

Telling History from Women's Standpoints: A Proposal for Teaching Philosophy through a Gender Perspective *

[English version]

Contar las historias desde las mujeres: apuesta para
enseñar la filosofía con perspectiva de género

Contar as histórias a partir das mulheres: Uma aposta
para ensinar filosofia com perspectiva de gênero

Received on 21/04/2025. Accepted on 19/08/2025

› How to cite:

Arbeláez, D. C. & Lince-Salazar,
S. M. (2026). Telling History from
Women's Standpoints: A Proposal
for Teaching Philosophy through a
Gender Perspective.
Ánfora, 33(61), 105-125.
<https://doi.org/10.30854/anf.1239>
Universidad Autónoma de
Manizales. L-ISSN 0121-6538.
E-ISSN 2248-6941.
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* This article is one of the outcomes of the research project, *The Other Canon of Philosophy: Reconstructing the History of Philosophy Produced by Women*, registered with the Vice-Rector's Office for Research and Graduate Studies at the *Universidad de Caldas* under code PRY-44. Its development was made possible by the work of the entire research team. We would especially like to acknowledge the faculty members of the Department of Philosophy and the other members of *Las Hijas de Lilith*, who participated in the project and contributed in different ways. The authors are also particularly grateful to the schools that, during the first stage of the research, allowed the revision of their philosophy curricula. Finally, the authors thank the students in the *Las Hijas de Lilith Research Seedbed*, who contributed to the collection and tabulation of the information provided by the schools and later analyzed in this article. Funding: Vice-Rector's Office of Research and Graduate Studies, Universidad de Caldas. Declaration of interests: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Note: English translations of quotations and cited passages originally published in Spanish were produced by the journal for accessibility and comprehension purposes.

Abstract

Objective: This article seeks to demonstrate the need to recover the contributions of women philosophers in secondary and upper-secondary education. **Methodology:** The article begins with a review of studies that have examined the extent to which the work of women philosophers has been included at these levels and, in addition, reviews curricular plans in the department of Caldas, as well as the textbooks most commonly used to teach philosophy. **Results:** The findings are conclusive: philosophy education in the department of Caldas does not include women, nor does it promote reflection on gender equity, despite the fact that this is established as a general objective in educational legislation in various countries, including Colombia. **Conclusions:** The article argues for the need to include women philosophers in secondary and upper-secondary education to provide students with a broader view of the history of thought. It further contends that teaching philosophy with a gender perspective helps close gaps and foster a profound change in the way we educate ourselves to inhabit the world. Ultimately, the proposed educational modality will contribute to correcting the unjust structures produced by an education and a history that ignore the contribution of half of humanity.

Keywords: Women; philosophy; education; gender equity; philosophy teaching (obtained from the UNESCO Thesaurus).

Resumen

Objetivo: el propósito con este artículo es mostrar la necesidad de recuperar los aportes de las mujeres filósofas en la educación secundaria y media vocacional. **Metodología:** se parte de una revisión de estudios que han indagado qué tanto se ha incluido el trabajo de las mujeres filósofas en estos niveles, y, además, se realiza una revisión de planes curriculares en el departamento de Caldas, así como de los libros de texto más usados para la enseñanza de la filosofía. **Resultados:** los resultados son concluyentes: en la formación en filosofía en el departamento de Caldas no se incluye a las mujeres y tampoco se hacen reflexiones frente a la equidad de género que se presenta como un objetivo general en las legislaciones en educación de distintos países, incluido Colombia. **Conclusiones:** se sostiene la necesidad de incluir a las mujeres filósofas en la enseñanza secundaria y media para proporcionar al estudiantado una visión más amplia de la

historia del pensamiento. Además, se defiende que enseñar la filosofía con perspectiva de género contribuye al cierre de brechas y a un cambio profundo en la manera como nos educamos para estar en el mundo. En últimas, a corregir las estructuras injustas en las que nos ha instalado una educación y una historia que desconoce el aporte de la mitad de la humanidad.

