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Histories of Philosophy in a Global Perspective

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Editorial Introduction to Histories of Philosophy in a Global Perspective

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This special issue of *East Asian Journal of Philosophy* (EAJP) is dedicated to the first research results of the Reinhart Koselleck Project, "Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective", which has been running at the University of Hildesheim (Germany) since April 2019. The project seeks to further research already conducted in three related domains: first, critical investigations of the historiography of the (European) history of philosophy¹ – on this, see Greco's discussion of Santinello's *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* in this volume; second, initial attempts at a global historiography of philosophy, of which a useful overview is provided by Herzl's literature review in this volume; third, a tradition of regional historiography of philosophy which, until recently, has emerged mainly in regional studies and philologies in, for instance, India, China and the Islamic world. The Reinhart Koselleck Project was initiated by Rolf Elberfeld in order to draw attention to a number of significant blind spots which still exist in the discipline of the history of philosophy and to subject these to a thorough investigation that focusses on the marginalisation of non-European philosophical traditions in the European historiography of philosophy. In short, it attempts to address and ameliorate problems

¹ This field of research was established by, among others, Lucien Braun's *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris 1973), the *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (1981-2004) initiated by Giovanni Santinello and Franz M. Wimmer's *Interkulturelle Philosophie* (Vienna 1990). Wimmer introduced an intercultural perspective into research on the historiography of the history of philosophy.

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that result from the almost complete ignorance of traditions of the historiography of philosophy in non-European languages.

A historiography of philosophy that aims to do justice to both the global and intercultural entanglements of philosophical traditions while addressing demands for the decolonisation of research and teaching, now routinely made globally and in reference to *all* sciences, can no longer perpetuate the dominant historical narrative of the last two hundred years by, for instance, merely adding a few examples from other regions of the world. Rather, the mechanisms that first led to the exclusion of both non-European philosophical traditions as well as the work of women philosophers from the prevailing narratives, must be critically examined. In the process, methodological problems that arise from a global perspective on philosophy and its history must be made visible and addressed with the appropriate degree of philosophical rigour. This includes reflection on how historical events with a global dimension, such as European expansionism, colonialism and slavery, impacted philosophy and other forms of knowledge production both within and outside Europe. In particular, questions regarding the status of orally transmitted philosophical traditions in the historiography of philosophy and the reconstruction of the philosophical knowledge of women in different regions of the world have to be reconsidered and critically discussed. On the latter, see Graness' contribution to this special issue. Problems that arise as a result of reconceptualising the history of philosophy in a global perspective are also addressed by guest contributor to this volume, Florian Scheidl, who discusses obstacles that stand in the way of establishing a more global perspective on the historiography of philosophy and, in particular, problems regarding the term "philosophy". The latter should come as no surprise since, in order to reconceptualize the historiography of philosophy, it is essential to reflect on the concept of philosophy itself, and thus on the question of what can and what cannot be included in a revised historiography as philosophy.

Equally urgent is the examination of traditions of the historiography of philosophy outside Europe. For this reason, the team of the Koselleck project has been conducting a comprehensive literature research on the historiography of philosophy in as many languages of the world as possible, in order to create a comprehensive bibliographic collection of histories of philosophies in various European and non-European languages. At this point, the database includes histories of philosophies in more than twenty languages. Diversity of languages was chosen as the primary selection and classification criterion for indexing histories of philosophy worldwide and not, as is commonly the case, regional or national divisions. The justification for such an approach is implicit in the assumption that individual languages – each form their own discursive space of philosophical historiography,

which in turn is intertwined with other languages – does not follow regional or national boundaries.

The most important point is that research produced by the Reinhart Koselleck Project goes beyond the horizon of European languages so that now, for the first time, extensive bibliographic collections of previously published works in the history of philosophy in selected non-European languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Turkish, from the beginning of the writing of the history of philosophy in different regions and languages of the world up to the 21st century, are gathered and archived. Such detailed research was the result of the collaboration between eight scholars from six nations, as well as a number of academic associates, from China to Brazil, who conducted some of the relevant research on site. The sheer amount of data compiled to date has, to some extent, surprised even those who initiated the project; as has the early beginning of a tradition of writing the history of philosophy in some languages, for example in Chinese. In this volume, Zhuofei Wang provides insight into some of the early works on the history of philosophy from China. As guest contributor to this issue, Amalia Xochitl López Molina (UNAM Mexico), discusses problems related to conceptualising Mexican philosophy and its origins. Then there is the study conducted within the framework of European philosophy by Fredrik Bjarkö (Södertörn University, Sweden, and Fellow of the Koselleck-Project Hildesheim) which offers a very detailed reconstruction of the historiography of philosophy in Sweden with a specific focus on the meaning of the concept “oriental philosophy” in the 19th century.

An additional focus of the Reinhart Koselleck Project, which is still under construction on the project’s website, is the compilation of international examples of curricula and research foci that demonstrate an intercultural or global perspective on philosophy and its history. That the USA has become a pioneer in this regard becomes evident from Yoko Arisaka’s contribution which highlights diversity initiatives already initiated 20 years ago by the APA and some departments of philosophy in the USA.

This issue of EAJP offers insights into the scope and first results of the Reinhart Koselleck project, “Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective”. It represents the work of a small section of an ever-growing international network of researchers who address questions and challenges that emerge from writing the history of philosophy in a global perspective. In the process, some insights are provided into some of the most important debates related to these challenges; debates about the concept of philosophy, discursive and political mechanisms of exclusion and the beginning of philosophy in different regions of the world, to name but a few. Contemporary historiography of philosophy is undergoing an upheaval in light of

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the wealth of new perspectives that have emerged in the 20th century. How the history of philosophy will be narrated tomorrow, is being decided today.

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Global Histories of Philosophies in European Languages

A review

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ABSTRACT | How a philosophical global history can be constituted is a question that has not yet found a concrete and generally accepted answer. If one compares the approaches of global histories of philosophy that have appeared so far, it becomes clear that some of them differ greatly from one another in their approaches and in the topics they deal with. This article analyzes various global histories of philosophy by comparing the content of selected publications in order to find out which cultures, systems of thought, and traditions are favoured in these writings and which focal points can be found in a comparative approach. This review focuses on eight works that can be described as global histories of philosophy.

KEYWORDS | Global History of Philosophy; World Philosophy; Non-European Traditions; Cross-Cultural Philosophy; Without Any Gaps; Global Perspectives

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In the 21st century, we are observing for the first time the beginnings of a turnaround in the historiography of philosophy in European languages. A change is now taking place in the wake of a Eurocentric worldview that dominated academia between the 18th and the 20th centuries through which the image of philosophical historiography was fundamentally shaped by European thinkers. This change is reflected in a slowly growing integration of hitherto marginalized cultures and philosophical traditions in recent works on the history of philosophy (Elberfeld 2017a, pp. 13–19). In particular, under titles such as “World History of Philosophy” or “Global History of Philosophy,” a greater variety of regional philosophical traditions are increasingly being included.¹ Yet how a philosophical global history can be constituted is a question that has not yet found a concrete, generally accepted answer. If one compares the approaches of global histories of philosophy that have appeared so far, it becomes clear that some of them differ greatly from each other in their methods and the topics they deal with. To analyze these differences, it is worthwhile to compare the content of selected publications to find out which cultures, systems of thought, and traditions are favored in these writings and what emphases can be found in a comparative approach. This literature review² focuses on eight works that can be described as global histories of philosophy. The majority of these publications were published in English, but particular works in German, French and Italian are also considered.³

In 1998, a global philosophical encyclopedia commissioned by UNESCO was published under the title *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle (Universal Philosophical Encyclopedia)*. The work includes systematic and methodological accounts of various traditions of thought, presented in multifaceted approaches that are exceptional on many levels. The first volume introduces problematic areas of philosophy by taking global issues into account (Jacob 1989). In the second volume there is a philosophical lexicon of terms in three sections, including an intercultural context that focuses on Asia (Auroux 1990). Impressively, the third volume offers a dictionary of works of philosophical, multicultural traditions on a scale unlike any other dictionary in a European language to date (Mattéi 1992). In the fourth volume, a global discourse of philosophy is developed which analyzes above all the importance of languages for philosophy (Mattéi 1998). Within

¹ In addition to publications on the global history of philosophy, there are other fields that operate in global history, such as: *Intellectual History* (see, for example, Moyn (2013)), *History of Ideas*, *Global History of Knowledge* etc. This literature review, however, deals exclusively with literature in the history of philosophy.

² This review was first published in German in *Polylog* (Herzl 2021). The English translation is my own.

³ I have deliberately not included the following three works in the literature review because these publications do not live up to what their titles promise with regard to cultural diversity: Adeline (2015), Wilczek (2004), and Baggini (2018).

the four volumes, the high methodological awareness and the strong differentiation of various discourses are especially remarkable. It is undisputed that this encyclopedia provides many starting points for new approaches to a global historiography of philosophy and comprehensive material for the further development of global historical research (Elberfeld 2017b, pp. 302–303).

A now well-known work was written by Ninian Smart, who set a milestone in the historiography of philosophy by publishing the book *World Philosophies* in 1999. Smart's intention is to introduce his readers to philosophically reflective traditions of thought that can be found in different cultures (Smart 1999, p. ix). The structure of the book is basically arranged geographically, with the exception of certain religions such as Islam and Judaism, which are treated in individual chapters. Smart's initial focus is on Asia, with Buddhist and Hindu teachings described first, followed by Indian epistemology. Smart then discusses teachings from China, Korea, and Japan, with China receiving the most attention. Here, from Taoism to Confucianism, influential traditions from classical Chinese philosophies are outlined. It is surprising that entire chapters are devoted to each of these countries, while the philosophies of Greece, Rome, and the Middle East are treated together in one chapter. It is evident from Smart's approach that he deliberately does not prioritize ancient European philosophical history, but instead outlines it as one philosophical current among others. His treatment of Europe on an equal footing with other areas is an innovation insofar as works entitled "World Philosophy" often present primarily non-European traditions.⁴ He then illustrates Islamic and Jewish philosophies as well as philosophies from Europe, North America, Latin America, and modern Islam. After this, modern philosophical discourses from South and Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan are described. Finally, Smart briefly discusses some African philosophical traditions. The balance in the regional distribution, as well as the distinction between ancient and modern philosophical traditions, is noteworthy. It shows that Smart does not simply reduce non-European philosophy to ancient traditions, but also considers more recent discourses.

An entirely new approach to the global historiography of philosophy is provided by Elmar Holenstein who, in *Philosophie-Atlas. Orte und Wege des Denkens (Philosophy Atlas. Places and Ways of Thinking)* (2004), focuses on geographical contexts. Holenstein argues that ways of thinking and the content of thought can be more easily grasped by looking at the place of origin, which means that, in his view, geographical location has a decisive influence on philosophical ideas, which is why he includes maps and diagrams in his work (Holenstein 2004, p. 7). In doing

⁴ As for example in Garfield (2011), or Solomon (1995).

so, he draws special attention to the fact that philosophical considerations, which are nowadays attributed to Central European traditions, often originated in other areas of the world. For Holenstein, finding connections and parallels between different currents of thought and examining them in consideration of the geographical location is an important factor of both contemporary and future philosophy (p. 9). The main part of the book is divided into four “histories of philosophy,” which are organized as the four cardinal points. Africa and South America have not been included in these subdivisions, receiving only a small subchapter in the introductory section on the various origins of cultures. The first of the four main chapters (“West”) includes European philosophy and the philosophy of the “Nile-Amu-Darya Region.”⁵ The chapter “South” describes South Asia, i.e., the Indian subcontinent as well as countries with South Asian or Indian writing cultures in Southeast and Central Asia. “East” deals with East Asia, namely China and countries with Chinese scriptural culture. Finally, “North” describes currents of thought in the North Atlantic, Western and Northern Europe, and North America. It is astonishing that Holenstein, despite the at least partially very successful intention to revolutionize the classical presentation of the history of philosophy, decisively excludes South America and Africa from the so-called “Four Histories of Philosophy.”

A new approach is offered by Peter Adamson (2010–) in his podcast *History of Philosophy without any Gaps* which integrates and comprehensively presents previously marginalized traditions of philosophy and interviews experts on the respective topics.⁶ About five hundred episodes are now available to listen to online, ranging thematically from ancient Greece to the Middle Ages to the 20th century and covering areas such as Islamic philosophy, Indian philosophy, and Africana philosophy.⁷ With the success of the podcasts, Adamson began publishing some of the audio content as books in 2014. To date, six volumes have been published, with more works planned. The first book, *Classical Philosophy*, is about pre-Socratic philosophy as well as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (Adamson 2014). The second volume, *Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, deals with Hellenistic philosophy in the first part and paganism in the Roman Empire in the second part. The third part includes the Christian philosophy of the Roman Empire (Adamson 2015). It is with the third volume of that the series begins the examination of non-European philosophy with *Philosophy in the Islamic World* (Adamson 2016). With his fourth volume, Adamson covers a topic that has received little attention to date: the European Middle Ages, which is treated here in terms of the

⁵ This is the name Holenstein uses for the region classically called the “Middle East.”

⁶ Adamson: *Online Podcasts*. <https://historyofphilosophy.net>

⁷ There are 403 episodes in the main series, 107 episodes on Africana philosophy and 62 episodes on India.

manifold interconnections with non-European philosophical traditions. The Middle Ages have rarely been studied in this holistic manner. The work comprises 78 chapters through which an extraordinary complexity of medieval philosophy is presented (Adamson 2019). The fifth volume, *Classical Indian Philosophy*, highlights the philosophical significance of various Indian, Buddhist and Jainist doctrinal texts (Adamson 2020). In the last part of this volume, there is also an excursus on Tantra and an interweaving of Indian thought with Greek and Islamic traditions. The latest volume on *Byzantine and Renaissance Philosophy* was published in May 2022 and deals with Byzantine philosophy in the first part and the Italian renaissance in the second (Adamson 2022). A book publication is planned for the episodes on Africana philosophy.

A significant balance in the representation of the different currents of worldly thought can be found in *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (2011), edited by Jay L. Garfield and William Edelglass, in which – in addition to a strong focus on Asian and Islamic thought – African philosophies receive increased attention. According to the authors, the objective of this book is, on the one hand, to highlight the importance of the history of diverse philosophical traditions. On the other hand, it aims to emphasize the fact that the philosophical world today is significantly polyglot, that is, multilingual (Garfield and Edelglass 2011, p. 6). First, the introduction draws critical attention to the widespread belief that one's own culture is the only one in which important philosophical thoughts arise. Second, the editors draw attention to the common assumption that cultures without fully developed written traditions are too "primitive" (p. 3) to establish important philosophical ideas. Third, the illegitimacy of these prejudices is emphasized, as they ignore the long history of cross-cultural philosophical influences, where philosophical dialogues between, for example, Greek, Persian, and Indian peoples, were already commonly established in ancient times (pp. 3–4). Garfield and Edelglass' book contains 43 essays by culturally diverse authors. The first part, dealing with Chinese philosophy, primarily contains writings on Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism (pp. 9–108). The second part covers non-Buddhist Indian philosophy (pp. 109–86). The third and fourth parts also deal with Asian traditions, namely Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and Japanese and Korean philosophy respectively (pp. 187–388). In the fifth part of the book, Islamic philosophy appears for the first time (pp. 389–460) and African philosophy is treated last in the sixth part (pp. 461–544). Strikingly, Latin America does not receive a chapter of its own. Indigenous peoples and Native American Philosophy are only mentioned in the seventh and last part, which deals with current trends in global philosophy (pp. 562–573). Fortunately, the book also contains an essay on global feminism.

A series worth mentioning has been published since 2011 under the title *The*

Oxford History of Philosophy, edited by Jonardon Ganeri et al. The publisher writes that this open-ended series is about the project of developing a new form of historiography of philosophy. In each volume, the author explores the development of philosophy in a specific time and culture, placing the ideas involved in their historical contexts.⁸ The first volume, *The Lost Age of Reason: Philosophy in Early Modern India*, covers a rich array of topics, including the transliterations of Sanskrit into Persian, Indian intellectual practice, and metaphysical, mathematical, and linguistic aspects of Indian philosophy (Ganeri 2011–). This volume is followed by a series of works on European and North American philosophy, with two volumes devoted to each of the following traditions: French philosophy (Gutting 2011; Clarke 2016), American philosophy and pragmatism (Misak 2013; Goodman 2015), and British philosophy (Hutton 2015; Hurka 2015). It was not until seven years after the first work that another book appeared on a hitherto academically marginalized topic: Jewish Philosophy of the Middle Ages (Rudavsky 2018). The work focuses on the explanation of Jewish metaphysics with a small excursus on ethics and the good life. The next volume examines *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy in the First Millennium CE* (Westerhoff 2018). The last book published so far is about the turn against metaphysics in Austrian Philosophy from 1874–1918 (Textor 2021). The classification criterion of the publication series is not clear: while in some cases it is individual countries or religions which are treated, in the case of North America a whole continent is being highlighted.

In 2014, Virgilio Melchiorre edited the highly innovative anthology *Filosofie nel mondo* in which experts trace the development of philosophy in various marginalized regions and traditions of the world. The volume begins with a short chapter on occidental philosophy (Greece, Christianity, and modernity). This excursus ends after 30 pages, followed by a chapter on analytics and, interestingly, the Australian school from the critical perspective of the exportation of analytic philosophy to various regions of the world (Melchiorre 2014, pp. 47–66). Of all the works described so far, one finds by far the most intensive examination of Russian philosophy in Melchiorre, which is described in its development in almost 200 pages and with an extensive bibliography (pp. 69–248). In contrast, the section on classical Islamic philosophy is very brief. However, a separate chapter is devoted to contemporary Islamic philosophy; here Islamic philosophy is not simply reduced to medieval philosophy. Two chapters on Jewish philosophy follow, divided into old Jewish philosophical traditions and philosophical traditions since 1945, in the latter there is even a section on Jewish feminist thought. In the chapter on Chinese

⁸ See Ganeri: *Oxford University Press Website*. <https://global.oup.com/academic/content/series/o/the-oxford-history-of-philosophy-ohphil/?cc=us&lang=en&>

philosophy, classical Chinese schools such as Confucianism or the philosophy of Lao Tzu are described in addition to the philosophy of modern and contemporary China (pp. 336–390). The chapters on the Latin American region (pp. 391–454) and on African philosophy (pp. 455–652) are exceptionally extensive. However, the discussion of Latin American philosophy only begins in the second half of the 19th century and includes the main representatives of the various positions on the question of the existence of a “Latin American thought” from José Martí to Leopoldo Zea to Enrique Dussel. The chapter on African philosophy focuses on the debates about the existence of African philosophy, as they were conducted in Africa in the 20th century, and their main representatives and directions from ethnophilosophy to wisdom philosophy. There are also sections on the philosophy of art and music in Africa, as well as various liberation, philosophical, and decolonial approaches (Fanon, Mudimbe, Wiredu). The survey ends with a chapter on Indian philosophy (pp. 653–799) and two chapters on Japanese philosophy. The first chapter on Japanese philosophy covers, among other things, Buddhism in Japan, but also the thought of the well-known philosopher Nishida Kitarō (pp. 801–874), while the second chapter is dedicated to the Kyoto School (pp. 875–906). What is remarkable about Melchiorres’ approach is that for all regions and traditions covered, emphasis is placed not only on presenting historical philosophical traditions, but also on providing insight into contemporary discourses.

Storia della filosofia. Un approccio globale by Giovanni Pampanini (2019) is a work that does not speak of a single history of philosophy, but of many worldwide histories of philosophy. The introduction formulates four central theses: 1) The history of philosophy cannot be separated from political history. 2) Non-European philosophies should be presented together with European philosophies. 3) The sources and terms of academic philosophy have to be extended (e.g. by terms from other humanities or from art and culture). 4) Global developments must not be separated from philosophy (Pampanini 2019, p. 14). Similar to Holenstein, Pampanini integrates geographical maps into his book. In the first part under the title “Antiquity,” influential historical figures from Buddha to Jesus and Mohammed to Montezuma are treated comparatively and the 15th century is discussed as a century of transition (pp. 19–128). The second part about modernity leads from the 16th to the 18th centuries (pp. 129–242). Finally, the third part about contemporary philosophy deals with philosophical discourses of the 20th century, regionally divided into the “West,” – to which include, besides North America and Europe, also South America –, Asia (Japan, China, India, Pakistan, Persia, Turkey, Lebanon, Indonesia, and Malaysia) and Africa (subdivided again into Arab and African philosophers). It is a pity that Africa is kept very short in comparison to the “West” and Asia (pp. 243–430).

It is noticeable that a variety of approaches to global histories of philosophy can be found in European languages. These range from topic-centered, geographically oriented histories to chronologically ordered histories. Despite diverse approaches, there are some features that stand out in a comparative view. First, Indian philosophy (followed closely by Chinese and Japanese philosophy) is the most covered. There tends to be a strong emphasis on Asia, which could be due to the richness of the available written material of Asian philosophies, as well as the long-established tradition in European philosophy of dealing with Asia (see Leibniz or Schopenhauer). Second, both South America and Africa, as well as philosophies of indigenous peoples, are either categorically omitted or treated only marginally. The reason for this can probably be found primarily in the scripture-centeredness of academic philosophy and the accompanying exclusion of oral philosophical traditions.

Thus, from a comparative review of recently published global histories of philosophy in European languages, a number of problems can be identified. First, the representation of philosophical traditions in different regions of the world is unbalanced. Second, there is a lack of consideration of philosophical historical works outside of occidental traditions. Especially in Japan there is a long tradition of global philosophical historiography which can serve as a methodological model for research in the history of interweaving traditions and should not be disregarded.⁹ Third, it becomes clear that there is an overarching lack of reflection on methods and basic concepts of the previous philosophical tradition, as well as a deficit of differentiated engagement with prevailing exclusion mechanisms in philosophy and its historiography. In order to integrate non-European philosophical traditions into the historiography of philosophy in European languages, both a critical examination of the discipline and a reform of its methods and concepts are needed.

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⁹ In addition to Japan, China and Korea also have a long tradition of writing philosophical histories. For Japan, see Krings et al. (2022); for China, see Wang (in this issue); and for Korea, see Park (forthcoming).

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A Look into the “*Storia delle storie generali della filosofia*” and Its English Edition from a Global Perspective

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ABSTRACT | This article¹ presents an overview of the work *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (“*History of the General Histories of Philosophy*”) [1979–2004; 5 vols.] and its English edition *Models of the History of Philosophy* (1993–Present; 4 vols.) from the point of view of a philosophical historiography in a global perspective. First, I will show the structure of both works, briefly introducing the sections and chapters as well as important changes in the English translation. Second, I will show how the research field of both works is limited to the Eurocentric canon of philosophy by methodologically considering their focus on specific linguistic-geopolitical areas.

KEYWORDS | *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (Santinello, Piaia); Historiography of Philosophy; Eurocentric Canon; Mechanisms of Exclusion; Global Perspective

¹ The present article is largely based on my work published previously in *Polylog* (Greco 2021) which is presented here in English and supplemented with special attention to the English edition of the *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (*Models*).

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1 Introduction

Two of the most comprehensive projects on the history of the historiography of philosophy to date are the *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (1993–2022) [*History of the General Histories of Philosophy*]² and the Reinhart Koselleck “Geschichte der Philosophie in globaler Perspektive” (2019–2024) [“Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective”] – in which I am a research member and from which this work arose. Despite their common orientation, these projects have quite different focuses: while the Koselleck project examines global perspectives on the historiography of philosophy with special regard to the diversity of languages – and hence also non-European languages – the aim of the SSGF has been to trace back to its roots a particular conception of philosophy and the theoretical disputes that accompany it within the framework of the dominant narratives in the historiography of philosophy in Europe.³ The aim of this paper is to critically revisit the approach of the SSGF from the perspective of a global historiography of philosophy, and thus to make visible important blind spots of the canonical historiography of philosophy, such as how the canonical approach has ignored or marginalized extra- and intra-European traditions of thought.

2 General Outline of the Work and Its English Translation

Giovanni Santinello conceived a project on the history of philosophy in the 1960s, which resulted in the five-volume, seven-tome work in the Italian language edition of the SSGF published from the 1980s onwards. More precisely, Gregorio Piaia recounts that “in the spring of 1975, at a meeting in Padua at the former Institute for the History of Philosophy [...], the research project on the ‘History of the General History of Philosophy from the Beginnings in the Renaissance to the Second Half

² Hereafter abbreviated as SSGF according to volume:page. The English edition has been published as Santinello et al. (eds.), *Models of the History of Philosophy* (hereafter abbreviated as *Models*). All quotations from *Models* are the work of its translators, while the English quotations from SSGF not provided in *Models* are my own.

³ Many authors of histories of philosophy have introduced their works with a review of writers and women writers of histories of philosophy. Johannes Jonsius, with his *De scriptoribus historiae philosophicae* (1659), was among those who first devoted themselves to philosophical historiography, showing how different histories of philosophy were handed down to us and from which sources. He was followed by Christoph August Heumann’s *Acta Philosophorum* (1715–25) in which we find references to women philosophers and non-European philosophies. As for the 20th century, this tradition is reworked in a new way by Johannes Freyer in *Geschichte der Geschichten der Philosophie im 18. Jahrhundert* (1911), which was expanded and enriched after the 1970s in French (see Braun (1973), and Gueroult (1992)) and in Italian with the SSGF (see Elberfeld (2021b)).

of the 19th Century’ was presented and launched” (SSGF, 5:ix)⁴ After Santinello’s premature death in 2003, Piaia took charge of the project until its completion a year later. The thick volumes, each with over 500 pages, were published in Italian by a group of experts over the course of more than 20 years. The first four volumes were translated into English over the last 30 years. It “has not been always an easy task, since many of the Italian words used still retain a meaning close to their Latin original, and unfortunately these rich connotations are often lost in the process of translation” (*Models*, 1:xxi), Constance W.T. Blackwell writes in the foreword to the English edition edited by her and Philip Weller as associate editor. The translation has been entirely revised and corrected, and in some areas integrated, and the bibliography has been duly updated. The translation project was developed with the full cooperation and help of the original team in Padua under the direction first of Giovanni Santinello and later of Gregorio Piaia and Giuseppe Micheli.

The aim of the work is to analytically reconstruct the emergence, establishment, and canonization of the specific genre of the general history of philosophy (*storia generale della filosofia*) as *historia philosophica*, and in doing so to reappraise a specific history of the historiography of philosophy, namely, as Santinello explains in the introduction to the first volume, “not in its entirety, but only the historiography produced by the specific genre defined as that of the ‘general histories of philosophy’” (*Models*, 2:vii; SSGF, 2:ix-x).⁵ The exact definition of the genre under study and the concept of philosophy behind the project are not further clarified in the SSGF, but it becomes increasingly clear in the course of the analysis of the selected works: the approach is based on a concept of philosophy that, since the 17th century, has been primarily guided by the idea that a certain rational-logical, systematic, and comprehensive treatise of philosophical thought took place exclusively in Europe. According to the approach of the SSGF, philosophy began in ancient Greece, was rediscovered during the European Renaissance, and experienced its greatest flowering in Germany between the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Nevertheless, a similar approach seems to guide the completion of the SSGF, despite C.W.T. Blackwell’s claim in the introduction to the English translation of the first volume that, paraphrasing Bréhier’s words, “a new methodological approach that rejected Comtian and Hegelian constructs was nec-

⁴ “Fu verso la primavera del 1975 che in una riunione tenutasi a Padova nell’allora Istituto di storia della filosofia [...] venne illustrato e impostato il progetto di ricerca sulla ‘storia delle storie generali della filosofia dalle origini rinascimentali al secondo Ottocento’”

⁵ The quote concludes the following passage: “A true literary genre is thus established and developed, the ‘general history of philosophy’, with its own precise problems (periodization, the interpretation of schools and approaches, methodology, etc.), tackled with a theoretical awareness (there is frequent reflection and discussion on the ‘concept’ of the history of philosophy, the methods with which to write it, and the results achieved by writers so far). We can trace the history of this ‘genre.’”

essary if a clear and philosophically useful study of the history of philosophy was to be made” which would, following the intention of Lucien Braun, “not impose an idea on the historical text as post-Kantian philosophers had done, but would examine the texts themselves” (*Models*, 1:xiii–xiv).⁶ The reference to Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1761–1819), one of the main proponents of this approach, made in the first line of the introduction to the first Italian volume leaves no doubt about the approach of SSGF.⁷ However, the work of examining the texts themselves, as is done in the SSGF, has no precedent and, so far, no successor either.

According to the findings of the SSGF, the special genre of the “General History of Philosophy” begins somewhere between the first half of the 16th and the 17th centuries (“From its Origins in the Renaissance to the ‘*Historia Philosophica*’”)⁸ with the rediscovery of ancient philosophical schools and the practice of erudition, i.e., the extensive and detailed collection of knowledge and data from different fields of knowledge. Vol. 2 (“From the Cartesian Age to Brucker”)⁹ examines the canonization of philosophical historical narratives between the second half of the 17th century and the first half of the 18th centuries. Vol. 3 (“The Second Enlightenment and the Kantian Age”)¹⁰ describes pre-Kantian and Kantian influences on philosophical historiography as major turning points between the second half of the 18th century and 1820 in two tomes (vols. 3.1 and 3.2, collected as one volume in the English translation). Vol. 4 (“The Hegelian Age”)¹¹ in Italian is published also in two tomes according to linguistic-cultural and political spaces (vols. 4.1 “The Historiography of Philosophy in the German Area”; and 4.2 “Histori-

⁶ See Bréhier (1926–1928, 1:10), and Braun (1973, p. 4). This is not meant to undercut the work of Santinello and his group, which produced a severe critique of the categories that had been typical of the idealist modes of thought in Italy. It is meant to emphasize how difficult, if not impossible, it is to unearth one’s blind spots and obvious customs on one’s own, in this case, without the oblique glances from different regions outside Europe and ideally in communication with each other. A hint of the diversity of perspectives coming exclusively from within Europe can be spotted by comparing Santinello’s work with those of Braun and Gueroult regarding their assessment of the discussions between the 15th and the 17th centuries on the history of philosophy and the very different descriptions of the contribution of early modern philosophy on how Western philosophy developed the way it did until the 19th century (see Braun (1973) and Gueroult (1992)).

⁷ “When the Kantian philosopher Tennemann, observing that the very concept of the history of philosophy is in itself a compound notion, proceeded to give an analysis (*Zergliederung*) that reduced it, with great simplicity and an intuitive sense of clarity, to the two distinct notions of ‘history’ and ‘philosophy’, he brought into sharp focus a basic interlinking of ideas that is fundamental to an understanding of the theoretical aspects of the historiography of philosophy.” *Models*, 1:xxv; SSGF, 1:vi.

⁸ Original title: *Dalle Origini rinascimentali alla ‘Historia Philosophica’*.

⁹ Original title: *Dall’età cartesiana a Brucker*.

¹⁰ Original title: *Il secondo illuminismo e l’età kantiana*.

¹¹ Original title: *L’età hegeliana*.

ography of Philosophy in the Neo-Latin, Danubian, and Russian Area”),¹² while the English translation gathers them in one volume, focusing on the most important contributions to the genre from the beginning of the 19th century to the 1860s. Vol. 5 (“The Second Half of the 19th Century”),¹³ which has not yet been translated into English, covers more recent developments and the slow fragmentation of the historiographical genre into specific genres of the history of philosophy.

A look at the tables of contents of the individual volumes makes it evident that systematization has varied. A fixed outline is intended to serve as a basis for unifying the collected material when describing the authors of histories of philosophy and their works. The schematic treatment of individual historians of philosophy and their works is framed by the more general presentation of the historical period in which they wrote, while such introductions – some of which are very detailed – also briefly introduce some authors who do not find a place in the schematic presentation. The detailed presentation of individual historians of philosophy represents the final stage of a more complicated division of the field of research. Only within the national and thematic frameworks are the individual historians of philosophy treated according to this fixed scheme in chronological order of the publications of their works. The focus was essentially on historians of philosophy; exceptions were made for authors who did not write “histories of philosophy” in the strict sense and yet who contributed significantly to the theoretical development of a particular conception, such as Pierre Bayle, Christoph August Heumann, and Immanuel Kant. Thus, Santinello describes the schematic classification of the SSGF in the introduction of the first two volumes in the following way:

The rigidity with which the above scheme is applied aims at guaranteeing the homogeneity of the treatment in a collective work like this, and intends to give a certain objectivity to the narration. Indeed the framework used is not so much the product of a theoretical re-appropriation of the past, but aims to reflect the historical and theoretical framework [– condensed exemplarily in Jakob Brucker’s approach –] which is the subject of these first two volumes. It corresponds, as we will see, to the problematic raised in some of the great ‘histories’ described here (*Models*, 2:ix; *SSGF*, 2:xi).

The authors¹⁴ and their works are examined in terms of six factors: 1) the biography

¹² Original titles: *La storiografia filosofica nell’area tedesca* and *La storiografia filosofica nell’area neolatina, danubiana e russa*. The titles are translated literally here, while in the English translation other partitions and consequently other designations are taken, which I will analyze below.

¹³ Original title: *Il secondo ottocento*.

¹⁴ As far as I know, female authors of histories of philosophy are not covered in *SSGF* or *Models*.

of the author; 2) the list of his works; 3) the presentation of his concept of the history of philosophy; 4) the analysis of his historiographical work(s) according to structure, proposed periodization, historiographical theories, and methodological choices; 5) the reception of the work(s); and 6) the bibliography on the author. This basic scheme is enforced throughout the five volumes, replaced occasionally by running text without schematic divisions for the treatment of specific topics such as: the age of the encyclopedists (vol. 3.1 of *SSGF*; vol. 3 of *Models*); the Kantian turn (vol. 3.2 of *SSGF*; vol. 3 of *Models*); the historiography of philosophy in Italy in the first half of the 19th century (vol. 4.2 of *SSGF*; vol. 4 of *Models*); the Austrian and Hungarian historiographies of philosophy (vol. 4.2 of *SSGF*; yet not translated in *Models*); and the British (vol. 4 of *Models*), French, Italian, and Russian historiographies of philosophy in the second half of the 19th century (vol. 5 of *SSGF*). The discursive format in which some topics and authors are presented – in contrast to the schematic presentation of the majority of authors – has the effect of partially losing track of some of the topics and regions covered.

In what follows, I offer a brief overview of the volumes as a basis for the subsequent critical analysis.

3 Survey of the Individual Volumes

3.1 Volume 1: *From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the “Historia Philosophica” (1981/1993)*

The first volume of the Italian work was published two years after the second, and in 1993 Blackwell introduced the translation in English. The volume contains, after an extensive introduction, two main parts embracing the period from the middle of the 16th to the end of the 17th centuries, with emphases on England, the Netherlands, and Germany. In the first section of the introduction, Luciano Malusa clarifies the context of philosophical historiography in the Renaissance period, which was characterized by a reevaluation of ancient thought (§1), the genre of ‘*Prisca Theologia*’ and ‘*Perennis Philosophia*’ (§2), the concordism (§3), a significant reference to Sextus Empiricus (§4) and the reformation period (§5). In the subsections of the second part of the introduction, Ilario Tolomio lists several prominent figures who contributed to the establishment of the genre of *historia philosophica* between the 16th and 17th centuries regarding: the literature of polyhistory (§1) with six authors, the pedagogical tradition (§2) with seven authors, religious pressures (§3) with four authors, the anti-Aristotelianism (§4) with ten authors, and finally the editions of Diogenes Laertius (§5) in the 17th century. Part one of the book deals with Thomas Stanley’s *History of Philosophy* (1); four works of *historia*

philosophica in the Netherlands (2), including Georgius Hornius; and the histories of philosophy of the Cambridge Neoplatonists (3) such as Theophile Gale and Thomas Burnet, written by Luciano Malusa. In the second part of the volume, Giuseppe Micheli treats, in seven subchapters, seven historians of philosophy of the second half of the 17th century in Germany (4), including the works of Johannes Jonsius (1659) and Jakob Thomasius (1665) among others.

Regarding the origins of philosophical historiography in the Renaissance period, Santinello wonders in the introduction: “why should the origins of general histories of philosophy be traced back to the Renaissance, rather than to classical antiquity?” Here Santinello refers to Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives of Philosophers* from the 3rd century CE to argue that, for the purposes of the SSGF project, one work on the history of philosophy “became relevant only at the point when it is discovered, studied, translated and imitated in the light of the highly evolved historical awareness and understanding of the humanists” (*Models*, 1:xxviii; SSGF, 1:x).

