**Curricular diversification and metaphilosophical myopia**

Forthcoming in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, October 2023.

**Abstract**

This paper argues for the diversification of university-level philosophy curricula. I do this by

sketching a metaphilosophical ideal – expansionist pluralism – whose main claim is that a key aim of teachers of philosophy should be to instil in students an expansive sense of the diversity of forms taken by philosophy across time and cultures. Such expansionist pluralism is vital to challenging tendencies to metaphilosophical myopia – a failure to apprehend or appreciate the diversity of philosophy. At the end of the paper, I argue that myopia is bad because it tends to encourage a specific type of hermeneutical injustice by impeding our students’ ability to make sense of many kinds of philosophy.

1. **Preliminaries.**

One challenge for teachers of philosophy is that of communicating something of the richness we find across time and across cultures. Diversifying our curricula is one way of meeting this educational goal. In this paper, I argue that such diversification can also be means of resisting a certain kind of hermeneutical injustice. I focus on the teaching of philosophy in universities, although the argument might generalise to other subjects. At least in their first-years, students are often unaware of so much of this richness—as one should expect of novices, new to the subject. Over time, though, one expects a steady expansion of the students’ sense of those many forms taken by philosophy – of the many ‘philosophies of…’, for instance, and the cultural and historical variety of ways in which philosophy has been conceived and practiced. I would want my students to learn more about the *possibilities for philosophising*, even if many of these forms might, on reflection, not be to their taste.

I want to endorse this pedagogical aspiration by connoting it to a metaphilosophical idea that I call *expansive pluralism*. The general idea is that teachers of philosophy should expand the students’ sense of the variety of ways of doing, appreciating, and understanding philosophy. Something like this is required by the ideal of truthfulness, if that is construed as a distinctive professional virtue of teachers (see Cooper 2008). It would not be *truthful* to just leave unmentioned whole kinds of philosophy. I agree with that, but think that others sorts of values can be brought into play, including that of justice. At the least, a teacher should work to spot and then to correct certain narrower or shallower visions of philosophy in their students (the idea, say, of philosophy as exclusively a Western enterprise, or as being ‘all about’ ethics, or as ‘really’ being the activity of analysing arguments). Expansive pluralism aims to reflect the actual richness one finds in the historical and cultural record. But it also has deeper functions, one of which can be articulated in terms of *hermeneutical justice.* To explain this function, let me describe one of the experiences which inspired this idea.

I teach undergraduate classes on Buddhist and classical Chinese philosophies. When exploring Theravada Buddhism and early Daoism, a sense of confusion arose among several students. This took the form of an inability to *understand* what the Buddha and Zhuāngzǐ *meant*, in the sense of what the aim or point of their remark was. This is more than just failing to follow an argument or get to grips with a technical term. It soon emerged that the students were confused by the whole *character* of the moral visions they were seeing in Buddhism and Daoism. My diagnosis was that the students were trying to read the two traditions as kinds of *moral activism*—roughly, as kinds of moral thought and practice aimed a radical change of the social world through collective action. For those students, the core assumption was that *being a moral agent* meant *being a moral activist* – a world-changer, driven by ‘causes’. This assumption was blocking their ability to understand Buddhism and Daoism, where the moral ethos is quietist – characterised by personal self-cultivation and disciplined distancing from sociopolitical concerns. The *eureka!* moment was discussions of the famous ‘turtle story’ in chapter seventeen of *The Book of Zhuāngzǐ* – where Zhuāngzǐ refuses the offer of high political office, explaining his preference to be like a turtle ‘dragging its tail through the mud’ rather than one dead but revered in a temple. Without a sense that moral quietism was an intelligible option, many of the students could not see what was going on in the texts. Without the concept of *quietism*, a whole form of moral thought and practice was obscured. As a consequence, the students could not access a distinct range of interpretive possibilities.

I was struck by the students’ obliviousness to the very idea of moral quietism. They could not see or appreciate the possibility – indeed, reality – of quietist forms of moral life and practice. I was also struck by a bad effect of their inability to countenance quietism: the students tended to see Buddhism and Daoism as inferior and failed attempts at moral activism. A typical judgment was that the Buddha was ‘obviously’ in error or ‘strangely confused’ when he advised monks to avoid discussion of political topics—or that the decision of Zhuāngzǐ to decline political power was ‘weird’ given that he condemned the moral character of his world. Of course, these critical attitudes and judgments changed as the courses went on (which is not to say all the students came to endorse moral quietism). But my sense was that the students’ interpretive abilities were initially being distorted by their presupposition that *being moral* meant *being morally activist*. I saw that as a metaphilosophical prejudice – one that occluded relevant interpretive possibilities and encouraged unfairly critical judgments of Buddhism and Daoism (as ‘strange’ and ‘confused’). This seemed to me some kind of injustice towards those traditions – a specific, if unusual kind of hermeneutical injustice. Of course, we can also identify other kinds of injustice that might also be in play, like that of attributing to a European philosopher arguments and ideas first developed in more distant cultures.

