

That We May Be Whole:

Doing Philosophy of Religion with the Whole Self

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The first time I workshopped a paper on trauma, the emotional preparation seemed almost as strenuous as my frenzied writing. This was a new experience for someone accustomed to arguing about the status of abstract property-universals. My apprehension arose not from fear of public speaking or philosophical criticism, but from the prospect of having to maintain the appearance of dispassionate distance from a topic in which I was deeply emotionally invested. The prospect of discussing the sadistic abuse of a friend as if it had been inflicted on the abstract entities that populate philosophical thought experiments, rather than a flesh-and-blood child, made me feel sick—even morally suspect. I had exposed the wounds and souls of my friends and myself to being poked by those for whom analysis was merely an academic exercise, for whom nothing of import hung on the conclusion of the argument. These weren't *bad* people. *They* weren't even the source of my trepidation per se—disciplinary norms were. My project was philosophical. As such there was a tacit expectation that we would treat it as if it were neither personal nor political (Kittay 2009a).

Since then I have encountered a number of analytic thinkers whose work transgresses the boundaries between the personal, the political, and the philosophical. Many of them describe similar experiences of trepidation in bringing their whole person to bear on their philosophical endeavors. Elizabeth Barnes recalls thinking that she could not do philosophical work on disability because she herself is disabled (2016, viii ff.). Eva Kittay reflects on the emotional burden of defending her disabled daughter from professional philosophers who would deny her a place in the moral community (2009a, 607-608). Susan Brison and Melissa Burchard reflect on the philosophical insights that we gain by taking their first-person experiences of personal and secondary trauma seriously (Brison, 2002; Burchard 2019). All argue persuasively that their personal investment in the subject matter, far from rendering them disadvantaged and problematically biased, gives them unique and valuable insight. Our philosophical conversations would not be complete without their contributions.¹ Within feminist philosophy and critical race theory the value of marginalized standpoints has come to be accepted almost as a given (as the abundance of work on standpoint epistemology shows), and theologians (our disciplinary cousins) have been working on theologies of gender, race, sexuality, ability, and post-colonial thought for decades. Yet, both their insights and the philosophical foundations that underlie them have been slow to gain traction within analytic philosophy of religion.² Here, the myth of the disembodied, dispassionate view from nowhere—which bears a striking resemblance to the view from cisgender, heterosexual, middle class, white, able-bodied Christian male—reigns. In this chapter I set

¹ Barnes makes this point with regard to the perspective of adoptive mothers, such as Sally Haslanger in the ethics of adoption, x.

² Although, there has been a notable surge in interest in these topics over the past few years, as evidenced by this volume, the volume of *Res Philosophica*, “New Frontiers in Philosophy of Religion,” and the volume that Michael Rea and I are editing (Under contract with OUP).

aside the question of whether or not the ‘God’s eye point of view’ has any place as a regulative ideal in our theorizing. Instead, I draw on feminist theories of epistemic injustice and oppression to argue that we cannot afford to continue to pretend that we *actually* occupy that view or that those of us who remain uninvested and disinterested in the answers to particular philosophical puzzles manage to draw closer to it than others.³ In the first two sections I sketch the dangers of attempting to do analytic philosophy of religion from this fictional perspective. In particular, I argue that it creates gaps in our collective knowledge—or what we might call, following Kristie Dotson, ‘reliable ignorance.’ Although not necessarily (initially) culpable, when embraced, reinforced, and then encoded in the structures and practices of the discipline, this ignorance becomes pernicious.⁴ It is pernicious in at least two respects. First, it distorts the results of our philosophical inquiry. Our theories end up incompletely at best, and false or positively harmful at worst. Second, though related, it does epistemic violence to members and would-be members of our philosophical community. Failing to see certain people as knowers, we quiet their testimony or encourage them to smother it themselves. In the third section I gesture towards some attitudes and practices that would help move analytic philosophy of religion toward greater epistemic justice, allowing more of us to practice philosophy with our whole selves.

³ Although standpoint epistemology also offers a helpful starting point for this discussion, I do not draw it to a significant degree in this chapter, both because I am not as competent in the literature as I would like to be and because I think it raises a number of issues regarding the nature of truth and knowledge that would need to be addressed for analytic philosophers of religion, but which I feel would take me too far afield.

⁴ My thanks to Kevin Timpe for suggesting this last step.

I. The Epistemic Limits of the View from Nowhere

Bertrand Russell describes the view from nowhere (as the position occupied by the ideal philosopher) quite vividly:

The free intellect will see as God might see, without a here and now, without *hopes* and *fears*, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, *dispassionately*, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledge—knowledge as *impersonal*, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for man to attain. Hence also the free intellect will value more the *abstract* and *universal* knowledge into which the *accidents of private history do not enter*, than the knowledge brought by the senses, and dependent, as such knowledge must be, upon an exclusive and *personal point of view* and *a body* whose sense-organs distort as much as they reveal (Russell 1969, 160, emphasis mine).

Although rarely made this explicit, I suspect that similar assumptions about the ‘proper’ mode of doing philosophy linger within analytic philosophy of religion (as elsewhere). I will not, however, argue for the claim that these assumptions are widespread in the present chapter. Not only is it a supposition that I believe many of my readers will find plausible, it is also one for which it is difficult to obtain sufficient and reliable evidence. Doing so would require extensive empirical data about the attitudes, beliefs, and implicit biases of the members of the sub-discipline, the latter of which would be especially difficult to obtain. My goals are more modest. I argue that this perspective *would* have negative effects *if* it were indeed (implicitly or explicitly) endorsed by some critical mass of analytic philosophers of religion. In particular, I argue that this perspective artificially limits the range of topics to which philosophers of religion can and should apply themselves; it wrongly circumscribes the range of evidence available to us; and it unjustly limits

the range of personal and social identities welcome within the subfield because it inflicts epistemic injustice upon those who cannot pretend to occupy the view from nowhere. Along the way, I offer anecdotes that, in addition to illustrating specific points, may support the plausibility, but not prove, the truth of my assumptions about the character of the field.

