"Tell Me How That Makes You Feel": Philosophy's Reason/Emotion Divide and Epistemic Pushback in Philosophy Classrooms

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Alison Bailey has recently explored the nature of what she calls privilege-evasive epistemic pushback or "the variety of willful ignorance that many members of dominant groups engage in when they are asked to consider both the lived experience and structural injustices that members of marginalized groups experience daily." In this article, I want to use Bailey's argument to demonstrate how privilege-evasive epistemic pushback is facilitated and obscured by the disciplinary tools of traditional Western philosophy. Specifically, through exploring philosophical cultures of justification and case studies, this work will reveal how students engage in privilege-evasive epistemic pushback by deploying the reason/emotion divide and various philosophical norms and practices it underlies to protect their epistemic home turf. Then, I offer three emotion-enhancing critical philosophical practices aimed at disrupting the ignorance-promoting moves of privilege-evasive epistemic pushback and, instead, engage emotion as epistemically significant.

Alison Bailey has recently begun interrogating what she terms *privilege-evasive epistemic pushback*, which she defines as:

> The variety of willful ignorance that many members of dominant groups engage in when they are asked to consider both the lived experience and structural injustices that members of marginalized groups experience daily… broadly speaking, [it] is an expression of resistance to knowing that happens predictably in discussions that touch upon and threaten our epistemic home turf. (Bailey 2015)

In other words, privilege-evasive epistemic pushback refers to ways in which members of dominant groups feign ignorance about everyday experiences of marginalized

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groups and the injustices those groups face and/or outright resist learning about such things in order to protect their own ideas about the world. And, despite appearing to be random, individual, one-off responses to course discussions and texts centering marginalized groups' experiences, expressions of privilege-evasive epistemic pushback are predictable and systematic.

Although privilege-evasive epistemic pushback occurs throughout society, Bailey is interested in how it circulates in the philosophy classroom (Bailey 2015). According to Bailey, classrooms are *unlevel knowing fields* or "contested terrains where knowledge and ignorance are simultaneously produced and circulate with equal vigor, and where members of dominant groups are accustomed to having an epistemic home turf advantage" (Bailey 2014, 62). Philosophy classrooms, she argues, are specific types of unlevel knowing fields that elevate reason and flatten or bury emotions in ways that allow dominant groups to occupy epistemic high ground while members of marginalized groups traverse the valleys. When the high ground is threatened, the students who are members of dominant groups engage in privilege-evasive epistemic pushback to fortify and protect their epistemic high ground.

I share Bailey's interest and concern about how privilege-evasive epistemic pushback operates in philosophy classrooms. I am particularly concerned about how the discipline of philosophy itself facilitates, obfuscates, and/or provides the tools for students to engage in this privilege-protecting type of epistemic pushback. I worry that my discipline is culpable in disguising this resistance as engaging in good philosophy. I worry about how the reason/emotion divide (or the norms that it underlies and supports) is deployed as a tool of privilege-evasive epistemic pushback to continue tilting the unlevel knowing field toward dominant groups. I worry that students deploy the reason/emotion divide to protect their epistemic safety at the expense of knowledge and empathy. And I worry that members of some social groups can (and do) deploy the reason/emotion distinction to protect their ability to emote but infringe on others' ability to do the same. In this essay, I elucidate by tracing five cases from my own philosophy classrooms how the reason/emotion divide—and specifically disciplinary norms and practices that overvalue reason and devalue emotion—are, indeed, being used by students to facilitate and obscure their privilege-evasive epistemic pushback. I will conclude with some suggestions for how we can productively respond to such pushback in our own philosophy classrooms.