In what follows I want to connect expansive pluralism to hermeneutical injustice by arguing that the former guards against the latter. We can instil in our students a more expansive vision of philosophy. Such expansive visions might help to expose metaphilosophical biases and presumptions - ones that, left unchecked, distort the students’ abilities or willingness to interpret and understand certain kinds of philosophy and encourage pejorative attitudes. If so, expansive pluralist pedagogy helps encourage a kind of hermeneutical justice.

1. **Myopia.**

Something like expansionist pluralism has been defended by many recent philosophers on many different grounds—ranging from fairness to the currently understudied traditions to geopolitical considerations to the epistemic value of looking at a wider range of philosophies (Cooper 2003, Cooper and Fosl 2010, van Norden 2017). I want to consider a *via negativa*: focusing on the epistemic harms of lacking an expansive vision of philosophy. In its most general form, the harm is a diminished, distorting sense of the richness and varieties of philosophy. One might be oblivious to the *existence* of certain kinds of philosophy, unable to see certain ways of doing philosophy, unable to countenance relevant and alternative ways of philosophising about a certain topic, or lack any access to potentially valuable concepts, ideas or perspectives.

Call this *metaphilosophical myopia*, which is taken from the same family of ocular metaphors as ‘gaze’ or ‘vision’ or ‘perspective’ and also an everyday sense of being *myopic* to mean *limited* or *rigid* in one’s outlook. We also talk of people *taking a broader view* of a problem and *looking into something in detail*. These epistemological senses of vision and perspective and myopia are among the ‘metaphors we live by’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). In these epistemological senses, myopia connotes (a) an unduly limited vision of or perspective on some topic which (b) tends to have bad epistemic or practical effects and also (c) can extend to a dogmatic disposition to keep that limited vision (see Battaly 2018). I suspect (c) is a contingent rather than necessary feature of metaphilosophical myopia. One can have an unduly limited perspective on *p* without being disposed to *retain* that limited perspective. This definition is consistent with the variety of more specific kinds of myopic thinking (such as very short-termist thinking, disregard for the distant consequences of acts one performs or endorses, and failures to put things in proper perspective).

I think myopia is an umbrella term for a range of mainly epistemic failings. It doubt that it is a distinct epistemic vice – a character trait which tends to make us a bad thinker. It refers to many different epistemic vices and failings, which are collectively constitutive of myopia. I assume to be myopic is a bad thing: no-one self-describes as *myopic*. It might also be the case that myopic people are not aware of their myopia; it may a ‘stealthy’ epistemic failing – one which tends to be self-sustaining because it’s difficult for those who have it to detect it (Cassam 2015).

To develop the concept of myopia we should distinguish its two dimensions: *narrowness* and *shallowness*, the horizontal and vertical axes, if you like. I can be myopic insofar as my vision is too *narrow*: incapable of seeing the existence, complexities or significance of a certain topic. I can also be myopic if my vision is too *shallow*, in the sense of failing to apprehend significant ‘levels’ of a topic. I just don’t *see* certain deeper aspects of a problem, perhaps, and trapped with a superficial sense of the situation at hand. With the worst cases of myopia, our vision is narrow and shallow.

The epistemic values opposed to myopia are *broadmindedness* and *depth*. Our vision can be made broader if it starts to apprehend and factor in the wider aspects of a situation. It can also be made deeper: additional levels of understanding are identified and processed. Quite what counts as ‘breadth’ and ‘depth’ will depend on the case in hand. A broader and deeper understanding of an historical event, such as the First World War, will be different in kind from a broader, deeper understanding of a person. The crucial unifying feature of breadth and depth is that they expand the range of epistemic possibilities that one can experience and engage with. In practice this can involve acquiring new knowledge, experiences, perceptual and cognitive abilities and character attainments such as epistemic virtues, wisdom, or a sense of perspective.

I hope it is clear that myopic thinking is bad for a range of epistemic and practical reasons. I will be more susceptible to caricature of X if my vision of it is too narrow or shallow. I will suffer imaginative impoverishment as long as I remain obliviousness to epistemic possibilities. I may fail to properly understand aspects of my values and outlook because there are broader or deeper aspects of them that remain invisible. I will find it harder to make sense of traditions and people whose way of life depend on things occluded by my myopic outlook. I’ll be susceptible to forms of practical and epistemic overconfidence – the problems I contemplate will seem far easier and far simpler than they actually are because I fail to apprehend their complexities.

