

2020

Ethical Openness in the Work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Jana McAuliffe

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

jxmcauliffe@ualr.edu

Recommended Citation

McAuliffe, Jana. "Ethical Openness in the Work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 6 (2). Article 3.

Ethical Openness in the Work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak¹

Jana McAuliffe

Abstract

This paper explores the problem of racial privilege in US American feminist thought. Drawing on Gayatri Spivak's analysis of ethics, particularly her ideas of epistemic discontinuity and teleopoietic reading, I argue that a specific kind of ethical openness can help feminist social-political philosophy better negotiate the legacy of white privilege. Spivak's work calls for a reconsideration and reworking of the subject who theorizes. Her analysis of ethics suggests that racially privileged feminists must be able to confront their own complicity in order to engage in political critique less likely to recreate historical patterns of racial domination and exclusion.

Keywords: complicity, ethics, political critique, racism, Spivak, US American feminism

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued that US American subjects considering social justice too easily fall into the trap of thinking "I am necessarily better, I am necessarily indispensable, I am necessarily the one to right wrongs, I am necessarily the end product for which history happened, and . . . New York is necessarily the capital of the world" (Spivak 2004, 532).² The emotional comportment of such a "charitable orientation" represents a cultural sensibility toward politics which is, at least partly, self-satisfied, benevolent hubris. In this paper I engage this subjective orientation as a critique of a dominant US American sensibility regarding justice work. The ways to avoid concretizing such hubris in feminist philosophy that is

¹ I wish to thank Tina Chanter, Namita Goswami, Darrell Moore, and Mary Jeanne Larrabee for their guidance on an earlier version of this reading of Spivak which appears in my dissertation, *Ethics and Affects: A Critique of Social Intelligibility with Adorno, Butler and Spivak*. Thank you also to the anonymous readers of *FPQ* for their thoughtful feedback.

² Given that there are many countries in the Americas, I find it more precise to use the term "US American" to refer to citizens of the United States, rather than the more common "American," and will do so throughout the paper.

ostensibly anti-racist is my focus here. By engaging Spivak's work, I argue that a specific kind of ethical openness renders feminist political critique less vulnerable to recreating historical patterns of racist exclusion. In the quote above, Spivak critiques the position of US academics in order to expose how well-intentioned academic work will often remain complicit with structures of global privilege. I suggest here that her critique of this complicit positionality serves as a model for how racially privileged feminist subjects who would "do good" can better contest racial domination in their theorizing.

I suggest that ethical openness and ethical connections are an integral aspect of feminist philosophy, and that the constitutive structure of privileged subjectivity is one way that predictable patterns of exclusion are recreated. I engage Spivak's analysis of ethics here because for Spivak ethics is marked as a recurring commitment to know the other better. She calls ethics *the experience of the impossible* to capture the irreducibility of the ethical relation to other forms of connection. On Spivak's view, effective feminist philosophy would recognize that one is embedded in simultaneous ethical, social, and political connections. Spivak calls on global thinkers to consider how political struggle and the impossibility of ethical singularity can supplement each other. I argue here that such a supplement will help racially privileged feminist philosophers better negotiate the legacy of white supremacy.

In section 1, I provide an overview of how I am framing the problem of racial privilege in feminist thought. In section 2, I introduce Spivak's project to provide a context for situating my readings of her work. In section 3, I draw on the essay "Righting Wrongs" to articulate how the epistemic assumptions of differing educational contexts are affected by global privilege through *epistemic discontinuity*. Within the context of North-South global dynamics, Spivak uses figures that allow her to mark the production of unintelligibility through cultural exchanges that favor capitalist-Western domination. I suggest that a figure, as she discusses it, is not a specific case or an individual person but a concept-metaphor that can help present a frame for ethical engagement that displaces the tendency to appropriate by the dominant into a new relation. In section 4, I engage with her critique of academic disciplinarity from *Death of a Discipline*, in which she argues that social sciences and humanities should supplement each other. Her idea of *telepoietic reading*, a habit of mind achieved through attention to specificity, can resist the tendency to force texts and people to represent their culture, moving instead into an ethical relation that engages the imagination. Such an ethics, ethics as the experience of the impossible, is less interested in knowledge production than in giving oneself over to being reimagined in a relation with another. I conclude that Spivak's work demonstrates that ethics calls for a reconsideration of the subject who theorizes, suggesting that racially privileged feminists must be able to confront their own

complicity as part of the work of political critique that actively confronts and contests racism.

Section 1

The idea that the category *woman* does not apply to all women equally and that there is therefore a need for explicitly anti-racist feminism has been consistently articulated by women of color throughout the development of feminist thought in the United States. The term “feminist thought” is admittedly broad and clunky; I use it here to refer to US American feminist work that is primarily political, academic, or both, if it has been represented in a text and so can constitute a discursive resource for contemporary feminist philosophy. As is noted by the editors of the *Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, feminist philosophy “originated in feminist politics . . . [and] included from the start discussion of feminist political issues and positions” (Garry, Khader, and Stone 2019, 1). They further note that while the argument that gender cannot be understood apart from other aspects of social identity has been articulated within feminist thought since the nineteenth century, nonetheless “the voices of white, Western feminists, often working in ‘analytic’ or Anglo-American philosophy, have prevailed within” feminist philosophical debates (2019, 1). In this vein, I consider feminist philosophy here to be part of the broader project of feminist thought, and feminist philosophers’ grappling with white privilege should thus be understood as contiguous with the history of women of color’s alienation from US feminisms.³

To illustrate the stakes of this exclusion, consider as a representative example the alienation of Black women from the project of women’s suffrage. This resulted from both the expression of racist attitudes by some key leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the perhaps more insidious willingness of decision-makers in the movement to frame women’s issues in ways that would capitulate to the racist attitudes of desired white supporters (NPR 2011; Fields-White 2011; McDanel 2013; Brown 2018; Staples 2019). Another significant example is the alienation of Black women from the developing field of women’s studies, as

³ I will focus here on race largely though the work by Black US American women as one example of this pattern of exclusion, but to consider this fully one would need to engage the potential of feminist philosophers to better engage racial differences beyond the black–white binary and to address normatively hierarchical differences not reducible to yet interrelated with race, including nationality, gender identity, sexuality, and ability. For a too-brief representation of such work, see Clare (1999); Davis (1983); Jaimes Guerrero (1996); Lugones (2003); Mohanty (2003); Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983); Piepmeier, Cantrell, and Maggio (2014); Smith (1983); and Serano (2007).

addressed in the speeches of Audre Lorde anthologized in her *Sister Outsider*. For instance, in “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” delivered at Amherst College in 1980, Lorde critiqued a tendency by white feminist literary scholars who, she claimed, were capable of teaching Shakespeare and Aristophanes but claimed they could not teach Black US American women’s writing because the experiences described were too “other” and too “alien” (2007, 117). In “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,” delivered at the National Women’s Studies Association in 1981, Lorde criticized barriers that were put in place to exclude poor women and women of color from participating in academic discussions of racism. These barriers included but were not limited to claims that the concerns of Black women are put “too harshly” and also that the existence of expensive registration fees created a fiscal barrier to entry for many nonacademic women, including activists working on the conference theme (Lorde 2007, 125, 126–127).

