

We've Come to See the Wizard! Revelations of the Enlightenment Epistemologist

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As I reflect on President Siegel's beautifully crafted, elegantly argued presidential paper, an image set in a larger narrative continues to haunt me. The odyssey of Dorothy (a paradigm inclusionist!) and her very diverse companions in *The Wizard of Oz* and their revealing encounter with an Enlightenment Wizard seems to me a poignant extended metaphor for our presidential gathering. Some of us have, magically, flown long distances and transcended time zones and hemispheres to be here; some of us have traveled by way of yellow brick interstates. Some of us have come in quest of valid arguments, subtle distinctions, insights into programmatic definitions, and lethal counter-examples. A few may even have come with a hunger for a transcendental deduction or two. And we have not been disappointed. As a self-identified Enlightenment epistemologist and internationally-respected critical thinker, Harvey Siegel's serious exploration of tensions surrounding inclusion and exclusion, particularity and universality should prove satisfying to those engaged in such quests.

For a long time I was a philosopher who embarked on such quests. I no longer do so quite so frequently. I agree with Naomi Scheman who notes that "Many of us who became academic... theorists were schooled to be the Wizard of Oz." Scheman then discusses dangers involved in the shift from being a finite but transcendent generic universalizer (that is, the Wizard) to becoming a more politically aware, principled liberal theorist committed to eradicating objectionable epistemic marginality by incorporating appropriate diversity into their theorizing. Scheman refers to the latter kind of theorist as a "Grand Canonical Synthesizer."¹ I believe that Siegel's ideas involve such a shift. As a commentator, I want to identify various logical spells, mystifications, shifting paradigms, logical incantations, illusory transparencies and paradoxes which invite us, listeners and readers, to become Grand Canonical Synthesizers too.

PARADIGMS, PARADOXES AND PERPLEXITY

When I read (and reread) the manuscript of the Presidential Address I found I had nothing to say! Nothing! I set aside the terror that such a response strikes in the cerebral cortex of a commentator. When I started to explore this response, I concluded that, in some ways, I had advertently wandered into a logical poppy field whose transcendent logical allure left me feeling that it was inconceivable that I should ever want to leave. This perplexed me to know/no end. So I call this the paradox of perplexity since I found that no matter how I turned, epistemologically speaking, I was still where I started.

This perplexity results from the transcendental argument so dear to Siegel's heart:

If I agree with Siegel, then I agree with Siegel;
If I disagree with Siegel, for there to be genuine disagreement, I must still agree with him on shared meta-criteria concerning rational standards;

These meta-criteria concerning rational standards are universal in scope. (the Enlightenment postulate);

Therefore: If I agree, I agree;
 If I disagree, I still agree;
 No matter what position I take, I agree.
 So no genuine disagreement with Siegel's central thesis is possible.

But this is very bizarre. How can this still be a genuine philosophical discussion and no disagreement be possible? It can't.

TRUTH TELLING IN THE FOOTNOTES: DESCRIBING THE CENTRAL PARADIGM

In note 43, Siegel remarks, "standards must have *epistemic punch* to be worthy of the name; without such *substantive force*, the problem of justifying the standard of inclusion remains" [emphases added]. In note 32, Siegel says, "A *stronger* thesis, that universality is *required* for the justification of particular claims, is one that I endorse." Similarly, he rhetorically defines, with Thomas Nagel, "the" only admissible universalistic paradigm of philosophy by suggesting that "to give up on universality is to give up on philosophy itself." Recognizing the legitimacy of empirical claims to systemic exclusion from epistemological theorizing, Siegel recommends an additive model of inclusion, saying "When *we* include others in our discourses *and as objects of our theories* we include also their particularity" (emphases added).

This is a discourse of toughness, strength, power, and punch. This is a discourse of rigorous justification, principled exclusion and inclusion, and a merciless -- though humane -- defense of the centralism of epistemic privilege based on critical thinking. Here are the foundational assumptions which generate practices of paradigm monopoly and eliminate the epistemological significance of epistemological subjects who speak from and through systemic oppressions and resistance.²

My role here today is not to dispute these claims, but to notice them, to name them, and to claim -- audaciously, without argumentation -- that there are other alternatives, other styles of articulation, other routes, that can lead us to understanding, to insight, to knowledge, to wisdom and, yes, to epistemology. There are other epistemological paradigms. We need to remember that when we are in the poppy fields of the Enlightenment.

