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Mining History

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We read and teach work by historical philosophers for any number of good reasons. It's an activity enjoyable in itself. Past thinkers can model good reasoning. Philosophical texts help us understand and connect to both particular cultural heritages and our shared human heritage. Rediscovering the work of less-canonical figures, texts that O'Neill[1] memorably calls "disappearing ink," can be a matter of justice.[2] And we can't make sense of human history (and thus the present) without making sense of the history of ideas. For these among other reasons, studying the history of philosophy is worthwhile.

We also turn to the history of philosophy as a means to inform our present philosophizing. We mine the writings of our predecessors for philosophical insights, problems, perspectives, and techniques that might otherwise elude us. Leaving aside the other significant reasons to study the history of philosophy, my focus in what follows will be on this practice of prospecting in the history of philosophy for contributions of enduring value. This is, in other words, an essay about *mining history*.

I.

In the spring of 1850, a wagon train heading from Salt Lake City to the gold fields of California was delayed in northwest Nevada by snow-laden mountain passes. To pass the time, some of the late-to-the-party 49ers explored the local streams and gulches for gold. Although they were able to pan a few flakes and nuggets, by their reckoning the local deposits were not as rich as the finds in California were purported to be, so they moved on once the snows melted.

The story of gold in those Nevada hills soon spread. By the mid-1850s a few dozen disappointed ex-49ers had come to the area for a second chance at fortune. The area was productive at first, but by 1858 panning the local alluvial deposits was no longer lucrative and prospectors began to search for new sources of gold nearby. In 1859 one James Finney, known as "Old Virginny," established a prospect on a nearby hill, which he and his friends creatively dubbed "Gold Hill."

Early gold recovery on Gold Hill was promising, but this was no guarantee that the prospect wouldn't pan out quickly. Nevertheless, when local prospector Henry Comstock saw just how much gold Old Virginny and his friends were panning, he determined to get in on the business. He and his friend Manny Penrod approached Old Virginny and claimed that the Gold Hill Prospect was on land they (Comstock and Penrod) had already claimed for a ranch. It wasn't, but Old Virginny had no way to contest their claim—the local property record was an illegible and frequently scribbled-over book kept at the saloon—so Comstock and Penrod successfully bullied their way into a 50% ownership of the claim. They accelerated panning at the site, but although they found it rich in gold they were soon frustrated by the fact that the gold was dispersed in a thick, heavy, bluish clay. The weight of the clay made digging and panning it backbreaking work, and its stickiness gummed up their sluice boxes and other equipment. Discouraged by the difficulty of working in the unusual clay, Comstock and Penrod sold shares in the claim for trivial amounts.

Months later, curious about the strange blue clay, local miner Judge Jay Walsh had it assayed. Both its weight and its blue color, it turned out, were owed to silver sulfides! This silver was present in such astonishingly high quantities that the assayer ran the battery of tests twice, thinking he must have made a mistake the first time. Walsh then double-checked with a metallurgist friend who confirmed that, indeed, the clay was a silver ore worth $3800 per ton—over $110,000 in today's currency, adjusted for inflation. Walsh visited the Gold Hill workings and was flabbergasted to see the workers laboriously discarding the clay *by the ton* to recover a few dollars' worth of gold.

So runs the early history of the Comstock Lode, which that gummy blue clay made one of the richest mines in American history. The Lode was so rich, and its veins ran so deep, that mining it required the development of new techniques, like square set timbering. The wealth of Comstock silver also became a sufficient justification on its own for Nevada, the "Silver State," to receive statehood in 1864. It's easy for us to chuckle at the irony of those original workers unknowingly discarding most of the silver ore which made it such a rich lode, but how must they have felt after learning that their focus on the more familiar gold caused them to ignore the bulk of the wealth upon which they stood?[3]

II.

Van Norden and Garfield helpfully catalog many philosophers' "tired arguments against change" (xii):

- "It is too hard to cover the core" (xii)
- "there is simply nothing valuable in any non-Western tradition" (xiii)
- "non-European thought somehow isn't as good as European philosophy" (12)
- "Chinese philosophers are playing the intellectual equivalent of minor league baseball, whereas Western philosophers are playing major league baseball" (26).