3.2 Volume 2: From the Cartesian Age to Brucker (1979/2011)

The second volume – published at first in the Italian edition and translated only in 2011 with an introduction by Gregorio Piaia – is divided into two parts that cover the period from the second half of the 17th century to the first half of the 18th century, focusing on France, Italy, and Germany. In the first part, Piaia deals with the general histories of philosophy in France in the age of Descartes (1) with eight authors, the philosophical historiography in France from Pierre Bayle to André-François Boureau-Deslandes in France (2) with six authors, the “critical” history of philosophy and the Early Enlightenment in Deslandes (3), and the general histories of philosophy in Italy in the late 17th and early 18th centuries (4) with six authors. In the second part, Mario Longo – supported by Francesco Bottin for the English translation of this chapter – addresses in detail the histories of philosophy in Germany from Eclecticism to Pietism (5) with eight authors, including Johannes Christian Wolf and Johannes Franz Buddeus among others; the theory of “*historia philosophica*” (6) in Ephraim Gerhard and Christoph August Heumann; the textbooks from Heumann to Jakob Brucker (7) with five authors; and finally Brucker’s titular “*historia critica*” and the Early Enlightenment (8).

The earlier publication of the second volume of the Italian work fits into the narrative of the SSGF, since this volume describes the significant phase in the development of modern philosophical historiography which, according to Piaia in his introduction to the English translation,

abandoned its philological and erudite guise and took on the form

of a 'critical' and 'philosophical' history of philosophy, in a complex and problematic interchange with the concerns of modern philosophy (represented in particular by Descartes, Leibniz, and Locke), but also with the nascent *histoire de l'esprit humain* [...]. We see a true change in intentions and methods which was fundamentally to influence modern cultural sensitivity and was to develop finally into the Hegelian apotheosis of the unity of philosophy and history of philosophy, but also, in another sense, into the methodology of 'intellectual history' (*Models*, 2:v).

Through the contributions of Deslandes' *Histoire critique* (1737) and Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae. A mundi incunabilis ad nostram usque aetatem deducta* (1742–44), who was Heumann's student, the genre of the "general history of philosophy" was established, raising theoretical questions of periodization, interpretation of schools and directions, and methodology.¹⁵ From this perspective, the narratives of earlier authors such as Stanley (1655), Horn (1655), and Thomasius (1665) are described and analyzed, giving these early approaches a certain unity and an identity.

3.3 Volume 3: *The Second Enlightenment and the Kantian Age* (1988/2015)

The third volume of the Italian edition published in 1988 contains four parts in two tomes and covers the period from the second half of the 18th century to the first decades of the 19th century, focusing on France, Italy, Britain, and Germany. The tomes appeared in English in 2015 as one volume with some changes to the Italian work, such as the removal of the list of subchapters of the rich introductions in the table of contents. In the first part of the first tome, Piaia discusses the histories of philosophy and the *histoire de l'esprit humaine* in France in the *Encyclopédie* (1), the impact of the *esprit des lumières* on the history of philosophy (2) with five authors, and the relation between religious apologetics and historiographical practice (3) with three authors. In the second part, Ilario Tolomio presents the historiography of philosophy in Italy in the second half of the 18th century in three chapters related to: the Enlightenment, erudition, and religious apologetics (4) with four authors; the transition from the school textbooks to works for a wider readership (5) with five authors; and a whole chapter devoted to the theism of Appiano Buonafede (6). The second Italian tome begins with Francesco Bottin's

¹⁵ These authors also draw on the philosophical contributions of Descartes, Leibniz, Bayle, and Vico, whose approaches are advanced during this period. See *Models*, 2:ix; *SSGF*, 2:xi.

treatise on the historiography of philosophy in Great Britain, focusing on the Scottish Enlightenment (7) with four authors. The fourth and final part of the Italian edition covers in detail the German philosophical historiography of the second half of the 18th century with contributions by: Italo Francesco Baldo on the textbooks after Brucker (8) with seven authors, Mario Longo on the Göttingen School (9) and five of its representatives, Giuseppe Micheli in a long contribution on the Kantian turning-point (10), and Giovanni Santinello on the Kantianism of Johann Gottlieb Buhle (11). While the Italian edition of the 3rd volume ended – due to editorial issues – with Gottlieb Buhle’s *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* and *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, the English translation includes in its ch. 11 the first chapter of the subsequent vol. 4.1 (*The Hegelian Age*) in the Italian edition and covers another three representatives of Kantianism: Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, Jakob Friedrich Fries, and Ernst Christian Gottlieb Reinhold. The decision to anticipate the chapter about Kantianism was made to provide the reader with a complete picture of the developments of the German philosophical historiography in the second half of the 18th century, presenting “a full account of the concept of an a priori history of philosophy, deriving from a psychological interpretation of the Kantian notion of ‘transcendental’” (*Models*, 3:v).

This volume focuses on the influences of the Enlightenment and Kantian philosophy on the historiography of philosophy, which, according to Santinello, can be exemplified in the works of Dieterich Tiedemann (1791) and Johann Gottlieb Buhle (1796). Although Kant did not write a history of philosophy, his philosophical approaches had a major impact on contemporary historians of philosophy. Santinello considers the category of progress to be the common orientation of the histories of philosophy that appeared between the 1750s and the 1820s, a concept which is now applied to the field of philosophical thought. “The need for a systematic structuring,” Santinello argues, “also involved reflection on the rhythms of progress and on how to give a historiographical description of them: a division by ‘revolutions’ or ‘centuries’, or a linear process, albeit at an inconstant speed (Tiedemann), or again a process by dichotomies of contrasting systems, as in the case of Kant’s outlines and the more extensive discussions by the Kantians (Buhle, Tennemann)” (*Models*, 3:xiii; *SSGF*, 3.1:xii). During this period, the thesis of the beginnings of philosophy in ancient Greece also solidifies, and “Oriental” or “barbarian” philosophies are no longer considered. The category of progress, in the sense of the succession of systems, from this point on becomes the leading factor in the historiography of philosophy.¹⁶

¹⁶ See *Models*, 3:xiii–xiv; *SSGF*, 3.1:xii–xiii.

3.4 Volume 4: *The Hegelian Age (1995–2004/2022)*

The fourth volume of the Italian edition is divided into two tomes that are published nine years apart and which cover the first half of the 19th century in the German, Neo-Latin, Danubian, and Russian areas, while the English translation collects in one volume the topics regarding the Germanic,¹⁷ French, Italian, and Anglo-Saxon regions. The first tome of the Italian edition is subtitled *The Historiography of Philosophy in the German Region (4.1)* and contains detailed contributions on the developments of Kantianism (SSGF, 4.1/1; Models, 3/11). It also contains contributions by Giuseppe Micheli on Tennemann, Bruno Bianco on Fries, and Mario Longo on Reinhold (these entries are in the previous 3rd vol. of the English translation).¹⁸ Further, Mario Longo presents the relation between hermeneutics and the history of philosophy (SSGF 4.1/2; Models 4/1), and Larry Steindler presents the school of Schelling (SSGF 4.1/3; Models 4/2). In the last chapter of the first tome, Santinello deals intensively with Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (SSGF 4.1/4; Models 4/3). The second tome is subtitled in Italian *The Historiography of Philosophy in the Neo-Latin, Danubian, and Russian Areas (4.2)* and is divided into three parts. In the first part, Piaia focuses on the French area with special regard to Joseph-Marie Degérando (SSGF 4.2/1; Models 4/4) and Victor Cousin (SSGF 4.2/2; Models 4/5). In the second part, Luciano Malusa presents the Italian historiography of philosophy (SSGF 4.2/3; Models 4/6) in the form of a continuous text, with the exception of schematic representations of the works of Pasquale Galuppi and Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (SSGF 4.2/4; Models 4/7). The third and final part – whose absence or probably displacement in the English translation is neither commented nor mentioned – presents the contributions to the history of philosophy from Spain (SSGF 4.2/5) by Antonio Jiménez García, Austria (SSGF 4.2/6) by Franz Martin Wimmer, Hungary (SSGF 4.2/7) by Larry Steindler, and Russia (SSGF 4.2/8) by Marija Torgova. The English edition of the 4th volume ends with the anticipation of the chapter on the British history of philosophy in the 19th century (Models 4/8), which in the Italian version is already a part of the fifth and final volume.

In the period considered in this volume, “the results of more than two centuries of theoretical reflection and historiographical practice” are condensed (Models, 4:v; SSGF, 4.1:vii). The genre of the “general history of philosophy” reaches its climax only to dissolve shortly thereafter. During this period, the search for a model of the history of philosophy intensifies and different models develop,

¹⁷ In Italian work it is referred to as the “German Area” (*area germanica*).

¹⁸ Since the Italian and English editions differ in chapter count in this volume and its tomes, in what follows, the two tomes of vol. 4 are specified as 4.1 and 4.2 respectively and the ch. are indicated after the “/” sign.

for instance, those of the Kantians, Schleiermacher, the Schellingians, and Hegel. Thus:

The histories of philosophy produced in the German-speaking region between the last years of the eighteenth century and the first 40 years of the new century – although Ritter’s vast work extends beyond, i.e. as far as 1853 – can be considered as a *continuum*, which, however, consists of a variety of theoretical positions and lines of interpretation. Common to all authors is a strong theoretical intent, namely their concern for determining the concept of the history of philosophy, viewed in itself and in its relation to philosophy as a science. [...] The perspective of a history of philosophy conceived as *a priori*, typical of the Kantians and particularly of Tennemann, thus yields place to the Hegelian identification of philosophy and the history of philosophy, which is conceived of as the self-manifestation of Reason (i.e. of the Absolute) viewed as the Spirit of the World (*Models*, 4:v; *SSGF*, 4.1:v).

In this volume it becomes clear that two approaches to the historiography of philosophy become particularly dominant: the Kantian and the Hegelian. The clarity of this occurrence is further underscored in the 4th volume of the English edition which temporarily sets aside the openness shown in the second tome of the Italian work with the broad inclusion of four other European areas. In line with the post-Hegelian dissolution of the identity of this genre, Piaia states that “with respect to the four linguistic-cultural areas considered in the previous volumes, the panorama is expanded here to include other areas selected for their representativeness” (*SSGF*, 4.2:ix).¹⁹

3.5 Volume 5: The Second Half of the 19th Century (2004)

The fifth and final volume of the (*SSGF* is divided into two parts. In the first part, different authors contribute to the presentation of the histories of philosophy in Germany according to the usual scheme. In the second part are presented as running text: the British area (1) is addressed by Giuseppe Micheli, the French area (2) by Piaia and Ubiraja Rancan de Azevedo Marques, the Italian area (3) by Luciano Malusa, and the Russian area (4) by Marija Torgova. The volume deals with the last works of the genre of the “general history of philosophy”: since this period,

¹⁹ “Rispetto alle quattro aree linguistico-culturali prese in considerazione nei precedenti volumi, il panorama è stato qui allargato ad altre aree, scelte per la loro rappresentatività.”

publications on the individual epochs of the history of philosophy of antiquity, the Middle Ages, or modernity have increasingly been developing.

4 Critical Issues in the Research Approach of the SSGF from a Global Perspective

The *SSGF* offers a meticulous collection and analysis of the most important histories of philosophy from the 16th to the 19th centuries along with their authors, which clearly surpasses similar works in its systematicity and comprehensiveness. Even though the *SSGF* confines its treatise to Europe, no mention is made in reference to a “European” historiography of philosophy, neither in relation to the histories of philosophy treated nor to the historians of philosophy considered in all five volumes. This shows that an assumption of equivalence between “general” and “European” histories of philosophy is taken for granted. This goes parallel to the presupposition that philosophy is simply a European matter. This phenomenon can be seen in various forms in the historiography of philosophy as well as in the histories of the historiography of philosophy up to the 21st century. So far, in the majority of works on the history of philosophy, the term “philosophy” is usually understood to mean “European philosophy,” whereas philosophies of other traditions of thought are given additional adjectives such as “Japanese,” “Jewish,” or “African.” The same happens in the *SSGF*.

As can be seen from the titles of the volumes, the main subdivision is arranged both chronologically by century and thematically in terms of the Cartesian, Kantian, or Hegelian ages. The further subdivisions of the individual volumes follow a linguistic-cultural or national scheme (Germany/Germanic, Italy, etc.) within which are differentiated certain schools (the Göttingen School, the School of Schelling, etc.) and different approaches (polyhistorical, encyclopedic, etc.). In this classification, the languages in which the works are written carry no weight, although they are occasionally mentioned in some entries. This is in spite of the crucial role that language plays for philosophizing in general, something which is elsewhere recognized by the authors of the *SSGF*. Only in the amalgamation of France and Italy under the designation “Neo-Latin region” (*area neolatina*) is a linguistic reference used in the last volume; however, it disappears in the English translation without any consideration of the peculiar position Latin has had as a written intellectual language. In the first volume, the division of the historians of philosophy into countries such as “England” (*Inghilterra*), the “The Netherlands” (*Paesi Bassi*), and “Germany” (*Germania*) at least suggests a linguistic component which, however, is not further explored philosophically, geopolitically, or culturally. Since in

the aforementioned century “Germany” was not yet a political or national entity until 1871, it can be assumed that the research group referred to a linguistic division with this term. However, what is not problematized at any point is the fact that only historians of philosophy who wrote in Latin (the common academic language at that time) are presented in this chapter. The diversity and importance of the languages of the histories of philosophy covered in the SSGF (Latin, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Danish, and Hungarian) are not addressed in the work. This leads to the problematic attributions of Johannes Jonsius and Harald Høffding to the German tradition, whereby the former wrote in Latin and the latter in Danish. Moreover, it goes unnoticed that many Russian scholars wrote in German in the mid-19th century due to the state ban on teaching philosophy at universities; while this issue is not addressed, it would have been interesting to comment on what this could mean to those Russian scholars. Academic languages established themselves as canonical languages of philosophy in part precisely because of their use for histories of philosophy or science, and this phenomenon is not addressed in the extensive work of the SSGF. This was especially the case for Latin, French, German, and it is also the case today for English. From a global perspective in particular, the importance of languages for philosophizing should not be underestimated. They contribute simultaneously to shaping the processes of canonization and to the development and practice of philosophy itself as a discipline. Translation processes are often addressed in the SSGF, but without stressing the significant historical, political, and philosophical consequences of these processes.²⁰

As far as the national division of the SSGF is concerned, the individual volumes regularly examine Great Britain (vols. 1, 3, and 5), Germany (vols. 1, 2, 3, 4.1, and 5), France (vols. 2, 3, 4.2, and 5), and Italy (vols. 2, 3, 4.2, and 5) in particular. Isolated chapters also examine The Netherlands (vol. 1) as well as Spain, Austria, Hungary (vol. 4.2), and Russia (vols. 4.2 and 5), which are entirely absent from the English translation of vol. 4, probably because it is provided in vol. 5. Put in another way, in the Italian work the German histories of philosophy are represented by five sec-

²⁰ See, for example, Stanley's *History of Philosophy* which is the first, if still immature, example of a general history of philosophy in the SSGF and which did not have a wide circulation outside England. The work only became famous after the Latin translation (1690) of the fourth and final volume, *Historia philosophiae orientalis*, on the Eastern philosophies of the Chaldeans, Persians, and Sabaeans, which was published originally in 1662 as *History of Chaldaic Philosophy*. The translator Jean Le Clerc, who annotated the work extensively, added an explanation of the importance of this treatise in terms of the relationship between Eastern, Jewish, and Greek thought, as well as regarding many medieval theological controversies. A complete Latin translation of the work was not available until 1711, which led to the diverse distribution, citation, and expansion of the work over the centuries. See *Models*, 1:163–203; SSGF, 1:176–215.

tions in each volume, the French and Italian by four sections each, the British by three sections, the Russian histories of philosophy by two sections focused exclusively on the 19th century, and by one section each for the the other four regions: the Netherlands only in the 17th century, Spain, Austria, and Hungary only in the 19th century. Moreover, the selection of the extra regions considered in the 19th century was based on their relation to the German philosophical historiography.

Piaia writes about this issue in the introduction to vol. 4:2:

So to illustrate when and how General Philosophical Histories 'entered' and established themselves in a larger cycle, we have moved toward the Spanish sphere (*ambito spagnolo*) in the West, and toward the two great continental empires, the Habsburg and Tsarist monarchies, where the dependence on German and even French models (in the case of Russia) is accompanied by the persistence of the pedagogical tradition or by more autochthonous elements pointing to a 'national' philosophical tradition, in order to trace and valorize the spirit of the Romantic epoch. In fact, this kind of dialectic between German philosophical historiography, as inspiring instance (be it Brucker, Tennemann, Hegel or the Schellingians), and a real or presumed national speculative tradition, is to be understood as a general key to the reading of the present volume (SSGF, 4:2:ix).

What is meant here by "Spanish sphere" (*ambito spagnolo*) is exclusively the country of Spain. Other Spanish-speaking areas remain excluded from the treatise, as is also the case with French- and English-speaking areas outside of France and England.²¹ Here again it becomes clear that language, nation, and empire are not differentiated, and their relation to each other, or to geographical borders, is not interrogated. This is especially the case for the the nationalization of philosophies, a phenomenon which increases in Europe from the 19th century onwards as a result of the formation of the respective nations. Nevertheless, the influence of language on philosophical and political phenomena remains largely unnoticed in the SSGF.

The narrowness of the research field of the SSGF is further evident when individual works of historians of philosophy are considered, in which a number of philosophical traditions and peoples are mentioned which today no longer receive any attention. Indeed, some historians of philosophy, such as Stanley (1655) or Brucker (1741–44), discuss "antediluvian," "Oriental," or "barbarian" philosophies,

²¹ As far as I know, three works have been published in Spanish in Latin American countries in 19th century: Tennemann 1845, Pujol 1883, and Cardinal Dagorgne 1895.

or the specific philosophies of the Chaldeans, Persians, Phoenician, Egyptians, Chinese, Indians, Africans, and so on. Nevertheless, Santinello's research group is primarily concerned with the European regions. According to the prevailing understanding, philosophy begins with Thales. Although most of the historians of philosophy included in the SSGF admit that there was some form of exchange between Greeks and other peoples, or acknowledge that the peoples of Asia and North Africa possess(ed) traditions of wisdom, this intellectual material was usually not counted as philosophy. This seems also to be the case in the SSGF.²²

Starting from the late 18th century, the exclusion of non-European intellectual traditions proves to be a common approach in Latin, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish languages (representative examples for the German-speaking world are Tiedemann 1791–97 and Tennemann 1798–1819).²³ Noteworthy in this framework is the work of Buhle, two of whose three works on the history of phi-

²² In contrast to the widespread tendency in the first sections of philosophical histories to mention oriental philosophies as religious, naturalistic, and unsystematic, some currents of philosophical historiography at the beginning of the 19th century show interest in the philosophies of other peoples and cultures. Among such currents we find, for example, the hermeneutic school (see *Models*, 4:3–130; *SSGF*, 4.1:183–448), the school of Schelling (see *Models*, 4:131–82; *SSGF*, 4.1:349–412), and later the approach of Dilthey (see *SSGF*, 5:328–63). Such philosophical-historical currents incorporate stronger cultural, linguistic, religious, and cosmological aspects into philosophical thought and are not as quick to exclude the development of reason in other philosophical systems. Some of these currents have developed in parallel with the Kantian approach to the historiography of philosophy, but have not been recognized as successfully as the Kantian and Hegelian approaches. The tradition of placing the beginning of the history of philosophy with ancient, oriental, or North African philosophies is carried on, for example, with the translations of Stanley (see vols. 1 of *Models SSGF*) and by some representatives of the Göttingen School (see vols. 3 of *Models* and *SSGF*).

²³ What is striking in the editions of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* is that, in its first 12-volume edition, the history of philosophy begins directly with the Greeks. Yet the later 8th volume (1811) mentions the Arabs in light of their reception of Aristotle's work, and the 9th volume of 1814 examines the relation between the Greek and Oriental philosophies from the perspective of the 14th to 16th centuries. The second edition of 1816, in the 3rd part of the introduction, edited in one volume as *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie für den akademischen Unterricht* (1816), includes a "Brief Overview of the Religious and Philosophical Views of Oriental Peoples and the First Greek Culture" ("Kurze Uebersicht der religiösen und philosophischen Ansichten orientalischer Völker und der ersten griechischen Cultur"), as well as a section on Jewish philosophy and Gnosticism (§3.3). However, the reference to the Arabs and to the Oriental philosophy of the 14th–16th centuries disappears. In the second part of the introduction to the 3rd edition of the *Grundriß* edited by Wendt in 1829, the Oriental philosophies are given more space, addressing the Indians (§66), Tibetans (§67), Chinese (§68), Persians (§69), Chaldeans (§70), Aegyptians (§71), Hebrews (§72), Phoenicians (§73), even if they are not taken up as the first chapter, that is, as the beginnings of philosophy. The Arabs are in turn mentioned, but not in the context of the Oriental philosophy of the 14th–16th centuries. Interestingly, Wendt concludes his treatise with a new chapter on "Foreign Philosophy" ("*Ausländische Philosophie*") in which he discusses the philosophies of the English, French, Italian, and other nations, whereas in the earlier chapters these geographical areas were alternatively classified under the philosophical strands.

losophy are discussed in the SSGF. In the *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1796), Buhle places at the beginning of his account the Egyptians (§§12–23), the Hebrews (§§24–28), the Phoenicians (§§29–31), the Chaldeans (§§32–33), the Persians (§§34–40), the Hindostans (§§41–7), the Chinese (§§48–50), and the Celts and Scandinavians (§§51–62). While their philosophies total 188 pages in this work, he alternatively starts his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (1800–04) directly with Thales and the Greeks. From Heinrich Christoph Wilhelm Sigwart (1840), Friedrich Karl Albert Schwegler (1848), and Friedrich Ueberweg (1863) onward, the accounts have tightened toward a Kantian or Hegelian approach in which most histories of philosophy begin directly with Thales and with the innate talent for philosophy commonly attributed to the ancient Greeks. These common approaches lead to the fact that certain regions of the world, together with their philosophical contributions, were slowly forgotten or systematically excluded.

Considering that in the age of humanism, from the 15th and 16th centuries until the time of Hegel, explicit attempts were made to write a complete history of the wisdom of the human or absolute spirit,²⁴ the exclusionary approach of the historiography of philosophy we see between the 17th and 19th centuries is quite surprising. For in the majority of works from these centuries it is clear that numerous regions – such as America, Asia, and Africa, as well as modern Greece – are excluded. However, the same can be said of most histories of philosophy coming from the 20th and 21st centuries. As for America, the absence in the SSGF of histories of philosophy from the United States is conspicuous since they were present in the general historiography of philosophy, for example, in 1846 with the new edition of John Daniel Morrel, in 1857 with George Henry Lewes, in 1874 with Louis Eugène Marie Bautain, and so on. The United States is mentioned only in relation to a few translations, such as the 1856 English translation of the *History of Philosophy (Geschichte der Philosophie)* [1848] by Friedrich Karl Albert Schwegler. The stark disproportionateness of the focus on European traditions compared with those of other parts of the world remains uncommented on by the researchers of

²⁴ Interesting in this respect is the treatment of histories of philosophy in the context of the history of science and literature, whose interface, without a clear demarcation between the history of philosophy and the history of ideas, has flowed into the history of ideas. The SSGF repeatedly mentions the influences of philologies without distinguishing the different conditions that contributed to the development of *historia philosophica* in the 15th and 16th centuries. Moreover, the philologies of non-European languages, which have stimulated the production of more detailed treatises from non-European traditions of thought from the 19th century onwards, have been appraised and discussed more in the field of philology rather than in academic philosophy. This can be shown by the production of such works in the field of philology and the absence of such mentions in works of history of philosophy in respect to older histories of philosophy in which different non-European traditions were included. For accounts of this process, see Elberfeld (2021b), and Greco (2022).

the SSGF.

In the works discussed in the SSGF, it is clear that a certain tradition of philosophical historiography has been developed through practices such as the mutual praising or criticizing, evaluation, and acknowledgement of selected histories of philosophy. Among the authors who have become so influential are surely Jonsius (1659), Bayle (1697), Heumann (1715), Tennemann (1798), Cousin (1864), and Windelband (1892).²⁵ It becomes clear that the German historiography of philosophy, and from time to time the French historiography of philosophy, have strongly contributed to the formation of a traditional canon of philosophical historiography. Thus, it is not surprising that in the SSGF the German and French traditions of philosophical historiography were used as benchmarks for the selection of further areas. From the Enlightenment onwards, German philosophical historiography has been the standard for further analysis according to which authors from other European regions are included or excluded.²⁶ In their turn, the historians of philosophy involved in the SSGF project are manifestly guided in their selection and presentation by the concept of philosophy that is discussed above. By uncritically reproducing a certain line of tradition, the SSGF positions itself within the classical canon.

5 Conclusion

What the research group investigates and analyzes under the title *History of the General Histories of Philosophy* (SSGF) is thus a specific tradition of philosophical historiography that emerged in the heart of Europe and which is guided by a specific theoretical interpretation of the connection between “history” and “philosophy,” namely the progressive development of rational thought by almost exclusively white men.²⁷ In choosing a particular genre of philosophical historiography, namely the “general history of philosophy,” by clearly excluding other historio-

²⁵ Historiography takes an interesting turn when modern sources are used instead of ancient sources, such as Aristotle, Plato, or Diogenes, namely from the most prominent philosophical historians of the Renaissance (Morhof, Stanley, Horn) and especially of the Enlightenment (Bayle, Wolf, Heumann, Brucker, Tennemann). See *Models* and *SSGF*, vols. 1, 2 and 3.

²⁶ See *SSGF*, 4,2:ix.

²⁷ Although the SSGF takes into consideration works such as Menage’s *Historia mulierum philosopharum* (1690) and Heumann’s *Acta philosophorum* (1715) – with the latter containing Heumann’s *Nachricht von der Philosophie der Frauenzimmer* (*News from the Philosophy of Women’s Rooms*) in which he theorizes that perhaps the first author of a history of philosophy was a woman (see *ibid.*, p. 178, and Elberfeld (2021b, p. 10)) – the SSGF does not comment at all on the incredible imbalance between men and women, protagonists or writers in the histories of philosophy.

graphical methods such as a biographical or a doxographical approach,²⁸ and by identifying the genre's peak and dissolution in the 18th century – while other historiographical approaches continued to develop and emerge – Santinello and his group significantly limit the context of their inquiry. This was the case even if the general editor and originator of the Italian project of the *SSGF* was sincerely motivated by the anti-idealist impulses underlying the properly historical work they produced.²⁹ Nevertheless, this work is the product of an historical consciousness, and “to develop a historical consciousness as a history of one’s own past means to narratively appropriate one’s own past from a certain perspective. Through such a memory of one’s own past historical self-understanding develops, which can become the starting point for a possible future” (Elberfeld 2021a, p. 7, my translation). The *SSGF*’s research work represents a window to the past that reflects and thus makes clear the dominant perspective in the history of the last century’s philosophy. This perspective is now to be combined with the history of the exclusions in philosophy, namely with “a negative history, or a history of enmeshment (*Verstrickungsgeschichte*), of European philosophy that deals exclusively with the dark and repressed sides found in many philosophical approaches” (ibid., p. 14). The goal is to let the dominant European narrative in the history of philosophy and the history of the exclusions produced by it reshape each other.

Santinello reflects on the *SSGF*’s framework of inquiry and the unfinished task of historians of philosophy in the opening lines of his introduction to the first volume: “Theoreticians of the historiography of philosophy have long discussed and continue to debate the problem, and show every sign of continuing to do so for a good while yet” (*Models*, 1:xxv; *SSGF*, 1:vii).³⁰ To quote Blackwell from the foreword to the English edition: “the history of philosophy is seen to have grown out of a constant reworking of the past instead of a rejection of it” (*Models*, 1:xxv; *SSGF*, 1:vii). The same is here proposed for us with this precious work on the history of

²⁸ In this the *SSGF* follows Braun: “By the end of ancient philosophical thought the only genres to have emerged, as Braun observed, were those of ‘doxography’, ‘biography’, and ‘diadochism’ – that is, the recording of the opinions and the lives of the philosophers, and the tracing of traditions and patterns of influence; whereas the outcome of Renaissance humanist thought was, precisely, the ‘historia philosophica’ and the *histoire critique*.” *Models*, 1:xxix; *SSGF*, 1:x.

²⁹ See *Models*, 1:xiv. Regarding the relationship between doing philosophy and doing the history of philosophy, Piaia elsewhere calls out a certain “habitus of openness to the various and manifold expressions of human thinking” rooted in the historical moment of globalization (Piaia 2020, p. 17; Piaia 2017).

³⁰ This is the second sentence which appears in the introduction of the first volume and is related to the above-mentioned reference to Tennemann as follows: “For us who have since witnessed the philosophies of Hegel and of nineteenth-century positivism, followed in the present century by the Hegelian renaissance, neo-positivism, and historical materialism, it is evident that the intersection of these two ideas (history and philosophy) remains a problem of crucial importance.”

philosophy: it is not a matter of rejecting its perspective as inadequate for the historical period we are dealing with, but rather of making visible the issues that have been overlooked and of investigating this massive collection of material from different perspectives. In 2022 we can no longer avoid looking at philosophies and their histories from global perspectives.³¹ Already from the 19th century onwards, treatises on the history of non-European philosophical traditions have been increasingly inspired by philological, ethnographic, and historical disciplines, and beginning in the 20th century first attempts were made to write a global history of philosophy that takes Asia, though not exclusively, into account.³² In the 21st century, in addition to Asia, such attempts can no longer ignore Africa, Latin America, Australia, and other parts of Europe as well. As such, a project like Santinello’s can only be done by a team that is more international and interdisciplinary in order to examine an historiography of philosophy today. One of the most crucial tasks is to critically question the prevailing narratives of the historiography of philosophy in order to account for the intercultural entanglements and “enmeshments” (*Verstrickungen*)³³ of philosophical traditions within and outside Europe.

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³¹ Piaia seems to be fully aware of this when he drafts his article “Storia della filosofia” (2001) on the *SSGF*.

³² For the 19th century, see Schlegel (1808), Windischmann (1827–1834), and Powell (1877). For an overview of the histories of world philosophies, see Hildesheim University’s *Geschichten der Philosophie in globaler Perspektive*.

³³ “*Verstrickung*” (enmeshment) is a philosophical term coined by Elberfeld in *Dekoloniales Philosophieren* (2021a). “Enmeshment” implies an active stance against the negative effects of one’s own actions. From the perspective of our contemporary situation, it is particularly directed against the deliberate and ignored concealment and obfuscation of negative entanglements of power strategies, especially with regard to colonialism, through various strategies of negation and immunization. Elberfeld frames his work in the following way: “In the present book, I would like to begin [...] by preparing a philosophical response to the sometimes massive criticism that has been and is being brought to bear on European history and philosophy – primarily by non-European thinkers – that does not ward off this criticism but attempts to assume philosophical responsibility within the horizon of this criticism.” *Ibid.*, p. 12 (my translation).

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What Are “Historiographies of Philosophy” Historiographies Of?

Problems of reconceptualizing the history of philosophy in a global perspective

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ABSTRACT | This paper focuses on the obstacles to establishing a more global perspective in the historiography of philosophy and in academic philosophy as a whole. I argue that in order to reconceptualize its historiography, it is essential to reflect on the concept of philosophy itself and the related linguistic problems, and thus on the question of what can be included in a redefined historiography as “philosophy” in the first place. I attempt to take a middle position between Eurocentric mainstream arguments for an exclusively Western-oriented academic philosophy and approaches that seek to situate philosophy outside the West as well. In order to gain a sustainable understanding of the term “philosophy,” my paper proposes a twofold approach: first, a linguistic argumentation informed by ordinary language usage; and second, a historical argumentation based on intellectual history and the evolution of the term in the context of academic philosophy. I urge caution regarding the use of “philosophy” to refer to non-Western thought due to the potential anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism of this attribution and argue for other approaches to reconceptualize the historiography of philosophy in a sustainable way.

KEYWORDS | Global Philosophy; Eurocentrism; Ordinary Language Philosophy; Intellectual History; Epistemic Violence

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1 Introduction

Projects of reconstructing or reconceptualizing historiographies of philosophy on a global scale face three main obstacles in general.¹ Firstly, there is the problematic scope of the Eurocentric historiography of academic philosophy which paradigmatically excludes non-Western thought.

Secondly, there is the special status with which academic philosophy has awarded itself or which it at least implicitly claims for itself among other academic disciplines: contrary to other disciplines (in the humanities), it is assumed that philosophy is not as much (if at all) historically contingent. Philosophy claims generally to speak *sub specie aeternitatis* – that is, from a standpoint of eternity – and therefore as not needing addenda from non-Western or other marginalized sources (see Kirloskar-Steinbach et al. (2012, pp. 13–14)).

And thirdly, there is the problematic concept of “philosophy” itself and the resulting issues for conceptualizing historiographies of it on a global (or any) scale: the question of what can or should be called “philosophy,” and what will consequently be included in its historiography. It is these questions that this paper will focus on.

These three interconnected obstacles always have to be dealt with, one way or another, if the aim is to enable new ways of looking at the history of philosophy. This is in no way to suggest that they are actually easy to overcome in everyday academic practice with its embeddedness in Eurocentric structures and concepts. However, the first two problems are perfectly tangible given the overwhelming evidence of the Eurocentric, Orientalist, often racist, chauvinist, straightforwardly misogynist, or otherwise extremely one-sided construction of philosophy as an academic discipline and its related historiographies (as shown e.g. by Park (2013), Bernasconi (1997, 2017), Chakrabarti and Weber (2016), Gassmann et al. (2018), Connolly (2015)). Likewise, the dubious, self-imposed special status of philosophy rests on a one-sided, ahistorical conception of philosophy which strips the discipline of most of its historical and contextual situatedness. Alternate historiographical reconstructions of “philosophy” can therefore help to establish a forceful counter-narrative to the alleged special status of European/Western philosophy, namely by pointing out its historical entanglements with non-Western thought or by integrating the historiography of philosophy into more general and global-historical contexts.

¹ Most of this paper is based on my doctoral dissertation (Scheidl (forthcoming)).

2 The Crucial Third Obstacle

It is precisely through the *awareness* of the first two obstacles that a decisive step has already been taken towards overcoming these problems, at least to the extent that they can be dealt with in a more enlightened and sustainable (and thus “philosophical”) way.² Although heightened awareness of the third obstacle will eventually be the key to dealing with it as well, this awareness itself is much harder to obtain and to sustain, which is why this problem seems to be the most difficult to overcome. The meaning of the term “philosophy” poses a number of methodological, epistemological, and linguistic challenges, including: What are those “historiographies of philosophy” that aspire to be global *historiographies* of exactly? In other words, in *what ways* and to *what extent* can *what forms* of non-Western thought be classified as “philosophy” and be distinguished from other phenomena? Dealing with these questions ultimately constitutes the crucial core of doing philosophy in a global perspective; accordingly, it is the key to conceptualizing a reconfigured historiography of philosophy.

These questions have obviously been addressed by many scholars and from a multitude of perspectives.³ In the end, this field may seem rather binary to the observer, as the various answers emphasize either that “philosophy” is an exclusively Western enterprise or that “philosophy” can indeed also be found in other parts of the world and must be recognized as such. Both of these “classical” answers, tending either toward Eurocentrism or global-philosophical orientations, unfortunately often fail to enter fruitfully into conversation with one another. In this sense, standard arguments against the quest for a more globally oriented (historiography of) philosophy, often implicitly building on Hegel’s beliefs, tend to meet the problems of the one-sided orientation of academic philosophy with self-confident indifference: they assert simply that philosophy is a purely Western thing, building on its two and a half millennia of already known history from its alleged origins in ancient Greece.⁴ Since any suggestion that philosophy might also have existed in Asia, Africa, or the Americas is ultimately considered irrelevant to “real philosophy,” a fruitful conversation is hardly possible. The position of many comparative or intercultural philosophers, however, seems to be equally barren. Many scholars assume, with a similar combination of rigidity and the conviction

² In the vast field of global philosophy, see for example the outstanding accounts of Elberfeld (2017b) and Steineck and Weber (2018).

³ For globally oriented ones see for example the works by Steineck and Weber (2018), Gassmann et al. (2018), Elberfeld (2017a, 2017b), and Wimmer (2004).

