

The effects of epistemic violence on women philosophers' career

Os efeitos da violência epistêmica na carreira das mulheres filósofas

Los efectos de la violencia epistémica en las carreras de las filósofas

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Abstract

The article deals with the epistemic violence faced by female philosophers and postgraduate students, especially linked to the conception of the epistemic subject, which underlies theories, methodologies, beliefs and behaviors. The effects of this violence range from the abandonment of philosophy by students, the precariousness of the working environment for women philosophers and the delegitimization of people coming from other epistemological registers.

Keywords: Epistemic violence. Subject of knowledge. Women philosophers. Philosophy classrooms.

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Resumo

O artigo versa sobre a violência epistêmica enfrentada por filósofas docentes e estudantes de pós-graduação, especialmente ligada à concepção do sujeito epistêmico, e que fundamenta teorias, metodologias, crenças e comportamentos. Os efeitos dessa violência vão desde o abandono da filosofia por parte das estudantes, a precarização do ambiente de trabalho das docentes e a deslegitimação de pessoas que partem de outros registros epistemológicos.

Palavras-chave: *Violência epistêmica. Sujeito do conhecimento. Filósofas. Sala de aula de filosofia.*

Abstracto

El artículo aborda la violencia epistémica que enfrentan las filósofas y estudiantes de posgrado, especialmente vinculada a la concepción del sujeto epistémico, que subyace a teorías, metodologías, creencias y comportamientos. Los efectos de esta violencia van desde el abandono de la filosofía por parte de los estudiantes, la precariedad del entorno laboral de las filósofas y la deslegitimación de personas provenientes de otros registros epistemológicos.

Palabras clave: *Violencia epistémica. Sujeto de conocimiento. Mujeres filósofas. Aulas de Filosofía.*

Introduction

We wrote this text as friends and researchers who share common projects and concerns. We have different styles of writing and relatively different ways of being and working, and perhaps this will come to light in the text in such a way that the question of our epistemic location will be manifest and will corroborate our reflections about situated knowledge. Furthermore, our text alludes to concerns and thoughts that are also shared with us and by us in our study group "Uma filósofa por mês" and that have made us attentive, for some time now, to the problem of epistemic violence.

Awareness of epistemic violence is not new among philosophers and other theorists positioned on the margins of sites of power in the game of narratives about the world. They experienced and identified the violent results of the relationship between production, dissemination and use as a prerequisite of certain distorted forms of knowledge.¹ Contemporaneously, the academic institution is a privileged space for the recognition of this violence and its effects, and philosophy, in whose heart epistemology beats, actively participates in its own establishment and maintenance. As researcher Claudia Brunner points out, "epistemic violence is not external or alien to the academic realm. It is rooted in knowledge itself, in its genesis, formation, organization, and effectiveness" (2021, p. 204).

Against the normalized academic trend, we have been thinking about other ways of inhabiting philosophy and academic life. As authors of this article, we share the deep desire, which is also our starting and ending point, for a philosophical experience whose resonances are loving, constructive, creative and salutary against the current academic philosophical practices of warring, discrediting, order-reproducing and of hierarchies, practices that make our bodies sick. Other ways of inhabiting philosophy are possible, other than those replicated by the systematic - real and symbolic - exclusion of institutional spaces and of spaces of lucid philosophical reflection.

In this text, we propose to outline a diagnosis, by means of a non-exhaustive list of reasons that help to explain the situation of marginalization, isolation, emptying and real exclusion of certain bodies in the field of philosophy, specifically in the institutional environment of classrooms, and mainly due to gender biases - which intersect with a myriad of other social and political markers. To this end, we would like to propose a reflection on epistemic violence, and on the violent ways of certain theoretical and pedagogical practices that are not questioned in the daily work of philosophy that fall more heavily on bodies considered dissident and non-hegemonic. In what follows, we suggest some conceptual distinctions about epistemic violence, and reflect on some specific procedures of academic philosophical activity that legitimize and replicate this violence, as well as its effects on (especially) female philosophers (at different moments in their careers). In the end, we offer an insight into alternative theoretical and pedagogical paths to the oppressive and exclusionary state of affairs currently observed in the institutional universe of philosophy.

¹ As is the case with the denunciations made by feminist philosophers of past centuries regarding the fallacies and sophisms claiming the intellectual and moral inferiority of women (and non-European peoples) due to the "inability" to perform knowledge as mainly "rational" knowledge, whose structured learning was denied to them beforehand. Some examples: Christine de Pisan, Mary Wollstonecraft, Marie de Gournay, Nisia Floresta, Flora Tristan, among others.

Epistemic violence in philosophy

Our modern societies have a poignant history of violence which we seem to have become accustomed to. Our social practices, from the most intimate to the most public, are permeated with violent actions. The production and transmission of knowledge tends, unfortunately, to bear these marks as well.

Defining precisely what 'violence' is a complex and perhaps always incomplete task. If one way of doing it is to think about physical impositions and coercion, we already have today a list of qualifications that allow us to think about the apparently invisible, but no less poignant, aspects of violence, such as the consequences of gender violence in psychological and patrimonial violence, for example. In this article, the epistemic aspect interests us more closely, especially because in philosophy particularly, it underlies the various other violent actions that unfold pedagogically and institutionally.

