

Mind and Morals

Essays on Cognitive Science and Ethics

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Chapter 12

Feeling Our Way toward Moral Objectivity

Naomi Scheman

However, diversely philosophers of psychology have thought of emotions, they have mostly agreed on thinking of them as states of individuals. And most moral philosophers have agreed on thinking of emotions as for the most part inimical to the achievement of moral objectivity. I argue in this chapter that both views are wrong and that we can learn something about why they are by looking at how they are connected.

I

Arguing that emotions are not states of individuals can seem merely perverse. My first attempt to do so (Scheman 1983) has seemed so to most philosophical readers.¹ It is, of course, true that we ascribe emotions to individuals and that we speak of individual people as being in various emotional states. But there is a more precise and particular sense of what it is for something to be a state of an individual that I think can be made out clearly, and in this more precise sense, emotions (along with other complex mental "states," such as beliefs, attitudes, desires, intentions, and so on) are not states of individuals. The sense I mean is this: *S* is a (complex) state of an individual *I* only if the elements of *S* are related to each other in causal or other ways that make of *S* a complex entity independently of *I*'s social context. (My concern will be to argue against this necessary condition; I have no interest in what might be sufficient conditions for something's being a state of an individual, or in any states that might be argued to be simple, such as qualia.)

The ontological distinction I am relying on is that between a complex entity and a jumble or a heap. Complex entities differ from jumbles or heaps in the relationships of coherence among their component parts. There is no way of drawing this distinction in any absolute way, since there will always be relationships to be found, or created, among any collection of entities. Rather, we need to ask whether some collection constitutes a complex object with respect to some particular theory or explanatory scheme (or some set of theories or schemes).

My argument will be that the coherence of emotions and other complex mental states is relative to irreducibly social, contextual explanatory schemes. In abstraction from particular social contexts, there is no theoretically explicable coherence among the behavior and the occurrent thoughts, feelings, and sensations (or whatever else one might take to be the components of an emotion). I have no commitment to this particular list, though it seems to get at what we do in fact point to when we identify emotions and other mental states). The distinction is akin to that between galaxies and constellations. Despite their both being made up of stars, galaxies are, and constellations are not, complex objects with respect to astronomy. The stars that make up a galaxy are related to each other causally and spatially, while the stars that make up constellations are related to each other only against the background of a set of stories about the night sky told by particular cultures on a particular planet; they are not even spatially contiguous except from the perspective of earth.

Emotions, I argue, are constellation-like, not galaxy-like. Their identity as complex entities is relative to explanatory schemes that rely on social meaning and interpretation. Emotions and other complex mental states differ from constellations in depending ontologically on explanatory schemes that have enormous depth and power and that we have every reason to continue to use—unlike astrology. The analogue of eliminative materialism would eliminate constellations from the furniture of the universe—not, I would think, inappropriately. But eliminative materialism as usually understood, which accepts my negative judgment on the possibility of even token identities between mental and physical states, would require that we jettison the explanatory resources of common sense, along with literature and the other arts, not to mention most of psychology, a prospect I find bleakly inhuman, as well as pointless.

It is, of course, true that many genuine states of individuals—diseases, for example—are identified and named only in particular social contexts, but the causal relationships that obtain among the causes and the symptoms are independent of those contexts; they are there to be discovered. There are intelligible questions to be asked about whether some particular pattern of symptoms constitutes a disease, and one important deciding factor is whether they hang together independent of their seeming to be somehow related, as, in the paradigm case, by being all caused by the same pathogen. If, on the other hand, the pattern of the symptoms is explicable in terms not of underlying somatic processes but of social salience, then it would be wrong to speak of a disease.² What is at issue is not what we call it, or even whether we call it anything, whether we find it interesting or important to name it, or whether its cause was or was not "biological" (pathogens can be social; to argue that a set of symptoms is

caused by, for example, childhood abuse is not to argue that they do not constitute a disease). What is at issue is whether there is an "it" at all.³

