflects a trend towards the disempowerment of academics by prioritising metrics that rely on quantifiable data. This trend has left many subjects in the humanities generally vulnerable. But philosophy as a discipline is not immune to the lure of the objective, and this will be our next topic.

3. Science and philosophy: between an objective rock and a neutral hard place

As the above account shows, metrics and quantifiable data, within a narrow conception of what is considered 'scientific', can play a huge role in university decision making. The problems arising from such tendencies in the academy, especially the bias towards quantification, are well trodden ground. In this section however we explore how similar tendencies can be found in philosophy, and we consider the impact of this on our programme specifically. There are many ways to think about the relationship between science and philosophy, of course, but for our purposes we reflect only on the influence that a particular account of neutrality or objectivity has on philosophy.

It is clear that philosophy within the analytic tradition prioritises scientific methods, broadly construed. Moreover, as Fiona Jenkins (2013, 87) describes, "institutionally successful philosophy" occupies a position from which to assess what is *best* in the discipline, and this too is done by comparison with scientific aims and methods. These approaches include "ideals of neutrality and objectivity" (Jenkins 2013, 87), for instance, alongside the distancing of philosophical thinking from the subjective and toward the abstract. These methods may be useful in plenty of ways, including to avoid some logical fallacies, but they also bring problems. For instance, as we will discuss below, by precluding or eclipsing the specificity of concrete positions, including those we offer in this paper.

To explain why ideals of neutrality and objectivity may be problematic, we need to consider a number of factors, as well as the limitations to such methods. The first point to note is that any method, just as any thought process, requires innumerable, even immeasurable, steps in a process which will include a number of overt as well as opaque decisions. For instance, about which method is used, how the process follows, in which direction, and so on. Those decisions are not and never can be neutral. All of which impacts on the possibility of objectivity. The league table examples we offer above show this very well. Decisions are not made in a vacuum (Fürst 2017), and this applies as much in science as in philosophy. Second, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that when neutrality in decision making is taken for granted, problems arise. The preference to find statistically significant data, for example (also known as a preference to be successful), can cause 'selective outcome reporting', which includes the mining of data for anything statistically significant (cf. Open Science Collaboration 2015). To do otherwise is to commit to publishing all studies, including those that show

very little or even nothing in the way of statistical significance. Few careers are built on such studies.

Such decisions in science include reporting evidence and data in a way so as to avoid being wrong. This kind of problematic approach is sometimes described as *bad science*, especially when the preference to avoid being wrong has led to significant scientific misadventures with some major consequences (Ioannidis cited in Lehrer 2010). Selective reporting or bad science has resulted in major controversies like the replication crisis, for instance in psychology. That philosophy replicates scientific methods without recognising associated weaknesses means that we are at risk of replicating some of these failures without addressing their causes. For these reasons Donna Haraway (1981, 477) proposes that:

The critique of bad science leads directly to an analysis of the material conditions of the production of knowledge and to a personal identification of the objective voice behind the 'pure, unadulterated facts.' Reality has an author. The author always has a proper name, but it has a way of disappearing into declarative sentences or even graphs embedded in published papers issuing from well-funded laboratories.

Recognising that *reality has an author*, as Haraway describes it, also means recognising the preferences and thereby biases of each concrete author. Analytic philosophy is not immune to bias (Brennan 2013; Saul 2013), especially when bias is understood to include more than just negative, selfish, or prejudicial preferences, and is instead associated with ordinary, everyday decision-making, like a preference for this coffee type over another. Efforts towards the neutral or objective mask these preferences and leave little space for the diverse experiences of the specific, concrete individual (Benhabib 1992). Philosophical methods which aim at scientific levels of objectivity can therefore obscure the necessarily subjective accounts at their core.