While I have suggested that feminist philosophy should be understood in the context of feminist thought more broadly, the ways that academic feminist philosophers conceptualize and engage gender is infused by concepts and methods shared with the history of western philosophy more broadly. One significant analytic lens for feminist philosophy has been epistemology, or philosophy of knowledge.⁴ As I will show below, Spivak’s analysis of epistemic discontinuity and ethical singularity can helpfully contribute to the work of scholars who argue that epistemic injustice should be central to thinking the possibilities of interactions across cultural gaps and power imbalances.

Epistemological analysis is useful in considering racism both because it exposes the norms of knowledge production as a way that racial exclusion can be perpetuated and because it offers conceptual tools that describe how the constitution of a normative subjectivity can lead one to disallow the claims of less privileged others.

For instance, Patricia Hill Collins argues that new academic knowledge is typically validated by prioritizing consistency with and acceptance by previous claims made within a field and, perhaps particularly in social sciences, according to positivist epistemic norms that value depersonalized, “objective” knowledge (2008, 253–256). This may alienate the point of view of Black women, as “individuals who wish to rearticulate a Black woman’s standpoint through Black feminist thought can be suppressed by prevailing knowledge validation processes” (Collins 2008, 254). Collins suggests that a Black feminist epistemology would engage alternate validation processes, for example by prioritizing the legitimacy of lived experience

⁴ As briefly representative of this work, see Alcoff (1991), Dotson (2014), Giladi and McMillan (2018), McKinnon (2019), and Ortega (2006).

and a dialogic rather than individualistic approach to the constitution of knowledge (257–262).

Further, one can track the relationship between a kind of subjectivity and the way that one recognizes a claim as valid; alternative epistemologies imply alternative subjectivities. It is because of this that knowledge validation processes that are ostensibly race and gender neutral can in practice engender distrust for the knowledge claims made by Black women and thereby alienate their participation in academic discourses.

In order to resist the relegation of a Black feminist epistemology to the status of an illegitimated other over and against a presumed neutral or objective epistemology, scholars such as Linda Martín Alcoff have argued that all knowledge should be seen as conditioned by the specific point of view of the knower. As Alcoff argues, “Because knowledge cannot be completely disentangled from social location and experience, the pretension to abstraction only conceals the relevant context, disabling a productive dialogue between contexts, which is the only means by which true agreement and understanding might emerge” (2001, 65). As has been identified by both Collins and Alcoff, one way that this occurs is through the coding of subjectivities formed in specific white contexts as neutral subjectivities reflecting objective contexts. This prevents any productive engagement of the impact of racial differences on people’s experiences, points of view, or senses of self. Such epistemological analysis suggests that the constitutive structure of white privileged subjectivities are often closed to epistemological change, and this is one way that predictable patterns of exclusion may be continually recreated over time, even in the face of repeated critiques.⁵ It is because Spivak acknowledges that white US American subjects’ complicity with oppression has an epistemic dimension that her work can be helpful in staging how racial privilege can be better negotiated within feminist philosophy. Spivak demonstrates that because complicity is an inevitable condition for Western subjects who would perform justice work, privileged subjects must allow the self who theorizes to transform in the process of engaging in critical thought. This insight will also serve feminist philosophy.

Section 2

For more than four decades Gayatri Spivak has been working as a critic concerned about the ongoing impact of coloniality and the limitations and injustices of gendered life.⁶ Her work is not easily summed up in ways that are common in

⁵ For other examples that analyze the structure of white privileged subjectivity as a barrier to anti-racist philosophy, see Lugones (2003) and Yancy (2016).

⁶ According to the editors of *The Spivak Reader*, Spivak’s first essay in English, “Shakespeare in Yeats’s ‘Last Poems,’” was published in 1965 (Landry and MacLean

academic contexts, such as by identifying specific disciplines to which she contributes or periods in which she developed particular ideas. This is in part because of Spivak's habit of publicly commenting on and reworking her ideas and texts. Shuttling back and forth as she does between her own texts troubles a teleological or progressive account that would want to point to where an idea began and conclude where it finishes up. In the preface of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Gayatri Spivak addresses the method of her theory by noting, "I am not erudite enough to be interdisciplinary, but I can break rules" (1999a, xiii). Her use of rule-breaking that expands the capacities of intellectual discourses is another reason that it is difficult to account for the impact of Spivak's substantial body of work and interests. Commenting on the difficulties of easily summing up Spivak as a thinker, Sangeeta Ray describes Spivak as "a literary theorist, a postcolonial critic, translator, feminist, Marxist, and deconstructionist" (Ray 2009, 3). Condensed in Ray's list are a number of concerns, influences, and methods that I will here briefly unpack as an overview to her thinking.

First, reading literature has been a persistent and crucial aspect of Spivak's work. As a representative example that is not exhaustive, the chapters of *In Other Worlds* include readings of short stories by the Bengali author Mahasweta Devi, a novel by English author Virginia Woolf, and poetry by the Irish poet W. B. Yeats and Italian poet Dante Alighieri (Spivak 2006). Understanding the work of comparative literature to be "reading closely in the original," Spivak always returns to reading as a task that expands the imagination and enables connection via cultural and linguistic specificity (Spivak 2003, 6). As a postcolonial critic, Spivak sets out to critique postcolonial, not simply colonial, reason.⁷ She analyzes the power dynamics

1995, 331). Her publications in deconstruction began with her translation of and critical introduction to Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, published in 1976 (Derrida 1994).

Spivak herself notes that "French Feminism in an International Frame" [1981], her translation and critical introduction to Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi" [1981], "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" [1985] and "Can the Subaltern Speak?" [1985] "represented the start of a new direction in [her] thinking" (Spivak 2012, ix). This new direction may be, as she puts it, "a turning of Derrida toward politics" (Morris 2010, 227). Each of these moments represents a different way to begin to tell a story about the development of Spivak's project, and these multiple, overlapping origins are appropriate to her work.