This argument, drawn from Wittgenstein, is an explication of what he refers to as "the decisive move in the conjuring trick...., the very one we thought quite innocent," since all we have done is to say what it is we intend to look at, that is, "processes and states...[we] leave their nature undecided" (Wittgenstein 1953, sec. 308). What has, surreptitiously, been decided is that these supposed processes and states are complex entities according to some possible theory, yet to be developed. There must, by this picture, be some underlying mechanism that knits each process or state together, some structure for some future science to reveal. But why should this be so? What are we assuming, and what are we precluding, when we make this initial, apparently innocent move? What we are precluding is precisely what I want to suggest is the case: that emotions (and other complex mental "states") are situationally salient, socially meaningful patterns of thought, feelings, and behavior.⁴ As such they may well be supervenient on physical facts, but only globally—that is, not only on physical facts in my body and not only on physical facts in the present or even in the past.

Consider, for example, these lines in Shakespeare's *Sonnet 116*: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds." There is something paradoxical in the claim—the same paradox as in Gertrude Stein's remark about Oakland: "There's no *there* there." In both cases there is something to point to, though the point of the pointing is to get one to see that there is, in a sense, no *thing* there, that by the standards by which we (more about "we" later) judge such things, this, whatever it might be, just does not count. The "it-ness" is not to be taken at face value: Shakespeare and Stein are urging us to have higher ontological standards, not to confer the dignity of coherence on what we ought, rather, to regard as a jumble or a heap. Jumbles and heaps can be pointed to; they can even be named but paradoxically: to do so is to adopt an interpretive perspective that one does not fully and wholeheartedly occupy. (In Sabina Lovibond's [1983] terms, it is to speak ironically, in inverted commas.) True love, or San Francisco, is "real" not because each has an inner coherence that false love and Oakland lack but because the patterns that lead us to see each as a coherent, complex object are salient from positions in which we wholeheartedly stand.

One might ask, in response to the denial that love that alters is (really) love: "If it isn't love, what is it?" I suggest that "it" might not be anything at all. Not that nothing is going on: rather, all that is going on—all the feeling, all the behavior—may not add up to anything, may not coalesce into a pattern we recognize as significant enough to name. It is as though

one started out to choreograph a solo dance and midway through got bored and drifted off into aimless jiggling and sashaying. The dance, had one stuck with it, would have been a "something": in the absence of its completion, what we have is a jumble of movements, not ontologically distinct from the rest of what one is doing, before, after, and during that time. What I call the individualist assumption in the philosophy of psychology is the assumption that whatever we find it significant to name—whatever patterns of feeling and behavior we find salient enough to use in explanations of ourselves and others—must also pick out complex events, states, or processes with respect to some theory of the functioning of individual organisms (for example, neuropsychology). Only the strongest reductionist projects would support such an assumption, since it is precisely the assumption of type/type identities.

There are two things in particular to note about the account of love in Shakespeare's sonnet. One is that it is clearly intended to be normative; that is, we are being urged not to count as love anything that alters when it alteration finds. (And it may well be difficult not to see it as love, especially if the feelings are one's own; one may well feel injured or betrayed by whatever "alteration" seemed to destroy one's love and cling to the sense of the value of what one feels was stolen. Similarly if one is the object of the "love which is not love," one might cling to the idea that one was, really and truly, loved—so long as one was, say, young and beautiful.)

Second, as a normative account, it is potentially and unpredictably retroactive; that is, what seems to be love today might be judged not to be love because of something that happens tomorrow, something that need not in any sense be latent today. We are being urged to withdraw an honorific label from a set of feelings and behavior because of a failure of constancy in the face of change—not that it could not have been love if it failed that test, as though there were something else in which its authenticity consisted, of which constancy were a reliable indicator. Wittgenstein draws our attention to this sort of normativity: "Love is not a feeling. Love is put to the test, pain not. One does not say: 'That was not true pain, or it would not have gone off so quickly'" (Wittgenstein 1967, sec. 504). What is at stake is less what "it" is than what we are, what we care about, value, and honor, a refusal to be swayed by the intensity of passing feeling. And it makes sense to say this to us only if we are at risk of being so swayed.⁵