Drawing on my own experiences teaching what Van Norden calls "Less Commonly Taught Philosophy" (LCTP), which in my case includes not only some non-Western philosophy, but philosophy written in non-standard genres (e.g., fiction and poetry), philosophy written by figures excluded from the canon (e.g., women in the Early Modern period), and philosophy written by figures considered to belong to other fields (scientists, politicians, historians, etc.) I can add a couple more I'm getting sick of hearing:

- "That's not *really* philosophy."
- "*Are there* any women who wrote philosophy in that time period?"
- "But students need a strong foundation in the classics!"

What these tired attitudes highlight is how, as Anglo-American philosophers, we have had tunnel vision.

We have focused on picking up the familiar, easily-recognized gold on the surface, while complaining about the sludge we have to sift through to extract it. We tend to content ourselves with selling off a nugget or two large enough to pay tonight's saloon tab, ignorant of further riches under our feet and thinking "there is simply nothing valuable" there. "*Are there*" any precious ores to be found in the sludge of intellectual history, besides the obvious gold of the canonical philosophers? While the intellectual gold we mine is certainly valuable, it probably makes up the lesser portion of the wealth to be discovered. The history of human thought is a lode of wealth, and we're not doing ourselves any favors by refusing, in our gold-fever, to exploit it fully.

I intend this to be an argument against having a philosophical canon, at least as far as usefulness for mining the history of philosophy is concerned.[4] The purported role of the canon in that domain is to highlight what's *worth our time*. But it's far too easy to dismiss something as not being worth our time merely because it doesn't look like what we think good work looks like, or because we lack the expertise and techniques necessary to recognize and extract its value. But panning for gold is only easier than extracting silver from sulfides because of familiarity. Gold panning is its own specialized technique requiring training, practice, and know-how.

Equivalently, no one is innately equipped to pick up the *Critique of Pure Reason* and comprehend its intellectual value. It takes a great deal of training in philosophical techniques and knowledge of a specific philosophical history to get the most out of Kant's work (and students lacking that training don't always hesitate to call its worth into question). But the fact that we teach *those* techniques alone and only *that* history is a contingent fact. We could just as well have been teaching the techniques and background necessary to comprehend the intellectual value of some works of LCTP. And since canonical Western philosophy is only a small fraction of the intellectual wealth available to us, it's worth developing and teaching those techniques. The sheer diversity of valuable philosophy in human history, however, means that we must jettison the idea that there is one set of figures worth studying above all others. We need to adopt Van Norden's "Hermeneutic of Faith" and assay writings of all sorts to see if they contain "truth, goodness, and beauty" (139).

I'm not suggesting that the canon is useless. The canon exists for good reasons, and abandoning it would be a sacrifice. It may be a sacrifice worth making, however, because of the benefits that will accrue to contemporary philosophy from digging more broadly through intellectual history. I'll also suggest that, contrary to a lot of worries that recent commentators have raised, the sacrifice is not that great. The real questions are how to transition to a model of teaching and reading the history of philosophy that isn't bound to a canon, and which model we should be transitioning to. I'll have a bit to say about that after laying out my non-metaphorical case for the value of non-canonical history of philosophy.

I should also reemphasize that my arguments against the canon are restricted to what we're reading and teaching for the purpose of mining history to inform contemporary philosophy, and don't necessarily apply to canons in other domains. It may be that we should keep canons in some domains for the purpose of preserving cultural history, as a matter of what we owe to thinkers who had priority on an idea, or for other reasons. But it doesn't follow that a rigid reading list is the

best way to look through the history of ideas for thought that will help us improve our present theorizing. In fact, we have good reasons to think that delving outside the restrictions of the canon will pay off.

III.

Let's consider what it is that makes a writer worth our time as we mine the history of ideas for philosophical insights. Is it that their writing gets it mostly right—that much of what they write is true? Doubtful. I happen to think that Plato got it wrong on pretty much everything, but still find reading him to be enlightening and worthwhile. Ditto for all sorts of other philosophers we generally agree are worth our time, so even if you happen to be more of a Platonist than me, I'm sure you can think of an example of someone you disagree with who is worth your time. There must be something besides being right that makes a philosopher worth reading.