⁷ I am not suggesting that Spivak is the only postcolonial thinker to take a critical stance toward postcolonialism from the perspective of thinking through postcoloniality; such a critical position might be one hallmark of responsible theory in general, and in the context of postcolonial theory, as the editors of the "Third

of a world where the Global North and Global South are differentially affected by economics, arguing that this dynamic becomes more clear if one sees “the ‘third world’ as a displacement of the old colonies, as colonialism proper displaces itself into neocolonialism. . . . The post-Soviet situation has moved this narrative into the dynamics of the financialization of the globe” (Spivak 1999a, 3). Thus, while she is undoubtedly a critic of colonialism, she also suggests that postcoloniality is not entirely sufficient for redressing the damaging effects of the global history of conquest.

As a translator, Spivak may be best known for her translations of Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (from French to English) and Mahasweta Devi’s collection of short stories, *Imaginary Maps* (from Bengali to English). Spivak remarks in “Translation as Culture,” that both when translating Devi’s short story “Draupadi” and when translating *Of Grammatology*, she “discovered . . . that translation was the most intimate act of reading” (2012, 251). Her translation work has been impactful both as a resource for English readers and as a critical aspect of her understanding of ethics and culture. This translator’s concern has enabled her to consistently argue that feminist and gender studies must think carefully about culture. Her engagements with Marxism include her careful reading of Marx’s texts as well as critical contributions to the work of the subaltern studies collective, a group of South Asian historians influenced by Marx and Marxian thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci. Spivak practices deconstruction both as a reader of Derrida and as an intrinsic method of how she engages with ideas, with politics, and with texts. As she states, “Persistently to critique a structure that one cannot not (wish to) inhabit is the deconstructive stance” (Spivak 1993, 284). It is because Spivak is a theorist who continually problematizes the theory that grounds her own texts that her analysis of ethics will be helpful here.

Spivak has used a variety of related phrases throughout her career to thematize the ways that ethical and intellectual projects are circumscribed by their inevitable impossibility. What this means, put simply, is that her work consistently reminds any thinker that the hope or goal that drives them to think can never come to be as it is imagined or wanted. As Beverley Best explains, “The formulation of the constitutive aporia—the necessary paradox which structures and makes possible all meaning, knowledge, identity, subjectivity/objectivity—underwrites virtually every moment of Spivak’s work” (1999, 476). Such an idea is present in the above-mentioned deconstructive stance, articulated in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* as the need to enact “a persistent critique of what we cannot not want” (Spivak 1999a,

World and Post-Colonial Issues” special issue of *Social Text* noted, postcolonial thinkers have for a long time been concerned with the “problematic implications” of the terms Third World and postcolonial (McClure and Mufti 1992, 3).

110). This calls a thinker to stage an active relationship to the structures that give one privilege. These structures may include intellectual discourses like philosophy, feminism, literary theory; they also include institutions like universities or nonprofits. In addition, they include concepts like justice, national belonging, or education. The ethical invitation of this stance toward one's own enabling structures is to always unpack one's investments in that which it seems impossible not to be or to want. In this way, one's complicity with that which one critiques is consistently foregrounded.

Framing the essays in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* in the introduction, Spivak engages such a relation of complicity through the idea of a double bind. She develops this through a reading of Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*; it is a way of representing the condition of simultaneously navigating a set of contradictory instructions (Spivak 2012, 4). Examples from the text include the double bind of the private and the public and that of truth and rhetoric (2012, xiii, xv). For Spivak, the legacy of the Enlightenment for education is the instantiation of double binds, and these are particularly significant for the "postcolonial and the metropolitan migrant" (2012, 4). Including herself in this group, Spivak writes, "We want the public sphere gains and private sphere constraints of the Enlightenment; yet we must also find something relating to 'our own history' to counteract the fact that the Enlightenment came, to colonizer and colonized alike, through colonialism, to support a destructive 'free trade,' and that top-down policy breaches of Enlightenment principles are more rule than exception" (2012, 4). The legacy of western enlightenment culture interacting with other cultures inaugurated a historical plethora of contradictory impulses for people with a foot in each.

Addressing the role of higher-education humanities teaching in the context of globalization, Spivak expresses concern that the need to secure funding and support for humanities work entices scholars to articulate or believe that they can "resolve double binds by playing them" (2012, 1). One must resist that temptation in order to be able to *learn* the double bind, to effectively engage one's imagination to rework one's epistemological assumptions and find new ways of negotiating conflicting impulses. For that reason, in my argument below, I focus on two texts in which Spivak thinks ethics in terms of pedagogically and institutionally mediated possibilities, focusing primarily on the texts *Death of a Discipline* and the essay "Righting Wrongs." The argument of "Righting Wrongs" was first delivered as a speech at Oxford University in an Amnesty International lecture series, "Human Rights and Human Wrongs," in 2001. Spivak's goal was to present a reading of human rights culture and to argue that education can help to dismantle the tendency of human rights work to function according to the dictates of Global North cultural logics. *Death of a Discipline* argues that comparative literature should

“collaborate with and transform Area Studies” (Spivak 2003, 19), and in that text she addresses the potential of education to contribute to social justice. Spivak comments in the later “Nationalism and the Imagination” that *Death of a Discipline* is an “elegy to Comparative Literature” (2012, 300), and in her introduction to *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, she suggests that this text is “too hopeful” (2012, 26).⁸ My engagement with these texts below should thus be considered in the context of Spivak’s caution against the optimistic notion that one can solve injustice; that would be to make the mistake of acting as if one can resolve a double bind. Instead, in what follows, I engage these two texts to consider a notion of ethical singularity that poses structural questions of power in order to critique the social, political, and economic influences that condition the possibility of hearing another as a singular ethical voice. By opening up possible ways of reimagining ourselves along with an engagement with others, Spivak expands the possibility of intimacy appearing as a weight that could bear on the deep privileges of a world conditioned by social injustice, even if those injustices cannot be overcome.

Section 3

In this section I describe the role of *epistemic discontinuity* in Spivak’s thinking, primarily as it is treated in the essay “Righting Wrongs” but also drawing on *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* and “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Her analysis of the differences in epistemological norms between Global North and Global South subjects demonstrates why critique of global injustice requires ethical engagement: a rethinking of the self and one’s relation to power is necessary to effective justice work. She summarizes the general concern of her argument when she reflects,

I have been suggesting, then, that “human rights culture” runs on unremitting Northern-ideological pressure, even when it is from the South; that there is a real epistemic discontinuity between the Southern human rights advocates and those whom they protect. In order to shift this layered discontinuity, however slightly, we must focus on the quality and end of education, at both ends. (Spivak 2004, 527)

The title of her essay thus refers to a global dynamic she is trying to unpack: the political and economic relationship between those who are “always right” and those who are “perennially wronged” (2004, 527). The notion of epistemic discontinuity encompasses differences in culturally sanctioned ways of making meaning: common approaches to speaking, recognizing the truth, and structuring arguments. These breaks between epistemic expectations precede any interaction between globally

⁸ Spivak comments on the essay “Righting Wrongs” in *Readings* (2014, 80–98).

privileged and globally disadvantaged subjects; they are not power-neutral and are conditioned by economics and politics as well as language and tradition. To address what she sees as the epistemic particularities of these two cultural approaches to meaning-making, Spivak refers to two ends, two sides, above and below, the Global South and the Global North. These juxtapositions gesture to the two epistemic spheres she is concerned with bridging in the piece, and they are not simply reducible to geographic location. Spivak asserts that what she names “Northern-ideological pressure” can come just as readily from those native to former colonial contexts as from the West. Moreover, Spivak does not intend “from below” to indicate a lower level on a hierarchy but instead intends to invoke a sense that using something from “below” is a use that is also a subversion of that thing (2012, 3–4).