I want to consider further examples to try to make plausible the view of emotions as situationally salient, socially meaningful patterns of thought, feelings, and behavior, rather than as states that one might discover within particular individuals at a particular time. The point is that it is such

patterns (not, for example, physiological causal connections) that make the components of an emotion hang together as a complex object rather than being a jumble or a heap. And, like pattern perception generally, the identification of emotions cannot be abstracted from the contexts in which the relevant patterns are salient.

The first example is drawn from the film *Torch Song Trilogy*, in particular, from the scene in which the central character, Arnold, is at the cemetery with his mother. Arnold is a gay man. He is, in fact, a drag queen by profession. He had a loving, committed relationship with another man, Alan, who was murdered by gay-bashing men in the street beneath their apartment. Arnold has buried Alan in the cemetery plot that his parents provided (presumably for the wife they hoped he would have). He goes to the cemetery to visit Alan's grave with his mother, who is visiting the grave of her husband, Arnold's father. Arnold's mother looks over at Arnold at his lover's grave and sees him reciting the Jewish prayer for the dead, and she asks him what he is doing. He says he is doing the same thing she is, and she replies in outrage that no, he is not: she is reciting Kaddish; he is blaspheming his religion. She finds it outrageous that he might take himself to be feeling grief, as she is feeling grief, and to have felt for Alan love, as she felt love for her husband.

That is, she looks at what Arnold is feeling in the context of Arnold's life and sees something quite different from what she felt in the context of her life. Sure, she thinks, he goes through these motions, says these words, even feels these pangs and aches, but they do not add up, hang together, or amount to the same thing as they would in the context of a proper marriage. (His feelings are no more grief than his saying those words is reciting Kaddish. To her they are equally meaningless jumbles.) Arnold, however, looking at his and her feelings, perceives the patterns differently from how she does; he weighs differently the similarities and differences, in the contexts of his and her lives, and ends up seeing the same feelings of love and of grief. It is the burden of the film, with respect in particular to a heterosexual audience, to persuade us to accept Arnold's mode of pattern perception and to reject as narrow-minded and heterosexist his mother's refusal to find in his actions and feelings the same valued coherence she finds in her own.⁶

A second example is drawn from popular songs, of which there are an enormous number, that couple love with potentially violent jealous possessiveness. In songs going back at least to those that were popular in the forties, one of the commonest themes, along with the "somebody done somebody wrong" songs, is the idea that love, in particular that which a man feels for a woman, must be reciprocated; she has no choice but to reciprocate it, and her turning her affections elsewhere is a possibility that,

because what he feels is love, he cannot allow. Her simply failing to reciprocate his love may, in fact, constitute the "wrong" that he takes her to have done him.

Songs like this are interesting and important to think about, in particular because of the current controversy over the words in so-called gangsta rap. If we are going to take seriously the influence of popular song lyrics, we need to focus at least as closely on those that have filled the mainstream airwaves as on those that come from subordinated populations. What is it that we are doing, in particular, when we call the complex of sentiments in those popular songs love? We could, alternatively, pathologize this complex of feeling and attitude and behavior. We could call it something like "possession dementia" and enter it into the next edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Or we could simply fail to see any "it" there at all. Valorizing and pathologizing are equally ways of bestowing coherence, however much we may believe that we are merely pointing to something—an emotion or a disease—that exists independent of our interest in it. The consequences of the elision of our interpretive activity in favor of a supposedly helpless recognition of "love" are, of course, disastrous, both because of the male behavior that is thereby licensed and because of the compliance it exacts from women who believe that such congenies *are* love, believe that it is something to be valued and honored.