Palabras clave: Mujeres; filosofía; educación; equidad de género; enseñanza de la filosofía (obtenidos del tesoro de la UNESCO).

Resumo

Objetivo: o propósito deste artigo é mostrar a necessidade de recuperar as contribuições das mulheres filósofas no ensino secundário e médio vocacional. **Metodologia:** parte-se de uma revisão de estudos que investigaram quanto tem sido incluído o trabalho das mulheres filósofas nesses níveis, e, além disso, realiza-se uma revisão dos planos curriculares no departamento de Caldas, assim como dos livros de texto mais usados para o ensino da filosofia. **Resultados:** os resultados são contundentes: na formação em filosofia não se incluem as mulheres e tampouco se fazem reflexões sobre a equidade de gênero que se apresenta como um objetivo geral nas legislações educacionais de diferentes países, incluindo a Colômbia. **Conclusões:** sustenta-se a necessidade de incluir as mulheres filósofas no ensino secundário e médio para proporcionar aos estudantes uma visão mais ampla da história do pensamento. Além disso, defende-se que ensinar filosofia com perspectiva de gênero contribui para o fechamento de lacunas e para uma mudança profunda na maneira como nos educamos para estar no mundo. Por fim, visa corrigir as estruturas injustas nas quais nos instalou uma educação e uma história que desconhece a contribuição de metade da humanidade.

Palavras chaves: Mulheres; filosofia; educação; equidade de gênero; ensino de filosofia (obtidos do tesoro da UNESCO).

Introduction

The uncomfortable question from which this reflection begins is whether those who teach philosophy include women philosophers in their curricula. In the 21st century, one of the major concerns surrounding philosophical education is the gender-based epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2017) sustained for centuries. The absence of women both from the teaching of the history of philosophy and from the treatment of philosophical problems has become a matter of pressing concern. Research on the contributions women have made to philosophy throughout history, and on the neglect of those contributions in educational curricula, can be traced across different continents, showing that this is an issue of global urgency.

Various studies have documented the exclusion of women from the philosophical canon and the resulting gender gap in curricula.

When the inclusion of women in philosophical curricula is examined, the outlook is discouraging. Rodríguez and Roldán (2015), in Spain, analyzed the presence of women teachers at different educational levels and the presence of women philosophers in textbooks. Their findings show that, although women teachers hold 57% of positions in upper-secondary education and vocational training, this representation is not reflected in textbooks, where female authorship accounts for an average of 12%. In addition, the number of works cited reveals a significant gap: on average, 5,25 of works by women philosophers are recorded, compared with 120,25 by male philosophers. One of the texts cited no women philosophers at all; of the 345 works referenced, only 12 correspond to women philosophers, representing 2.98% of the total.

Alonso (2019) points out that one of the general objectives of secondary education, established in Article 25 of Royal Decree 1105/2014, consists of “fostering equal rights and opportunities between men and women” and, moreover, “critically analyzing and assessing existing inequalities and discrimination.” However, although the guidelines for the subject *History of Philosophy* in the second year of upper-secondary school are consistent with this objective in their introduction, the syllabus does not present a single woman philosopher.

This reveals an educational anachronism that normalizes “stereotypes, ideologies, and prejudices surrounding the idea [of] the exercise of thought” (p. 35). The author proposes a curriculum that complements the contributions of female and male philosophers to make women visible in the history of thought and thereby denaturalize assumptions about women’s intellectual capacities.

Morillo (2020), for her part, argues that, judging by the list of names through which the history of philosophy is configured in textbooks, “[...] anyone may come away with the impression that philosophical knowledge, far from presenting itself as a specifically human capacity and need, is rather a

male privilege” (pp. 36-37). On this basis, she calls into question the meaning and relevance of including women philosophers in philosophical education, highlighting the need to reassess forms of positive discrimination and to develop curricula from a critical perspective, rather than merely replacing one list of male names with another list of female philosophers.