We can go further and claim that the subjective and the objective are inseparable. Haraway (1988, 583) argues that it is in fact the *partial perspective* that promises an "objective vision." In other words, *objectivity* begins with the *particular*, by virtue of what she calls "specific embodiment": there can be no *objective* vision without *particular* vision, as well as the particular mind that imagines and thinks about what is seen and experienced. The drive to objectivity denies the "active perceptual systems" (senses, body, mind) that allow for necessarily "specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life" (Haraway 1988, 583). When this subjectivity is ignored, the particular merely *poses* as the universal (Jenkins and Hutchison 2013, 13). This might not seem obviously problematic in the sciences (actually it is, but that's for another paper). Especially as it is certainly possible that in the process of experimentation and analysis one scientist *could* be replaced by another, of equal skill and training, without significant harm or even impact on the experiment. It is clearly problematic in philosophy, however, as Crary (2002, 98-99) notes when she describes

philosophical conceptions of objectivity in terms of a “point of view from nowhere”. Yet a *view* from nowhere really isn’t all that possible for the embodied and embedded philosopher. Wittgenstein makes this point when he complains about people who try to speak “impartially” about things, and who “pretend to be able to slip out of their own skins” (cited in McGuinness 2007, 235, note 7). For similar reasons feminist theorists tend to reject assumptions about objective reality, whether because they are abstracted from a particular perspective or because they are presented as independent of subjectivity (Crary 2002). Our point here is not to examine objectivity in itself, qua a *philosophical endeavour*. Instead our point is narrower than that: it is to show how the *expectations* of objectivity, and of working within these contexts of expectation, have impacted on us in practical terms.

Our aim in this discussion is to show what we have discovered in the margins, and to thereby suggest that philosophy *necessarily* requires the concrete philosopher who can bring this perspective. The philosopher, and their particular way of thinking, is on this account integral to their contribution to the subject. To neglect this is to offer a “false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility” (Haraway 1988, 583). In other words, a person’s limits are included in their individual approach to philosophy, with associated responsibility. Intuition, for example, whether in creativity and thinking, as a foundation for philosophical reasoning, or in decision-making, is not easily divorced from the person from whom it originates (Hutchison 2013). Intuitions are grounded in practice and preference, as well as in culture and training. To neglect these dimensions is to ignore the embodied subjectivity of knowledge and of thinking. As Michelle Bastian (2013, 219) suggests, “embodied experience is not external to philosophy”, instead it “shapes some of its most central concepts”.

It is important to note at this point that our argument rests on concrete positions. It cannot be made only in the abstract. Instead our argument invites, perhaps even requires, the reader to use our concrete experiences as a way to think about their own, and to reflect on where they stand. To consider the concreteness of their own perspectives, intuitions, and limits, and to consider how these impact on the teaching and the research that they do, including on method and on their views about the relation between the subjective and the objective. It is not easy to *show* the view from the margin to those who do not share the space, even if we try to offer some insights in the section below. But to see the space where one finds one’s own feet is an important starting point.

That our programme is, or was, built on the work of two very different philosophers, yet both in the margin, cannot be divorced from the identity of the programme that we created. It would not have been possible to replace one or other of us, and yet maintain the specific, concrete experiences, identities, thinking, teaching and learning that emerged in our programme. To recognise this detail is to recognise the value of the unquantifiable, including as it does a

variety of disparate but interrelated experiences (involving also many colleagues and students). It is also to recognise the philosopher in the margin as a concrete individual, with a particular point of view in and of philosophy, and with a particular contribution to offer the discipline. Our programme demonstrated the culmination of such complexity, and so it is unsurprising that we continue to mourn its loss. Our point is that the discipline of philosophy should too.