In the context of the reflections already produced by feminist epistemologists, we could think about epistemic violence from the peculiarity attributed by Miranda Fricker to "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (Fricker, 2007, p.01) when with this she defines epistemic injustice. Epistemic violence is perhaps always, in this sense, an injustice, as it not only impacts particular individuals, but echoes a social, political and institutional structure, whose intention is the maintenance of power, privilege and status, and this, despite the democratic guidelines supposedly endorsed by academic practices. Or rather, this institutional structure reverberates the epistemological conceptions which themselves underlie struggles for power, privilege and status.²

If injustice is a notorious feature of epistemic violence, and even though we still have a long way to go until we reach a shared position about the meaning of 'justice', this feature is not exhaustive or not enough to account for the various facets that encompass the violence committed against "someone specifically in their capacity as a knower". After all, what does it mean to say that epistemic violence is unjust? And how does this attribution of injustice reveal the subtleties and the departure biases hidden in the long philosophical tradition that constitutes our academic life? And, this is the point that interests us most, what characterizes the epistemic aspect of the violence suffered by female philosophers?

Perhaps we could also think about the concept of epistemic violence as a tight knot of theoretical, methodological and pedagogical assumptions and practices that in their normal and normative status pass as unproblematic - perhaps even as legitimate - for those upon whom this violence is not acted on or at least less impeditive of their (philosophical and institutional) existence. It is part of this knot the very conception and currency of a unilateral concept of 'philosophy', as well as a disembodied epistemic subjectivity, a contradictory hierarchization of universal rationality and a conception of epistemic authority that is confused with the abusive use of places of power and privilege granted by unquestioned epistemic self-determination and self-attributed expertise (in philosophy or in any area of philosophy). We will talk about these aspects to characterize three main moments of epistemic violence that we would like to frame in the

² This is the way Enrique Galván-Álvarez unfolds epistemic violence from processes of domination: "Epistemic violence, that is, violence exerted against or through knowledge, is probably one of the key elements in any process of domination. It is not only through the construction of exploitative economic links or the control of the politico-military apparatuses that domination is accomplished, but also and, I would argue, most importantly through the construction of epistemic frameworks that legitimize and enshrine those practices of domination." (Galván-Álvarez, 2010, p. 12).

following vocabulary: epistemic violence as *the emptying of the condition of legitimate subject of knowledge* [concerning the level of knowledge acquisition and epistemic subjectivity]; epistemic violence as *delegitimization of knowledge assertions* [concerning the level of justification of knowledge]; and epistemic violence as *delegitimization of epistemic authority* [concerning the level of knowledge authority]. Of course, this is not an exhaustive characterization and the moments of violence it concerns are experienced in an intertwined and tangled way.³

To begin to untie the knot of epistemic violence, let us think about the way our conception of philosophy is permeated by unmanifest presuppositions about the attribution and legitimation of philosophical knowledge from the very first moment we begin our journey through the – canonical – history of philosophy. Despite the immense variety of textual methodologies to which we are presented – if we are to exclude here the orality of Socrates' agora – an insistent trait that runs through the transmission of philosophical ideas is the alleged universal validity of the thought announced by a thinker whose localized designation⁴ is just a detail, a secondary and inessential detail. Now, the universality of philosophical thought does not have the meaning – which it could well have – of being critically readable in any geographical and philosophical place, but is, rather, an assumption of undifferentiated theoretical and conceptual framing to make bodies that are very different from each other in space and time to fit and square. This means that a concept of philosophy that takes as an explicit starting point the idea of the epistemic subject as always situated is delegitimized in advance as non-philosophical, because non-universalizable. This is also due to the epistemic subject underlying this ideal conception of philosophy being itself supposedly universal and interchangeable across space and time.

Underlying the logic of the universal validity of any philosophical thought is the imperative of a knower (of the world and of philosophy) whose epistemic characteristics are impossible to instantiate. Feminist epistemologists have, for decades, insisted not only on the unenforceability of the qualifications of neutrality and impartiality of the subject of knowledge but also on the deception of compliance with these criteria by the philosophers themselves who are presented to us as the ideal models of human thought. The point is that the subject of knowledge that underlies this conception of philosophical knowledge is eminently as marked and situated as the subjects in principle incapable of universal(izable) reflection who, not coincidentally, have non-ideal, thus non-hegemonic bodies.

For hegemonic bodies – those who have social, economic, political and epistemic privileges – epistemic subjectivity passes as disembodied, even though, and curiously, only a fortunate few fit the

³ Kristie Dotson (2014) considered three types of epistemic exclusions that, when persistent, lead to what she calls epistemic oppression, that is: continuous/persistent epistemic violence: first-order epistemic exclusions - due to failed epistemological resources (credibility assessment failures, for example); second order - due to insufficient resources to understand the range of experiences in a given community; and third order - due to the inadequacy of the entire epistemic system (when collective resources are improper to handle certain experiences) and due to its resilience in preventing new resources from outside the epistemic system to provoke changes. Our own definitions have points of contact with her first order conception of epistemic exclusion and with the notion of the entire epistemic system being inadequate. However, our vocabulary is mainly focused on first-order epistemological elaborations that relate to the classical definition of knowledge as "true and justified belief" suitable for a universalizable subject of knowledge only. Other points of contact and other conversations with Dotson may be subject to future developments.

