The Political Structure of Emotion: From Dismissal to Dialogue

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How much power does emotional dismissal have over the oppressed's ability to trust outlaw emotions, or to stand for such emotions before others? I discuss Sue Campbell's view of the interpretation of emotion in light of the political significance of emotional dismissal. In response, I suggest that feminist conventions of interpretation developed within dialogical communities are best suited to providing resources for expressing, interpreting, defining, and reflecting on our emotions.

"The communication of sentiment" between persons is such a remarkable quality of human nature in Hume's estimation that he devotes much attention to explaining the nature and structure of this phenomenon. The communication of sentiment may be significant in a far broader theoretical context, and in a much different way, than Hume ever envisioned. Integral to the successful communication of emotion is the idea that others recognize our emotions for what they are. Recognition of emotion is not only central to understanding the emotions of ourselves and others, its presence—or lack thereof—is politically revealing.

I focus here on the emotional dismissal of anger, particularly feminist anger, because it threatens an especially valuable source of motivation and insight.[1] Like other outlaw emotions, feminist anger is a politically and epistemologically subversive response to oppressive practices. It is a key tool for leveraging women into their rightful place in society through subverting dominant ideologies. It is also difficult to ignore. Dismissing such anger does not then seem to be a matter of innocent oversight. Rather, dismissal silences one's political voice and, at the same time, compromises a valuable source of self-worth and self-trust.

Justifying the legitimacy of our emotions might seem to be an appropriate response to the dismissal of our emotions, for surely this is just the sort

of occasion demanding the assertion of our first-person authority over our own emotions. However, I recommend against this approach for practical and theoretical reasons. The practical concern is that a defensive attitude is likely to perpetrate emotionally abusive practices. Since dismissal is itself a form of emotional abuse, it is particularly important to avoid any participation in its practices. The theoretical concern is that such defenses are typically grounded upon an individualistic view of emotion. A holdover of the traditional view of the self, first-person authority grants introspection upon one's internal states as the sole source of knowledge of emotion, desire, belief, and so forth. Conversely, a social view of emotion supposes that emotions are constructed through one's social interactions. On this view, one cannot come to know one's emotions through introspection alone because one does not possess emotions as wholly internal phenomena.

Although I do not intend to give a positive explanatory account of emotion in this paper, I will assume that emotions are in some sense social constructs, although not to the exclusion of internal content such as phenomenological experience, thoughts, beliefs, and so forth. My aim is to show that interpretation and reinterpretation of our emotional responses within appropriate dialogical communities permits us to form and maintain our claims to our emotions. The significance of this account is twofold. First, it demonstrates how a social theory of emotion need not award interpretive power to those interested in emotional dismissal. Second, it firmly establishes a place for the beneficial social and political effects of supportive interpreters, those who are willing to engage in a dialogue about others' emotional lives, especially the emotional lives of the oppressed.

Denying Emotions, Defining Emotions

Sue Campbell (1994, 1997) draws out the political complexity of emotion as a socially constructed phenomenon through showing how the interpretation of emotion may serve powerful political agendas.[2] The dismissive interpretation of anger as "just bitterness" fulfills an oppressive agenda of dismissing others and their legitimate concerns. Such dismissal is not simply indicative of a communicative failure. Rather, it works as part of a larger political strategy to condemn the person attempting to express anger. So the political strategy of dismissal restrictively controls others through controlling their emotions. The control of another's expression of emotion undermines that person's confidence and may reduce or remove the possibility for engaging in actions significant to her life. Thus, Campbell's account of the social nature of emotion captures the seriousness of what is wrong with retorting, "You're just bitter" to an intended expression of anger.

Campbell's expressivist theory of emotion is also instructive in showing that context is key to recognizing the oppressive strategies of interpretation. On this

view, emotions are *communicative* in nature. Any failure in the expression of emotion does not rest solely upon emoters: it may just as easily be a function of interpreters. Shifting the onus onto persons attempting to express their anger is thus not justified should they fail to express that anger. Yet, faced with an interpretation of one's anger as bitterness, one might be readily inclined to defend oneself, to justify that anger as a rational response: "*This* is why I am angry, not bitter!" Or perhaps: "*This* is why I have a right to be angry!"

