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Inclusive Pedagogy: Beyond Simple Content

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> I would define the episteme retrospectively as the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within, I won't say a scientific theory, but a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false. The *episteme* is the "apparatus" which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterized as scientific.
>
> —Interview with Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh"

HOW WE TEACH WHAT WE TEACH

Philosophers have made notable progress in making philosophy more inclusive and welcoming. Feminist philosophers and philosophers of race in particular have helped increase the number and visibility of women and people of color through efforts such as the Mentoring Project for Pre-Tenure Women Faculty in Philosophy (Antony and Cudd 2015), Minorities and Philosophy (MAP 2015), the Gendered Conference Campaign (Feminist Philosophers 2009), and the UPDirectory (UPDirectory 2015). Philosophers have also come to appreciate that our pedagogies need to be *and can be* inclusive. Efforts such as a public Google doc containing a database of philosophical works by women suitable for undergraduate courses (Anonymous 2015), the APA Diversity and Inclusiveness Syllabus Collection (APA 2015), and conference panels and workshops[1] on diversifying philosophical readings in various courses are excellent contributions in this regard. The message that philosophers should work to make their classes more diverse by including readings written by members of groups traditionally underrepresented in philosophy (basically, anyone other than white, middle-upper-class, heterosexual, able-bodied males) and by taking as philosophically serious issues concerning diversity has been received and acted upon by many of us. So, it is now far less likely, although unfortunately still quite likely, to find an introduction to philosophy syllabus assigning only texts written by the great dead white males. We are also seeing more and more courses on feminist philosophy and philosophy of race being taught today than even a decade ago and, dare we say, more respect being paid to these courses and relevant research by mainstream philosophers than ever before.

Beyond considerations of content, however, we find form. We have learned from feminist philosophy and critical theory that neutrality is a myth; this applies also to the seemingly neutral ways we structure our courses, design our assignments, and assess student achievement and mastery of material. It isn't enough to diversify the topics and authors in our classes, to simply, in other words, add women or add color, and stir. For philosophy to live up to its potential as a force for social justice and progress, we must reconsider how we teach what we teach. Just as many of us have recognized that we must learn new content in order to teach more socially responsible versions of our courses, we should also be willing to learn new methods of teaching—and, indeed, of learning.

At the first Diversity in Philosophy Conference in 2013, in a presentation titled "Challenging the Canon," Eugene Marshall asks us to imagine applying a version of the Bechdel Test to our syllabuses: "A philosophy syllabus passes the test just when (1) it contains two or more texts by women authors (2) who are, preferably, in dialogue with each other, (3) but, at least, doing something other than merely responding to the ideas of a man" (Marshall 2013).[2] We would like to propose an additional guideline for philosophy courses inspired by Maria Lugones's powerful essay, "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception." Lugones encourages playfulness in the service of learning and learning to love as follows:

> Playfulness is, in part, an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight.

She continues,

> So, positively, the playful attitude involves openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to self-construction or reconstruction and to construction or reconstruction of the "worlds" we inhabit playfully. Negatively, playfulness is characterized by uncertainty, lack of self-importance, absence of rules or a not taking rules as sacred, a not worrying about competence and a lack of abandonment to a particular construction of oneself, others and one's relation to them. (Lugones 1987, 17)

Lugones counsels that such playfulness is safe only in certain worlds, worlds not constructed by and for arrogant perceivers. To make philosophy more inclusive and welcoming, professors can aim to create an atmosphere—a world—in which a kind of decentering playfulness thrives, by designing nontraditional assignments, studying nontraditional philosophical texts, and being willing to engage with the students on their own terms, even when those terms are unfamiliar and perhaps uncomfortable for the professor. As professors at two different universities, we have each attempted to accomplish this in different ways and have found that the result can be a philosophy classroom characterized by an aggregate attitude of openness, willingness to explore new ideas and possibilities, lack of undue deference to inherited academic norms, and relish for a broad range of modes of expression and communication. One