The Reason/Emotion Divide in Traditional Western Philosophy

Distinguishing reason from emotion in ways that overvalue reason and devalue emotion has a long history in Western philosophy. As Sally Haslanger suggests, philosophy operates on a schema that "presents it as hyper-rational, objective, masculine" in contrast to emotional (Haslanger 2008). Haslanger's statement is one of many feminist positions that respond to that long history. Some, like Genevieve Lloyd, have identified reason as a patriarchal tool and argue that sexism, conceptions of reason, and domination are intrinsically connected (Lloyd 1984). Others, like Martha

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Nussbaum, deny the intrinsic link between patriarchy and reason and warn feminists against abandoning reason (Nussbaum 1994). Still others, like Linda Alcoff and Donna Haraway, acknowledge patriarchal connections but still think feminists "cannot entirely forego the recourse to reason, objectivity, and truth" (Alcoff 1996, 65), without undermining feminist arguments. And some, like Megan Boler and Sarah Hoagland, reject the dichotomy altogether, instead maintaining that emotions and reason are inherently connected and that emotions enable reason (Hoagland 1988, chapter 4; Boler 1998). Here, I will not wade into this discussion. Instead, I am concerned with how the division between reason and emotion operates to foster privilege-evasive epistemic pushback in the philosophy classroom. To interrogate this, I will highlight some key ways that the reason/emotion divide permeates the discipline.

A key way the reason/emotion divide pervades current philosophical discourse is the epistemological position that advocates that good philosophers take what Phyllis Rooney denotes as "the default skeptical stance" (Rooney 2014, 35). This "default skeptical stance" requires philosophers to doubt the truth of even the most apparently indisputable knowledge claims and then employ rational, deductive analysis to determine their veracity. In other words, we should approach claims with the presumption that they are false until proven true via objective, rational argumentation. Taking this stance sets philosophers up to participate in debates using what Janice Moulton calls the "Adversary Paradigm" (Moulton 1983, 152).

According to Moulton, this paradigm applies "the now-rejected view of value-free reasoning in science to reasoning in philosophy" to require all philosophical reasoning to be deductive. On this paradigm:

> General claims are made and the job of philosophic research is to find counterexamples to the claims. And, most important, the philosophic enterprise is seen as an unimpassioned debate between *adversaries* who try to defend their own views against counterexamples and produce counterexamples to opposing views. (Moulton 1983, 152–53)

The adversary paradigm defines philosophical engagement as a competition between adversaries rather than a cooperative, generative endeavor.

Ostensibly, these requirements are meant to ensure that inquiry is truth-revealing; through this laser focus on deconstructing arguments, we can weed out falsehoods and arrive at truth (and, by extension, knowledge). Practically, however, arguments are not judged on this standard. Instead, they are evaluated based on the degree to which they adhere to disciplinary standards, including the reason/emotion division: the more people can *appear* to offer reasoned, value-free, emotion-free arguments, the stronger their case is taken to be.

The reason/emotion divide does not simply maintain an adversary paradigm, however. It also helps create and maintain what Kristie Dotson calls philosophy's "culture of justification" (Dotson 2012). According to Dotson, "to say that philosophy has a culture of justification. . . is to say that the profession of philosophy requires the practice of making congruent one's own ideas, projects and. . . pedagogical choices with some 'traditional' conception of philosophical engagement" (Dotson 2012, 6). This culture of justification, Dotson says, includes "at least three components. It will 1)

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manifest a value for exercises of legitimation, 2) assume the existence of *commonly-held*, justifying norms that are 3) *univocally relevant*" (7). The culture of justification, then, requires people to make their claims cohere with (what are presumed to be) universally accepted tenets of the field. One of the presumed universally accepted tenets of philosophy's culture of justification is the reason/emotion divide and its requirement that claims be emotion-free—in both substance and content. When an argument or an arguer deviates from these standards, it is dismissed or minimized.

As Lorraine Code has shown, those perceived as too emotional or as having a vested interest in a topic tend to be seen as less credible knowers than those who are understood as being rational, "objective," and dispassionate observers (Code 2006, 190–96, as well as chapter 7).[1] The presumed separation between reason and emotion underlies the general idea that true knowledge is dispassionate and objective, which "preserves an implausible presumption of disinterestedness on the part of unmarked, dominant inquirers, while casting inquirers that wear their politics on their sleeve as always, for this very reason, bound to yield skewed results" (Code 2006, 194). The reason/emotion divide feeds the larger idea that a person's epistemic credibility diminishes as their perceived emotional or personal investment in a topic increases.