THE DANCES OF THE LOGICAL KNIVES

Once upon a time I thought of myself as a critical thinker. (On some Thursdays I still do, I must confess) As a critical thinker, I will approach this section with a serious and elevated sense of myself as a rigorous, transcendent subject assessing the logical merits of a theoretical text. Now I see philosophers and other critical thinkers who engage in this kind of performance as rivals engaged in something dangerous, something involving knives, blood, and death -- a kind of lethal epistemological dueling, rigorously regulated by meta-criteria of rational standards. Arguments and their transcendent authors stand up to rigorous attacks and thwart potentially deadly counter-examples.³ Successfully -- and individualistically -- running the gauntlet in public philosophy carnivals is a well-rewarded existential sport for professional philosophers and graduate aspirants. Looking for weakness, for logically vulnerable spots, for the holes in the armor of arguments are central to the ritual. Here is how the knives attack. Note the moves. Guard against the wounding. Be prepared to mount a logical defense. Ask yourself whether these remarks flow from a spirit of generosity. Ask yourself whether they lead to intellectual and personal openness, to calm philosophical reflection, to the building of a community of philosophers of education where caring and intellectual illumination nurture each other.

DANGEROUS EQUIVOCATIONS:

1. anemic generalizations (such as aggregated particularity) are equated with rich-blooded universality so that additive aggregates are offered as the full definition of inclusion;

2. referential indeterminacy over what should be included under "inclusion": voices, views, interests, attributes, experiences, points of view -- alternatives which are clearly not logically or epistemically equivalent (or desirable or even feasible);
3. "inclusion" defined, variously, as "seeking out," "making room for" "taking seriously" -- each of which is linked to a different political and epistemic programmatic while, tellingly, leaving the centrality and transcendent Wizard status of the epistemic subject doing the seeking, making room for, and taking seriously unproblematized;
4. the equation of "rational standards," "abstract reasoning" and "accepted ideals of reason." Clearly, these phrases can have very different meanings and do not stand in any sort of mutual entailment relationship unless one accepts certain rationalist Enlightenment postulates from which these entailment relationships may follow;
5. the equation of "qualifications" and "expertise" couched in illustrative contexts so as to produce a culture of expert elitism in a larger setting of unproblematized credentialist exclusionary practices. One consequence of this equation is the production of a range of "justifiable grounds" for exclusion.

TRANSCENDENTAL QUESTION-BEGGING:

Siegel asks us to think about the question of adjudicating between alternative rival concepts of philosophy. To do this we are to ask: Which conception is more defensible? Although appearing to be a plausible question (somewhat on the order of which is more defensible: seat belts or air bags), it is a question to be resisted for a variety of reasons. First, we need to ask: why are we asking only this *one* question? Second, we need to ask: why should we be asking *this* question and not some other questions such as what insights might we derive from employing a multiplicity of conceptions of philosophy rather than just one? Third, we need to see that if we even tentatively tiptoe in the direction of trying to answer the question, we are back in the poppy field of perplexity since the rules for adjudication presuppose the pre-eminence of Siegel's paradigm. This is not to say that, in some circumstances, we might not try to address this question, but we first need to deconstruct and de-center the question in the search for epistemic insight.

MISLEADING EXAMPLES:

Example (1): In his discussion of ethical universalism, Siegel claims that,

if, as philosophical consultant to Amnesty International, I am engaged in the project of constructing a theory accounting for the immorality of torture...my theory need not *and should not* (emphasis added) concern itself with the particularities of the victims...their particularity...will be simply *irrelevant* (emphasis in text) to the moral wrongness of the deeds.

But surely this is mistaken. Torture may have a generic kernel which any human being could agree on, but it is also true that the most excruciating forms of moral, psychological, and emotional torture may have large, culturally constructed and culturally mediated dimensions to them. A rape is a rape is a rape, at one level. But a rape may also be culturally mediated and its symbolic construction and torture-laden destructive consequences far exceed any "basic action," a naturalized and decontextualized description of the sort called for by Siegel's principled methodological exclusion of particularity.