⁴ We take the concept of 'situated knowledge' (developed by feminist epistemologists such as Donna Haraway (1988)) as a background to derivative expressions we use along the text: 'localized designation', 'situation', 'epistemic location'.

standard model of aptitude for philosophical knowledge. It is clear that this background assumption does not absolutely agree with the variety of theoretical proposals demonstrated by the canonical history of philosophy or even by the epistemic location of the philosophers presented as ideal models, but this does not prevent it from informing the legitimacy criteria of the epistemic subject that are continually in force, whether in academic philosophical discourse, or within the scope of traditional epistemologies, in the anticipated requirements for double-blind publications, or even in the classroom environment. The postulate is of a subject whose rationality concerns not only a sharp readiness for the cognitive apprehension of reality in its multiplicity and accommodative reading of the world (which would in fact allow us to think of an expanded concept of rationality suitable to different human and non-human bodies); but what is at stake is a rationality set in advance by the criterial filters of neutrality (the supposed exemption of corporeal and social influences on knowledge acquisition and justification), impartiality (especially when it comes to attributions of knowledge – whose bias is something that Fricker's work examines from her conceptions of testimonial and hermeneutic injustice), objectivity (and its appeal to a quasi-factual and universally accessible order of justification, which may be open to political and moral overtones when the “objectively situated” epistemic subjects share non-explicit political and moral group or personal interests at the expense of the interests of others), and independence (which presupposes that the knower has not only an almost innate ability to abstract from the environment and from relationships with other people and creatures, but also sufficient intellectual maturity for authoritative and highly specialized cognitive statements).

The postulate of rational epistemic subjectivity is presented as universally attributable, and it would be enough for bodies in their variability to be able to abstract from their inclinations and personal information to also be able to inhabit the rarefied air of intellectual sovereignty. However, this postulate is also presented concomitantly with a history of philosophy whose conceptualization is deeply and hierarchically dichotomic. According to this conceptualization, the characteristics exposed above are listed alongside masculinity and whiteness of a high political and economic status, in opposition to the traits attributed to women and other non-hegemonic bodies: emotionality, passionateness, partiality, dependence and, at the limit, irrationality. Add to this a discrediting picture coming from the thoughts of exemplary philosophers of the canon about women and racialized people, and we have an environment that is completely refractory to the presence of dissident and non-hegemonic bodies in philosophy, in the history of philosophy and in a philosophical classroom.

If we did not already know that the disembodiment of knowledge is a farce, we could conclude that only a small portion of subjects do effectively comply with these guidelines of rational epistemic subjectivity and authoritative intellectual sovereignty when doing philosophy, something that would imply an exclusive assignment of epistemic authority. This exclusivity is, contradictorily, therefore, embodied by people who suppose themselves capable of universal representation of knowledge and who do not find in this history any reason to suspect the authorization granted to their philosophical activity by their predecessors in intellectuality. At the same time, this exclusivity authorizes an attitude of cognitive superiority granted both to the philosophers of the canonical list and to the teachers who replicate them in their texts and in the classroom. In this sense, (and, always again, contradictorily) we have as a background a unilateral conception of philosophy that excludes female philosophers and other epistemically located thoughts, as well as (and, always again, contradictorily) a unilateral conception of textual philosophical methodology

that should, as much as its authors, instantiate a universalizable epistemology. Of course, this scenario has violent repercussions in the classroom.

More explicitly, we could say that there's a rule established among us, even if it is not declared or spelled out, that it is necessary to have, in addition to a certain type of mind, a certain type of body – as if this separation were even possible – for one to inhabit the places of (Brazilian) philosophy. In this sense, we have several processes of dichotomic distinctions: bodies are separated from each other (males and females, men and women, whites and non-whites...) and the body itself is separated from oneself (as a physical entity/substance and non-physical, mind/reason). The distinction between bodies is not very explicit in canonical philosophy, but the separation between mind and body has been indicated and presented and sparsely commented on since ancient philosophy.

Our country is majority black and indigenous, but this is not the reality of our higher education and postgraduate courses. The same can be said about women, people with disabilities or queers. The question is not ontological or physical - it does not concern an intrinsic inability of these persons to philosophical activity -, but it is political and epistemic. It also concerns the production of certain contents about beings that are presented as "true" or "justified" without them being part of this production. And although many today have the habit of evoking the case of "historical time" to excuse Aristotle, Descartes or Kant for their misogynistic, racist, ableist or speciesist stances - to name just three of the most revered canonical authors in our Western philosophical tradition and only four of the problems that we can perceive in their texts - the practices, methods and content that circulate in our philosophy departments follow similar paths. If "nature" is less and less invoked to indicate that "some are made" for the "activities of thought" and others for "work", the "proof" of this "fact" is now produced by other means, epistemic means. Countless words, phrases and methods, from the most subtle to the very explicit, are mobilized for systematic disqualification of dissident and non-hegemonic bodies that are dissident and non-hegemonic in relation to an established standard such as that of the "epistemic man" - the philosopher for excellence. These methods, contents and practices that aim to disqualify, discourage or even eliminate other bodies constitute modes of epistemic violence.