Among other things, Russell's description rejects emotion and particular, first-person, lived experience as playing legitimate roles in the project of analytic philosophy. Although he qualifies these claims with the phrase "as it is possible for man to attain," acknowledging the practical impossibility of perfect attainment of the ideal, it is clear that he believes that one should strive to limit these influences as much as is humanly possible. If this is the correct way to engage in analytic philosophy of religion, then it seems that analytic philosophers of religion should focus on topics that are universal and abstract, rather than particular, embodied, and concrete.⁵ Questions about the existence of a divine being, the evidential significance of suffering, and the rationality of religious belief (in general) would be welcome areas of inquiry, while the existential problem of evil, racism as a manifestation of American Christianity, the performance of gender in religious communities, or the role of atonement theory in religious abuse would be precluded, or at least discouraged. In other words, on Russell's view, a whole range of social and political questions that philosophers of religion might be in a position to address, and which might benefit from the rigors of philosophical analysis, are completely inappropriate or at least philosophically suspect. Given that humans are inherently social and political beings, and given

⁵ Admittedly, analytic philosophy of religion has concerned itself with a number of questions that are, in some sense or another, particular, embodied, and concrete, such as the incarnation, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and religious experience. However, much of this work has focused on abstract ontological or epistemic questions on these topics. What ontology of natures does one need to have to understand Christ's human nature? How is it possible for a substance to go out of existence while its accidents remain?

that most major world religions endorse things like obligations to members of one's family, love of neighbor, and care for the poor and socially disadvantaged, all of which are particular, embodied, and concrete, it would be both surprising and unfortunate if philosophers of religion had absolutely nothing to offer to our understand of such projects.

One way to respond to this observation is to appeal to the intellectual division of labor. There are inevitably many valuable things that philosophers could do with their time that they do not do because they are busy with the demands of their chosen profession. In fact, most philosophers could probably make a greater practical impact on the world by choosing some other career path. But insofar as we think there is value in intellectual pursuits for their own sake, it would be odd to argue that we have a religious obligation to abandon our philosophical careers in order to pursue the common good in some more practical way. Similarly, there are many other valuable philosophical projects in which any given philosopher *could* engage, but doesn't. Insofar as we are *analytic* philosophers of religion, we have every reason to engage in those intellectual inquiries appropriate to *analytic* philosophy of religion—the abstract, universal, disembodied inquiries with which we are already engaged. And, of course, it would be uncharitable to ignore the various ways in which these abstract, universal, apolitical inquiries have actually contributed to the common good. If one thinks that religious faith is valuable, as I do, then removing barriers to it posed by the problem of evil or accusations of irrationality is a great good—one to which many analytic philosophers of religion have *in fact* contributed for the common good.

I have no wish to deny that this is true. I think philosophers of religion have done philosophical and practical good through their work. Nonetheless, when I look at the example of rigorous analytic philosophical work in feminist philosophy, philosophy of race, philosophy of dis-

ability, and applied ethics I cannot help but think that Russell's perspective artificially limits the range of topics to which analytic thought may be applied. Sally Haslanger's pragmatic social ontology of gender is no less rigorous or analytic for taking on a topic that is particular, embodied, and inherently political (2000). So too for the work of Kristie Dotson, Elizabeth Barnes, Kate Manne, Charles Mills, Melissa Burchard, and a myriad of others (e.g., Dotson 2011; Dotson 2014; Barnes 2016; Manne 2017; Mills 1998, 2007; Burchard 2019). This demonstrates that seeing Russell's disciplinary norms as *essential* to the project of analytic philosophy is misguided. And I see no plausible reason to think that there is something about religion, as such, that requires exclusively abstract, universal, disembodied engagement with it. If that is right, then there is a whole range of issues that analytic philosophers of religion *could* be addressing, from which religious communities and society more generally might greatly benefit. Although I lack that data to say with any confidence what factors contributes to the paucity of engagement with these topics within analytic philosophy of religion, it seems plausible that assumptions about the appropriate mode of doing philosophy illustrated in the quote from Russell play a role to some degree. It may well be that philosophers of religion have systematically ignored these topics because of personal prejudice and the structural forces that such prejudice creates against the particular and the political.

Not only is it not the case that analytic philosophy of religion *must* be practiced in a dispassionate, ahistorical mode, but there may also be a whole range of valuable evidence, reasons, perspectives, and topics that we lose when we exclude emotion and lived experience from our theorizing. Consider first the value of lived experience. Recent work on transformative experience, pioneered by Laurie Paul, underlines the extent to which, at least for beings like us, what

we are in a position to know and reason about is limited by our life experience (Paul 2015). Before leaving the black and white room, Mary does not and cannot know what seeing red is like, even though she possesses all the propositional knowledge there is to be had about the nature of color vision (Jackson 1986). Indeed, our knowledge isn't just limited by our experience as a matter of contingent fact. Given our finite human nature, our knowledge is necessarily limited.⁶ A being like God may be able to occupy the view from nowhere *and* have access to the phenomenal knowledge of particular experience (e.g., Zagzebski 2008), but beings like us only have access to the phenomenal knowledge of things we have experienced and those that are sufficiently similar for us to make accurate inferences about them.