Example (2): Again, Siegel uses the examples of contemporary biological theories and current medical practice as instances where a clearly demonstrable systematic historical exclusion of "women and non-European men" has had no deleterious effect. Basing his claim partially on feminist scholarship, Siegel claims that these biological theories "enjoy impressive epistemic credentials," which "we" acknowledge when "we" "visit a trained physician." But who are "we" here? He can't mean such feminist biologists and theorists such as Bleier, Fausto-Sterling, Fox Keller, Haraway, Harding, Hubbard, Oudshorn, Rose, Schiebinger, and Spanier because their highly

analytic critiques of contemporary biological theory point out precisely the woefully inadequate epistemic credentials of much of the research addressing questions of sex, gender, race, and class.⁴

Siegel's sanguine remarks regarding physicians suggest that their author is a relatively privileged white male who can point to a body of vast and expensive factually and normatively androcentric health research and training, supported by a culture committed to keeping him and similar men in positions of rationalized dominance. The history of *women's* health care -- which documents and contextualizes the misogynistic theorizing of women's bodies through oppressive frames of race, class, sexual orientation, and compulsory fertility and the correlative infantilizing paternalistic practices of the "trained physician" -- does not support the claims to impressive (and apolitical) epistemic credentials.⁵ In the case of biological theorizing *and* medicine, exclusion has led to devastating and lethal consequences. It is only through enchantment that these two examples can be offered in support of exclusion and explicitly de-cultured particularity.

DUBIOUS DUALISMS:

Like many rationalist Enlightenment thinkers, Siegel is much enamored of dual/dualistic thinking, the result of which is the production of powerful dualisms which often employ eclipsing reductions. Here are value-laden dualisms which permeate the paper:

universality -- particularity
 all -- nothing
 expert -- amateur
 we -- they
 inclusion -- exclusion
 transcendence -- immanence
 necessary -- sufficient
 included groups -- excluded groups
 rationally justified truths -- social justice and transformation

In each case, because of the value-laden asymmetries bound up with Siegel's arguments, the reader is led down the path of rationally-justified propositional arguments to prefer, and to regard as epistemologically significant, only the left-hand member of each pair. There is no problematizing of any particular dualism, of the tendency to dualistic thinking, or of the (dys)utility of thinking of the challenges of inclusion in dualistic terms. While I find these cumulatively dazzling, I have learned, often the hard way, of the intellectually and politically procrustean effects of such thinking.

ROADSIGN 1: PERILS OF EXCLUSION AHEAD

With the rationally-justified denial of the epistemic significance of particularity, excluded groups, amateurs, and politicized systems of knowledge, comes explicit exclusion, silencing, and devalorization of knowledge claims that do not come commodified in propositional/argument form. When I agreed to respond to the Presidential Address on the subject of Inclusion in epistemology, I was very excited. I respect Siegel's philosophical talents, his spirit of generosity, the seriousness with which he engages with challenging scholarship, and his deep political commitment to openness of voice. So it was with a real sense of anticipation that I looked forward to seeing what he had to say of the various epistemological theorists whom I find insightful, moving, challenging, and catalyzing of my own travels in epistemology. I was keen to see what he would do with Sandra Harding's notion of lesbian standpoint epistemology, or with Cornel West's work on prophetic pragmatism.⁶ I was intrigued to see how he would theorize the radical challenge to the Enlightenment epistemic subject articulated in the theorizing of Maria Lugones or Gloria Anzaldúa.⁷ I wanted to know how he would respond to Patricia Hill Collins's model of Afrocentric epistemology or with Patricia Williams's refusal to engage in analytic theorizing in order to promote illumination.⁸

Surely, I thought, a paper on inclusion should practice inclusion, but these "outsiders" are not present in Siegel's paper. This absence speaks to our collective loss, and also speaks to our society which is made up of many wizards who continue to adhere to Siegel's epistemological norms. It is not an accident that, as a society, we are largely composed of white, middle class, professionally credentialed individuals who are often admitted as legitimate only after we have satisfied other wizards that we, too, can cast the spells of Reason.

There might be justifying reasons, bound up with Siegel's enlightenment paradigm, why these contemporary epistemologists are not there. He might reply, for example, that: "They are not doing epistemology." or that "They are not trained and credentialed epistemologists" or that "The particularizing focus of their work lacks the requisite universality to be considered of epistemological significance." There are many ways to exclude. Paradigm invocation is a powerful one.

Another exclusionary move is expert invocation, a move with which Siegel is clearly comfortable when he explicitly eliminates his grandmother and his grandfather although, interestingly, we are offered no justifiable reasons for these exclusions. (I am assuming that grandparent status *per se* doesn't count as a justifiable reason because that would be ageist bias of the most obvious sort.) My own movement of epistemic spirit is to want to talk to, to listen to, and to learn from the potential knowledge and wisdom that Harvey's grandmother, for example, has accumulated in her lifetime. Philosophy of Education presidents do not grow on gumdrop trees -- philosophers as talented and committed as Harvey Siegel have been nurtured and supported not only by philosophical mentors, but by parents and by parents of those parents. Were it possible, I would want to unearth the subjugated knowledges in Harvey's grandmother's heart and history were she still alive.⁹ I would want to listen to her tell not only her own story, but to articulate her more theoretical sense of the systemic connections concerning anti-semitism, American culture, and a woman's life lived in a tradition which prizes intellectual excellence in its sons. No epistemological paradigm can claim my allegiance which so explicitly rules her out as an epistemic subject.