I think one can in principle be myopic about anything that has sufficient depth and breadth. I see myopia as being akin to dogmatic and other epistemic vices. One can be dogmatic about any belief at all, just as one can be myopic about any thing at all. But this does not mean that there are no interesting differences among specific forms of myopia. Moreover, what counts as a *limited* vision will be relative to the shape and structure of the object in question.

To elaborate on these points, I need to say more about metaphilosophical myopia.

1. **Metaphilosophical myopia.**

*Metaphilosophical myopia* means a limited and constrained vision of philosophy – or, rather, of the diversity of activities and projects which are typically referred to as *philosophical*. A striking feature of philosophy across times and cultures is its remarkable heterogeneity. Philosophy can involve different aspirations or goals, different practices and activities, different institutional or social arrangements, different kinds of relations to other cultural and epistemic projects and very different self-conceptions of the nature or value of philosophising. Philosophies can also reflect a range of accounts of the human condition that can be related to different visions of reality.

I think there are kinds of metaphilosophical narrowness and shallowness. The narrowness is an inability to recognise or accept a wider range of forms of philosophy. It’s fine for someone to have a preferred kind of philosophy; there is no worrying narrowness in a philosopher having metaphilosophical preferences. But there is bad narrowness in derogating and impugning wider forms. Some years ago, a group of philosophers defended a radical philosophical naturalism: the headline claim was that a philosophical project that does not conform to the methodological or metaphilosophical strictures of naturalism ‘fails to qualify as part of the enlightened pursuit of truth’ and should be ‘discontinued’. Philosophy should serve ‘the great epistemic enterprise of modern civilization’: natural science (Ladyman and Ross, 2007, vi, 310; for a critique, see Kidd 2022).

Such scientism is one source of narrowness, but there are others. Jacques Derrida was being metaphilosophically myopic when he remarked to an audience at a Chinese university that there was no philosophy in China. ‘Philosophy’, said Derrida, is related to languages and history that are of ‘ancient Greek’ origin and so ‘something of European form’ (quoted in van Norden, 2016, 25). Heidegger, of course, said similar things, despite his own debts to Daoism. Such Hellenocentrism amounts to an overt *Eurocentric narrowness*. Doubtless many others can be described. Many philosophical, cultural. and ideological convictions can work to distort our vision. Moreover, there are crucial differences between different kinds of myopia: Ladyman and Ross offer substantive arguments for their metaphilosophical claims – ones which merit serious engagement – unlike the unargued Eurocentrism exhibited by Derrida.

*Metaphilosophical shallowness* refers to the inability to realise or admit that certain forms of philosophy have kinds of *depth*. Our conception of philosophy becomes shallow when it fails to accommodate the possibility of certain kinds of depth. ‘Depth’ refers to kinds of significance or meaning. Imagine someone who insists that the activity of philosophising is essentially a sort of intellectual chess – awfully clever, interesting, absorbing, but ultimately useless. For a myopic philosopher, attempts to articulate the depth and meanings of philosophising in terms of moral, existential, or political goals will seem absurdly hyperbolic. I might see philosophy as a ‘way of life’ and talk excitedly of the work of Pierre Hadot, but to the ears of a metaphilosophically shallow colleague I’m zealously attributing to philosophy kinds of depth it does not and cannot have.

R.G. Collingwood described something like metaphilosophical shallowness in an interesting remark about the Oxford philosophy of the early 20th century. Its practitioners, he lamented, had ‘excogitated a philosophy so pure from any sordid taint of utility … that it was no use at all’ (Collingwood, 1939, 51). This austere vision of philosophy denies certain sorts of depth to philosophising – no practical payoff, no existential import. It is an ornate intellectual game – no more than that. Of course, there are interesting parallels to explore between games and philosophising (Kidd, 2021a). Thinking of ‘doing philosophy’ in terms of a game might in specific contexts be useful (there are ‘rules’ and such a thing as ‘fair play’). But if ‘game’ means ‘a trivial activity that is fun but has no meaning outside of that’, then many kinds of philosophy are not anything like a game. Think of a refrain, ‘This isn’t a game! This is serious!’ (Of course, certain games can be serious, too).

I do not want to exhaustively describe kinds of metaphilosophical myopia of the narrower or the shallower sorts. I hope enough has been said to make it clear that one can be myopic in many ways about the varieties of philosophy and that one can be myopic for all sorts of reasons. I only want to add one more point: metaphilosophical myopia should be expected among students and others who are new to philosophy (which is not to say seasoned philosophers can’t be myopic). Students are still in the formative stages of their education and hopefully acquiring a fuller view of the scope and historical and cultural varieties of philosophy. If so, narrow and shallow visions of philosophy are a tolerable, if transient feature. Youthful ignorance gives way to educated and informed understanding. Breadth and depth are added along the way. It is a problem, however, if myopia endures, or if it mutates into a sort of metaphilosophical dogmatism. It is proper that students have their own favourite kinds of philosophy. But forming preferences or choosing favourites is an activity that can be done well or badly. If students come to be trapped by their myopic outlook, then they cannot properly explore and assess the options: certain possibilities are invisible, occluded, and misinterpreted as something other or lesser than they actually are.