However, Campbell recommends against the move to assess the rationality of emotion:

> Calculating rationality may put responsibility on the individual for her attitudes or actions without offering ways of assessing that individual's situation against the political options of others. If, as I believe to be the case, assessments of rationality are connected most deeply to questions of intelligible agency, what is not within my power to affect may not provide a rational ground for my actions or responses. That others have different powers will not provide a rationale for *my* acting in a certain way in *my* situation. (Campbell 1994, 52)

There are two related worries embedded in this response, namely, that the assessment of rationality may not be warranted and that assessing rationality may place undue responsibility on emoters. Let me address each in turn.

First, consider the claim that what I cannot intelligibly do provides no rational ground for my actions or responses. This stance on rationality seems counterintuitive because I won't be able to rationally express anger about something I cannot do. Frustrated in my attempts to be taken seriously by another, I may become angry at him—perhaps just because he is the sort of person he is, or perhaps because his reaction simply represents another frustrating barrier that is part of the system of oppression I confront daily. I may even get angry because of the dismissive attitude I face precisely because I am frustrated that I have no control over it. Nevertheless, in these sorts of cases, anger seems not only warranted but also rational as a response to the situation. I see the rationality of emotion here as a function of the *appropriateness* of response to a situation rather than as a function of whether or not one has power over one's situation. Emotions do not so neatly correspond to what one can or cannot intelligibly do. It is the very nature of many emotions that they are specifically directed toward what one cannot do at the moment, or ever. A child can reasonably hope that she will learn to ride a bicycle soon, even if she cannot reasonably be expected to ride a bicycle now or even if it turns out she will never be able to ride the bicycle. Fear indicates that something terrible may happen that one cannot prevent. Despair indicates that we cannot foresee otherwise than a grievous situation that is present or impending. Indeed, most of the time emotions link

us to what we cannot control.[3] Thus, it appears we can judge how rational our emotional responses are by judging how appropriate those responses are to the situations with which we are faced—even if we have no power to effect change in those situations.

Second, assessing the rationality of emotion might seem to place undue responsibility on persons to justify their emotions as legitimate responses. Lynne McFall (1991) views bitterness as a justifiable response to the disappointment of one's hopes, so long as those hopes are both important and legitimate to hold. Given this sort of view, challenging one's emotion as bitterness extends to questioning the legitimacy of one's hopes. We may have little or no political power over the maneuver of questioning the legitimacy of our hopes or the categorizing of them as illegitimate—just as we may have little power over questioning the legitimacy of our anger. Blocking such strategies is central to avoiding their pernicious work. But neither the perniciousness of nor our lack of control over such strategies entails that we should reject ascriptions of the rationality of one's anger, bitterness, or hope in the first place. That hopes may be characterized as illegitimate says nothing about their actual legitimacy. This also holds true if we hope for our anger to be interpreted as anger and it is instead interpreted as bitterness. Simply because we receive the criticism of bitterness does not entail that we must engage in a discussion of its legitimacy.

Even if it is not likely that our anger will be interpreted as such, it is still legitimate to hope that it will be. McFall considers hopes legitimate if they are not demonstrably false; false hopes expect the inevitable or extremely unlikely to happen. This seems right. If it is inevitable that I will die, it is illegitimate for me to hope to live forever. If it is extremely unlikely that a university will actually be handed over to the highest bid on eBay, then even if one has the highest bid it is illegitimate to hope to own the university.[4] If we are in the company of persons we consider capable of giving uptake to our emotions, it would be legitimate to expect them to do so. We might wish to add a moral force to this expectation as well, and claim that others *should* give uptake to legitimate instances of bitterness. But I hesitate to take this approach because we cannot always expect others to care about our losses of hope or, in fact, any other feature of our lives. In certain sorts of relationships or communities, though, it would be legitimate to expect others to give uptake to our emotions. More details about histories and relationships need to be supplied to determine the sorts of contexts within which it would be legitimate to have such hopes. I won't have more to say here about how one determines the legitimacy of emotion, although I will expand on contexts of interpretation nearer the end of this essay.