In her thesis *Philosophy as a Subject from a Gender Perspective: A Review of the 2002 and 2020 Study Plans and Programs*, Pinto (2021) examines the application of the PTD model (Female and Male Presence, Transmission of Stereotypes, and the Value Dimension of Female and Male Presence model) in two basic education curricula in Chile developed eighteen years apart. She argues that the concealment of women lies in the absence of women philosophers from curricular content, as well as in language, since the discourse is directed primarily toward a male audience. Not only are women assumed to not engage in philosophy; they are also assumed to not receive a philosophical education. Although the study shows that the gap narrows over time in the use of language, the difference remains significant. In 2002, masculine forms represented 80%, while feminine forms accounted for only 10%, and the remaining 10% corresponded to neutral language. By contrast, in 2020 masculine forms fell to 56%, while feminine forms rose to 20%; however, neutral language exceeded feminine language, accounting for 23% of the total. These changes significantly favor the inclusion of women and the visibility of their contributions.

Concern over the erasure of women from school curricula is not exclusive to philosophy. López (2014) refers to a study of 115 textbooks across all subjects and from three different publishers in which women account for just 12.8%.

All these observations underscore the urgency of addressing the absence of women from the content that guides academic education.

Methodology

With the aim of investigating the inclusion of women in philosophical education in the Department of Caldas, the research project *The Other Canon of Philosophy: Reconstructing the History of Philosophy Produced by Women* was carried out between August 2022 and April 2023. Its purpose was to identify the state of this issue in secondary education. The team analyzed the presence of women in philosophy curricula at institutions across the department, using documents provided by the Caldas Department of Education and by the institutions themselves. It also reviewed the textbooks most commonly used by different teachers. Finally, as an exercise in “gender hermeneutical justice,” a proposal for redress was developed

through the production of a textbook on women philosophers. It addresses the Pythagorean women, Hildegard of Bingen, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Marie de Gournay, Elisabeth of Bohemia, and Nel Noddings, to mention only a few (Hoyos *et al.*, 2025).

Results

Regarding this review, education in Colombia is governed by the General Education Law (Law 115 of 1994), which, in its second chapter, *Curricula and Study Plan*, enshrines the principle of school autonomy (Art. 76). More specifically, with regard to the *aims of education*, Article 5 of Title 1 states [our translation]:

- Education in respect for life and for other human rights, for peace, democratic principles, coexistence, pluralism, justice, solidarity, and equity, as well as in the exercise of tolerance and freedom.
- Education to facilitate the participation of all persons in the decisions that affect them in the economic, political, administrative, and cultural life of the Nation.

This grants institutions the freedom to prioritize the thematic content of core subjects at each level. This differs from countries such as Spain or Argentina, where such content is defined in advance. However, this autonomy is expected to remain consistent with the aims of education, in this case, justice, equity, and the participation of all persons in all decisions.

Taking this general framework into account, and to fulfill the objective of identifying the presence of women in curricula, these documents were requested from the Caldas Department of Education and from the various institutions by email. Through this exercise, 27 curricula were collected and reviewed according to four analytical categories: content, methodologies and resources, bibliography, and the presence of women. In terms of content, most addressed general themes or problems. Five curricula referred to specific thinkers; however, none of these references included women. In addition, no use of inclusive language was identified that would reflect an interest in the study of both male and female philosophers.

With regard to bibliographic references, only one reference by a woman was found in one of the philosophy curricula. However, APA citation models and other editorial standards do not facilitate the identification of authors' first names,

which could serve as a filter (although not a fully reliable one) for determining whether a publication was written by a man or a woman.

Identifying the names of the people who prepared them was possible in eight philosophy curricula, for a total of 12 names, six of which corresponded to names commonly used by women.

In conclusion, the philosophical education offered in basic schooling in educational institutions in Caldas shows no concern for the contribution women have made to the development of philosophy. Since the teaching of philosophy is commonly divided into history and problems, these curricula could be enriched by incorporating women's contributions.