Laurie Paul's primary point is that we cannot use the resources of standard decision theory to decide whether or not to undergo a transformative experience because we cannot know what the experience will be like and because we cannot access the values and preferences we will have after we undergo that transformation. We simply cannot occupy the proper frame of reference from which to assign values to possible outcomes. But the importance of lived experience and the phenomenal knowledge that it provides isn't limited to decision theory. It relates to a number of issues within analytic philosophy of religion. Of course, there has been a great deal of work done on the significance, reliability, and evidential value of experience both within and without philosophy of religion: is it rational to believe on the basis of religious experience?, what sorts of experiences count as religious experiences?, etc.... But the quote from Russell would help explain why there is greater hesitance to philosophize *with* or *through* that very same lived

⁶ I take finitude to be an essential human property, and I take being a member of the substance kind one is to be an essential fact about that particular, so I take the finitude of our knowledge to be something essential about us. Even if that is wrong and our knowledge is only contingently limited, however, it is still a valuable direction for philosophical inquiry. I thank the editors, Kevin Timpe and Blake Hereth, for encouraging me to clarify this point.

experience. Phenomenal knowledge may provide knowledge, evidence, and reasons that one would not otherwise have. Knowing what certain kinds of suffering *are like*—in the same way that Mary comes to know what seeing red is like—and having experienced the changes that they effect on one’s value structures and preferences may be relevant for assessing the adequacy of a theory, for seeing the importance of a topic, for prudently navigating delicate philosophical issues. For example, knowing what it is like to experience religious trauma may better place one to evaluate the success of various theodicies and responses to the problem of divine hiddenness (Panchuk 2018). Not only does one come to know, phenomenologically, the kind of experience that a successful theory must account for, it also gives one access to the changes in values and preferences that impact whether a sufferer will be in a position to accept a particular theodicy. That is, the lived experience is important when responding to, and assessing responses to, the problem of evil both as a philosophical puzzle and as an existential problem. But no human trying to operate from the view from nowhere knows what that kind of trauma is like. Excluding the “accidents of private history” entails that, by definition, analytic philosophy of would lack this relevant range of insight. This is true across a number of issues that analytic philosophy of religion might otherwise address: male philosophers of religion do not know what it is like to experience religiously motivated misogyny; white philosophers do not know the pain of racial discrimination by those who claim to be brothers and sisters in the faith; some of us have never had a canonical religious experience, lost our faith, or converted to a new religion. All of these topics are ripe for analytic treatment, if only analytic philosophers of religion would abandon the view from nowhere and embrace the view from particular somewheres.

Not only does the exclusion of lived experience deprive us of epistemic resources relevant to the truth or falsity of our theories, it also makes it difficult, and perhaps even impossible, to see the negative practical impact that our theories may have. Black liberation, feminist, and womanist theologians often critique mainstream theology, not only for ignoring the experience of women and people of color in their theologizing, but for ignoring the ways in which theories that overlook the experiences of marginalized groups do positive, concrete harm to those already vulnerable communities (e.g., Williams 2013; Cone 2013; Brock and Parker 2001). For example, in *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us*, Rebecca Parker recounts her journey in realizing that the most prominent theories of the atonement valorize suffering in ways that have minimized and glorified the suffering of abused women and children. She recounts asking her congregation,

Do we really believe that God is appeased by cruelty and wants nothing more than our obedience? It becomes imperative that we ask this question when we examine how theology sanctions human cruelty. If God is imagined as a fatherly torturer, earthly parents are also justified, perhaps even required to teach through violence. Children are instructed to understand their submission to pain as a form of love. Behind closed doors, in our own community, spouses and children are battered by abusers who justify their actions as necessary and loving discipline...A God who [must punish] disobedience will teach us to obey and endure when it would be holy to protest...Atonement theology takes an act of state violence and redefines it as intimate violence, a private spiritual transaction between God the Father and God the Son. Atonement theology then says that intimate violence

saves lives...mak[ing] intimate violence holy and salvific. Intimate violence ends sin.

(2001, 30-31; 49)

One need not agree with Parker's claims about the connection between atonement theory and abuse to appreciate that the claim itself, and any appropriate response to it, would have to draw on knowledge of the lived experience of vulnerable individuals. It is only as Parker engages with abuse survivors within her parish, outside of the "ivory tower" of the academy that she becomes increasingly uneasy with mainstream approaches to the atonement, because only in that role does she confront the practical impact of those theories. While the task of discerning whether a particular point of theology is being misapplied or whether the appropriateness of a particular practical applications follows *logically* or *necessarily* from the doctrine is a fraught and challenging task, we are unlikely even to ask these questions if we strive to engage in analytic philosophy of religion only from the view from nowhere.

Similarly, James Cone describes his experience interacting with members of the Black church:

The poison of White supremacy is so widespread and deeply internalized by its victims that many are unaware of their illness and others often do not have the cultural and intellectual resources to heal their wounded spirits. In my travels around the world, I am amazed at how much people of color want to be White. They want to look like Whites, talk like Whites, and even pray like Whites. Many are still worshipping a White God and a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus—still singing, 'Wash me and I will be Whiter than snow.'

(2004, 141)

No respectable theologian would claim that God or Jesus is white. And yet, because whiteness is so often invisible as an assumed default, white Christians have remained oblivious to how artistic and theological representations implicitly assume as much. God in Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam" is an old white man who creates the first human to reflect that race. Blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus hangs on the wall in many 'color-blind' churches. Few of us have ever considered how metaphorically associating darkness with evil and whiteness with good might serve to reinforce systems of oppression—how singing "black is the color of my sin, the wrong that will keep my heart from Him" in Sunday school might hurt a Black child. We are confronted with the significance of the language we use to communicate abstract philosophical and theological ideas through the lived experience that Cone offers us in his testimony.