In recognising the value of the concrete philosopher, and their contribution to the discipline, we must next consider equity of access to the field. What would it mean to say, for instance, that distance, objectivity, and a kind of neutrality are prioritised in, and thereby dominate, some major strands in analytic philosophy? And what evidence can be offered that there is a prioritisation of one group in philosophy, with concomitant prioritising of their vision of what philosophy *is* over that of others (Jenkins and Hutchison 2013, 4)? For the philosopher in the margin, it can be difficult to provide definitive evidence, or even to pinpoint the kinds of inequity associated with marginalisation. This is tied up with the fact that marginalisation can occur as a result of apparently minor decisions and actions. Samantha Brennan (2013, 191) suggests that to view each act separately can result in missing “aggregative effects” and patterns relevant “to understanding bias and discrimination”. The accumulative effects include a lack of recognition that accompanies one’s work (whether by its being ignored or denigrated), or that one’s work is judged outside of the context from which it derives its value and meaning, as can happen with interdisciplinary work, for example. Justine McGill (2013, 211) argues that “no amount of personal brilliance, emotional fortitude, or sheer hard work can protect a woman from being silenced in a context in which implicit shared assumptions about the relevance of her gender operate to leach her words of their power”. Indeed, it sometimes seems to us that no amount of hard work from the margins of a discipline will suffice to shine a light on the work of an academic in the margin, nor the programme that they create.

In our work and our teaching, we each (in different ways and for different reasons) sought to offer a challenge to the primacy of *objectivity* in philosophy. At the heart of this endeavour, as the above account implies, is the idea that the philosophical is not easily detached from the person who develops it. From this is a related claim, namely that the requirement in some philosophy to, above all else, *maintain distance from one’s own philosophical ideas* can not only engender the kinds of biases and limitations we note above, but also result in positions that are disingenuous. Marilyn Friedman (2013, 28; Tuana 1992) suggests that learning to distance oneself from a philosophical position “promotes a superficial and shallow attitude towards philosophical ideas.” If correct, then the prioritising of such methods can, and perhaps already has, caused harm to philosophy as practiced in the analytic tradition. Especially where it has seen the promotion of the apparently objective over the development of the individual as a philosophically embedded person with specific preferences and intuitions.

That our programme gave weight to the latter was not and could not be captured in the league tables against which its value was judged, that much is clear. That philosophy as a discipline has lost something seems to us clear, but as we note above it is not easy to prove.

One way to support our claims would be to show numerous efforts in analytic philosophy to decontextualise philosophical questions and answers. We could also show where this is used to achieve a certain kind of clarity and precision about what has now become a highly theoretical position. Yet an abstract account of this sort, itself divorced from the particular that could give it the kind of depth and meaning with which we are concerned, would replicate the methods that we seek to unpick. For these reasons we instead present some of our particular experiences, as two philosophers in the margin, and in this way offer a personal account which we suggest is essential in discourse on marginalisation in philosophy specifically.

4. The view from the margins

To introduce this section, we need to reiterate our belief that the concrete experience of marginalisation cannot be found in thought experiments or abstract treatises. Experiences are complex and contingent on context (Haraway 1988). The perspective of the concrete philosopher in the margin cannot be known without their contribution. Little in the experience of marginalisation can be predicted, and little more can be reflected in the kind of abstract league table against which apparently objective judgements and decisions are nevertheless made. In such attempts we see over and over again a disregard for the ‘who’ in the pursuit of objectivity (Jenkins and Hutchison, 2013, 4). The life as lived at the margins should begin therefore with an understanding that such views are “from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body” (Haraway 1988, 589). In these ways, judgement differs when experienced from the inside or from the outside. As philosophers in the margin we rarely have access to the *inside*. Meanwhile those who do not experience marginalisation can only speculate about what it is to be on the *outside*. We can offer some examples to aid that understanding.