On a socially constructionist account of emotions, as Maria Lugones argues (1987, 1991), we "make each other up," at least insofar as we set the parameters of intelligibility. We determine which patterns of feeling and behavior will count as love or grief or anger or whatever else. We also more personally and directly make each other up, as we help or hinder each other in seeing new or different patterns. For example, I have argued (Scheman 1980) that the central character in that paper, Alice, was helped by other members of her consciousness-raising group to see a pattern of depression, odd outbursts of impatience and pique, and a general feeling of undefinable malaise as anger. We can sharpen each other's pattern perception in the face of various kinds of resistance or fear.

Often, as is likely in this case, we will come to regard a particular pattern (Alice's anger) as so striking, once we come to see it, that a fully realist vocabulary is apt (she *discovered* she was angry). Speaking this way amounts to placing our interpretive activity in the background, taking it for granted, treating it as part of common sense. There is often, of course, good reason to do this, as others will have good reason to challenge it. What is important to note is that such challenges ought not to succeed if all they do is point out that Alice's anger is visible as such only if you stand *here* and look through *these* lenses. The response to that is, "Yes, of course, and what anger is any different? Do you have a problem with

standing here, with looking through these lenses?" The answer to that question is likely to be yes: we cannot make judgments without standing on some ground or other, or see without lenses (even if only those in our eyes), but we need to be ready, when concretely challenged, to argue for the rightness of the choices we make, even those we may not have recognized as choices until someone questioned them.

For example, in the story I tell, the other women in the group spoke of their own anger, in the contexts of lives not unlike hers, and Alice's not regarding them as moral monsters or as wildly irrational helped, along with an evolving political consciousness, to create the background against which she could similarly see herself as angry. What goes on can be described as a kind of crystallization. And there is, of course, all the difference in the world between unacknowledged and acknowledged emotions. Once we acknowledge a significant pattern in our feelings and behavior, we are in a position to act differently. There is also all the difference in the world between the discovery of anger and its creation, especially its inappropriate creation, as some would argue that Alice was brainwashed by feminist antifamily propaganda.⁷ I do not want to deny that there is such a difference, but there are no formal grounds—no grounds less contested than feminism itself—on which to base a judgment about which it is.

Conversely there is the possibility of justifiably chosen disavowal of feeling. For example, one can take as infatuation rather than as love feelings one judges to be inappropriate, feelings that, given how we think of ourselves as moral beings or as socially situated in the world, we think it would be better for us not to have. Or we could work toward overcoming prejudicial fears and antipathies by thinking that those feelings are incompatible with the people we take ourselves most fundamentally to be. We do not take ourselves simply not to have such feelings; rather, we redefine them. In the first case—redefining love as infatuation—we are likely to downplay the "it-ness" of what we are feeling, to fragment our responses, to attach them to various features of the situation, rather than letting them all cohere around the person we are trying to "get over." In the latter case—transforming judgment into phobia—we might rather focus on whatever coherence we can find not in the situation but in our history; we might choose to see as coherent, caused pathology what we might have been inclined to regard as situationally differentiated responses. Locating the explanatory coherence in ourselves, not in the objects of our judgment, is a central piece of identifying, for example, racism or homophobia.

How we do all of this shifting in pattern perception depends enormously on the interpretive resources, the encouragement or discouragement of those around us. Centrally, it depends on whom we take "we" to be—those with whom we share a form of life, whose responses we expect

to be congruent with or touchstones for our own. Sympathy and empathy—feeling with and for each other—are therefore not just matters of response to independently given emotional realities. Rather, they change the context of experience and the context of interpretation. In so doing, they change the emotions themselves, frequently in ways that do not work by causing any changes in behavior or in immediate felt experience; such changes can, for example, be retroactive. A characteristic theme of Henry James's novels and novellas, for example, is the way in which subsequent events can utterly change the meaning of what someone felt and did—can, for example, make it true, as it was not before, that one person loved another. (I am thinking in particular of *The Golden Bowl*, *Wings of the Dove*, and "The Beast in the Jungle.")