Finally, consider the relationship between emotion and knowledge. Although much of the philosophical tradition has been skeptical of the value of emotion, many feminist philosophers and virtue theorists affirm the importance of emotion in both epistemology and ethics. In her ground-breaking work "Love and Emotion," Alison Jaggar points out that the myth of the dispassionate investigator, far from protecting us from the ills of invested reasoning, actually intensifies this risk because it renders emotional investment, which we all inevitably experience, opaque and taboo, rather than transparent (1989). Furthermore, if one rejects the "unintelligent view" of emotion according to which they are mere bodily perturbations (as I believe one should) in favor of a view on which emotions are intentional and involve concepts, then there is reason to think that emotions can give us insight that might otherwise be difficult or even impossible to obtain. For example, Eva Kittay points out that it isn't just that her love for her disabled daughter makes listening to Singer and McMahan's arguments about her daughter's exclusion

from the morally community painful, but that both the experience and the existence of her love for her daughter reveals *facts* about the world that Kittay might not otherwise access (2009a, 623). Love, it is true, can distort one's perspective, making one insensitive to faults, unjustifiably hopeful, or encouraging one to unjustly favor the beloved over others; but it can also give one insight into the value of the other that one who does not love the other is likely to lack. The loving gaze is often a more insightful gaze because it enables the lover to see the beloved *as morally valuable*. Indeed, Kittay argues that the existence of her love for her daughter reveals that her obligations arise *not* from her own preferences, but from of the nature of her daughter and the social relation in which she stands to her. Certainly one might accept on testimony that someone else is a member of the moral community. One might judge that another falls within the moral community based on facts about that other that one reads off of their medical chart. But another way to come to know the moral value of another is *to experience them as a moral subject*, an experience that may be facilitated by loving attention to that other. If this line of reasoning is right, then perhaps rather than vilifying the fetus-loving pro-lifer, the "biased" parent of the gay child, or the angry atheist, we can recognize that their emotions may enable insight that we ourselves do not have insofar as we do not share the emotional disposition that facilitates the insight. In other cases there may be little reason to think that an emotion is epistemically valuable, but where the emotion is still be morally appropriate. Here the danger is not that the exclusion of emotion as such will be epistemically detrimental to our philosophizing, but that we may exclude members of the philosophical community from the philosophical conversation on the basis of morally appropriate responses to the content of the philosophical subject matter. This might make us philosophically worse off by excluding those who have valuable contributions to

make. In fact, those whose lived experience gives them the philosophically valuable insight I mentioned above may be disproportionately among those excluded on the basis of their emotional engagement with the subject matter. Even if we didn't think that Kittay, Haslanger, or Barnes had any special epistemic status with respect to disability or adoption, if we exclude them because they are emotionally invested in those topics, then we lose important voices.

If both lived experience and emotion can provide insight that we might not otherwise have, then a tacit commitment to dispassionate, disinteresting reasoning necessarily leaves gaps in our collective knowledge. In what follows I argue that these gaps are not morally benign because they constitute a kind of reliable ignorance that inflicts epistemic violence on members of our community.

II. The Silencing Effect of the View from Nowhere

It might initially seem that since all of us have and lack some lived experiences, and all of us experience emotions, a tacit exclusion of those things from philosophical discourse would limit us all equally in our philosophical endeavors. At worst it is a misfortune that we all share, not an *injustice*. Things are actually more complex. As I mentioned above, the view from nowhere often looks suspiciously like the view from the dominant group, so that the experiences and emotions most typical of cisgender, straight, able-bodied white Christian men aren't even recognized as particular experiences and emotions into which the accidents of personal history enter and which shape and impact their philosophizing.⁷ I remember a conversation I had a few years ago

⁷ Social epistemologists have theorized and documented this kind of opaque, but still predictable, ignorance that arises from being a member of a privileged group. See, for example, Jose Medina (2013) and Charles Mills (2007).

about the compatibility of the Christian faith with affirming the goodness LBGTQIA+ (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, etc...) gender identities, orientations, and romantic relationships. My interlocutor suggested that the fact that I have a sibling and several close friends from this community makes me biased in my assessment, while they, lacking such relational attachments, are able to view the issue more objectively. They weren't wrong about me. I am deeply, personally invested in the question of LBGTQIA+ inclusion in religious spaces. My interlocutor's mistake (which they now acknowledge) was in thinking that their view, as a cisgender heterosexual man with no close LBGTQIA+ friends, was *less invested* or *less biased* than mine. We were merely *differently invested*. The difference was that my interlocutor's investment was opaque, while mine was transparent—their investment was mistaken for the God's eye point of view, while mine was quite obviously impacted by the “accidents of personal history.”

The goal of this project is not to suggest that there is something inherently immoral about occupying that dominant perspective. I have no desire to expel the majority of analytic philosophers of religion from the discipline. Rather, it is to make their perspective—one that I, as a cisgender, white woman, largely share with them—transparent as a historically situated, invested, engaged position, with all of the limitations, biases, and insights that come along with it.⁸ If we fail to do so, the gaps in our collective knowledge will remain and continue to have pernicious effects on those who do not occupy the dominant perspective. Because traditionally under-represented members of the profession tend to be seen as the ones who are *especially* invested, *partic-*

⁸ There is an argument to be made that it is inherently more limited than other perspectives because subordinate groups are forced, in virtue of their subordination to develop what W. E. B. Du Bois calls “double vision.” But I will leave these considerations to the side for the sake of brevity.

ularly biased, and *inappropriately* emotional, those who do not occupy the dominant perspective are more likely to be unjustly assessed in their capacities as philosophers—and as knowers more generally. In this section I argue that when we remain ignorant of the fact that we ourselves fail to occupy the fictional view from nowhere, it is especially easy to inflict what feminist philosophers call *epistemic injustice* and even *epistemic violence* on our fellow philosophers.⁹