This section has been in some ways the most difficult to write. For one, our experiences are not identical, and neither is our assessment of them. An even more difficult issue is that telling these stories makes us vulnerable. Take, for instance, how we argued earlier on the basis of our experience that league tables are disempowering. This argument may invite responses that completely dismiss the relevance of personal experience. It may, for instance, be replaced by criticism of a system, or it can be reduced to evidence of *our* failing with no relevance for anyone else. (Apparently, we were simply not up to the job.) While there may be some truth in such responses, they risk missing the point if they are not themselves questioned as a form of what Alison Bailey calls “privilege-preserving epistemic pushback” (Bailey 2017), that is, an attempt to defend the

status quo of philosophy. After all, in the preceding section we argued for the importance of each philosopher recognising their particular perspective. A discussion that ignores experiences misses the point. Indeed, it needs to try and acknowledge them. In 'Concrete Flowers' Kristie Dotson observes how "philosophically-trained black women quit the field of philosophy with a sigh of relief. ... More often than not, the final realization ... is not, 'I have failed at philosophy,' but rather, 'philosophy has failed me'" (Dotson 2011, 403). It takes courage and pertinacity to articulate such a realisation. It also asks for careful perception by those who observe. The women sighed and Dotson heard.

To work in a small programme in a lower league institute is to experience few opportunities for networking. It is to experience even fewer of the apparently everyday, informal, yet important interactions that impact on one's daily life, one's professional career, and on one's programme. This includes the kinds of conversations that happen in corridors about league tables and the Research Excellence Framework (REF), a national research assessment exercise which generates research-based league tables. Such conversations also prepare someone to play the games that each involves. On the one hand, to be marginalised *within* your own university, such as by *exclusion* from the conversation, can be seen as discriminatory practice. Meanwhile, to be *absent*, namely because you were never there in the first place, can mean that your exclusion isn't even viewed as problematic. Indeed, it is difficult to prove that you are *excluded* from a conversation where your absence is necessary and assumed. Yet, whether it is obvious or not, the philosopher in the margin is conspicuous by her absence, and discussion about things that affect *each* philosopher suffers where there is a dearth of views from the margin in the kinds of ordinary conversations that we note here. Especially as they are spaces in which all kinds of intuitions are honed. Meanwhile we as philosophers in the margin experience our own absence from such spaces and networks as loss. We suffer not only from a lack of opportunity to contribute to important discourse, but also from the lack of space and time in which our own ideas can be tested, supported, and honed through discussion with colleagues in our discipline. The outcome of this absence is seen in league tables but also in a disappointing REF return.

Spaces where philosophers can meet, such as conferences, or as offered by societies like the British Philosophical Association (BPA), can on the one hand offer a way to bridge these gaps. For instance, where there is a chance to meet together with smaller programmes before a larger meeting, as the BPA has offered in the past. On the other hand, some meetings can inadvertently reify gaps. Especially where there is no space to learn and practice unspoken social conventions in advance of such meetings, to know *who is who* beforehand, among other details that can help to lubricate these interactions. For those who occupy the margins for intersectional reasons (university status, gender, ethnicity, and so on), not having those valuable experiences in advance can mean

it is easy to say the wrong thing, or to the wrong person, and to not even know that you have done so.

For instance, to say that you have never had a sabbatical can be difficult to hear for colleagues in universities with established sabbatical systems and funding successes. It can lead to awkwardness, and sometimes stops the conversation. To speak about the enormous pressure that is put on academics at small institutes to ensure that students do not fail (and what it is to be made responsible when students do fail) has led to responses of incredulity as well as of silence. And to acknowledge in a meeting of your peers, for instance at the BPA Head of Department meeting, that some philosophy departments hold enormous power over others is not to ingratiate oneself well into the conversation, nor does it endear you to those about whom you have complained, or those who are their friends.

We can add to the above expectations about appropriate style, including those that arise because of gender. This can include expectations regarding how women will or won't fit within an environment established by (mostly) male predecessors, or in noting how women's experiences may differ from their male colleagues. It has been asked, for instance, whether combative tendencies in philosophy can be alienating to women, and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that it can be (Beebe 2013, 64). Yet it is also clear that a woman with a robust style can also be alienated. What it is to be confrontational is tied up not only with gender but also with culture, and what is perceived as a virtue in one culture or context (frank, assertive) can be a vice in another (blunt, discourteous). To be culturally 'other' can lead to further marginalisation.