To see how metaphilosophical myopia could connect to curricular diversity, consider the rich range of *goals* of philosophising. It matters *why* people feel compelled to engage in the at times difficult, unusual, and even dangerous thing we call philosophy. As the case of Socrates attests, doing philosophy is not always appreciated and rewarded by other people. It often comes at real costs. Metaphilosophical myopia can include a profound obliviousness to certain *goals*. This is going to be a problem: our goals help us choose our actions and select appropriate actions. This helps make our choices and actions intelligible, to ourselves and hopefully to others. Moreover, goals can be appraised – as rational, weird, odd, sensible, typical, eccentric, idiosyncratic and so on. (I return to this point in the later section on hermeneutical injustice and metaphilosophical myopia.)

Consider this short, unsystematic list of some goals that have animated philosophers:

* To advance social justice.
* To articulate (or to endorse) a misanthropic appraisal of humankind.
* To cure what Wittgenstein called ‘mental cramps’.
* To deepen our ability to appreciate beauty.
* To defend the epistemic abilities on which everyday life depends.
* To describe the fundamental structures of human experience.
* To enable individual release from *saṃsāra*, ‘the wheel of suffering’, rebirth, and *karma*.
* To enhance one’s relationship with God.
* To justify (or challenge) the authority of the state.
* To motivate withdrawal from the pressures and corruptions of the mainstream world.
* To question prevalent presuppositions and predilections.
* To restore a deteriorating cultural tradition.
* To safeguard the moral values on which civilized human life depends.
* To secure (or deny the possibility of) knowledge of the nature of reality as it is ‘in itself’.
* To support (or put a brake on) scientific enquiry.
* To urge on us (or resist) a pessimistic appraisal of human life.

This list can be extended and elaborated. Some goals could be combined. The intelligibility and salience of these goals depend on one’s moral and ideological convictions and on cultural and metaphysical convictions. It might also depend on what William James called *temperaments* (James 1981). Secular naturalists won’t see the goal of enhancement of our relationship to God as either intelligible or salient but might find an aspiration to restore a dying cultural tradition *intelligible* (they can make *sense* of it) but not see it *as* *salient* (it does not *matter* to them).

The point here is that philosophers across the history of world traditions have been animated by a remarkable variety of goals. Some of those goals are still current today, while others are not and some might strain our imagination – or reveal a certain contingent lack of imagination that could be corrected by exploring new traditions or adopting new methods (see Burley 2015). We can be metaphilosophically myopic by failing to see or accept certain goals. If one cannot ‘get’ those goals, one won’t be able to easily make sense of the concerns or activities of those philosophies. Bas van Fraassen, for instance, was ‘baffled’ by medieval Christian doctrines such as the Trinity even if they are set alongside the ‘unimaginable otherness of closed space-times’ and other core postulates of modern cosmology (van Fraassen, 1985, 258). Such ‘bafflement’ lessens, though, if once puts those doctrines in the context of the medieval Christian world: the intelligibility and salience of concerns about the nature of God and the possibility of salvation is rooted in that life-world. Outside that context, they may seem – as they do to van Fraassen – odd or eccentric. In context, though, there is no puzzlement about why they were intelligible and salient, given the form of life (cf. Kidd 2012).

Myopic obliviousness to the goals animating a person or philosophical tradition can distort or prevent our efforts to understand them. This can happen in at least three ways: (i) we fail to grasp that a philosopher or tradition *has* philosophical goals; (ii) we grasp their goals but fail to accept them *as* philosophical; (iii) we attribute to them philosophical goals that differ from their actual goals. In the third case, one may attribute wrong goals or shallower versions of their goals or see some of their goals but fail to discern others and so obscure the overall complexity of their goals.

Consider, as an example of (iii), a student some years ago who asked if my module could ‘dump Descartes’. It would be better, they said, to drop ‘old-fashioned epistemological themes’ in favour of more ‘existential’ ones. The student was unaware that scepticism was a concern for Descartes precisely because it jeopardised the moral and religious certainties that offered ‘the greatest joy of which we are capable in this life’ (Descartes, 1998, 98). Put another way, they got the goals wrong – it was *existential concern* and not (mere) *abstract curiosity*. Their appreciation of Descartes’ goals prompted them to search for newer interpretations of scepticism. In this case there was an expansion in their sense of why we might *do* philosophy. The consequence was a willingness to see Descartes’s project as a more serious endeavour – worthy of a kind of respect that the student had failed to extend before. In this sense there was a kind of hermeneutical justice at work. Obstacles to a fairer, richer, and deeper understanding were removed and once-blocked kinds of understanding could start to flow.