According to Kristie Dotson, epistemic violence in testimony “is a refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance,” where “pernicious ignorance” is a kind of ignorance that reliably arises from the gaps in the cognitive and hermeneutical resource available within a community and that has a tendency to harm others (2011, 242ff). Here the “cognitive and hermeneutical resource” refers to the concepts, interpretations, images, and cultural scripts that are present within a particular community. Miranda Fricker notes that there are usually aspects of the life and experience of marginalized people and groups that members of the dominate group have little interest in trying to understand (Fricker 2007, 152). As a result, the community may fail to develop the vocabulary, theories, or scientific knowledge necessary for making sense of that category of experience. Classic examples are the concepts of “sexual harassment” and “post-partum depression” prior to the women’s movement, but we might also include things like “white fragility” and “religious trauma.” The absence of these conceptual resources makes it difficult for individuals who experience the relevant phenomena to successfully communicate about them to others, especially when those others haven’t experienced them personally. All of us rely both on our in-

⁹ Gayatri Spivak first coined the term ‘epistemic violence’ in “Can the Subaltern Speak” (1998). Both Dotson and Miranda Fricker have identified various forms of epistemic harms and wrongs that are broadly related to this phenomenon. In addition to the two kinds of epistemic violence addressed here, they identify three kinds of epistemic injustices: testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice, and retributive injustice.

terlocutors and on broader social factors for the success of our linguistic exchanges. The social imaginary (the range of “live” possibilities or models that are socially imaginable), available hermeneutical resources, personal biases, and controlling images can all work against the speaker to make it impossible to get the desired uptake of their linguistic acts (Langton 1993, 22; Kukla 2014; Fricker 2007). In the case of epistemic violence, communication breaks down because interlocutors are reliably and perniciously ignorant. I contend that expectations within analytic philosophy of religion about philosophizing from the view from nowhere help to create an environment where reliable ignorance exists. The ignorance that concerns me in this paper is ignorance of the insight that individuals and groups may have in virtue of their particular, invested, historically-situated identities—that is, the knowledge arising from their lived experience and their affective engagement with it.

Following Dotson, I suggest that this pernicious ignorance may inflict two kinds of epistemic violence on some members of the sub-discipline: testimonial quieting and testimonial smothering (2011, 242 ff). Testimonial quieting occurs when the audience fails to identify a speaker as a knower with respect to a body of knowledge. The audience need not discredit the speaker as a knower *tout court* or ascribe to them any form of irrationality or cognitive deficiency; rather, they simply fail to see the person as someone who might be in possession of the kind of knowledge in question in a particular linguistic exchange or domain. As a result, the testimony is goes completely unheard—because it is never solicited or attended to—or is not appropriately heeded. Nancy Eiesland describes this form of epistemic violence in her assessment of the American Lutheran Church’s (ALC) failure to develop institutional policies that adequately re-

flect its ostensive theology of access. Eiesland diagnoses this failure as a refusal to place disabled people at the “speaking center” in the development of their theology:

In the ALC theology of access, the able-bodied church is at the speaking center. Persons with disabilities are the topic. The document addresses itself to the able-bodied church urging it to promote the needs of person with disability, rather than speaking directly to persons with disabilities within the denomination, empowering them to claim their voice and to assert their demands for justice. The comment features what the able-bodied church thinks it knows about person with disabilities and how that differs from what it actually practices. Even on the level of semantics, person with disabilities become third-person objects and the able-bodied church becomes the first-person subject. (1994, 82)

Individuals with disabilities were not invited to contribute to the development of the theology of access, and the history of the disability rights movement was largely ignored. Their testimony was quieted, either because it wasn't deemed important or because it was judged to be biased. As a result, only a few years later the very church that had resolved to work toward a theology of access barred people with “significant” physical or cognitive disabilities from ordination.

Although this example is drawn from a Christian denomination, it isn't hard to call to mind instances of similar quieting within analytic philosophy of religion. Take, for example, the controversy that arose within the Society of Christian Philosophers following a keynote address by Richard Swinburne at the Mid-West meeting in 2016. In the course of the Q/A, Swinburne suggested that gay individuals should seek to be cured of their sexual orientation “just as” people with “any disability” should seek to be cured. Members of the audience cited disability-positive

testimony as one reason to find this claim problematic, but Swinburne dismissed it out of hand. Later, when the president of the SCP made a public statement that included “regret regarding the hurt caused by the recent Midwest meeting of the Society for Christian Philosophers,” one philosopher responded on social media by saying, “The only appropriate response is ‘get over it.’ This is why conservatives decry Millennials as precious snowflakes.” Those who suggested that the “hurt” involved was more than mere offense but the deep pain associated with the history of horrendous abuses that have been inflicted on LBGTQIA+ and disabled people in the name of curing them were dismissed for being “emotional,” laughed at, and called names—silenced, not by physical coercion, but by suggestions that people “like them” are incapable of the rigors of rational argumentation. Suggesting that emotional pain and personal vulnerability were worth taking seriously in a philosophical debate was enough to get them dismissed as reliable sources of knowledge or contributors to the pursuit of knowledge. While many of the individuals targeted by those attempts at silencing were privileged members of the profession (at least along some dimensions), and so were not greatly harmed by the attempts to silence them, interactions like this contribute to a culture where expression of emotion is grounds for downgrading the credence in or attention to an individual’s argument. People who already lack privilege in the discipline are likely to be especially sensitive to even “minor” challenges like this. If enough members of the profession engage in such quieting, those subjected to it, especially those who are vulnerable along a number of social dimensions, may be greatly harmed over the course of their careers. Their work might be unfairly rejected from conferences. They might not be invited to give talks or to participate in other professional events. Such exclusion from the venues in which our work is assessed, criticized, and improved through engagement with our peers is likely to have a nega-

tive net effect on the quality and quantity of work that the philosopher produces, which in turn would likely have a negative impact on their prospects on a difficult job market. In short, the harm could be quite great.¹⁰