It seems right that oppressed persons should not have to defend their emotions if they fail to express them as a result of another's oppressive political agenda. Encouraging the oppressed to accept such a responsibility is akin to the sorts of tactics that are usually employed as part of emotional abuse.

Emotional abusers often divert issues from legitimate targets by instead placing the focus on the way in which one expresses oneself. The implication is that the person raising the issue is herself inadequate to express that concern or she is to blame for how she has raised the issue. Diversion is a way of controlling the communication between the persons involved (Evans 1996). This sort of abuse is common to women's lives.[5] Restricting freedom of expression is a similar sort of abusive tactic used to oppress groups of persons. Thus, in being aware of the damage the context of interpretation may have on oppressed persons, we should be quite wary of endorsing a theoretical commitment that suggests the onus of responsibility for failure of communication be placed on such persons.

Being met with the critical accusation of bitterness does not entail that one should take on the responsibility for failure in communication, either: we need not defend our anger to our accusers. Receiving the accusation, "You're just bitter" we may be tempted to defend the legitimacy of our anger, but to do so gives uptake to the accuser. The political advice here is similar to that given to women in emotionally abusive relationships: it is best not to attempt to defend one's original emotion when it is met with accusation or denial. To do so is to agree that one's emotional response to the original issue is not significant and instead what is significant is the interpretation. Thus, the onus of justifying one's anger should not be placed on the person aiming to express her anger in the face of critical uptake, and neither should she aim to defend her anger. If this is correct, then we should not be worried that an accusation of bitterness may try to place the responsibility of defending the rationality of one's anger, bitterness, hope, or other emotion onto oneself. Trying to place responsibility on emoters to defend themselves need not be accepted as itself a legitimate move.

Significance of Emotional Dismissal

What is the extent to which emotions can be defined by interpreters? Here the expressivist view encounters its main limitation. On this view, successfully expressing an emotion does not depend solely upon the individual: it may not be possible to express anger, although one might like to do so. Let's say I intend to express my anger to someone. If my "intended anger" is dismissed as simply bitterness, then, according to Campbell, I did not succeed in expressing anger. That is, failure of expression is linked with failure to possess an emotion: "We may try to be angry through our actions and simply not succeed. The very same actions may succeed as angry actions in a different interpretive context" (Campbell 1994, 54). Here it is important to understand that the problem is not a matter of failing to succeed in expressing an anger I actually possess. Rather, any forestalling of the expression of my anger appears to deny the existence of my anger.

On the expressivist view, emotions are individuated according to the collaborative affair of a person trying to express an emotion (perhaps through actions or words) with that attempt receiving uptake. So it appears that unless my attempted expression of anger receives uptake, I cannot assert that I am angry. As Campbell seems to suggest, the most I can assert is that I am trying to *express* anger or that my "intended anger" is not expressed (Campbell 1994, 54, 51, 63). But perhaps this suggestion is misplaced. Emotions need only be expressible, not expressed, in order to be individuated (Campbell 1997, 103). A history of collaborative individuation is needed to justify the claim that one's emotion is expressible. Still, we should agree that emotions must be *expressed* to be *expressible* at some later date, given the need for this history. So then, the individuation of emotion remains dependent on collaborative interpretation, if only as part of the causal history of the emotion.

Yet since the expression of emotion is a personal affair on the expressivist account, and often idiosyncratic, we should wonder how any previous response or behavior should be taken to constitute the expression of the same emotion at a later date. It is unclear how the expressible nature of my anger should allow me to assert that I am actually angry right now, if my anger is actually my own sort of expression receiving uptake. Thus, if I am faced with dismissal then it does not appear that I can be justified in asserting that you are denying my anger. Perhaps Campbell agrees: "The expresser cannot *account for* or defend her intended anger, however, because her interpreters are no longer listening" (Campbell 1994, 51; my emphasis). If there is no anger to say you have denied, only an intended anger, then it would appear to be a conceptual impossibility to assert that you have denied my emotion (that emotion is nonexistent). Here we could say that the dismissive interpretation negatively defines the emotion as what it is not.