Perhaps it has to do with the quality of their writing? We're quickly going to run into the same problem. True, some classic philosophy, such as Plato's, is notable for how effectively written it is. But a lot of other philosophy we consider worth our time despite, and not because of, how it is written. (I'm looking at you, Kant.) Besides, if considerations of writing quality were key, the literary and philosophical canons should overlap much more than they do.

Nor could the answer be that the canon should be composed of those whose thought is most clear and logical. Not only is the canon full of philosophers who are less than clear (sorry, Nietzsche), but if logical rigor were the criteria, the recent history of philosophy would have a clear advantage over philosophy written prior to the widespread adoption of first-order logic by philosophers.

More plausibly, it might be the philosophers who had the most historical influence who are worth our while. To some extent it makes sense that the best philosophers would have been the most influential. But only to a very limited extent, since prejudices, injustices, and the vagaries of history often prevented good philosophy from having much influence. Moreover, the canon has never been a detailed map of causal influence across the history of philosophy, but instead represents the interests of the present. For example, when my grandfather took a course in political philosophy at UCLA in 1955, he read a few authors familiar to the standard contemporary course list, such as Plato, Mill, and Hayek, but there are many surprising omissions—no Hobbes, Locke, or Rousseau, for instance. In their place were figures such as Mussolini, Lenin, and sociologist

Barbara Wootton, who wrote on the welfare state. It's obvious why, in the early Cold War, fascism, Leninism, and central economic planning would be seen as central to the canon of political philosophy. The answer isn't, to give one example, because Mussolini's writings were so influential on the future development of political philosophy. Instead, the philosophers who make the cut are those who reflect our current interests.[5]

And this is largely how it should be, to the extent our goal is to mine the past for insights that will inform our present theorizing. The canon has always been subject to reevaluation on the basis of present interests. Think of the recovery of Aristotle in medieval Europe, the fluctuating importance of Hegel to modern philosophy, or the recent recognition of Reid as worth reading alongside Locke, Hume, and Berkeley. The mutability of the canon is a testament to the existence of valuable philosophy outside of it.

So what is it that makes the writing of some long dead writer valuable to our present philosophical theorizing? The answer is surely multifaceted, but one important feature must be that writing worth our time provides something that we aren't getting in the contemporary philosophical literature. In other words, what makes old philosophy worth our time is that it is *different*. Different doesn't mean "better," "more important," "more logical," or "truer." But it can mean "more creative," "making distinct assumptions," "informed by a different history or culture or set of goals," or "tackled using an alternative method." It means that what makes a work of historical philosophy worth mining is that it is diverse.

"Diverse" in the sense of intellectual diversity: Plato and I may both be light-skinned men, but part of what makes him valuable as an interlocutor for me is how he challenges my philosophical stances. Social diversity (race, gender, language, etc.) will generally track intellectual diversity, but we shouldn't limit our reevaluation of the canon to implementing some sort of affirmative action program, at least not for the purposes of mining history.

It shouldn't be surprising that intellectual diversity is valuable. In many domains, things which are distinctive, rare, or unique are reckoned more valuable. We evaluate works of art, designate national parks, and even choose what to eat and wear in part by assessing what each object or place contributes in terms of diversity. We do the same when it comes to philosophy. When we review journal submissions, we downgrade papers that fail to be distinctive and promote papers that are original. We assess the value of a contribution to the philosophical discussion in large part based on how it diversifies that discussion.

This is an appropriate attitude to take. Modern research suggests that intellectual diversity is crucial to the advancement of inquiry. Social scientific models, for instance, have indicated that "diversity trumps ability" when it comes to solving problems.[6] Philosophers of science have provided arguments and models bolstering this claim, premised on the value of an efficient division of labor,[7] the utility of having creative "mavericks" exploring new intellectual territory,[8] and the way that diversity mitigates the risk of premature consensus on false claims.[9] Follow-ups to some of this work[10] have highlighted that intellectual diversity is especially valuable on the most difficult and intractable areas of research. In philosophy, difficult and intractable problems are our bread and butter (and our naan and ghee, our tortillas and manteca, etc.).