⁴ It is worth noting, though, that most of these contemporary views are not intended to be disparaging towards non-Western thought *per se* (unlike historical instances as in Kant, Hegel, or Hume), but they tend to remain unaware of the problem or are indifferent towards it.

of scholarly righteousness, that certain schools of thought – for example, from India, Japan, or the African context – are or even must be “philosophy” as a matter of course, and consequently that philosophy was conceived several times independently in different parts of the world.⁵ Notwithstanding the fact that there is a complex and varied discourse in the field of global philosophy with a high awareness for the diversity of the term “philosophy” throughout history, an “open outcome” – in the sense that “philosophy” might turn out to be a term better not used for non-Western thought – seems hardly possible and runs the risk of being accused of an Eurocentric, chauvinist, and/or racist attitude.⁶ Accordingly, no fruitful conversation seems possible in the face of this powerful paradigm either.

3 The Position of This Paper

The core purpose of this paper, therefore, is to take more of a middle position that allows and invites actual dialogue by appreciating the search for global perspectives in philosophy, while at the same time refuting a number of routinely made claims about “philosophy” outside the Western canon and about the corresponding needs for reform of most historiographical accounts of the discipline. Naturally, a short paper like this cannot take all aspects of the discourse sufficiently into account. Therefore, I will focus mainly on certain linguistic aspects, that is, on the question of what “philosophy” means, and how to use it and what for – questions which are central to assessing the adequacy of historiographical accounts of “philosophy” and the potential need for corrections. Thus, I explicitly do *not* argue ontologically, as most approaches in the field at least implicitly do, in terms of reflections on what philosophy *is* or what kind of thinking can be *identified* as philosophy. In fact, I suspect that ontological approaches of this kind to the subject matter are an essential, if not constitutive, part of the problem itself. Apart from historical considerations I argue primarily in terms of the philosophy of language, focusing not on the *being* of philosophy, but rather on the subtleties, preconditions, and concomitants of *naming* something “philosophy.”⁷

The relationship between the conceptualization and historiography of philos-

⁵ For accounts that argue for “philosophy” outside Europe, see for example the works by Mall (1995), Kimmerle (2002), Wimmer (2004), Elberfeld (2017a; 2017b), and Steineck and Weber (2018).

⁶ For exceptions in the field that urge caution in applying “philosophy” to non-Western thought, see for example Gassmann (2016, pp. 196–199, 128–132), Obert (2009), and Scheidl (forthcoming).

⁷ Without being able to cover these aspects in this paper, one would, in a language-sensitive approach like the one that I propose, be further urged to consider various word classes, such as whether there is a difference in the attribution of the noun or adjective, e.g. whether “non-Western philosophies” or “non-Western philosophical traditions” are to be included in these new historiographies.

ophy is, in a sense, similar to an academic version of the chicken-and-egg problem. It illustrates the intricacies of rewriting history on the basis of a highly connotative concept with very different uses and an epistemologically complex situation: what is perceived as the history of “philosophy” will strongly influence or even determine what is generally and personally understood to be “philosophy;” while assumptions about “philosophy” will undoubtedly influence the understanding of what constitutes the history of “philosophy.”

4 An Ordinary Language Approach to Meaning

All in all, it is truly “infuriatingly difficult,” as James Maffie (2014, p. 6) aptly puts it, to define what philosophy is and what “philosophical” means in this sense. Mainstream philosophy prescribes the meaning by alternatively referring to the origin of the word in Greek antiquity and the subsequent traditions building themselves upon it, or in accordance with the academic tradition since the late 18th century, or according to the special focuses of particular branches of philosophy. On the contrary, globally oriented philosophers argue that “philosophy” could not be reduced to its alleged Greek origins nor to the subsequent Eurocentric appropriation of the term, but that it has to refer to something more general that could, at least potentially, be found worldwide. In the German *Interkulturelle Philosophie* (Intercultural Philosophy), for example, it is extensively argued for understanding “philosophy” as a generic concept or an umbrella term under which, similar to the case of “religion” or “literature,” worldwide phenomena could be subsumed (see e.g. Wimmer (2004, pp. 30–35); Mall (1995, pp. 8–12); Mall (2000, pp. 52–59)).⁸

Both the Eurocentric approach and the attribution of “philosophy” to non-Western thought have valid points, and both are problem-generating. Their insights and their shortcomings, I argue, are closely linked to the core linguistic question and the different historical stages of the use of “philosophy” in ordinary as well as in academic language. It holds true that “philosophy” refers to a particular Western academic discipline, to which sources from outside of a certain “Graecoroman-Abrahamic” spectrum have hardly had any connection and influence after antiquity, particularly since the late 18th century.⁹ They are thus hardly represented in the historiography of this discipline, and it would seem rather odd to integrate forms of thought (e.g. from Japan or Mesoamerica) that had no part

⁸ Views like these are also problematic with respect to other presumably generic terms; regarding “religion” see the example of Japan (Josephson 2012).

⁹ Notable influences on Greek antiquity from outside the Greco-Roman sphere came, among others, from Egypt or India. For my coinage as “Graecoroman-Abrahamic,” see Scheidl (forthcoming).

in the actual history of the discipline. And it holds true just the same that non-Western forms of thought are not *per se* inferior to academic philosophy, that there are several links and historical connections to Western philosophy (that are often neglected), and that non-Western forms of thought are commonly as well as historically often also referred to as “philosophy” or “philosophies,” particularly in English. It would seem equally odd, accordingly, not to represent them in historiographies of philosophy/philosophies of which the Western academic discipline would then only be one part.

If both of these approaches hold true to a certain degree, this already says a lot about the diverse and connotative uses of the term “philosophy,” particularly regarding the differences in academic jargon and in common speech. For a reconceptualized approach to the discipline of philosophy, I argue that this distinction is of great importance due to the historical developments in the past 250 years, and that we need to consider the developed academic understanding of “philosophy,” as well as a more ordinary language approach to the meaning of “philosophy.” The latter would be based on the convictions of Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP), which can be traced back to Wittgenstein’s proposition “Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache” (2009, PI §43).¹⁰ Hence, instead of prescribing the meaning of certain words and phrases to deal with philosophical problems, in order to deduct a word’s meaning OLP focuses on how a term is used in ordinary language, that is, on the common, non-specific, more “natural” (as in not at all or not overly reflected) use of language in daily speech.¹¹ Since the question of what “philosophy” means is usually referred to as a philosophical problem itself, it seems only fitting to apply the insights of OLP here as well.

The use of “philosophy” and related words in ordinary language is quite diverse: “Philosophy” is often understood as a particular form of intellectual or mental activity, in Richard King’s (1999) phrasing, an “exercise of systematic reflection” or even a “systematic and rigorous exercise of rationality” (p. 2). It can also denote more general forms of knowledge production and life practices. For example, the term “philosophical” can mean “contemplative” or “withdrawn,” but it is also used to refer to the fact that something is difficult to understand or very demanding, or that it has a fundamental claim, or that someone thinks very thoroughly. The word can also be used critically: “too philosophical” can mean that something is overly speculative, long-winded, or simply incomprehensible. Someone’s “philos-

¹⁰ In English: “[T]he meaning of a word is its use in the language.” (Ibid.) On OLP itself, see for example Baz (2012), who also provides several very compelling refutations of some of the objections to OLP.

¹¹ I am not aware of any instance (other than my own) where OLP is applied to an analysis of the term “philosophy” itself (see Scheidl, forthcoming). For example Gassmann et al. (2018), however, briefly refer to and argue with Wittgenstein’s remark itself (pp. 8f.).

ophy” designates their attitude towards life, a credo or reflected upon approach to the world, a considered opinion, and, accordingly, is often used in the plural form “philosophies” to refer to certain teachings or systems of thought.¹² As King (1999) puts it: “In this sense one can talk of the philosophy of the United Nations, the philosophy of corporate management or the philosophy of my late grandfather (‘never turn down a free drink’)” (p. 2).¹³ In ordinary language, following the Merriam-Webster and Cambridge Dictionary, “to philosophize” can be understood along the lines of “to think about something,” “to contemplate,” “to muse,” but not necessarily in a particularly profound way, and is therefore sometimes also used in a disapproving manner. A “philosopher” is accordingly considered to be some sort of scholar or thinker, a very educated or a very wise person, or someone who is looking for knowledge or wisdom. All in all, it would be indefensible to want to limit this range of human characteristics and behaviors to the West.

5 Historical Aspects and Language Usage

To additionally consider the diverging historical uses of a word goes beyond the usual scope of OLP: the term “philosophy” was coined in an Eurocentric fashion only towards the end of the 18th century, which makes it necessary to understand the context of that time from which this use of language is derived. Clearly, the usage in ordinary language mirrors and conserves the permissive scholarly and ordinary use of the word before the 18th century. As many authors have shown, “philosophy” was, up until then, widely used in reference to all kinds of thought, Western and non-Western (such as Chinese, Celtic, or Egyptian philosophy). Importantly, it was used as *occulta philosophia* even for forms of thought that concerned themselves with reading the stars, naturopathic medicine, the kabbalah, magic, and so on – subjects that today would be deemed esoteric and only of interest to culture-historical studies (see for example Elberfeld (2017b), Scheidl (forthcoming)). As Kurt Flasch (2003) wittily remarks, under Emperor Diocletian even mining engineers were described as *philosophi*, just as there had been many different meanings of “philosophy” in late antiquity (e.g. for grammar, military knowledge, poetics) (pp. 64–65). Early contacts with Japan and China spoke of *philosophia* there, and Chinese thought was greatly appreciated by Leibnitz, Wolff, and Hume (see Steineck and Lange (2018, pp. 462–463), Gassmann et al. (2018, pp. 20–22), van Norden (2017, pp. 19–21), Nelson (2017)). That is not to say that the respective forms of non-Western thought were represented adequately, but

¹² Schlaeger (1989) criticizes understandings like this as “trivializing.”

¹³ King himself does not refer to OLP nor does he share the views I express in this paper.

that they were equally referred to as *philosophy* and treated as such: they were read and interpreted if available, and defended as well as criticized. This shows, in short, that there was a historical use of the term “philosophy” which varies greatly from today’s academic uses and which denoted a much greater range of signifieds.

As Peter Park (2013) points out, a swift and forceful change took place in the second half of the 18th century when non-Western thinkers were systematically excluded from philosophy by historiographers of that time. The philosophies of Kant and Hegel finished the job, so to speak, and by the 1820s, as Park demonstrates, the business of philosophy proper had become an entirely Western one. To speak from a linguistic-philosophical view, the use of language changed, at least at an academic level, and “philosophy” became not just a marker or sign of particularly advanced, civilized thinking; in accordance with the mindset of the ongoing European Expansion, it also became limited to the “West.” Around the same time, the modern discipline of philosophy evolved, and following the Eurocentric view on the special status of “philosophy,” other academic disciplines emerged in the course of the 19th and also 20th century, under whose authority many forms of knowledge (that were previously considered “philosophy”) were delegated. Natural philosophy (Darwin still considered himself to be a “natural philosopher”) became what is now referred to as “natural sciences,” and the “philosophies” of China, India, or Mesoamerica became the field of the corresponding disciplines such as Sinology, that were thereupon solely in charge of dealing with “philosophical” content of non-Western origin.

All three obstacles I named in the beginning are rooted, for the most part, in this historical development. In light of this and the broad use of “philosophy” in ordinary language, it seems quite natural to argue against this narrowing of the meaning of the term, and for an integration of previously rejected thought into contemporary academic philosophy and the historiography of philosophy, now understood broadly and more generically. Comparative, intercultural, and similar approaches to philosophy are effectively attempting to tie in, so to speak, with the historical usage of the word prior to the 18th century. For a dialogical solution, it seems rather helpful to focus on the *motivations* of those philosophers who argue for an expanded understanding of the concept of “philosophy.” In my assessment, although this of course runs the risk of oversimplifying or unduly psychologizing matters, the drive in certain academic circles to establish non-Western forms of thought as “philosophy” results, at least implicitly, from this historically evolved denial of the status “philosophy” – a concept which represents, after all, as Maffie (2014) puts it aptly, “the pinnacle of humanity’s intellectual and rational achievement” (p. 6). To *not* regard something as “philosophy,” then, means to maintain a certain devaluation. In this sense, the explicit labelling as “philosophy” in the

academic-philosophical context serves to counteract the lasting degradation of non-Western thought that occurred during the Eurocentric transformation of (academic) philosophy. In terms of these views, however, it is not necessarily a matter of attribution or of labelling something as “philosophy,” in the sense of something added or ascribed from the outside, but rather a matter of linguistically exposing the hitherto ignored, more ontological fact that something has always been “philosophy.”

However, while I also argue that academic philosophy would do well – precisely out of its own self-interest – to engage more with non-Western thought, to reflect thoroughly on its Eurocentric structural development in the past, and to broaden its horizons in a global perspective, I consider attempts to integrate non-Western traditions directly as “philosophy” to be counterproductive in the long run. This view results from at least three underlying factors (that will be addressed below): with these forms of integration, one would, firstly, impose the term “philosophy” on non-Western thought and counteract the latter’s distinct originality (that is, tearing it from its diversity of tradition-dependent contexts and having to measure the then integrated thought against the standards of academic philosophy), thus reproduce a form of “anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism.” Secondly, one would reproduce the special status of “philosophy” (and thereby also Eurocentrism) by deeming it so important that it needs to be awarded to non-Western thought in order for the latter to be of equal value (resulting from the historical devaluation by denial of this status). And thirdly, one would ignore the actual historical developments of academic philosophy and run the risk of ideologically rewriting history in accordance with post-modern tastes.

6 Using “Philosophy” as a “Generic Term” and the Issue of Anti-Eurocentric Eurocentrism

In this sense, I consider the understanding of “philosophy” as a generic term to be eminently unsuitable for academic use. My argument is not easy to follow, particularly in an English-speaking context, precisely *because* of the wide, highly connotative, and equally versatile ordinary language usage of the word “philosophy,” denoting certain properties and phenomena that are often only vaguely connected to or relevant for academic philosophy. And it is precisely this distinction between the historically evolved usage within the academic discipline and ordinary language usage that needs to be considered more, since it cannot simply be retroactively overcome, neither by reference to the historical usages nor by reference to the many aspects that “philosophy” denotes in everyday usage.

Just using the same word, understood as some sort of generic term, neither constitutes relevance – both as far as everyday phenomena and non-Western forms of thought are concerned – nor does it help integration. Moreover, tremendous pressure is inevitably exerted: “philosophy” in an academic context, even in its seemingly descriptive application to non-Western phenomena, takes those texts, thinkers, and traditions out of their original context. It pre-structures or reshapes them, and reinterprets them using the “measuring rod” (Gassmann et al. 2018, pp. 8–10) of the Western, academic tradition (which incorporates many different approaches, yet which is easily distinguishable qua academic discipline from other phenomena).

This reshaping is, qua conceptual categorization, to a certain extent generally unavoidable and can also become problematic for other presumably generic terms (such as “religion,” “novel,” “emperor”). But in this case, it remains particularly striking because the generic application of “philosophy” is supposed precisely to prevent a one-sided, Eurocentric determination of the concept as well as the epistemic violence of denying forms of thought recognition as philosophy. At the same time, quite in the sense of a well-meaning Procrustean bed, the attribution “philosophy” itself also represents a form of epistemic violence because it necessarily involves a reshaping and appropriation.

It should be noted that, for example, in pre-modern Japan or China, there was not even a corresponding term for “philosophy,” and content, which could now be identified as “philosophical,” was embedded in conceptually and structurally quite different contexts. For example, when *tetsugaku* was finally introduced as a neologism in the 1870s, it was agreed upon in Japan itself that what it was taken to refer to had not been present in premodern Japan; consequently, it became common practice not to refer to the thought of Dōgen, Shinran, and many others as “*tetsugaku*/philosophy” (see Steineck et al. (2014), Steineck and Lange (2018), Maraldo (2004), Gassmann et al. (2018)). In this regard, some scholars argue that these decisions had merely been misunderstandings due to a one-sided understanding of “philosophy” (e.g. Steineck et al. (2014), Maraldo (2004)). This likely did play a certain role, just as the question of timing and the subsequent consolidation of the understanding of “philosophy” as something imported did.¹⁴ And yet, when more knowledge about the diversity of philosophy became available, these original determinations were not corrected either.¹⁵ And this, I argue, is not a bad thing at all, since *with* the label “philosophy,” the consideration of the specific orig-

¹⁴ For the question of timing, see Gassmann et al. (2018, p. 21); and for the understanding as “imported,” see Heisig et al. (2011, p. 3).

¹⁵ Furthermore, arguing that Japanese Meiji-era intellectuals “just didn’t get it right” runs the risk of paternalistically overriding their assessment.

inal contexts, the entanglements and disentanglements of forms of pre-modern Japanese and other non-Western thought would only be possible to a limited extent.¹⁶ If the aim is to let non-Western thought be heard as something in its own right, this is best done without the influencing categorization “philosophy,” an inevitably Western shaped “measuring rod” based on academic philosophy. This is inevitable, after all, since *some* conceptual understanding of philosophy must be established in order to be able to determine which forms of thought might be eligible to be labelled as such, and accordingly which might be incorporated into the historiography of philosophy (see Schmidt (2011, pp. 254–259), Wimmer (2004, p. 25)). Such a conceptual understanding, I argue, is never possible without reference to Western, academic philosophy and its lasting influence on the term.

But what about forms of self-determination, one might ask, when numerous thinkers from non-Western contexts refer to their “own” traditions as “philosophy,” as is the case with Maori thought, African oral traditions, and pre-modern Japanese sources? In my view, this fact does not change the situation. On the one hand, forms of self-determination are not exempt from critical analysis, especially in the context of philosophy itself. On the other hand, my argumentation still holds in that the use of “philosophy” in ordinary language – as a fancy synonym for profound thought, life practice, critical reflection, etc. – is unproblematic in a non-academic context. In an academic context, however, it becomes highly problematic and involuntarily reproduces Eurocentrism, since these forms of thought are still torn out of their original contexts and *original* self-determinations. Therefore, although non-Western traditions are supposed to be valorized qua “philosophy,” this endeavor remains always bound to the Eurocentric past in which the “lack” of philosophy was understood as devaluation. Thus, wanting to integrate something into philosophy and its historiography always runs the risk of also being an expression of the reproduction of Eurocentric prejudices, of the idea that thought with the special status “philosophy” is of more value than something without it, preserving the importance that precisely the Eurocentric history of academic philosophy has given to this term in the first place.

7 The Problem of Conceptual Pre-understanding and Ambiguity

References to Wittgenstein’s family resemblance argument (2009, PI §65–71) are often used in globally oriented writings to demonstrate that there are forms of non-Western thought that are so similar to Western forms of “philosophy” (though not all of them similar in the same regard) that they exhibit family resemblances

¹⁶ For a similar argumentation, see Obert (2009, pp. 314–15).

and can thus be categorized as belonging to the same family (see for example Connolly (2015, pp. 19–22), Ma and van Brakel (2016, pp. 93–119), Mall (2000)). While this seems to be a promising approach in order to counter the institutionalized, Eurocentric stereotypes that currently prevail in academic philosophy, I contend that there seems to be some confusion about the family name, and subsequently, about the topic of that historiography. (Academic) philosophy can indeed be categorized as a member of various global families. However, I argue that “philosophy” cannot function as the global family name, but rather something truly generic such as “profound thought,” “intellectual thought,” or the like. Since profound thought is nothing exclusively Western, members of that family would come from all over the world and would also be included in its historiography – but *not* in the historiography of philosophy. That would be like including the history of chess in a historiography of the game of dice simply because they both represent a form of “game.” All in all, even if one argues with family resemblances, analogies, and so forth, the academic use of “philosophy” for non-Western thought remains tricky at best: it always presupposes a conceptual pre-understanding which builds heavily on the history of this word in the West as the starting point for cognition and recognition alike.¹⁷

And this, I fear, is an essential problem for reconceptualizing the history of philosophy globally, like in Rolf Elberfeld’s project “Histories of Philosophy in a Global Perspective” (University of Hildesheim, n.d.). By means of the plural “histories,” Elberfeld and many others aim to present a more comprehensive historiographical account, in part by compiling histories of philosophy in various languages, assuming “philosophy” to be a fitting term to refer to non-European thought independent of academic philosophy. While this does sound appealing, it is nonetheless problematic in that the label “philosophy” is used to subsume everything that once was or that could be referred to as “philosophy,” since this would render the term so broad that it would be difficult to distinguish. As I established, at the level of ordinary language, it is as easy as it is suitable to speak of “philosophy” also in terms of many forms of thought outside the intellectual Western hemisphere, let alone of many forms of reasoning within the West that are usually not counted as “philosophy” in academia anymore. Hence, it would be possible to represent all that in a “historiography of philosophy,” which would then be more or less synonymous with a very extensive “history of human thought.” Such an equation is not uncommon in English, as for example in Heisig et al.’s *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (2011), an excellent and quite thorough account of the various

¹⁷ For a masterful analysis of comparing, including the problems of analogies, see the works by Weber (2013, 2014).

schools of thought and theory in Japan from the Asuka era to present day Japan, all of which are referred to as “philosophy.”¹⁸ But the use of such an equation leads back to the problem of distinguishing criteria from those kinds of human thought and life practices which, even with a permissive use of the term, would not be called “philosophy.” Due to the vast ambiguity of the term “philosophy,” it is not obvious where to draw a line as to what should be considered part of the history of philosophy and what should not, and it would remain rather arbitrary up to a point to decide what should be called “philosophy.”

The core problem, which also shapes the issue of historiography, is thus the multiple allocations of the concept of philosophy. Precisely because the ordinary language use of “philosophy” offers a wide range of meanings, I argue that it is important, at least on a scholarly level, to not equate these different forms of use, but rather to specify and differentiate the various levels of meaning: “philosophy” is not necessarily the same as “philosophy.” To understand philosophy on an academic level today as broadly as in the past would ignore the fact that many subjects that were once considered “philosophy” (natural sciences, astrology, religious studies, mathematics, etc.) have since differentiated into clearly delineated disciplines and now have a different relationship to “philosophy.” Thus, in order to lay the foundations for a more globally oriented future academic philosophy, there would thus be a need for a reconceptualized historiography of philosophy that distinguishes whether one takes the broad usability of the word as a measure, thereby having to integrate a great deal of intellectual history, or whether one takes the narrower use of the academic discipline in particular as decisive, which is what I advocate.

8 The Grid of Intellectual Life

Apart from the consideration of the historical development of different academic areas and the shape of the field of academic philosophy today, I argue that the choice of what belongs in a reconceptualized historiography depends on the actual frameworks of intellectual communities and other entanglements in which the thinkers in question stood. I understand this mostly in the sociological terms of Randall Collins’ (1998) account of the ways in which intellectual work is organized and functions around the world, describing the history of philosophies as building on concrete interactions between “intellectual groups, master-pupil-

¹⁸ For their reflections on using “philosophy,” see Heisig et al. (2011, pp. 17–23), for my further analysis of their arguments see Scheidl (forthcoming).

chains, and contemporaneous rivalries” (p. 7).¹⁹ While Collins’ arguments have a slightly different context, they are nonetheless valuable for understanding both the genesis of academia as well as the contextuality of intellectual life. Intellectual groupings and networks, intergenerational connections (such as master-student chains), and processes of exchange in rivalries and conflicts form a crucial role in the emergence of philosophy as a discipline.

The decisive point in a global perspective is: sources that were not or could not be part of these structures and networks – that is, which were not received in any form – could not be part of what emerged from them, namely academic philosophy. If, for example, Dōgen is now categorized as a philosopher, this is meaningful in the sense of ordinary language, for example, as a synonym for “profound thinker” or “wise man.” At the same time, this is also a subsequent reframing in (post)modern approaches; since he was not part of what was understood as “philosophy” at the time, he was not received and accordingly had little to do with the entanglements that make up the constitutive grid of philosophy as a modern, academic discipline.²⁰ The crucial point is, however, that *not* calling Dōgen’s thought “philosophy” is neither a demotion nor a malevolent discrimination: without the veil of Eurocentrism, there is ultimately no obstacle to receiving him in the current philosophical debate, that is, to letting him become part of what is now “philosophy” and what will be the history of philosophy in the future. Collins’ description of intellectual networks in this sense provides the key for a change in a global perspective: through the reception of relevant non-Western thought in contemporary academic philosophy, the former becomes part of those existing “networks” and can thereby help to transform them further and to build new ones. This is, therefore, less a matter of history and historiography than it is of contemporary philosophizing.

The problems of re-categorization are easily masked by the strong inclinations to do justice to those excluded forms of thought that were refused the status of “philosophy” in the past. The categorization as “philosophy” as a countermeasure to Eurocentric discriminations is well-intended, but ultimately misguided, since it does not represent the phenomena in question in their contextuality and interconnections. Dōgen is part of the history of Buddhism, Japanese thought, etc., but should only be seen as a part of “philosophy” insofar as he began to be read and

¹⁹ Collins uses “philosophies” in a broad sense.

²⁰ While I do not have space here to address the issue of concepts similar to “philosophy,” such as Panikkar’s “homeomorphic equivalencies” in the sense of “functional equivalencies,” it should be evident that even if there had been a corresponding concept for “philosophy” in pre-modern Japan, this would still not make Dōgen’s thought part of “philosophy” in the strict sense of my reasoning (see Scheidl(forthcoming)).

received by philosophers, and not just as a profound, fundamental, and philosophically relevant thinker alone. Otherwise, it would be very one-sided to integrate him because of his non-Western origin, but not also advanced thinkers from the West. In other words, if we integrate Dōgen as a sophisticated thinker, don't we also have to see corresponding Christian theologians, theoretical physicists, self-reflective historians, conceptually working psychologists, systematic literary scholars, and many more as “philosophers” and thus as part of the history of philosophy? Where then would the boundary be, if there were one at all, between philosophy and theory, between philosophy and other disciplines, etc.? Including all of them would in a certain sense recur to an original understanding of “philosophy,” which, as the mother of all science, would then also be some sort of harbor in which all of her descendants ultimately still linger. But if in this sense almost anything in the history of thought were “philosophy,” and thus part of the history of philosophy, it would also have to find adequate entry into its historiography. And such a historiography of philosophy as more or less synonymous with the historiography of science or human thought *per se* would be a strikingly counter-productive account in my view, since it would make fundamental differentiations more difficult, and would ultimately be too extensive to be meaningful at all as a historiography of (academic) philosophy in the narrower sense.

9 Ways of Integration

The decisive point, however, is that such a broad *conceptual* integration isn't even necessary to enable the actual integration of certain non-Western contents into academic philosophy. Even if one were to argue that philosophy has no limits in its scope (other than, for instance, biology with its scope on the scientific study of life) and can concern itself with literally anything, my argument still holds: even when we accept that philosophy deals with everything, this does not require everything to be “philosophy.” From the fact that something is philosophically interesting or relevant it therefore does not follow that it needs to be categorized as “philosophy,” or that it should be included in the historiography of philosophy.

This argument is directed both against the attribution of “philosophy” to non-Western forms of thought and against the Eurocentric exclusion of non-Western thought from academic philosophy. Especially if philosophy concerns itself with basically everything, it is indefensible to exclude Buddhist texts or Indian systems of thought from it solely by virtue of their provenance.²¹ Clearly, such an exclu-

²¹ There might, however, be other aspects than their origins that would not deem them very interesting for philosophical inquiry.

sion is unfounded and mostly rooted in past differentiations that live on in the shape of academic institutions and mostly implicit stereotypes about the status of non-Western thought. However, in contemporary philosophy, it is common to regard, say, the results of scientific experiments, psychological statistics, or non-academic content like a novel, a movie, or a certain experience of nature, and so on. Likewise, both the history and the content of Buddhist thought, for example, can be relevant to academic philosophy without the need to declare any of it to be “philosophy,” or to include it in the histories of philosophy (unless of course it was actually received).

Regarding a reconceptualization of the history of philosophy, there is accordingly a tremendous difference between thought from outside the Western frame and one from within it. While it is eminently sensible, for example, to examine more closely what women and other marginalized groups have historically done in philosophy (or other fields), and how their part in the intellectual networks and academic grid of the West has so far often not been sufficiently recognized, global demands for integration lead to new distortions. As I argued earlier, something that was not part of the structures on which philosophy is built cannot retroactively become part of them; in fact, this could in itself be regarded as a “Eurocentric” or paternalistic gesture which assumes that the respective “others” want to be integrated into “philosophy” and its historiography. (Historiographical) integration can be achieved insofar as something hitherto insufficiently considered (such as past connections) is “uncovered” when the veils of Eurocentrism, misogyny, chauvinism, etc. are lifted, allowing for a more accurate representation of the actual grid of the history of academic philosophy and subsequent conceptualizations. Integration can also be achieved on the basis of a certain scholarly relevance in the present, which is undoubtedly the case for many elements from non-Western contexts, not least because of the fundamental nature of philosophical questions, which in principle can also be found outside the narrow provenance of Graecoroman-Abrahamic academic philosophy.

Such openness for integration also results from the fundamental demand that philosophy places on itself. At the same time, the readiness to integrate must not be confused with a guarantee or moral right to integration and an implicit, museum-like protection – the philosophical claim to scrutinize and examine closely remains after all. The willingness to integrate should never supersede aspects of quality and competence. This means that, in the classical liberal understanding of competition, we are dealing with a competition of ideas and thinkers that is ongoing and in which non-Western thought is increasingly included – which, just like Western thought, is analyzed, criticized and, if necessary, also refuted or rejected (for instance, if it fails to convince in terms of quality). This argument also invites

to see (and to historiographically depict) past competitions and intellectual fights, and thus to open the global philosophical field for the idea that certain exclusions may not be founded so much in Eurocentrism, but in a lack of quality, originality, or relevance to philosophical endeavors.

10 Reconceptualizing the History of Philosophy

The historical course of academic philosophy has deprived it of a considerable amount of possibilities for its inner development: much nonsense in philosophy (and other disciplines) would not have been written, indeed could not have been written, had there been more global orientation. Regrettable as it is, the fact of Eurocentrism cannot be changed retroactively or retrospectively; historiography can do no more than trace these paths of the past and place them in appropriate conceptual or paradigmatic frameworks. If forms of non-Western thought are to be received in academic philosophy, which I strongly advocate for, the study of history is particularly suitable insofar as it is a matter of becoming aware of Eurocentric structures or mechanisms and their after-effects. Heightened awareness is essentially helpful in overcoming all three interconnected obstacles I addressed in this paper: Eurocentrism in academic philosophy and its standard historiographies; the self-awarded special status of “philosophy” as a marker of presumably substantial thought, speaking *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the problematic concept of “philosophy” itself, i.e., the question of what can or should be called “philosophy,” and what accordingly must be considered historiographically.

Seen in this light, reconceptualizing the history of philosophy is first and foremost about historiographically working out what was once excluded from philosophy (and how), and also about taking seriously the *actual* interconnections and entanglements of academic philosophy to the non-Western diversity of intellectual history. Hence, a central part of the endeavor to get a more accurate view of the history of philosophy is also to point out the reception of non-Western thought that actually did take place and that was inspiring or influential to Western, academic philosophical thought, as it is famously the case with Leibniz or Schopenhauer, but also with Husserl, Heidegger, or Buber (see Nelson (2017)). Most of the hitherto prevailing historiographies of philosophy are only inadequately able to depict the actual history of academic philosophy, not only for downplaying the actual entanglements, but also for not sufficiently depicting the mechanisms of exclusion of (among others) non-Western thought, the development of Eurocentric structures, and the narrowing of the term “philosophy” after a previously varied, not to say colourful, conceptual history. Since this is in many respects a constitu-

tive part of the development of the modern discipline of philosophy, Eurocentrism also requires a correspondingly appropriate representation in historiographical accounts.

Regarding its alleged special status, I argue for seeing the history of philosophy as a field of historical scholarship that cannot be thought of independently of other historical developments, such as the European expansion, civilizing missions, colonial policy, and many other economic, social, or religious contexts.²² In a reconceptualized historiography of philosophy, there needs to be an increased emphasis on the entanglements with non-philosophical accounts of history, as well as the increased integration of the history of philosophy into other historiographies, including but not limited to a global perspective. This, too, works against the philosophical self-understanding of the special status of philosophy, for by focusing only on historiographies of *philosophy*, one can tend to reproduce the Eurocentric special status of philosophy as something mostly unentangled in historical developments in general. In a similar sense, to overcome a certain “philosophy-centrism,” as well as the problems of the conceptually overburdened term “philosophy,” one could opt to fixate less on the entire complex of “philosophy” in order to focus on historiographies of a “lower level” in this sense, namely of components of academic philosophy. Thus, global historiographies of ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, (philosophical) anthropology, etc. could emerge. Of course, the same problems of conceptual transfer and of non-existent networks that I discussed may arise, but it would possibly be easier and less complex to deal with them, since less consideration would have to be given to the academic discipline and its peculiarities in its entirety. For these subcategories are more about something that could be understood as universally occurring with humans (e.g. considerations about morality, cognition, the meaning of life, reality, and the first reasons) without the compulsion to contain all of this in a unit as “philosophy” (and potentially seeing other forms of thought as deficient “philosophy” due to the lack of certain subcategories).

Only when and insofar as there was an actual historical, philosophical engagement with or any form of reception of non-Western thought did the latter become “ex positivo” an entangled part of philosophy in the narrower, academic sense and thus must be considered historiographically. As I have shown, while attributing “philosophy” or using this term very widely for non-Western thought is well-meaning, it is ultimately more problematic than beneficial. However, a sustainable reconceptualization can be achieved precisely by pointing out the histories of and

²² On the global-historical relevance of environmental, economic, or other accidental factors, see for instance Marks (2015).

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reasons for exclusion (as well as the historical changes in the use of language). In this sense, Eurocentrism will always be a necessary part of the history of philosophy, as it has been a formative factor for the academic discipline. But that which was once excluded is not in itself and in its own right part of the history of philosophy: it is precisely the absences, the emerging voids, the disentanglements which are part of the history of philosophy and which themselves have a central value for both the historiographical and contemporarily systematic philosophical discourse. This is in itself an intriguing field of research that should not be underestimated or valued less than an examination of actual entanglements.

What is needed is therefore both a historiography of entanglements and disentanglements in academic philosophy and beyond. The history of academic philosophy is but one part of global intellectual history, next to many varieties of human thought and life practices that do stand in their own right. They don't need to be labelled off as “philosophy,” but can be discovered by philosophers to enrich or even transform their contemporary philosophizing (and vice versa). What is needed in the end is not just a reconceptualized historiography of philosophy that clearly points out the Eurocentric character of academic philosophy, but furthermore a reconceptualized historiography of human thought. A wholesome approach to a globalized historiography of philosophy is therefore necessarily an interdisciplinary one that does not only take its strength from its interdisciplinarity, but also realizes the ultimate interdisciplinarity of philosophy itself.

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Orientalism in 19th-Century Swedish Historiography of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT | During the 19th century, most Swedish philosophers considered the Orient, rather than ancient Greece, the birthplace of philosophical thought. This article examines the arguments in support of this viewpoint and reconstructs the meaning of the concept “oriental philosophy” used at the time. The aims of this article are therefore twofold. Firstly, it examines and maps out the way in which the history of philosophy was treated by 19th century Swedish philosophers. This question has not been studied in depth, and the article therefore contributes to a deeper understanding of Swedish academic philosophy during this period. Secondly, since the Swedish source material contains many examples of how historians of philosophy described oriental thought, the article also contributes to an understanding of modern European orientalism and oriental studies in general. The conclusion is that, as a concept, oriental philosophy played a key role in 19th-century debates on the origins of philosophical thought; ideas about oriental culture could be, and indeed were, used both to formulate Eurocentric narratives about the history of philosophy and to challenge such narratives. This article suggests that its conclusion could likely be extended to German historiography of philosophy, and that further studies on this issue are needed.

KEYWORDS | Orientalism; Historiography of Philosophy; Swedish Philosophy

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One of the most well-known contemporary Swedish textbooks on the history of philosophy is Svante Nordin's *Filosofins historia*. First published in 1995, it has since been updated and printed in four editions and is still widely used by students of philosophy and intellectual history. Already in the subtitle, Nordin specifies what he includes under the concept of "the history of philosophy": it is defined as *The Adventure of Western Reason from Thales to Postmodernism* (Nordin 2017). For Nordin, therefore, philosophy is synonymous with a particular Western tradition of reason; it starts in Greek antiquity and from there develops as a mainly European project. Nordin does not deny that there is reason outside of the West, but he does claim that, historically, reason assumed the form of philosophy only in the West.

Nordin is not the only one who represents this viewpoint. Rather, when he identifies Thales as the first philosopher, he is following a long historiographical tradition that can be traced back to the 18th century and which is often taken for granted with little critical discussion.¹ I do not refer to Nordin's textbook because it stands out in comparison to other contemporary works on the history of philosophy, but because it demonstrates that Sweden is no exception to this dominant historiographical tradition.