In this argument Spivak draws heavily on her own experiences as an educator, on the one hand as a professor at Columbia University in New York, and on the other hand as a teacher and a teacher trainer within rural communities in West Bengal, India. The way that she figures these experiences illustrates for the reader how to link a cultural episteme to a generalizable approach while acknowledging the mediated and limited possibilities for education in each context. While Spivak draws on large glosses for heterogenous populations, on my reading this should not then be taken as an assertion that either the Global North or the Global South can be characterized or summed up according to only one logic. Rather, Spivak uses such characterizations as a method for critique that operates by condensing a dominant logic into a *figure* or a *concept-metaphor* that can be interrogated. Unpacking an epistemic assumption requires expressly engaging with the ways that intelligibility and unintelligibility are produced through cultural exchange. This is often marked by Spivak in trying to imagine what escapes or drops out of an attempt to think about the significance of global dynamics from some particular vantage point.

Identifying these tropes so they can be critiqued engenders a place from which critique of the differential distribution of power across cultural epistemes can be waged. This has been a concern of Spivak’s at least since the publication of her widely read “Can the Subaltern Speak?” That essay is organized around a concern for how representation is affected by a global capitalist economy and makes at least two important interventions into the interrelation of subjectivity, epistemology, and power. First, Spivak’s reading argues that the representation of the suicide of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri and the practice of Sati usually do not reflect a concern with the “subaltern woman’s consciousness” (1988, 295). Second, she demonstrates that self-proclaimed radical Western intellectuals’ active disavowal of their own complicity in hegemony recodifies the model of universal subjectivity they ostensibly work against (Spivak 1988, esp. 271–284). Similarly, her treatment of the figure of the native informant in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* argues that an opaque

ambivalence is drawn on when Western academic disciplines invoke figures of Global South cultures. In anthropology or ethnography, the term *native informant* had traditionally described a human subject of a study who provides “insider” information for the academic to use in generating theories about the indigenous culture being studied. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak rethinks the position of the native informant as not one who provides information, but one who is “a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe” (1999a, 6). Spivak uses this method of figuration to demonstrate the tendencies of such a Western imaginary. The native informant as figure is not an ethical *other* so much as a reflective surface that can be made to represent an idea projected by the agent of a dominant culture. Encapsulated in a figure such as the subaltern or the native informant, or in a concept metaphor such as human rights, is a power dynamic that can function coercively if left unspoken and unchecked.

On my argument, critically unpacking this tendency of privileged subjects to reduce the experiences of nonwhite people is needed more broadly within US American feminist projects. The figure in the position of the native informant or subaltern is not seen to be psychically complex in a way that would warrant any extra work or undue attention. One way to personify Spivak’s concern is to think of the native informant analogously to the person-of-color sidekick in a Hollywood romantic comedy or television sitcom: her backstory is so familiar because of dominant cultural scripts that it can be recollected by a few choice gestures or phrases. Meanwhile, her story is incidental to the plot, which is focused on the (usually romantic) destiny of the white protagonist. Spivak uses the figure of the native informant to structure a critical argument about the status of Western canonic thinking by tracking its appearance in two separate contexts. According to Spivak’s reading of Kant, Hegel and Marx, within the context of the “great texts” of Western disciplinary humanities, the position of the native informant is an “unacknowledgeable moment” that is “crucially needed” yet “foreclosed” (1999a, 4). On her reading, what these philosophers have in common is that in the course of making now-canonical philosophical arguments about freedom, they appeal to the native informant as an example of a negative or failed position that nonetheless has demonstrative, argumentative validity. However, the disruptive potential of engaging “the poorest *woman* of the South” as an ethical subject who could contest the universalizing hegemony in much of Western philosophical texts is structurally precluded. She writes, “I think of the ‘native informant’ as a name for that mark of expulsion from the name of Man—a mark crossing out the impossibility of the ethical relation” (Spivak 1999a, 6). In that sense, the idea that the native informant *could* appear is invoked as a kind of promise; the promise that universal Western culture will spread, that eventually all people will be included in a world history, or

an enlightened cosmopolitanism, or an egalitarian communist order. Yet this promise is disingenuous, for in the act of projecting a cultural identity onto the Third-World other, the possibility of an ethical engagement is obviated; on my analogy from above, the perpetual sidekick does not get to tell her own story. Unlearning the practice of *figuring* global others and therefore precluding ethical experience is necessary for staring to navigate the complicity of Global North justice seekers.

Spivak clearly articulates the elision of cultural difference in North–South interactions. What needs to be discussed are the mechanisms in Spivak’s work for moving this into a productive reworking of privileged Western complicity. In order to develop this further, I turn to her analysis of human rights. In “Righting Wrongs,” the concept of human rights is introduced as an example that bears the legacy of the epistemic discontinuities between the Global North and Global South. Spivak’s critical assessment of this idea helps clarify the stakes of these power-infused cultural differences. There are two kinds of diagnosis that Spivak brings to the idea of human rights: human rights as *alibi* and human rights as *enabling violation*. Regarding human rights as alibi she writes, “The idea of human rights . . . may carry within itself the agenda of a kind of social Darwinism—the fittest must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit” (Spivak 2004, 524). The idea of the alibi is one that Spivak employs to indicate when an idea or concept appears to be doing some good, while this “goodness” actually obscures a power dynamic and protects its beneficiaries. Spivak invokes the idea of the alibi when she wants to name a psychological disposition toward an ideological power dynamic. The functioning of this alibi can be unconscious, conscious, or some combination of the two. Her historical example of this is the mantle of the “white man’s burden” under which the British Empire “civilized and developed” its colonies, functioning as an alibi for “economic, military and political intervention” (Spivak 2004, 524). On this model, cultural relativism can be an alibi for what is actually cultural chauvinism, serving as a superficially moral reason to remake the world in the image of Western norms.⁹ Similarly, human rights can function as an alibi when the interventions made in the name of rights, for example aid projects, perpetuate rather than ameliorate the economic dependence of the South. Spivak thus aligns human rights with a kind of disaster politics, in which “democratization” becomes a code word for turning a

⁹ This power dynamic is at stake in Spivak’s critique that colonialism entails “White men are saving brown women from brown men” (1988, 296). The assertion of such an alibi remains a global tactic; Puar and Rai (2002, 127–130), for instance, argue that professed care for the female “victims” of the Taliban served both to garner justification for the US war in Iraq and as a prop for uncritical Western liberal feminists to set themselves up as saviors.

