

Philosophy 427
Intuitions and Philosophy

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Class 19 - Gender Differences I

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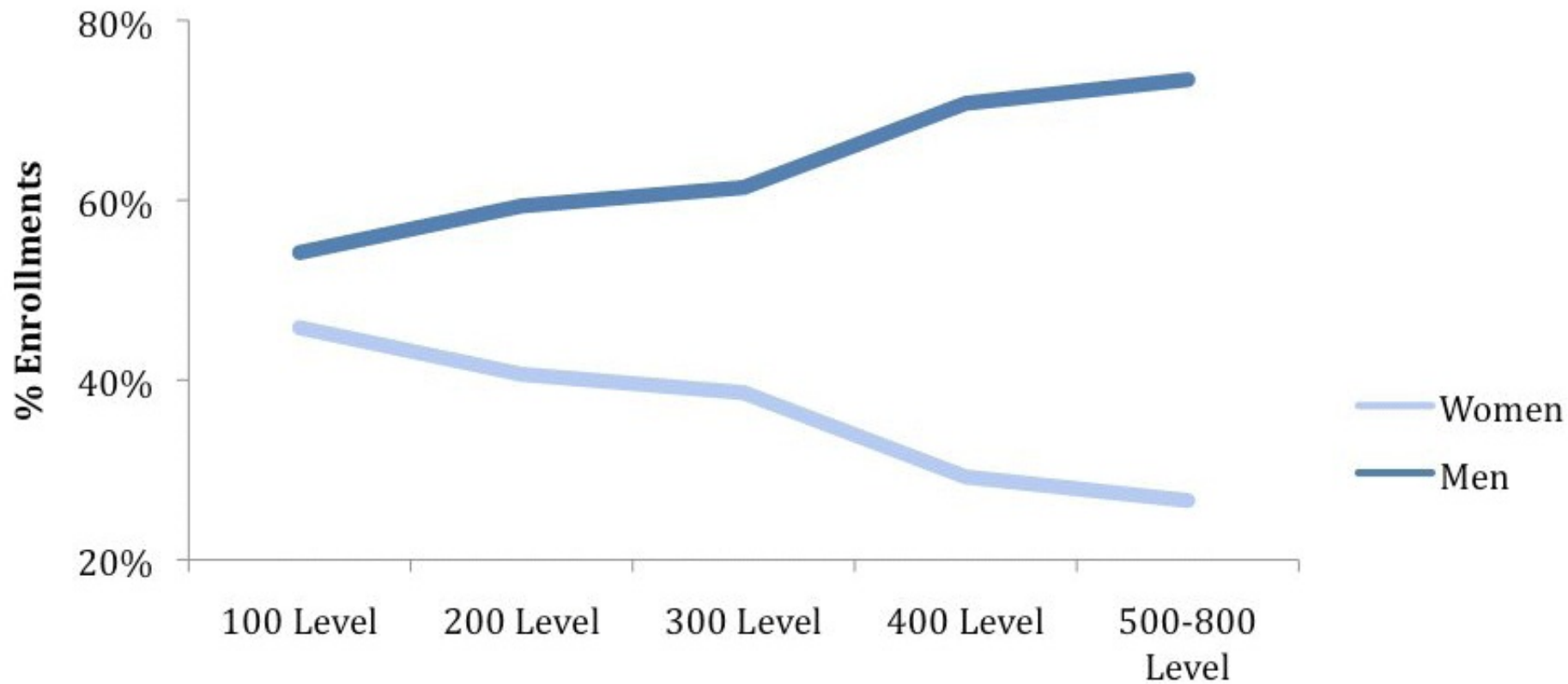
There is a deep well of rage inside of me. Rage about how I as an individual have been treated in philosophy; rage about how others I know have been treated; and rage about the conditions that I'm sure affect many women and minorities in philosophy, and have caused many others to leave. Most of the time I suppress this rage and keep it sealed away. Until I came to MIT in 1998, I was in a constant dialogue with myself about whether to quit philosophy, even give up tenure, to do something else. In spite of my deep love for philosophy, it just didn't seem worth it. And I am one of the very lucky ones. One of the ones who has been successful by the dominant standards of the profession. Whatever the numbers say about women and minorities in philosophy, numbers don't begin to tell the story. Things may be getting better in some contexts, but they are far from acceptable.