This has not always been the case; in fact, it seems that the conception of philosophy as a fundamentally European enterprise was established considerably later in Sweden than in Germany. During the 19th century, Swedish philosophy teachers generally presented a very different narrative. They viewed "orientalism" as the first epoch in the history of philosophy, followed by Greek thought as a second epoch. Furthermore, they did not describe their own philosophical systems as belonging to a purely Western tradition. In fact, it was more common to claim that the modern era of philosophy represented a systematic *unity* of Western and Eastern thought. Similar conceptions also existed in Germany, particularly among the romantics. In Sweden, however, it was not just represented by romantic philosophers, but also often used as point of departure by the idealists of the highly influential Boströmian school.

That said, the inclusion of oriental philosophy in the history of philosophy did not necessarily coincide with a positive view of the Orient or oriental culture. Rather, many Swedish philosophers characterised oriental philosophy as superstitious, despotic and lacking in distinctions. But this was rarely seen as an argument in favour of altogether excluding the Orient from the history of philosophy, and in this regard, 19th century Swedish historiography of philosophy differs from

¹ There are, of course, also many historians of philosophy who have challenged this Eurocentric narrative. For an overview of global histories of philosophy in European languages, see Herzl's contribution in this issue.

developments in Germany during the same period.

My aim in this article is twofold. Firstly, I examine and map out how the history of philosophy was treated by Swedish philosophers in the 19th century. This question has not been studied in depth and the article therefore contributes to a deeper understanding of Swedish academic philosophy during this period.² Secondly, since the Swedish source material contains many examples of how historians of philosophy described oriental thought, the article also contributes to our understanding of modern European orientalism and oriental studies in general. In fact, I argue that the idea of “oriental philosophy” as a distinct tradition was not established until the 19th century, when it replaced the category of “barbaric philosophy” from which previous historians often departed. Formulated more generally, my aim is to examine how the concept of orientalism was used in 19th-century Swedish historiography of philosophy and what philosophical ideas historians associated with this concept.

To make this second aim more concrete, I begin with an overview of Eurocentrism in German 19th-century historiography of philosophy. Following this, I briefly discuss previous research in the field before moving on to an in-depth examination of how the Orient was treated by Swedish philosophers in the 19th century. Finally, I present some theoretical implications and outline possible questions for further study.

1 The German Background

Before the second half of the 18th century, it was uncommon for works on the history of philosophy to begin with ancient Greece. Instead, the most common narrative went all the way back to the creation of the world in the book of Genesis, thereby giving Adam, rather than Thales, the role of the first philosopher. Historians then continued to describe how the original revelation was spread, handed down, and reshaped among a multitude of different peoples: Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Celts were all afforded an undisputed place in this narrative of the history of philosophy.³ Although the thought of these peoples was generally categorised under the name “barbaric philosophy” it must be kept in mind that this term did not have the clear negative connotations it evokes in contemporary language. For instance, when Christian historians of philosophy referred to Adam, Abraham and Moses as representatives of “barbaric philosophy”, this

² To my knowledge, there is only one previous study on Swedish historiography of philosophy, namely Ers (1970).

³ For general overviews of the historiography of philosophy, see Santinello (1993), Braun (1973), Geldsetzer (1968), Guérout (1983; 1988), Piaia and Santinello (2011a; 2011b) and Schneider (1990).

was not meant in any negative way; rather, the adjective “barbaric” should be understood as a purely descriptive term for peoples who were neither of Greek nor Roman origin.⁴

Only in the 1780s and 90s did challenges to this narrative arise. In 1791, Dietrich Tiedemann started the narrative of his textbook, *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, with Thales. It is quite possible that he thereby became the first modern historian to consider Thales the first philosopher (Bernasconi 1997). However, already a few years earlier, the Göttingen-based historian Christoph Meiners had argued against the idea that there were philosophical cultures older than that of the Greeks – a claim which the Kantian Tennemann would reiterate in his monumental twelve-volume work, *Geschichte der Philosophie*. In the 19th century, the idea of philosophy’s Greek origins was also strongly defended by Hegel and his followers.

There are two particularly important reasons for this change in how the history of philosophy was written. First, in German academic philosophy, a distinction between philosophy and religion had become central by the 18th century – above all in the protestant tradition. In this context, philosophy was understood as a science wholly immanent to the sphere of reason and therefore to be clearly separated from faith and revelation. The pre-modern⁵ narrative of the history of philosophy was founded upon the opposite ambition: here, the task of the historian was to show how pagan philosophy had its roots precisely in divine revelation. This could be done only by establishing a continuity between the patriarchs of the Old Testament and the Greeks – a continuity which, in turn, was made possible by the barbarians as mediating middle link. Since German historians of the late 18th century departed from a different conception of the nature of philosophy, they consequently had to reject this narrative.

Second, another conceptual distinction that rose to fundamental importance during this time was between West and East, between Europe and the Orient. Perhaps the most famous examination of this development is Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, in which he aims to show how European self-understanding is conditioned by the creation of the Orient as a negative other (Said 2003).⁶ To the extent that this

⁴ It should be noted that a distinction was usually made between antediluvian and postdiluvian philosophy, thus distinguishing the patriarchs from other barbarian philosophies. There were also some historians who did not classify antediluvian philosophy as part of barbaric philosophy.

⁵ The concepts modern and pre-modern are, of course, complex and difficult to define. In this article, the terms are employed in a sense specific to the historiography of philosophy: I use them solely to describe the move away from the narrative of philosophy’s divine origins – a narrative which was in turn intimately connected to the category of barbarian philosophy.

⁶ As Said himself readily admits, his concept of orientalism is far from unproblematic when applied to the German context. It should also be noted that my ambition in this article is to understand orien-

distinction is expressed by historians of philosophy, it is intimately connected with the distinction between philosophy and religion or between reason and superstition. Thus, the Orient was frequently characterised as a culture in which reason had not yet risen to a state of independence but instead remained entangled in mythico-religious beliefs. Only in Greece, it was argued, had reason been freed from its religious shackles, and only here could the history of philosophy as an independent science therefore be said to have begun.

Here, it is worth noting that pre-modern works on the history of philosophy did not emphasise the distinction between Eastern and Western culture. Rather, the concept of “barbarian philosophy” included a multitude of peoples, both inside and outside of Europe. Sometimes, subdivisions between northern, southern, eastern, and western barbarians were made – but the main organising principle was nonetheless simply a distinction between barbarians in general and Greeks. Furthermore, the concept of “barbarian philosophy” did not indicate a single, unified philosophical culture; there were a multitude of barbarian peoples, and the only thing they had in common was that their philosophical beliefs were all diffusions of divine truth. In contrast, the 19th-century concept of the Orient was intended to describe a highly homogenous cultural sphere defined by the subsumption of reason under superstition and despotic religious rule. This conversely meant that Greece, which had previously been distinguished from both European and non-European barbarians, was now firmly placed in the context of a wider European cultural history.

The distinction between Europe and Orient thus played a crucial role for historians who were intent on writing a history of philosophy with Greek thinkers as the starting point. However, the same distinction could also be used to construct another, wider narrative. Two prominent examples of this are the works of Schelling-influenced historians Friedrich Ast (*Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie*; 1807) and Thaddä Anselm Rixner (*Handbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, first volume, 1822). Ast and Rixner both emphasise that philosophy must be understood as a striving which is immanent to the human spirit. Therefore, they claim, it cannot belong to any single human culture, nor can it be wholly absent in any mythological belief system. Philosophy's origins must thus be sought in the origins of human culture as such. In practice, this conception meant tracing philosophy back to the Orient and to the oldest preserved writings from India. Therefore, oriental rather than Greek philosophy must be understood as the first epoch in the

talism as a modern phenomenon, established in the 18th and 19th centuries. Said, in contrast, traces orientalism back to Greek antiquity. My understanding of the historical origins of the concept is thus different. That said, I believe that Said's general characterisation of the dependency of ideas about Europe on ideas about the Orient to be a fruitful theoretical starting point.

history of philosophy.

The arguments for the inclusion of oriental philosophy appear to have been somewhat successful. This is illustrated by the fact that Tennemann, who had initially argued that the history of philosophy begins with Thales, later revised his viewpoint. While he did not accept the inclusion of the Orient as an epoch in its own right, he did concede that it could be regarded as a precursor to the origin of philosophy in Greece. This view led him to include a section on “religious and philosophical opinions of oriental peoples” in his textbook *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Tennemann 1816). A similar solution was also employed by Hegel.



Figure 1: The first epoch of philosophy as named in German-language books on the history of philosophy 1720–1919. The table only includes books which (1) are included in the bibliographic section of the Hildesheim research project “Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective” (‘Deutschsprachige Philosophiegeschichten’ n.d.) and (2) contain a formal table of contents.

We can therefore summarise developments in the late 18th century as follows. The older distinction between barbaric and Greek philosophy was replaced by a new distinction between Oriental and Western philosophy. While this distinction was sometimes used to counter the notion of an Oriental philosophy, it could, and indeed was, also used to formulate positive conceptions of Oriental philosophical

culture. Both narratives are based on the distinction between East and West, and thereby differ from the previous division of philosophy's history into a barbaric and a Greek period.

Using the extensive bibliography compiled by the research project "Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective" of the University of Hildesheim, one can get an enlightening overview of this development, as is captured in figure 1 above. A quantitative analysis of these data shows that in the 18th century most German books on the history of philosophy considered "barbaric" or "non-Greek" philosophy to be the first discernible epoch.⁷ From the middle of the 19th century, however, no more books in this category are published at all. Instead, more and more books are published in which the history of philosophy starts with Greek philosophy, so that from 1800 onwards this periodisation is used in the majority of published volumes on the history of philosophy. However, for the entire 19th century, Oriental philosophy is still represented, sometimes as an epoch in its own right, and sometimes as a precursor to classical Greek philosophy.

2 Previous Research

In recent decades, multiple scholars have taken an interest in how philosophy and its history came to be seen as a purely European phenomenon. As for studies in German, these issues are currently the subject of the Reinhart Koselleck Project at the University of Hildesheim⁸ and also represent a central theme in Franz Martin Wimmer's research on intercultural philosophy (Wimmer 1990; 2017). Among the relevant studies published in English, Peter K.J. Park's *Africa, Asia and the History of Philosophy* (2013) deserves particular mention. Park examines Christoph Meiners' Eurocentric historiography of philosophy and the way it was received by contemporary Kantian scholars. His conclusion is that the Kantians were highly influenced by Meiners and often repeated his arguments in favour of philosophy's Greek origins (Park 2013, pp. 149–150). Robert Bernasconi, too, has played a significant role in this field with his series of articles on Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy (Bernasconi 1997; 2000; 2003).

While this article is greatly indebted to the work of these scholars, it attempts to approach the question of Eurocentrism in a somewhat different way. Previous studies have often focused on the questions of how, when, and why the world

⁷ The number of published books in this sample is rather small and the data should therefore be interpreted with caution. For example, in the first period (1720–39) only two books were published, both by the influential historian Johan Jakob Brucker.

⁸ See the project plan ('Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective' 2019) and the anthology *Philosophiegeschichte in globaler Perspektive* (Elberfeld 2017).

outside of Europe was excluded from the history of philosophy. But as mentioned, my focus is rather on a conceptual displacement that is related to this exclusion and which can, to some extent, be understood a precondition for it, namely the displacement of the category “barbaric philosophy” by “Oriental philosophy”.

While this conceptual displacement has been pointed out by Wimmer (2017, p. 183), he does not claim to have exhaustively described its implications but rather notes that it requires further study. Since this article aims to reconstruct the concept of Oriental philosophy used by a specific group of 19th-century historians of philosophy, it can be understood as such an attempt at further elaboration.

2.1 The Swedish Context

Against this background, Swedish historiography of philosophy serves as an interesting case study. As already mentioned, Swedish historians of philosophy stand out in the sense that the majority of them considered the Orient to have been the birthplace of philosophy – a conception that, in Germany, was always represented by a minority.

An important reason for this difference between Sweden and Germany is the status of Hegelianism. As previous studies have shown, Hegel played a key role in establishing and legitimising the idea of philosophy’s Greek origins. Among Swedish philosophers, however, Hegelianism never managed to gather a large following. Instead, three other main currents can be identified during the 19th century: 1) at the beginning of the century, idealist philosophers inspired by Kant and Fichte slowly gained influence at Swedish universities. 2) In the 1810s, this influence waned in favour of a romantic philosophy above all inspired by Schelling. This was in turn challenged by 3) the idealist system-philosophy of Christopher Jacob Boström which, by the second half of the century, had gained the status of unofficial state philosophy.⁹

This is not to say that there were no Swedish Hegelians. Hegelianism was represented by the Swedish-speaking Finn Johan Vilhelm Snellman as well as Fredrik Georg Afzelius and Johan Jakob Borelius. The Swedish Hegelians were generally interested in the theory of the history of philosophy and produced a number of texts on the subject. In these texts, they tend to follow Hegel in denying the existence of philosophy in the Orient. But the Hegelians never managed to seriously challenge the dominance of the Boströmian school. They remained relatively marginalised in Swedish academic philosophy and exercised a considerably smaller influence than Hegelians in the neighbouring Scandinavian countries. For this reason, the

⁹ For general overviews of Swedish philosophy during this period, see Nordin (1987; 1981) and Lagerlund (2020).

Hegelian view on the beginning of the history of philosophy always remained a minority position in Swedish academic philosophy. Instead, “Oriental thought” retained its status as the first epoch in the history of philosophy until as late as the end of the 19th century.

In what follows, I first describe the status and role of the history of philosophy at Swedish universities during the 19th century. After that, I move on to a discussion of how the concept of Oriental philosophy was understood by Swedish philosophers during this period.

3 The History of Philosophy at Swedish Universities

In the 19th century, there were two main universities in Sweden, namely Uppsala University and Lund University.¹⁰ Characteristic of philosophy in Sweden is that the discipline was split into two subdisciplines: theoretical philosophy (logic and metaphysics) and practical philosophy (politics and ethics).¹¹ Each university had one professorial chair in each of the subdisciplines as well as an adjunct of philosophy and a varying number of (typically unpaid) docents.

The history of philosophy played a central role in 19th-century university education. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the curricula and student handbooks that the universities started to publish in the late 1880s.¹² The 1888 curriculum of Lund University lists three areas of knowledge that students must master in order to obtain a passing grade (*approbatur*) in theoretical philosophy: formal logic, psychology, and “a general overview of the history of philosophy.” In practical philosophy, students were required to follow “a shorter course in the history of philosophy” as well as “shorter courses in ethics and philosophy of state” (Akademiska föreningen 1888). The 1887 student handbook of Uppsala University (published by the student organisation *Verdandi*) lists a similar set of criteria. As at Lund University, knowledge of the history of philosophy was considered a pre-

¹⁰ There were other Swedish universities for parts of the century. For example, the Royal Academy of Turku was Swedish until 1809 when Sweden lost Finland to Russia, and the University of Greifswald was Swedish until 1815. These universities are not included in this analysis since they were not Swedish for the greater part of the period under discussion in this paper.

¹¹ This division still applies to most contemporary Swedish universities. To my knowledge, the only exceptions are Umeå University and Södertörn University where the subject is simply referred to as “philosophy.”

¹² Before that, students did not have access to printed curricula or details on the criteria for graduating. Instead, such information was transmitted orally, either from earlier students or directly from professors. When the student organisation *Verdandi* published the first study manual in 1887, it was their explicit objective to change this. Soon after, universities started publishing official curricula. On this development, see Frängsmyr (2010, pp. 289–294).

requisite for obtaining passing grades in both theoretical and practical philosophy (Verdandi 1887).

It is clear that by the end of the 19th century, the history of philosophy was considered a fundamental part of philosophical studies. This is further confirmed by the fact that courses on the history of philosophy (or specific eras thereof) were generally offered every semester, usually by more than one teacher at each university. In fact, no other topic appears to have been taught with the same frequency.¹³

A 100 years earlier, the situation was rather different. In the lecture catalogues of the 1770s and 80s, mentions of lectures on the history of philosophy are few and far between. Interestingly, the few times the subject was taught, teachers were usually not philosophers by occupation but rather docents of literary history. This suggests that the history of philosophy was not considered part of philosophy *per se*. But even these lessons by literary historians were infrequent. It seems, then, that philosophy at Swedish universities went through what could be described as a historical turn in the 100 years between the 1780s and 1880s which saw the history of philosophy, formerly an uncommon topic, becoming a central part of the curriculum.

The start of this development can be traced to around 1800, particularly at Uppsala University. Here, Daniel Boëthius (professor of practical philosophy 1783–1810) devoted a series of public lectures to the history of philosophy in 1783–1784, again in spring 1795, autumn 1797 and autumn 1801. While this was only a small part of Boëthius' total lecture output, it greatly exceeds the number of lectures dedicated to the history of philosophy by both his predecessors and contemporaries.

Boëthius marks the start of a trend that would come to define 19th-century

¹³ This claim is based on two complementary sources. The first is the lecture catalogues that universities published at the start of each academic year (Lund University 1770–1865; 1866–1900; Uppsala University 1770–1852; 1853–1899). In these catalogues professors, adjuncts and docents advertised their planned lectures, colloquia and other forms of teaching. The second important source is the handwritten lecture diaries (*föreläsningsdiarier*) which ordinary professors were required to hand in to the university chancellor at the end of every month ('Föreläsningsdiarier Och Studentförteckningar Uppsala Universitet', 1784–1892; 'Föreläsningsdiarier Och Studentförteckningar Lunds Universitet', 1819–1823, 1876–1892). These diaries, which usually consisted of 1–2 pages per professor and month, provided an outline of the subjects the professor had treated in his public lectures. Today, the diaries are kept at the Swedish National Archives. Most of them are still available for Uppsala University, while a large number of those at Lund University seems to have been lost with only the diaries from 1819–1823 and from 1876 onwards remaining. Despite this gap, lecture diaries offer a good general overview of the philosophical lectures. Unlike the lecture catalogues, they allow us to follow in detail the structure and length of each lecture series and, in many cases, even that of individual lectures. However, as the lecture diaries were only written by professors, they do not contain information about the teaching activities of adjuncts and docents.

Swedish university philosophy. This trend would grow even stronger with the work of idealist philosopher Benjamin Höijer, who became professor of theoretical philosophy in 1809.¹⁴ From that point until his death in 1812, Höijer devoted the majority of his public lectures to the history of philosophy.¹⁵ By then, the history of philosophy had become one of the most frequently addressed topics for university lectures in philosophy and would remain so for the rest of the century.

An important reason for this development can be found in the manuscripts of Höijer's lectures in which he argues that the study of the history of philosophy has two great advantages for students. Firstly, it familiarises them with a multitude of different philosophical systems, and secondly, it allows them to discover that these systems do not merely follow one another randomly but rather form a necessarily connected, organic whole. For these reasons, the history of philosophy is "the easiest and quickest introduction to philosophy" (Höijer 1808b, p. 4). It was in precisely this way the history of philosophy established itself as a dominant form of university education: as a propaedeutic for new students of philosophy.¹⁶

A similar development occurred at the Lund University, albeit considerably later. In the first half of the 19th century, mentions of the history of philosophy remain infrequent in the lecture catalogues. But around 1850, the trend that had developed at Uppsala also reached Lund. Lorentz Fredrik Westman made the history of philosophy the subject of his lectures from 1846/47 to 1855/56, and during the last half of the century, both the Hegelian Johan Jakob Borelius and the Boströmian Per Johan Hermann Leander regularly devoted their lectures to the subject.

This development was not unique to Sweden. In his *Philosophie und Universität*, Ulrich Johannes Schneider demonstrates in great detail how, over the same period, the history of philosophy also became a dominant subject at German universities (Schneider 1999; see also Schneider 2004). In Germany, however, this development was preceded by a rise in the number of books and journals devoted to the history of philosophy. During the 1790s, a series of intense debates about the concept of history of philosophy took place in German scholarly journals,¹⁷

¹⁴ Although Höijer was only formally appointed as ordinary professor at the end of May 1809, he had already started his public lectures in the autumn of the previous year.

¹⁵ Lecture diaries show that Höijer taught the history of philosophy from 1808–1810. Although the diaries from 1811–12 are missing, we know that by December 1810 Höijer had only got as far as Aristotle. It therefore seems likely that he continued the historical lectures during the spring of 1811.

¹⁶ This is confirmed by the curricula from the 1880s and 1890s in which the history of philosophy tends to play a greater role in theoretical philosophy than in practical philosophy. The reason for this is that theoretical philosophy was seen as the more elementary subject. When students moved on to practical philosophy, it was assumed that they already had a general knowledge of the history of philosophy.

¹⁷ Among the most important articles in this debate are those by Reinhold (1791), Goess (1794) and

and multiple ambitious textbooks on the topic were published. The situation was somewhat different in Sweden. By 1850, only two multi-volume textbooks on the subject had been published by Swedish philosophers, neither of which seems to have been commercially successful. Apart from this, Swedish literature on the topic consisted of a few articles and translations of German works.

In the remainder of this article, I partly rely on this sparse collection of printed sources. Just as important, however, are the unpublished lecture manuscripts from the archives at the universities of Uppsala and Lund. Swedish philosophers treated the history of philosophy mainly as a subject of *oral* transmission: it was taught in lecture halls rather than debated in published writings. It was in the lecture halls students were introduced to the history of philosophy, and it was here the professors discussed and spread their conceptions of it. Far more than a learned, philosophical debate between professors, the history of philosophy was a subject of vertical transmission from professor to student. It was seen, above all, as a philosophical propaedeutic.

4 Swedish Historiography of Philosophy from Boëthius to Boström

4.1 Daniel Boëthius

For most of the 18th century, Swedish university philosophy was dominated by an eclectic combination of Scottish moral sense-philosophy and Wolffian metaphysics. In the 1790s, however, Kantianism began to receive the attention of Swedish philosophers. This marks the beginning of a long period during which German-influenced idealism would dominate Swedish academic philosophy.

Daniel Boëthius is often credited with being the first to introduce Kantianism in Sweden (Liljekrantz (1925, p. 133), Nordin (1987, p. 41)). I have already mentioned that Boëthius also played an important role in promoting the study of the history of philosophy at Uppsala University and in fact, these two achievements are closely related. When Boëthius first presented Kantianism to the Swedish audience, he did so by translating a series of articles on the history of philosophy written by the Kantian scholar Georg Gustav Fülleborn (Boëthius 1794). Kant's philosophy, therefore, made its way to Uppsala University in the form of Kantian historiography of philosophy.

Boëthius had already discussed the latest developments in philosophical historiography before he developed sympathies for Kantianism. In an unpublished

Grohmann (1798) which have been discussed by a number of authors, such as Bondeli (2015), Geldsetzer (1968), Braun (1973) and Guérout (1988).

manuscript of 1791, he provides a general outline of how the subject had been treated, from the work of Diogenes Laërtius down to his own time (Boëthius 1791; n.d.). Like many contemporary German historians, he criticises previous scholars for not being systematic, claiming that they were chronicle-writers and material-gatherers rather than true pragmatic historians. Boëthius complains that philosophy, unlike mathematics, still had no reliable history.

Two historians are nonetheless praised by Boëthius, namely Christoph Meiners and Dietrich Tiedemann. That these two scholars in particular are mentioned is significant because, as Bernasconi, Park and others have shown, they were pioneers in establishing the Eurocentric narrative of the history of philosophy. And this is indeed the achievement for which Boëthius praises them. Meiners, he claims, has proven that the so-called philosophies of Asian peoples are no philosophies at all, and that the starting point for the history of philosophy must therefore have been Greek antiquity.

It seems probable that Boëthius' interest in Kantianism arose, at least in part, from his interest in the history of philosophy. During the 1790s, many Kantians devoted their attention to formulating the principles of a new method and theory on this subject. It is important to bear in mind that Meiners was an outspoken anti-Kantian and that several Kantians, among them Reinhold (1791, p. 30), criticised his way of writing the history of philosophy. It does not seem that Boëthius seriously reconsidered his earlier praise of Meiners in light of this Kantian criticism. In 1795, the year after his translations of Fülleborn, he held a series of lectures on the history of philosophy in which he repeated his view of philosophy's Greek origins. In his lecture diary he reports that he spoke about "the Greeks as the people from which all known striving for a real philosophy in ancient times originates." The notion that the ancient Chaldeans, Egyptians and Indians possessed any deep wisdom is dismissed as a "prejudice."¹⁸

Boëthius is an interesting example of Park's thesis that Meiners' racial anthropology was not rejected by the Kantians. On the contrary, Park claims that the Kantian historians of philosophy based their view of philosophy's Greek origins on arguments directly imported from Meiners' writings. For Boëthius, this indeed seems to be the case.

The narrative according to which philosophy originated in Greece was also preferred by Boëthius' successor as professor of practical philosophy, Nils Fredrik Bibergh. While to my knowledge there are no manuscripts or notes from Bibergh's lectures, the lecture diaries he submitted to the university chancellor make no

¹⁸ On this, see Boëthius' lecture diary for March 1795 ('Föreläsningsdiarier och studentförteckningar Uppsala universitet').

mention of ancient non-Greek philosophies.¹⁹ But another view on the origins of philosophy had by this time already begun to gain acceptance at Uppsala University. It was a narrative first introduced by Boëthius' most prominent student, Benjamin Höijer.

4.2 Benjamin Höijer

Höijer enrolled as a student at Uppsala University in 1783. Under the influence of his teacher Boëthius, he became a proponent of critical philosophy and in 1798 travelled to Germany to personally meet many of the prominent philosophers of the time, among them Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling.²⁰ The following year, he published his most important work titled *Avhandling om den filosofiska konstruktionen* (*Dissertation on the Philosophical Construction*; Höijer 2018). The dissertation was translated into German and garnered praise from Schelling who commented that Höijer deserved to be counted among "true thinkers" (quoted in Höijer 2018, p. 168).²¹

Höijer's first important treatment of the history of philosophy dates back to 1795. In that year, he published the first in a long series of articles titled "Om Anledningen, Hufvudinhållet och de sednare Framstegen och Förbättringarna af den Critiska Philosophien" ("About the Cause, Main Contents and Latest Progresses and Improvements of Critical Philosophy").²² The explicit intention of the article is to defend critical philosophy and to establish the achievements of Kant as a clear progress for philosophy as science. In order to do this, Höijer offers a general overview of the history of philosophy and sketches out a theory of the laws according to which philosophy must develop. Since this is the first in-depth discussion on the origins of philosophy by a Swedish philosopher, it deserves to be examined in some detail.

Much like German idealist historians of philosophy at the time, Höijer considers philosophy to be an expression of universal human reason. The ultimate striving of reason is to realise a flawless philosophical system. Such a system must also be an organic whole, grounded in a single fundamental principle, which, once dis-

¹⁹ Rather than relying on contemporary historians, Biberg seems to have based his lectures mainly on writings by Cicero, to whom he frequently refers in the lecture diaries.

²⁰ Höijer describes these encounters in his travel diaries, which has been transcribed by Birger Liljekrantz. (Höijer 1798). Liljekrantz also offers a detailed description of Höijer's travels in the monography *Benjamin Höijer* (Liljekrantz 1912).

²¹ For recent studies on Höijer's philosophy, see Mats Dahllöv's dissertation *Det absoluta och det gemensamma* (Dahllöv 2022) and the anthology *Benjamin Höijer: metafysik, estetik, historia* (A. Burman and Wallenstein 2021).

²² References are to the 1825 edition of Höijer's collected works. Translations are my own.

covered, would end all philosophical quarrels. Although Höijer does not believe that such a system already exists (or, indeed, that it can ever be fully realised), he claims that Kant's critical philosophy must be considered a decisive step towards it.

Since philosophy is a product of universal human reason, its roots must be sought in the beginning of human history as such. Here, Höijer offers what could be described as an anthropological account of the history of philosophy. As long as the human being lives in a state of sensual pleasure in which its desires are "satisfied in the order they arise," it does not occupy itself with the causes and reasons of the world around it. It is only once it encounters some kind of outer resistance that hinders the satisfaction of these desires that "the first question about the reasons for the events and the connection of the things arises. Through this, the first, crude beginning of the use of reason is revealed" (Höijer 1825, p. 13).

The kind of examination undertaken by this uncultivated reason is one that looks for an intelligent agent behind events in the world. As a result, the humans invent supernatural beings who are actually just alienated representations of the human being itself, "reflections of its ego" (Höijer 1825, p. 14). It is in this animistic worship of nature that Höijer identifies the beginning of philosophical inquiry: "In superstition lies the first seed of all philosophy" (Höijer 1825, p. 13).

Höijer then continues by tracing the development of this superstition through what he calls "the first civic societies." The founders of these societies, he claims, used religion and superstition to make their subjects obedient. "Worship of the Gods" thus became an "art of governing" and led to the development of more complex systems of religion. These systems were created in the interest of despotism, not truth: "Anything in the examinations that could lessen the blind submission of the people and their faith in their leaders was carefully hidden away." (Höijer 1825, p. 16). The systematisation of religion nonetheless still marked a progress in the development of reason for, as Höijer (1825, p. 16) puts it, "to the extent the assumed superstitions could be brought into a connected whole, a philosophical building was also approached." Where superstitions formed systematic wholes, they were transformed into *pantheism* which Höijer therefore considers "the first metaphysics" (Höijer 1825, p. 18).

Even though Höijer does not mention any specific regions, peoples or systems of faith, it is likely that his discussion refers to the Orient. All the central concepts he invokes – superstition, despotism, and pantheism – were at the time strongly associated with oriental culture and thought.²³

²³ In an unpublished manuscript (Höijer 1794) the thesis of philosophy's first seeds in superstition is more clearly connected to the philosophies of Asian peoples.

The oriental nature of philosophy's first stages finally becomes explicit when Höijer's exposition reaches the era of classical Greek philosophy. He describes the beginning of this era as follows:

Through the migrations of the Orient, the known sciences were finally moved to Greece, and with them this system. Civic freedom and disorder, perhaps both an effect of the climate and the location, had always made out main features in the character of the Greeks. These features snatched philosophy from the hands of the priests, where it had previously always been a hereditary secret of a particular guild. Thus, it was in Greece this system could be developed in all its consequences and brought to a level of perfection through which its flaws could be discovered. [...] Philosophy had hardly stopped being a stranger in Greece before the system of superstition was contested. (Höijer 1825, p. 18)

Höijer's conclusion is in line with the theory usually presented by contemporary German historians of philosophy, namely that in the beginning philosophy and religion were one and the same but that reason subsequently rose to the state of science in the era of classical Greek thought. Tennemann would later argue that the history of philosophy proper only begins at the point of this separation (Tennemann 1816, p. 9) and that the original conflation of reason and superstition, science and myth, should be understood as philosophy's pre-history.

Even though Tennemann had not yet presented this argument in 1795, Höijer was, of course, aware of Boëthius' arguments in support of the same conclusion. It would not have been surprising if Höijer had followed in the footsteps of his teacher and identified the beginning of philosophy in Greece. But he ends up reaching a different conclusion. He emphasises that superstition already at its first stage contained the seed of philosophy and that it should therefore be considered the starting point of philosophy's history. Philosophy may have been freed from superstition only in Greece – but it nonetheless arrived in Greece as an immigrant from the East.

In Sweden, Kantianism and idealism soon got the reputation as a revolutionary philosophy that was harmful to society. As Nordin writes, both Kant's and Fichte's thought were often equated with Jacobinism (Nordin 1987, p. 64). This initially made it difficult for Höijer to get an academic post. However, when the professor of theoretical philosophy, Per Högmark, died in 1808, the political climate in Sweden had become somewhat more tolerant and Höijer was appointed Högmark's replacement as ordinary professor.

As already mentioned, from this point on Höijer dedicated a large part of his public lectures to the history of philosophy. Regrettably, the lecture manuscripts are difficult to interpret; Höijer wrote in what could best be described as a form of cipher, frequently deploying unorthodox abbreviations and leaving many words out.²⁴ That said, the manuscript does appear to include sections on the history of Egyptian, Indian, Persian and Chinese philosophy (Höijer 1808a). Interestingly, Höijer also includes a discussion of the results of earlier historians such as Buhle, Tiedemann, Meiners and Tennemann. Of these, he claims that Tiedemann is the most reliable source; because Tiedemann does not belong to any particular school, he manages to give an impartial account of the history of philosophy. Nonetheless, Höijer does not seem to share Tiedemann's view on the beginning of the history of philosophy.

Höijer held his lectures at roughly the time that the idea of philosophy's oriental origins began to be defended by romantic and Schellingian historians in Germany such as Friedrich Ast. Ast's *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie* is not mentioned by Höijer, which could be interpreted to mean that his view on philosophy's origin was formulated relatively independently of German romantic thinkers – an interpretation which is strengthened by the fact that Höijer already discussed oriental philosophy in his 1795 article.²⁵

4.3 The First History of Philosophy in Swedish

Even though Höijer is rightly considered one of the most prominent Swedish philosophers of the 19th century, his idealist system never managed to generate a large number of followers in Uppsala. His narrative on the history of philosophy, on the other hand, appears to have been relatively influential. That much is evident from the first ever Swedish-language textbook on the history of philosophy, *Grunddragen af filosofiens historia (Outlines of the History of Philosophy)*, by his former student, Lorenzo Hammarsköld.

The structure of Hammarsköld's book bears a close resemblance to German idealist histories of philosophy. It begins with a general definition of philoso-

²⁴ Parts of the lectures have been transcribed by Birger Liljekrantz (Höijer 1808b) but these do not include the sections in which Höijer discusses oriental philosophy. Since I have not been able to read the full manuscript, my discussion of it is preliminary.

²⁵ After the death of Höijer's brother Joseph Otto, a list of the two brothers' book collection was compiled for an estate auction (*Förteckning öfver professorerna Benj. C. H. och J. O. Höijers efterlemnade boksamling* 1833). This list shows that Höijer owned a large collection of histories of philosophy, among which were Adelung's *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber*, Buhle's *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Tiedemann's *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, Meiners' *Geschichte der Weltweisheit* and Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*. Ast's *Grundriß* is not included in the list.

phy as pure, aprioristic science of reason after which it continues to deduce the conditions for philosophy's temporal development. Much like the German idealists (and Höijer) Hammarsköld identifies the root of philosophy in human nature. Therefore, he argues, any complete history of philosophy must take the origin of man as starting point.

In contrast with Höijer's anthropological understanding of this origin, Hammarsköld offers a sort of mythological-religious account which begins with a description of divine creation and then goes on to describe how man's reason was obscured after the original sin. Following the fall, philosophy is to be understood as recollection of an original revelation. "Philosophising is thus nothing else than a striving to remember the time when man saw the highest one in the way he is." (Hammarsköld 1825, p. 19; my translation).

At first, the method of this recollection was mythological. Every myth, Hammarsköld claims, is "a symbolically produced, sensual philosopheme" and therefore,

each mythology, or system of myths, must deserve attention from the genealogists of philosophy – for mythology is the most ancient attempt a people makes to explain the basis of existence, and thus also the basis of knowledge. (Hammarsköld 1825, p. 20)

Following this, Hammarsköld discusses the origins of human culture. Even though he concedes that we cannot know for sure where and when the birth of mankind is to be found, he suggests that Ethiopia is the most likely candidate. After discussing Ethiopian mythology, he goes on to describe the philosophy of the Egyptians, Hindus, Persians, Jews, Phoenicians, the first Greeks and finally the ancient Scandinavians.

Like Höijer in his 1795 article, Hammarsköld considers Greek philosophy to mark an immensely important moment in the development of philosophy. He discusses the question of whether the Greeks had received their education from the Orient but remains undecided. However, even if the inspiration did lie in oriental culture, the Greeks developed it into "altogether new works": "The sombre superstition of the East never took root in a joyful people directed towards practical life and living in a more smiling than sublime nature" (Hammarsköld 1825, p. 38). With this, Hammarsköld seems to identify an essential difference between the Greeks and oriental peoples – but this does not stop him from identifying the origins of philosophy in the Orient.

4.4 Romanticism

Hammaršköld wrote his textbook at a time when romanticism had become a strong tendency in Swedish philosophy. In fact, Hammaršköld is to some extent a transitional figure between idealism and romanticism. Despite his continued conviction of Höijer's philosophy, he was also a part of the romantic movement known as the "phosphorists" – a name referring to the journal *Phosphoros* which was published between 1810 and 1813 by Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom and Vilhelm Fredrik Palmblad. A central aspect of the phosphorists' philosophical project was the sense that idealism had gone too far in its separation of philosophy and religion, or reason and mythology. Thus, the Kantian or idealist narrative of the history of philosophy is here radically reinterpreted. While, for the Kantians, philosophy could only realise itself once it established its independence from religion, the phosphorists understood this independence in terms of a loss. According to them, a new unity was needed. We have already seen how this idea was expressed in Hammaršköld's history of philosophy, which considered all philosophy a recollection of the original intuition of the divine, of the first revelation that had become obscured through man's separation from God.²⁶ To find the template for this unity of faith and reason, the phosphorists often turned to oriental religion. As noted, the conception of oriental thought as mixture of mythology and science was already well-established at the time. The phosphorists did not challenge this conception, but rather reinterpreted its consequences: for them, the Orient offered a vital clue about how philosophy and religion could be reconciled again.