Third World nation into a “tributary economy” for the West (2004, 543). In such an instance, the human rights intervention works as an *alibi* for the perpetuation of the economic superiority of the North.

On the other hand, human rights can also function as an *enabling violation*. In order to articulate this, Spivak has to work through the concern that rights discourse as such, particularly the twenty-first century idea of human rights that permeates the globe, has an inherent Eurocentric bias. Regarding this, she writes, “I am of course troubled by the use of human rights as an alibi for interventions of various sorts. But its so-called European provenance is for me in the same category as the ‘enabling violation’ of the production of the colonial subject. One cannot write off the righting of wrongs. The enablement must be used even as the violation is renegotiated” (Spivak 2004, 524). Understanding how to use an already-compromised agency is difficult. Further, it is possible that rights are not the best framework to use to address justice, and that other, better frames will be developed. Spivak’s analysis takes place in the meantime, in an urgent present in which the problems of violence and injustice continue and a confrontation of Global North hubris is urgently necessary. By way of an already compromised position is the only way for privileged subjects to work toward justice at all; this is what it means to recognize rights as an enabling violation.

For Spivak, an *enabling violation* engenders possibilities and kinds of agencies *while* it simultaneously overwrites other kinds of agency and perpetrates injustices or oppressions. It is not a pure or unproblematic position to occupy, but it is a productive one. It tries to encompass the certainty that there may be a wrong that needs righting, and yet the process of righting that wrong must remain accountable for the changes it tries to enact and for the possible violence of its own methods. Using the historical example of the production of the colonial subject exposes the difficulties and the stakes of Spivak’s attempt to resituate human rights as an enabling violation. She argues, “Colonialism was committed to the education of a certain class. It was interested in the seemingly permanent operation of an altered normality,” one which intends a “self-empowerment” that Spivak sees as “paradoxically” lacking in much of the work in contemporary human rights and development, be it undertaken by Northern activists or Southern middle-class descendants of the old colonial subjects (2004, 524). Spivak sees in colonialism’s self-interested dedication to the education of a class in colonial India a commitment in terms of time, effort, and patience, as well as an ostensible interest in agency that should be present in much contemporary aid work. This is not meant to defend colonial domination but instead to disrupt a too-easy sense of historical progress. This uncomfortable reading of an aspect of coloniality can productively discomfort a Global North reader who thinks of themselves as beyond colonial power dynamics. On this view, human rights could function as enabling violations to the extent that aid

work participates in an alteration of the social world, prioritizing a notion of self-empowerment as articulated by the community being served by that aid work, and remaining committed to the persistent critique of the desire for rights.

“Can the Subaltern Speak?,” *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, and “Righting Wrongs” each seek to mark, through a figure or a concept, the nonoccurrence of an engagement with a different cultural episteme in terms of its logics, meanings, values. The critical analysis of these figures articulates a problematic power dynamic, which raises the question of how one can minimize the reflexive epistemic orientation of privileged white/Western subjects. This requires not only analyses which are situated in the larger context of global resource distribution and a historicized account of the sedimentation of cultural differences, but also a specific notion of ethical experience. In what follows, I suggest that, for Spivak, a relation of dominance could shift into one of ethical engagement only on the condition that dominant cultural subjects allow themselves to be rewritten in the process of an ethical exchange. The engagement with ethics I address below does not offer proscriptions for good behavior or proper ethical principles. Rather, on this analysis, “To attend to the unleashing of the ethical gives no guarantee that it will produce a ‘good’ result—just that it will bring in a relation, perhaps” (Spivak 2004, 568). I address how to understand bringing about a new relation as an ethical task in the following section.

Section 4

Here, I think through the relation between ethical and political analysis in terms of Spivak’s account of singularity and ethics as an “experience of the impossible.” For Spivak, ethics must always begin with the specific, and her model is one of a relation between two people. However, it is by beginning with such specificity that the relationship between the generalizable and the singular is opened up in her work, and this dynamic is relevant to political critique. She expresses this through the idea of *teleopoiesis*, a mode of reading a text that calls for simultaneous attention to the singular and the general. That is, Spivak’s account of singularity has both a textual and an experiential component. It is on this model of singularity that an ethical concern can be made to supplement a more generalizable claim in the service of something like justice.¹⁰ In the preface of *A Critique of*

¹⁰ Spivak considers the idea that one must negotiate a structure like justice at the same time that one is dismantling and recreating it, that one inhabits the space one is problematizing, as a deconstructive idea. She notes, “We would rather not construct the best possible theory, but acknowledge that practice always splits open the theoretical justification” (Spivak 2004, 531). Spivak has clearly been influenced by Derrida’s way of relating ethics to politics; ethics as the experience of the

Postcolonial Reason, Spivak cautions against presenting “the ethics of alterity as a politics of identity” (1999a, x). The politics of identity with which she is concerned would flatten out heterogeneity in the service of collecting data, reinscribing the dominance of the Global North; it would serve as an alibi for the urban postcolonial migrant to speak in the name of “The Third World.” An ethics of alterity, on the other hand, would not jettison identity as a political concern. However, such an ethics would not presume that the representation of another in their identity is anything but a reductive representation, a flat bit of knowledge that does not sufficiently account for the ethical experience of interacting with another. For Spivak, such an encounter is a singular experience, one that should continually bear on any generalized political claim.

Spivak’s work suggests that to disrupt the tendency toward hubris by dominant subjects, politics must be supplemented by ethics, and for Spivak, specificity is the means of this supplementation. This sustained and careful commitment to think specificity allows for the cultivation of habits and orientations that can inculcate disruptive, critical engagements that work toward something like justice. Such habits are modeled in the methodology of the “Collectivities” and “Planetarities” sections of *Death of a Discipline*.¹¹ Spivak turns to close reading of literature, theoretical texts, and popular political writings in order to develop a technique of accounting for singularity that opens up onto a general field. Engaging the singular and general is opposed to trying to develop a universal account that can also be deployed to illuminate a specific case. By beginning with the more specific side of the duality, Spivak shifts the focus onto the moment of particularity. By replacing the particular with the singular, she shifts the dynamic being explored away from a classic mode of representation toward one of a relation that must be continually renegotiated.