Data on Women in Higher Education and Philosophy

Enrollment	Degrees	Philosophy BAs
Enrollment History	Degrees by Gender	Philosophy Pipeline

The Buckwalter and Stich Hypothesis

Students come to philosophy with somewhat different intuitions about many standard philosophical thought experiments, and as we have shown, in many cases there are statistically significant differences between women's intuitions and men's. However, most of the faculty members who get to say which intuitions are correct (and "obvious") are now, and always have been, men. So women students are more likely than men students to find that their intuitions about the thought experiments discussed in their philosophy classes are at odds with those of their instructor. If it is indeed the case that students (of either gender) are less likely to continue in philosophy if their intuitions do not accord with those of their instructor, then all the elements of a powerful and cumulative selection effect are in place – a selection effect which "filters out" a greater proportion of women than of men (30).



**Figure 16. Percent Philosophy Enrollment
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Spring 1999 - Spring 2010**

Thought Experiments in Which Gender Differences Were Found

- Gettier Cases
- Compatibilism
- Physicalism
- Dualism
- The Violinist
- The Magistrate and the Mob
- The Trolley
- Causal Deviance
- Epistemic Side Effects
- Brain in a Vat
- Twin Earth
- Chinese Room
- Plank of Carneades

Gettier Cases

- Peter is in his locked apartment, and is reading. He decides to have a shower. He puts his book down on the coffee table. Then he takes off his watch, and also puts it on the coffee table. Then he goes into the bathroom. As Peter's shower begins, a burglar silently breaks into Peter's apartment. The burglar takes Peter's watch, puts a cheap plastic watch in its place, and then leaves. Peter has only been in the shower for two minutes, and he did not hear anything.
- **Does Peter really know that there is a watch on the table, or does he only believe it?**

Compatibilism

- Suppose Scientists figure out the exact state of the universe during the Big Bang, and figure out all the laws of physics as well. They put this information into a computer, and the computer perfectly predicts everything that has ever happened. In other words, they prove that everything that happens, has to happen exactly that way because of the laws of physics and everything that's come before.
- **In this case, is a person free to choose whether or not to murder someone?**

Physicalism

- Suppose you meet a man from the future who knows everything there is to know about science. He tells you that he doesn't like apples, and says that though he has never eaten one, he has figured out what apples taste like just by studying the relevant science.
- ***Could he know what apples taste like without ever having eaten one?***

Dualism

- Suppose neurologists are able to identify every part and every connection in the human brain. Working with a team of computer scientists, they then build a robot that has a complete electronic replica of the human brain.
- ***Could this robot experience love?***

The Violinist

- Jill wakes up one morning and finds a strange man next to her in bed, plugged into her kidney. A man from the Society for Music Lovers introduces himself and explains to Jill that she has been plugged into a famous violinist who is dying of kidney failure. Without Jill's help, the violinist will die. The man from the Society explains that Jill must stay plugged into the violinist for 9 months in order for him to recover and survive. Jill pulls the plug and the violinist dies.
- ***Jill's pulling the plug was:***
 - Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 labeled "Forbidden," 4 labeled "Permissible," and 7 labeled "Obligatory."

The Magistrate and the Mob

- Steve is the police chief of a large city. A particularly volatile political situation has erupted into violence with the assassination of a candidate, and citizens are rioting in the streets, demanding an arrest be made. The situation will worsen unless Steve can produce a perpetrator; people have already looted numerous stores, overturned cars, brutally attacked bystanders, and set fire to a government building. The police department has Steve's 14-year-old brother in custody for petty theft and drunkenness. He could easily fabricate sufficient evidence against his young brother to satisfy the public and stop the riots. Steve chooses not to frame his teenage brother and the violent attacks escalate.
- **The choice Steve made was**
 - ▶ Participants were asked to respond with a horizontal sliding bar, where the leftmost side was anchored with "Good" and the rightmost side was anchored with "Bad."