cannot predict precisely what will happen in such a classroom, but taking such risks is an essential step toward a more thorough diversification of our field. Indeed, the willingness to take risks is essential in the effort to overturn the status quo, including the status quo of philosophy, which, as we all know, is particularly resistant to change. Our judgments and institutions are reinforced by academic discourses that are structurally biased and privilege certain "appropriate" forms of discourse and correlating forms of intellectual excellence. This discourse helps compose what Foucault referred to as the *episteme*: "In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice" (Foucault 1970, 168). The reigning discourse was also implicated by Marx and referred to as the *superstructure*: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness…. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less transformed" (Marx 1977, 4–5).

Despite efforts to diversify the content of philosophy classes by ensuring that philosophy written by a diverse and representative selection of philosophers is studied, students still may be alienated when required to participate in a discourse that is not their own. In what follows, we explain what we mean by decentering playfulness and why it is needed in the classroom.

CRACKING THE EPISTEME THROUGH PERFORMANCE: DECENTERING PLAYFULNESS

Ludwig Wittgenstein and Michel Foucault expose how language does not merely represent the world, but instead structures the multitude of our worlds and does so in part by determining what actions and statements make "sense" and therefore deserve recognition and respect. Those that aren't deemed sensible are met with censure and blame. As Wittgenstein first pointed out in *Philosophical Investigations*, language games comprise "the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven" (Wittgenstein 1962, ¶7), including gestures, habits, and worldviews as "the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (¶23). We are misled by our belief that some forms of expression are essentially more appropriate than others, into believing that the reigning *episteme* is morally and epistemically neutral in the games academics play.

Language and the language games we play coerce us into predictable, regulated relations with others, constricting the range of possibilities we can truly consider. We are always already participating in relations of power sustained and justified by the reigning *episteme*. This *episteme* informs the language games that we learn and create in order to participate in the public sphere. In the academic context, oppressive language games are powerful despite commitments to social justice and efforts to expose and undermine oppression. Even while we aim to open up the structure of discourse by focusing on relevant progressive content and issues, insofar as we unquestioningly

accept the reigning episteme, we constrict the field of possible enunciations at any one time.

Indeed, especially in the academic domain, where only some forms of expression count as fully embodying the dignity we associate with scholarly life, where only some forms of expression are deemed meaningful, the expectations we set for and the expressions we accept from our students are far from neutral. Within the academy, under the pretense of openness, dialogue, and free inquiry, we constrict our use of language by respecting boundaries between academic and nonacademic inquiry as given, natural, and defensible. As Judith Butler explains, "language constitutes the subject in part through foreclosure, a kind of unofficial censorship or primary restriction in speech that constitutes the possibility of agency in speech" (Butler 1997, 41). Butler also makes clear that the racist, classist, and sexist structure of the *episteme* also informs our visual and imaginative fields.[3] The notion of "dignity" that delimits what sorts of verbal enunciations are appropriate to academic endeavors is not universal. Not recognizing the diversity of meaningful methods and modes of expression marginalizes minority groups and silences potentially revolutionary actions, as both of these can expose the contingent and oppressive epistemic structure that perpetuates racist, classist, and heterosexist relations of power.

Recognizing more than one possible form of excellence encourages real social change within and beyond the ivory tower. Decentering playfulness in our classes can call out the implicit assumption that any one method or mode of discourse can be the only or even the most viable route to knowledge. In other words, through incorporating and exploring alternative modes of inquiry, the hegemonic discourse is shifted from its privileged and central locale within the field of discursive domains. This allows students to see the academic structure of meaning as a structure. For example, by integrating rap and spoken word as assignments in courses and focusing on alternative forms of philosophical writing as texts such as letters from prisoners, autobiography, blogs, and underground hip-hop, the comfortable center cannot hold. This pedagogy ushers the privileged, including—maybe especially—the professor(s), outside their comfort zone. In fact, nontraditional assignments and texts have enriched our understanding of the subject matter despite—and sometimes because of—our own and some students' discomfort with the use of such texts and methods of learning and assessment in academic contexts.