Awareness of the frequency of such quieting and the harm it can do is one of many reasons that some knowers ‘voluntarily’ choose to remain silent, limit their contributions to what they expect will be well-received by others, or hide significant aspects of their lives, experiences, and social identities that might otherwise contribute positively to philosophical discourse. Dotson calls this behavior testimonial smothering. Three conditions are characteristic of the phenomenon. First, the content of the testimony is unsafe or risky. Second, the audience demonstrates testimonial incompetence with respect to the content of the potential testimony. This may have already arisen in the context of the token conversation, or, as is more likely, it is a well-documented aspect of the cultural context. Third, “testimonial incompetence...follow[s] from, or appears to follow from, pernicious ignorance,” as defined above (Dotson 2011, 244).

If analytic philosophy of religion privileges the view from nowhere in the spirit of Russell’s description (as I suspect it does), then it is not difficult to imagine which speakers would be most likely to smother their own testimony. Even if emotion and lived experience can expand our knowledge as I argued above, they may also be used as grounds for dismissing or attacking another’s argument, strong-mindedness, and philosophical rigor. In such an environment, it would be reasonable for a philosopher to worry that expressing their emotions or offering their lived experience as evidence is too risky. And given an implicit or explicit commitment to the view from nowhere, it wouldn’t be unreasonable to assume that the risk arises from testimonial

¹⁰ I do not intend to make any claims about whether or how many members of our profession are actually so treated. I hope that it is small, but I fear that it is not.

incompetence that follows from pernicious ignorance created by the view from nowhere. That is, the characteristic environmental features that contribute to testimonial smothering may well be present within analytic philosophy of religion. Furthermore, if those who are not cisgender, straight, able-bodied, white, Christian men are more likely to be seen as not occupying that view, as especially emotional and especially biased, then it follows that members of under-represented groups in the profession are most likely to be in a position where they feel the need to smother their own testimony.

As I mentioned in the first section, many of the areas of inquiry where lived experience can give us important insight—religious trauma, horrendous suffering, racism—are the very kinds of experience that are likely to elicit strong emotional responses. In fact, those emotions may often be the morally appropriate responses to certain kinds of lived experience. Anger is an appropriate response to racism; sorrow and grief the right response to abuse; despair a sometimes unavoidable response to horrendous suffering. Some philosophers will not be able to engage with the issue into which they have unique insight without expressing (currently unwelcome) emotion. Others may be capable of stifling emotions, but believe that treating certain topics in a dispassionate manner is morally inappropriate or insensitive to the nature and content of the experience. This means that as long as expressions of emotion are assumed to have a skewing effect, those whose lived experience gives them insight, as well as those who have morally appropriate responses to it, are among those most likely to fall prey to testimonial silencing and smothering.

Let's return to Eiesland's example cited above. I have already suggested that the ALC's failure to place disabled people at the speaking center is a kind of testimonial quieting, but as

Eiesland herself suggests, the quieting both results from and contributes to the phenomenon of testimonial smothering. She suggests that because people with disabilities are so rarely placed at the speaking center, and because it is so difficult to obtain uptake of their testimony about their experiences as disabled persons, they often remain silent or else craft their testimony in ways specifically designed to satisfy the expectations and abilities—the reliable ignorance—of their non-disabled interlocutors. They smother the testimony they would like to give, because that testimony is risky, and non-disabled people consistently demonstrate testimonial incompetence with respect to it. This is largely due to a social imaginary that can only cast disability as both negative (something that necessarily makes one worse off) and individual (not caused by socially-structured lack of accessibility). Consider bell hooks' assessment of such situations:

If the identified audience, those spoken to, is determined solely by ruling groups who control production and distribution, then it is easy for the marginal voice striving for a hearing to allow what is said to be overdetermined by the needs of that majority group who appear to be listening, to be tuned in. It becomes easy to speak about what that group wants to hear, to describe and define experience in a language compatible with existing images and ways of knowing, constructed within the social frameworks that reinforce domination. (1989, 15)

Of course, such testimonial smothering makes it less likely that disabled people will be placed at the speaking center in the development of theological resources. Their absence from that conversation perpetuates an environment in which they feel pressured to smother their testimony.

And the vicious cycle continues.

Although I am sure that this phenomenon is most intense for individuals who live and work at the intersection of a larger number of marginalized groups than I myself do (after all, I am a white, cisgender, middle class woman), I have felt this pressure myself. In my work on religious trauma, it is easy to allow the existing narratives and debates in philosophy of religion to determine the way that I frame the problem. It is easy to use detached, intellectualized, tidy narratives, rather than offering the invested, emotional, and messy reality of the phenomenon. It is easy to pretend that I count others, and not myself, among those who live in the wake of religious trauma, lest I be dismissed as angry, bitter, or biased (or at least angrier, more bitter and more biased than merely working on the topic suggests). I have insight from lived experience that I usually do not share in conference presentations and published articles for fear of giving myself away—for fear of being stereotyped, dismissed, and misunderstood. This is perhaps most palpable in philosophical discussions of atonement theory. Rebeca Parker’s critique of atonement theory cited above resonates with me because it aligns with my own experience of abuse in Christian community. The fear and inner conflict of a child witnessing and subject to violence, who wants nothing more than to protect those she loves, but who believes that God blesses submission to abuse rather than resistance—that was my fear. Mine were the vain attempts to find joy in submitting to abuse inflicted in the name of God, the name of the cross, the name of the atoning Christ. When the cross is what you deserve, anything short of that is “grace.” So I listen to defenses of penal substitution and vicarious punishment with shaking hands, racing heart, and tears welling in my eyes (Murphy 2009; Craig 2018). I stifle the desire to say, “Do any of you have the slightest idea what it feels like to watch helplessly while someone you are supposed to trust hurts someone you love? If you did, you would know that *this* could never be a just pun-