With regard to the analysis of the textbooks used to teach philosophy in Caldas, even in the Ministry of National Education (MEN) guidelines for upper-secondary education (MEN, 2010), Agnes Heller was found to be the only woman philosopher explicitly mentioned. Although works by Hannah Arendt and Adriana Arpini are cited, their names are not developed in the text; moreover, APA citation standards do not help make them visible. This trend continues in the textbooks most widely used in the region, particularly those published by Santillana, whose most recent version (*Philosophia 10 and 11*) does not include women philosophers or women authors on the editorial team. By contrast, earlier versions (*Pensamiento filosófico 1 and 2*) do record the participation of women authors.

Discussion

Bringing Women Philosophers to Light in the History of Ideas: Recognizing Knowledge for Human Growth

We should not have to concern ourselves with reviewing the presence of women in philosophical education; nevertheless, such a review is justified by the neglect of women's thought. We know that this task is not exclusive to the 21st century, nor did it arise merely as an echo of contemporary feminist movements. In the fourteenth century, Christine de Pizan (2015) had already warned of the need to combat misogynistic positions and to show that women have made many important contributions to humanity. Her work *The Book of the City of Ladies* vindicates the physical, scientific, artistic, literary, philosophical, cultural, and

social work of hundreds of women; in this way, she becomes one of the first thinkers able to demonstrate that women's contributions are neither minor nor insignificant. She compels us to recognize that any body of knowledge that ignores these contributions will be historically incomplete. Along similar lines, Marie de Gournay (2014), in *The Equality of Men and Women*, first published in 1622, presents a catalogue of illustrious women as an argumentative strategy for demonstrating equality between the genders, while also arguing that the nature of God, being perfect, is neither masculine nor feminine.

From the standpoint of the "critical perspective" proposed by Morillo (2020), and as heirs to these philosophers, whom we recognize as the first feminists by conviction, we find that women's absence from philosophical canons of education must be overcome. This is because we need to include names associated with women, and also because we must make visible women's capacity to address issues different from those treated by men, or issues treated by men but approached with visionary perspectives and proposals that allow for revisiting old philosophical problems that now appear as emergent. From this perspective, defending spaces that struggle for the recognition of women in academia is important. For example, philosophers such as Sally Haslanger (2008), Louise Antony (2012), and Arantza Etxeberria Agiriano (2018) point out that one of the reasons for women's lower presence in philosophy has to do with the fact that female students do not see themselves represented in textbooks, curricula, or academic events. Ensuring that women are represented in different areas of study from the early stages of education can therefore help close these gaps.

Failure to recognize women's contributions means that we have explored only one part of history and that the part still awaiting exploration is not merely nominal or quantitative, but also substantial, even though it has been denied to us. Janina Ramírez (2023) explains that one of the motivations behind her work was discovering that in different repositories and archives preserving human thought there is a tendency to disparage, erase, and overlook what is considered to have been produced by women. In the closing lines of *Fémina*, she writes: "This handful of women I have presented are part of a silent majority, and many more voices are waiting to be heard" (p. 359).

Bringing women philosophers to light and highlighting their role in philosophical education does more than broaden and complete the history of thought. Offering this education with a gender perspective contributes to cultural transformation through the pursuit of gender equality, defined by the UN for 2030 as one of the most urgent goals and inseparable from the struggle for social justice, equal opportunity, and participation.

Concerning discourse, within philosophical education with a gender perspective, stressing use of the generic masculine as one of the mechanisms through

which women are concealed in philosophy is important. Pinto's (2021) research addresses this concern and, encouragingly, shows that recognition of women has gradually gained ground in curricula focused on philosophical education. In the same spirit, there has been a decrease in the use of masculine language and the increase in generic or neutral language. One of the major contemporary debates surrounding the recognition of women concerns language use, since the generic masculine that has predominated in Spanish and other languages does not do justice to women's presence. Some people have fully adopted gender-inclusive double forms in their discourse to make explicit reference to both men and women; others, however, have preferred neutral language, arguing that it satisfies the principle of linguistic economy while ensuring the equal inclusion of men and women.