Here, it is important to remember and reference that philosophers like Sueli Carneiro (2023), Gayatri Spivak (1988), and Simone de Beauvoir (1949/2016) have all made the point that there is a technique of transforming someone or a group into the "other". It is crucial to keep this in mind. According to Beauvoir's analysis in *Second Sex*, this practice is inextricably linked to the creation of subjects with lower and subordinate social status—women in this instance—in contrast to those who identify and see themselves as complete subjects—men, or better yet, some men—and, as such, the real creators of culture and knowledge. Spivak, in turn, also identifies the production of subalternized subjects as an "other", in the context of the colonization process. As such, they are defined as essentially different, exotic, abnormal, or even threatening.⁵ Bringing these questions to the philosophy classroom, we find that they are mirrored in the practice of what Patricia Hill Collins ([1991] 2019) refers to as "subjugated" knowledges—knowledges that are kept outside dominant epistemic systems—as well as in the absence of dissident and non-hegemonic

⁵ The selection of Descartes as a key figure in philosophy, with his "I" and "Cogito," during a time so close to the genocides and epistemicides committed by Europeans at different times throughout history, particularly against women (the "witches"), Native Americans (the "savages"), Black people (the "workhorses"), Muslims, and Jews (the "impures"), is therefore not coincidental. This is noted by Gosfoguel (2016) and Federici (2019).

bodies—previously classified as "others"—and in the attempts to keep them away through a variety of practices.

Let us then think about our learning positions in the classroom. Reports of discomfort begin as imprecise and indeterminate. But the lack of representation⁶ in the curriculum, in bibliographies and in the scope of epistemic legitimation granted by the criteria set out above, casts doubt on the very possibility of dissident and non-hegemonic bodies inhabiting the classroom of a philosophy course. It is an effect of displacement or maladjustment in the wake of an *emptying* of these bodies of their *condition as legitimate subjects of knowledge*, bodies that do not seem to be able to fit into this type of philosophical activity. They are deprived of the possibility of understanding themselves as subjects capable of true philosophical cognition and rationality, since they do not meet the criteria of universalizable rational epistemic subjectivity and do not find possible exceptions in the list of philosophical experiences that would count as authorization for occupying this academic space.

Obstruction in understanding oneself as a legitimate subject of knowledge is a first moment of violence. It is characterized as epistemic violence precisely because it affects someone as a knower who is deprived of her own self-conception and self-understanding as a knowing subject in her own right, and who thus suffers a destabilization in her self-confidence and self-determination, and who considers herself refractory to intellectuality, thought and philosophy. We could say that this is a moment slightly prior to testimonial injustice regarding issues of epistemic credibility, since it affects the epistemic subject's own self-conception prior to any testimonial or assertive epistemic elaboration. It is clear that in the academic environment "philosophical" testimony (if we can call it that way) suffers the same kind of credibility deficit that Miranda Fricker attributes to issues of second-order prejudice. Such procedures only reinforce the first violence felt as the emptying of the condition of legitimate subject of knowledge. Furthermore, this emptying and discreditability of "philosophical" testimony are reinforced by a multiplicity of practices that unfold from assumed theoretical and textual assumptions (those outlined above) and involve power relations that manifest themselves in the classroom impacting on student and teachers' behaviors.

These behaviors just mentioned express themselves in an extremely hierarchical environment, even when the environment is supposedly democratic or when the behaviors are performed in tones of collegiality. Here we can think of those apparently juvenile, playful and joking teaching attitudes, that are nothing more than affective baits for students (mainly male students) to identify with their teachers who share the same epistemic-political place of enunciation based on their similar social marks. This teacher pal becomes a philosophical model to be reproduced in academic and extra-academic spaces (think, for example, of the professor who is a friend of male students who go out with him after class for sporting activities that are socially considered masculine). The opposed model behavior - and easier to denounce - is that one who blatantly misses the point of the joke with concealed prejudices (and sexist jokes abound in our students' reports). However, beyond the initial outwardly friendly stance, the most important aspect of the philosophical activity that takes place in a classroom or in conferences and debates is the validation of

⁶ It is evident that mere representation is insufficient. It needs to be combined with analysis of the causes of the underrepresentation of female philosophers and other groups in the various echelons of academic life. Furthermore, existing customs and practices may endure, as is the case in places designated for representation in party politics, when women who are obviously anti-feminist or non-feminist are said to "represent" women.

the epistemic (universalizable) subjectivity – that is of course attributed and legitimized by means of self-assertion – as the central epistemic authority of the philosophical approach in question, subsequently reinforced by all those who participate in and endorse the discursive practices that support a complex philosophical game.