1. **Curricular diversification.**

The diversification of the philosophy curricula of undergraduate programs is complicated. This would be true even in the absence of politicised concerns about ‘decolonisation’ of curricula or ominous debates about the value of the arts and humanities. Diversity in philosophy could be in practice defined demographically, culturally, or methodologically. Imagine a curriculum which lacked any work by philosophers from Asia and Africa—or one full of analytic philosophers but no phenomenologists—or one which presented only male philosophers. Of course, there are too many constraints for us to teach everyone from everywhere from everywhen. Diversification is always going to face practical problems as well as metaphilosophical prejudices (Kidd 2020).

Curricular diversification invites a range of practical and principled questions. What are the aims? What are the criteria for diversification? Should diversity be measured at the level of the individual modules or courses or the curriculum as a whole? Should students be required to take certain modules through compulsorisation in an attempt to ensure their exposure to certain kinds of content?

I make a modest claim: *one* aim of curricular diversification should be to try and reduce those tendencies to metaphilosophical myopia among students of philosophy. This is integral to ideals of expansive pluralism - expansiveness ought to be valued in part as an antidote to narrower and shallower visions of philosophy. One could add to that lots of other kinds of value, too (Cooper and Fosl, 2010, xxiv-xxix). One might hope that an expansive sense of the technicolour richness of philosophy can be a scaffold for certain kinds of humility, open-mindedness, and many other epistemic virtues and attainments. As a slogan, expansiveness should be *edifying*. But this must not be equated with removing old content and replacing it with new. Swapping A for B is not pluralism – it is simply exchanging one pattern of exclusion for another (Kidd, 2021b). We can measure expansion against the local standard of what was previously included or by the ‘global’ criteria of what the philosophical enterprise at large can offer. One test of expansiveness is the extent to which students are initiated into richer visions of the forms, goals, practices or ways of living for enacting those goals, and the socially-organised ways of living philosophically.

Consider some of the options:

Characterizations of philosophy abound. It is ‘the queen of the sciences’, a grand and sweeping metaphysical endeavour; or, less regally, it is a sort of deep anthropology or ‘descriptive metaphysics’, uncovering the general presuppositions or conceptual schemes that lurk beneath our words and thoughts. A different set of images portray philosophy as a type of therapy, or as a spiritual exercise, a way of life to be followed, or even as a special branch of poetry or politics. Then there is a group of characterizations that include philosophy as linguistic analysis, as phenomenological description, as conceptual geography, or as genealogy (Cooper, 2009, 1)

As a student becomes inducted into pluralistic, expansive visions of philosophy, they should be increasingly receptive to the broader and deeper possibilities of philosophy. They will *know* that curiosity has not been the motivation of choicefor all philosophers (some condemn it). They will *understand* some philosophers were among the faithful (and others were secularist or atheist and others had little interest in religious or were working within cultural contexts without a clear category of ‘the religious’). The student should also *appreciate* that what is true of philosophers in one historical period or cultural context need not be true of others. Not all philosophers fixate on argumentation, not all are ‘pro-science’, not all connect philosophy and politics, not all think ethics should be about changing the world, not all of them engage in metaphysical theory. This list of the variegated realities of philosophy can be extended *ad nauseaum*.

Here are three general features of a diverse curriculum that can help to challenge students’ latent metaphilosophical myopia. To start with, the curriculum must obviously be pluralistic: it should accommodate forms of philosophy from different historical periods, cultures, traditions, and also different methodological and doctrinal ‘schools’ of philosophy. Students will know the philosophies they might already have studied in school are a sample not the whole. The second feature of a diversified curriculum is principled aversion to prejudiced presentations: if students are presented with A, then told it is false, weird, outdated, old-fashioned, primitive, or otherwise lacking in merit, then this is a failure to be truly pluralist. I will badly prejudice my students if I told them many Buddhist doctrines are *really* ‘mind-numbing and wishful *hocus pocus*’ (Flanagan, 2013, 3). As well as not instilling prejudices of this sort, a student should also work to identify those a student brings with them. The aim is not to *convert* students out of one position and into another. It is to remove barriers that distort and occlude epistemic possibilities.

A third feature of a diversified curricula that can challenge myopia is slightly different and is perhaps most contentious. Myopia and its forms ought to be presented as a *bad thing*, as a failing which ought to be rectified. I presented it in the terms of limited vision – too narrow or shallow. Myopia in that sense can reflect and foster such vices as dogmatism and closedmindedness (see Battaly 2018). It can also be related to racism and cultural chauvinism or anti-religious biases of all sorts. Expansiveness might reveal what is beneficial about broader and deeper vision, but one should also affirm what it harmful about the narrower and shallower visions, too. After all, a variety of temptations exist towards myopia – a narrow vision means less to think about, say, or the artificially intensified sense of rightness one gets if one fails to appreciate rival perspectives. Moreover, all sorts of incentives can feed a taste for narrow specialisation. Indeed, some critics, including Ron Barnett, emphasise a contraction of the purposes of universities (Barnett, 2013).