This deployment of ethical specificity is developed as a practice of close reading but is linked in her thinking with global and social justice. For instance, Spivak’s goal in the second chapter of *Death of a Discipline* is to investigate how

impossible and ethics of alterity are both also deconstructive ideas. For these reasons, concrete qualifications of this idea of justice are rare in Spivak’s work. However, if justice is unqualified, there is nonetheless great attention to specificity and context in Spivak’s work, and she distinguishes her own approach from Derrida’s by suggesting her analysis can think the specificity of classed and raced determination across genders in a way that his does not (Spivak 1993, 308). For a more extensive treatments of Derrida’s influence on Spivak, see Morton (2007, 70–95).

¹¹ Similar arguments are made in both “Righting Wrongs” and *Imperatives to Re-imagine the Planet*.

reading literature can feed the “formation of collectivities,” an attempt to think on an inclusive level that must be labeled the “general” without capitulating to a logic of difference that appropriates, rather than engages with, the nondominant (2003, 26). Spivak calls for supplementary interdisciplinary work that could get closer to the singularity expressed in texts, arguing that comparative literature should recognize that “the proper study of literature may give us entry to the performativity of cultures as instantiated in narrative” (2003, 13). In this way, transcultural literature could grant the reader a mediated and incomplete experience of the active lives of cultural others—a first glimpse, perhaps, of the potential work of an ethical mindset. As she goes on to note, when picking up a work of literature produced from within a culture that is not one’s own, one is outside of the cultural context of that narrative. Nonetheless, for Spivak there is an ethical call from the work, a call for the reader to resist adopting a reductive objectifying stance, in which another—be they a character, or the authorial voice of an essay, or the bearer of a statistic—becomes a representation of culture.

An objectifying gaze that looks only for flat representations of lived lives is juxtaposed in this analysis to the work of the imagination. As Spivak elaborates,

This is preparation for a patient and provisional and forever deferred arrival into the performative of the other, in order not to transcode but to draw a response. Believe me, there is a world of difference between the two positions. In order to reclaim the role of teaching literature as training the imagination—the great inbuilt instrument of othering—we may, if we work as hard as old-fashioned Comp. Lit. is known to be capable of doing, come close to the irreducible work of translation, not from language to language but from bodily to ethical semiosis, the incessant shuffle that is a “life.” (2003, 13)

By invoking semiosis, the process of generating signs, she highlights the activity of meaning-making that attends such an inter-cultural engagement. The transcoding of a cultural representation is aligned with a representational way of relating to a text, one that shares the problem of the figure of the native informant I discussed earlier. It invokes a reductive and stagnant identity of another, one easily interpreted in terms of a preestablished hermeneutic. Resisting the search for identity claims about another’s culture in favor of experiencing the way another is presented as one aspect of the performance of a multifaceted culture, captured in a textual moment that does not stand for a larger claim “about” that different life, requires activity of quite a different nature. This activity of reading entails the participation of one’s imagination as a way to shift from engagement in terms of universality and particularity toward attending to a developing sense of the general and the singular.

It also requires that as one engages with a text or with another, one also engages and challenges one's own sense of self and point of view. Spivak elucidates what this work of the imagination would involve when she distinguishes between "learning *about* cultures" and the work of "imagining yourself, really letting yourself be imagined (experience that impossibility) without guarantees, by and in another culture, perhaps. Teleopoiesis" (2003, 52). If poiesis is an "imaginative making" (Spivak 1999b, 76), then teleopoiesis is an imaginative making across distances, but not one in which the reader tries to grasp the *meaning* of the distant text.¹² Instead, it is one in which a reader tries to frame a textual encounter as an ethical encounter and one is called, to use Judith Butler's (2005) phrase, to give an account of oneself.

To further clarify the claim that "ethics is the experience of the impossible" (Spivak 1995, xxv), I turn now to how Spivak connects this account of reading the singular to social and political concerns. This is crucial for how she is able to take an intimate structure and make it relevant for considering the stakes of institutional and global issues of justice. Spivak addresses ethical singularity quite directly in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. She is concerned with the possibility of movements that work toward "an ecologically just world," and wants to consider what supplements are needed to keep collective efforts from reproducing the power relations they fight against (Spivak 1999a, 382). To this end, she writes,

We all know that when we engage profoundly with *one* person, the responses—the answers—come from both sides. Let us call this responsibility, as well as "answer"ability or accountability. We also know, and if we don't we have been unfortunate, that in such engagements, we want to reveal and reveal, conceal nothing. Yet on both sides, there is always a sense that something has not got across. . . . Ethical singularity is approached when responses flow from both sides. Otherwise, the idea, that if the person I am doing good to resembles me and has my rights, he or she will be better off,

¹² Spivak developed her use of teleopoiesis from a reading of Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*; Derrida develops it through a reading of the temporal logic of Nietzsche's discussion of the philosophers to come in *Beyond Good and Evil* (Derrida 2006, 29–38). Derrida writes "*Teleiopoieós* qualifies, in a great number of contexts and semantic orders, that which *renders* absolute, perfect, completed, accomplished, finished, that which *brings* to an end" (1994, 32). As Corinne Scheiner explains, Derrida plays with two different prefixes, "*teleio* (bringing to an end or completion)" and "*tele* (far)" to give both a temporal and spatial sense to his idea. In addition, "*teleiopoiesis* accounts for the more metaphoric distance of alterity...the negotiation of these distances, their mediation, is the movement of *teleiopoiesis*" (Scheiner 2005, 240).

does not begin to disclose-efface the (im)possible ethical relation. (Nor of course does an attitude of unqualified admiration for the person as an example of his or her culture.)¹³ (1999a, 384)

Here, Spivak invites the reader to reflect on their own experiences of intimate exchanges with another. She uses the rhetorical tactic of gesturing to an experience “we all know.” Since the question of human experience, of the meaning and nature of being human, is continually being reopened in her work, I suggest that she is not trying to name a universal experience so much as open a space that can be filled by the experiences that come to mind. For example, when I read this passage my thoughts go to times when I have made a new friend. Perhaps it happens in an unexpected place—a meeting that was otherwise dull, a party one was obligated to attend. Something shifts, and a singular person pops out of the backdrop as someone I want to know well, not just be familiar with. I am curious about their family, background, home. What they like to eat, their take on the TV and books I like. All of a sudden I do not want to animate my public, polite, socializing self; I want to animate a more personal version of myself for this other person, to have them see my sense of humor, my politics, my tastes.¹⁴ We are in what Spivak calls a space of responding, of “answerability,” when caught up in a kind of feedback loop of discourse that nourishes itself. When one of us speaks, the other feels energized and wants to reply. This new friend is now someone I am connected to; I feel bound to their experiences in some way. This can be a joyful connection and it can be painful, but either way, it is *vibrant*. For some, this intimacy might take the shape of discussing their erotic lives, or their experiences with oppressions. For others, those topics are uninteresting, but they might care deeply about how to understand sacred texts. Or they might care to recall how important sports were to their childhoods, to speak of the environments in which they are most at home, or to share how the loss of a child has changed their life. Whatever the particulars, Spivak suggests that what is unique about this experience is that in wanting to connect, one not only wants to understand and be understood, one also knows that this is impossible in any unconditioned sense.