This game is not a game of constructive reflections on philosophical questions, nor is it a game of respectfully analyzed and collectively evaluated arguments. It is a game of argumentative disputes, in which the most important thing is the dispute itself, the competition of positions, the sharp duels, the accurate and intelligent responses, the supposed fun of the argument for argument's sake, which are all methods whose final intention is to establish and legitimize the space of the winners, or the main winner, who holds then the title of expert and serves as a guide to those who wish to occupy the same place of supposed intellectual brilliance. Only those who are trained in the arts of these argumentative disputes manage to approach the podium of experts.

Note that the problematic point we would like to highlight here is not the argumentative procedure itself (also because feminist philosophies have all expanded the meaning of 'argument' to the consideration of activities and people who can philosophize in a variety of argumentative formats). The problematic point is the maintenance of an environment of dispute for the sake of dispute itself. It is noticeable, in many cases, a real pleasure in "winning" and "disqualifying" the "opponent", and this is precisely the language used. The understanding of a problem, a theory, a proposal or the mutual understanding about possible alternative responses disappears completely from the horizon. The environment reproduces a bellicose and violent sociability, typical of virilism, and of sexist and classist masculinism that is institutionalized under the guise of objective rationality, contradictorily embodied by the univocity of professorial authority.

It is not explicitly mentioned that what is happening is a complex philosophical game of competitions and combats, instead of a joint reflection that would involve discussing different possibilities or some points identified by some as problematic but judged correct by others. Most of us - people who don't know how to play the game the way it is played or who aren't interested in disputes - discover this only when already experiencing academic life.

It is also by means of this experience that we realize that some argumentative procedures and some epistemic practices seem to disregard ways of acquiring and justifying knowledge that are situated and embodied, admitting no universal assertions of truth, or that evolve gradually through unstable considerations and reflections that demand a maturation time different from that of duelist game readiness. Somehow, we realize that we share neither this fundamental meaning of philosophical activity nor its methods.

We could say that we were not told at any time, when we became interested in philosophy, that it was about winning a game, competing for positions of intellectual privilege, or participating in a race for the podium. But not only do we once again feel out of place and out of adjustment: we are effectively silenced in our maladjustment. Our attempts to assert knowledge are impeded both by the lack of rhythm in speech, of readiness and vocal imposition, and by the unpreparedness in the use of words, since access to public space has been denied to us for a long time and we do not have the same skill as it seems natural and unimpeded in male speech, with his sure voice, self-confidence and (intellectual) self-esteem. We do not manage public space with the self-confidence apparently required to grant authority to speech, this being also due to socialization processes that disdain and diminish expressions coming from feminized bodies. And when we try to impose a voice for assertive statements, it is again the same socialization processes and

political processes of exclusion that judge such attempts as passionate, hysterical, and uncontrolled performances. In other words, not only were we not trained in the game of philosophical disputes, but we were also not even trained to speak publicly, and our ways of asserting are, in this sense, considered in advance as out of place and, concomitantly, invalidated. This is a second moment of epistemic violence that reinforces the initial moment of emptying of the condition of legitimate subject of knowledge. This is the *delegitimization of knowledge assertions* whose damage extends from the modes of acquisition to the modes of justification of knowledge - assertions that are not considered legitimate because they do not manage to overcome the level of belief and do not, therefore, obtain the status of truth that obtain the assertions argued according to the objectively accessible and universally shareable criteria allocated publicly by the method described above. These assertions do not count as legitimate "philosophical testimonies" because they do not respond to the methodological qualification carried out by the maximum subject of knowledge.

Added to this violence are all the current mechanisms of silencing that are not exclusive to the space of philosophy or even to the academic space itself and which receive the nomenclatures that now allow us to identify the strategies of annulment and derogation around non-hegemonic speech, which affect especially women and which produce the effect of destabilizing reasoning and the flow of expression: *maninterrupting*, the constant interruption of women's speech by male students and teachers, sometimes in mutual collaboration between them; *mansplaining*, the explanation of women's speech by male students and teachers in alternative rephrasings that are directed at themselves or other listeners and presented as if women could not know what they were saying; *bropropriating*, the appropriation by male students and teachers of the speech and ideas expressed by female colleagues as if these were their own, something that can also happen at a textual and theoretical level. These mechanisms are part of the academic environment as a whole, being pervasive in philosophy classrooms, and overlap with the already bellicose environment of duelist argumentative games with a layer of male camaraderie — the *brotherhood* typical of egoic reinforcements and maintenance of the high intellectual self-esteem of those who occupy a privileged place in the academic hierarchy and who grant each other superlative epistemic authority.

The combination of derogation strategies in an epistemically violent environment also has combined effects that act on psychic, emotional, epistemic, and even bodily layers and that lead many people simply to abandon the academic environment, or the philosophical academic environment specifically. Conceptually, we could name this entire process as a kind of *structural gaslighting* - thinking that the philosophical institutional structure is composed not only of the actual academic institution, but also of its internal arrangements, which range from the curriculum to the time dedicated to each theme, philosopher, or woman philosopher, passing through teaching practices. In the end, women philosophers ask themselves at different points in their careers whether they are truly doing philosophy, whether they are in the right place, and whether they should accept the diagnosis presented from the very beginning concerning her (imputed) inability to think, her flawed intellectually verging on irrationality. This self-mistrust appears to support the notion that has permeated philosophy throughout history: that epistemic authority can be attributed only if subjectivity and knowledge justification align with the entire set of criterial assumptions that we have been discussing. Put differently, based on the information that has been made available thus far, non-hegemonic and dissident bodies lack sufficient support to be authorized to bear their own cognition with authority. This is a third moment of violence that unfolds and entangles with the previous ones. This is the *delegitimization of epistemic authority*.