Dividing reason from emotion is at once epistemic and political. As Alison Jaggar demonstrated in "Love and Knowledge," "critical reflection on emotion is not a self-indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action. It is itself a kind of political theory and political practice, indispensable for an adequate social theory and social transformation" (Jaggar 1989, 64). In providing criteria for what constitutes knowledge, credible knowers, and philosophically legitimate areas of investigation, the disciplinary privilege-protective practice of denigrating "emotional" knowers and denying the theoretical importance of knowledge generated from emotions promotes ignorance of anything (or anyone) excluded from the rational universe; it is knowledge-obstructing *and* ignorance-producing. When members of marginalized groups express anger about instances of racism and sexism, for example, it is dismissed on the grounds that they are acting "irrationally", are too "emotionally invested" in the topic, or rendered unintelligible.[2] This policing of emotions reinscribes the culture of justification Dotson highlights and allows ignorance to circulate through the unlevel knowing field by coercively silencing those who make emotion-laden claims (Dotson 2011, 238). As such, invoking and enforcing the reason/emotion split masks the ways in which the listener refuses (intentionally or not) "to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance" (238–39), thus committing epistemic violence through testimonial quieting (242),[3] and/or through testimonial smothering (244).[4]

The Reason/Emotion Divide in the Classroom

> The relationship between a person and their educational experience is fraught with different emotions and histories.
> — Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*

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As Megan Boler's statement illustrates, she and other theorists like Sara Ahmed, Karen Barad, Michalinos Zembylas, and Emily Danvers have decisively shown that emotions circulate in learning environments, despite the promotion of reason and devaluing of emotion in Western society (see, for example, Boler 1997, 2; 1998; Zembylas 2002; 2005; Barad 2007; Danvers 2015). Even in classes like critical thinking and logic, where reason is centered and emotions tend to be erased, student learning is connected to emotions. Danvers's recent study, for example, showed that students do not simply do critical thinking—they feel it (Danvers 2015). She explains:

> These feelings were not simply emotional reactions to isolated performances of critical thinking (such as feeling happy about receiving a good mark for a critical essay or feeling nervous about engaging in classroom debate). Students articulated the complex affects they felt in response to critical thinking's discourses and practices. (Danvers 2015)

And, as Boler implies, these emotions do not circulate in neutral, ahistorical, ways. Far from private, individual states or responses, radical feminists have long argued that emotions—both how they are displayed and how they are responded to—are sites of social control that are socially, culturally, and politically situated (Boler 1998). Sometimes, emotions such as shame, fear, and humiliation are deployed as forms of social control to uphold religious, scientific, and epistemic norms to exclude marginalized groups from knowledge and its production (Boler 1998, 31; Mills 1997). At other times, however, emotions can be reclaimed to resist such agendas, for example, by using them as connective and cognitive indicators that "something is wrong with the outside world" (Driscoll 2000, 716). In both cases, emotions clearly flow through the unlevel knowing field of the classroom—to both uphold the status quo and resist it.

I am concerned here with specific ways emotions circulate in philosophy classrooms, especially those where the texts and experiences of oppressed groups are centered. In particular, I am exploring how the discipline of norms and culture of justification upholding the reason/emotion divide in ways that overvalue reason and demean emotion enables, facilitates, and obscures members of dominant groups engaging in privilege-evasive and privilege-protective epistemic resistance to maintain their epistemic home turf and worldview.[5] Generally, we see this in the way the adversary paradigm structures many student interactions. Trained in argumentation as a competition, members of dominant groups resist claims about oppression and privilege by trying to "beat" members of marginalized groups not on the basis of evidence, but rather on the grounds that members of marginalized groups are highly emotional, complaining, hypersensitive, and manipulating others to push an agenda, whereas members of dominant groups are rational, objective, aspiring practitioners of philosophy. Students also accomplish this by enforcing philosophy's culture of justification by requiring those from marginalized groups to cohere with philosophy's "commonly held norms," especially those requiring arguments to be objective and rational. What is central for me, here, is the way students consistently use these tools of philosophy, not to seek knowledge and truth, but rather to seek epistemic safety. Students