Experimental work has come to the same conclusion that the value of intellectual diversity isn't substitutable by pure intellectual ability. These experiments typically use social diversity as proxies for intellectual diversity. A study of gender diversity, for instance, found that it increased corporate profits,[11] another study found that racially-diverse groups were better at solving a murder mystery,[12] while yet another surveyed the scientific literature and found that papers with coauthors of multiple ethnicities had higher impact and were cited more often.[13] Diverse groups solve intellectual problems better for several reasons: being confronted with people who think differently challenges us to sharpen our own arguments and evidence, diverse groups bring a broader array of background knowledge to a problem, confronting diverse ideas calls into question previously unquestioned assumptions, and so on. This empirical work complements Mill's argument in *On Liberty* that even wrong ideas should be part of the conversation, because engaging with them improves the ultimate epistemic outcome.[14] By putting ourselves in conversation with dead philosophers, we increase the diversity of our philosophical interlocutors, and thus reap the benefits of intellectual diversity. This, I'm suggesting, is the primary feature that makes past thinkers worth our time. Even if God revealed to us the list of the thirty objectively best philosophers in history, we would still want to read all sorts of other philosophy, because diversity trumps ability. Non-canonical figures can be valuable not only because of their philosophical quality, but because they represent intellectual diversity, exposure to which is good for philosophical inquiry as a whole.

If I'm right about this, then I have a straightforward argument against the canon, at least for the project of mining history. The main reason for maintaining the canon is to highlight which authors are worth our time. But what makes authors worth our time is largely that they represent

intellectual diversity. In virtue of not being canonical, an author[15] represents intellectual diversity. The canon thus doesn't highlight most of the authors worth our time. Therefore, the canon fails to satisfy the main reason for keeping it around.

IV.

An in-principle argument for the value of looking outside the canon is nice, but the best evidence that we've been overlooking other treasures while panning for gold is the success that historians of philosophy who shift their attention beyond canonical figures have been finding. Consider, for instance, how attention to philosophers we used to write off as mere scientists has become a fruitful domain of inquiry in the study of Early Modern philosophy. I'm thinking of examples like work on Isaac Newton[16] and Robert Boyle[17] which have shown that not only do these natural philosophers have interesting things to say about philosophical problems, but also that they were in frequent dialogue with both canonical philosophers (such as Descartes and Hobbes) and other important but neglected thinkers (e.g., each other, Margaret Cavendish[18]). Historians of philosophy have also been finding success studying other sorts of LCTP including philosophy written as fiction[19] and non-Western philosophy (which Van Norden provides excellent examples of).

A couple of specific examples of how LCTP is worth our time as miners might help illustrate my point. One question looming over most readers of this journal is "How can we defend the value of the humanities and a liberal education?" In two of my recent courses, we have approached this question from the perspective of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the seventeenth-century Mexican nun and polymath. Sor Juana's work checks all the boxes that tend to get a philosopher overlooked: as a Latina she's the wrong ethnicity and gender, as a literary and religious figure she gets dismissed as not being a philosopher, and since her writings belong to diverse genres like poetry, letters, and drama, they're dismissed as not being serious treatises or essays. But she has a philosophically-grounded answer to the question of why a liberal education is necessary. In both her open letter "Respuesta a Sor Filotea" and her epistemological poem "Primero sueño,"[20] she defends a holistic, syncretic epistemology. For Sor Juana all knowledge is unified, so real understanding requires a broad education. For example, as a nun, she was admonished to leave aside worldly knowledge and focus on the divine. But she counters that to grasp theology, one must grasp the other sciences. To understand the Psalms, for instance, one must understand some music theory, and to understand music theory, one must understand some mathematics. Even a bride of Christ thus needs to study

math. Moreover, Sor Juana points out, even when her books were taken away, philosophy remained to her. Her mind couldn't help but consider the architecture of her convent, and contemplating that architecture raised questions of physics and optics. Even cooking, an activity more acceptable for a nun than philosophizing, is inextricably tied up with other domains of knowledge. The savvy cook, she argues in "La Respuesta," is an experimental natural philosopher *par excellence*, and "If Aristotle had cooked, he would have written much more." What good are the humanities? If Sor Juana is right, the humanities are necessary because no domain of knowledge can stand without the others. Her approach and her arguments—even the fact that she feels it necessary to defend the value of a liberal education—provide a diverse alternative to other philosophers of her generation precisely because she, as a woman and a non-European, was forced to fight for her right to a broad education.