In the particular instance we are examining here and within the framework of the philosophical academic community, delegitimization may be connected to problems of testimonial injustice concerning the lack of credibility that is associated with an external (identity) characterization of the subject. It goes beyond identity, however, as the very notion of epistemic authority is anchored on a specific knowing subject that is beforehand inhibited for people who do not fit into the embodied standards meeting the canonical subject of knowledge. Of course, this has to do with prejudices, but in a way that is fundamental to the very idea of the epistemic difference that is attributed, based on already established criteria. It is from the list of characteristics attributed to the subject of knowledge that all others establish themselves as not sufficiently cognoscent and therefore deprived of authority to pronounce truth assertions, or even to elaborate their own experiences (which is what we can also understand as “identitarian prejudiced credibility deficit”). It should be noted that any attempt at authorization is then doomed to failure, and that only another configuration of epistemic subjectivity can help us to overcome this violence. The fact that other bodies, dissident and non-hegemonic, begin to occupy the academic spaces of philosophy is not enough to be able to assert that epistemic authority is being granted to them (this occupation may have simply happened without any “grants” of power and privilege from the self-granted holders of knowledge, and now they don't know what to do with it). The epistemically violent practices and behaviors detected in several of the activities that make up the philosophical life of the academy attest to this.

Here, the behavior that illustrates the delegitimization of the epistemic authority of dissident and non-hegemonic bodies is precisely that which appears in the affirmation of the intellectual-philosophical superiority of the professor, researcher, self-awarded expert in his field, whose reinforcement in confidence and unquestioned self-esteem is endorsed by their closely matched peers and by students who believe in the model being presented to them - because they are hopeful of the title of successor to the master. It should be noted that the teaching position occupied as a place of accumulated experiential authority is not itself in question here - this is in fact a place that should be interposed by the students' experience and knowledge and the teacher's continual learning attitude. What is really at issue is the toxicity manifested by the unilaterality of epistemic authority, which is often confused with intellectual authoritarianism or arrogance, whose abuse of the labels of 'specialist', 'expert', 'original theorist', belittle, invalidate and delegitimize different perspectives or different questioning statements. This violent moment does not arouse fear or fearful reaction as to a dictatorial stance. It is not so explicit a violence. It occurs as a reaction to the self-determined authoritative intellectual sovereignty of the teacher-knower and his stance of superlative authority that is mutually corroborated by the fraternity of "geniuses in philosophy." The cognitive superiority of the teacher-expert places him at the top of the intellectual pyramid, whose secure base is a mass of average learners.

How to face epistemic violence experienced in philosophy?

Since the knot of epistemic violence is formed by individual, group, and structural actions, it is necessary to face it on these three levels. In all three, it is necessary to *identify and dismantle the norms, structures, beliefs, methods and behaviors that regulate the granting of credibility*, and, consequently, the status of epistemic subject, more to some than to others. As cliché as it may seem, the acts of listening, respecting, and taking into account different views are essential for confronting this type of violence, on all levels.

Listening is different from hearing (which refers to what the ear captures). It implies the act of listening carefully and, in the context of human interactions and our discussion about epistemic violence, it also implies the act of not preventing the other from speaking and to let him or her speak, either through the use of voice, written texts or other forms of communication. This is a way of facing the epistemic violences of speaking on behalf of others, without their inclusion or consent; of imposing explanatory models on the common world; of silencing and usurpation; of impediment to self-definition, self-evaluation, and valuation.⁷

Here we have the first problem to be faced: to *include dissident and non-hegemonic bodies in our circles of conversation, discussion, readings, and our written production*, as well as to include them in our institutions and positions of power, commonly occupied by people who have always been attributed more prestige, expertise or authority. Here it is also necessary to think about our curriculum and bibliographies, but we will come back to that later. First, let us think about the presences and absences of the most varied bodies in philosophy. If in elementary and high school classrooms, depending on the schools, we can more frequently find dissident and non-hegemonic bodies among the students, they will become a minority in undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Brazil (and other parts of the world), including teaching positions. In this sense, *inclusion policies* are necessary to change this reality, but they are not enough. It is necessary that the philosophy material in elementary and secondary school classrooms also reflects epistemic diversity and human diversity so that students with the most varied characteristics think of themselves as potentially participating in the construction of meanings and explanations about reality. The same can be said about the teaching staff at universities. In other words: philosophy departments need to open up to diversity to produce material that is more appropriate to reality. Openness to diversity of bodies and experiences also needs to occur in curricula and bibliographies. This is a way of listening to what has already been said.