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engaging in this type of pushback are not expressing genuine skepticism that encourages "open-minded, cautious, curious and engaged doubt" but instead are refusing to engage information because of what José Medina identifies as the need for "cognitive self-protection" (Medina 2012, 35; Bailey 2015). It is a type of what Boler calls "defensive anger," or an anger deployed as "a protection of beliefs, a protection of one's precarious use of identity" (Boler 1998, 191). Students are using the tools of philosophy—including the reason/emotion divide and what it undergirds—to protect their epistemic apparatus against what they perceive as a threat to it. In the process, they mark how *both* knowledge *and* ignorance, reason *and* emotion circulate through the unlevel knowing field of the philosophy classroom. We can see this in five examples from my own classes.

Case I: Ashley and Dustin[6]

Ashley is a queer African American woman majoring in philosophy. Our applied ethics class is reading autobiographical narratives that illustrate the range of homophobic violence experienced by college students. While evaluating the authors' claims, Ashley offers various reasons why she finds them persuasive, including that she has experienced on campus many of the things the authors discuss. As she explains her experiences at the intersection of racism, sexism, and homophobia, she suggests that they offer justification for the authors' claims of the existence of homophobic violence on college campuses.

Dustin, a heterosexual white man also majoring in philosophy, responds: "I am sorry… I don't want to say you deserved the violence you suffered, but you made a choice to live a sinful life. The Bible clearly says that sinners will be punished. You're a homosexual. You were punished." Ashley asks Dustin if he is admitting that such violence exists and he responds: "I am not convinced that it does but if such violence exists, and I am not saying it does, then it is G-d's will." Ashley, now crying, stops me from jumping in and says "I did not choose to be a lesbian! Even if I did, nobody deserves to be beaten and I carry the scars that show it [the violence] is real." Dustin mutters: "Well, I am willing to discuss this but I can't reason with you if you're crying. You are just crying as an emotional play for sympathy. You obviously can't discuss the issue rationally because your experiences are clouding your judgment."

Dustin deployed the reason/emotion divide to revoke Ashley's epistemic credibility and protect his epistemic safety. First, he implicitly appealed to philosophy's culture of justification that requires objective, rational justification to discount Ashley's testimony because she cried. In doing so, Dustin reinforced Code's finding that those perceived as emotional or invested in a topic are accorded less epistemic authority. Furthermore, in refusing to engage Ashley's arguments while she was crying, Dustin invoked the disciplinary standard of devaluing emotion to justify his refusal to serve as a willing participant in a testimonial exchange with her. In other words, Dustin used norms of philosophy's culture of justification to commit epistemic violence against Ashley via testimonial quieting, strip Ashley of epistemic authority, and disguise his own resistance to her claim that homophobic violence exists and it is

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wrong. In the process, Dustin implied that he deserved epistemic credibility (and even sympathy) for simply trying to enforce the standards he had learned (after all, he said he was "willing to discuss it"), and it is Ashley who was deviating from them.