Now, it might seem that I have attributed too much definitional power to the interpretation of emotion. By appealing to Donald Davidson's semantic theory, Campbell parallels the definition of emotion to the definition of linguistic terms to argue that others cannot *make me mean* anything through their interpretive responses—or lack thereof (Campbell 1997, 151). If that is right, then it would appear that others cannot define my emotions for me. But the parallel with language breaks down at a certain point. Campbell's theory of the interpretation of emotion appeals to Davidson's semantic theory, which holds that the meaning of words are determined through social use or linguistic conventions in a society. Davidson's theory of "triangulation" explains how words are meaningful because of the possibility of mutual interpretation. The triangle lies between word, object, and observer. For example, if whenever someone looks at a mouse and sincerely and reliably utters "raton" then observers will interpret *raton* to refer to the object in the world we call a mouse. The meaning of *raton* is here publicly accessible and determined through social convention. But I doubt that the individuation of emotion on the expressivist view can work along similar

lines. Observers may see some people laughing nervously, others clutching their spouses, some drinking heavily, and others' eyes flashing meanly. How could observers determine what emotions these people, no matter how reliably or sincerely, are trying to express? These instances of personal expression could be indicative of many different sorts of emotions or even one emotion (perhaps jealousy). To give uptake, observers would have to determine the personal significance for each person of their particular expressions. Not only would this be difficult in practice, the requirement to do so severely undercuts the ability of observers to correlate any set of expressions with any particular emotion term.

Words have social meanings apart from personal expression, but on the expressivist view emotions have their meaning precisely because they are personal expressions:

> to look for the meaning of my response as affective meaning, to take this stance as an interpreter, *is to try and understand the significance to me* of certain occasions, and for those occasions involving emotions and conventions, an interpreter will require an understanding of *how I see myself* in respect to particular social norms or rules. No set of rules, conventions, or descriptions can substitute for these acts of interpretation and give meaning, by themselves, to my expressive responses. (Campbell 1997, 143; my emphasis)

Campbell rejects the social constructivist view of emotion in which emotions are defined according to socially constructed categories. Interpretation of emotion through fixed social categories entails that (1) it becomes impossible to express affective significance outside those categories, and (2) others may have distorted understandings of personal affective significance (1997, 154). Thus, social categories are not sufficient to establish the reference of terms picking out some emotions over others.

If emotions are not defined according to socially established categories, then emotions cannot be publicly individuated in the same way meanings of terms are. Social use reliably establishes the meaning of terms because those meanings are fixed within a social community of language users according to rules or conventions. But not so on the expressivist view: individuation of emotion is restricted to the smaller domain of interpreter and expresser. So then, one cannot express a particular emotion assuming that it already has a determinate status as one sort of emotion rather than another prior to expression and uptake. We should wonder why anyone would desire to communicate unless her words already possessed a meaning *prior* to expression. So too, we should wonder why persons would wish to express their anger or sadness, and so forth, to another unless they could already speak of having that anger, sadness, and so forth.

While many times others might interpret me as expressing the emotion I hope to express, it may happen that even "in fairly simple cases of affective communication, someone's response can make me unsure of what I have expressed, and, therefore, of what I feel" (Campbell 1997, 106). If even one person interprets a different meaning to my words or attributes a different emotion to me, it can quickly become unclear what emotion I possess: in these cases "my affective state becomes a more confused one" (111).[6] This uncertainty about my emotions need not be a matter of degree, of whether I experience irritation, displeasure, or full-blown contempt. The uncertainty can be between two very different sorts of emotions: one interpreter's response may bring me to wonder if I feel impotence or contempt, for example. Even if I am not confused between emotions but am simply given cause to doubt my emotion, it would no longer be appropriate to attribute that emotion to me.

In recognition of such uncertainty or confusion, an expressivist view of emotion could suggest constraints on the power of interpreters. Campbell suggests that interpreters follow Laurence Thomas's advice and orient interpretation in favor of the personal accounts of those belonging to oppressed groups (Thomas 1993). Interpreters adopting such an attitude recognize they cannot enter into everyone else's experiences to share their feelings. Indeed, a certain arrogance would accompany the belief that anyone can be a successful interpreter of anyone else's attempts at the expression of emotion. I agree that moral deference is indispensable to respectful interpretation of emotion, and I'll have more to say about this nearer the end of this essay. However, I do not think that moral deference can be the interpretive restraint on interpretation the expressivist view needs.