Alonso (2019) showed that in Spain, governmental declarations are neither sufficient nor a guarantee of the educational transformations required. The same can be observed in Caldas: despite regulations oriented toward education for equality, women are commonly absent from philosophy curricula. Even when such curricula are designed to teach history, they wholly erase women's thoughts. Recognizing this gap between what education is normatively expected to be and what is actually offered is not new; however, once such shortcomings are identified, educational practices become easier to correct. Some may think education for gender equality has little to do with the thematic content of disciplinary knowledge. Nevertheless, an education that includes women in its curricula becomes a key ally in achieving gender-aware educational aims and in closing gaps across fields of knowledge, including philosophy.

In this regard, the study conducted by Dougherty *et al.* (2015) deserves special attention. Framed by the question *Why do women leave philosophy?*, it examined the University of Sydney context to determine whether the causes of attrition stemmed from pre-university experiences (primary and secondary education) or from classroom dynamics. The study was carried out with a sample of 123 students enrolled in an introductory philosophy course that included topics in ethics, metaphysics, and aesthetics. Observation was conducted over 13 weeks, and a Likert-scale survey was administered using the statement: "I can imagine becoming a male/female philosopher." The authors found significant differences in the responses to the first survey, suggesting the influence of pre-university factors, and compared these results with those from a final survey administered at the end of the course to determine whether there were differences that might corroborate the influence of classroom dynamics on the ability of men and women to imagine themselves as philosophy professionals. Among the findings, they observed that, after the first class, although two thirds of the students were women, fewer than half intended to specialize

in philosophy. In response to the question of whether they could imagine themselves as male/female philosophers, women tended to assign lower scores; they also stated that they probably would not feel comfortable engaging in philosophical discussions, although the authors did not find that women regarded philosophy as especially useless for achieving their goals. Paradoxically, the authors found no significant differences in the second survey, which would support the idea that pre-university factors probably exert a greater influence on women's persistence in this profession.

It should be understood, then, that the relationship between curricular content and everyday events mediated by culture and society is best conceived as a correlation in which the self is constantly constructed, recognized, and defined in relation to others. Sonia Reverter (2003) puts it this way,

The constructivist potential of the concept of "gender" is enormously significant for feminist philosophy, because it implies that we can introduce changes in epistemological structure, that we can finally rethink how femininity and masculinity are constructed, in short, how the other is constructed and, consequently, the basis of that other's exclusion. For the moment, then, we may say that feminist theory is the theorization of the construction of the "other" (in this case, the "female other") as a dominated subject. (p. 40) [our translation].

Understanding that changes in epistemological structures have effects on the construction of the self allows us for defending the importance of linking the changes expected in social structures to curricular content. In other words, if education is to contribute to the recognition of women in society, women must be recognized in the history and production of the knowledge being taught. This is a practice that can make education from a gender perspective easier; however, most scientific, artistic, literary, and philosophical knowledge seems to have been denied to women, and finding that those who prepare curricula lack the knowledge of female referents to include in their proposals is common. In this regard, the need to modify curricula in higher education has been identified so that new generations may make up for this lack. However, seeking strategies for training those who completed their professional education without learning about women's presence in the development of their disciplines is also necessary, so that they may promptly incorporate them into their content and thus contribute to education from a gender perspective.

One of the most common concerns raised when attempting to provide education with a gender perspective is expressed by Rebeca Caballero Álvarez (2011):

Including a gender perspective through curriculum design is, without doubt, a major challenge for the development of curricula and study programs in institutions of higher education, since it complicates a task that is already complex, because curriculum designers must satisfy—in addition to the demand for the particular knowledge of each profession or discipline—the inclusion of practices and content aimed at eradicating inequity between the sexes in everyday school life (p. 45) [our translation].

When faced with the possibility of including such “practices and content aimed at eradicating inequity between the sexes in everyday school life,” the false threat of sacrificing discipline-specific content quickly appears. However, acquiring the habit of including women’s work within teaching and learning processes is a powerful aid in offering education with a gender perspective.

In short, including women in curricula designed for philosophical education makes a fuller education in philosophy, its history, and its problems possible, as well as contributes to the educational purpose of preparing us to inhabit the world and, in particular, to respond to the demands of justice, equality, and gender equity.