Expansive pluralism and curricular diversity are doubtless related in many other ways. But I want to close the paper by returning to my claim that encouraging expansive pluralism can foster a kind of hermeneutical justice.

1. **Hermeneutical justice.**

Generally, we tend to think of injustice as being done to a *person*—to ‘victims of injustice’, say. But we also talk of talk of ‘injustice’ being done to other things, too. I could accuse you of *not doing justice* to someone’s argument. We could say that we do an injustice to a thing if we treat it in ways that are both *unfair* and *wrong*. Here the *it* could be a person, group, idea, or culture: one can do a hermeneutical injustice to some or all of these.

I focus here on *hermeneutical injustices*, the term made famous by Miranda Fricker as a kind of what she calls an epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007). Her original account defined it in terms of ‘having some significant area of one’s social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource’ (Fricker, 2007, 155). Several scholars quickly emphasised other forms, including one group refusing to give uptake to those resources developed by a social community (Mason 2011, Pohlhaus Jr. 2012). Hermeneutical injustice is harmful for those whose identity and prospects are tied up with those experiences. For Fricker, ‘the subject is rendered unable to make communicatively intelligible something which it is particularly in his or her interests to be able to render intelligible’ (Fricker, 2007, 162). Insofar as those experiences cannot be properly interpreted and understood, the subject suffers harms (Medina, 2017, 46-47).

Fricker’s original account has been amended and expanded in the subsequent literature and it is now recognised that there are many varieties of hermeneutical injustices (see Medina 2017). I focus on this claim: a hermeneutical injustice is done when the metaphilosophically myopic impugn or even deny the intelligibility and significance of forms of philosophy lying outside their vision. There are two ways this could happen: one cannot see certain kinds of philosophy *as* intelligible cases of philosophical activity, or one does make sense of certain forms of philosophy but only in ways that distort their actual meaning or significance.

Why would this be a hermeneutical injustice? Such cases involve failures to understand, make sense of, or interpret certain kinds of experience and activity. More broadly, they reflect inability or unwillingness to make sense of certain forms of life. The ‘injustice’ comes when such failures are both unfair and harmful. My failure to grasp the purpose of what you are doing or what your people hope for is not necessarily an injustice. I only do you or your people an injustice when an interpretive inability has bad causes – such as racial prejudice, cultural chauvinism, or laziness – and if it tends to encourage bad attitudes and behaviour (derogatory sneering, intimidation, acts of violence).

Metaphilosophical myopia can often sustain kinds of hermeneutical injustice of this sort – or so I think. Something like this claim is implicit, arguably, in Ben Kotzee’s suggestion that kinds of curricular diversification can help expand the range of culturally-specific experiences that our students can understand:

[T]he selection of what is taught – what makes it onto the curriculum – has a deeper significance. Teaching a canon of ideas and works by actors from a particular cultural tradition makes that form of culture accessible to students; conversely, not teaching other cultural traditions forecloses students’ understanding of that cultural tradition. Educationalists alert to epistemic injustice ask how decisions about the curriculum enable or block students’ understanding of particular social experiences and encourage or inhibit the ability of students from particular cultures to express their particular understanding of the world (Kotzee, 2017, 327)

Kotzee does not specifically refer to culturally diverse forms of philosophy, but his points here apply to metaphilosophical myopia. Students in a limited curriculum are introduced to forms of philosophy which they can then become able to make sense of – in principle, at least. But those limitations will ‘foreclose’ their understanding of other forms – or, at least, make it much more difficult to make sense of them (the student who lacks curricular exposure to, say, Confucianism is not thereby *debarred* from understanding it). In Kotzee’s terms, a limited curriculum tends to ‘inhibit the ability’ of students to make sense of other forms into which they have not been duly ‘initiated’.

An underdiverse curriculum can feed types of metaphilosophical myopia that inhibit students’ ability to find kinds of philosophy intelligible and salient. Expansive pluralism is intended to redress those inabilities. There are other corrective strategies, too, including more methodologically pluralistic ways of doing philosophy, such as by incorporating ethnographic work (Burley 2020). Here it will be useful to consider some specific examples and indictments of metaphilosophical hermeneutical injustice:

1. Massimo Pigliucci wrote a blog-post entitled ‘On the Pseudo-Profundity of some Eastern Philosophy’ which offers the following scorn:

“What is the sound of one hand clapping?” “What did your face look like before your ancestors were born?” These are some allegedly profound questions posed by Zen masters […] It is also the sort of philo-bubble that gives philosophy a bad name – and sells plenty of titles in the Eastern philosophy section of bookstores (Pigliucci, 2006).