¹³ A version of this same passage appears earlier in the translator’s preface to *Imaginary Maps* (Spivak 1995, xxv).

¹⁴ I take the language of animate from María Lugones (1987, 10). Lugones’s idea of the self suggests that although a person always experiences themselves in the first person, they do not experience an underlying, true self. Rather, various external and internal conditions allow one to *animate* different selves as one travels through worlds.

Through such an experience with a new interlocutor, one does not require that the other share one's experiences so much as one wants to think and feel one's experiences anew through this engagement, and to come to understand theirs. However, it is in really trying to understand that the limits of understanding reveal themselves most forcefully. No matter what it is about this person that drew me to them, whatever our connection, we are not the same. Each of our histories, contexts, personal reflections, fears, and hopes are discrete from each other's, and there is no possibility for true transparency, for one-to-one translation from my life into the mind of another. The desire is there, to express one's own perspective, to grasp the perspective of another, yet it is always somewhat frustrated. It is only by truly negotiating these differences that something like intimacy can develop. The moment I describe above is not the intimacy of a deep relationship. It is, however, an intimate and singular moment.

Spivak's model for conceiving of ethical singularity is thus an engagement between two people, a dynamic interaction of sharing and becoming familiar that *regrets* what one can never know or understand about the other and about the self. Spivak suggests this comportment can trouble, at least for a time, tropes of dominance. When that other person is allowed to "represent" something, to be a particular instance of "a person like that"—a person in a wheelchair, a person of color, a liberal or conservative person—the disingenuous impression that there is no more to the story precludes ethical interrelation and the integration of ethical analysis into political critique. Training in reading, however, invokes the general from the position of the singular in the mode of an ethical teleopoiesis whose *comportment* is akin to the ethical engagement I describe above. Singularity, on this analysis, breaks the tendency toward universalization common to theories that come out of Western traditions. As she notes in "Righting Wrongs," "...although I generalize, my example remains the singular. On the practical calculus, the problem of the singular and the universal is confronted by learning from the singularity of the singular, a way to the imagination of the public sphere, that rational representation of the universal" (Spivak 2004, 542). What is at stake then is a way to reimagine the terrain of public discourse such that ethical singularity weighs on any demand for universal justice.

Spivak's discussion of transnational feminisms in *Death of a Discipline* is particularly relevant for my analysis of US American feminism. There she offers a reading of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* to demonstrate her concerns about universalization and the possibility of an unstable general account orienting a more ethical global critique. In order for a feminist project to not superimpose a preestablished idea of "woman" as the subject of feminism, the question of in the name of whom feminism works must be continually posed. The generalizable, not the universal, captures the movement of "poiesis trembling into the task of

teleopoiesis,” an active making of meaning that turns back onto the self as part of an ethical engagement (Spivak 2003, 43). In an ethical relation in which one gives in to a teleopoietic reading with another, the inability of two people to fully understand each other raises the question of how understanding oneself differently might bring the two closer. In the context of human rights work or feminist political critique, the impossibility of justice implies that one become ethically invested in remaking oneself along with the work of critiquing the world.

Conclusion

If feminist philosophers engage Spivak’s sense of ethical openness, I suggest that the complicity with structures of white supremacy that white feminists inevitably must negotiate can be negotiated more productively. The notion of ethical openness I explore here will not solve the problem of racist exclusion. However, I suggest that ethical openness is a subjective mechanism that people privileged by white supremacy can utilize in order to better hold themselves accountable to the ongoing need to work for inclusive theories. Spivak’s work demonstrates that occupying the position of privilege actively, with self-awareness, is a constitutive element in the work of critiquing and reworking systems of privilege. Such an intervention is necessary given that mainstream academic projects have struggled to rework the premises and methods of feminist philosophy such that the experiences and needs of less privileged people could be more meaningfully engaged. Scholars of race, of disability, of sexuality, or class; scholars who engage gender in ways that press beyond the question of women; and nonacademics who have an existential stake in the questions academics pursue have repeatedly done the work to demonstrate the tendency of mainstream feminism to act in the name of privileged women. Perhaps ironically, the work produced to critique these exclusions often helps feminist theory remain relevant both as an academic discipline and a cultural project, since some of this critical work, such as that of Audre Lorde, has been absorbed into the mainstream feminist canon. And yet, it seems that each new wave or stage in feminist movements in the United States has settled back into the pattern of refocusing the experiences of privileged women, specifically white US American women. Given the enormous debt that all feminist philosophy owes to foundational texts—including, but certainly not limited to, accounts of Sojourner Truth’s (1998) argument for women’s rights to include racial justice in the speech called “Ar’n’t I a Woman?,” the revolutionary political program rooted in complex political identity introduced by the “Combahee River Collective Statement” (Combahee River Collective 1983), and the indelible impact on the theorization of intersectional systems of power laid out in Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1991) “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of

Color”—it is well past time to heed the call made by bell hooks (2000), among others, to centralize the margins of feminist theory.

I have not intended to argue that political critique requires the intimacy of friendship or that political relations should be built on the model of ethical relations. It is specifically the reconsideration of subjectivity and complicity implied by Spivak’s work that I argue will benefit feminist philosophy. Feminists whose senses of self remain unchanged through the process of engaging political critique will remain unable to follow through with the work of social justice. It is easy for dominant power interests to co-opt and redirect the work of critical movements. It is also easy for individuals who set out to engage justice work to decide that an easier path to an easier victory is the strategic, expedient move, especially if they are benefitted. It can be easy to decide that other people can wait longer. Feminist history in the United States teaches us that this error is unfortunately likely for racially privileged white feminists, given that complicity with oppressive structures is the place from which white US American feminists begin.