ishment for any sin, no matter how horrendous. You would know that *this* is not *grace*—that is not *mercy*,” or “Do you know what it is like to try to love and trust someone who doesn’t care *who* they get to hurt, as long as they get to hurt someone?” or “How can you all talk about this as if it is an abstract puzzle? Don’t you know vulnerable people have lived and died, suffered or thrived, on the outcomes of your theory? Don’t you know that some people’s faith depends entirely on whether or not your theory of the atonement makes God out to be just like their abusers?” But I don’t. I smother my testimony, my questions, my horror, and my grief. I don’t trust the majority of my fellow philosophers to look on them, or me, with respect. I don’t trust them to even consider the possibility that my revulsion arises from moral sensitivity, from moral insight, from knowledge. And I do not often trust myself or have the confidence to accept the value of my lived experience in the face of a profession that devalues it. The lines between self-confidence, intellectual honesty, epistemic humility, internalized self-doubt, and testimonial smothering are all too thin. And so, I write this wondering if I am brave enough to leave this paragraph in the final draft—if I am willing to take the very risk that I have argued there is epistemic value in taking.

I do not want to suggest that my or anyone else’s lived experience renders our perspectives and critiques unassailable. No one claims that the testimony of those with lived experience is epistemically indefeasible. Like anyone, my own own beliefs on these matters may be mistaken. Like any evidence, lived experience can be misleading. But none of this changes the fact that lived experience can be, and often is, epistemically valuable and that testimonial smothering and quieting in general are bad both for the philosophers subjected to it.

At this point, one might object not so much to the thesis of this chapter, but to my specific framing of the problem. One might claim that in the contemporary academy, and even in analytic philosophy of religion, it is not the perspective of women, people of color, abuse survivors, or LBGTQIA+ individuals that is under-represented, silenced, and smothered; rather one might think that it is the perspective of conservatives, especially conservative white Christians, that is undervalued. It is true that there has been a shift in the views that dominate the academy in recent years, and those with more conservative views often feel less confident expressing them than they used to. It is undoubtable that in some cases and contexts traditional and conservative views are silenced. I do not want to claim that it is a necessary truth about the view from nowhere that it disadvantages women, people of color, LBGTQIA+ individuals, and liberal perspectives. This is one reason in the first section I included the Christian pro-life perspective as one that is often caricatured. However, when assessing this objection, it is important not to ignore the facts of the past and their lingering impact on our sub-discipline. While the winds of change have been blowing in the academy for some time, and they are beginning to blow in analytic philosophy of religion, for most of the history of contemporary philosophy of religion (and even its Medieval manifestations), it has been dominated by cisgender, straight, white, able-bodied, conservative Christian men. The average analytic philosopher who doesn't work on philosophy of religion can name a host of prominent white male philosophers of religion with little thought (Alvin Plantinga, Peter Van Inwagen, William Alston, Richard Swinburne, William Hasker, John Hick, William Rowe, Robert Adams, etc...), possibly 3 women, and probably no

philosophers of religion of color or from the LBGTQIA+ community.¹¹ This suggests that when we are assessing actual or potential epistemic violence, which is a phenomenon inherently tied to social forces and power dynamics, we must keep in mind that it is women, people of color, LBGTQ+ individuals, and other social identities who have been under-represented. While it is possible for a conservative male philosopher to find his testimony silenced, or even smother it himself because of assumed testimonial incompetence, the silencing is likely to do him less harm as a knower and have fewer negative epistemic repercussions for the sub-discipline as a whole in the current contingent conditions of the discipline than when members of other, less represented groups are silenced. Furthermore, it is unlikely that in any given instance a marginalized member of the profession would react badly to a conservative's perspective because of reliable ignorance. As a general rule, those who are marginalized within a community are more likely to have a working understanding of the traditional and more dominant perspectives—even, or especially, the ones they reject—than the privileged are to have an equal knowledge of non-dominant perspectives. This phenomenon is often called “double vision” (Medina 2009; Narayan 2007). The marginalized must understand the dominant perspective to “make it,” while the privileged can completely ignore perspectives they do not share. This is why epistemic injustices are usually defined such that they only apply to marginalized groups (Fricker 2006).¹² Furthermore, the position I advocate for in this chapter is that we include more people, perspectives, testimony, and evidence, not less. Insofar as a view favors exclusion, harsh moral judgements of other identi-

¹¹ This is not an argument that representation should remain this way, only that as a matter of contingent and lamentable fact, it is currently this way. My hope is that these structural issues can be corrected and that we will achieve greater visibility of a wider range of analytic philosophers of religion in the coming years.

¹² Although I have argued elsewhere that such definitions often make it more difficult for us to see certain kinds of harms, it is still important to recognize the differences (Panchuk under review).

ties, or a refusal to make the profession more welcoming and accessible to those others, it is *prima facie* more plausible that it will be epistemically violent than a view that promotes inclusion.¹³

In this section I have argued that our mode of philosophical theorizing has created a form of pernicious ignorance that is both epistemically violent and philosophically distorting. What is less clear is what we are to do about this as a sub-discipline. In the next section I suggest an attitude and a practice that would serve to ameliorate our ignorance so that it is less likely to be pernicious, though additional attitudes and practices are surely needed as well.