We need *bibliographic diversity* that better represents our plural humanity and our equally plural experiences of the world. It is not enough to create a discipline for “eastern philosophies” and another for “African philosophies” if the rest of the canon remains focused on the same main line that guides a certain way of doing philosophy and a certain type of rationality as “the” correct one. The same applies to the issue of women and the racial issue in our societies - to give just two examples again. It is not enough to include one or another female philosopher, person with disability or a black person, etc., in the bibliography to overcome the reductionism created throughout centuries of philosophical practice among a small group of white men who authorized themselves to “think in the name of humanity” and produce their observations and explanations about the world, perpetuating them in the name of a self-attributed authority.

We cannot give up on a more varied curriculum and bibliography, which goes beyond the limits produced by centuries of colonization (and coloniality of power, knowledge, gender..., as our colleagues in decolonial and subaltern studies are teaching us). Expanding our bibliography, to make it more diverse, will not be effective if the methods associated with epistemic violence are not identified and dismantled. Here, *respect and consideration for non-hegemonic dissident bodies, their experiences and knowledge* also need to be brought into play. It is always possible to put together a beautiful bibliography and use it in a pejorative

⁷ Patricia Hill Collins [2019] pointed out self-definition and self-evaluation as two powerful anti-racist practices.

way, comparing it disrespectfully with the established canon, or with very little knowledge of the facts. It is also possible to include a class on an important topic for non-hegemonic dissident bodies, arising from listening to these bodies, but conducting it in a subtly – if not overtly – dismissive way. This is the case of classes on care ethics, for example, most of the time presented in a superficial or outdated way, just to be able to say that a class on some type of “feminine” or feminist ethics was included. This is the case of classes on care ethics, for example, most of the time presented in a superficial or outdated way, just to be able to say that a class on some type of “feminine” or feminist ethics was included. Currently, care theories point to the vital importance of care for all individuals, ecosystems, and forms of society, and to the multiple objectives of care - maintaining life, meeting the multiple needs of individuals and communities (affective, economic, social, physical...), the reduction of damage and the maintenance of the complex networks involved in collective life. However, deontological, and consequentialist ethics receive much more emphasis in philosophy courses than care ethics, and indigenous and African ethics, for example, are practically unknown.

Expanded discussion groups, inclusion policies, and more diverse bibliographies and curricula... will not have sufficient effect if the methods remain the same - with their disputes and games of attribution of authority, inflated egos, discrimination, silencing and delegitimization of non-hegemonic dissident bodies... Even in environments with more diversity, it is necessary *to identify prejudices, injustices and violences to be dismantled to provide the conditions for responsible and respectful dialogue*. As Kristie Dotson pointed out, "to communicate we all need an audience willing and capable of hearing us." (2011, p. 238).

Here, we think again of Miranda Fricker (2007) and her discussion of the ethical-epistemic virtues of testimonial justice and hermeneutic justice - called by Santos (2022, p. 155) *anti-prejudice and corrective virtues*. Although the virtues mentioned are not sufficient - since they place on individuals the responsibility for something that is also structural, and which Fricker does not elaborate on - they can be evoked for classroom environments and for various social relationships. They function to produce systematic sensitivity and critical reflection in the face of inadequate credibility judgments or lack of epistemic material regarding the expressions, perceptions, and experiences of non-hegemonic dissident bodies. In this sense, there are many gaps to be filled in collective hermeneutic resources, intended to spread the dominant group's perceptions of the world and experiences. These gaps imply unequal relations of social power in the most varied places and instances. Therefore, in addition to enabling respectful speech and listening at the individual and institutional level, it is also important to *encourage the production of conceptual tools* that make sense for non-hegemonic dissident bodies and that enable their self-conception.

Patrícia Hill Collins (2019) argues that excluded individuals develop epistemes parallel to the hegemonic ones (such as self-representations and self-evaluations different from those attributed to them) that serve them as tools for understanding and constructing meaning. However, they are unknown or disregarded by the guardians of canonical epistemology.

It is vitally important to *create working groups specifically focused on the search for knowledge previously despised and to dialogue about dissident and non-hegemonic experiences and ways of thinking*. This applies to groups of students with dissident and non-hegemonic bodies, so that they can share their experiences and impressions of the world with each other and produce a more appropriate vocabulary - like the countless groups of women who have come together in the past and continue to meet to discuss their agendas and support each other. And this also applies to classrooms. Philosophy students and teachers need to be open to dialogue, to practice respectful listening and take into consideration what is indicated and proposed to them by dissident and non-

hegemonic bodies. Professors are socially privileged people in academic economics, and they are the ones who benefit from - and often perpetuate - epistemic injustices. Therefore "they must be educated about epistemic justice and their obligations to interrupt unjust systems" (Johnson, 2019, p. 255). Education, then, is vitally important for epistemic agents and for overcoming epistemic injustice.

A good proposal to solve the problem of teachers' (bad) attitudes and shortcomings could be the creation of a "retraining" or *teacher training movement* in all philosophy departments in the country, in the search to provide an epistemic turnaround. We could create regular listening and qualification courses taught by representatives of non-hegemonic dissident bodies, for example.

We imagine that the reverse experience – of being in the learning situation and not having epistemic power – will create anguish, insecurities and fears in philosophy teachers. Because of this possible situation, institutions that are serious about confronting epistemic violence need to think about *ways to support their teachers*, including the psychological support necessary in times of crisis. This support is important both for young people and teachers in contact with unknown realities and groups, and for experienced teachers, given the inevitable changes that occur in the world and the epistemic twists proposed by non-hegemonic dissident bodies.