To mitigate the impacts of such complicity, I suggest that feminist philosophy seek methods for reworking privileged subjectivity. In this paper, I engaged Spivak’s work as one approach to beginning this project. In order to shift common North–South relations into the ethical, Spivak advocates attending to singularity. This might require charting the connections between academic living and working in institutional contexts and the self-conscious voice of a scholar producing an academic text. The method of teleopoietic reading that Spivak presents maintains a relationship between the singular and the general that does not require the subsumption of the particular to the universal. Taking on the task of such engagement requires active work on oneself to cultivate openness to surprise both as a producer of theory and in one’s engagement with others; attending to epistemic discontinuities is a way to begin such self-work. As I have argued here, feminist political philosophy is better served when a theorist actively engages with the institutionally mediated conditions of their work as an ethical task. Such a critique must be persistent, since there will never be a fully just argument, or institution, or nation, or world. Critical philosophy, concerned with complicity and ethically engaged, should continually reopen the terms upon which the question of justice is pursued.

References

- Alcoff, Linda Martín. 1991. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique*, no. 20, 5–32. doi:10.2307/1354221.
- . 2001. "On Judging Epistemic Credibility: Is Social Identity Relevant?" In *Engendering Rationalities*, edited by Nancy Tuana and Sandra Morgen, 53–80. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Best, Beverley. 1999. "Postcolonialism and the Deconstructive Scenario: Representing Gayatri Spivak." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 17:475–494. doi:10.1068/d170475.
- Brown, Tammy L. 2018. "Celebrate Women's Suffrage, but Don't Whitewash the Movement's Racism." American Civil Liberties Union, August 24. <https://www.aclu.org/blog/womens-rights/celebrate-womens-suffrage-dont-whitewash-movements-racism>.
- Butler, Judith P. 2005. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Clare, Eli. 1999. *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*. Third Impression edition. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2008. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.
- Combahee River Collective. 1983. "The Combahee River Collective Statement." In *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, edited by Barbara Smith, 264–274. New York: Kitchen Table–Women of Color Press.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–1299. doi:10.2307/1229039.
- Davis, Angela Y. 1983. *Women, Race & Class*. 1st Vintage Books edition. New York: Vintage.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Motilal Banarsidass.
- . 2006. *The Politics of Friendship*. Translated by George Collins. London: Verso.
- Dotson, Kristie. 2014. "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression." *Social Epistemology* 28 (2): 115–138. doi:10.1080/02691728.2013.782585.
- Fields-White, Monee. 2011. "The Root: How Racism Tainted Women's Suffrage." NPR.org, March 25 <https://www.npr.org/2011/03/25/134849480/the-root-how-racism-tainted-womens-suffrage>.
- Garry, Ann, Serene J. Khader, and Alison Stone. 2019. Introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader, and Alison Stone, 1–10. New York: Routledge.
- Giladi, Paul, and Nicola McMillan. 2018. "Introduction: Epistemic Injustice and Recognition Theory." *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 4 (4). doi:10.5206/fpq

- /2018.4.6227.
- hooks, bell. 2000. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. 2nd edition. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Jaimes Guerrero, Marie Anna. 1996. "Civil Rights versus Sovereignty: Native American Women in Life and Land Struggles." In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, edited by M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 101–121. New York: Routledge.
- Landry, Donna, and Gerald MacLean, eds. 1995. *The Spivak Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Lorde, Audre. 2007. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Reprint edition. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.
- Lugones, María. 1987. "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception." *Hypatia* 2 (2): 3–19. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.1987.tb01062.x.
- . 2003. *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- McClure, John, and Aamir Mufti. 1992. "Introduction: Third World and Post-Colonial Issues." *Social Text*, no. 31/32, 3–7. jstor.org/stable/466215.
- McDaneld, Jen. 2013. "White Suffragist Dis/Entitlement: The *Revolution* and the Rhetoric of Racism." *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 30 (2): 243–264. doi:10.5250/legacy.30.2.0243.
- McKinnon, Rachel. 2019. "Allies Behaving Badly: Gaslighting as Epistemic Injustice." In *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, edited by Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr., 167–174. New York: Routledge.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. 1983. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. 2nd edition. New York: Kitchen Table–Women of Color Press.
- Morris, Rosalind C., ed. 2010. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Morton, Stephen. 2007. *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Polity.
- NPR (National Public Radio). 2011. "For Stanton, All Women Were Not Created Equal." Highlights of interview of Lori Ginzberg, by Steve Inskeep for *Morning Edition*. NPR, July 13. <https://www.npr.org/2011/07/13/137681070/for-stanton-all-women-were-not-created-equal>.
- Ortega, Mariana. 2006. "Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color." *Hypatia* 21 (August): 56–74. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2006.tb01113.x.

- Piepmeyer, Alison, Amber Cantrell, and Ashley Maggio. 2014. "Disability Is a Feminist Issue: Bringing Together Women's and Gender Studies and Disability Studies." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 34 (2). doi:10.18061/dsq.v34i2.4252.
- Puar, Jasbir K., and Amit S. Rai. 2002. "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots." *Social Text* 20 (3 [72]): 117–148. doi:10.1215/01642472-20-3_72-117.
- Ray, Sangeeta. 2009. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: In Other Words*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Scheiner, Corinne. 2005. "Teleiopoiesis, Telepoesis, and the Practice of Comparative Literature." *Comparative Literature* 57 (3): 239–245. jstor.org/stable/4122311.
- Serano, Julia. 2007. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press.
- Smith, Barbara, ed. 1983. *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. New York: Kitchen Table—Women of Color Press.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, reprint edition, 271–313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- . 1993. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1995. Translator's preface to *Imaginary Maps*, by Mahasweta Devi, translated by Gayatri Spivak, xxiii–xxix. New York: Routledge.
- . 1999a. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 1999b. *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet (Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten)*. Translated by Willi Goetschel. Vienna: Passagen Verlag.
- . 2003. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2004. "Righting Wrongs." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103 (2–3): 523–581. doi:10.1215/00382876-103-2-3-523.
- . 2006. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Routledge Classics edition. New York: Routledge.
- . 2012. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 2014. *Readings*. With a foreword by Lara Choksey. Calcutta: Seagull Books.
- Staples, Brent. 2019. "When the Suffrage Movement Sold Out to White Supremacy." *New York Times*, February 8, sec. Opinion. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/02/opinion/sunday/women-voting-19th-amendment-white-supremacy.html>
- Truth, Sojourner. 1998. "Ar'n't I a Woman?" In *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787–1900*, edited by Philip Sheldon Foner and Robert J. Branham,

226–229. *Studies in Rhetoric and Communication*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Yancy, George, ed. 2016. *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-racism: How Does It Feel to Be a White Problem?* Reprint edition. London: Lexington Books.

JANA McAULIFFE is an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, specializing in social-political philosophy and critical philosophies of gender, race, and class. Her current research is focused on everyday politics as exemplified in taste, including “A Taste for the Political” in *Rejoinder* and “She’s Making Profit Now: Neoliberalism, Ethics, and Feminist Critique” in *philoSOPHIA*.