II

The second argument is for the necessity of emotions to moral judgment. One of the reasons for this necessity has to do with the importance of moral perception to moral judgment—that is, much of the work of moral judgment is done in how we perceive a situation, what we see as morally relevant or problematic. Probably the moral theorist for whom such perception is most obviously central is Aristotle, for whom practical wisdom consists largely in this ability to perceive the salient features of a situation. But equally, if less obviously, for Kant, perceptions of salience are necessary to determine what the appropriate maxim is, that is, the one we need to test against the requirements of the categorical imperative: of all the ways I might describe what I am considering doing, which description best captures what might be morally problematic? (Do I ask if it is permissible to say something pleasing in order to make someone feel good, or do I ask if it is permissible to lie in order to make someone feel good?) Moral perception is arguably also important for utilitarians: everything I do potentially affects the pleasure and pain of myself and others, but not everything I do is appropriately subject to the felicific calculus. Any usable utilitarian moral theory is going to have to distinguish between actions that are and actions that are not morally problematic, and their having consequences for someone's pleasure and pain cannot be a sufficient ground. What is sufficient, however, presumably will have centrally to do with what those pleasures and pains are likely to be; in coming to an accurate description of what is morally salient about a situation, we need to be sensitive to the relation of our possible actions to the emotions of ourselves and others.

Emotions play various roles in moral epistemology, in helping us come to adequate moral perception. The first is that emotions partly constitute the subject matter of moral epistemology; that is, how I and others feel is

often part of the morally relevant description of the situation. Furthermore, such descriptions are always given from the perspectives of emotional complexity. For reasons related to my first argument, these are not disinterested perceptions; they are, rather, the perceptions of people who are, at the very least, part of the background against which the emotions being described get the salience that they have.

The second role of emotions in moral epistemology is that of an epistemological resource. One of the clearest statements of this point is Alison Jaggar's (1989) discussion of what she calls "outlaw emotions": emotions that, according to the hegemonic view of the situation, one is not supposed to feel. Women, for example, are not supposed to be angered by whistles and catcalls as they walk down the street. We are supposed, rather, to feel flattered by them. One is not supposed to feel anger at certain kinds of jokes—sexist, racist, and so on—in certain social settings. Feelings such as these, which one is not supposed to have, are, Jaggar argues, often the best sign that there is something going on in the situation that is morally or politically problematic.

Outlaw emotions can work quite effectively against the phenomenon of gaslighting, a phenomenon that the poet and essayist Adrienne Rich (1979) has described, whereby we undermine our own and each other's perceptions. Something is going on that leads us to feel an outlaw emotion—for example, sexual attentions or sexual joking in the workplace that feels creepy and uncomfortable. We can be told and can learn to say to ourselves that we are being overly sensitive, prudish, or whatever else, and we thereby undercut the possibility of there being a critical edge to those emotions. A way of working against gaslighting is to take outlaw emotions seriously, as epistemic resources pointing us in the direction of important, often morally important, perceptions.

One way of putting this point is that unemotional perception is problematically partial, especially in its failure to include outlaw perceptions. The effect of ignoring or bracketing our emotional responses will frequently be that we gaslight ourselves into a failure to notice and learn from importantly critical perspectives, that we perceive only along the hegemonic lines of sight. (The problem is not confined to what we might think of as the context of discovery; it is not just that we are less likely to notice a wrong, but from a perspective uninformed by the relevant outlaw emotions, we will not acknowledge it even when it is pointed out to us. That is what gaslighting is about: a systematic biasing of the contexts of both discovery and justification.)

As Jaggar notes, not all emotional responses, not even all outlaw emotional responses, are valuable in this way. There is, I suspect, nothing to be learned from the annoyance some people feel in the face of having it pointed out to them that their behavior, including their choices of words,

contributes to forms of social subordination. The defensibility of making such responses "outlaw"—that is, not how people are "supposed" to feel—rests in part on there being nothing to be learned from taking them seriously, nothing we do not already know about resistance to having one's privileges challenged. There may, of course, be much to learn from the fact that people do feel these ways, but the feelings are not themselves valuable epistemic lenses.