Last but not least, it is necessary to keep in mind that epistemic violence does not only concern individuals but is also rooted in structures and institutions. Individual or small group changes, no matter how significant and important they are, they need institutional support to be able to maintain or expand their practices. Furthermore, it is necessary to keep in mind that epistemic violence is an integral and essential part of systems of oppression, since they perpetuate oppressive structures and maintain power imbalances, and that such systems are resistant to change and can even be resilient, as indicates Dotson (2014).⁸ Even when epistemic violence is unmasked and confronted, systems continue to function, perpetuating the harm they cause. To address them, Dotson points to the fact that individuals – and we point here to dissident and non-hegemonic bodies – must recognize the persistent resilience of their own epistemological systems and trust them to create alternative epistemologies and promote sociopolitical change.

The creation of *groups at different points in the system* – the various philosophy courses, educational institutions and classrooms across the country, for example – and cooperation between them is equally important. They provide support for smaller groups still in formation at the same time as they echo the demands and changes that are on the way at different points in the system.

We believe that persistence, organization in groups, the creation of new meanings and languages, reciprocity and working together can lead to coping and changes in systems, even if they are resilient.

What might emerge after a radical turn? A new epistemic subject

Finally, we would like to do a little imaginative exercise. Let us think of how rich the experience of dialogue and philosophical discussions can be between various bodies that represent our humanity, in a climate of respect and consideration. We risk thinking that the image of another epistemic subject will emerge. It's still hard to name this new subject. However, this subject is an open subject and susceptible to constant changes; with enough plasticity to adapt, adjust, and recreate amidst bodily changes and in contact

⁸ Dotson (2014) chamou de "resiliência dos sistemas" a capacidade dos sistemas de opressão em persistir, adaptar-se e manter as suas características opressivas.

with various other bodies and environments. Is a subject who has multiple experiences and occupies different locations throughout a timeline, is also interdependent on others for existence and knowledge, and is aware of varied possibilities of living and being a subject.

Gloria Anzaldua, in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestizo* (1987), has drawn our attention to the existence of subjects who are close to the flowed subject because they live between borders. Borders “physically present everywhere where two or more cultures touch, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where the lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks into intimacy” (1987, p. 17). The 'border' is, simultaneously, a place of different languages and dialects, of varied forms of power and impotence, of policing and transgressions, of uprooting, tensions and struggles, of survival and miscegenation. For countless people - and here we also think figuratively, in the classroom, and in our students and our fellow teachers -, this is an uncomfortable place from which we want to move away, whether by retreating or by crossing the border line, especially if it is controlled by violent representatives of a state of things that aims to reproduce the separation of established bodies and privileges.

Retreating or crossing the border does not seem to be what interests Anzaldua, but the ability to live there. The central point is not to cross the line that separates the two worlds and then become an inhabitant of “the other side”, fully adapted to the jargon, content and methods that prevail in this other place - let us think here again about the philosophical games implemented in our classrooms and events. Migrating, as Susan Friedman rightly observed, may well be a type of luxury flaunted by those who have crossed over and find themselves comfortably stationed. “The attractions of migrancy, intellectual or material, are no doubt more evident to those located in spaces of relative power or privilege, like the academy” (Friedman, 1998, p. 102).

Here, we wish to draw attention to the coexistence and cohabitation of various realities and modes of being, which should be taken into account when creating our understanding of the world we inhabit and share. If theorization is to avoid being overly partial, it must find a home in the encounters of differences. Furthermore, in order not to be too partial, it needs to imply existing differences, without prior valorization or disqualification.

Anzaldua, with her gaze focused on the borders, and on herself, identifies a new subject of knowledge, even if she does not name it that way. This subject is a borderer female subject, and, therefore, *mestiza* - a person who results from the union of two or more different cultures and races, someone who receives multiple and often opposing messages, who deals with “self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 78), who discovers that is not possible to “hold concepts or ideas within rigid boundaries” and that “rigidity means death” (p. 79). Having this knowledge, she knows she needs to be and to think flexibly. She also knows that epistemologies and philosophies of peoples and groups that do not share the hegemonic views of the West represent a vital source of wisdom for the present and future of our humanity (Anzaldua, 2015).

Since the new mestiza does not perfectly fit into any type of group, she has experienced violence in a variety of settings, from the most private to the most public. Nevertheless, we think that the skills she has acquired can be developed without the multiple subjections and violence she has encountered. His flexibility and understanding of other worlds and his own are qualities that come from being a border dweller who lives between different cultures.

We can imagine that the new subject of knowledge emerging from border experience and dialogue is someone who (re)knows the universalizing, categorizing, reductionist and colonizing narratives about reality, as well as their representatives and their ways of acting. As Anzaldua pointed out, she – the new subject – needs and is able to develop a "new consciousness" and other epistemologies that can incorporate the dynamics of this place rather than ignore them, and that can listen to, respect, and take into consideration a wide variety of dissident and non-hegemonic bodies because of her border experience (territorial, identity, cultural, etc.).

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