NECESSITY OF PLAYFULNESS IN THE ACADEMIC WORLD

Though we "perform" our socially sanctioned scripts every day, we are not conscious of our behavior as performance; it is seen and experienced as what is "normal" and "everyday." When our students self-consciously perform ideas and/or participate in modes of expression that are not "natural" or "normal" in their academic world or social interactions, they can better recognize how certain privileged forms of expression rest on the suppression of other truths and ideas that escape them. In our experiences, students are nervous about stepping outside of their comfort zone in order to

be assessed on skills and knowledge that are not traditionally regarded as forms of academic excellence. However, we have also found that the wisdom gleaned from this discomfort has furthered the pedagogical aim of our courses better than written work alone. When we integrate marginalized discourses and alternative forms of expression into the *structure* of our courses and assignments, students who usually have the privilege of feeling "normal" can existentially experience the discomfort of performing as the "other." In this way, performance can better expose the episteme as the episteme as well as reveal cracks in its totalizing façade.

A next step in resisting and subverting structural discrimination in society as well as in philosophy is twofold. First, it involves incorporating marginalized discourses as texts. Second, it involves valuing varied forms of expression students might utilize in engaging with the material and philosophical issues it confronts. Both of these efforts have the potential to fully engage students not already at the center of the academic enterprise. Such students are like Lugones's world-traveler who finds herself in another world where she does not feel at home. By presenting them with an opportunity to speak in their own voices and in which their own epistemic standpoint may be afforded a privileged position, these students are placed at the center of an academic enterprise that may previously have seemed alien and uninviting to them. At the center, we can now find the marginalized student.

Furthermore, expanding the sorts of expression valued beyond that of formal academic writing gives students at the center of the academic enterprise a glimpse into what is required of the others on a regular basis if they are to succeed in college. This is akin to Lugones's suggestion that the arrogant perceiver must be willing to leave her comfort zone to open herself up to sincere engagement with otherness. For example, the straight-A student who has trained for college from an early age through a college-prep curriculum may easily construct a five-page philosophical analysis of the main argument in Descartes's *Meditations*. This student may immediately understand the traditional assignment and be able to complete it with little effort. However, little effort is not necessarily what we want to encourage in philosophy. If asked to complete a less traditional assignment, this student will likely find it less natural and as a result may struggle in just the way we want students to struggle. The world that was once their inheritance has now shifted in a way that asks them to grow and change. How novel!

Instead of merely allowing diverse voices to enter a space that has been structured without their consent and probably against their interests, varying the kinds of assignments required can shift the balance of comfort and expertise in a way that allows previously marginalized voices to speak for themselves and from themselves. Philosophical intuitions and assumptions are weighed against the real-life experiences of individuals, especially marginalized individuals, for example, prisoners and the disabled. For example, we have incorporated slam poetry and underground rap music into traditional philosophy courses as both texts and as student work. (Interested readers will find samples of student work in Appendices A and B at the end of this article.) Including these sources as texts to be studied gives voice to marginalized groups and raises salient issues for these groups. Students are also invited to produce

similar texts for class credit, allowing them to engage with philosophy on their own terms and in their own voices. This allows their testimony to function as text, piercing the univocal expression of "true" philosophical discourse that reinforces the heterosexist, racist, and classist structure of society. In short, theoretically and practically, we problematize the distinction between philosophical and nonphilosophical texts and question the assumption that there is basically one kind of worthwhile philosophical writing. After all, the goal is not just to open philosophy to a more diverse set of practitioners but to open philosophy to a more diverse set of practices, making philosophy not only better for marginalized persons, but also just simply better.

Challenges

The pedagogical approach we have described here is not a panacea to diversifying philosophy. It must be incorporated responsibly and with due diligence. In closing, we would like to discuss two pressing challenges to creating a classroom where decentering playfulness is likely to thrive. These are the risks of cultural appropriation, and the duty to demystify traditional academic discourse.