Challenging the status quo, whether intentionally or not, has meant that each author of this paper has at one time or another been described as 'a difficult woman'. In this way each individual identity has been subsumed under the category of *difficult women*. We have, as already noted, sometimes been treated interchangeably, and this only added to that grouping. While this is not particular to philosophy, the approach which includes classification based on generalisation certainly is. In this way, ideas are categorised, but so are the individual philosophers, sometimes dismissively. These kinds of behaviours, we argue, deny the authenticity of the individual who is categorised, and thereby their identity as an individual philosopher. Experiences described above (in necessarily generalised form – some of us still wish for careers in philosophy) only help to cement our identities as *difficult*, or as irrelevant, with concomitant increase in marginalisation.

There are other experiences of marginalisation that are less specific to our own collective circumstances. For instance, where philosophy follows the scientific approach to knowledge building, whereby we are "obliged to comment on the received texts", (Haraway 1981, 477), and to build arguments from a position that is not one's own. Discourse on these exclusionary practices are well

established (Alcoff 1996), but the experience of marginalisation contributes further still.

As with the league tables, much about a small university can be counted against the philosopher at the margins, but in ways that they cannot control. For instance, we have each been told that the institution's lack of status further diminished one's own, from which follows that one's own career is cyclically stunted. In one funding application it was made abundantly clear that the university resources were not sufficient for the project, though an explanation of what those resources were was not given, nor were recommendations to remedy this offered.

Issues of inclusion, exclusion, and associated power dynamics are central to marginalisation. Career progression, for instance as offered via funding grants, is protected by the same gatekeepers, e.g. senior academics, editors, and referees, who already hold significant power within the philosophy profession, especially over those who are lower on the academic ladder (Friedman, 2013, 23). Gatekeeping is also visible in publishing (Yang 2003; Sato 2012), and it would be naïve to think that individual and institutional characteristics play no role in further marginalisation during the publication process.

Philosophy, just as science, systemises and propagates norms and paradigms about philosophical systems and methods. These norms dominate discourse about 'good' philosophy, as well as about which philosophers occupy central platforms. It is striking, for instance, that through each of our intellectual careers, invitations to speak at philosophy conferences have been vanishingly few. Too often conference speakers are announced, and it is clear that 'top' speakers from prestigious institutions have been selected, even when their CVs demonstrate no particular expertise on the specific topic of the conference. Intellectual gatekeeping can be harmful to individuals, but also to disciplines who can thereby suffer from a lack of diversity and plurality in their perspectives (Sayer 2014).

Tied up with the above gatekeeping are associated issues of authority and credibility, as well as the injustice that is experienced when a person who should have authority is unfairly doubted. As Katrina Hutchison (2013, 112) notes, judgements about who or what is considered 'authority' in philosophy is made trickier by the fact that philosophy does not have the same kinds of anchors for "theoretical authority" as many other disciplines. Indeed, methods in philosophy are varied and, Hutchison (2013, 124) argues, many of these "are often learned only implicitly". This can make it difficult to challenge the authority of established philosophers, but also, and most importantly for our experiences, "to establish oneself as an authoritative philosopher" (Hutchison 2013, 112). Especially given preferences may be aesthetic (Brennan 2013), as shown in the protest by some analytic philosophers against Derrida's honorary Doctorate from Cambridge in a 1992 letter to the *Times*. The criticism in that letter centred primarily on style.

The kinds of problems we describe above fit what Miranda Fricker (2007) describes as *testimonial injustice*. She says this is “a distinctively epistemic injustice... in which someone is wronged specifically in her capacity as a knower” (2007, 20). This applies especially where the credibility of the knower is doubted, as in the case of what she calls *credibility deficit*, and which we suggest can extend to the category of exclusion. Fricker (2007, 27) offers that injustice can occur *incidentally*, for instance in the prejudice against a particular research method, or *systematically*, as a “prejudice relating to social identity” or *identity prejudice*. This latter category includes

prejudices that ‘track’ the subject through different dimensions of social activity – economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious, and so on. Being subject to a tracker prejudice renders one susceptible not only to testimonial injustice but to a gamut of different injustices, and so when such a prejudice generates a testimonial injustice, that injustice is systematically connected with other kinds of actual or potential injustice. (2007, 27)

The former category – incidental injustice – includes the research method example as above, or the conference example she describes elsewhere (28) when the philosopher of science suffers a credibility deficit by virtue of their ‘academic category’.