Pigliucci shows no understanding of the nature or function of *koans*, nor explains the criteria of a ‘profound’ question, nor seriously attempts to understand the practice of *koans* relative to Zen teachings. Indeed, the reference to ‘philosophy’ in the context of the worry about it being given a ‘bad name’ seems to betray a myopic sense of the aims and practices of philosophy. *Koans* are perhaps eccentric or absurd relative to the usual methods of analytical philosophy. But those are not the methodological norms to invoke in that instance.

2. Kristie Dotson challenges what she calls the ‘culture of justification’ in philosophy in terms which resonate with my worries about myopia. Her paper, ‘How Is This Paper Philosophy?’, has a clear commitment to something very much like what I called expansionist pluralism:

I am not concerned with appropriate answers to the question, “how is this paper philosophy?” Rather, I am concerned with the kind of disciplinary culture that renders such a question of paramount importance […] Typified in the question, “how is this paper philosophy,” is a presumption of a set of commonly held, univocally relevant, historical precedents that one could and should use to evaluate answers to the question. By relying upon, a presumably, commonly held set of normative, historical precedents, the question of how a given paper is philosophy betrays a value placed on performances and/or narratives of legitimation (Dotson, 2012, 5)

The ‘presumption’ Dotson rightly criticises will be indicative of metaphilosophical myopia – the narrowness that results that presuming that each philosophical tradition shares the same goals or asks the same questions. Of course, that will be a ridiculous presumption, but that does not stop it being common. Presumptuousness can be fed by obliviousness to alternatives – one continues to presume X because one is unaware of Y and Z.

3. Michael Dummett revealed a narrow account of the aims of philosophy – across all its forms, apparently – when be announced:

[O]nly with the rise of the modern logical and analytic style of philosophizing was the proper object of philosophy finally established, namely ... the analysis of the structure of thought, [for which] the only proper method [is] the analysis of language (Dummett, 1978, 458)

Here we see the dogma of the definite article in a reference to *the* ‘proper object’ of philosophy. Analysis of the structure of thought is certainly *an* aim of philosophy, and an intelligible one at that, but is hardly *the* aim. There are many other possible aims. Of course, if one is dogmatically insistent on the privileged status of that aim, the risk is that one is trying to induce in others some sense of ‘incongruence’ between other forms of philosophy and one’s own preferred sense. This takes the form of presenting a particular aim as *the* aim of any serious, worthwhile, or plausible philosophising and using it to derogate others. This sense of congruence ‘hinders one’s ability to argue for the positive philosophical status of one’s projects’ (Dotson, 2012, 13).

4. Amy Olberding, a noted scholar of classical Chinese philosophy and advocate of curricular diversification, notes a ‘double-bind’ that often afflicts those who call for the inclusion of currently underrepresented philosophical traditions:

[T]he more these philosophies appear to strike out into territories largely unexplored in western canonical sources or contemporary debates, the less “philosophical” they may seem to western-trained interlocutors. Failure to hook into existing domains of inquiry or doing so in an unfamiliar style may awaken suspicion that here is something other than philosophy proper. The double bind for scholars who would promote interest in non-western traditions, then, can register as an importunate, impossible demand: Show us something we have not seen before, but be sure it looks well and truly familiar to us too (Olberding, 2015, 15)

This is an interesting hermeneutical injustice: a philosopher allows an in-principle possibility of their exploring other forms of philosophy, currently unknown to them. However, the price is that those other forms must *conform* to those forms of intelligibility and salience one already endorses. The idea that forms of philosophy can be intelligible in quite different ways – or seem significant to people for reasons quite unlike the ones already recognised – is thereby precluded. Olberding puts the point well when explaining that, for the myopic philosopher, ‘the unfamiliar [is] weighed and evaluated relative to how well it conforms to [one’s] existing expectations and preoccupations’ (Olberding, 2015, 16).

Each of these four cases involve kinds of hermeneutical injustices caused by the myopic conceptions of philosophy I have criticised. The common theme is a failure to recognise kinds of intelligibility and salience that can be possessed by forms of philosophy. Some are too narrow in their sense of how philosophies can *matter*, and others are too narrow in their sense of the goals, practices, and aspirations of philosophers. Each therefore wrongly and unfairly prevents myopic philosophers from being able to understand and make sense of the wider variety of philosophy. The consequence is that the myopic philosopher therefore does those philosophical traditions an injustice – one sees them, wrongly and unfairly, as hermeneutically defective (‘weird’, ‘stupid’, or ‘mind-numbing and wishful *hocus-pocus*’).

