

“Straying From the Rules”: Transdisciplinarity and the Continental Canon’

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It is notable that many of the general claims and conclusions about canons common to the discussions within various disciplines (including literary studies and history) fail to hold in the – perhaps unique – case of Western philosophy. In this paper I will investigate the disciplinary peculiarities of the Western philosophical canon via a comparison of its features with what is often said about the notion of the canon in literary studies. This reveals the peculiarly tight and unusual relationship between the Western philosophical canon and higher educational institutions and certain groups within them, rendering the position of the ‘continental’ canon interestingly ambiguous. Via a critical discussion of Kant’s distinction between canon and organon, this paper will argue that the effective identification of ‘canon’ and ‘discipline’ in philosophy in general is weakened in the case of continental philosophy in particular and that it is the inherent ‘transdisciplinarity’ of the continental canon that allows for its persistence not despite but because of the ‘decolonising’ critiques to which it has been subjected.