In the examples we consider here, the incidental and the systematic overlap. In fact, it seems to us that they do not simply occur simultaneously, but rather that they reinforce each other. On this account the prejudice against a research method or approach, e.g. towards feminist philosophy, can be tied up with a systemic identity prejudice, e.g. towards female philosophers. Similarly, for the philosopher with a foreign name who works at a ‘lower’ institute, lack of recognition can be understood as not merely coincidental but as a compound of prejudices. Demonstrating this process of reinforcement can be difficult, yet, regardless, the lack of recognition remains. This account fits within the “identity-prejudicial credibility deficit” (28) model that Fricker proposes. Disentangling the correlation or causation question is no easy feat. When such tasks fall to the philosopher in the margin, here is yet another way in which we must undertake emotionally draining labour. What is key therefore is that it ought not to be incumbent upon the person who suffers credibility deficit to accurately locate the source of the deficit. The examples that Fricker offers, for instance, present a case for theoretical analysis by an impartial observer, but one of personal and painful examination by the situated knower, and this distinction needs to be carefully borne in mind if marginalisation is to be understood and processes for remedy considered.

The account we offer in this paper suggests that philosophers need to do more to avoid becoming “mired in our own fields of research and so thoroughly indoctrinated by our working culture and ‘best-practices’ that we lose the capacity to honestly critique the popular methodologies of our own disciplines” (Murray *et al* 2007, 513). The outsider, including the philosopher in the margin,

has a particular perspective that can be useful for this process. The authors of this paper are not tied to any particular tradition, whether analytic or continental, and instead borrow more or less heavily from each, as well as from other traditions and disciplines. In this way the philosopher in the margin can avoid being tied “by the theoretico-practical terms that govern the insider’s regime of knowledge; the outsider brings a different lexicon, novel explanatory terms and a fresh *modus operandi*” (Murray *et al* 2007, 513). The philosopher in the margin can help to transgress traditional topologies, and to draw attention to methodological weaknesses. We can also question unstated yet obvious (to the outsider) preferences and biases, even if this can make for uncomfortable silences at meetings and conferences.

To recognise the value of a situated knowledge is to recognise the value of hearing the *other*, and not to assume the knowledge or position of the other, nor even to assume that this can be understood by speculation, sympathy or empathy (hooks 1991). On this account, we have proposed that the view of the philosopher in the margin cannot be presumed or hypothesised in abstract or general terms. For these reasons we suggest that it is essential that philosophers in the margin are included. To accept this account is to see what has been lost in the closure of our programme, and to see that this is more than can be quantified. To rectify this would require an additional conversation on time and resources, to which we now turn.

5. Time and resources (even to invent interesting titles)

Time is a precious commodity in academic contexts, yet assumptions are made about a universal temporality as both quantity and as experienced. For instance, when the philosopher in the margin speaks of a lack of time, and the philosopher at a prestigious institute who is currently on a sabbatical replies (without curiosity or enquiry) that they understand. Bastian (2013, 219) suggests that to assume time is the same for each person is to fail to recognise, and thereby to further disadvantage, those who otherwise and already suffer disadvantage. In fact, she says, “seemingly commonsense notions of time mask inequalities within philosophy in multiple ways” (Bastian, 2013, 219-20).