The Trolley

- You are taking your daily walk near the train tracks and you notice that the train that is approaching is out of control. You see what has happened: the driver of the train saw five people working on the tracks and slammed on the brakes, but the brakes failed and the driver fainted. The train is now rushing toward the five people. It is moving so fast that they will not be able to get off the track in time. You happen to be standing next to a switch, and you realize that the only way to save the five people on the tracks is to throw the switch, which will turn the train onto a side track, thereby preventing it from killing the five people. However, there is a stranger [or, in the other vignette: a 12-year-old boy] standing on the side track with his back turned, and if you proceed to throw the switch, the five people will be saved, but the person [boy] on the sidetrack will be killed
- **“It is morally acceptable for me to pull the switch.”**
 - ▶ Responses were collected on a 7 point scale with 1 labeled “strongly disagree” and 7 labeled “strongly agree”.

Causal Deviance

- Tom is walking in the park when he sees a man choking on a sandwich. Tom, full of nervousness because of his intention to save the man's life, runs over and performs the Heimlich maneuver. The man coughs up the sandwich he had been choking on and his life is saved.
 - Positive Normal
- Tom is walking in the park when he sees a man choking on a sandwich. Tom, full of nervousness because of his intention to save the man's life, runs over to perform the Heimlich maneuver. However, Tom's nervousness leads him to have an epileptic seizure. (Had Tom not had the epileptic seizure, he would have carried out the Heimlich maneuver and saved the choking man's life.) By chance, the epileptic fit happens to lead Tom's arms to squeeze on the man's chest, causing the man to cough up the sandwich and saving his life.
 - Positive Deviant
- Tom lies in wait for his enemy, who had stolen his life savings. As soon as his enemy appears, Tom, nervous because of his intention to kill the man, pulls out a gun and shoots his enemy dead.
 - Negative Normal
- Tom lies in wait for his enemy, who had stolen his life savings. As soon as his enemy appears, Tom, nervous because of his intention to kill the man, pulls out a gun. However, Tom's nervousness triggers an epileptic seizure. (Had Tom not had an epileptic seizure, he would have shot his enemy dead.) By chance, the epileptic fit leads Tom to squeeze the trigger, and the bullet happens to hit and kill his enemy.
 - Negative Deviant
- Participants were asked to judge (1) how moral or immoral the agent was, (2) how much blame or praise the agent should receive for his actions, and (3) how positively or negatively the agent should be judged.

Epistemic Side-Effects Effect

- The vice-president of a company went to the chairman of the board and said, “We are thinking of starting a new program. We are sure that it will help us increase profits, and it will also (*help / harm*) the environment.” The chairman of the board answered, “I don’t care at all about (*helping / harming*) the environment. I just want to make as much profit as I can. Let’s start the new program.” They started the new program. Sure enough, the environment was (*helped / harmed*).
- **“Did the chairman *know* that the new program would (*help/harm*) the environment”**.
 - ▶ Seven-point scale from -3 to 3 (where -3 was anchored with “the chairman didn’t know” and 3 was anchored with “the chairman knew”).