The phosphorists were not mainly a movement of academic philosophers. Rather, they were active in the intersection of philosophy, literature and poetry.²⁷ But even though the phosphorists themselves did not play a great role in academic philosophy, a form of Schelling-inspired romanticism would for a long time dominate the philosophical climate at Uppsala. Until 1849, both professorial chairs were occupied by representatives of this tradition, namely Samuel Grubbe and Eric August Schröder. The former succeeded Höijer as professor of logic and metaphysics and like Höijer devoted many of his lectures to the history of philosophy. His extensive manuscripts offer a detailed discussion of the concept, method and aim of studying this subject and reveal a thorough understanding of contemporary German debates.²⁸ In his own work, Grubbe defines the history of philosophy as

²⁶ It is worth noting that this conception recalls pre-modern narratives of antediluvian philosophy. In Hammaršköld's version, however, the Orient assumes the place of postdiluvian barbarians.

²⁷ In academic philosophy, the phosphorists were for a time represented by Atterbom, who occupied the professorial chair of theoretical philosophy in Uppsala from 1828 to 1835. During this period, he held lectures on both the history of philosophy and "the history of theism."

²⁸ In 1827, Grubbe moved from the chair of theoretical philosophy to the chair of practical philoso-

reason's striving to realise the idea of philosophy. This conception clearly resembles that of Tennemann, who was perhaps Grubbe's main influence. That Grubbe was no orthodox follower of Tennemann is clear, however, for unlike Tennemann he does not locate the origin of philosophy in ancient Greece. He makes it clear that he is aware of Tennemann's position as well as the arguments in favour of it and refers to the contemporary debate on the origin of philosophy, noting that "many of the most famous authors" have argued for Greece as the birthplace of philosophical thinking (Grubbe 1876, p. 29; my translation). Grubbe concedes that this position is reasonable if we understand philosophy in a strict sense: as "separated from religion and fully undressed the mythical clothing in which it at the start was covered." However, he continues, even with this strict definition there can be no doubt that Greek philosophers were inspired by oriental teachings. There is no Greek knowledge or science, he claims, that cannot be traced to a predecessor in the Orient and therefore "[e]ven with such a strict concept, these oriental philosophemes would [...] deserve a place in the history of philosophy, at least as a preparation for philosophy proper" (Grubbe 1876, pp. 29–30). Unlike Hammarsköld, Grubbe unambiguously argues for Greek thought's dependence on oriental sources. In fact, he goes even further than this. Ultimately, he considers the strict definition of philosophy as "speculation in a scientific form" to be unsatisfactory. He instead proposes that our attempts to understand the concept of "philosophy" would be more productive if we focussed less on its form and more on its "content and object" (Grubbe 1876, p. 30). What really defines philosophy is therefore not the way in which it is practiced, but rather the *aim* or *idea* which regulates the practice.

With this understanding oriental teachings have an undeniable place in the history of philosophy. While, unlike their western counterpart, oriental teachings are presented in a mythological-religious form, they are still concerned with the most fundamental questions of philosophy. In fact, according to Grubbe, "in terms of profundity, many of the mythical philosophemes of the Orient surpass many of the Greek systems which generally are considered philosophical" (Grubbe 1876, p. 30). Compared to Højjer and Hammarsköld, Grubbe therefore clearly assumes a more positive stance towards oriental philosophy. Not only does he consider it the source of Greek thought – he also contends that it rivals Greek thought in terms of philosophical quality.

phy. His lectures on the history of practical philosophy were published posthumously in his collected works (Grubbe 1876). The sections in which he discusses oriental philosophy are however based on his lectures on the history of philosophy he already delivered in the 1810s and 20s (Grubbe n.d.). When sections quoted in this article are included in both versions, I refer to the page number of the printed edition.

On the basis of this viewpoint Grubbe presents his general periodisation of the history of philosophy. Given the understanding of philosophy as closely tied to the human spirit as such, the epochs of philosophy cannot be fundamentally different to the epochs of world history in general, he claims. These are the Asian, classical, medieval and modern epochs, and while all of them have their unique, distinct characteristics, they must be understood as moments in one continuous, organic development regulated by the same striving. “The research of all periods makes out a coherent whole, and no epoch in the history of philosophy must therefore be regarded as separate from the others” (Grubbe n.d., my translation). In this way, Asian philosophy is systematically included in the narrative of the history of philosophy.

This is also the case for Eric August Schröder, Grubbe’s colleague at Uppsala from 1836 onwards. Schröder was perhaps the most prolific Swedish historian of philosophy of his time. He lectured on the subject in a continuous series of lectures from autumn 1840 to spring 1844, and also published the second extensive Swedish textbook on the topic, *Handbok i filosofiens historia (Handbook of the History of Philosophy)*; Schröder 1846).²⁹ In it, we find the by now familiar arguments previously presented by Hammarsköld and Grubbe, notably that oriental thought should be understood as a mixture of reason and mythology, an “immediate Nature-wisdom” founded on religious contemplation. As such it does not “express an all-encompassing unity of reason” and “bear[s] traces of a lack of spiritual freedom.” Nonetheless, it is precisely in this mixture of reason and religious contemplation that the origins of philosophy must be identified. The Orient is therefore to be understood, not simply as the birthplace of philosophy, but of culture in general (Schröder 1846, p. 15).

For Schröder there can be no question that Greek culture was deeply influenced by the Orient. Although Greek polytheism might differ greatly from the oriental worship of nature and even though the “cheerful, bold humour” of the Greeks stand in sharp contrast to “the feeling of lack of freedom, of fearfulness, that more or less prevails in oriental religious systems and forms of culture” (Schröder 1846, pp. 79–80), Greek culture is “permeated with fundamental conceptions which, although they were independently developed by the Greek spirit, undeniably have an oriental origin” (Schröder 1846, p. 13).

Given Grubbe’s and Schröder’s lectures and Hammarsköld’s and Schröder’s textbooks on the topic, it is clear that by the mid-19th century, the idea of philosophy’s oriental origins had come to dominate Swedish philosophy.

²⁹ Schröder was still working on the last volume at the time of his death.

4.5 Hegelianism

Around the middle of the 19th century, the dominance of romanticism at Swedish universities had increasingly come to be challenged by Hegelianism. This was above all the case at Lund University where romanticism and phosphorism had been less influential than at Uppsala. Even so, the presence of Hegelianism was also felt at Uppsala where one of its most prominent champions, Fredrik Georg Afzelius, was an adjunct. Even though Afzelius frequently presented lectures on the history of philosophy, in what follows I look closely at one particular manuscript, dated 1866–79,³⁰ which offers a particularly detailed discussion of the topic of philosophy's origins.³¹

The manuscript presents a devout and orthodox Hegelianism. It starts with an account of previous works on the history of philosophy and concludes that Hegel and Aristotle are the only two thinkers who properly understood the concept of this subject. Before Hegel, Afzelius claims, most historians were mere material-gatherers – a task which, though important, should only be regarded as a *preparation* for the true history of philosophy. This true history consists in creating a continuous, organic whole from the given material. Apart from Aristotle and Hegel, no historian of philosophy has managed to grasp this goal, and Hegel therefore “has a fully justified claim as the developer and perfecter of the *scientific foundation* of the treatment of the history of philosophy” (Afzelius 1866–1879).³²

In his discussion of the work of earlier historians of philosophy, Afzelius strongly criticises the notion of an oriental philosophy. He traces its history back to the tradition of *prisca theologia*, which sought the roots of philosophy in divine revelation. This, he argues, led “historical research further astray from the real domains of history” as it gave rise to both “the discovery of so-called oriental philosophy” and to ideas of a “thitherto fully unknown ‘philosophia antediluviana,’ in which one of course expected to find the philosopher’s stone” (Afzelius 1866–1879, pp. 6–7; my translation). Afzelius leaves no room for doubt about his opinion on this view of the history of philosophy: “What has been called oriental philosophy is, in fact, no philosophy at all – and the orient with its so-called philosophy must be *completely excluded from the history of philosophy*” (Afzelius 1866–1879, p. 190; emphasis by Afzelius).

³⁰ The cover sheet added by the archivist states that the manuscript could possibly date back to 1844/45. In the context of this article, however, the exact date is not of central importance.

³¹ Afzelius also treated the history of philosophy in a number of other writings, both published and unpublished. See, for instance, Afzelius (1846).

³² Afzelius’ judgment of earlier historians is somewhat unfair. Before Hegel, a number of German idealists had already argued for the need of a systematic and organic history of philosophy in contrast to “mere compilations.” On this, see Reinhold (1791, p. 32) and Tennemann (1798, lxi).

His standpoint is supported by an argument that unfolds in two steps. Firstly, he presents a Hegelian theory on the condition of possibility for philosophy according to which philosophy only occurs when and where world Spirit returns to itself from its state of otherness. To be able to philosophise, "Spirit must be *free*, detached from its immediate naturality, its state of being-determined by nature in general" (Afzelius 1866–1879, p. 189). But since this freedom is only reached *after* the state of immediate naturality, determinedness, or otherness, the history of philosophy cannot begin at the same point as world history in general.

Secondly, Afzelius attempts to prove that oriental culture must be understood precisely as the stage in which Spirit finds itself determined by another. Thus, oriental culture is described in terms of despotic political rule in which only the patriarchal ruler is free. All other individuality, freedom and subjectivity is subsumed under this ruler so that the principle of oriental culture is therefore one of absolutism, or of "the One substance." Oriental individuals therefore do not possess the power of self-determination, or indeed self-consciousness:

Oriental consciousness is thus not self-consciousness, but consciousness of another that is alien to self-consciousness and rules over it.

This other is the One substance, which constitutes the absolute, the all-in-all, the infinite. (Afzelius 1866–1879, p. 190)

With this argument, Afzelius does not only aim to show that there is no oriental philosophy but to prove that the very concept of oriental philosophy is a contradiction in terms. It is worth noting, though, that Afzelius' highly negative description of the Orient is not in itself new to Swedish historiography of philosophy. On the contrary, the view of the Orient as despotic and absolutist is rather similar to Høijer's and Schröder's. In addition, his formal description of the Orient as a state of otherness resembles Høijer's description of how uncultivated reason finds the foundation of being in a supernatural subject beyond itself. The resulting difference therefore does not lie in the description of the Orient as much as in the philosophical and historiographical conclusions drawn from that characterisation. Unlike earlier Swedish idealists, Afzelius does not consider philosophy to be as old as humanity itself.

Also worth noting is that Afzelius does not claim the independence of Greek philosophy from its oriental predecessors. While there may not be any room for oriental philosophy in Afzelius narrative, in world history, the Orient nonetheless paves the way for the birth of philosophy in Greece. Afzelius could well have agreed with Høijer, Grubbe and Schröder that the root of philosophy lies in superstition and mythology – only with the Hegelian addition that philosophy must be understood as the *negation* of this root.

One may want to question whether Afzelius' arguments and conclusions are consistent with Hegel's historiography, but there can be no doubt that Afzelius himself considers his argument to be fully and consistently Hegelian and that Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy was his main source of inspiration.³³ Afzelius was not the only Swedish philosopher to argue in support of this Hegelian conception of the history of philosophy. At Lund University it gained an even stronger position through the work of Johan Jakob Borelius, professor of theoretical philosophy, 1866–1898. In his more than 30 years as professor, Borelius frequently lectured on the history of philosophy and like Afzelius, claimed that “a philosophical development is absent in the Orient.”³⁴ This standpoint had also been presented by another Lund Hegelian, namely the docent Johan Ernst Rietz (Rietz 1838).³⁵

It is clear that Swedish Hegelians were convinced by Hegel's arguments against the notion of an “oriental philosophy,” and that they made some effort to also convince their compatriots of them. Had the Hegelians managed to rise to dominance in Swedish academic philosophy, the exclusion of the Orient from the history of philosophy would most likely have established itself as the norm. The reason that this did not occur is because the Hegelians were quickly outmanoeuvred by another school of thought, the Boströmians.

4.6 Boströmianism

Christopher Jacob Boström studied philosophy at Uppsala University under Biberg and Grubbe before he became professor of practical philosophy there in 1842.³⁶ Boström's predecessors had generally advocated a rather eclectic form of romantic philosophy with influences from both Schelling and Jacobi. But Boström clearly had a different approach and formulated his own rationalist-idealist philosophical system. With Boström, then, Swedish philosophy developed in a direction

³³ Compare Hegel's discussion on the “Commencement of philosophy and its history” (Hegel 1995, pp. 94–99) and oriental philosophy (Hegel 1995, pp. 117–147). See also the chapter on “The Oriental world” in Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (Hegel 2007, pp. 111–224).

³⁴ See Borelius' lecture diary for October 1883 (‘Föreläsningsdiarier och studentförteckningar Lunds universitet’, n.d.).

³⁵ One of Borelius' former students, the docent Sven Wägner, would also publish a Swedish textbook on the history of philosophy titled *Filosofiens historia i sammandrag*. Though not a Hegelian himself, Wägner appears to have been influenced by the narrative presented by his former teacher. He does discuss ancient Chinese, Indian, Persian and Egyptian teachings, but concludes that neither of them “develop[ed] into philosophy in the real sense” (Wägner 1914, p. 7). Borelius clearly appreciated the work of Wägner. In the curriculum of 1888, it is listed as literature for Borelius' course on the history of philosophy (Akademiska föreningen 1888, p. 35).

³⁶ Boström occupied the professorial chair as deputy professor from the autumn of 1840 onwards.

which was somewhat independent from Germany. Although there can be no doubt that Boström was inspired by German idealist philosophy – perhaps above all by Schelling's philosophy of identity³⁷ – Boström believed that his own system went beyond all previous philosophies.³⁸

Central to Boström's thought is the concept of *personality*. For Boström, the highest personality is God or the Absolute, of which all other beings are limited expressions. Personalities therefore form a hierarchical system, but are at the same time all included in the highest personality. This highest personality is above the world of phenomena, and therefore independent of both time and space.³⁹

Boström's philosophy was highly influential at Swedish universities. From Sigurd Ribbing's appointment in 1849 to the end of the century, both professorial chairs in philosophy at Uppsala University were occupied by his followers. The dominance at Lund was less decisive, mainly because of Borelius' appointment in 1866. This meant that the Hegelian narrative about the history of philosophy exercised a more significant influence there. That said, Lund, too, had a number of prominent Boströmian professors and despite Borelius' criticism of the Boströmian system, neither he nor the other Hegelians managed to fundamentally challenge the dominance of Boströmianism at Swedish universities.⁴⁰

Compared to earlier professors at Uppsala, Boström did not devote many of his lectures to the history of philosophy. He taught the subject in 1840–41 but after that focused more on his own systems of ethics, philosophy of religion and philosophy of right. But this does not mean that the history of philosophy had become less important in academic philosophy. Rather, it indicates that the Boströmians, being a distinct school with a large number of followers, could also develop a certain division of labour. For instance, the history of philosophy was frequently named as topic in the lectures of Ribbing, Boström's colleague and devout follower in the chair of theoretical philosophy. Private lessons on the history of philosophy were also offered every semester by docent Pontus Wikner, and from time to time by Erik Olof Burman. At Lund, the subject was often taught by the Boströmian Johan Herman Leander.

This means that the Boströmians' teachings on the history of philosophy are not necessarily identical with the lectures Boström himself presented on the topic.

³⁷ Other influences that Boström and his followers tended to emphasise were Plato and Leibniz.

³⁸ The idea of Boström as the culmination of idealism was also presented by his follower Axel Nyblaeus in his overview of Swedish philosophy (Nyblaeus 1886).

³⁹ For more substantial introductions to Boström's philosophical system, see Nordin (1981) and Liedman (1991).

⁴⁰ A rather infamous confrontation between Borelius and Boström which occurred before Borelius gained his professorial chair is described by Nordin (1981).

In fact, the standardised text on which the Boströmians based their lectures was not written by Boström, but by Ribbing. That text is the compendium *Grundlinier till filosofiens historia* (*Outline of the History of Philosophy*; Ribbing 1864), which is listed as course literature in the curricula at both Uppsala and Lund.⁴¹ It is clear that this compendium also formed the basis of the lessons by Wikner, Burman and Leander; the available manuscripts based on their respective lectures all follow the same structure and contain only small differences in content. The following overview is based mainly on these sources, but also on manuscripts of the lectures by Boström himself (Boström n.d.; 1883).

The lecture manuscripts generally begin by offering a definition of philosophy as the science of the Absolute and the dependence of the relative thereupon (Ribbing 1864, p. 5; Leander n.d.; E. O. Burman 1884, p. 219). This is followed by a brief discussion of the nature of philosophy's history and a summary of the main historical forms of philosophy presented as a series of dual oppositions (realism and idealism, empiricism and rationalism et cetera). Finally, the main epochs of the history of philosophy are enumerated before the manuscripts continue to the actual historical exposition.

Regarding the structure and logic of the history of philosophy, the Boströmians are critical of Hegel. In his posthumously published lectures, Hegel had claimed that the historical development of philosophy follows the same basic structure as the logical development of thought.⁴² The Boströmians rejected this claim. For Pontus Wikner, for example, history belongs to the sphere of freedom and thus does not follow general rules that can be identified in advance (Wikner 1869, p. 12). Despite this stance, the Boströmians nonetheless ended up with a highly schematic description of how philosophy develops historically. Wikner and Leander both identify a pattern of progress, culmination, and regress, each epoch belonging to one of these movements (Wikner 1869; Leander n.d.). The tripartite structure is thus the main organising principle for their historiography.⁴³

Additionally, all Boströmians follow the same periodisation. As a first division, they distinguish between pagan and Christian thought. The first is further divided into three sub-periods: eastern thought or orientalism, Greek thought (sometimes

⁴¹ The student manuals emphasise, however, that this text is not suited for individual study but should rather be used in combination with oral lessons. The more extensive *Kollegium i filosofiens historia* by Wikner as well as an unprinted manuscript by Burman of which students circulated transcriptions, are also mentioned in Uppsala's student handbook of 1887.

⁴² Hegel's statement has been discussed by multiple scholars such as Fulda (2007) and Nuzzo (2003).

⁴³ Wikner and Leander further elaborate on the structure proposed by Ribbing, who distinguishes between progress and regress but does not present a third concept of culmination (Ribbing 1864, pp. 9–10).

referred to as “western thought”), and Alexandrine thought.⁴⁴ Following from the development scheme, orientalism is then characterised as a period of progress, classical Greek thought as the culmination, and Alexandrine thought as a regress. But despite Greek philosophy being referred to as a culmination, in practice it was often characterised as a *negation* of orientalism. Wikner writes:

Eastern and Western education (*bildning*) differ in that a) the Eastern is *purely naturalistic*, whereas the Western admittedly is naturalistic to a certain degree, but not purely: it is *anthropomorphic*. b) the Eastern is *directed towards unity*, so that diversity is suppressed, whereas the Western is *directed towards diversity*, so that unity is suppressed. From this it follows that Eastern education is more monotheistic, Western is more *polytheistic*. Furthermore, it follows that Eastern education is almost purely pantheistic, whereas Western education has the virtue of being able to grasp the divine in a more concrete manner. c) Eastern education is, at its peak, *religious doctrine*, whereas Western education rises to speculation. (Wikner 1869; my translation)

Implicitly, this opposition points towards the need for a higher unity. In fact, earlier in the manuscript Wikner defines system as “unity in difference” – in other words, unity of the tendencies of oriental and western thought.

This is indeed the way the Boströmians understood their own epoch. Boström himself, in the notes from his lectures written by Gustaf Wilhelm Gellerstedt, describes the current age as “[t]he period of universality,” whose character consists in “harmonious unity of the previous opposites [i.e. the eastern and western epochs]” (Boström n.d.; my translation).⁴⁵ Thus, the history of philosophy ends up following a type of dialectical development culminating in the unity of oriental and European philosophy. In this regard, the Boströmian schema of the history of philosophy bears a close resemblance to the narrative proposed by Ast and Rixner, as well as the Swedish romantics.

Despite this systematic inclusion of the Orient in the narrative, Boström remains rather ambiguous on the question of the philosophical value of oriental thought. In the short manuscript *Schema af filosofiens historia* (*Scheme of the*

⁴⁴ I have only found one exception to the inclusion of oriental philosophy as a distinct epoch, namely Wikner (1867, p. 26). However, Wikner here describes neo-Platonism as an attempt to unite Greek philosophy and “oriental (natural, mystical) elements”.

⁴⁵ The manuscript, which predates Ribbing’s *Grundlinier*, follows a somewhat different periodisation than the one the Boströmians would later use. Three main periods are mentioned: the period of unity (or the period of oriental, Asian and ancient European [*forneuropeisk*] education), the period of particularity (or of European education) and the period of universality.

History of Philosophy),⁴⁶ he refers to “oriental thought” but to “Greek philosophy”, thereby implying that the oriental period did not reach the stage of true philosophy (Boström 1883; my translation and emphasis).⁴⁷ And on the question of how the Orientals influenced Greek culture and education, his standpoint is closely related to that of Meiners and Boëthius. Discussing the “reason for the emergence [of classical Greek philosophy]”, he writes: “Perhaps from the Orient? No, for it has a wholly different tendency. Whereas orientalism is supported by divine authority and is more symbolic-allegorical, the doctrine of the Greeks is more humane and atheist” (Boström n.d.).

Nonetheless, this independency of Greek thought from oriental influence does not lead Boström to exclude the oriental epoch from his general narrative. On this issue, his position differs from German historians on both sides of the orientalism-debate in the historiography of philosophy. While the Boströmians do not without reservation share the romantics’ positive view of the Orient, they follow the romantics in systematically including the Orient in the general narrative.

5 Discussion

Among German historians of philosophy, the idea of philosophy’s Greek origins was relatively widespread in the 19th century, but it was not unanimously accepted. Rather, it was repeatedly challenged and criticised from a multitude of perspectives. However, as I argued in the introduction to this article, German 19th-century historians broke away from earlier narratives in another important respect, namely they rejected the concept of barbarian philosophy and replaced it with the concept of oriental or eastern philosophy. This conceptual displacement appears to have occurred quickly and with little or no debate. Nonetheless, it would fundamentally reshape the view of the history of philosophy in both Germany and in Sweden.

Swedish philosophers of the 19th century were without doubt much influenced by their German counterparts. Philosophical debates in Sweden frequently refer to the latest developments in Germany and it was therefore crucial for Swedish

⁴⁶ The manuscript exists in several handwritten transcripts and is also included in Boström’s collected works. However, the form of this manuscript indicates that it was in fact written down by Ribbing. As the intellectual historian Sven-Eric Liedman has shown, Ribbing attended most of Boström’s lectures during the 1840s and edited them into manuscripts with a distinct structure. This structure, which Liedman describes as a taxonomy or catechism, was then circulated among and transcribed by students (Liedman, pp. 165–166).

⁴⁷ Similarly, Wikner refers to “Oriental religious opinions” but to “Greek religious-philosophical education” (Wikner 1896).

professors to follow German publications closely.

The same is true of the historiography of philosophy from Boëthius onwards. Boëthius raised interest in this field precisely by introducing a German debate to the Swedish audience and after that, all Swedish historians of philosophy show a high degree of familiarity with the state of their subject in German-speaking Europe. They read Fülleborn, Tiedemann, Tennemann, Ast and Hegel and imported the methodological and theoretical concepts of these thinkers.

Swedish philosophers were also aware of the German debates on the origins of philosophy. These debates are explicitly discussed in a number of Swedish manuscripts, and implicit references are made to them in an even greater number of writings. But Swedish philosophers did not regard the question as already decided. Rather, the idea of philosophy's Greek origin was considered only one of multiple possible explanations. As I have demonstrated, Swedish philosophers generally ended up rejecting this narrative so that after Boëthius, only devout Hegelians continued to defend it.

What is universally accepted by Swedish philosophers is, instead, the distinction between oriental and occidental philosophy. Unlike the question of philosophy's origins, the distinction between Orient and Occident is never questioned or discussed; it is taken for granted and marks an analytical premise rather than a subject of examination. By way of conclusion, I briefly turn to the meaning of this distinction and summarise the ways in which it was deployed as a principle of historical periodisation.

5.1 The Concept of Oriental Philosophy

The general understanding of oriental philosophy displays remarkable stability throughout the 19th century Swedish historiography of philosophy. Characterisations by Höijer in 1795 are repeated with no notable revisions by Ribbing and Wikner a hundred years later. The most important aspects of this understanding can be summarised as follows. Firstly, oriental thought is not characterised by the free use of reason but rather by a reason subsumed under mythology and superstition. In the Orient, there is thus no clear distinction between philosophy and religion. We have already seen, for example, how Höijer considers superstition "the first seed of all philosophy". Secondly and as a consequence, philosophy is not considered a *public* matter in the Orient but is practiced only by a minority of priests and rulers, firmly kept away from the wider body of citizens. Thus, Schröder considers a certain "lack of freedom" as characteristic of oriental thought – a lack of freedom frequently also contrasted with Greek culture by philosophers such as Höijer and Hammarsköld. Thirdly, all oriental thought has a pantheistic tendency.

In the Orient, there is a lack of distinctions, be it between matter and spirit, God and world, or the temporal and eternal

It should be noted that all three main characteristics of oriental philosophy can be evaluated in a number of different ways. On the one hand, the fundamental unity of oriental thought is often praised since such unity is, after all, also the goal of idealist system philosophy. On the other hand, the same unity can be criticised for lacking inner distinctions, for being undeveloped; it is not yet the “unity-in-difference” that according to the Boströmians characterises the true philosophical system.

When it comes to the relation between philosophy and religion in the Orient, interpretations follow a clear line of conflict between idealism and romanticism. For the idealist Höijer, philosophy must free itself from its religious chains – only through the distinction between philosophy and religion can reason start to examine its own laws and principles. For the romantics, on the other hand, the unity between philosophy and religion is instead a lost ideal that the contemporary era must strive to re-establish. Boströmians took a somewhat more ambiguous stance, but generally repeated the romantic idea of the need for a unity of western and eastern thought.

An additional debate concerned the influence of Orientals on the Greeks. Here, the line of conflict is somewhat more difficult to discern. Höijer describes the Greeks as clearly influenced by the Orientals; it was from the east that they received the material for their own thought. Grubbe argues the same position in even stronger terms. Boström, on the other hand, shared Meiners' view that the Greeks developed their thinking independently of any external influence. As we have seen, however, this does not lead Boström to exclude the Orient from his historical periodisation. On the other side of the spectrum, we find Afzelius, who does indeed exclude the Orient from the history of philosophy but without denying its influence on ancient Greek culture. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there was also the debate about whether or not oriental thought is to be considered true philosophy. Boëthius was the first Swedish philosopher to take a clear stance in this debate: without reservations, he supported Meiners' rejection of the concept of an oriental philosophy. Afzelius reached the same conclusion with reference to Hegel rather than Meiners.

Grubbe is of a different opinion. He concedes that in a strict sense philosophy can only refer to reason independent of religion. However, he argues, even when we use such a definition must oriental thought be considered an important part of the development of philosophy. Furthermore, he prefers a wider concept of philosophy which does not emphasise the distinction from religion. If we use such a definition, oriental thought has an obvious and natural place in the history of

philosophy. Finally, he argues, regardless of which definition we choose, oriental myths and stories have an unquestionable philosophical value.

Among 19th-century Swedish philosophers Grubbe stands out as the one most sympathetic to oriental philosophy. Boström and his followers have a more ambiguous stance regarding the question of whether oriental culture is truly philosophical. In their manuscripts, they generally refer to the epoch of “oriental forms of education” rather than oriental philosophy. At first glance, this stance may seem closely related to that of Tennemann and Hegel. The important difference is that, unlike the Boströmiens, neither Tennemann nor Hegel raised oriental thought to the status of epoch in the history of philosophy.

5.2 Conclusion

In this article, I attempted to offer a general overview of how the category of oriental philosophy was treated in Swedish histories of philosophy during the 19th century. It is clear that opinions on the Orient and the philosophical value of oriental cultures greatly varied among Swedish academic philosophers. But for all their differences, Swedish philosophers generally agreed on the usefulness of “orientalism” as a concept of periodisation in the history of philosophy. I would argue that this concept is crucial for understanding the development of historiography of philosophy during this period. Furthermore, I believe that this usefulness likely extends beyond the Swedish context and may, for example, also be fruitfully applied to analyses of developments in Germany.

This article mainly examined *how* Swedish historians of philosophy defined and discussed oriental thought. A further question which deserves attention is *where* they acquired their understanding of the Orient *from*. While this question cannot be exhaustively answered here, it can be noted that oriental studies was an expanding field of research during the 19th century. The works of oriental philologists, anthropologists and general historians were a main source of knowledge for historians of philosophy. However, further empirical studies on transfers of knowledge between orientalist and historians of philosophy are needed.

Regardless of its sources, however, the concept of “oriental thought” appears as a new category of periodisation in the 19th century. As I argued here, the idea about oriental philosophy marks a conceptual shift: it gained ground at the expense of the older concept of barbarian philosophy and ultimately replaced that concept altogether. What is at stake in 19th-century historiography of philosophy is therefore a geographical reorganisation of philosophy’s past, and this reorganisation fundamentally altered the conditions under which the origins of philosophy were discussed. As we proceed to rethink philosophy’s history in global perspec-

tives, it is of crucial importance that we historicise and critically re-examine these conditions.

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Overview of Ancient Chinese Historiography of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT | As a recently developed field of inquiry, the history of Chinese-language historiography of philosophy prioritizes studies of the history of Chinese philosophy since the 20th century. Relevant studies prior to the 20th century, mainly written in ancient Chinese, are highly marginalized. The historiography of philosophy in a global perspective attaches great importance to different expressions and frames of what is commonly referred to as “philosophy and history of philosophy”, thereby providing the essential theoretical support for the reconstruction of an ancient Chinese historiography of philosophy. This article outlines the historiography of ancient Chinese philosophy in order to present its basic characteristics in terms of approaches, methods and styles.¹

KEYWORDS | Historiography of Ancient Chinese Philosophy; Global Perspective; Line of the Way; Female Philosophy

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As a recently developed field, the *History of Chinese Philosophical Historiography* (Zhongguo Zhexueshixue Shi, 中國哲學史學史) focuses on the study of the historiography of Chinese philosophy since the 20th century while works predating the 20th century, written predominantly in ancient Chinese, are highly marginalized. For instance, Chai Wenhua's *Historiography of Chinese Philosophical History* (2018, Zhongguo Zhexueshixue Shi, 中國哲學史學史) is dedicated to the historiography of Chinese philosophy but considers it a field which only developed in the 20th century. Despite his attempts to include earlier traditions in his study, Wenhua is reluctant to refer to these as philosophical, instead framing them as part of the prehistory of Chinese philosophical historiography in the sense of a historiography of learned thought (Xueshu Sixiangshi, 學術思想史). (柴/Chai 2018, p. 5)

The Reinhart Koselleck project at the German University of Hildesheim, *Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective*, is devoted to different expressions and conceptualizations of what is called *philosophy and history of philosophy*. It thereby widens the scope for the exploration of a historiography of philosophy in ancient languages. As a result, the possibility of reconstructing historiographies of ancient Chinese philosophy gains substantial theoretical support. In what follows, I present the outlines of historiography of ancient Chinese philosophy and present their basic features in terms of approaches, methods and styles.

I

But first, the crucial question about the origin of philosophical historiography in the Chinese-speaking world needs to be addressed. Existing studies suggest that the earliest historical accounts of Chinese philosophy can be traced back to the pre-Qin period (Xianqin Shiqi, 先秦時期) (before 221 BCE), and as such comprises the early stage of the Chinese tradition of thought. (Elberfeld 2017, p. 10; 柴/Chai 2018, p. 20). The pre-Qin period is often considered to have been one in which Chinese thought reached an early peak which saw the emergence of numerous schools of thought such as Confucianism (Rujia, 儒家), Daoism (Daojia, 道家), Mohism (Moja, 墨家), Legalism (Fajia, 法家), the School of Names (Mingjia, 名家) and the Eclectic School (Zajia, 雜家). Against this background, the description and evaluation of thinkers and schools of thought also developed. These descriptions were mainly fragmentary and often appeared in the form of single chapters, paragraphs, sentences or even just words. Previous studies (柴/Chai 2018, pp. 20–23; Gentz 2012, p. 62) consider the following texts the earliest beginnings of a Chinese history of philosophy: *Under Heaven* (Tianxia, 天下) in *Zhuangzi* (Zhuangzi,

庄子) (350 BCE–250 BCE), *Criticism of Twelve Philosophers* (Fei shi'er zi, 非十二子) in the *Xunzi* (Xunzi, 荀子) (475 BCE–221 BCE) and *Prominent Teaching* (Xianxue, 顯學) in the *Hanfeizi* (Hanfeizi, 韓非子) (475 BCE–221 BCE).² *Under Heaven* is regarded by most as the first description of Chinese learned thought to have come down to us (Cf. 柴/Chai, 20th ed.) Written from a Daoist perspective this work dealt with contemporary doctrines such as Daoism, Confucianism, Mohism and the School of Names while *Criticism of Twelve Philosophers* was not only devoted to a critique of twelve forms of thought including Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism and the School of Names but also praised of the contribution of Confucius and his disciples to the unity of the nation and the welfare of the people. *Prominent Teaching* dealt with the lines of development of Confucianism and Mohism and, as the title suggests, for the first time considered the two schools of thought part of prominent teachings (柴/Chai 2018, p. 23).

Stylistically, these works stand out as theoretical treatises characterized by argumentation and logic and as such their importance for the reconstruction of an ancient Chinese historiography of philosophy is self-evident. However, if the criteria were limited to works that offered a theoretical account, there would be a danger of overlooking those works which better characterize ancient Chinese philosophy. Historically, Chinese thought was primarily pragmatic and practical. Therefore, it was common practice for classical writings on a particular topic to record the words and deeds of practitioners such as monarchs, courtiers, officials, politicians, reformers, diplomats and military strategists alongside those of scholars. Moreover, a prevailing attitude of Chinese scholars toward knowledge was to put what they had learned into practice so that theoretical works could eventually contribute to practice. As a result, a purely theoretical exploration of knowledge did not develop widely in the Chinese tradition, as can be seen from the widespread criticism of the short-lived pre-Qin School of Names which emphasized logic and linguistic analysis.

Based on this, it would be useful and significant to attempt a new reconstruction of a historiography of ancient Chinese philosophy, an expanded historiography which would, in addition to theoretical treatises, also include works with practical and pragmatic features such as the compilation of the regulations of court ceremonies, labels, customs and norms of social behavior found in the pre-Qin *Book of Rites* (Liji, 禮記, chap. 3, 9, 5, 11, etc.) (475 BCE–221 BCE); the outline of the lives, deeds, words and the governing ideology of monarchs of early antiquity (Yao, Shun, Yu) in the *Book of Deeds* (Shang Shu, 尚書, chapters 1, 2, 3, etc.) (772 BCE–476 BCE); the account of the labels, laws and military rules of earlier eras (Xia,

² Dating is based on the *Chinese Text Project* (<https://ctext.org/>).

Shang, Zhou) in *The Methods of Sima* (Si Ma Fa, 司馬法, ch. 2) (772 BCE–221 BCE) and the description of the sacrificial ceremonies of the past twelve rulers on the sacred mountain Tai (ch. 50) and the strategies of rulers in earlier epochs (chs. 64, 79, 84, etc.) in the *Book of Guanzi* (Guanzi, 管子) (475 BCE–220 CE).

II

Today, literature, history and philosophy are the three basic disciplines in the humanities and social sciences in China. In ancient China, however, there were no such distinctions. On the contrary, the three fields were essentially intertwined in intellectual discourses. As a result, descriptions of ancient Chinese philosophy can also be found in history books and literary works and the approaches are both historical and literary. This is an important feature of early historiography of philosophy in ancient China. In addition, the following two characteristics of ancient Chinese philosophy should be given special attention.