As academics in the margin we have at times been fortunate enough to each have a notional ‘day a week’ for research (actually, for one of us it was cut to ‘half a day’ for a while), with the rest of the week apportioned to the usual academic tasks of teaching and admin etc. But even this notional day has rarely been protected in normal times, and in recent years has instead been filled with the closure of our programme. This has included the defence, negotiation, and finally the mediation of outcomes, including the welfare of oneself, colleagues, and students. There is also the administrative and teaching burden that comes from the actual closure. Add to this the years of uncertainty that arise from an ever-present threat of redundancy. All of this leads to a very particular experience of research time.

None of the details in the above example can be considered *external* or personal life events. They do not compare to, say, bereavement, or caring duties (which also need to be taken into account). None of the experiences of closure and redundancy originate from outside the academy, yet little of it is accounted for in the time allotted to the academic *within* the academy. Nor is the quality of the time as it is experienced accounted for. There is no box to tick, or space for narrative about how closure impacts on research, whether as a context for league tables, or for the REF. It may be true that the academic who has a day of research time each week has the same prospect for research as any academic in a comparable position, yet the philosopher in the margin will experience that time differently, even without taking into account the kinds of external factors we note above. It is therefore essential to recognise the embodied experience of (e.g. research) time as experienced at the margins of the discipline. As Bastian (2013) describes, failure to recognise the specificity of these experiences can result in a concomitant failure to notice the causal power of associated inequity. Neglecting “structural exclusions” (Bastian 2013, 221) creates only further marginalisation. Where inclusion is not the norm, the burden of proof will be particularly difficult for those who are already at the margins, and with limited resources to prove one’s experiences, or indeed one’s worth. This can further exacerbate already vulnerable foundations, as our own submission to the REF proved. Failure to gain entry to the *inside* comes with a very high cost.

This examination of time as a quality matters not only for the individual who is at the margins, but also for the future of philosophy. As Bastian (2013, 225) points out, philosophy is “guided by a narrow vision of the future that only admits of a particular kind of philosopher”. This description can be expanded to include a narrow vision that only admits of a particular kind of philosophy programme. This can be seen in the section on league tables above. As things stand, scope for originality is limited to those who have time to find gaps in whatever topics are acceptable (to publishers, editors, reviewers), and often along well-trodden paths. In this way the researcher is vulnerable to the judgement of those who wield power, with judgment grounded in an account that is authoritative and “unequivocal” (Jenkins 2013, 97), and from which there can be no recourse, and no defence.

Haraway (1981, 471) suggests that “To author is to have the power to originate, to name”, yet such scope for authorial autonomy is problematised by the need to reflect on an unequal canon, with unequal workloads, amid an unequal distribution of emotional labour that is often draining, especially at the margins. Jenkins (2013, 86) suggests that the gender gap in philosophy can be viewed in part as “an effect of a specific colonisation of the resources and plural strands of philosophy’s own traditions”, which in turn engenders the privileging of one philosophical approach over another. This colonisation stretches from the present to the future, especially as it enables current hegemony to dictate future paths and to further cement what is marginal (Bastian 2013, 226). As Langdon

Winner (1980) observed about technology innovation, trends and habits can become status quo if we do not take care to avoid hegemony and to recognise when the deck is stacked in favour of some, and against others. What we accept in the short term becomes entrenched as what we do, and this principle along with the caution to take care in these endeavours, long promoted in both science and technology studies, ought to be applied to methods and the identity of philosophy in the UK.

Metric systems that evaluate the productivity and success of an author cannot be fair while they assume a universal volume of available time for research. As Jenkins (2013, 83) describes, “disciplines reproduce themselves”, and in this way the “hegemonic conception of the discipline” reflect things like the gender composition of the most powerful within it, as well as the preferences of those authorities. All of which occurs under the auspice of a *disciplinary* narrative. The outcome of such processes is not therefore a *natural* outcome, i.e. as from ideas that compete on an equal footing, but rather a *survival of the fittest*, where fitness is already determined by factors that include systemic privilege and marginalisation. Each is connected with intersectional characteristics e.g. race, gender, disability, culture, class, especially as these link to the availability of resources and time.