First, the risk of cultural appropriation is real, especially with regard to hip-hop and rap. Cultural capital affords dominant groups the freedom to coopt expressive elements from marginalized groups, not to respectfully appreciate them, but instead to profit from, mimic, and sometimes mock them. The activity of cultural appropriation is distinct from sincere curiosity fueled by a desire to learn from other cultures. Learning from another culture, as in Lugones's "world-traveling," involves recognizing its contributions to the pursuit of wisdom and how they developed in a specific context and life-world.

Thus, when alternative assignments run the risk of cultural appropriation, professors must ensure that students engage with the material and assignment in appropriate ways. In our courses we frame specific course discussions around readings that highlight the difference between appreciation and cooptation. The difference in practice is, of course, often difficult to discern. For example, there is a history of rappers with white privilege who have significantly contributed to the form and content of hip-hop, such as the Beastie Boys, RA the Rugged Man, and Brother Ali, to name just a few. It is not the case that those who are racialized as "white" cannot rap, nor that they should not rap; we have found it helpful to discuss the difference between cooptation and participation by comparing and contrasting those rappers who "ape" the style, for example, Vanilla Ice and Iggy Azalea, and those able to "create" rap in their own voices and from their own perspectives, legitimately participating in the global phenomenon currently constituted by rappers from virtually every cultural and ethnic group.

The playfulness we advocate does not involve donning a costume or playing a trivial game. It is playfulness in which one learns and grows by appreciating the diversity of discursive and nondiscursive forms of creative excellence and knowledge.

We cannot allow the fear of cultural tourism to preclude our education about diverse forms of cultural expression, but instead we need to discuss the nature of and problems with cultural appropriation in the midst of diversifying our philosophical practices. A primary aim of diversifying the practice and the content of philosophy is to disrupt the hegemonic imposition of a single form of intelligible expression as the *only* legitimate form of philosophical inquiry. If we fail to diversify philosophical modes of inquiry, then we simply reinforce the epistemic structures that marginalize alternative forms of expression capable of upsetting the status quo. Shying away from diversifying assignments out of fear of offending merely allows the normalization of cultural appropriation to go unquestioned.

Second, philosophy professors should aim to increase their students' philosophical literacy, and this cannot be accomplished via decentered playfulness alone. In other words, as one colleague put it, an important part of the philosophy professor's job is "to introduce students to the norms of traditional academic discourse, because [we] can't really assume that they already know that 'language game'."[4] The risk is that in introducing alternative forms of philosophical investigation, we fail to remedy the alienation most students confront when introduced to philosophy. If we don't lessen their alienation through teaching them greater proficiency in analytic thought and philosophical writing, are we doing them a disservice?

Undoubtedly, a significant part of our job as philosophy professors is to introduce students to the norms of traditional academic discourse. Hence, the inclusion of assignments that speak to other perspectives, values, and skills is not recommended to the exclusion of more traditional engagements and assignments. Yet we do our students—and ourselves—a grave injustice if we proceed as if these norms are morally neutral, as if they have not served to perpetuate oppressive perspectives, values, and skills. Pointing out the oppressive frameworks can only go so far because, as Butler notes, "as we think about worlds that might one day become thinkable, sayable, legible, the opening of the foreclosed and the saying of the sayable become part of the very 'offense' that must be committed in order to expand the domain of linguistics" (Butler 1997, 41). To disrupt the hegemonic imposition of those norms and imagine better methods of inquiry requires recognizing and learning from multiple philosophical forms of communication and achievement.

NOTES

Darriana Howard, Stephanie Salazar, and Kahlia Roberts, and all of the students who have eagerly engaged in the alternative assignments we've described here.

1. Excellent panels on this topic were included, for example, in the 2013 Diversity in Philosophy Conference at the University of Dayton (APA 2013) and are showing up on more mainstream philosophy conference programs than ever before.