Much of the current dispute about "political correctness" can be seen as disputes about which responses ought appropriately to be seen as outlaw—not, that is, *outlawed*, if that even makes sense, but regarded as inappropriate, as epistemically unreliable. It follows from my first argument that any talk of emotions is deeply and pervasively normative, so there is no escaping such judgment of appropriateness, or any way of circumventing the politically tendentious nature of the judgments we make. Nothing simpler than attention to the specificities of a particular case will settle the question of what sort of epistemic weight we ought to put on a particular emotionally informed perception. Again, what is at stake is the identification of an appropriate "we" and our own, possibly problematic or partial, frequently critical, at times ironic, identification with it. Outlaw emotions can, for example, draw our attention to the dangers of excessive rigidity and a passion for purity, even with respect to values we wholeheartedly endorse. (Such was, of course, the original intent of the term "political correctness.")

III

I have been arguing that (1) any descriptive account of emotions is necessarily social, including normatively—that is, both generally and in specific cases, moral judgment enters into a descriptive account of our emotions—and (2) our emotional responses to situations and to each other necessarily inform the moral judgments that we make. I argue now that this circularity is benign and that it facilitates rather than undermines the possibility of the objectivity of moral judgment (and for that matter, the objectivity of the ascription of emotion, though it is moral judgment that I will focus on here).

In order to make this argument I need to explain what I mean by objectivity. I want to take as the motto for this account a quotation from Wittgenstein (1953, sec. 108): "The axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need." What is our "real need" with respect to objectivity? I suggest, especially with respect to the objectivity of moral judgment, that the need is for moral knowledge that is "commonable," that is, stably sharable across a maximal diversity of perspectives. Can moral knowledge be objective in this sense? (Alternatively, one might ask the question: is moral knowledge as opposed to moral

opinion] possible?) I can see no reason why it should not be, but we need to consider the conditions of its possibility—that is, the conditions of the possibility of moral judgment that we have good reason to believe will be stable across a maximal diversity of perspectives, that will remain in place and not be upset when the situation is looked at from perspectives different from those that have informed it heretofore.

The usual problems with respect to objectivity—that is, the reasons people who believe in its possibility think that it is difficult to obtain—are conceived of as problems of partiality defined as bias. Seeing the problem in this way leads to such things as ideal observer theories or other theories couched in terms of desirable forms of ignorance. Factual knowledge may need to be maximized, but following the dominant epistemology of empiricism with respect in particular to emotions (which takes it as necessary insofar as possible to bracket them), the emphasis is on an epistemology of parsimony. We need to bracket off those influences that are taken to be problematic, where "problematic" means in practice "likely to produce diversity of opinion."

But we could see the problem rather as one of partiality defined not as bias but as incompleteness. That is, a judgment we have come to seems acceptable to us, but we cannot be sure that someone will not walk through the door and say, "That looks wrong to me"—and that in the face of that challenge we will either agree right off that their claim has standing against our consensus or be persuaded eventually to change our initial assessment of it or them as mad, ignorant, romantic, childish, or whatever else. If this is the way that we think of the problem, then what we need is not an epistemology of parsimony, guarding us in advance against the possibility of objections, but rather an epistemology of largesse.⁸ We need to be expansive in who constitutes the "we" whose judgments and critical input help to shape the knowledge in question.

One way of addressing our "real need" with respect to objectivity is to ask what reason we have to believe that something we think we know will not be shaken by criticism coming from a yet unforeseen perspective. The best answer is that we have no reason to believe that. Our claim to objectivity rests precisely on the extent to which our practice makes such critique a real possibility. Rather than being able to argue in advance that no effective criticism could be forthcoming—because we have managed methodologically to anticipate and defuse it—we stake our claim to legitimacy, that is to objectivity, precisely on our record of having met actual, concrete criticism and thus earning the trust that we will do so in future. Objective judgments are more, rather than less, defeasible. What makes them count as knowledge—rather than, say, a working hypothesis—is their having come out of and been subjected to the critical workings of a sufficiently democratic epistemic community.