Another contemporary issue that preoccupies my students is the question of whether art should be censored for moral reasons. They're confronted every day by calls to cancel or boycott television shows that contradict progressive values, by politicians blaming spree killings on violent video games, and by debates over whether the music they listen to is cultural appropriation, or misogynistic, or glorifies violence. Canonical figures like Plato and Kierkegaard have important things to say about the relationship of art and ethics, but I was impressed recently by some students who cast their net a little wider. While working on a class project to build an online encyclopedia of Early Modern philosophers, these students discovered debates over censorship in Early Modern China. Although women were generally given little chance to publish in China at the time, it was acceptable for women to write poetry. Some of these women used this as loophole to engage in philosophical argument. One, Wang Duanshu, philosophizes in her preface to an anthology of women's poetry.[21] Among other things, she argues that censorship of immoral or vulgar poetry would be inappropriate, both because justice to the individual poets requires us to preserve their words and because an accurate picture of women's contribution to letters requires a full catalog of their writings. My students put Wang in dialogue with a slightly later anthologist, Yun Zhu, who advocated censorship on the grounds that the purpose of women's poetry is to teach other women their role in society.[22] The approaches to censorship of these two Chinese philosophers spoke to my students because, like our current cultural controversies, their discussion of art and morality is inflected with issues of social identity. As with the case of Sor Juana, the diverse cultural and

social position held by Wang Duanshu and Yun Zhu put a twist on their intellectual contributions that made looking outside the traditional canon worth the effort for my students.

Successes like these reinforce for me the value of opening up the broader history of human thought to my students—and in my own work. Given the type of training philosophy instructors get, working in the bluish clay of LCTP may not be as familiar and comfortable as focusing on gold, but we're not doing the kids any favors if we forbid them to play in the muck.

V.

Having made my case for the benefits of mining outside the canon, let's complete the cost-benefit analysis by assessing the price of change.

A recent review of *Taking Back Philosophy* by Jonardon Ganeri in the *LA Review of Books*[23] raises a number of concerns about Van Norden's proposal. First, Ganeri notes a legitimate concern that broadening the canon might lead us to lose the valuable ability for philosophers to discuss their work with each other regardless of specialization. This is because philosophers share a "basic tool kit for the management of disagreement," one which comes from both shared principles of reasoning and a common background vocabulary. Ganeri worries that Van Norden's solution to this problem—a comparative, multicultural approach—reifies cultural differences and elides variation within cultures. As an alternative to this multiculturalism, Ganeri proposes a topic-driven cosmopolitanism. Instead of, say, teaching a class on comparing Indian and Western philosophy, Ganeri would prefer to see us teach a standard course (epistemology, philosophy of language, etc.) with some relevant Indian texts included.

I'm sympathetic. By including philosophy traditionally excluded due to gender, genre, or discipline under the heading of LCTP, I'm already pushing Van Norden's vision towards a more topic-driven cosmopolitanism. In making our assault on the canon not about culture specifically, but about removing any barriers to mining for wisdom, we expand the horizons of philosophy without committing ourselves to cultural relativism or turning syllabus-building into an exercise in checking boxes to make sure we have token representation of arbitrary social categories. Viewed this way, leaving the canon behind need not incur the costs that Ganeri worries it might.

Perhaps Ganeri and I are too sanguine about how easy or appropriate it would be to take a cosmopolitan approach to adopting works of LCTP. In an article entitled "Not all things wise and good are philosophy," Tampio argues that a canon inclusive of writing outside the Western

philosophical tradition "undermines what is distinct about philosophy as an intellectual tradition."[24] That distinctive feature, according to Tampio, is the Platonic search for truth and wisdom through reason alone, unfettered by "established traditions or religious commitments" or "the love of blood and country." If we allow for writings from varied traditions and genres to count as philosophy, this objective search for truth will no longer characterize philosophy.