Educating with a Gender Perspective to Build Reality on Principles of Equality

The Italian philosopher Wanda Tomasi (2002), in *Philosophers and Women*, begins from the strange and, at first sight, counterintuitive idea that being is not neutral. With this statement she embarks on a journey through the history of Western philosophy in which she shows how, on the basis of philosophers’ reflections, a world is configured in which women occupy a subordinate place.

The problem Wanda Tomasi (2002) identifies at the root of the canonical philosophical tradition is that, without directly addressing sexual difference, it has taken men as the model of humanity. This has had notable consequences for the way we have organized ourselves socially throughout history and for the role assigned to women within this organization. The first consequence is that women have been considered defective, imperfect, or incapable of performing certain tasks. The second is women’s exclusion from multiple spaces. The third is that the contributions of women thinkers have been virtually erased from history, which reinforces the need to evaluate the inherited canons of thought.

To understand these consequences, reviewing the contributions of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, who at times use the word “aner” (male) interchangeably with “Anthropos” when referring to human beings is enough.

It clearly shows that men are taken as the measure of the human. This becomes much clearer, for example, when Aristotle, in Book IV of *Generation of Animals*, states that the woman is a failed male. In this regard, Wanda Tomasi (2002) writes: “[...] when there is weakness in the male and matter is not mastered, animality prevails, that is, the monster emerges, of which woman is the first degree” (p. 55). This idea of woman as a failed male persists throughout the history of philosophy and, therefore, throughout the history of education. It is reflected in gender stereotypes that determine whether women do or do not participate in academic, labor, and political spaces.

With this question in mind, what can we do to correct this androcentric tradition and generate more inclusive and diverse environments of knowledge and social organization? We recognize that from the first half of the twentieth century, consistent and systematic efforts have been made to recover women's contributions to the history of thought, including the four volumes of *A History of Women Philosophers* (Waithe *et al.*, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1995), *Las filósofas. Las mujeres protagonistas en la historia del pensamiento* [*Women Philosophers. Women as Leading Figures in the History of Thought*] (Di Martino and Bruzesse, 2000), *Sabias. La otra cara de la ciencia* [*Wise Women. The Other Side of Science*] (Muñoz, 2017), and *Ellas lo pensaron antes: Filósofas excluidas de la memoria* [*They Thought of it First: Women Philosophers Excluded from Memory*] (Femenías, 2020). These efforts fill the void left by the exclusion of women's thought and bring to the fore questions about the silencing of women in history and its consequences. They offer a different way of viewing the philosophical canon and the problems deemed relevant. As Hutton (2021) and Birulés (2015) argue, this requires evaluating how we have approached the past and memory; it also implies opening pathways so that, from the earliest stages of academic education, students can engage with concerns about the role of women in history and learn to trace the signs of these contributions.

Moreover, as Del Río (2022) proposes, this reconsideration of how the philosophical canon has been conceived constitutes a moral responsibility for those devoted to the profession. In her study of different histories of philosophy in Mexico, and faced with the almost complete absence of women authors, she asks whether this omission constitutes a defect in the quality of those histories or whether it represents an act of injustice for which we would be responsible. To answer this question, she turns to the approaches of Fricker (2010, 2017), Calhoun (1989), and Moody-Adams (1994), concluding that what is included in the canon or in history always implies a degree of responsibility. She argues that efforts to recover the history of women philosophers should incorporate the perspective of ethical critique, oriented toward the concept of “gender epistemic justice.”

This concept may be understood as a positive counterpart to Fricker's (2017) notion of "epistemic injustice," that is, harm done to someone in their capacity as an epistemic subject by virtue of some identity prejudice, for example, being a woman. Such harm appears either as an impairment of credibility (testimonial injustice) or as an impairment of the capacity to make sense of one's experiences (hermeneutical injustice). This type of injustice has implications for the quality of knowledge, but also for the ethical responsibility borne as knowers in the face of practices that perpetuate injustice. By contrast, the pursuit of gender epistemic justice implies recognizing responsibility and taking action to repair the damage produced by unjust behavior (epistemic and moral harms).