II. Ameliorative Attitudes: Making Room for the Whole Self

The alternative to the pernicious ignorance that arises from taking oneself to occupy (something close to) the view from nowhere requires both the attitude of epistemic humility and the practice of emotional labor. The first of these is one of the maxims suggested by Eva Kittay in her work on ethical practices in philosophical theorizing (2009b, 136). She argues that in order to theorize ethically, one must know what one does not know. In the context of this chapter, I suggest that the needed epistemic modesty will require (at least) two things: (1) recognizing the ways in which all of us are historically positioned, invested, and limited by our experiential knowledge and our social relatedness, (2) recognizing that others who are differently situated are also historically positioned and invested in ways that may give them insight that we lack. Both of these are involved in Fricker's description of the virtue of epistemic justice (2007, 86-108). Epistemic jus-

¹³ I thank Michael Rea and the members of the audience at my presentation at the 40th Anniversary meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers for pressing me to clarify this point.

tice involves compensating for our tendency to downgrade the testimony of those who are socially marginalized by giving them a higher credence than we would otherwise tend to give them. I take this compensation for our learned credibility deficit to be a sort of epistemic humility—a willingness to lower our credence that our own perspective is superior and raise our credence in the perspective of marginalized others. On a practical level, this might involve actively pausing when we are swift to reject a critique or comment because of the social identity of our interlocutor or because of the emotions that they express. It might involve stopping to consider the possibility that they are right and we are wrong, perhaps especially when they espouse a view that conflicts with our assumptions and religious traditions.

What epistemic humility does not require is adopting a radical form of metaphysical or epistemic relativism, according to which there are not objective facts of the matter or it is impossible for us to gain objective knowledge. From the claim that it is practically and epistemically harmful for knowers *like us* to philosophize as if we can occupy a God's eye point of view, it does not follow that *God* does not or should not occupy such a view. In fact, part of my critique rests on the very assumption that there *are* objective truths that we are likely to miss when we engage in philosophy as Russell suggests.¹⁴ Relatedly, epistemic humility does not require acquiescing or endorsing every position held by a traditionally marginalized philosopher of religion or every idea expressed with emotion. Under-represented philosophers are no more a monolith than white men. We endorse a wide range of, often mutually exclusive, views. My proposal

¹⁴ Although we are working within different traditions and with different assumptions, Simmons's (2012) work has influenced my thinking on this point.

only requires that we not be excluded for failing to engage in philosophy free from passion and the “accidents of personal history.”¹⁵

But merely acknowledging that others may have access to knowledge that we lack and adjusting our credences accordingly will be insufficient to prevent pernicious ignorance if our conceptual resources and assumptions prevent us from grasping the content of another’s testimony to begin with. In the second section I mention the notion of hermeneutical injustice, which occurs when the hermeneutical resources available within a community are inadequate to express the experience of marginalized groups. Fricker suggests that to overcome the obstacles that this lack of resources creates we must develop the virtue of hermeneutical justice (2007). To this end, she argues that when a member of a marginalized group describes an experience that initially sounds non-sensical to us, we should assume that they are trying to communicate something important. We should consider the possibility that either they or we lack the vocabulary or the conceptual framework to make this important reality mutually comprehensible. This forces us to listen charitably and respectfully and to work for mutual understanding *before* we attempt to evaluate the testimony. Something similar is required to overcome the barriers created by entrenched assumptions in our discipline. When a marginalized other speaks from lived experience, with emotion, from an obviously “invested” position, I argue that we must do the emotional labor of seeking to *empathetically understand* what they are communicating and how it is relevant for our theorizing. This requires that we engage in the practice of empathy, which requires emotional labor.

¹⁵ I thank several members of the audience at my presentation at the 40th Anniversary meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers for pressing me to clarify this point.

We can learn something about the experience of those who occupy different positions from our own through quantitative data. Male philosophers of religion might read statistics about sexual harassment in the discipline, in the church, or the mosque. Able-bodied philosophers can learn the history of abuse of the disabled community, including (and perhaps especially) abuse by religious communities. But this alone may be insufficient to understand what it is like to experience those things. If Laurie Paul is right, it is simply impossible to know what some experiences are like unless we have them for ourselves. Nonetheless, I believe empathetic listening can do much to overcome some of this inevitable cognitive gap. By empathy, I mean something like cognitively modeling the emotions and lived experience of another while maintaining the distinction between the self and the other. As Barrett Emerick points out, it involves not trying to figure out how you would feel in another person's shoes, but what it is like for them to occupy their own shoes (2016, 176). He suggests that it involves apprenticing oneself to the other and treating them as a knower of their own lived experience and emotional engagement with the world. This labor is not easy, and it is not without costs. It is painful to listen empathetically to the stories of gay religious individuals, of those traumatized by their faith communities, and of disabled people belittled and dismissed in the name of God. It requires listening to the arguments of those who express anger, grief, offense, emotional pain, and love without dismissing them, and accepting that these very emotional responses may provide insight into the topic they address. Yet, to abandon this labor of love is not only to abandon those who suffer; it is also to act irresponsibly, ignoring a range of epistemic resources in favor of our own privilege and comfort.

When we philosophize with our whole self and allow others to do so as well, we recognize and embrace the ways in which we are *all* personally invested. Only then can we work to correct our tendency to unjustly discount the arguments of others. We might grasp that when someone explains that to discuss a particular theodicy, they must first overcome the panic induced by hearing that their rape was an opportunity to foster intimacy with the divine, they are not confessing to a cognitive distortion. We might see the trans person who expresses outrage at claims of trans deviance as offering an important corrective, because we understand that cisgender philosophers are no less invested in being cis than transgender philosophers are in being trans. Such realizations can also force us to acknowledge the great responsibility we bear in our religious philosophical endeavors. Our theories and our arguments impact real people with real religious and non-religious lives. Finally, doing philosophy with the whole self allows us to subvert religious discourses that have been distorted by the fragmented modes of the past. With hard work and a bit of grace, philosophy of religion can become not just more inclusive, but more wholly truthful.

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