Tampio's worry falsely assumes that the Western tradition is characterized by an unfettered search for truth. That's certainly an ideal we Western philosophers have sometimes espoused, but it isn't definitive of good Western philosophy. Aquinas' inquiry wasn't undertaken independent of "religious commitments," but that doesn't mean that he wasn't a real Western philosopher. Likewise, the racism running through Kant's anthropological work[25] belies his supposed cosmopolitanism to reveal the workings of "established tradition" and "love of blood." Nietzsche, to give an extreme example, disavows the disinterested search for truth as a philosophical folly.[26] Tampio might counter that while, say, Kant may not have perfectly practiced the ideal of disinterested truth-seeking, he held it, and that's what characterizes real philosophy. But if that's the criterion, then all sorts of LCTP also meets it. Though they might fall short of the ideal, it's ludicrous to say that Nāgārjuna, Gabrielle Suchon, Jorge Luis Borges, and so on aren't trying to seek the truth even if it challenges the traditional assumptions of their societies. So even if we grant to Tampio the value of disinterested truth-seeking, that ideal isn't a razor that cleanly slices out the traditional Western canon.

Tampio has a second, more practical worry. "Philosophy departments," he writes, aren't "the natural home for scholars of Islamic jurisprudence or Confucian ethics." Given the structure of the modern university, those studying philosophical works from other cultures fit better in area studies departments, those studying philosophical fiction in literature departments, and those studying natural scientists like Newton and Boyle in history of science programs. Honestly, sometimes when I attend a talk where I have to listen to Gettier problem variant number 597, I don't feel like I'm in my natural home either. But one of philosophy's strengths is its breadth. Philosophers in the same department can work on abstract mathematical theory, applied feminist politics, the metaphysics of fungi,[27] and Early Modern epistemology. To fit all that under one roof, philosophy must already be a big tent, and surely it has room for a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence or two. Actually, I do in fact have a colleague who is a scholar of ancient Chinese ethics, and he's as at home in our department as any of us. I'm not moved by Tampio's practical worry.

Also taking the sting out of Tampio's second worry is that opening up philosophy doesn't necessarily mean juggling around everyone's departmental appointments. This will become clearer if I say a few words on how I think we might structure philosophy to facilitate taking advantage of intellectual treasure outside the canon.[28]

VI.

To mix my metaphor with the one Van Norden uses in chapter 3 of *Taking Back Philosophy*, mining is more about tearing down walls than building them. Instead of building walls, mines require the construction of *support structures*, which allow for extraction without risking collapse. The square set timbering method pioneered at the Comstock was so innovative because, as a system of stacked mutually-supporting cubes,[29] it allowed miners to follow veins wherever they went, freeing them from traditional limitations on the size of tunnels.

What support structures do we need as we build better mines for philosophical wisdom?

First, we need better ties to our friends across the university. The trend towards interdisciplinarity in both the sciences and the humanities isn't something philosophy can avoid and still remain relevant. We can facilitate the teaching and research of LCTP by co-teaching and co-authoring with scholars from relevant disciplines, and by inviting them to present at our events. To give one example, at the first Penn Workshop on Non-Western Philosophical Traditions,[30] we invited Deven Patel from Penn's South Asia Studies department to present on classical Indian philosophy of language. This introduction, and conversations with Patel at workshop events, was enough to give some of the philosophy grad students who attended a basis to work towards teaching and researching Indian philosophy. In other words, by reaching outside our discipline, we were able to construct support structures that facilitated broader philosophical mining. Note that this doesn't require any shuffling around of disciplinary or institutional affiliations, thus avoiding Tampio's worry about where scholars' natural homes are.

The second set of support structures we need might sometimes require some institutional changes, however. To facilitate effective mining outside the canon we need to tear down walls which discourage creative approaches to the history of philosophy. Some of these walls are pedagogical: we need not only to offer a broader array of history courses, but to vary the content of the courses we do teach. Moreover, we need to find ways to allow students at all levels to count relevant courses as satisfying philosophy requirements. A graduate course on Mary Wollstonecraft

taught by the English department, for instance, might satisfy a philosophy graduate student's history requirement. Given the value of intellectual diversity to inquiry, cases of that sort shouldn't be exceptional, and should even be encouraged.