Brain in a Vat

- George and Omar are roommates, and enjoy having late-night ‘philosophical’ discussions. One such night Omar argues, “At some point in time, like, the year 2300, the medical and computer sciences will be able to simulate the real world very convincingly. They will be able to grow a brain without a body, and hook it up to a supercomputer in just the right way so that the brain has experiences exactly as if it were a real person walking around in a real world, talking to other people. The brain would believe it was a real person walking around in a real world, except that it would be wrong. Instead it’s just stuck in a virtual world, with no actual legs to walk and with no other actual people to talk to. And here’s the thing: how could you ever tell that it isn’t really the year 2300 now, and that you’re not really a virtual-reality brain? If you were a virtual-reality brain, after all, everything would look and feel exactly the same to you as it does now! George thinks for a minute, and then replies: “But, look, here are my legs”. He points down to his legs. “If I were a virtual-reality brain, I wouldn’t have any legs really, I’d only just be a disembodied brain. But I know I have legs, just look at them! So I must be a real person, and not a virtual-reality brain, because only real people have real legs. So I’ll continue to believe that I’m not a virtual-reality brain.”
- George and Omar are actually real humans in the actual real world today, and so neither of them are virtual-reality brains, which means that George’s belief is true.
- **George knows that he is not a virtual-reality brain.**
 - ▶ Agreement or disagreement on a seven-item scale, with the leftmost anchor labeled “Completely Disagree,” the midpoint labeled “In Between” and the rightmost anchor labeled “Completely Agree”.

Twin Earth

- Suppose that elsewhere in the universe there is a planet called “Twin-Earth”. Twin-Earth looks exactly like our Earth in virtually all respects. It is populated by twin equivalents to every person and thing here on our Earth, and even revolves around a star that appears to be exactly like our sun. Oscar grows up here on our Earth, while someone exactly like Oscar, who we can call “Twin-Oscar”, lives on Twin-Earth. Oscar and Twin-Oscar both go through life having the same experiences, and both perceive their environment in exactly the same way. They look and act completely alike, and even experience the same emotions. In fact, there is only one difference between these two planets. The difference is that on Earth the stuff that fills the lakes and rivers and that people and animals drink is H₂O, while on Twin Earth, the stuff that fills the lakes and rivers and that people and animals drink is another chemical compound, XYZ, that to the naked eye looks completely indistinguishable from the H₂O on Earth. H₂O and XYZ also taste exactly the same, and both have the ability to quench thirst and to sustain life. However, Oscar and Twin-Oscar both live before the development of modern science, and they have no idea about chemistry or molecular composition. When they go for a swim, both Oscar and Twin-Oscar point to the liquid in the lake and call it “water” even though on Earth that liquid is made up of H₂O, and on Twin-Earth it is made up of XYZ.
- ***When Oscar and Twin-Oscar say “water” do they mean the same thing, or different things?***

Chinese Room

- Jenny is a native English speaker who can only speak English. She is locked in a room full of boxes of Chinese symbols, together with an instruction manual written in English for manipulating the symbols. People from outside the room send in notes on pieces of paper with Chinese symbols written on them, which unknown to Jenny, are questions in Chinese. Jenny's job is to look through her manual until she finds the symbols that look exactly like the ones written on the pieces of paper. When she finds that string of symbols, the manual will tell her what new string of symbols to write down, and send to the people outside the room. By following the instructions in the manual, Jenny is able to give the correct answers to the questions. The system consisting of Jenny and the instruction manual that she is using can be thought of as an unusual sort of computer. Jenny gets so good at following the instructions in the manual, that from the point of view of any one outside the room who speaks Chinese, her responses are absolutely indistinguishable from those of Chinese speakers. After responding to a comprehension question participants were asked whether they agreed with the following statement.
- ***The computational system consisting of Jenny and her instruction manual understands the Chinese written on the notes.***
 - Responses were on a seven-item scale with the leftmost anchor labeled "Completely Disagree," the midpoint labeled "In Between" and the rightmost anchor labeled "Completely Agree"

Plank of Carneades

- There are two shipwrecked sailors, Jamie and Ricki. They both see a small plank that can only support one of them and both of them swim desperately towards it. Jamie gets to the plank first. Ricki, who is stronger and is going to drown, pushes Jamie off and away from the plank and, thus, ultimately, causes Jamie to drown. Ricki gets on the plank and is later saved by a rescue team.
- ***How morally blameworthy is Ricki for what he did?***
- Seven-item scale, with the leftmost anchor labeled “not at all blameworthy” the midpoint labeled “in between” and the rightmost anchor labeled “extremely blameworthy.”

Dinner Thursday

- 6:30pm
- My home: 23 Fountain Street in the Village
- Soup and Pizza