In this way, the arguments of Del Río (2022) and Fina Birulés (2015) lead us to consider that the presence of bias in the construction of curricula means that we are being denied access to part of knowledge and that our knowledge is incomplete. However, this problem is more complex, since it implies limitations on our knowledge, and also affects our construction of reality and the assessment of the practices we consider just.

The way that reality is constructed, as well as those that inhabit it, is shaped both by lived experiences and by the structures of knowledge through which education is conducted. At the same time, when education is concerned with preparing individuals to respond to the needs of the world, rather than stuffing their minds with content, then individuals educate and are educated to inhabit the world.

Including women in philosophical education also means engaging concerns that have not formed part of the history or canon of philosophy. For example, in the thought of the Pythagorean women, mathematics was not an area of knowledge isolated from every day and domestic matters. They insisted on harmony not only as a numerical characteristic but also as a virtue to be pursued in human behavior. Theano of Croton maintained that

The world and the human being exist by nature in harmony, and one should be careful not to disturb that harmony. Asceticism and spiritual work are required. A positive effect is attributed above all to mathematics and music, since number plays an important role in these two disciplines (Gleichauf, 2010, p. 10).

The connection between philosophical reflection and the actions proper to life was also reflected in the education offered by this school, which was directed toward care of oneself and of others, expressed in terms of human harmony. This perspective suggests the search for an education aimed at epistemic abstraction, as well as at inhabiting the world. Thus, we may agree that

the interest of Theano's texts (ca. 600 BC) lies in developing what one would currently call a "philosophy of education," a psychology of moral development, and a theory of family obligations and responsibility toward younger generations (Femenías, 2020, p. 33) [our translation].

Although we are dealing with an ancient school from which abstract conceptions have been inherited with lofty universal pretensions and far removed from the sensible and experiential world, this school nevertheless offers a conception of education that remains relevant today and that, if studied carefully, may prove highly useful for understanding and addressing problems now regarded as emergent.

Integrating philosophical education into everyday life constitutes one of the first steps toward understanding that we educate ourselves to inhabit the world. When education is thought of in the ancient Greek world, the idea that a holistic education was offered is quite common: Alongside gymnastics, music, mathematics, and poetry, there was also room for magic and myth. This form of education was due primarily to the fact that the Greek way of inhabiting the world was interwoven with narratives and mythical figures. One example can be found in Pericles' victory speech, in which the first thing he does is acknowledge that the gods were on his side; similarly, other stories from Greek culture recount that, prior to a confrontation, a council of war was held in which much of the attention was devoted to entrusting the coming events to the gods.

Offering philosophical education with a gender perspective entails two highly significant benefits. First, it contributes to the pursuit of gender epistemic justice, which ensures fair representation in the knowledge taught in school settings. Second, it fosters the habit of including and recognizing women in all our lived activities, thereby promoting an education for inhabiting the world that is equitable, inclusive, and reflective of the values of the society we seek to build. Vargas (2016), in *La querrela de las mujeres* [*The Debate on Women*], explains that the struggle for the recognition of women both in the intellectual world and in society dates back to the Middle Ages,¹ when women sought to make known their opinions about the false ideas being spread concerning women's thought.

What is at stake for them is crucial: Recognition of their intellectual capacity and their access to education and culture. This form of political participation, putting into circulation thought favorable to the interests of their own sex, is closely tied

1 This paper has already referred to *The Book of the City of Ladies*, a work in which Christine de Pizan (Italy, 1364 - France, 1431) makes a major effort to vindicate the social actions and intellectual contributions of hundreds of women from classical antiquity to her own time.

to the growing interest of women of the time in reading and to the opening of spaces for cultural and political gathering and debate, also sponsored by women. (Vargas, 2016, p. 108) [our translation].