Likewise, we need to consider how the other institutional structures of philosophy, such as journals, conferences, and professional societies, can replace walls with support structures. Are we finding reviewers with the necessary expertise to advise editors on whether work on LCTP is worthwhile? Do we make space for a variety of conference sessions that tread less-familiar ground, or do we tokenize LCTP on the schedule? How might our societies encourage teaching and research outside the canon?[31]

Finally, at least for purposes of good undergraduate teaching, specialist-level familiarity with a form of LCTP isn't necessary. What we need are support structures like translated texts, introductory textbooks, and other similar resources for the novice.[32] Creating these sorts of resources will facilitate over time the production of researchers who will pursue LCTP in more depth.

VII.

Having gestured at how and why we should look outside not just *the* canon, but any canon for philosophical treasure, I'll close by noting a few added bonuses to being non-canonical:

- It allows to have a more accurate picture of intellectual history.[33]
- It facilitates a more cohesive presentation of philosophical topics.[34]
- Students enjoy having a more diverse set of readings.
- Work on LCTP will help us forge connections with other disciplines.
- If our syllabi aren't shackled to a standard reading list, we're freer to teach according to our best pedagogical judgment.
- It frees up space for more novel work, rather than epicycles on panned out philosophical work.[35] Too much work in the history of philosophy doesn't aim to be anything more than a "footnote to Plato."

For these sorts of reasons, we shouldn't content ourselves with just another revision of the canon. We've been revising the canon for as long as there has been a history of philosophy. Instead we should untether ourselves from canons altogether.

Notes

1. Eileen O'Neill, "Disappearing Ink: Early Modern Women Philosophers and Their Fate in History," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*, ed. Janet A. Kourany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 17–62.

2. See Vera Tripodi, "The Value of Diversity and Inclusiveness in Philosophy: An Overview," *Rivista di Estetica* 64 (2017): 3–17.

3. This history is drawn from the first chapters of Grant H. Smith and Joseph V. Tingley, *The History of the Comstock Lode, 1850–1997* (Reno: Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, 1998).

4. Not that you're off the hook if you aren't a historian of philosophy. There are canons for philosophy's various subdisciplines—I bet I could guess most of the contents of a random political philosophy or philosophy of language class without having to look at the syllabus. My arguments apply to these facets of the philosophical canon as well as the parts of the canon which cover more temporally distant philosophy.
   Additionally, any subfield of philosophy can benefit from engagement with the ideas of past philosophers, so we all should be mining history, even if we aren't all historians.

5. For an extended discussion calling into question the role of causal influence in shaping the canon, see Lisa Shapiro, "Revisiting the Early Modern Philosophical Canon," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2.3 (2016): 365–383.

6. Lu Hong and Scott E. Page, "Groups of Diverse Problem Solvers Can Outperform Groups of High-Ability Problem Solvers," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 101.46 (2004), 16385–16389.

7. Michael Strevens, "The Role of the Priority Rule in Science," *The Journal of Philosophy* 100.2 (2003): 55–79; Miriam Solomon, *Social Empiricism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

8. Michael Weisberg and Ryan Muldoon, "Epistemic Landscapes and the Division of Cognitive Labor," *Philosophy of Science* 76.2 (2009): 225–252.

9. Kevin J. S. Zollman, "The Epistemic Benefit of Transient Diversity," *Erkenntnis* 72.1 (2010): 17–35; Carlos Santana, "Why Not All Evidence Is Scientific Evidence," *Episteme* 15.2 (2018): 209–227.

10. Patrick Grim, et al., "Scientific Networks on Data Landscapes: Question Difficulty, Epistemic Success, and Convergence," *Episteme* 10.4 (2013): 441–464; Sarita Rosenstock, Cailin O'Connor, and Justin Bruner, "In Epistemic Networks, Is Less Really More?" *Philosophy of Science* 84.2 (2017): 234–252.

11. Cristian Dezsö and David Ross, "When Women Rank High, Firms Profit," *Columbia Business School Ideas at Work* June 13, 2008.