Largesse is not, however, the whole story. Not all voices are or should be equal. Not all perspectives afford usefully different vantage points. Not all criticisms should lead us to change our minds. The mistake of empiricist epistemologies—epistemologies of parsimony—has been to put faith in formal general principles of exclusion to erect a *cardem sanitaire* that would serve to discriminate a priori between those influences on belief that are appropriate and those that are not. But certainly in the realm of moral knowledge, as in any other knowledge that concerns human flourishing and harms, such faith is misguided. (Feminist philosophers of science and others have argued, persuasively, I believe, that it is misguided even in the “hard” sciences. See, for example, Longino 1990.) Discrimination—between the crackpot and the reasonable, the bigoted and the spiritedly partisan, the intolerant and the upright, the subordinated margins and the lunatic fringe—is both necessary and unavoidable. But nothing less substantive, less political, less controversial than fully messy engagement in the issues at stake, in the real differences between us, in the concrete ways in which various “we’s” are constituted, will enable us to make these discriminations in ways that do not beg the very questions they are meant to decide. Emotions, in particular, can be invaluable epistemic resources as often as they can be biasing distractions, and there is no way of formally deciding which is the case.

I want to discuss briefly one particular role of emotions in achieving moral objectivity. The principal barrier to the actual achievement of objectivity is power, that is, the ways in which hegemonic social locations are constructed and others are marginalized, silenced, or distorted. The thinking of those who occupy positions of authority and privilege is problematically and systematically parochial. The knowledge claims that we produce, whether moral or factual, are in need of critical examination from the standpoints of the subordinated. The reason for such critique is one Marx articulated in his discussion of ideology, and it has been developed by feminist standpoint theorists. (For an overview and critical discussion of this work, see Harding 1986, 1991.) To see the world from the perspective of privilege is to see it through distorting lenses that produce views that naturalize or otherwise justify the privilege in question. Those who are privileged are not doomed to view the world only through those lenses, but it is at the very least unlikely that learning to see differently will come about without the experience of listening to and learning from those who are differently placed—an experience not likely without conscious effort. Preempting or stigmatizing those other voices is a central strategy of the ideology of privilege: either we think we already know what they have to say, or we think we have reasons for rejecting in advance the possibility that what they say will be of value.

María Lugones (in a talk at the University of Minnesota) gave a very interesting example of this sort of critique by looking at the moral virtue of integrity defined as singularity of subjectivity and of will, including a direct connection between one’s will and one’s actions. (For a related discussion, see Lugones 1990.) From the perspective of the subordinated, there are two things that are evident. One is the visibility of the meant-to-be invisible facilitation provided by various kinds of social structures that step in and enable the intentions of the privileged to issue in actions that appear to have been done in a straightforward, direct, unmediated fashion. Marilyn Frye (1983) gives an illuminating example of this phenomenon when she suggests we see patriarchy through the analogy with a play that proceeds thanks to the invisible labor of stagehands (women) who are not meant to be seen. The play of patriarchy is disrupted—revealed as a play—when women stop looking at the play and at the actors and start looking at each other.

The second thing that, on Lugones’s account, becomes evident from the perspective of the subordinated is the necessity on their part of various sorts of ad hoc devices compensating for the meant-to-be invisible facilitations provided to the privileged by the social structure. Consider, for example, the ways in which language typically allows the privileged to say directly and straightforwardly what they mean. Part of the reason that it is so easy to ridicule attempts at bias-free language reform is that it really is awkward and graceless to avoid, for example, using the masculine as though it were generic. What we should learn from this discovery is just how pervasive and pervasively debilitating the biases in our languages are, how much they are set up to make some able to navigate smoothly while others systematically founder on jagged assaults to their self-esteem or engage in constant tacking against the wind in order to avoid them.