First, narrative styles in the early period were very diverse and included, among others, dialogue, proverb, anecdote, parable, myth, legend, document, conference report, hagiography and rhapsody. As one of the most important literary forms in ancient China, dialogue served as an intersection between oral practices and canonical writings. According to Reinhard Emmerich (2004), the emergence of dialogue as genre can be considered the birth of Chinese philosophical literature.³ An outstanding example of this genre is *Conversations* (Lunyu, 論語) (480 BCE–350 BCE), a compilation of Confucius' doctrinal collections and conversations. Throughout the work one finds commentaries on individuals and their deeds. These include Confucius' assessments of his disciples, other thinkers (such as Guanzhong, Yan Pingzhong and Zuo Qiuming), certain personalities (such as rulers, ministers, scholars, sages and hermits), his disciples' assessments of Confucius, Confucius' self-assessment, disciples' assessments of each other and so on. Allegorical stories and fables were also common forms at the time. *The Book of Liezi* (列子) (475 BCE–221 BCE) (particularly chapters 1, 2, 4, and 6) is a classic of Daoist literature and consists of a series of allegorical stories and parables featuring Confucians, Daoists, Mohists and dialecticians. As a record of mythologies and geographies, *Classics of Mountains and Seas* (Shan Hai Jing, 山海經) (475 BCE–220

³ "The starting point of the philosophical literature are the early sections of the *Analecks*, probably going back to the 5th century BCE, in whose brief dialogues the practice of oral instruction is reflected. The works of the late 5th and then 4th centuries BCE –the core chapters of the *Mozi*, the 'inner' chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, and *Mencius* –are also largely organized in dialogue. Only texts of the late 4th and then 3rd centuries BCE –*Xunzi*, *Han Feizi*, younger layers of *Mozi* and *Zhuangzi*, the *Guodian* manuscripts – reveal a systematic layout and argumentation." (Emmerich 2004, p. 47).

CE) is also important for the study of Chinese thought in early antiquity because it contains a description of about 40 countries, 100 historical figures and 400 goddesses, spirits and monsters. It is important to note that it was not uncommon for philosophical histories to cite theses without naming the associated thinkers or schools of thought. Moreover, Chinese thinkers often focused on describing the thoughts of others and cared little whether or not they accurately represented the original sources. Combined, these pose challenges to the reconstruction of ancient Chinese philosophy, so that when using referring to these historical sources one must constantly turn to the original works cited or the relevant history books to verify their accuracy. Among many examples, the following is illustrative. In *Xunzi* (荀子) (475 BCE–221 BCE) (chap. 8) it is written: “How fullness and emptiness replace each other, or how hard and white, similarity and dissimilarity are distinguished, are things which sharp ears do not hear, sharp eyes cannot see, and about which experienced debaters cannot speak” (若夫充虛之相施易也，堅白同異之分隔也，是聽耳之所不能聽也，明目之所不能見也，辯士之所不能言也). In this instance, the distinction between hard and white (Li Jian Bai, 離堅白) refers to a thesis advanced by Gongsun Long (公孫龍) (320 BCE–250 BCE), a representative of the School of Names, even though his name does not appear.⁴ According to *Gongsun Long* (Gongsun Longzi, 公孫龍子) (475 BCE–221 BCE) (ch. 5), if a stone is hard and white, one cannot judge with one’s eyes alone whether it is hard, but only that it is white. By the same token, one cannot determine by hand whether it is white, but only that it is hard. Accordingly, there are either white or hard stones in the world, but no stones which are both white and hard.

Second, historical accounts of people and events can, in a sense, be considered part of a philosophical historiography. A typical example is the Confucian classic *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu, 春秋), an official chronicle of Confucius’ home state of Lu from 722 BCE to 481 BCE. Traditionally, this work is attributed to Confucius and consists of short entries on courtly, diplomatic and martial events. While these descriptions do not appear to be related to philosophy they nonetheless express Confucian thoughts on political, social and ethical issues in a subtle form. In that sense, this work could be considered a philosophical historiography which combines a Confucian perspective with historical narrative. The three later history books which comment on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* could then be described as one of the earliest forms of ancient Chinese philosophical historiography. The first of these, *Notes of Zuo on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu Zuo Zhuan, 春秋左傳) (468 BCE–300 BCE), is traditionally attributed to

⁴ The same method of describing the School of Names is also found in chapter 41 of *Hanfeizi* and chapter 17 of *Spring and Autumn of Lü Bu We*.

Zuo Qiuming (左丘明, 556 BCE–451 BCE) and is considered a classic for the study of the intellectual history of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu Shidai, 春秋時代) (770 BCE–476 BCE). It is a history book that not only comments on the work of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* but also describes events not covered in them. The second work, *Guliang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu Guliang Zhuan, 春秋穀梁傳) (206 BCE–9 CE) and the third work, *Gongyang's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun Qiu Gongyang Zhuan, 春秋公羊傳) (206 BCE–9 CE), traditionally attributed to Guliang Chi (穀梁赤, ?–?) and Gongyang Gao (公羊高, ?–?) respectively, are both historical books as well as commentaries on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

III

The Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) represented a turning point in the historiography of ancient Chinese philosophy. On the one hand, the basic features of the historiography of pre-Qin philosophy discussed here –fragmentation, stylistic diversity, integration of literature, history and philosophy –continued into this epoch, as reflected, for instance, in *Master of Huainan* (Huainanzi, 淮南子) (206 BCE–9 CE). Theoretically based on Daoist thought of the pre-Qin period, this encyclopedia of human life and the universe integrates, among others, Confucianism, the Yin-Yang school, Mohism, the School of Names and Legalism. In particular, the six classics of Confucianism, namely the *Book of Songs* (詩經, Shijing), the *Book of Deeds* (尚書, Shangshu), the *Book of Rites* (禮記, Liji), the *Book of Music* (樂記, Yueji), *I-Ging* (易經, Yijing) and *Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋, Chunqiu) are described and critically engaged. In terms of genres, we are presented with a combination of poetry, prose, dialogue, sayings, story, myth and anecdote. Chapter 21 offers both an explanation of the motif and structure of the work as well as a summary description of the development of Confucianism, Mohism, the school of diplomats, legalism and their interrelationships.

On the other hand, the emergence of imperial catalogs contributed significantly to advances in the categorization and canonization of philosophical writings. As Emmerich (2002, p. 45) points out, “[m]ore than the philosophical debates of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE themselves, therefore, the imperial catalog shaped the canonization of early texts and their doctrinal differences”. The work *Classified Catalogues* (Bie Lu, 別錄; after 26 BCE) is considered to be the earliest, comprehensive and official Chinese catalog book produced by the imperial order. The holdings of the imperial library were cataloged under 6 domains, 38 classes, 603 families and 13 219 volumes, and includes the titles of books, number of items

and volumes, names of the authors with short biographies, the meaning of book titles, origin of the books, type of book, the process of compilation and the evaluation of the books. Another catalog book, *Seven Territories* (Qilüe, 七略; 6 BCE–5 BCE), is a summary of the work *Classified Catalog* and is divided into seven domains: *Book Catalogs* (Jilüe, 輯略), *Six Arts* (Liuyilüe, 六藝略), *Scholars* (Zhuzilüe, 諸子略), *Songs and Rhapsodies* (Shifulüe, 詩賦略), *Military Works* (Bingshulüe, 兵書略), *Cosmological and Prognostic Techniques* (Shushulüe, 數術略) and *Pharmaceutical and Medical Practice* (Fangjilüe, 方技略). Among these, the domain of *Scholars* is considered one of the earliest classified catalogs of Chinese philosophical writings. It divides the various Chinese schools of thought into ten traditions, namely Confucianism, Daoism, the Yin-Yang School, Legalism, the School of Names, Mohism, the School of Diplomacy, Syncretism, Agrarianism and the School of Side Talks. Despite the priority given to Confucianism in the late Western Han period, this categorization still offers an inclusive overview of other schools of thought.

During the Han period, a historical account of philosophical thought was frequently included in history books, which became one of the most important ways of preserving works of ancient Chinese philosophy. In addition, the genre of biography was significantly developed during this period.

The book *Records of the Chronicler* (Shiji, 91 BCE) by Sima Qian (司馬遷) is considered the first general historical work devoted to historical persons in the form of biographies. In China, the genre of biography is

essentially the portrayal of a person as a member of a particular group. Biographies are always found in collections of biographies, never in isolation. They function in a web of biographical references to other biographies and must be read as such. (Gentz 2012, p. 62)

In Sima Qian's work, various types of biographies can be found; those of individual thinkers (e.g., volume 85, *Biography of Lü Buwei* / 呂不韋列傳), joint biographies of multiple thinkers (e.g. volume 63, *Biographies of Laozi and Han Fei* / 老子韓非列傳) and class biographies (e.g. volume 67, *Biographies of Confucius' disciples* / 仲尼弟子列傳 and volume 121, *Biographies of Confucians* / 儒林列傳). In a sense, the *Biographies of Confucians* can be seen as an overview of the development of Confucianism in the early Han dynasty (柴/Chai 2018, p. 30). The final volume (no. 130) contains an autobiography of the author, a description of the process of creating the work and a brief overview of each chapter. It is worth mentioning that the *Treatise on the Essence of the Six Schools* (Lun Liujia Yaozhi, 論六家要旨), written by the author's father, *Sima Tan* (司馬談), is cited here. The teachings of the pre-Qin period are divided into six schools: the Yin Yang School, Confucianism, Mohism, the School of Names, Legalism and Daoism. Daoism is highly valued,

which is consistent with the official approach of the early Western Han dynasty to honor *Huanglao Daoism* (Huanglao Zhi Xue, 黃老之學; 柴/Chai 2018, p. 26)

The biography genre, initiated by *Records of the Chronicler*, was elaborated on in a great number of official Chinese dynastic history books.⁵ The book *History of the Han Dynasty* (Han Shu, 漢書; 92 CE) is an official history book in the form of an annal of biographies which cover the history of Han dynasties from 206 BC–23 CE. In terms of the method of philosophical historiography it continues the tradition of *Shiji* and includes individual biographies of scholars of the period such as *Biography of Jia Yi* (賈誼傳; vol. 48), the *Biography of Dong Zhongshu* (董仲舒傳; vol. 56), the *Biography of Sima Xiangru* (司馬相如傳; vol. 57), the *Biography of Sima Qian* (司馬遷傳; vol. 62), the *Biography of Dongfang Shuo* (東方朔; volume 65) and the *Biography of Yang Xiong* (揚雄; volume 87). Volume 30, *Treatise on Art and Literature* (Yi Wen Zhi, 藝文志), is a bibliography of Chinese writings whose method of categorization is largely based on the Seven Areas text, although the seven areas are reduced to six: *Six Arts, Scholars, Songs and Rhapsodies, Military Works, Cosmological and Prognostic Techniques and Pharmaceutical and Medical Practice*. As in *Seven Areas*, the area of *Scholars* includes the same ten schools, namely Confucianism, Daoism, the Yin-Yang School, Legalism, the School of Names, Mohism, the School of Diplomacy, Syncretism, Agrarianism, and the School of Side Talks. That said, a high regard for Confucianism dominates the discussions (Cf. 柴/Chai 2018, 31f.).

III

The earliest monograph of philosophical historiography that focused on a particular domain of thought is found in Buddhist writings. From the Wei, Jin as well as

⁵ For example, the *Biographies of the Confucians* (Rulin Liezhuan, 儒林列傳) in the *History of the Han Dynasty* (Han Shu, 漢書; 92 CE.), the *History of the Later Han* (Hou Hanshu, 後漢書; 445 CE), the *History of the Jin Dynasty* (Jin Shu, 晉書; 648 CE), the *History of the Liang Dynasty* (Liang Shu, 梁書; 636 CE), the *History of the Chen Dynasty* (Chen Shu, 陳書; 636 CE), the *History of the Wei Dynasty* (Wei Shu, 魏書; 554 CE), the *Book of the Northern Qi Dynasty* (Bei Qi Shu, 北齊書; 636 CE), the *History of the Northern Zhou Dynasty* (Zhou Shu, 周書; 636 CE), the *History of the Sui Dynasty* (Sui Shu, 隋書; 636 CE), the *History of the Southern Dynasties* (Nan Shi, 南史; 659 CE), the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (Bei Shi, 北史; 659 CE), the *History of the Song Dynasty* (Song Shi, 宋史; 1345 CE), the *History of the Ming Dynasty* (Ming Shi, 明史; 1739 CE), the *New History of the Yuan Dynasty* (Xin Yuan Shi, 新元史; 1919 CE), the *Outline of a History of the Qing Dynasty* (Qingshi Gao, 清史稿; 1928 CE), the *Biography of Confucianism* (Ruxue Zhuan, 儒學傳) in the *Ancient History of the Tang Dynasty* (Jiu Tangshu, 舊唐書; 945 CE), the *New History of the Tang Dynasty* (Xin Tangshu, 新唐書; 1060 CE), the *History of the Yuan Dynasty* (Yuan Shi, 元史; 1370 CE), the *Biography of Daoism in the History of the Song Dynasty* (Song Shi, 宋史; 1345 CE) and the *Biographies of Buddhists and Daoists* (Shi Lao Zhuan, 釋老傳) in the *History of the Yuan Dynasty* (Yuan Shi, 元史; 1370 CE).

Southern and Northern dynasties (魏晉南北朝; 265–589 CE) to the Sui and Tang dynasties (隋唐; 581–960 CE), Buddhism was widespread in China, as a result of which many Buddhist biographies appeared, with one of the goals being “to establish orthodox lines of transmission” (Gentz 2012, 62). Among these is the *Collection of Reports on the Translated Tripitaka* (Chu Sanzang Jiji, 出三藏記集) of Sengyou (僧祐) from the Liang dynasty (梁朝; 502–557 CE). This work is predominantly a collection and catalogue of Buddhist scriptures (Jinglu, 經錄). It contains the biographies of more than 32 monks involved in the translation of Buddhist works. Several authors, including Hui Jiao (慧皎; 497–554 CE), Dao Xuan (道宣; 596–667 CE), Zan Ning (讚寧; 919–1001 CE) and Ru Xing (如惺; n.d.) had written works entitled *Biographies of Famous Buddhist Monks* (Gaoseng Zhuan, 高僧傳). Among them, Hui Jiao’s work, which includes descriptions of the contributions of 257 Buddhist monks to the development of Buddhism, from its introduction to China to the Northern Wei dynasty (北魏) (385–535 CE), is considered an influential work. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, an increasing variety of Buddhist sects emerged, which also contributed to the production of such historical accounts. Examples include the *Biography of the Lotus Sutra* (Fahuajing Zhuanji, 法華經傳記) of the Tiantai sect (Tiantai Zong, 天台宗), the *Biography of the Avatamsaka Sutra* (Huayanjing Zhuanji, 華嚴經傳記) of the Huayan sect (Huayan Zong, 華嚴宗) and the *Biography of Baolin* (Baolin Zhuan, 寶林傳) of the Chan sect (Chan Zong, 禪宗). As the earliest existing history of Chan Buddhism, *Baolin’s Biography* contains stories about 28 ancestors of the Western Paradise (Xitian, 西天) and 6 ancestors of the Eastern Lands (Dongtu, 東土; Cf. 柴/Chai 2018, p. 34). From the Song dynasties (兩宋時期) (960–1279 CE), the text *Record of the Lamp* (Deng Lu, 燈錄) exemplifies an important genre of Chan Buddhist historiography, one which stylistically combines biographies with collections of doctrines and chronologic descriptions of the words and deeds of Buddhist monks (Cf. 柴/Chai 2018, 36). One of the earliest such works is *Jing De Records on the Transmission of the Lamp* (Jide Chuandenglu, 景德傳燈錄; 1004 CE), which consists of 1 701 biographies of Chan patriarchs and famous Buddhist monks. Another work, *The Compendium of the Five Lamps* (Wudeng Huiyuan, 五燈會元; 1252 CE), is divided into different volumes according to *Five Teachings and Seven Schools* (Wujia Qizong, 五家七宗) in order to show the lineages of Chan Buddhism. About this genre, Genz (2012, p. 62) comments:

[Biographies] represent norms of exemplary lives in social references that are meant to serve readers as points of reference for their own lives. At the same time, through the genealogical and social references, they construct contexts of tradition that can be binding for the readers. We find the same in Confucian biography collections

from the 12th century onward, which from then on claim to trace the transmission of right doctrine (daotong 道統).

In terms of the continuation of right doctrine, the work *Records of Yiluo Origins* (Yiluo Yuan Yuan Lu, 伊洛淵源錄; 1173 CE) by Zhu Xi (朱熹) occupies a seminal place. This work aims to establish Cheng-Zhu-Lixue (程朱理學) as a right doctrine through a description of the words and deeds of Zhou Dunyi (周敦頤), Cheng Yi (程顥), Cheng Hao (程顥) and their disciples. Under its influence, many works on the history of Lixue (理學) appeared, among which Zhou Rudeng's (周汝登) *Orthodox Transmission of Sacred Learning* (Shengxue Zongzhuan, 聖學宗傳) and Sun Qifeng's (孫奇逢) *Orthodox Transmission of Lixue* (Lixue Zongzhuan, 理學宗傳) had the most significant influence. While the former describes 89 historical figures and Confucian scholars in order to establish the orthodox status of the contemporary Yangming School (陽明心學) in Confucianism, the latter is devoted to 170 Confucian scholars from different dynasties in order to establish a lineage of transmission of Confucianism.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties (明清時期; 1368–1912 CE), a new genre, the *Scholarly Cases* (xue'an 學案), emerged with its more comprehensive structure, signaling a high point of ancient Chinese philosophical historiography. Usually, a work classified as a scholarly case includes biographies of scholars, records of their words, deeds, writings and relevant commentaries by others. In describing the origin and lineage of a particular school of thought, special attention is paid to the line of transmission that constitutes it, thereby providing an authentic and detailed source for the study of the history of Chinese thought in different dynasties. In this regard, Huang Zongxi's (黃宗羲) *Scholarly Cases of the Ming Dynasty* (Mingru Xue'an, 明儒學案; 1676 CE) is considered a representative work devoted to the history of philosophical thought in the Ming period. Included in this book are 17 scholarly cases, consisting mainly of an overview of the schools of thought as well as biographies and collections of doctrines of the scholars along with commentaries. One of the foci of the text is the origin and development of the Yang Ming school. More than 200 Ming scholars are presented in chronological order, detailing the transmission of their teachings. Another significant work is the *Scholarly Cases of the Song-Yuan Dynasties* (Song-Yuan Xue'an, 宋元學案; 1838 CE), written by Huang Zongxi and updated by Huang Baijia (黃百家) and Quan Zuwang (全祖望). This work consists of 87 scholarly cases and introduces more than 2,000 scholars of the Song-Yuan period. Because of its description and evaluation of the origins and lines of development of the schools of thought of the Song and Yuan dynasties, this work is considered significant for the study of the history of philosophical thought of the period.

IV

It is commonly held that women's education was not well developed in ancient China due to millennia of oppression by a Confucian-based patriarchal system, with the result that there were hardly any learned women (see Graness in this volume). But this is a misconception. On the contrary, women created a large number of philosophical works in ancient China. The real problem is that these works have not been adequately studied. Hu Wenkai's (胡文楷) work *Investigation of Works by Women in Past Dynasties* (Lidai Funü Zhuzuokao, 歷代婦女著作考), first published in 1957 and revised in 1985, is the most complete catalogue of works by women to date and the first study of the general history of art and literature by Chinese women. (Cf. 張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, pp. 1203f.) Hu Wenkai's collection includes more than 4,000 mostly literary works by women, from the Han dynasty to the early 20th century, of whom 33 were from the Han, Wei and Six dynasties; 22 from the Tang and Five dynasties; 46 from the Song and Liao dynasties; 16 from the Yuan dynasty; more than 250 from the Ming dynasty; more than 3,660 from the Qing dynasty and more than 160 from the early 20th century. Book titles, authors' names and short biographies, and sources are listed in the order of Chinese dynasties. The Qing dynasty obviously represents a high point in women's intellectual contributions. More than 900 works (mainly poetry collections) by more than 870 women from this era have been preserved (Cf. 張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, p. 1206). These findings are in sharp contrast to the view, introduced by the Confucian scholar Chen Jiru (陳繼儒, 1558–1639 CE) and prevalent since the Ming dynasty, that a woman's only talent is her virtue (Nüzi Wu Cai Bian Shi De 女子無才便是德; Cf. 劉/Liu 1998, pp. 200–210).

Poetry was the main form through which learned Chinese women expressed their thoughts. The *Encyclopedia for Appreciating the Poems of Talented Women in China's Past Eras* collected 1,081 poems by 470 women, from the pre-Qin period to the 20th century (Cf. 鄭/Zheng 1991, pp. 1–84). The earliest poems by women are found in the Confucian classic Book of Songs (Shijing, 詩經; 1046 BCE–771 BCE) which contains more than 20 poems by women of the pre-Qin period, dealing with love, marriage, patriotism, homesickness and nostalgia. As such, the *Book of Songs* could be used as the earliest source in the reconstruction of the history of Chinese women philosophers. As a Confucian text, it provided moral support and practical models for women in ancient China to participate in intellectual activities. By the time of the Qing dynasty, the notion that the *Book of Songs* established a tradition of Chinese women's writing was widely accepted (Cf. 張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, pp. 1212f.).

Biographical works describing the words and deeds of women appeared dur-

ing the Han period. The original version of *Biographies of Women* (Lie Nü Zhuan, 列女傳; 206 BCE–9 CE), traditionally attributed to Liu Xiang (劉向; 77 BCE–6 CE), recorded the stories of 104 women, from the pre-Qin period to the Western Han dynasty, and was divided into seven volumes: *The Biographies of Exemplary Mothers* (Mu Yi Zhuan, 母儀傳), *The Biographies of the Wise and Enlightened* (Xian Ming Zhuan, 賢明傳), *The Biographies of the Kind and Virtuous* (Ren Zhi Zhuan, 仁智傳), *The Biographies of the Chaste and Obedient* (Zhen Shun Zhuan, 貞順傳), *The Biographies of the Principled and Righteous* (Jie Yi Zhuan, 節義傳), *The Biographies of the Eloquent and Educated* (Bian Tong Zhuan, 辯通傳) and *The Biographies of the Evil and Parasitic* (Nie Chu Zhuan, 孽嬖傳). The only female scholar mentioned among them is Xu Mu (Xu Mu Furen, 許穆夫人) (c. 690 BC–n.d.) in the *Biographies of the Kind and Virtuous*. Later, Ban Zhao (班昭) of the Eastern Han dynasty, added the volume *Additional Biographies of Women* (Xu Lie Nü Zhuan, 續列女傳), which recorded the stories of 20 women. In the process, another scholar, Ban Jieyu (班婕妤; n.d.), was added. The evaluation of women in the *Biographies of Women* was viewed from a Confucian perspective as a result of which, this work served for a long time as the standard textbook for the moral education of women in traditional China.

In the *Biographies of Women*, women's stories are categorized according to the commonalities in their words and actions. Following this paradigm, many subsequent history books –such as *History of the Han Dynasty* (Han Shu, 漢書; 92 CE), *History of the Later Han* (Hou Hanshu, 後漢書; 445 CE), *History of the Jin Dynasty* (Jin Shu, 晉書; 648 CE), *History of the Wei Dynasty* (Wei Shu, 魏書; 554 CE), *History of the Northern Dynasties* (Bei Shi, 北史; 659 CE), *History of the Song Dynasty* (Song Shi, 宋史; 1345 CE), *History of the Yuan Dynasty* (Yuan Shi, 元史; 1370 CE) and *Outline of a History of the Qing Dynasty* (Qingshi Gao, 清史稿; 1928 CE) –included biographies of women in general and some female scholars in particular. That said, most of the works by women from ancient China have been lost. Most of our current knowledge comes from history books, bibliographical categorizing books or collections of poems and essays, all of which are particularly significant for the study of the history of Chinese women philosophers.

Unlike the works of male scholars, there are few mentions of works by women in ancient Chinese official histories. Although there are references to women's works in *History of the Han Dynasty*, *History of the Sui Dynasty*, *History of the Ming Dynasty*, and other history books, most of these works are lost. In the Qing dynasty, a large number of anthologies recording poetic works by women appeared. Additionally, many anthologies were compiled by women. For example, *Anthology of Poems by Educated Women of the Qing Dynasty* (Guochao Guixiu Zheng Shi Ji, 國朝閨秀正始集; 1831 CE) and *Anthology of Poems by Educated Women of the Qing*

Dynasty Volume II (Guochao Guixiu Zheng Shi Xuji, 國朝閩秀正始續集; 1836 CE), were compiled by Yun Zhu (憚珠; 1771–1833 CE) and included nearly 3,000 works by more than 1,500 Qing women poets along with descriptions of their lives (張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, p. 1203). Then there is also *Xiaodaixuan's Poetic Commentaries on Poems* (Xiaodaixuan Lunshi Shi, 小黛軒論詩詩) by Chen Yun (陳雲; 1885–1911 CE), which is itself a poetry collection which consists of 221 works. A total of 1,198 women poets and 1,345 poems are evaluated *in poetic form* (Cf. 王/Wang, 2016). Given that the criteria of selection were the virtue and talent of women authors (Cf. 王/Wang, 2016), it is significant that the poems of Buddhist nuns and talented prostitutes⁶ who had received little attention in official history books, were also included (王/Wang 2016, pp. 26ff.)

The active development of women's works in the Qing dynasty was an integral part of the work of male scholars. Famous scholars such as Mao Qiling (毛奇齡; 1623–1716 CE), You Tong (尤侗; 1618–1704 CE), Feng Ban (馮班; 1602–1671 CE) and Hang Shijun (杭世駿; 1696–1773 CE) had female students (Cf. 張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, p. 1208). In addition, many male scholars paid attention to the work produced by women. For example, Yuan Mei's (袁枚; 1716–1797 CE) influential *Notes on Poems from the Sui Garden* (Suixuan Shihua, 隨園詩話; 1792 CE) contains more than 180 references to women's poems (張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, p. 1212). Many male scholars also compiled anthologies of women's poetry. Examples of these include Liang Zhangju's (梁章鉅; 1775–1849 CE) *Notes on Poems of Women from the Min Region* (Minchuan Guixiu Shihua, 閩川閩秀詩話; actually a collection of biographies of Fujian women poets of the Ming and Qing dynasties), Lei Jin's (雷瑨; 1871–1941 CE) *Notes on Women's Poems* (Guixiu Shihua, 閩秀詩話) and *Notes on Poems of Women* from the book *Wumen-Notes on Poems* (Wumen Shihua, 梧門詩話) by Fa Shishan (法式善; 1753–1813 CE), a Mongolian scholar (張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, p. 1212). In addition, eminent scholars such as Ji Zhenyi (季振宜; 1630–n.d.), Xue Xue (薛雪; 1681–1770 CE), Zhao Zhixin (趙執信; 1661–1744 CE), Shen Deqian (沈德潛; 1673–1769 CE), Lu Wenchao (盧文弨; 1717–1796 CE), Wang Chang (王昶; 1724–1806 CE), Jiang Shiquan (蔣士銓; 1725–1785 CE), Hong Liangji (洪亮吉; 1746–1809 CE), Ruan Yuan (阮元; 1764–1849 CE), Ge Zai (戈載; 1786–1856 CE), Weng Tonghe (翁同龢; 1830–1904 CE), Wang Kaiyun (王闈運; 1833–1916 CE) and Lin Shu (林紓; 1852–1924 CE) in addition to prefaces, epilogues or reviews of the works of women (張; 石/Zhang; Shi 2008, p. 1212).

It is evident that in ancient China women developed philosophical ideas mainly in the form of poetic philosophy. The reason why poetry occupied such a central

⁶ In Chinese, “prostitutes” (jīnǚ, 妓女) refer both to people who provide sexual services and entertainers (similar to geisha in Japanese). The female authors mentioned in Chen's work are mainly from the latter group, that is, “talented prostitutes.”

position in the intellectual life of Chinese women can be explained with reference to their educational background and preferences combined with the influence of a strong tradition of poetic education (Shijiao, 詩教) inspired by *Book of Songs*. In traditional Chinese society, most women received only primary education. However, extensive reading, sound cultural knowledge and a critical attitude are all necessary and important for writing prose, novels and theoretical treatises –which explains why it was difficult for Chinese women to achieve success in these domains. In contrast, poetry was a relatively easier form to master –as a result of which, a large group of women poet-philosophers emerged. That said, the restriction of styles did not negatively impact the richness and diversity of their intellectual expressions and their unique status in the global history of women philosophers.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is clear that the historiography of ancient Chinese philosophy, along with the gradually deepening awareness of the history of doctrines, underwent a notable shift from fragmentation to systematization: sporadic references of ideas and doctrines to each other → the selection, categorization and revision of canonical writings → the clarification of knowledge orders and genealogies based on the classification of surviving writings → the establishment of the tradition line of the Way.⁷ Nevertheless, features such as the inseparability of ideas, accounts of words and deeds, a diversity of narrative styles and the fusion of literature, history and philosophy are common to all eras.

The curation of literature on ancient Chinese philosophical historiography is making great progress. Based on results so far, it can be concluded that reflection on the historical description of Chinese-language philosophy should no longer be limited to modern studies. We can expect that with the reconstruction of the early history of Chinese philosophy, new questions and methodological problems will be raised for the historiography of philosophy in a global perspective.

⁷ This suggestion comes from Prof. Dennis Schilling's lecture on Chinese philosophical historiography, which took place at the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Hildesheim in February 2020.

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Mexican Philosophy

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ABSTRACT | To speak of “Mexican Philosophy” in the 21st century is more complex than referring to a national philosophy or a philosophy of the Mexican state, because Mexican Philosophy is, in fact, a critical vision of the philosophy that this state sought to build. In this essay we will briefly address the difference between Mexican Philosophy or New Mexican Philosophy and Philosophy in Mexico. We will also make a brief survey throughout significant moments and authors in the history of Mexican Philosophy to show the long journey it has gone through (from Mesoamerican philosophies to the 21st century), and how it has formed a grounded critical, rigorous, and contextualized tradition of thought.

KEYWORDS | Mexican Philosophy; Philosophical Tradition; Critique of the State; History of Philosophy; Cultural Diversity

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1 Delimitation of the Concept

The idea of Mexican Philosophy is much more complex than the study of the philosophy created in the Mexican state.

Mexico as a state has consolidated its own style of statehood, nation, culture, values, and philosophy since 1867, when President Benito Juárez shot Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg for his invasion of Mexico. However, Juárez's conception of state philosophy implied a universalist, univocal, and racist vision, and since the 1950s it has been criticized by some Mexican intellectuals and by the same philosophers who once defended that vision of the state. In the 21st century, the group of specialists who founded the Permanent Seminar of Mexican Philosophy in 2008 (López 2012, p. 362) were extremely critical of that idea of philosophy promoted by the Mexican state. They proposed new readings of Mexican Philosophy based on Carmen Rovira's methodology, which forces the researcher (of ideas or the history of philosophy) to start from the reading and interpretation of the direct sources of knowledge (books, articles, codices, magazines, monuments) in order to later contextualize them in their specific timeframes and in the political, intellectual, and cultural environments of the author who created that direct source. This method allows us to avoid over-interpreting philosophical sources with concepts external to the work itself or to the author who created it.

Therefore, we will say that Mexican Philosophy, or New Mexican Philosophy, performs a critical study of the philosophical, political, and cultural endeavor of the Mexican state and its philosophy (hereafter "state philosophy" when it refers specifically to the philosophy of the state). Mexican Philosophy and state philosophy also differ in the following four points:

- 1) **Temporality.** State Philosophy covers only the 19th century and a large part of the 20th century. Mexican Philosophy alternatively covers not only the period from the Conquest of Mexico (1521) and the establishment of Mexico as a Spanish colony (1521–1810) to the present day, but also extends to the ancient original peoples and the Mesoamerican period beginning around 2,500 BCE. The Mexican nation can only be understood when we comprehend the *Mexica* empire and its antecedents with the emergence of mathematics, calendars, astronomical measurements, medicine, writing, politics, etc., features, which it usually shares with other Mesoamerican cultures.
- 2) **The Position on the Spanish Antecedents of Mexico.** While for the Mexican state the two great columns of Mexican culture are the Spanish nation and the indigenous people, Mexican Philosophy maintains that the government of Spain was not interested in creating a nation in America. It created colonies where

there were two main vice-royalties: Peru and New Spain (although in 1739 it created New Granada and in 1776 Rio de la Plata). These colonies, of course, had been ruled under a different legality from the various kingdoms that made up the Crown of Castile (the Spanish nation), in which the native peoples were considered, at best, as minors who could not govern themselves and who needed guardianship. In addition, Creoles (Spaniards born in Mexico) could only occupy low and a few middle positions in the government and the church. Therefore, it is particularly important to study the Conquest, the injustice of the war, the plundering, the racism, as well as the “civilizing and evangelizing” mission that Spain and the Mexican state have propagated.¹

- 3) **Questions about a Generalized National Sentiment.** While the state has been developing a deep-rooted nationalism for more than a century and a half, Mexican Philosophy criticizes the fact that the Spanish crown did not consider the original people as citizens or as deserving of respect for their lands and their persons. In colonial times, their books were burned and their wise men and rulers assassinated; they were forced to abandon their language and speak Spanish, and compelled to despise and spit on their own gods (Portilla 1986, p. 133). With the arrival of the Mexican state, the indigenous predicament did not improve, and in an attempt to “civilize” them, the state expropriated the few lands that still remained while commencing new attacks against their culture. From the point of view of the modern state, “all men were equal and citizens of Mexico”; everyone ostensibly had to have the same rights, speak the same language, and have the same opportunities to be educated (that is, civilized in the case of the indigenous people). However, many of the original people resisted both the Colony and the Mexican state, and they have survived to this day with their own languages, culture, ethics, and customs.

While Spaniards and Creoles could have had some kind of nationalist sentiments (towards the Spanish nation), some Creoles developed such feelings towards the Mexican nation; in fact, the main Mexican philosophers are recognized as having some kind of national feeling, either because they considered themselves Mexicans or because they decided to rescue the culture of the native people as part of the universal culture and saw it as valuable as any other. However, even today there is still a lively discussion, on which intellectuals have not agreed, between those who advocate for the preservation of ethnicity and the promotion of the modern nation.

- 4) **Homogenization versus Cultural Diversity.** The Mexican state has imposed a

¹ Luciano Pereña (1992), and José Vasconcelos (1920).

process of political, linguistic, and cultural homogenization since its establishment in 1867, a process which has continued to the present,² based on the idea of “civilizing the native ‘savage’” of the “savage native people” and the disregard of their customs, medicine, and forms of political and cultural relations. On the other hand, Mexican Philosophy has fought for the linguistic, ontological, epistemological, and political recognition of the original peoples (ancient and contemporary), as well as for the defense of the diversity of cultures within Mexico.

Contemporary states are framed by those black lines that mark the borders one sees in school maps, those artificial borders that were drawn and agreed upon through wars and bloodshed so that that the state can recognize its territory. But the philosophy that is situated only within the territory of the country called Mexico (and which refers to any philosophical conception, regardless of its area of knowledge or specific tradition, thought of as “national” only because it has been written in Mexico or by Mexicans) is called in our country: *Philosophy in Mexico*. It is a type of philosophy that may not even refer to the country itself, may be foreign and created in other places, or which may come from traditions completely alien to the Mexican philosophical tradition. Philosophy in Mexico was what the “academic” philosophy of the 1940s called all the philosophy that was done in the country, because from the point of view of Samuel Ramos, the first creator of that titular chair at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexicans did not have their own culture and the only way to create one was to copy European culture, to make it “properly ours” (Ramos 1990, p. 146).

It is important to point out that throughout the 20th century *Philosophy in Mexico* was discussed as if it the only way to do philosophy, but in the first decade of the 21st century there was a substantial change in the self-perception of Mexican Philosophy in which almost all specialists in this area agreed: Mexican Philosophy should not be “a universal philosophy made ours,” as Ramos declared in 1934, but rather should become a philosophy of its own. This was because it arises from a specific tradition of thought that can be known and recognized as a philosophy that emanates from a specific historical, political, cultural circumstance, and because it wants to respond to the pressing problems of its time. This change in perception arose thanks to the following three important circumstances:

² Even the current Mexican government has more than a 70% approval rating after four years in office and after the crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, in addition to the energy and economic crisis caused by the recent war between Russia and Ukraine. Despite having a greater sensitivity for multiculturalism and the development of indigenous peoples, it is very difficult to change the perspective of the univocal, universalist, and racist nation-state with its taxation system that functioned in Mexico until just four years ago.