The context within which interpretation takes place is relevant to whether or not persons should be willing to engage in a discussion about their emotional lives. Such discussion is, properly speaking, the level at which moral deference comes into play. Moral deference is an attitude of respectful listening to those who wish to describe their personal experiences and memories to others, to describe their moral pain (Thomas 1993, 246–47). Those who wish to tell these stories are deserving of moral deference. In contrast, interpretation of emotion on the expressivist view need not involve listening to another's story. Interpreters on the expressivist view are understanding one's expression to be a particular emotion rather than another. It is thus unclear how such interpreters should be like those who listen with moral deference. Even if the content of the stories change such that one's stories are about one's emotions, I fail to see how moral deference could have a role in interpreting another's emotion on the expressivist view. Such a dialogue is conceptually ruled out on that view if, as I argued earlier, it is correct that there is no emotion to discuss until interpretation individuates that emotion.

Even if the expressivist view could justify the assertion that a person *is* angry and someone has dismissed that anger, it would need to provide some sort of account of how an attitude of deference would have best featured in interpretation in the first place. Without that account, our original worry reappears, namely that interpreters may wield their power in destructive ways, compromising a person's ability to discern her own emotions or those of others. The real force of this concern is that the power of interpretation is frequently used to dismiss or distort women's expression of emotion, especially that of anger. Granting unchecked legitimacy to that power of interpretation treads perilously close to legitimating emotional abuse.

Interpretation

Coming to understand and define emotion through dialogue is one way we can know which emotions we are experiencing: different interpretations produce different awarenesses and understandings of our emotions. So too, we can understand the emotions of others through dialogue. The aim may not be to define emotion, but, through dialogue about attitudes, beliefs, and responses, it is possible to come to understand both the emotions of oneself and those of others. A certain risk of interpretation is always present, however, and it is not simply one of getting it wrong. Accepting others' interpretations of our emotions may undercut our own self-worth. Gaslighting paradigmatically undermines one's capacity for free agency by way of instilling doubt and distrust of oneself as a worthy moral agent (Benson 1994). Understanding one's emotions—just like understanding one's beliefs and desires—through the eyes of the gaslighter undermines one's sense of self-respect and self-worth. Thus it may be important not to accept others' interpretations of our emotions even if dismissal is not the aim or result of that interpretation. So, how should we approach conflict between the emotions one understands oneself to have and the understandings others have? Who has the authority to determine the emotion: the interpreter or the emoter? This is a politically loaded question, thus it deserves our careful attention.

The very fact that interpreters say (and they may do so quite sincerely) that another is bitter even when she asserts she is angry might seem to undermine the authority of the angry person. If the authority to determine our own emotional states can be questioned by others, it may lead oneself to question one's own authority. Once one's authority to lay claim to anger is questioned, it may easily result in a questioning of whether or not one believes oneself to possess anger. Under certain circumstances, repeated undermining of one's authority to say what emotion she is experiencing may be quite debilitating. Uncertainty about what emotions one possesses or whether or not one is qualified even to make

such judgments is one common sign of emotional abuse. The insidious nature of emotional abuse consists largely in its wearing away of one's self-trust, one's ability to trust one's judgments and beliefs, and, along with it, the certainty that one's emotions are appropriate responses to those judgments and beliefs. Anger often involves judgments or beliefs: judgments that another has acted badly (Scheman 1980), that one's own projects are worthy (Frye 1983), or that another has done an injustice (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1135b). If this is a correct view of anger, then its dismissal, especially if repeated or common, may destroy one's capacity to trust her judgments and beliefs.