ROADSIGN 2: PERILS OF INCLUSION AHEAD

How to include -- that is the question! Or is it? At least three perilous alternatives tempt us:

1. THE "THEORIES R US" APPROACH:

To illuminate this approach I use a short parable. My son Daniel wants, like many children, to play with other children on the weekend. When arranging for the children to get together, I inquire about locale. Daniel's invariable response is, "I want them to come to play here, Mom." When I ask "Why?" he replies, "Because I have the best toys."

In his Presidential Address, Harvey Siegel says, "When we include others in our discourses and as objects of our theories, we include also their particularity." How is this sense of "inclusion" different from Daniel's? It continues to presuppose that Siegel's theories are "the best toys" and that, given his universality assumption, these theories R Us. Objectified particularity may not be lost through this process, but particularized epistemic subjectivity is clearly eliminated.

2. PSEUDO-INCLUSION:

How The Grand Canonical synthesizer Works: Identified by bell hooks and other theorists of color, this perilous alternative involves continuing to privilege white, credentialed theorizers who use particularized, concrete narratives of women and men of color as "experiential data" in the name of improved inclusive theorizing while they themselves as white theorizers continue to occupy an epistemological and institutional pride of place.¹⁰ Such a move involves the appropriation,

exploitation, and the explicit denial of originary epistemic subjectivity of women and men of color and members of other systemically excluded groups.

3. TERRORIST INCLUSION:

In the chapter, "Crimes Without Passion," Patricia Williams remarks that

We, as law teachers, create miniworlds of reality by the faith that students put in our tutelage of the rules of reality. We define the boundaries of the legitimate and the illegitimate, in a more ultimately powerful way than almost anyone else in the world. It is enormously important therefore to consider the process by which we include, as well as the process by which we exclude.¹¹

Williams illustrates this by citing examination questions that are common in law schools throughout the United States including:

a constitutional-law exam in which students are given the lengthy text of a hate-filled polemic entitled "How to Be a Jew Nigger" and then told to use the first amendment to defend it;
numerous criminal-law exams whose questions feature exclusively black or hispanic or Asian criminals and exclusively white victims;
many, many questions in which women are beaten, raped, and killed in descriptions pornographically detailed (in contrast to streamlined questions, by the same professors, that do not involve female victims).¹²

Williams's discussion includes not only many more examples of such "inclusion" but also her analytic assessment of these in relation to law school pedagogy. These practices fill her with anger and dread because here we have examples of inclusion of the most dangerous sort. They are dangerous because they feed and promote racism, sexism, class-bias, homophobia, and anti-semitism. They are dangerous because they seep into the souls of future lawyers and judges and suggest a model of "inclusion" which not only manipulates stereotypes but compels the students to work, sympathetically, inside the consciousness of the racist, the sexist, the anti-semitite, the violent heterosexist. What is most disturbing is that this compulsory invasion of consciousness is done in the name of liberal fairness and internalizing mechanisms of "impartial" judicial practice.

FORSAKING TRANSCENDENCE: CONFESSIONS OF AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL HERETIC

What are our alternatives here? On the one hand, we have the Siegel universe filled with the hard crunch of jousting as the rival Knights of Reason attempt to eliminate those alternatives which lack sufficient epistemological force. On the other, we have the foundationless abyss of postmodernism marked by eclipses, posturing, and writhings of fluid discourses, elusive texts, and evasions or embraces of powerful dominant rhetorics. Are these the only two alternatives or have we simply moved from oppressive rationalist universalism to the techno-metamorphoses of virtual epistemologies? Are we not under the spell of dualist thinking once again?

I agree with Chandra Mohanty who says, "resistance lies in self-conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations and in the active creation of an oppositional analytic."¹³ While space does not permit the development of my positive "oppositional analytic" which can open up other epistemological alternatives, let me clarify how my epistemological views differ from those of Professor Siegel:

1. I do not believe that all knowledge -- or even all epistemologically significant knowledge -- can be expressed in propositional form, nor do I privilege canonical de-naturalized propositions as the route to knowledge.
2. I reject any definition of objectivity which entails the principled eliminability of particularity.
3. I reject any model of the self which allows for the full inter-translatibility of subject positions, the limiting case of which is the transcendent Wizard.
4. I reject universality in epistemology as a theoretical ideal.