Dustin also invoked the reason/emotion divide to deny that Ashley's emotions contain knowledge; her emotions were portrayed as epistemically vacuous and incapable of offering epistemic insight (Lorde 1984, 124–34). Ashley's tears were "just an emotional ploy to get sympathy," and not, for example, expressions of thoughtful and discerning judgments or potential reasons to accord her epistemic credibility (Hoagland 1989, chapter 4). In denying the argument in her tears, Dustin refused to recognize Ashley as a credible knower and implicitly appealed to philosophy's devaluing of emotion to do so (Dotson 2011, 238). And, again, this dismissal is based solely on Ashley's expression of emotion; Dustin is not engaging her arguments (ostensibly) on the grounds that she is emotional, rather than actually exploring and challenging their merits. And many philosophy majors in the class did not see it because he appealed to disciplinary norms that they have been taught, which require arguments and evidence to be presented in a rational, dispassionate way. I suggest, then, that his privilege-evasive epistemic pushback was facilitated and obscured, at least in part, by philosophy's culture of justification, which favors reason and denigrates emotion.

Case II: Mike

Our contemporary philosophy class is discussing rape. Mike, a philosophy major, becomes agitated when I sketch the connections between the sexual assault statistics, rape culture, and the category WOMAN.[7] *A light bulb goes off for Kate, who excitedly engages the connections. When she's done Mike screams: "Seriously?! I do not see that at all!" I stop Kate from answering and explain to Mike and the class that I have done so because (a) members of the class must conduct their own research rather than asking others to do that work for them and (b) because such requests can be trauma-inducing. To this Mike responds by screaming at me: "You just don't want anyone to say anything that contradicts your agenda. You chose this emotionally charged topic without evidence or solid arguments, to convince us that feminists are right. I'm not buying it. Show me real arguments and unbiased evidence and then we can talk."*

Mike's privilege-evasive epistemic pushback was, at least partially, facilitated and obscured by the disciplinary norms just discussed. He resisted information on the grounds that the professor was emotionally invested in the issue and rejected a claim about the nature of sexual violence because (according to him) it was rooted in emotion rather than "fact." Like Dustin, Mike refused to even engage the material on the grounds that real philosophy is about arguments and evidence, not agendas or emotions—a core claim of traditional Western philosophy. And, again, in claiming that he "will talk" once "real arguments and unbiased evidence" are presented, Mike relied on philosophy's culture of justification to imply that he is ready to do "real" or "proper" philosophy when the professor complies with disciplinary standards. Still,

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Mike's actions also illustrate at least one additional way philosophy helps facilitate and hide privilege-evasive epistemic pushback.

The specific aspect of this example I want to highlight occurred when Mike turned to Kate to demand that she testify about her experiences with sexual assault. I have often seen students who are dominantly situated find it acceptable to appropriate as epistemic resources classmates who occupy one or more marginalized social locations. On the one hand, this need not be an issue unique to philosophy but rather could result from ignorance, sexism, or racism on the part of individual students. But, on the other hand, this pattern goes hand in hand with the adversary paradigm Moulton describes where the interlocutor demands evidence for claims and engages in a constant battle of examples and counterexamples so as to "win" the argument. In that way, what is unique here is the ability of philosophy students to reach for disciplinary-specific norms to help them resist. Let me elaborate. Students learn to produce and demand examples and counterexamples, and they do so. In making these demands, however, the adversary paradigm can (inadvertently or not) facilitate privilege-evasive epistemic pushback by teaching students to continue until they win the argument. Faced with resistance to their victory, members of dominant groups, like Mike, think they are epistemically entitled to their classmates' personal experiences in the name of philosophical investigation. When they are told this is false, they get angry and increase their pushback to the issue on the grounds that the professor has "an agenda." And this occurred in this instance. In fact, he explicitly told me in subsequent conversations that this prohibition both angered and confused him—he was just trying to get information to figure out if a claim was true, and I stopped him. In other words, in his mind, he was not engaging in privilege-evasive epistemic pushback, but rather I prevented him from doing his philosophical due diligence.

This raises several issues that underlie privilege-evasive epistemic pushback and philosophy's role in it. First, philosophy students learn that good philosophy is objective, rational, and value-free. Then, we model or teach them philosophical methodology that teaches them to (1) take a default skeptical stance; (2) view texts and other philosophers as adversaries; and (3) assess arguments and claims rationally and objectively by searching for logical flaws and counterexamples to the claims made by others. So, if they question other students, they are simply practicing what they are taught, which is exactly how Mike saw the matter.