Faced with invidious interpretations of individuals' emotions by their oppressors, should we lay the authority on individual emoters to have the final say as to what their emotions are? One difficulty with taking this route is that it seems to lead back to the problem of justifying one's emotions to others. Claiming that one has authority to assert that one is experiencing, say, anger and not bitterness, requires more by way of defense than simple appeal to personal authority. Here is where one is easily pinned into justifications of why one's experiences add up to anger and not bitterness—just the route we saw earlier is best avoided. Moreover, adopting the view that the individual has final authority over her emotions supposes that emotions are wholly internal states: others have no right to say anything about what is simply an internal matter. Both points are challenged on a social view of emotion. If emotions are in some sense socially constructed, then they are not wholly "owned" solely by individuals; so then, individuals do not possess first-person authority over their own emotions. This opens up a serious problem for the social constructivist view privileging interpretation; however, nothing else seems to prevent it from privileging the interpretations of members of dominant groups. If, for example, a woman's angry objections are not to be dismissed as childish petulance or the workings of a deranged mind, she needs to have interpreters willing to take seriously her point of view. Should those interpreters wish instead to fulfill their manipulative agendas through crushing the legitimacy of her point of view, then, as we have seen, there appears to be little in the expressivist view to prevent their interpretations from defining her emotions for her.

A focus on the political dynamics within groups and between groups and individuals is needed to solve the problem. By outlining the sorts of dialogue best suited to interpretation of the emotions of both self and other, I hope to illustrate how the balance of authority shifts according to the political structures involved in interpretation and how we might understand the content of that authority. In the spirit of Diana Meyers's (1997) view that feminist outlaw emotions are best interpreted within groups, I propose that the interpretation of emotion is best developed within certain sorts of dialogical communities. Diemut Bubeck (2000) has outlined two different sorts of dialogue in which epistemic claims can be formed: dialogues of separation and dialogues of

negotiation. Dialogues of separation allow those who share a similar location and experience to formulate their experiences together away from prevailing oppressive forces. Dialogues of negotiation permit commonalities to be reached through acknowledging difference. I suggest that communities of separation and negotiation provide the sorts of resources suitable for expressing, interpreting, and reflecting upon our emotions.

Communities of Interpretation

A community of separation provides the space within which persons can reflect on the social meanings of their experiences and develop a language to intelligibly express that experience.[7] Developing this language enables agency and subjectivity to flourish within such communities. It is also important to the self-narratives that shape one's identity. Self-narratives situate one's emotions within the context of one's life story, they hold a central place and meaning in relation to other elements of the narrative (Meyers 2003; Nelson 2001). The interpretation and reinterpretation of self-narratives does not progress solely due to shared understandings. Being met with reproach as well as reassurance allows individuals to refine, reconcile, or reject parts of their self-narratives. I am uncertain as to how much reproach or revision of one's narrative should take place in a community of separation, however; and, at a certain point too much criticism, or too much recalcitrance to accept any of it, undermines the benefit of retreating to such a community. More certainly, an important element of communities of separation is that listeners will always aim to *support* the expression of each other's experiences through being empathetic listeners. Such listeners affirm others' emotions through their responses and aim to understand others' interpretation from their perspective.[8]

Critical dialogue in separatist communities flourishes if social meanings, including those of emotion terms, are formed through a collaborative effort of interpretation and reinterpretation. We learn from others what objects and situations typically warrant certain sorts of responses, and which emotions are appropriate or inappropriate.[9] The support of separatist communities permits outlaw emotions like anger to be acknowledged as appropriate. The release of typical oppressive barriers of self-expression and interpretation disrupts response patterns, freeing persons to acknowledge their own emotions and those of others that subvert dominant ideologies. Thus, dialogue within a separatist community may significantly change how one experiences or interprets one's emotion, even to oneself. Developing a new trusting attitude is central to this enterprise. It is not unusual for members of oppressed classes to take on others' distrusting views of themselves in doubting their own responses, including their emotional responses (McLeod 2002). Part of the important work to be done in a supportive community is to develop trust in one's own emotional responses. Trusting one's

emotions is coextensive with recognizing one's authority over them. Authority in this sense is not derived purely from first-person introspection. The idea of trust I endorse is itself a result of a social process and so, too, the authority one generates over one's emotions is the result of a collective enterprise.[10]