Similar situations arise in the realm of action. The privileged can (apparently) directly and straightforwardly do what they intend (“apparently” because we are not supposed to notice the assistance they are receiving, the ways in which all the paved roads are laid out to go where they want to go). The subordinated are driven to constructing various Rube Goldberg devices—in the realm of discourse, circumlocution; in the realm of action, manipulation. That is, everything that they do to make things happen, all the bits and pieces, are both patched together in a makeshift fashion and are also glaringly evident. They are “devious,” not “straightforward,” or so it seems from the perspective of privilege.

The articulation of such critical perceptions and their entry into the moral conversations of the privileged require what Lugones (1987) refers to as “world travel,” and various things go into effecting it. One is the cultivation of relationships of trust; another is the willingness of the

privileged to acknowledge others' views, including others' views of them; another is the evocation and the articulation of outlaw emotions and their acknowledgment as an epistemic resource; and a final one is attention to how we make each other up, especially across lines of privilege, how we create the possibilities of meaningfulness in each other's lives.

A crucial piece of such epistemic work is to transform dismissible cynicism and rage on the part of the subordinated into critique and transformation. As long as people feel effectively shut out of the procedures of moral conversation, they are likely to respond, if they respond at all, with global cynicism and inchoate rage, which are too easily dismissible, rather than with focused, specific, and intelligible critique, which has the possibility of being transformational. The work of creating a context in which this articulation can occur is in part the task of the more privileged, as it is the structures of privilege that have set the problem, and it cannot be solely up to those who are subordinated to take on the remedial education of those who continue to benefit from their subordination.

The progress toward moral objectivity is thus in the form of a spiral: as we become better at the forms of emotional engagement that allow the emotional resources, in particular of those whose perspectives have been subordinated, to become articulated and to be taken seriously by themselves as well as by the relatively privileged, then the terms of the descriptive apparatus for our emotional lives shift, which then allows for even more articulation of emotionally informed perceptual responses, and so on. What appeared to be a problematic circle is in fact a spiral, and if we have defined objective judgments as those that we have good reason to believe have been subjected to effective critique, existing in contexts that allow for the future possibility of further critique—that is, judgments that we have good reason to believe are stable across a wide range of different perspectives and that will shift, if they do, not capriciously but intelligibly—then it follows that the social constructedness of emotions and the ineliminable role of emotions in moral judgment work together in order to provide the possibility of moral objectivity.

Notes

1. For an extensive and very thoughtful discussion based on this (mis)reading of the argument, see Grimshaw (1986).
2. There is an extensive literature on what constitutes a disease, much of it concerned with arguing that what is called the "medical model" misidentifies as disease complexes of behavior and symptoms that take their significance from their social context. See, for example, Zita (1988).
3. This point is similar to the one Helen Longino makes in arguing for the importance of attending to "the specification, or constitution, of the object of inquiry" (Longino 1990, 99); she in turn acknowledges Michel Foucault and Donna Haraway.

4. I argue this claim, concerning all complex mental states, more fully in several of the essays in Scheman (1993) and in an unpublished manuscript, "Types, Tokens, and Conjoining Tricks."
5. Thanks to Daniel Hurwitz for deepening my reading of the sonnet, in particular, in insisting that the point cannot be that "it" simply is not love.
6. I discuss this example more fully in Scheman (forthcoming).
7. A much more subtle objection to the role that I give others in the identification of feelings (and a persuasive argument for serious attention to the inchoate) is explored in Sue Campbell's doctoral dissertation in philosophy at the University of Toronto, 1993, a revised version of which I understand will be forthcoming as a book.
8. I am indebted here to the account in Longino (1990) of objectivity as primarily a characteristic of scientific practice, rather than of theories or whatever else result from that practice, which practice is objective insofar as it embodies the conditions of effective critique, so as to take into account the essential role played by values. Presumably no one would argue that moral knowledge should be value free, but the problems of how to characterize objectivity in the face of diversity are not dissimilar.

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Part IV

Agency and Responsibility