



# **The Center Must Not Hold: White Women Philosophers on the Whiteness of Philosophy**

*George Yancy*

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The Center Must Not Hold: White Women Philosophers on the Whiteness of Philosophy functions as a textual site where white women philosophers engage boldly in critical acts of exploring ways of naming and disrupting whiteness in terms of how it has defined the conceptual field of philosophy. Within this text, white women philosophers critique the field of philosophy for its complicity with whiteness as a structure of power, as normative, and as hegemonic. In this way, the authority of whiteness to define what is philosophically worthy is seen as reinforcing forms of philosophical narcissism and hegemony. Challenging the whiteness of philosophy in terms of its hubristic tendencies, white women philosophers within this text assert their alliance with people of color who have been both marginalized within the field of philosophy and have had their philosophical and intellectual concerns and traditions dismissed as particularistic. Aware that feminist praxis does not necessarily lead to anti-racist praxis, the white women philosophers within this text refuse to telescope as a site of critical inquiry one site of hegemony (sexism) over another (racism). As such, the white women philosophers within this text are conscious of the ways in which they are implicated in perpetuating whiteness as a site of power within the domain of philosophy. Framed within a philosophical space that values the multiplicity of philosophical voices, and driven by a feminist framework that valorizes de-centering locations of hegemony, interdisciplinary dialogue, and transformative praxis, The Center Must Not Hold refuses to allow the white center of philosophy to masquerade as universal and given. The text de-centers various epistemic and value orders that are predicated upon maintaining the center of philosophy as white. The white women philosophers who contribute to this text explore ethics, epistemology, aesthetics, taste, the nature of a dilemma, questions of the secularity of philosophy, perception, discipline-based values around how to listen and argue, the crucial role that social location plays in the continued ignorance about the reality of oppression and privilege as these relate to the subtle forms of white valorization and maintenance, and more. Those interested in critical race theory and critical whiteness studies will appreciate how the contributors have linked these areas of critical inquiry within the often abstract domain of philosophy.

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