At this point it may be wise to consider the question of merit, especially as this is sometimes offered as an objection to ideas of privilege. Perhaps time and resources are allocated according to success and this is reflected in a meritocratic system of reward. Perhaps the successful academic has more time for research, or perhaps they are successful because they use their time well. Such views may contain some promise, but they require further thought. Jenkins (2013, 84) highlights that negotiations about success are “reflective of (contestable) constructions of both value and judgement”. Accordingly, criteria for success are not separate to such values and judgement. In fact, the “frameworks for validating disciplinary achievement” are self-perpetuating in so far as they help to reify “practices and processes” (Jenkins 2013, 85) which they both generate and authorise, and from which perpetuation the privileged continue to benefit. It is rather like grading one’s own paper. Hutchison (2013, 118-9) argues that a philosopher may not realise the limits of their own training. If a philosopher is familiar only with the methods adopted in their narrow area of specialisation, then they may not be best placed to judge the quality either of contents, of techniques, nor even intuitions, as employed in another area in philosophy (whether viewed positively or negatively).

In this way, a meritocratic system not only “defends its particular results as fair” but develops a system of assessment through which lens “its results will appear as unquestionably and exclusively valid” (Jenkins 2013, 95). This creates and sustains inequity, while systemising and perpetuating imbalance, and thereby also shaping the identity of the philosopher in the margin. Representation requires presence: to have a voice in philosophy requires time,

as covered above, effort, resources as well as people who believe, invest, and offer support in both public and private spheres (Collins 1996; Dotson 2011). That we must make time to write this particular paper for instance, with the pain and sadness it brings each of us, offers further evidence of the emotional labour required to draw attention to what would otherwise not be seen. It is especially difficult to do this while knowing that the burden of proof will remain on us, that our perspectives may not be taken as true or accurate, and knowing that our credibility may be doubted in other rather unpredictable ways.

6. Conclusion

This paper has sought to show the specificity, as we experience it, of being at the margins of philosophy. We've argued for the impossibility of maintaining a programme as we devised it. In so doing we have argued that philosophy should "foster pluralism" (Jenkins and Hutchison 2013, 14), and understand that pluralism also includes a range of methods, approaches, aims, and style. On top of that, methods of accountability and assessment need to be revisited, especially with a view to challenging what are currently "narrow criteria of achievement" (Jenkins 2013, 99). Our experiences show that to neglect these challenges is to risk excluding those who are already at the margins of philosophy. Philosophy needs to value a different range of aims and motivations, as well as methods of discourse (Hutchison 2013, 120), and for this, it needs to take much greater care of those who exist precariously on its margins.

Our pluralistic philosophy programme celebrated a variety of methods, traditions, and approaches within philosophy, and in so doing it bucked the trend for more and more narrow specialisation within university departments. A narrow approach avoids problems that come with complexity, but it also fosters expectations and assumptions regarding shared values, preferences, and intuitions. Bastian (2013, 227) argues that an aversion to contradiction in traditional philosophical discourse, for instance, "risks leaving philosophy unable to respond adequately to the complexities of the world in which it is practiced". This paper offers support for this position and adds that methodological uniformity in philosophy can make these inadequacies more likely. We maintain that our programme offered a way to avoid such inadequacies, and that its loss should therefore be seen as a loss to the discipline.

McGill (2013, 211) argues that the "suppression or distortion of women's speech is a collective, cultural problem that needs to be addressed as such", and we have offered this paper with a case study on league tables to add weight to this position. We do this while noting other forms of intersectional exclusion and marginalisation. Philosophers have for too long taken for granted that philosophy is somehow free of the kinds of cultural assumption, power imbalance, and discrepancies in authority that mire other disciplines. Maintaining this status quo has in fact left philosophy, and particularly philosophers in the margin, especially vulnerable to metric-obsessed,

quantifiable-data-driven capitalist market forces, with judgements and actions grounded in these vices. To defend our programme required resistance and objection, and this, as McGill (2013, 213) predicts, was costly.

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