- 1) Finally, after the arduous individual and collective work of more than half a century, different specialists in the area completed (in general terms) the History of Mexican Philosophy of all periods: Pre-Hispanic (Nahuatl and Mayan), Colonial, Novo-Hispanic, 19th century, and 20th century.
- 2) Carmen Rovira³ created important research groups and became the figure around which Mexican Philosophy studies are developed. After long and deep discussions within Rovira's team, it was decided to start calling the work we were doing "Mexican Philosophy," replacing the "philosophy IN Mexico" that had been imposed by the creators of the State Philosophy.
- 3) Several philosophers and intellectuals payed attention to the Zapatista movement of 1994 with its slogan of "never again a Mexico without us," leaving behind an absolute speculation to turn their gaze to the problems of the real Mexico: poverty, inequality, lack of freedom and democracy, lack of opportunities, state violence, and injustice.

2 Mexican Philosophy as a Tradition

Mexican Philosophy is a tradition of thought that has developed throughout history. It exists mainly to challenge the multiple ontological, epistemological, and cultural claims made mostly by Europeans, but also by Mexicans themselves since the consolidation of the State. Thus, our philosophy is also interested in the study of the circumstances in which it arose something that is decisive for the understanding of philosophy itself.

We can note that Mexican Philosophy can be distinguished by a serious concern for the recognition, study, and defense of *what is properly Mexican* which has been expressed in different ways from the different approaches of the various authors who have identified themselves with what is Mexican. Therefore, we are absolutely aware that this "Mexicanness" is in a process of changing according to the social, political, and cultural circumstances of the different times in which

³ Carmen Rovira Gaspar became the pillar of Mexican Philosophy studies. Her academic life and philosophical work now have exceptional significance not only in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters and in UNAM itself, but also in Mexican Philosophy and Iberoamerican philosophy. Thanks to her fruitful and exceptional work of more than half a century, the studies on Mexican Philosophy took on new life, and new generations were formed with her work. Her task opened new and hopeful horizons to recover and develop an authentic, critical, and emancipatory philosophical tradition in open confrontation with the pretensions of political and intellectual colonization. Her exceptional work dedicated to Mexican and Latin American philosophy has earned the recognition of the national and international philosophical community.

people have recognized themselves as “Mexican.” However, an important common thread is that those who identify themselves as Mexican do so in order to respond to issues raised by the European colonizers in view of the identity of the Mexican or the natives of the Americas.

The study of the history of Mexican Philosophy gained importance when Samuel Ramos, José Gaos, Leopoldo Zea, Carmen Rovira, and Mauricio Beuchot, among others, put their efforts and much of their work into its development, agreeing that knowing our own tradition, and therefore making the history of the philosophy of our country, is an indispensable aspect of philosophizing.⁴

Thanks to the elaboration of the History of Mexican Philosophy that began professionally with Samuel Ramos in 1941, and which continues to this day with the Permanent Seminar of Mexican Philosophy and many other experts in philosophy, we now understand that Mexican Philosophy is the study, search, valuation, and defense of the thought of Mexico *about* Mexico and which has been carried out in our region since the ancient period of the native peoples (also called pre-Hispanic or Mesoamerican) until the present. This allows us to speak without a doubt of the existence of a philosophical tradition that is recognized as our own, and that, with its different changes and nuances, is here to stay. As we will see below, this has allowed us to integrate philosophers from very different periods and traditions.

3 A Brief Journey through the History of Mexican Philosophy

It is important to point out that, in our culture, the concepts of “Mexico” or “Mexican” do not come from the 19th century. That is, the term “Mexico,” as a name for this region and its culture, was not invented with the emergence of the Mexican state; on the contrary, it dates to the Mesoamerican cultures themselves that recognized the Mexica (Mexicans) as an important political, economic, and cultural people.

⁴ To clarify the use of the term “philosophy,” and in order to break existing prejudices, we want to underline that the Mesoamerican indigenous people had a vast knowledge of nature, the cosmos, architecture, mathematics, politics, etc., and that all this knowledge was expressed and preserved in their books (codices) in the respective language and writing system of their culture. The ancient indigenous peoples had scribes (*tlacuilokeh*) and wise men (*tlamatinime*) who wondered about the world, the universe, and human beings in a similar way like men and women from other regions of the world. For this reason, we affirm the existence of philosophy within the context of the Mesoamerican indigenous peoples. The controversial debates on this topic exceed the objectives of this text.

3.1 The Tlaminime (Wise Nahuas) and the Debates about Religion

It is known that *Tlacaelel*, one of the main Mexica *tlaminime* (wise men), promoted the myth of Aztlan that narrates how the Aztecs leave Aztlan towards the place where they will find an eagle devouring a snake standing on a cactus: Mexico Tenochtitlan. In this way, several codices known as the group of the pilgrimage strip (Anonymous 2015) are generated, with the aim of creating a grandiose past and an identity for the Mexica culture that, despite their long journey and multiple wars against the various Nahua cultures, managed to settle in the Valley of Mexico where they found the place that *Hutzilopochtli* (the God of war) had indicated to them. There the Mexica tradition would gloriously flourish and would spread through different Nahua and Mayan empires.

In its consequence, the questions of *Nezahualcoyotl* (one of the greatest Nahua sages) about life and truth was finally settled in the Colloquy of the 12 of 1524 (Portilla 1986); the work of *Tlacaelel* was to build a glorious identity and to firmly reject the Nahua *tlaminime* and the Christian religion and culture that was to be imposed on them. With the Colloquy of the 12 we can prove the existence of an own philosophy within the Mesoamerican cultures. The defense of the ontological, epistemic and cultural validity of what in Mexican. This genealogical reconstruction produces an alternative history from the moment when Europe began to impose its religion, politics, and culture as “the only truth,” first and foremost to the Mexica people, then to their Nahua allies, until reaching many others including the Mayan, Mixe, Chichimeca people, etc., and all their descendants.

3.2 Human Ontology of the Indigenous American

From the beginning of the Conquest of Mexico and the rest of the 16th century, Spanish Imperial Thought assumed that the Americans were “quasi-monkeys,” as Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda points out in his *Demócrates Alter* (1996, 101), under the argument that since they did not have the same politics, religion, and customs as the Spaniards they therefore did not have intelligence and were slaves by nature. In this way, *logos* was taken away from the Mexican indigenous people and the defense of their culture and rationality was left in the hands of other Spaniards who were recognized for their wisdom and expressive capacity. Against this presumption, for example, Alonso de la Veracruz and Bartolomé de las Casas, among others, defended the rationality of the American Indian, as well as their human, political, and cultural capacities. Given that the Christianity and humanism of Spaniards led them to think of the Native Americans as equal and free, and to thereby see them as children of the same God, they inaugurated the defense of Mexican peo-

ple by those who felt that the injustices done to the Americans were injustices of humanity.

It is important to point out that to all the friars who came to evangelize and bring the word of God to what they called *New Spain*, it was clear that *Mexican* was the language spoken by the Mexica people when they were integrated into the Nahuatl cultures of the Valley of Mexico. This was the case to the extent that Antonio Rubio was accused by the general of his Jesuit order for “having an aversion to the treatment of the Mexican language,” to which Rubio responded that he worked better in Mexican lands “to serve with it to the ministry of the language and its natives” than he could by serving in Spain or Rome. It is therefore significant that in his philosophical studies, published in many European editions that were brought to light while he was still alive, Rubio decided to publish his logical treatise under the title of *Mexican Logic*. Although it is true that the first printings of his logic were not published under this title, the editions from 1610 onwards already bear the title *Mexican Logic*, and it is precisely those editions that were consulted as textbooks (by order of the king) in the Jesuit colleges of Europe. It is understood that philosophers such as Descartes and Leibniz studied Father Rubio’s *Mexican Logic* (Beuchot 2006, p. 66).

3.3 Rationality of the Mexican in the 17th Century

Rubio’s *Mexican Logic*, as quoted by Descartes, already shows us a sign of identity from the 17th century that we can also find in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (2005) herself in her *Loa al auto sacramental del Divino Narciso* (*The Loa for the Auto Sacramental of The Divine Narcissus*), which was performed for the first time in Madrid in 1689. Since the 16th century, the sacramentals were performed on the day of Corpus Christi and were intended to make the spectators reflect on themselves, examine their conscience, and change their behavior. The *Loa al Divino Narciso* dramatizes the Conquest of America and defends the conversion, but only if it is given through reason. It also shows the Mexica religion as true, as the one that worshipped the great God of seeds, whose people were threatened to be defeated by both corporal and intellectual weapons with terrible violence. What is interesting is that the Hieronymite nun rescues the God of the three traditions (Hebrew, Greco-Latin, and Mexica) as a God for all of them (Cruz 2005, p. 383).

Sor Juana’s friend, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, is recognized as a great man of science and words. He was so interested in Mexican antiquities (Mexica culture) that he became a defender of the heirs of the emperor Moctezuma. But it was Juan José de Eguiara y Eguren (1696–1763) who published his *Bibliotheca Mexicana* in Latin in 1755 in order to refute the dean of Alicante, Manuel Martí, who claimed

that “in Mexico everything was ignorance.” Enguira’s *Mexican Library* (1986) integrated a great number of works and thinkers of the time with which he wanted to refute both the ignorance of the dean of Alicante, as well as that of many others who did not know how much had been written and studied in Mexico. Eguira’s indignation also makes it clear that, both in the case of the Spanish philosophers of the 16th century and, like Eguira, the Spanish born in Mexico (Creoles), their philosophy began to be generated as a response to the ontological and epistemic disqualifications of Mexico and Mexicans by Europe such as the “Inferiority of the Natives.” It is important to point out that from here on we can already see radical differences between what was conceived as Mexican.

Years later, in the 18th century, we find the philosophy of the Mexican Creole Jesuits who elaborated a humanism that proposed the dignification of the human race and the respect for others without violence or the imposition of values on them. It is a humanism that has a critical vision of the reality of the Americas in whose lands it has its feet firmly planted, and which embraces all human beings, whatever their race, culture, and creed. Francisco Javier Alegre argues: “what should be said of the innumerable multitude of Ethiopian slaves who during these five hundred years have been taken to the Spanish colonies [...] and who are still being taken [...] [T]hese Ethiopians are neither slaves by birth nor by themselves [and] it follows that this slavery is altogether unjust and iniquitous” (Rovira and Ponce 2007, p. 58). Andres Cavo in turn expresses that the “lesser evil” would be “that no inhabitant of the New World converts to our Holy Religion and that the dominion of the king is lost forever,” rather than “to force those people to the one or the other with slavery” (Rovira and Ponce 2007, p. 58). For Pedro José Márquez, “the true philosopher is cosmopolitan (or citizen of the world); he has all men as compatriots, and knows that any language, however exotic it may seem, by virtue of culture can be as wise as a Greek. With respect to culture, true philosophy does not recognize incapacity in any man, either because he was born white or black, or because he was educated in the poles or in the torrid zone.” (Rovira and Ponce 2007, p. 58)

Among the writings of these Jesuits, we will highlight Francisco Javier Clavijero who published a very extensive *Ancient History of Mexico* in 1781 in which he demonstrates the greatness of the Mexica culture. He elaborates on its architecture, its knowledge of mathematics and the calendar, the complexity of its language and poetry, and the historical and political development of different indigenous cultures until reaching the Mexica and its confrontation with the Spaniards. (Clavijero 2005, p. 601) He focuses specifically on the climate and the animals of America during this time. The creation of Clavijero’s enormous work and the other works of the Jesuits have antecedents that are necessary to highlight, because

within their exile in Italy, which took place in 1767 when Charles III expelled them from the Spanish territory, the Jesuits found that the diverse criticisms which the European naturalists were making of America had spread throughout Europe.

In his *Natural History*, The Count of Buffon (Georges Louis Leclerc, 1707–88) used the same method as almost all Europeans, however instead of relying on observation, he did research starting with a comparison between the animals existing in the Old World and those of the New World. He found that the species of quadrupedal animals were less numerous in America than in Europe; while the American ones numbered only 70 species, in Europe there were more than 130 (including the “endemic” elephants and giraffes). He also argued that while the indigenous animals were few and of small stature, the imported ones had become smaller and less robust because of the environment. According to Buffon, the American climate was hostile to the development of animals due to a number of factors: the quality of the soil, the degrees of heat and humidity, the elevation of the mountains, the extent of the forests, and above all, what Buffon perceives as the brutal state in which nature is found in the Americas. In addition to this, the American man had done nothing to dominate it, because “The savage is weak and has small organs of generation, he has no hair or beard and no desire for his female, although he is lighter than the European because he has the habit of running, he is, however, less strong bodily [...] possessing no liveliness and activity in the soul, the activity of the body constitutes less an exercise or voluntary movement than a need for action caused by natural appetites.” (Buffon 1826, p. 443).⁵ This passage compares the Indian to the cold-blooded animals that only move to satisfy their instincts and who live in a rotting aquatic context. We also observe here how Buffon explains the weakness in men, by justifying a weakness in the American soil itself, that breeds such inferior men and, in short, to justifying the inferiority of the indigenous by appealing to (a dubious notion of) nature.

Only a few years after Buffon, Corneille de Paw writes in his *Philosophical Investigations on the Americans or Interesting Memoirs to Serve the History of the Human Species* (1768) that Buffon was wrong to think that the Americans were small and child-like in comparison to Europeans. In reality, for De Paw, what was happening to the indigenous people, as to so many other species of American animals, is that they are completely degraded, due sometimes to the climate or to other natural factors such as floods that have led the continent to such degener-

⁵ “Le sauvage est foible et petite par les organes de la génération; il n'a ni poil ni barbe, et null ardeur par sa femelle: quoique plus léger que l'Européen, parcequ'il a plus d'habitude à occurrir, il est cepandant moins fort de corps [...] il n'a null vivacité, null activité dans l'âme; celle du corps est moins un exercice, un mouvement volontaire, qu'une nécessité d'action causée par le besoin.” (Buffon 1826, p. 443)

ation in which even its human inhabitants have been affected. For “on a continent where even the dogs have lost their tails and the crocodiles have become lazy and bastards, it is natural that its inhabitants should have less sensibility, less humanity, less taste, less instinct, less heart, less intelligence, in a word, less of everything with respect to the Europeans” (De Paw 1777, p. 347). From this perspective, the problem with America was not only that those who were born were inferior subjects to the Europeans, but so were the individuals who spent years inhabiting it. It was for this reason that the rulers of the new world born in Europe would have to return from time to time to purify their body and soul, since the effluvia given off by the American soil could reduce their intellectual abilities.

A major problem was that De Paw’s ideas had a great influence at the time because he was the one who wrote the concept *Amerique* within the new edition of the Encyclopedia published by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alambert in 1777. As a result, authors like Immanuel Kant, GWF Hegel, and Karl Marx had distorted ideas about America offered by the French naturalists, with which they dared to speak of the inability of the American man to become an autonomous and free one and to thereby integrate himself within the full development of history.

The great influence of the Encyclopedia and its ideas about the inferiority of the Americans can even be found in German-speaking intellectuals and merchants in the 19th century, who, despite having short or long stays in Mexico, continued to spread ideas about the inferiority of the continent and its inhabitants. This was the case with Alexander Humboldt in his *New Spain Political Essay* (1822), and later with Carl Christian Sartorius who published *Mexiko* in German in 1855, which was quickly translated into English as *Mexico Landscapes and Popular Sketches* (1858). In this text, Sartorius affirms that the Indians “are incapable of acquiring a degree of intellectual development like that of the white race” (1990, p. 139). This was mainly because, he argues, they do not foresee the future, and like American birds, due to the very mild climate in which they develop, they fail to build nests as perfect as those of European birds. The ease with which life is lived in Mexico has led Mexicans to seek fun and pleasures without worrying about what will happen tomorrow. Thus, Sartorius sees the rural population (mainly made up of indigenous people and castes) as communitarian, backward, degenerate, indolent, and non-producers of goods, or worse, as non-consumers of goods, which makes them “a threat to civilization.” (1990, p. 158) Of course, these ideas would have an impact on the discourse of the Mexicans who created the Mexican state in the second half of the 19th century, but we will begin with its antecedents in the beginning of the formation of the Mexican nation at the time of independence.

3.4 On the Right to Independence and Sovereignty

In the document *Posthumous memory of the trustee of the town hall... on which the right of sovereignty of the people is founded*, written in 1808 by Primo Verdad y Ramos (an illustrious Creole), the author mentions in a clear way the importance of the natives in his proposed board of representatives. Speaking of the indigenous folk, he says: “it will therefore be very fair that they equally have their representation in the general assemblies: and if the deputies are provided in reason of the persons they represent, and of their number, forming a very large part that of the Indians, it is clear that it should be tripled, with respect to the other bodies.” (Verdad 1808, p. 162) Primo Verdad thus gives a preponderant role to the indigenous peoples in the proposed meeting. It is important to highlight that the author is one of the first to grant a role of such magnitude to the indigenous people and, not satisfied even with this, he proposes, in a progressive and daring way for his time, the American union and the abolition of castes. On including the indigenous population in the meeting, he declares: “How much would this not contribute to preserve the longed-for union of all Americans and how much would we not alleviate by this means the rivalry and jealousy of one another! Then, we would forget the hateful names of Indians, crossbreed, ‘ladinos’ that are so disastrous for us.”⁶

However, in the pro-independence Fray Melchor de Talamantes, we can see a refusal to consider all the people in general as worthy of participating in the “Congress,” since to carry out such an action would diminish the power that the Creoles exercised over the rest of the people. For this reason, he affirms: “The poor people, in no truly cultured nation do they enjoy the right of citizenship [to exercise national representation]; because of their rusticity, ignorance, coarseness, indigence and the necessary dependence in which they find themselves with respect to enlightened and powerful men, this makes them unworthy of such an excellent quality, which demands true freedom, incompatible with ignorance and beggary” (Talamantes 1808c, p. 383). And if “the ignorant people” lack the rights of citizens, then it cannot be entrusted with the government of the people, which must be left to “enlightened and powerful” men, that is, to the Creoles. Based on the above, Talamantes affirms that it “has always sustained and will always sustain national sovereignty, which is sometimes distinguished by the name of Sovereignty of the People, understanding by *People*, the embodiment of the whole nation; but in no way the rigorously popular sovereignty, subject to a thousand vices and errors” (Talamantes 1808d, p. 242).

Regarding Talamantes’ remarks, it would be interesting to ask ourselves: Why would the indigenous folk not be part of the people? Is Talamantes not an enlight-

⁶ A “ladino/a” is an indigenous or Creole person who prefers to live and dress like the Spanish.

ened man who follows the teachings of Rousseau? The answer is not so simple: Talamantes is a friar who took up the enlightened ideas of popular sovereignty that began with St. Thomas, and which passed through the School of Salamanca – strengthened by the philosophy of the Jesuits, specifically of Francisco Suárez – before reaching the independence of the Americas. And we should note that this discovery, which greatly changes the Eurocentric vision, would have been impossible without the research methodology of Carmen Rovira.

3.5 Positivism and Liberalism in the 19th Century

After these first attempts to organize the Mexican nation, there were multiple confrontations between liberals and conservatives, and although the first Political Constitution of Mexico was signed in 1824, a clearer idea of how to shape the Mexican State was not really obtained until the second half of the 19th century.

After the French invasion from 1862 to 1867, in which Mexico suffered as an independent state and the Austrian Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg was imposed as the King for several years, the government of Mexican President Benito Juárez shared a clear objective with the philosopher Gabino Barreda: to reform the nation and lead it to progress along the path of freedom. However, it should be noted that – for the sake of that freedom and based on the principles of popular sovereignty and social equality, which he points out in his *Oración Cívica* (Civic Oration 1979) as the axioms of progress – Barreda and the liberals decided to forget their differences and to treat everyone as citizens, which meant “civilizing” the indigenous. However, it is also commendable that from that point on the indigenous were already (according to the law) part of the social core of the nation. An example of this is the paintings of Mexico of the late 19th century.⁷

Gabino Barreda’s leading role in the strongest and most extensive Mexican education project of the entire independence era was no secret. After listening to his *Civic Oration*, Benito Juárez commissioned Barreda to establish the foundation and proper functioning of the National Preparatory School, the one in which the country would be regenerated and the institutions and habits of the Mexican people would be radically changed (Barreda 1979, p. 14). While they had learned under the Spanish domination to resign themselves, with the education for independence they prepared themselves for the fight for revolution.

With a good and enlightened education, Barreda and Juárez incorporated the scientific, religious, and political emancipation of the population, for which Barreda began to promote positivism as a weapon of educational reform. In 1863 Barreda

⁷ Artworks like Carl Christian Sartorius: *Portada de Mexico and the Mexicans*, 1859; August Lohr: *Tacubaya*, 1897; José María Velasco: *Valle de México*, 1900.

published his work *De la Educación Moral* (On Moral Education), where he set the precedent for the ideas that later separated the liberals and the positivists. While in his *Civic Oration* he upholds the idea of “freedom, order and progress,” in the first document he tries to locate the moral impulses in the brain and maintains that all social welfare is due to a healthy development of the bodily organs of the altruistic instinct, to the detriment of those others favorable to the opposite instinct. Thus, the purpose of education is none other than to fulfill the noble mission of the development of the altruistic instincts where the individualist myths of “*laissez faire, laissez passer*” of liberalism must be removed to allow love to flourish. “Love, order and progress” combat the free will espoused by the liberals of the Enlightenment, because such freedom can only provoke disorder, anarchy, and conflict between different moral beliefs, thereby making the progress of all civilization impossible. The subjects to be taught in high school must be absolutely scientific in order to create the required mental emancipation.

Of course, the liberals disagreed with Barreda’s rationalism. Although they accepted the ideology of Spanish and indigenous culture as the backbone of the homeland, as proposed by the national independence fighters and European nationalists, they refused to accept that love was superior to freedom. José María Vigil, for example, sought to strengthen patriotism through a universalist education on the one hand, and a *Mexicanist* education on the other. In his text *Necessity and Convenience of Studying the Country’s History* (1878), Vigil proposes that Greek and Latin should be studied at the same time as Nahuatl, in order to strengthen patriotism through what is authentic, what is proper, as the only way to avoid self-contempt. Only the promotion of the Hispanic-indigenous culture would allow Mexico to go from a country of anomalies to a normal country (Vigil 2001). Thus, just as the German liberal Sartorius announced in 1855, the crossbreed personality (combination of Spanish with indigenous, a *mestizo*) is what is properly Mexican; it is what, according to Vigil, will allow us to go from a Mexican person to a Mexican citizen.

3.6 Civilization, Education, and Integration of the Indigenous Folk

However, it is Ezequiel A. Chávez who, taking up the previous discussions, makes a more descriptive contribution to the Mexican character in his *Essay on the Distinctive Features of Sensitivity as a Factor of the Mexican Character* (1901). He also takes the indigenous and the Spanish as the foundation of the crossbreed Mexican culture, but he goes further by dividing the “mestizos” into vulgar and superior: the “vulgar” are those who do not know how to dominate their passions, and the “superior” are those who manage to intellectualize their feelings through ratio-

nality, thereby orienting themselves towards the future. What calls our attention in particular is the way Chávez characterizes the character of the indigenous: he is stoic, taciturn, the owner of an focused inertia that leads him to a control of emotional and impulsive behavior that brings him closer to civilization, because he is able to bear it all (Chávez 2004).

This is important because several decades later (1934), Samuel Ramos (1897–1959) tries to analyze the character of the Mexican and reconsiders the two traditions that made a Mexican culture possible when united. He affirms that a miscegenation between the indigenous (native) and the Spanish took place in Mexico, but from his perspective the indigenous culture as such disappeared and the Spanish culture has been transformed upon the American soil. Thus, if Mexican culture is neither purely indigenous nor purely Spanish, it is necessary to question the identity of the Mexican.

Ramos conceives the indigenous and the exaltation of their culture as a myth; despite admitting that a large part of the Mexican population is indigenous, he hardly takes them into account, instead arguing that the indigenous “plays a passive role in the current life of the country” (1990, p. 122). “The active point,” he explains, “is the other, that of the Metis who live in the city. It is to be supposed that the Indian has influenced the soul of the other Mexican group, of course, because he has mixed his blood with it. But his social and spiritual influence is reduced today to the mere fact of his presence.” It turns out then that the influence of the indigenous in Ramos’ contemporary Mexico is reduced to the biological inheritance transmitted by blood to their descendants, given that this blood now affects their character (p. 109). Thus, in terms of the cultural question, the indigenous has a null influence because their culture, Ramos assures us, was subsumed within the European culture when it was conquered before finally disappearing altogether. In this respect, Ramos says that it “is true that there was a miscegenation, but not of cultures, because when the conquistadors came into contact with the natives, the latter’s culture was destroyed. It was – says Alfonso Reyes – the clash of the jug with the cauldron. The jar could be very fine and beautiful, but it was the most brittle” (p. 102).

Ramos considers the indigenous person and analyzes his character only to make possible the foundation of his characterology of the Mexican. From the indigenous he only takes the characteristics used later as those that lead the Mexican to suffer a feeling of inferiority. For Ramos, the indigenous person has “[a] sober and dry rigidity whose base is an internal apathy and insensitivity to the deepest tremors of life” (p. 108). “[T]he Mexican Indian,” he continues, “seems unassimilable to civilization.”

3.7 The Emerging Possibility of Philosophy in Mexico

It was in 1941 that Ramos founded the chair of History of Philosophy in Mexico, which has been taught at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) since its foundation. Intending to find a tradition of thought that “could fix a national sense,” Samuel Ramos wrote his text *Historia de la Filosofía en México* (History of Philosophy in Mexico) in 1943. He analyzes several traditions of thought: the Aztecs, the colonial period, the philosophy of New Spain, independent philosophy, positivism and the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the great educational and philosophical works of his teachers José Vasconcelos and Antonio Caso. However, and in spite of promoting the study of national philosophy, he affirms that

Mexico must have in the future a ‘Mexican’ culture; but we do not conceive of it as an original culture distinct from all others. We understand by Mexican culture the universal culture made ours, that lives with us, that is capable of expressing our soul. And it is curious that in order to form a ‘Mexican’ culture, the only path we have left is to continue learning European culture. Our race is an offshoot of the European race, our history has developed within European frameworks. (Ramos 1990, p. 92)

It is clear that Samuel Ramos is one of the greatest exponents of the State Philosophy that tries to eliminate the indigenous as part of Mexican culture, justifying his attitude with theoretical proposals of the intellectuals of the country.

In spite of the fact that in Mexico there was already a concern for finding a culture and a philosophy of its own, as we have seen in Ezequiel A. Chávez and Samuel Ramos, it was José Gaos (1900–1969) who starkly criticized the concept of a traditional history of philosophy, and proposed, in its place, a history of ideas arising from the time and circumstances themselves. This allowed him to search for a history of Mexican philosophy that goes beyond the simple history of philosophy IN Mexico. In addition, he trained several generations of thinkers in our country who inherited methodologies, and even the interest in certain problems, that allowed them to think on their own.

The work of José Gaos and his disciples managed to mediate the impulse to make a history of philosophy of Hegelian influence in Mexico. Gaos recovers the historicist theory of Dilthey and Heidegger, which led him to warn that history is specifically limited to the human, and that the sciences and their methodology are inadequate to understand what is properly human. In his *Confessions* he admits to the influence of Ortega y Gasset, especially his ideas of perspectivism and

subjectivism in philosophy.

However, the problem was that many Mexicans denied the existence of philosophy and philosophers in the country, so Gaos saw the need to widen the concept of the philosopher, the category of thinker, which was opened even to those who were researchers in history, exact sciences, or literature; these are characterized by “a peculiar national magisterium” (Gaos 1980, p. 18). Once the existence of Mexican thinkers is justified, Gaos warns that the history of philosophy in Mexico is a subset of the history of thought in this country and this, in turn, belongs to the history of ideas in Mexico. Thus, in order to explain the history of Mexican philosophy, it will be necessary to begin by making a critical review of the history of ideas.

Gaos begins with an interesting analysis on the meaning of the concept of an “idea.” He argues that no idea is what it is by exclusive appearance, because every idea, despite being singular, is in the background of other ideas and such a relationship prevents it from having a purely “abstract” sense. In fact, an idea is always the “reaction of a man to a certain life situation [...] so the idea is an action that one performs in view of a certain circumstance and with a precise purpose” (Gaos 1980, p. 18). In this way, Gaos makes it clear that in order to carry out the history of ideas, we cannot do away with the circumstance that provoked the idea itself, nor the design that has inspired it, because to do without them would lead us to have only a vague and abstract profile, which in reality is an imprecise skeleton of the effective idea. Therefore, in order to make a history of ideas we must reconstruct the concrete situation and find out the function that the idea represented in that situation; otherwise, it will become an abstract and “dead idea, a mummy, and its content, the imprecise human allusion that the mummy holds” (Gaos 1980, p. 18).

3.8 Teaching Latin American and Mexican Philosophies

Leopoldo Zea (1912–2004) is recognized by Gaos as the best of his students. He takes up from his teacher the concern for making a history of his own philosophy in *The Positivism in Mexico*, published in 1943. However, he extends the problem of circumstantialism to all Latin America has thus influenced a great number of Latin American philosophers to carry out monographic studies based on their own thinkers. This work has led him to promote schools, centers, and magazines concerned with the history of Latin American ideas.

From Zea’s point of view, the consideration of the past was essential for American philosophy, and the elaboration of a history of the ideas of the American people could not be postponed because it was conceived as the foundation that would

allow us to advance towards an authentic future. Authenticity was at stake in the knowledge of the philosophical past, so the philosophers with whom Zea made contact throughout America (Arturo Ardao (Uruguay), Joao Cruz Costa (Brasil), Francisco Miró Quesada (Perú), Guillermo Francovich (Bolivia), José Luis Romero (Argentina), Arturo Andrés Roig (Argentina), José Antonio Portuondo (Cuba), Roberto Fernández Retamar (Cuba) y Darcy Ribeiro (Brasil)), took on the project and carried out monographic studies on philosophers of their own countries of origin. They discovered that originality in itself was not relevant, because what was at stake, according to Zea, was to find an authentic way to use and apply foreign ideas in their own circumstances. A great effort was then made to create a dialogue with their own context, without disturbing the balance between the circumstantial view and the universal perspective.

In the second half of the 20th century, when the studies of Latin American philosophy had developed and became normalized, several philosophers who established the histories of philosophy in Latin America began to question the Hegelian perspective and proposed in its place a situated history. Leopoldo Zea is a clear example of this. In his *Introduction to Philosophy*, published for the first time in 1953, he warns us: "So far, the universal, eternal and immutable value of his philosophy [European's philosophy] *has been affirmed*; now *we affirm* the circumstantial character of philosophy, of all philosophies. To one idea we oppose another. Now it will be necessary to expose the assumptions, the bases on which we rely to make such an affirmation" (1953, p. 15). Although this text seems to be, at first sight, a history of common philosophy that rescues the doctrines and systems of the "great thinkers," it is enough to examine the index carefully to notice the differences between the European and the Mexican philosophy. In chapter 2 "The Modern Era", we find the theme "America and Utopias." This leads us to read the text with different eyes and to notice how it was written from the perspective of circumstantialism. This circumstantialism leads Zea to deny the idea of philosophy as unique. Instead the study of philosophies, as a plurality, is proposed. Thanks to this critical reading, Zea also defends the existence of an original Latin American philosophy which arises not to create new and strange systems, but to respond to the problems of a specific reality that has originated in a specific time. Precisely in his text *American Philosophy as Philosophy Without More* (1969), Zea responds to Salazar Bondy and Luis Villoro, both of whom affirmed, from different traditions, that in America there is still no philosophy of its own.

Carmen Rovira (1923–2021) takes over the concern of her teacher Gaos to elaborate on the history of ideas from her own circumstance and, contrary to Zea who opened up to the Latin American tradition, Rovira focuses on the rescue of the Mexican tradition, which is why she has become the fundamental pillar of the

studies of the history of Mexican ideas. Rovira reexamines the concerns of Ramos and Gaos to find her own ideas in her own intellectual past: she elaborates on several monographic studies on Mexican philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries. She also coordinated an extensive research project on the history of philosophy in the 19th century from which emerged a monumental work called *An Approach to the History of Philosophical Ideas in Mexico: 19th and early 20th century* (Rovira 1997). In it she puts forward her own ideas on the correct way of doing the history of philosophy by elaborating and inheriting a methodology that is in fact observed in her texts. She herself states: "I have dedicated myself to a careful, detailed, critical and comparative analysis [of the author's work], situating it in its context and starting precisely from this work-context relationship, in order to arrive as objectively as possible at certain conclusions that can clarify the contradictions in the political and religious philosophical discourse..." (Rovira 2004, p. 13).

We can see how the foundation of Rovira's philosophical rigor is grounded in the access to the direct sources of the authors, and by direct sources we are not talking about translations of the work into Spanish; it is necessary to go to the work in the original language. Furthermore, a text must be analyzed from its own context and with the categories of its time, distancing itself, as far as possible, from contemporary categories that are foreign to the work of the author under study. Thus, starting from the authors' own texts and contexts, Rovira was aware that the categories that were classically used in the history of ideas did not always serve the purpose for a thorough interpretation of Mexican philosophy.

The uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in 1994, declaring "never again a Mexico without us," shook the hearts and consciences of all those who were sensitive to their call. It also made many of intellectuals in Mexico, America, and Europe become interested for the first time in the existence of the indigenous social group and to open their ears to their claims and their expressions. For the first time, the "I'd like a word, I want it in my own language" of the Mayan Quiché poet Humberto Ak'Abal, expressed in his minimal poems "*El Pregonero*" (The Town Crier), made sense.

After the Zapatista movement, Luis Villoro changed his analytical vision and began to make deep and detailed studies on the problem of justice by patiently analyzing the theories on the subject from Socrates to Rawls, Apel, and Habermas. His studies were published three years later in the book *El Poder y el Valor* (Power and Courage), where he begins to recognize in the indigenous communities their own conscience and to understand (together with Carlos Lenkersdorf) that "the true leaders receive all the respect because they know how to articulate the thought of the community and, in that sense, they obey the community" (Villoro 1997, p. 370). Likewise, he understands that in the indigenous community "the in-

dividual abides by the inherited rules, by the uses and customs of always; only in them he (the indigenous) discovers himself” (p. 371). Villoro admits that, in short, indigenous life takes place in its community and only in it does the native develop his being.

Villoro observes communitarian attitudes among the indigenous groups close to a participatory democracy. Further, he warns that although it is impossible for Western individualism to leave its tradition and to become an indigenous community, it is possible to think of a new Western community where the source of meaning would not be the whole or the individual element, but rather the integration of each part to a whole in which it discovers its own reality. Here, his idea of the integration of the individual to the community is striking, because it is in the community where a more complete expression of being takes place.

Following in the footsteps of Villoro and León Olivé, a consolidated and opinionated group of philosophers promoting multiculturalism in Mexico has been developing in the last decades, providing a strong critique of the ideas of modernity. However, to differentiate them from the Canadian proposal⁸ of which they are also critical, we will refer to the Mexican version as *intercultural philosophy*. Authors such as Raúl Alcalá criticize science and technoscience as instrumental knowledges controlled and applied by capitalist industries and closed to intercultural dialogue. Ambrosio Velasco has also worked along these lines, criticizing the traditional model of science (analytical and synthetic, rational and empirical, univocal, precise, formal and universal) in order to present a new model of fallibilist science. This model of science is without univocal language or method that guarantees universal truths, using rather dialogic and plural forms of rationality close to the model of knowledge that Alonso de la Veracruz exposed very well in his courses on logic in the 16th century. It contained rational argumentations with logic, rhetoric and dialectics, as well as the sensitivity to recognize cultural diversity. From this perspective, Ambrosio Velasco defends multiculturalism and epistemic equity, which imply valuing all cultural traditions and (intercultural) dialogues. The intercultural proposal questions all epistemological imperialism, recognizing that there are different types of knowledge validated by the criteria of diverse communities. More than a simple relativism, it implies an epistemic relativism based on good arguments and on a dialogue that requires responsible, democratic listening, with a *phronesis* that includes and understands diverse cultures.⁹

⁸ See Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, who consider indigenous people as minority cultural groups.