On its face, this may not appear problematic. After all, we ought to interrogate claims. But when we teach students that philosophy's culture of justification requires that this inquiry be done in an adversarial way that overvalues reason and devalues emotion, students may confuse (or try to hide) resistance with investigating an idea. When this is done in circumstances like Mike's, it seems that the basic tools of the discipline are helping facilitate both privilege-evasive epistemic pushback and epistemic exploitation.

According to Nora Berenstain, "epistemic exploitation" occurs "when privileged persons demand an education or explanation from marginalized persons about the

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nature of the oppression they face" (Berenstain 2015). When exercised, epistemic exploitation:

> maintains structures of oppression by centering the needs and desires of dominant groups and exploiting the emotional and cognitive labor of members of marginalized groups who are required to do the unpaid and often unacknowledged work of providing information, resources, and evidence of oppression to privileged people who demand it. (Berenstain 2015)

Generally, this work includes the emotional and mental work of attending to the needs of the students in dominant social groups who "just don't see it" or strategizing about how to present (or not) information that may upset members of dominant groups. In other words, members of marginalized groups are asked to sacrifice their well-being for the comfort of others.

This is precisely what Mike did to women in the class that day. Because *he* could not see the reality of rape, rather than doing his own epistemic work to investigate, he demanded that Kate do it for him. And he deployed standards of the discipline to do it.

Case III: Jackie and Rachel

We are discussing the effects of privilege and oppression on members of dominant groups when Jackie, an African American woman, states her frustration that white women and men get sympathy for the damage they endure from occupying privileged positions, but white women simply can't hear anything about the damage she endures as a woman of color. She then proceeds to offer numerous ways this is occurring in relation to the class debate on the text we are discussing and how it happens to her in daily life. Almost immediately, Rachel, a white woman in the class interjects: "That's not true! I am really sympathetic to your problems, but it doesn't mean that I am not also damaged by racism." Jackie calmly suggests that she is not denying that Rachel may face some issues, but that it is not an excuse to ignore her *or other women of color. Rachel responds to Jackie by declaring that* she *cares about her but that Jackie cannot see that because she is too angry. To this, Jackie responds: "So now I am an 'angry black woman.' I'm screwed again."*

Rachel then begins to cry and say that she doesn't understand why Jackie had to be so "mean" to her. Almost all of the white women in the class try to comfort her and defend her position. Jackie is frustrated and sits in silence almost the entire rest of the semester… but then does her final research project on the ethical impacts of the "angry black woman" stereotype.

In this case we see many issues already highlighted: Rachel rejected Jackie's epistemic authority on the grounds that her insights were based on perceived anger rather than reason; she implied that Jackie's anger offered no important insights into the issues; she recentered herself as the epistemic authority on moral damage; she silenced Jackie through testimonial quieting to promote ignorance and protect her

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safety. However, this example highlights another aspect of privilege-evasive epistemic pushback that has not yet been made explicit: the role of white fragility, its connection to epistemic violence, and how these remain obfuscated by certain philosophical standards.

Robin DiAngelo defines "white fragility" as a "lack of racial stamina" (DiAngelo 2011, 56). More specifically, DiAngelo argues,

> white fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium. (57)

According to DiAngelo, white people in North America live in a "social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress" (55). And, "This insulated environment of racial privilege builds white expectations for racial comfort at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress" (55).

The interaction between Rachel and Jackie highlights the strong relationship between white fragility and privilege-evasive epistemic pushback: privilege-evasive epistemic pushback is a form of white students suiting up in their armor to protect, defend, and solidify their white identities (Alison Bailey, personal communication). Put differently, when students enter the philosophy classroom that challenges their views on race, this activates their white fragility. Feeling knocked off of their racial epistemic home turf leads them to grasp for tools that will get them back onto it safely. Some of these tools are provided by the discipline of philosophy's norms around reason and emotions.