In a community of negotiation, persons are willing to negotiate their positions within oppressive interpretive communities. Here, the aim is to bring about social and political change. Successful negotiation overthrows oppressive practices and overcomes divisiveness through acknowledging commonalities. Dialogue progresses toward commonality only if participants are aware of and recognize difference, and if they are aware that difference is socially constructed and can be overcome (Bubeck 2000). Reflection on the dialogue itself is integral to generating mutual understanding regarding one's responses as formative of a particular sort of emotion. The ability to see such differences and commonalities, and hence to engage in that reflection, is predicated upon the ability to undergo shifts of perception. Shifts in what we see as salient features of situations, or even if we see the same sorts of situations at all, effect shifts in our emotions (Blum 1994; DesAutels 1996; Burrow 2002). Critical reflection functions best if turned not toward the justifiability of one's emotional response, but toward the source or target of one's emotional response.[11] Through generating dialogues about sources or targets of emotions, we can bring to light features of situations that are relevant to having *that* emotional response and not another. What is salient to others is thus important to understand in a dialogue aiming to understand and recognize others' emotions.

Trust within Dialogues

The uptake of another's expression of emotion indicates shared understanding and recognition, it registers that which is significant in one's life. Campbell's expressivist view rightly emphasizes that blocking the expression of emotion through dismissal is intrinsically harmful because it controls an essential means of personal expression and communication. As we have seen, asserting the appropriateness of an outlaw emotion such as anger does not entail that one must justify its appropriateness when confronted with emotional dismissal such as the claim, "You're just bitter." I think that what might be an instance of oppressive power can instead be converted into an occasion for self-affirmation. Members of oppressed groups sometimes only have the trust in their own emotional responses of anger, resentment, or bitterness as indicators of wrongs and injustices accepted as permissible by dominant groups. The strength for maintaining integrity and self-governance comes from trust of one's emotions as well as trust in one's judgments, beliefs, and values. One must be able to depend on one's capacity for self-determination and to withstand pressures competing against one's identity-constituting interests. These abilities are not

forged in solo. Trusting others is a positive attitude with positive expectations: a self that trusts itself benefits from trusting relations, and has its own positive expectations for its own actions and motivations (Govier 116).

Identifying the sorts of communities most conducive to exploring and developing one's emotional life can foster the trust that is so important to developing and maintaining one's identity and integrity. Dialogues of separation or negotiation are productive avenues for sharing experiences and understandings of emotions in ways that develop self-trust and self-worth. But should participants in dialogues always trust their interpreters? Should we always trust our emotional responses? Within communities of negotiation, those expressing their emotions need not bear the responsibility of ensuring that their interpreters can be trusted. Earning another's trust, especially from someone weary of trusting those from oppressive social categories, is a great act of moral responsibility (Thomas 1993, 247). Interpreters should take on the moral responsibility of proving themselves worthy of the trust of those who are oppressed, and especially of those who are oppressed by groups to which interpreters belong. Communities of negotiation, then, are not communities in which persons ought to fight to be heard. Here is where a listener's attitude of moral deference is important, for this attitude freely allows oppressed persons to enter into a dialogue about their emotions.

Turning to one's community of separation enables one to develop a sense of trust in one's emotions as appropriate responses. Self-trust is a reliance on oneself to accept one's motives and goals as worthy, that one has sound judgment and competence (Govier 1993). Persons who trust their responses to the degree that they are unconcerned to question or revise those responses, especially when presented with alternate ways of understanding a situation, do not seem to have sound judgment. Indeed, they seem to suffer from arrogance, rigidity, condescension, or other such indicators of self-trust gone awry. For instance, anger toward oppressors might be fueled by the assumption that oppressors' claims are distorted simply in virtue of coming from *their* standpoint (Bubeck 2000, 199). Worse, some people are chronically angered or chronically bitter. While specific instances of bitterness or anger often indicate serious wrongs, sometimes they are the product of a person's general outlook on life. Individuals with such "rancorous attitudes" are attuned to the wrongs of a situation to the exclusion of any mitigating features in a way that is emotionally imbalanced: they obsess over their misfortunes, are driven to dwell on the wrongs they or others have incurred, and often overlook any occasion for happiness, personal fulfillment, or pleasure (Meyers 1997, 207).