Bringing up these reflections on women in the fifteenth century helps us showing that the struggle for the recognition of women goes back many centuries; it also allows us to trace the education received by medieval women and the aims that guided the didactic principles of the time. The education women received was directed toward preparing them to inhabit the world as wives, mothers, or religious women, and they were never prepared for public functions or government; so much so that training in rhetoric was denied to them. Curricula for women varied according to their social condition and the life projects envisioned for them: “Logically, it is not the same to be the wife of a nobleman as of an artisan; consequently, there are educational differences in terms of content, duration of education, and the persons involved” (Vargas, 2016, p. 269). We realize that educating ourselves to inhabit the world has accompanied the education women have received throughout history. Perhaps, even at the risk of the counterfactual this implies, if women had not been relegated from the public and political spheres and had been allowed more active participation in the decisions that guide society, we would today clearly understand that the ultimate purpose of education is to guide our behavior.

Conceiving education from the perspective of behaviors and actions within society is a position quite close to American pragmatism. As Barrena (2012, p. 2) argues, pragmatist education seeks personal growth, as well as knowledge rooted in everyday life, capable of promoting a deeper understanding of the world and of ourselves. In this sense, pragmatism maintains that educational programs should affect both one’s understanding of the world and one’s lived experience, as well as the constant and unfinished construction of oneself and of reality. Thinking of education as growth of the self entails cultivating reflective thought and recognizing that actions and decisions continue into future experiences.

Growth must proceed in a direction that allows growth to continue and that achieves greater clarity in ideas about the world. Growth, education can never be considered complete and is a clear example of the principle of continuity upheld by pragmatism (Barrena, 2015, p. 69).

From this perspective of understanding education as growth, offering one that actively includes women in its curricular content acquires even greater relevance. By adopting a pragmatist approach, we recognize that the inclusion of women is not only a matter of epistemic justice but also an effective strategy for fostering social growth. By including women in the curriculum, we enrich

the learning experience of our students while at the same time fostering behaviors oriented toward gender equity. Pragmatism insists on the importance of cultivating the habit of valuing the practical consequences of our actions and decisions; it teaches us to cultivate our attitudes while remaining alert to the sensations we expect in our encounter with the world, to prepare our reactions to those sensations, and to put ideas to work within the continuity of experience with the aim of modifying reality (Dewey, 2000, p. 85).

In this way, we can see that thinking about education with a gender perspective in pragmatist terms makes promoting recognition of women in a merely discursive sense possible, and also as an active potential within an education oriented toward action and social change. This, in turn, contributes to the construction of a more just and equitable world for all people, regardless of gender.

Conclusions

Beginning with the question of whether women are included in the teaching of philosophy and the history of philosophy creates the uncomfortable position of the argument *ad antiquitatem*: If they are not there, have never been there, and education has nevertheless functioned, perhaps there is no need to include them. However, a more conscious reflection on the matter leads to asking: What would have happened if women's contributions had been included from the beginning? Would society be the same? Would the same ideas about justice and equality exist? These questions cannot be answered. Nevertheless, the work of recognizing and recovering women's thought has clearly shown that the exclusion of women from certain activities and fields of knowledge has consolidated the configuration of a world in which the idea that the ideal human being is male and that this configuration has been naturalized. In this way, unjust structures that subordinate the feminine have been perpetuated.

As has been shown, the way to correct these structures and attain ideals of equity involves re-educating ourselves to inhabit the world. Recognizing women's contributions to the history of thought and also considering that history from another perspective is vital. As Fina Birulés (2015) affirms, merely recovering the voices that have been silenced or establishing the reasons for that silencing is not enough; rethinking history and the way we have approached it is necessary. We must recognize that not everything important, nor all the problems relevant to a given era, were always recorded in the canon, and that finding answers to some questions that still exist today in the traces left by women philosophers is

possible. Finally, the role that teachers can play in secondary and upper-secondary education is fundamental, since fostering spaces for reflection on these matters and doing so with a gender perspective will make consolidating more conscious and sensitive forms of citizenship possible. This will result in closing gaps, and also in consolidating a necessary social change.

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