2. "I propose a version of the Bechdel Test for philosophy syllabuses. For those who do not know, Alison Bechdel is a comic artist who proposed the following test for movies in 1985 in her comic *Dykes to Watch Out For*: The test requires that a film have (1) at least two women characters, (2) who speak to each other, (3) about something other than a man. A shockingly low percentage of films pass this test" (Marshall 2013, conference presentation).

3. See, for example, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia" (Butler 1993). Butler asserts that the racist structure of the *episteme* informs the visual and imaginative fields. In order to explain the jury's view in the Rodney King trial, that King was a threat to the police officers who beat him, Butler asks: "How do we account for this *reversal* of gesture and intention in terms of a racial schematization of the visible field? Is this a specific transvaluation of agency proper to a racialized episteme? And does the possibility of such a reversal call into question whether what is 'seen' is not always already in part a question of what a certain racist episteme produces as the visible? For if the jurors came to see in Rodney King's body a danger to the law, then this 'seeing' requires to be read as that which was culled, cultivated, regulated—indeed, policed—in the course of the trial. This is not a simple seeing, an act of direct perception, but the racial production of the visible, the workings of racial constraints on what it means to 'see.' Indeed, the trial calls to be read not only as instruction in racist modes of seeing but as a repeated and ritualistic production of blackness. … This is a seeing which is a reading, that is, a contestable construal, but one which nevertheless passes itself off as 'seeing,' a reading which became for that white community, and for countless others, the same as seeing" (Butler 1993, 16).

4. Deborah Boyle, personal correspondence, September 1, 2015.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE OF STUDENT SLAM POEM

Slam poem written, performed, and analyzed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an intermediate-level undergraduate course in feminist philosophy at Bucknell University:

"OUR VOICE" BY DARRIANA HOWARD AND STEPHANIE SALAZAR

"What lies between your thighs is a man's Genesis, so how dare he spit upon scripture"
was a line spoken by one of my favorite poets.
But of course things never play out as they should,
so he continues to participate in conversation he has no say in, dictating . . .
as if it was not one of my kind who birthed him into existence.
One of my kind who got him nurtured into adulthood.

So here's a list of things we become before we are done becoming women.
1. Second place.
You see "ladies first" is just a myth.
The only time we come first is on the opening of a door.
But even THAT'S gotten patronized, how?
Because you get those so-called gentlemen who really just want to watch our ass-
ets cross the door first.

2. Objectified.

High school without the makeup, dates, and push up bras would not be high school.

Curl your hair, keep up with the trends, and don't forget to

suck in, turn to your good side and smile bright for the cameras.

After all, crowd approval is the most important.

Find the perfect potion for beauty, sexiness, intelligence, and of course some morals!

3. I don't even have the name for it,

but you know that thing we went through that involved a lesson

on how not to get raped instead of teaching men NOT to rape?

Wear knee-length skirts, don't leave the house past sundown,

don't take shortcuts, and always have your keys ready.

Basically, stay on the lookout for all the men you see

because more than likely they want to assault you.

And if they do it's your fault for not having been careful enough!

Which reminds me of a story of when . . .

He stopped. Pulled up his pants, turned on the light, took another beer and walked away. While I lay there and thought to myself,

When did I say yes?

My mind was chasing in circles as I searched for this moment and realized it never

happened. I never said yes, and I never said give it to me.

Yet,

Still I found myself lying there.

Let's start from the beginning. It's October 30th and it's homecoming night.

So I go to my room and try to find something nice.

I put on a pretty black dress,

of course because it complements my body and everyone will be in town tonight,

but for him?

It was meant to make the process easier. So it could be less work to remove from my hips, to my chest, over my shoulders and past my head.

Or maybe it was when I decided to do the extras,

I put on too much makeup and fixed my hair too nicely, . . .

Applied shadow and liner to my eyes, ran bright-red lipstick across the curls of my lips and pressed my hair, just so it would fall right.

In his eyes, was this consent?

Could this not just be pride and a bit of confidence on my end?

Well no . . . God forbid I tried to get all sexied up for myself.