Self-trust seems appropriate so long as one is open to shifting ways of viewing a situation, should a change in perspective be warranted. People who suffer rancorous attitudes toward others may warrant the description that their emotional response is inappropriate, in the sense of resulting from an overly

narrow view of the world. For such people, trust in their emotional responses to the exclusion of critical reflection overlooks the opportunity to shift their outlook to a more balanced one. Critical self-awareness of one's focus on certain features of a situation permits shifts in one's own emotions (Mackenzie 2002, 203). Emotional flexibility is just that openness to shifts in perspectives of situations that is likely to lead to shifts in emotion. Developing emotional flexibility moderates the trust we have in both our own and others' emotional responses, producing a more judicious trust.

Should one's trust be violated, as in the case of interpretive dismissal, expressers of emotion may be called on to exercise their power over whether or not they want to negotiate or separate. In either case, we may continue in the same relationships, or sometimes the same sorts of relationships, with those who have violated one's trust. Annette Baier's advice is that "if a trust relationship is to continue, some tact and willingness to forgive on the part of the truster and some willingness on the part of the trusted both to be forgiven and to forgive unfair criticisms, seem essential" (Baier 1986, 238).

I am uncertain how much forgiveness members of oppressed groups should show toward their dismissers, or when the best time is to do so. Separation, if it prevented forgiveness, would seem to undermine the ability of the previously dismissed to continue relationships with their dismissers. Not all relationships might be worth continuing, of course. The willingness to continue relationships through engaging in negotiation provides its own reward, as an act of standing for one's emotional responses as indicators of what is significant to oneself while also allowing a more judicious trust of oneself and others to develop. Courageous persons engaging in negotiation bring promise of great extrinsic rewards of social progress and change as others learn from the emotional lives of those who are oppressed. If it is not possible to appeal solely to reason to change prejudicial attitudes, an appeal to emotion may be, if not the only way, at least one good way of doing so.

Notes

1. Audre Lorde (1984) develops anger as a tool that is a source of insight and motivation.

2. While Campbell subsumes "emotions" under the category of "feeling," preferring to speak of feelings in general, my aim in this essay is to understand the dismissal of emotion.

3. This idea is well developed in Stoicism, as highlighted on Martha Nussbaum's (2001) theory of emotion.

4. Swansea University was put up for sale on eBay by one of its students in protest against massive departmental closures, including its Philosophy Department (Parkinson 2004).

5. Thirty-six percent of women experience emotional abuse while growing up and 39 percent experienced it in a relationship within the last five years (Women's Health Test 1995).

6. Campbell suggests that emotions can exist independently of collaborative interpretation, for example in the case of concealment: "Sometimes we suppress or deny our emotions, but others are able to 'see' what our emotions are; we interpreters have some latitude in finding significance in the unexpressed" (Campbell 1997, 183ff). I am wary of this description of concealment, for it may lead to the idea that interpreters get to say what emotions we really have, like parents telling their children they are really not upset, just tired. Moreover, Campbell leaves it unclear how emotions are individuated if they are not defined collaboratively. Because she often supposes that emotions are not individuated prior to expression, more explanatory work is needed to understand how concealed emotions are individuated prior to expression. Perhaps emotions are concealed only *after* the process of expression and uptake. But this does not avoid the problem that during that interpretive process, interpreters may simply confuse us about our emotions or deny their existence.

7. I am supposing that within such groups oppressed persons possess epistemic privilege, as outlined by classical standpoint theory. Such knowers 1) perceive *fundamental* regularities in systems under question, 2) possess superior knowledge of human potential, for example, by recognizing socially created inequalities, and 3) differentiate social constructions benefiting privileged classes from supposed universal human interests (Anderson 2004).

8. The sense of empathy I am speaking of is synonymous with my (2002) idea of sympathy as an imaginative engagement with others' emotions from their perspective, producing similar emotions in the sympathizer.

9. Ronald de Sousa explains how social referencing teaches one to name emotions and learn appropriate emotional responses as part of one's emotional education (1987, 182). See also Catriona Mackenzie's discussion of this point (2002, 186–206).

10. Just as that authority is socially generated, it can be taken away by others, as in the case of those who are deemed insane (Scheman 1980, 180).

11. De Sousa (1987) gives a detailed account of how emotions are understood relative to sources or targets.

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