⁹ *Phronesis* in the Aristotelian style, as a virtuous attitude. “ §4 The remaining possibility, then, is that prudence is a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being. Far production has its end in something other than itself, but action

4 Conclusions

After this brief overview of Mexican philosophy, its themes and problems, it is clear that we can speak of a philosophy of its own that shares the following characteristics:

- A search for and recognition of what is proper that generates a certain identity, although this “what is proper” changes according to the times, authors, and circumstances.
- The sense of its *ownness* happens in and from a place and circumstance that is conceived as Mexican by the philosopher who makes the proposal. A circumstance that we preferably call context (historical, political, cultural) today.
- There is a search for Mexican identity that inserts its own proposed philosophy in a tradition of thought, which is critical of the simple and univocal universalism of the West.
- Many of the specialists in Mexican philosophy of the second half of the 20th century chose to write histories of Mexican philosophy from different periods, in order to elaborate on a Mexican philosophy that can be considered generally completed.
- The history of Mexican philosophy is much more complex than the history of State Philosophy or the history of national philosophy, of which Mexican philosophy has elaborated important, critical studies.
- Mexican Philosophy differs from philosophy IN Mexico. The former is rooted in a tradition of its own that can be found throughout the history of Mexican ideas from Mesoamerica to the present day. The latter is centered only in the territory and can come from any position, with any philosophical tendency, and can speak about any subject with the only requirement that it be done IN Mexico or speak about what the State recognizes as Mexican.

does not, since its end is acting well itself. §5 That is why Pericles and such people are the ones whom we regard as prudent, because they are able to study what is good for themselves and far human beings; we think that household managers and politicians are such people. This is also how we come to give temperance (*sophrosune*) its name, because we think that it preserves prudence (*sozousan ten phronesin*)” Aristotle (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics*. 1140b between 4 and 6.

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Women in the History of Philosophy

Beyond Europe: methodological considerations

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ABSTRACT | Worldwide, pre-nineteenth-century philosophical works by women are almost entirely undocumented. However, this fact has so far caused little concern to the vast majority of authors, even those who wrote the most comprehensive histories of world philosophy. Due to a predominantly masculine perspective in the discipline, the exclusion of women from the canon of the history of philosophy continues to this day. This tendency has also affected attempts to reconstruct, document, and integrate “non-Western” philosophical traditions into global discourse, attempts which have been under way since the 1980s. A contemporary revision of the canon of the history of philosophy, however, cannot take place solely from an intercultural or global perspective; it must also address and correct patriarchal structures of exclusion in all regions of the world. The paper discusses the specific challenges of reconstructing the history of women philosophers outside Europe.¹

KEYWORDS | History of Philosophy; Women; Feminist Historiography; Methodology

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1 The Problem

When I asked the author of an introduction to contemporary Chinese philosophy at a book launch a few years ago why he had not included women philosophers, he seemed to be surprised by my question (which he had obviously never asked himself) and replied that there were no women philosophers in China. In response to the disbelieving expression on my face, he added that there were probably already women at philosophy departments in China and Taiwan, but not yet philosophical works by women worth including in an introduction. In view of a strong patriarchal culture in Chinese academia (which was illustrated at the World Philosophy Congress in Beijing in 2018 by the fact that at the opening event in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, only men sat on the podium while women only made an appearance to serve tea, a circumstance that was heavily discussed and criticised at the congress), one would hardly want to blame the colleague for his omission of women philosophers in his introductory book. However, this experience illustrates quite vividly a certain state of consciousness in the international academic community, as well as the situation of women philosophers in the academy. Despite regional differences, it can be said that the situation is characterised by the following two features:

- Little attention is paid to the contribution of women to philosophy and its history, and the absence of women philosophers in departments, curricula, and survey works is rarely perceived as a shortcoming.
- Prejudices that assume that women are either incapable of doing philosophy or only capable of doing it to a very limited extent, and that their achievements in the discipline are mediocre at best, have been widespread and continue to this day.²

This problem also affects the field of intercultural philosophy as well as regional histories of philosophy. In recent decades great effort has been exerted worldwide in intercultural philosophy, and in similar disciplines such as transcultural, comparative, and global philosophy, to bring to light historical and contemporary philosophical traditions excluded from the dominant discourse and to in-

² Ruth Hagengruber and Karen Green (2015) provide an illustrative example in their introduction to the special issue of *The Monist*, "The History of Women's Ideas." Here they refer to an article by David Stove (1993) in which Stove argues that the lack of significant contributions to philosophy by women provides sufficient evidence for women's inferior intellectual capacity. He also claims: "There is not a single passage, intended for publication, in any philosopher that I know of, in which the intellectual equality of the two sexes is asserted." (p. 5)

clude marginalised voices in an equal, non-hierarchical, nonviolent, open discourse. However, little has been done to include women philosophers in this discourse. The programme of making “non-Western”³ philosophical traditions visible in academic discourse and integrating them into teaching and research on an equal footing, thus contributing to epistemic justice in the global philosophical discourse, has thus far not extended to women philosophers’ works in those traditions. On the contrary, the same gender bias that we are already familiar with from European and North American philosophy to a large extent pervades intercultural philosophising and regional as well as global histories of philosophy. For example, a brief examination of publications in German and English from the 1980s to the 2000s shows that, with very few exceptions,⁴ women philosophers are not included in reconstructed histories of philosophy in the Islamic world, India, and China.⁵ The same applies to reconstructions of South American and African philosophies.⁶ This reveals a research gap unaddressed by intercultural philosophy, feminist and gender studies, and regional and global histories of philosophy. So who tells the story of women philosophers outside Europe and North America?

³ For lack of a better term to describe philosophical traditions that have so far been excluded from the dominant philosophical discourse, I have decided to use the equally problematic term “non-Western” in this essay. I use this term to refer to philosophical traditions in Africa, Asia, and South America, but also to hitherto suppressed philosophical traditions such as those of the First Nations people in America, the Maori in New Zealand, etc.

⁴ See Kralle and Schilling’s (2004) edition of *Schreiben über Frauen in China* (Writing about Women in China). However, this book is less about women philosophers and more about women writing and writing about women. For India, see Adamson and Ganeri, “Better Half: Women in Ancient India,” episode 16 of Peter Adamson’s podcast *History of Philosophy without Any Gaps*. The podcast’s episodes on African philosophy portray numerous Black women philosophers.

⁵ Regarding China, this concerns such classics as Feng Youlan’s *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (1948), as well as recent books. For the German-speaking context, see among others: Moritz, *Die Philosophie im alten China* (1990); Bauer, *Geschichte der chinesischen Philosophie. Konfuzianismus, Daoismus, Buddhismus* (2001); Schleichert and Roetz, *Klassische chinesische Philosophie* (2009); and Heubel, *Chinesische Gegenwartsphilosophie zur Einführung* (2016). In the field of Islamic philosophy, see Rudolph, *Islamische Philosophie* (2004); Turki, *Einführung in die arabisch-islamische Philosophie* (2015); and Hendrich, *Arabisch-Islamische Philosophie* (2011). And on Indian philosophy, see Lorenz, *Indische Denker* (1998).

⁶ For Latin America see Krumpel, *Philosophie in Lateinamerika* (1992). In the case of Africa, there is development: while Masolo mentions no women in his book on the history of African philosophy in the 20th century, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (1994), Barry Hallen mentions the gender question and some representatives of feminist philosophy in chap. 8 of his book *A Short History of African Philosophy* (2009).

2 The Task

Only recently has an awareness developed that women philosophers in “non-Western” traditions constitute a doubly marginalised group, hitherto invisible in regional and intercultural discourse, and barely perceived even in feminist philosophical historiography. There are – fortunately – a few exceptions, such as Raúl Fornet-Betancourt’s *Frauen und Philosophie im lateinamerikanischen Denken* (Women and Philosophy in Latin American Thought, 2008). However, it is primarily thanks to the tireless interventions of contemporary women philosophers that women’s contributions to “non-Western” philosophical traditions are slowly becoming the focus of research.⁷

Nevertheless, research on the philosophical work of women outside Europe and North America is still a great rarity which faces entrenched prejudices. Assertions that equate women’s lack of visibility with inability show clear parallels to arguments that have long been used to legitimise exclusion of or ignorance about “non-Western” philosophical traditions. Because women’s contributions are invisible, it is assumed that there are none, and therefore, women must be incapable of contributing at all. No other reason for the invisibility is sought or posited. If causes are named, they are located in the biological constitution of the individual or in climatic conditions, but not in underlying social, political, or epistemic structures. Underlying both forms of prejudice is a lack of interest in excluded traditions of philosophising. Moreover, such prejudices often go hand in hand with a patronising attitude that only credits a narrowly defined group of people with the ability to philosophise. In doing so, the marginalised and fragmented state that results from structural, patriarchal, and colonial oppression, and the targeted destruction of such knowledge traditions, is presumed to be the cause of their invisibility.

In the early 1990s American philosopher Sandra Harding pointed to the overlapping mechanisms and arguments that exclude entire regions and groups of people from both the history of philosophy and contemporary discourse (Harding 1991).⁸ She argued that analyses of such overlapping structures of discrimination require an intersectional approach that studies the intertwining of mechanisms of oppression and exclusion and the multidimensionality of subject positions. Unfortunately, for a long time her insights had hardly any impact on research methodology; they have particularly played no role in philosophy. And although Elizabeth Spelman criticised the “white, bourgeois orientation” of feminist theory as early as 1988, the feminist historiography of philosophy has so far hardly succeeded in

⁷ See also, among others, the research project *Extending New Narratives/Pour de Nouveaux récits en histoire de la philosophie* project led by Lisa Shapiro and others.

⁸ In this context see also Harding and Uma Narayan (2000).

linking the feminist perspective with a larger inclusive and emancipatory agenda; at best, insufficient efforts have been made to do so. The fact that philosophy and the historiography of philosophy, area studies (such as Indology, Sinology, African studies, etc.) and gender theory have long been pursued side by side without contact has certainly contributed to this. Thus, the task that philosophical research – including intercultural philosophy – faces today is to establish an intersectional approach as an important methodological tool. The intersecting exclusions of “non-Western” women from the predominant narrative of the history of philosophy as well as feminist, and regional historiographies of philosophy clearly point to the fact that previous research lacks awareness that thought traditions may be discriminated against in multiple ways. An intersectional approach raises precisely this awareness and enables an interweaving of feminist, anti-racist, and global perspectives as well as closer interdisciplinary cooperation.

3 Challenges

A reconstruction of the history of women philosophers faces considerable challenges. As the research on reconstructing the history of women philosophers in Europe and North America has already shown, a number of specific problems arise.⁹ Let me mention a few important challenges here:

- Overcoming a tradition of thought/worldview that a priori denies that women have the intellectual ability to philosophise.
- Overcoming traditions and schools of philosophy in which basic philosophical concepts – such as reason, rationality, or objectivity – connote masculinity.
- Investigating the structural causes that have led to the exclusion of women philosophers and their works from the canon of the discipline.
- The study of structural causes that have prevented women from engaging in intellectual activities.
- The elaboration of methods and the identification of sources for the reconstruction of the knowledge of women philosophers, for example, by conducting basic research to find philosophical works by women and to reconstruct the lives and works of women philosophers.

⁹ See Tuana (1992), Alanen and Witt (2004), and Witt and Shapiro (2020).

In my opinion, discussions that have taken place within the tradition of European-North American feminist philosophical historiography can be fruitfully used for a reconstruction of the work of “non-Western” women philosophers, even if other contexts pose specific problems of their own. Commonalities across cultures make such use possible and reasonable. For example, the same combination of misogynistic ideology and structural and institutional discrimination against women is found in Europe, Asia, and the Islamic world. Of course, the results of “Western” women’s studies cannot be transferred to “non-Western” contexts without further research due to the specific historical conditions in each case. Beside differences in the cultural or religious contexts, European and North American feminist historians of philosophy do not speak from a colonised situation and its of oppression and ruptures in traditions of the history of ideas. Colonialism and slavery, as philosophical problems, have only recently been addressed in the feminist historiography of philosophy, as has the question of the extent to which European and North American women philosophers have or have not taken a critical stance against colonialism and slavery. These historical events and their consequences, which continue to have an impact today, are central to the reconstruction of histories of philosophy in a number of “non-Western” contexts.

“Non-Western” philosophical traditions must also be confronted with the question of why few or no women appear in their historical narratives. The specific factors responsible for the exclusion of women must be investigated in detail for each context. The extent to which basic terms and concepts of “non-Western” philosophical traditions have been shaped by a male perspective and misogyny, and the extent to which gender roles have limited women’s intellectual activities, must both be examined. To my knowledge, such an investigation has not yet been undertaken with regard to “non-Western” philosophical traditions. It is also necessary to investigate which institutional and structural conditions have led to the exclusion of women from the narratives of “non-Western” philosophical traditions, and which theories and arguments have been used to legitimise such exclusion. Empirical studies in “non-Western” contexts may also open up new perspectives on exclusion mechanisms in Europe.

The development of methods and the discovery of new sources for reconstructing the ideas of “women philosophers” are further important aspects which connect research in “non-Western” regions with European and North American feminist philosophical historiographies. However, the challenges of methodological questions in “non-Western” regions go beyond the state of the discourse in European-North American feminist historiography of philosophy. It is striking that published European and North American histories of women philosophers show a far-reaching attachment to written texts. Although the theories and names of

women philosophers of Greek antiquity, for whom there are no extant texts and whose names are handed down in works by later philosophers, are usually included in narratives of the history of philosophy, only women who have left texts are included in accounts of later centuries. Here, a text-centred approach seems to predominate. It is therefore no surprise that the majority of detailed studies in recent years have concentrated on the period from the sixteenth century onwards, where texts written by women in a wide variety of genres are available. There has barely been any opening in the discipline of the historiography of philosophy to study non-written sources, materials, and practices.¹⁰ This particular challenge now confronts research towards the reconstruction of the history of women philosophers outside Europe, especially where oral traditions were predominant. Reconstructing the history of a philosophy based on oral traditions is difficult to begin with; how can women's philosophical knowledge be recovered in such a context? It seems an almost hopeless endeavour; authorship of oral philosophies is mostly unknown, and traditions with gender-neutral languages present further complications.¹¹ However, there are narrative traditions, as well as religious or cultural practices, that were passed on only matrilineally or in female peer groups, and thus perhaps there is also philosophising that is practised only by women. This could possibly be a starting point for reconstructing knowledge specifically transmitted by women in oral traditions, which could be examined for its philosophical relevance.¹² This is an unusual and, moreover, tentatively explored approach to reconstructing philosophical knowledge whose outcome is uncertain. Nevertheless, feminist, European, and North American historiographies of philosophy can benefit immediately from discussions about oral philosophy, for example, by expanding source materials. In North America, this question particularly concerns the reconstruction of the philosophical knowledge of First Nations people and Black women.

From a feminist perspective, the reconstruction of the philosophical heritage

¹⁰ Studies in this direction tend to emerge from *Black feminism* (see Hill Collins (1991)).

¹¹ See, among others, Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí's study on the Yoruba language, *The Invention of Women* (1997). Oyèwùmí shows that there are no gender-specific words in Yoruba to designate son or daughter; rather, gender-neutral terms such as "offspring" and "siblings" are used. Yoruba names are not gender-specific, nor are the *oko* and *aya*, often translated as "husband" and "wife" (see p. 29 and pp. 44f.). Likewise, the concept of "women" in the sense of a social group with shared interests and a common social position, namely as subordinate to men, did not exist in this community before contact with Europe. She writes that the "creation of 'women' as a category was one of the first accomplishments of the colonial state" (p. 124). The uncritical transfer of English terminology to the history and culture of the Yoruba has contributed to a "patriarchalisation" of their history and culture.

¹² For example, a wide-ranging discourse has developed on the specific knowledge of Maori women (*Matauranga Wahine*) (see among others Jahnke (1997), and Jenkins and Pihama (2001)). The philosophical relevance needs to be investigated.

in oral traditions entails a number of new challenges that have hardly been considered so far.¹³ But even in cases where written material exists, the reconstruction of female philosophers' theories poses specific challenges to us, since here we are confronted with text genres that are not usually considered "legitimate" sources in the prevailing discourse of the historiography of philosophy, such as poems and other literary forms,¹⁴ religious texts,¹⁵ hagiographies,¹⁶ and letters. In recent decades, however, a number of works have appeared in feminist research on the history of philosophy which address the handling of sources and the need to include more genres of texts in the reconstruction of the history of women philoso-

¹³ An exception is the Sage Philosophy Project initiated by Henry Odera Oruka (1990) in Kenya in 1974, in which sages, including women, were interviewed. In this context, the American philosopher Gail Presbey is particularly committed to the inclusion of women. She specifically documents and analyses the knowledge of wise women within the framework of the Sage Philosophy Project in her works (1997; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2012).

¹⁴ For example, Phillis Wheatley (1753–84), who was brought to North America as a slave and the first Black woman to have her poetry published, is a central figure in African-American literary history. Her work is increasingly being analysed from a philosophical perspective (see Gates (2003) among others). On Wheatley's inclusion in the philosophical canon, see the arguments in Adamson and Jeffers's "Young, Gifted, and Black: Phillis Wheatley," one of the Africana Philosophy episodes of the *History of Philosophy without Any Gaps*.

¹⁵ Hence, in the *Upanishads* we find the names of those women who are now considered to be the two most ancient Indian female philosophers: Gargi Vachaknavi and Maitreyi. Both are mentioned in the 6th and 8th Brahmana of the third chapter of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* as dialogue partners of the sage Yajnavalkya. Gargi is considered in Vedic literature as a great philosopher of nature and a *Brahmavadini*, a person who has great knowledge of *Brahma Vidya*. Maitreyi, a wife of Yajnavalkya, is also considered a *Brahmavadini* and participates in the dialogue. It is difficult to say if the figures from the *Upanishads* are historical persons – a significant question for the history of philosophy. In general, there is little doubt that they are historical persons. In the Islamic world, there is little documentation of the work of women philosophers, especially from early centuries. Among the names of women thinkers which have come down to us are Rābī'a al-'Adawīyya al-Qaysīyya, also known as Rābī'a of Basra (713/717–811); Fāṭima bint al-Matannā, also known as Fāṭima of Cordoba (12th century), a Sufi master and teacher of the renowned philosopher Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240); and 'Āīša bint Yūsuf al-Bā'ūniyya (ca. 1517), who is also known as a Sufi master and poet. The Islamic tradition of the African continent, particularly in the regions south of the Sahara, also has hardly any known writings by or traditions of scholarly women. In this respect, it is a fortunate coincidence that we have a number of texts by Nana Asma'u (1793–1864) from the Sokoto Caliphate (in the north of present-day Nigeria), mostly religious doctrinal poems.

¹⁶ An example is the hagiography of Walatta Petros (1592–1642), a Christian nun who was given the status of a saint in the Ethiopian Coptic Church because of her resistance to the Catholicisation of Ethiopia. We have no transmitted texts from Walatta Petros herself. Our knowledge of her life, deeds, views, and statements has been handed down exclusively within the framework of a hagiography. That her resistance to Jesuit influence and the political and religious subjugation of Coptic Ethiopia to the rule of Catholicism, as well as her independence from male decision-makers, be it her husband or the king, is an expression of firm political, religious, and moral positions cannot be doubted. Nevertheless, it is not easy to decide whether a hagiography offers sufficient and reliable source material with which to justify Walatta Petros' inclusion in a history of philosophy (Galawdewos 2015).

phers. The Austrian-American historian Gerda Lerner, for example, described the methodological problems in tracing women philosophers in past centuries in the following way:

They are nearly impossible to find if we apply to them criteria we apply to male philosophers. Due to the constraints and disadvantages under which thinking women had to live and due to their isolation from institutional recognition, their work and careers look different from those of men. [...] I do not propose to elevate to the level of philosopher any women who had ideas of any kind or who pursued intellectual interests. But I think we need to be sensitive to the possibility that women's thought, just like women's art, would find different modes of expression than would men's. (Lerner 2000, pp. 10–11)

Lerner argues that “[to] find them we have to stop looking for women in the male model” (11). The search for women philosophers must become more open and include other genres of textual production, and other practices for the transmission of thought and concepts, than the conventional male-centred historiography of philosophy. It is important to consider smaller works and messages delivered in other forms, for example, in poems like Emily Dickinson's, and even to study fragmentary, partially developed insights. One of the basic demands of a feminist historiography of philosophy is finding new source material: utilising different textual genres and a broader range of modes of expression and philosophical practices. (Alanen and Witt 2004) Philosophical treatises in the classical sense can hardly be expected from women because of structural discrimination, such as the centuries-long exclusion of women from academic professions and institutions of higher education. Women were forced by circumstances to resort to other media and literary genres to express thoughts, concepts, and theories. In this respect, the reconstruction of the history of women philosophers must examine a variety of practices and genres of philosophising.

4 Conclusion

A proper revision of the canon of the history of philosophy cannot be carried out solely from an intercultural or global perspective, but must also address and correct patriarchal structures of exclusion – in all regions of the world. Such a revision aims to do justice to women philosophers marginalised or forgotten solely because of their gender and despite the originality or relevance of their ideas. But

more fundamentally, it is a matter of correcting an image of philosophy that has been shaped to this day by male philosophers – and, consequently, by a male perspective – and which seems thereby to provide a tacit historical justification for male supremacy in the history of philosophy. In this respect, a critique and reform of the historiography of philosophy from a feminist perspective has direct implications for our understanding of philosophy. Linking the feminist perspective with an anti-racist and global perspective is thus of particular relevance. The aim must be to bring together the theoretical and methodological reflections from global and feminist research on the history of philosophy and to draw conclusions for a historiography of philosophy for the future.

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Institutional Change through “Diversity Initiatives”

The case of philosophy in the USA

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ABSTRACT | This paper is a summary of the history of the various “diversity initiatives” of the American Philosophical Association over the last 20 years. These initiatives, created by various committees created by the APA, helped to reshape the overall contents of curricula and policies of hiring in philosophy in the USA. It also helped academic departments to rethink the parameters of the meaning of the term “philosophy” as currently used.

KEYWORDS | Diversity; Diversity Initiatives; Institutional Change; Demography; American Philosophical Association

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1 Demographic Background

For more than 20 years, the issue of “diversity” has been explicitly on the agenda at meetings of the American Philosophical Association (APA), the largest professional organization for scholars working in the academic field of philosophy in the USA. Because all hiring, assessment of departments and other professional issues are centrally organized through the APA, it is not a trivial matter that the association is invested in the development of various diversity initiatives. In this paper, the initial establishment of various diversity committees as well as the development and current status of the APA and philosophy departments in the USA are reviewed.¹

The implementation of diversity initiatives by the APA has partially been in response to an overall population shift in the USA. While the demographic makeup of the country has always been diverse, the post-World War II population of new immigrants increased, and the demographic makeup has been changing steadily for the past 50 years. As the student body became more and more diverse, it became unfeasible and unacceptable for universities to continue ignoring this shift. By 2000, California had become the second “majority-minority state” after Hawaii – that is, a state in which whites are in the minority as a result of unprecedented growth in the Hispanic, Asian and immigrant populations. By 2014, all nine campuses of the University of California, the main public research university in California, had become majority-minority among its undergraduates, with Asian students representing the largest “minority.” By 2019, an additional four states had become “majority-minority” states: Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Maryland. As of 2020, the most recent census year, nonwhite children constitute a majority of the country’s population² while the U.S. Government Census Bureau projects that by the mid-2040s, the entire USA will have become “majority-minority.” The shift is experienced, not only on university campuses, but by all citizens and on a daily basis – in public schools, the workplace and the living environment, especially in metropolitan areas.³

¹ The author served as initiating member of the APA Diversity Initiative; the Committee on Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies (2001–2003); Diversity Committee for the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (2000–2003); Program Committee for the APA Pacific Division (1999–2001), and the Diversity Curriculum Committee of the University of San Francisco (1998–2001).

² The census is mandated by the U.S. Constitution. Demographic information collected by the Census Bureau is available at <https://www.census.gov/> For a summary description of “majority-minority” states, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority_minority_in_the_United_States.

³ In this essay my focus will be the philosophical profession in the U.S. against the background of this demographic shift, but similar shifts are also occurring in Europe. For example, according to the

2 Diversity and Philosophy

Beginning as far back as the 1980s, many US departments in the humanities responded to this socio-political reality by changing their curricula to reflect this shift in demographics and to promote a more diverse and possibly more global self-understanding of their own profession. However, philosophy has always been quite resistant to acknowledging diversity, and although there have been efforts to change the curriculum, by the 1990s, the majority of philosophy programs still paid little, if any, attention to philosophical traditions outside the Western, particularly analytic, tradition. This was largely a result of the self-understanding of philosophy as a "science" (in analytic philosophy) with a self-evident Western heritage which equated "philosophy" with "Western philosophy" and the "history of philosophy" with the "history of Western philosophy." Diversity, it was argued, made as little sense as "non-Western physics." It was assumed that there is basically no such thing.

However, by the late 1990s and largely in response to criticisms raised by various university-wide diversity initiatives, which had become increasingly commonplace everywhere, a number of philosophers started to challenge these assumptions and began to engage in diversity dialogues. The question that was immediately raised was, how is "philosophy" defined? Many of us in the profession had no problem accepting non-Western philosophies (nearly exclusively Chinese or Indian philosophies at the time) as "philosophy," while others, if not the majority, excluded these traditions from the definition – as a result of which, these traditions mostly ended up finding a home in Religious Studies programs. Whether such non-Western philosophies can be taught in philosophy departments is no uncontroversial matter when it comes to curriculum changes, negotiations for new positions, and hiring.

But diversity was not merely an issue of professional politics, for it touched on the very question of the nature and role of university educators. Our world has never been a collection of isolated nations and peoples, but a dynamic arena of communication and conflict. Given present technology and the constant flow of people, information, and capital, our students will have to learn that provincial attitudes, willful ignorance about the rest of the world and intellectual ethnocentrism are no longer adequate for effective participation in a global culture. The

Datenreport 2018 from the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, as of 2017, 39% of German children under the age of 3 have *Migrationshintergrund* (See <https://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/datenreport-2018/bevoelkerung-und-demografie/>). Germany will become even more diverse in the near future. Schools and universities will have to grapple with the issues of diversity at all levels since they are embedded in these dynamic societal shifts. The field of philosophy is no exception.

narrow self-definition of philosophy may have been adequate for the past 100 years, but this says nothing about what we, as philosophers and educators, will have to do in order to move forward in a radically different and rapidly changing world. Unwillingness to engage in this conversation would be an oversight that could undermine our very role as philosophical educators, if not a sabotage our students' future. Studying one's own tradition is certainly essential, as is teaching good methods of argumentation and the power of abstraction. But teaching Western philosophy does not absolve one from having to learn about the rich philosophical traditions of other cultures, past and present.

Moreover, the history of Western philosophy has been far from an innocent development. After all, it was complicit in European colonialism and racism, as well as the long history of excluding women. In fact, these various complicities are still at work, justifying the exclusion of non-Western philosophies and/or women philosophers. If philosophy is to become the truly critical enterprise it has always claimed to be, then all these historical facts and subtle practices of exclusion which still influence our understanding of the subject should be taught explicitly, the epistemological blind-spots and unexplored areas examined, and analyzed. As educators, especially of philosophy, we are responsible for teaching, not only critical modes of thinking, but also for making explicit and transmitting the broader implications of having practiced our discipline in a certain way. Why should we be exempt from such an obligation?

3 Diversity Initiatives Created by the American Philosophical Association

The questions and considerations regarding its own narrowness has led the American Philosophical Association to establish various diversity committees in 1998. These committees were created in order to address, on the one hand, the practices of unfair marginalization in the profession and, on the other hand, in order to better serve the profession, not only in the present but especially in the future, by gradually altering the status quo. The first of these committees were dedicated to Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies; Black Philosophers; Hispanics (the term "Latinx" was introduced in 2018); LGBT Philosophers; Native American and Indigenous Philosophers, and the Status of Women. A Committee on the Status of Disabled People in the Profession was added in 2019. A Committee on Inclusiveness in the Profession, created in 2007, communicates with these Diversity Committees. Committees meet once or twice a year and report back at

the relevant division’s annual APA meeting.⁴ Each committee also produces an annual newsletter which contains several essays on the committee’s charter. The call for papers to contribute to a committee newsletter goes out to all members of the APA and is not limited to members of any one committee. The publication of these newsletters started in 2001 – with the exception of The Newsletter on Hispanics, which started publication in 2003.⁵

The committee whose work I am most familiar with is The Committee on Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies whose founding chair was Xijiang Jiang. Initial discussions concerned the question of who should be allowed to join the committee given that the initial and explicit purpose of all the diversity committees was to address issues raised by philosophers who had personally experienced exclusion in the profession. However, it soon became clear that exclusion was not limited to philosophers from Asian countries, but that Asian American philosophers also experienced marginalization. At that point the name of the committee changed to reflect this understanding. Soon after, however, we discovered that not only those with Asian backgrounds, but also non-Asian philosophers who taught Asian philosophies, were marginalized (more so than Asian philosophers who taught, say, logic). As a result, the name of the committee was changed for a second time to also include those who taught Asian philosophies, regardless of their personal background. At present, this committee is known as The Committee on Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies (AAMPP).

The first panel sponsored by the AAMPP committee took place at the Pacific APA meeting in 2000 (Albuquerque) under the title, “What is Philosophy? The Status of Non-Western Philosophy in the Profession.” Participating in the panel were Joseph Prabhu, Eric Schwitzgebel, Robert Solomon, Kwasi Wiredu and Xianglong Zhang. Martha Nussbaum, who had originally accepted an invitation to participate in the panel discussion, unfortunately cancelled at the last minute. Participants were selected on the basis that they all conduct research and teach in a university department with offerings in one of the many so-called “non-Western” philosophical traditions and that they are therefore particularly sensitive to issues involved in researching and teaching these traditions of thought. The committee’s first newsletter, which appeared in 2001, was based on this panel and contained a commentary by Schwitzgebel and articles by Solomon, Prabhu and Arisaka.⁶

By 2000, there were still relatively few women philosophers and philosophers

⁴ The APA has three divisions: Eastern, Central and Pacific, and each division holds an annual meeting.

⁵ For more information on these committees, their newsletters and the relevant statistics, see the Diversity submenu on the APA website at <https://www.apaonline.org/page/divmenu>.

⁶ <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/collection/2EAF6689-4B0D-4CCB-9DC6-FB926D8FF530/v01n1Asian.pdf>

of color whose philosophical interests include non-Western traditions of thought. At that point, Asian philosophies were the only recognized branch of non-Western philosophies and although there were philosophers whose specializations included Latin-American, African-American/African, Arabic and other indigenous philosophies and who were in contact with each other, they were not organized around this interest before the diversity committees came into existence. Further, although feminist and LGBTQ philosophers and philosophies had been actively organized, these areas did not primarily address non-Western philosophies or issues of race. Very few graduate programs offered a Ph.D. in non-Western or diversity-related philosophies. In fact, the University of Hawaii, the flagship of Asian and Comparative philosophy, had been the only true exception.

Since 2000, the APA has become even more actively involved in developing its diversity initiative and presently oversees its effectiveness directly from the national office. Official statements on diversity are issued, distributed and approved every few years. For example, the 2018 statement read:

The APA divisions are committed to the goal that the divisional programs and the membership of their committees achieve broad diversity. This diversity includes (but is not limited to) race, color, religion, political conviction, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification, ethnicity, and age. Where representation on the divisional programs is concerned, we also include diversity of rank and institutional affiliation.

Further, the APA divisions are committed to the goal that the membership of their committees and the divisional programs reflect the broad diversity of philosophical traditions, orientations, and approaches in the profession. To encourage this diversity, the divisional executive committees, in cooperation with the national office, will undertake the following initiatives and welcome suggestions from the membership for continued improvement in achieving these policy goals.

- a. Gathering, analyzing, and publishing data on the diversity represented in the divisional programs.
- b. Active encouragement of the membership to support these efforts by volunteering to chair and comment at sessions, suggesting invited sessions, submitting papers and posters, and identifying other ways to ensure that the divisional programs are based on the broadest possible pool of submissions.

Institutional Change through “Diversity Initiatives”

In 2013, a task force on diversity and inclusiveness was created in the national office which oversees the operations of the various diversity initiatives. It reports directly to the APA board of officers.

Moreover, in order to keep track of the demographic information relevant to the promotion of inclusiveness, the APA began in 2016 to collect data on diversity and inclusiveness through its large-scale survey, conducted every few years, on diversity-related issues in departments and among philosophy graduate students. Questions in these surveys are not limited to race, ethnicity or LGBTQ status, but also include questions about disability, whether students come from first-generation households (in which the student is the first person from a household to attend college) and whether or not they have a military background.⁷ The survey contained in the 2019 report also asked graduate students questions to determine whether they felt respected and included in the department; whether they experienced any discriminatory practices, and whether they thought the program could become more diverse. At the time, information collected was intended to serve as the basis for further recommendations.

In addition, the APA began active undergraduate recruitment and outreach among underrepresented groups. For example, with ongoing assistance from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the association supports university efforts to create undergraduate summer diversity institutes and workshops, taught by philosophers from diversity groups, who recruit students from underrepresented groups to study philosophy. Currently there are eight such summer institutes. Until 2017, there was also the Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institute (PIKSI) Ambassador Program, which appointed student “ambassadors” from underrepresented groups who visited undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to encouraged them to either consider studying or continue studying philosophy.

Additionally, the APA began the online “Diversity and Inclusiveness Syllabus Collection.”⁸ Philosophers who teach diversity-related courses can share their syllabi or develop one to post in order to assist others who were equally interested in incorporating elements of diversity in their courses. Currently, there are 26 categories listed of which some are specific diversity-oriented courses such as Africana Philosophy, Indigenous Philosophy, Islamic Philosophy, and Multicultural and World Philosophies, while yet others are more traditional courses, such as History of Philosophy, Social and Political Philosophy and Philosophy of Language,

⁷ The 2019 report is available at https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/data_on_profession/apda_final_report_2019.pdf.

⁸ See https://www.apaonline.org/members/group_content_view.asp?group=110430&id=380970 for an extensive list of these syllabi. Authors of these syllabi retain copyright and receive a citation when their syllabus is shared.

which incorporate elements of diversity and inclusiveness. Examples of the latter would be a Philosophy of Language course that includes readings in sexist and/or racist speech-acts, or a course in epistemology that addresses questions of epistemic injustice or feminist epistemology.

4 Diversity among the Philosophy Departments

Beyond these efforts of the APA, diversity initiatives at departmental level also increased exponentially over the last 20 years. In 2000, the University of Hawaii, with its focus on Asian and Comparative philosophy, had been practically the only department with a notable diversity profile. Although there were other departments in which one could earn a Ph.D. in a non-Western philosophical tradition such as Africana philosophy, they were few and far between and usually not particularly diverse, either in terms of teaching staff or student body. In stark contrast, by 2020, the graduate programs in which one could earn a Ph.D. in a diversity-oriented field had risen to 48.⁹ Many departments gradually re-invented themselves over the past 20 years to become more diverse in their offerings. In this regard, the seven most notable departments and their diversity offerings are:

1. Binghamton University (NY): Asian, Africana, Asian-American, Feminism, Gender, Postcolonial, Diasporic, Trans;
2. Emory University (GA): Africana, Puerto Rico, Feminism, Gender, Race, Decolonial, Multiculturalism, Holocaust, Migration;
3. Pennsylvania State University (PA): Feminism, Gender, Race, Africana, indigenous, Latin-American;
4. Stony Brook University (NY): Asian, Asian-American, Indian-Analytic, Comparative, Race, Feminism;
5. The University of Hawaii (HI): Comparative, Asian, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Buddhist, Islamic, Feminism, Children;
6. The University of Memphis (TN): Feminism, Gender, Race, Comparative, African;
7. The University of Oregon (OR): Feminism, Gender, Race, Latin-American, Indigenous, Decolonial.

⁹The list with the link to the departments can be found at <https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/en/histories-of-philosophy/curricula-and-research-worldwide/us-diversity-oriented-departments/>.

Institutional Change through “Diversity Initiatives”

There has been a fast and steady increase in the number of departments that offer philosophy of race and Africana philosophy, and representation in areas such as decolonial and indigenous philosophy, while relatively new, are expected to increase. Below is a list of the area of specialization in which one can now earn a Ph.D., followed by the number of representative departments in each category:

1. African-American and Africana philosophy: 14
2. Arabic and Islamic philosophy: 8
3. Asian philosophy (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, other): 22
4. Comparative philosophy: 12
5. Feminist philosophy: 36
6. Philosophy of gender: 19
7. Indigenous philosophy: 2
8. Latin-American philosophy: 9
9. Multiculturalism: 1
10. Philosophy of race: 23
11. Postcolonial and/or Decolonial philosophy: 3

As this list indicates, the number of doctorates in diversity fields have increased significantly and every year the number of new posts created and appointments made in them, increases. Among the undergraduate programs in state and liberal arts colleges, the issue of diversity has been embraced much more readily. Given demographics and continuing efforts by the APA, this tendency is likely to increase.

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