As I continue to lie there, I recognize that still,
I never said yes.
So where throughout the process of getting ready for what I thought would
be a night I'd never forget did I say yes?
Because now, this is a night that I regret and want to forget.

And after all my pondering of what I did wrong,
It became very clear to me that people don't understand the meaning of
consent.
Consent isn't getting me to drink, so I loosen up and realize "I want it."
Consent isn't the lack of a verbal no,
Consent isn't me hesitating to accept your demand to enter me.
And consent isn't getting permission to take the next step but really taking
three.

BOOM,
he exited the room,
And I realized
I never said yes, and I never said give it to me.
Yet,
Still I found myself lying there.
End story.

We've grown up in a world that is home to oppressors.
I said we've grown up in a world that is home to oppressors.
And though we birthed them, they own us . . .
For now.
Because I stay hopeful of the fact that it is not long until
they realize that without our womb they have no dictatorship.

And call us naive, but hope seems to be all we have.
Hope gave us voting rights,
Hope gave us higher education,
Hope gave us jobs,
Hope gave us a voice, and
hope will continue to give us what we should have been born into
for simply being human beings.

After all
what lies between our thighs is a man's Genesis, so how dare he spit upon
scripture.

Rap written, performed, and analyzed in partial fulfillment of requirements for an intermediate undergraduate-level course in philosophy of hip-hop.

"SLAVERY IN THE ACADEMY" BY KAHLIA ROBERTS

In my house, music was respected,
Ask me, I say that I'm eclectic,
Everything from Dead to electric,
'Scept that rap by a gangsta was rejected.
Since 4th grade, been in a choir,
Voice stretching higher and higher,
And how long does that note last?
Well, that's the mark of a choir caste.
Yet I hated rap into my teens,
Then even then, it was all about Charlie Scene,
Fake-ass angst an' little bitta Marx,
And Danny Boy with a voice like a lark.
Then I got up in the Academy,
Wouldn't shout Undead for the life of me,
Ashamed, thinkin' profs only want some Mozart harmony.
But if I think rappers didn't know the shit
That I spit,
Then I'm full of it.
They be the original Marxists and feminists,
Got my back as a po, queer, atheist,
Fuck Kohlberg if 2Pac be singin' it!
You know it's slav'ry we dealin'
As long as we stealin'
The knowledge rappers spit
That we find appealin'.
'Cuz everyone can get plagiarized,
But no Ph.D., so it ain't legitimized,
But you bet 'cho ass, just because it ain't cotton,
Doesn't mean we ain't stealin' what oughta be boughten.
So we got slavery, up in the academy
We take what don't belong to us,
Time gonna come soon to pay the fuck up,
Got slavery in the academy,
Think our ideas are bright,
Well they're not,
Our minds rot,
While rappers do the work
But professors get to talk.

And lest you think that merely,
The academy uses slaves then clearly,
Let me sing it for you dearly,
That they churn out new slaves yearly.
Wire round my throat to make me write essays,
To say the way that pays until the end of days,
Until my mind's a haze, and the essays stay,
And the words that play make me feel hooray!
Life's all play, be hap-pay, it's all good today!
Cuz blinders shade my gaze,
So the establishment's not afraid,
That someday they'll lose their maids,
Drivers, cashiers, and all other slaves,
Cuz' they'll always work to keep me amazed,
At how white, male bastards paved the way,
For everyone—I mean them—to lie in the shade.
And when I flounce across that stage,
To whom do I pay homage?
Diploma in my hand,
But under what demands?
Can I help all children share this land?
Or will I just be the new iron hand,
With the wire, around the throat,
Of the child, from the choir,
To make her write essays,
That pay my pay until the end of my days,
Will I keep them amazed, that straight white men are heroes always?
Or will I break them down,
Will I make them frown,
Will I make them hear that hate abounds,
That the money wasn't just on the ground,
It didn't just lie around,
It was taken, not just found,
Will I make them hear this thundering sound?
What will I say, who will I be,
Who will I tell that there's slavery in the academy,
Do you hear me?
Slavery in the academy,
It's a slavery academy!