In some cases, the hermeneutical injustice is expressed in terms of a suggestion to make that strange-seeming tradition intelligible at the cost of distorting its distinctive spirit or character. To quote Olberding one last time:

It is not … uncommon in *fora*where “east meets west,” where efforts are made to bring Confucianism to the attention of scholars trained exclusively in western philosophy, to hear remarks that include prefaces such as: “What would make Confucianism more appealing…” or “What would make Confucianism work…” What follows such prefaces are typically recommendations that Confucianism sacrifice whatever is perceived as alien, regardless of how significant it may be for Confucianism itself (Olberding, 2015, 16)

In this case the hermeneutical injustice takes on a double character: one fails to make sense of a form of philosophy on its own terms, then tries to present it as intelligible or salient only by effacing its own character and imposing one’s own. This is a hermeneutical injustice, and it is caused by metaphilosophical myopia. I have suggested that one way to protect our students against that injustice is to create a curriculum animated by the ideal of expansionist pluralism.

*Ian James Kidd*

*ian.kidd@nottingham.ac.uk*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the Editors for inviting me to contribute. I benefited from the questions and suggestions of audiences at Nottingham and the workshop organised for this special issue. I am especially grateful for excellent comments from David E. Cooper, Gerry Dunne, Simon Fokt, and Jane Gatley. Many of these ideas originated in conversations with Mikel Burley.

**REFERENCES**

Barnett, Ron (2013) *Imagining the University* (London: Routledge).

Battaly, Heather (2018) ‘Closed-Mindedness and Dogmatism’, *Episteme* 15(3): 261–282.

Burley, Mikel (2015) ‘Reincarnation and the Lack of Imagination in Philosophy’, Nordic Wittgenstein Review 4.2: 39-64.

Burley, Mikel (2020) *A Radical Pluralist Philosophy of Religion: Cross-Cultural, Multireligious, Interdisciplinary* (London: Bloomsbury).

Cassam, Quassim (2015) ‘Stealthy Vices’, *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective*4.10: 19-25.

Collingwood, R.G. (1939) *An Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press).

Cooper, David E. (2003) *World Philosophies: An Historical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell).

Cooper, David E. (2008) ‘Teaching and Truthfulness’, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 27: 79-87.

Cooper, David E. (2009) ‘Visions of Philosophy’, *Philosophy Supplement* 65: 1-13.

Cooper, David E. and Peter S. Fosl (2010) *Philosophy: The Classic Readings* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell).

Cottingham, John (2009) ‘What is Humane Philosophy and Why is it At Risk?’, *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 65: 233-255.

Descartes, Rene (1998) *Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Dotson, Kristie (2012) ‘How Is This Paper Philosophy?’, *Comparative Philosophy* 3.1: 3-29.

Dummett, Michael (1978) *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth).

Flanagan, Owen (2011) *The Bodhisattva’s Brain: Buddhism Naturalized* (Harvard, MA.: The MIT Press).

James, William (1981) *Pragmatism* (Indianapolis: Hackett).

Kidd, Ian James (2012) ‘Humane Philosophy and the Question of Progress’, *Ratio* XXV, no. 3: 277-290.

Kidd, Ian James (2020) ‘Trade-offs, Backfires, and Curricular Diversification’, *Symposion* 7.2: 179-193.

Kidd, Ian James (2021a) ‘Martial Metaphors and Argumentative Virtues and Vices’, Michael Lynch and Alessandra Tanesini (eds.) *Polarization, Arrogance, and Dogmatism in Debate: Philosophical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2021), 25-38.

Kidd, Ian James (2021b) ‘Reloading the Canon’, *The Philosopher’s Magazine* 93: 57-63.

Kidd, Ian James (2022) ‘Conceptions of Philosophy and the Challenges of Scientism’, Moti Mizrahi (ed.), *For and Against Scientism: Science, Methodology, and the Future of Philosophy:* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield), 75-86.

Kotzee, Ben (2017) ‘Education and Epistemic Injustice’, Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook to Epistemic Injustice*(New York: Routledge), 324-335.

Ladyman, James and Don Ross (2007) *Every Thing Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalised* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson (1980) *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Medina, José (2017) ‘Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice’, Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus (eds.),

Olberding, Amy (2015) ‘It’s Not Them, It’s You: A Case Study Concerning the Exclusion of Non-Western Philosophy’, *Comparative Philosophy* 6.2: 14-34.

Pigliucci, Massimo (2006) ‘On the Pseudo-Profundity of Some Eastern Philosophy’, *Rationally Speaking*, 23 May.

van Fraassen, Bas C. (1985) ‘Empiricism and the Philosophy of Science’, P.M. Churchland and A. Hooker (eds.), *Images of Science: Essays on Realism and Empiricism, with a Reply from Bas C. van Fraassen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

van Norden, Bryan van (2017) *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (New York: Columbia University Press).