12. Katherine W. Phillips, Gregory B. Northcraft, and Margaret A. Neale, "Surface-Level Diversity and Decision-Making in Groups: When Does Deep-Level Similarity Help?" *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 9.4 (2006): 467–482.

13. Richard B. Freeman and Wei Huang, "Collaboration: Strength in Diversity," *Nature* 513 (September 18, 2014): 305.

14. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, in *A Selection of His Works* (Palgrave, London, 1966), 1–147.

15. Obviously we need some qualifications here. To represent relevant intellectual diversity an author also needs to be writing about a relevant topic and meet some thresholds of intellectual sophistication and originality.

16. E.g., Andrew Janiak, *Newton as Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Andrew Janiak and Eric Schliesser, eds., *Interpreting Newton: Critical Essays*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Kirsten Walsh, "Newton: from Certainty to Probability?" *Philosophy of Science* 84.5 (2017): 866–878.

17. E.g., Thomas Holden, "Robert Boyle on Things above Reason," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (2007): 283–312; Laurence Carlin, "The Importance of Teleology to Boyle's Natural Philosophy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19 (2011): 665–682.

18. I can't resist sharing an amusing example of Cavendish-Boyle interaction: In her sci-fi novel *Blazing World,* Cavendish represents Boyle as a humanoid spider who can't successfully replicate any air-pump experiments. This is an attack on Boyle's empiricism, and perhaps on the utility of mathematics for science (see Alison Peterman, "Empress vs. Spider-Man: Margaret Cavendish on Pure and Applied Mathematics," *Synthese* (2017): 1–23). Boyle's friend and assistant Robert Hooke gets represented as a humanoid louse, in reference to his illustrations of microscopy (Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, called the Blazing World* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2016)).

19. E.g., Silvia G. Dapía, *Jorge Luis Borges, Post-analytic Philosophy, and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Carlos Santana, "Two Opposite Things Placed near Each Other, Are the Better Discerned": Philosophical Readings of Cavendish's Literary Output," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23.2 (2015): 297–317; and Corey McCall and Tom Nurmi, eds., *Melville among the Philosophers* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

20. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Poems, Protest, and a Dream: Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin, 1997).

21. See Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

22. See Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

23. Jonardon Ganeri, "Taking Philosophy Forward," *Los Angeles Review of Books* August 20, 2018, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/taking-philosophy-forward/.

24. Nicholas Tampio, "Not All Things Wise and Good Are Philosophy," *Aeon* September 13, 2016, https://aeon.co/ideas/not-all-things-wise-and-good-are-philosophy.

25. See Robert Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," in *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, eds. Julie K. Ward and Tommy L. Lott (London: Blackwell, 2002), 145–166.

26. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1966).

27. This is a real thing. See Daniel Molter, "On Mushroom Individuality," *Philosophy of Science* 84.5 (2017): 1117–1127.

28. Katharina Paxman suggested to me another pragmatic objection: a canon is inevitable. Even if we throw out the present canon, there will still be texts and figures who are widely taught, and these will coalesce into a new canon. I agree that there will always be texts and figures who are more widely read, and there should be! I don't mean to imply that all writings are of equal worth. But a canon is more than a *descriptive* list of the most commonly taught and read figures; canons are essentially *normative*. They ratify their contents as better or more important, they demand that all certified philosophers have familiarity with them, and they implicitly dismiss figures not on the canon as not worth our while. I don't think these normative implications are inevitable, and we should happily give them up.

29. See http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/square-set-timbering for illustration and details.

30. Mentioned by Garfield in the preface of *Taking Back Philosophy* as helping spark the book.

31. The American Philosophical Association's collection of diverse syllabi is one example of an attempt to do this.

32. Van Norden himself has done an exemplary job of creating these sorts of support structures for classical Chinese philosophy, in the form of both a reader (Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett

Publishing, 2005)) and a textbook (Bryan W. Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011)).

33. Susan Price, “Reviving the Female Canon,” *The Atlantic* May 13, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/05/reviving-the-female-canon/393110/.

34. Merold Westphal, “The Canon as Flexible, Normative Fact,” *The Monist* 76.4 (1993): 437.

35. Samuel C. Rickless, “Brief for an Inclusive Anti-Canon,” *Metaphilosophy* 49.1–2 (2018), 167–181.