5. I do not believe that epistemology should be and can only be generated by experts with credentials.
6. I do not believe in a sharp distinction between contexts of discovery and contexts of justification in knowledge production.
7. I do not believe in pristine disciplinary boundaries.
8. I believe that epistemologizing is a political act.
9. I believe that I am an epistemologist.

I would like to invite Professor Siegel to leave his paradigm at home and come to visit those of us who are engaged in this very different epistemological journey. Like Professor Sichel who so warmly introduced our President, I, too, wish to publicly acknowledge that I know (in more than merely propositional ways), that Harvey Siegel "practices inclusion with sensitivity and moral commitment and does philosophy with integrity." He would make an ideal traveling companion.

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1. Naomi Scheman, *Engenderings: Constructions of Knowledge, Authority, and Privilege* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xii-xiii.
 2. For an extended analysis of this experience see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Explanation and Culture: Marginalia" in *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 103-17.
 3. Maryann Ayim, "Warning: Philosophical Discussion, Violence at Work," *Women and Philosophy -- Femmes et Philosophie*, Special Issue of *Resources for Feminist Research*, Vol. 16 (Toronto: OISE Press, 1987); Norman Swartz, "Philosophy as Blood Sport," unpublished manuscript, Department of Philosophy, Simon Fraser University.
 4. These are only a few of the relevant critical theorists examining the epistemic foundations of the biological sciences: Ruth Bleier, *Science and Gender* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984); Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Sandra Harding, ed. *The "Racial" Economy of Science* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1993); Ruth Hubbard, *The Politics of Women's Biology* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Nelly Oudshoorn, *Beyond the Natural Body: An Archeology of Sex Hormones* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Hilary Rose, *Love, Power, and Knowledge: Towards a Feminist Transformation of the Sciences* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1994); Bonnie Spanier, *Im/partial Science: Gender Ideology in Molecular Biology* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1995).
 5. Scholarship which calls into question the validity of these claims when gender and race are factored in is voluminous. Emily Martin, in *The Woman in the Body* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1987) engages in an insightful analysis of pathologizing female medical metaphors. Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) addresses gender distortions in the development of anatomy. For a general overview, see Sheryl Burt Ruzek, *The Women's Health Movement* (New York: Praeger Scientific, 1979) For a sustained assessment of the epistemic impact of excluding women from health care research, see Volumes 1 and 2 of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, *Women and Health Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1994) and Sue Rosser, *Women's Health: Missing from U.S. Medicine* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1994). For an insightful essay integrating issues of sex/gender and race/ethnicity, see Nancy Krieger and Elizabeth Fee, "Man-Made Medicine and Women's Health: The Biopolitics of Sex/Gender and Race/Ethnicity" in *Women's Health, Politics, and Power: Essays on Sex/Gender, Medicine and Public Health*, ed. Elizabeth Fee and Nancy Krieger. (Amityville, N.Y.: Baywood Publishing Co., 1994).
 6. Sandra Harding, "Thinking from the Perspective of Lesbian Lives" in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 249-67; Cornel West, "Theory, Pragmatism, and Politics" in *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 89-106.
 7. Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World-Travelling,' and Loving Perception," *Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1987), reprinted in *Making Face; Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation, 1990), 390-402; Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Toward a New Consciousness," in *Making Face; Making Soul*, 377-89. See also Norma Alarcon's essay, "The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism," in *Making Face; Making Soul*, 356-69.
 8. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Patricia J. Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).
 9. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon. (New York: Pantheon, 1980)
 10. For extended analyses of this process see, for example, bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989); Maria Lugones, "On the Logic of Pluralist Feminism" in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. Claudia Card (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 35-44; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" and "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, Lourdes Torres (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1-80; and Rozena Maart, "Consciousness, Knowledge, and Morality: The Absence of the Knowledge of White Consciousness in Contemporary Theory" in *A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, ed. Debra Shogan (Toronto:

Canadian Scholars Press, 1992), 129-67. Scheman discusses the impact of such theorists on her own work in *Engenderings*, xiii.

11. Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor*, 88.

12. Ibid, 84-85.

13. Chandra Mohanty, "On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberation Education in the 1990's," Quoted by bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 22.

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