Often, students appeal to philosophy's culture of justification to claim that they are not racist, they simply don't see the evidence for racism that X author or Y student suggests. Or, they assert that, because they, as white people who do not experience racism or see it on a daily basis, are better situated to assess its existence than people of color (whose emotions will lead them to see racism where it does not exist). Note, however, this is not exactly what happened between Rachel and Jackie. Rachel actually appealed to her own emotions to bolster her epistemic credibility while simultaneously dismissing Jackie's experience on the grounds she was "angry." So, Rachel appealed to philosophy's epistemic norms to deny Jackie's claims while ignoring the fact that she used emotion to garner support for her claims by white members of the class who, likely, also had their white fragility activated. But I also think Rachel implicitly appealed to some other philosophical norms here to bolster her position, for example, the logical principle of charity (that Jackie should give her the benefit of the doubt). Only when this failed did she move to racist, sexist, "shadow texts" of the angry black woman (Bailey 2015). So, while philosophical norms are clearly not the only element facilitating Rachel's privilege-evasive epistemic pushback here, they certainly helped.

We must note, though, that Rachel's tears disrupted the inquiry by recentering her epistemic needs and smothering Jackie's testimony; all Jackie could do to avoid

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further damage in the face of Rachel's crying was to smother herself and shut down. In this way, then, Rachel was not only able to reach for Western philosophy's reason/emotion divide to disguise and facilitate her privilege-evasive epistemic pushback, but also to tilt the unlevel knowing field toward "white repair" and away from the creation of productive epistemic friction.

More generally, note how norms about reason and emotion epistemically empower one knower's tears while silencing another's. When members of marginalized groups cry in response to being attacked by members of dominant groups, it is seen as epistemically manipulative and diminishing, but when members of dominant groups cry in response to feeling attacked by members of subordinate groups, it is seen as enhancing. When Ashley cried, the reason/emotion divide was deployed to discredit her knowledge; *her* tears were evidence to Dustin that she was a "lesser philosopher" than he, because she used emotion to make epistemic claims. By contrast, Rachel's tears diminished Jackie's epistemic credibility; Rachel's tears validated her claims to other whites in ways that would not have occurred for Jackie. In both cases, tears were used to protect whiteness and epistemic authority.

Case IV: Lewis

In a discussion on transgender rights, Lewis, a politically conservative, white, Christian, cisgender, male philosophy major interrupts the discussion by asking: "Don't we need to construct some basic principles or conditions to determine when someone is a transgender person before we can discuss anything about their rights? After all, whose *rights are we discussing?"*

I suggested to Lewis that he was not as interested in defining his terms but rather was trying to avoid engaging the topic. In response he expressed frustration that transgender issues "are always discussed now" and screamed: "Let's do philosophy!"

In addition to the issues we have already seen, Lewis appealed to disciplinary norms to define a concept before it can be used. In this case, he seemed to be making a reasonable request (what is wrong with defining our terms?) when he was really using the tools of philosophy, specifically the practice of defining key concepts before utilizing them, to refuse to engage the topic at all. In fact, he was explicitly interrupting the conversation to plead that we *not* engage the topic at hand. I suggest he was trying to stall the discussion so that he did not have to confront his epistemic discomfort with the topic. Again, he used the tools of the discipline—specifically the requirement for conceptual clarity before proceeding to a larger discussion—to obscure his privilege-evasive epistemic pushback.

Case V: Studying Political Philosophy

I teach political philosophy every three to four semesters. The class first focuses on argument structures and fallacies and then explores the arguments of the classic social contract theorists (that is Hobbes, Locke, and Rawls). Following this, we explore critiques of this tradition

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(Pateman and Mills). Although students discern Hobbes's argument for a Leviathan, Locke's argument for private property, or Rawls's argument for the principles of justice, they struggle with critically engaging them. For example, students almost never question Hobbes's description of human nature as greedy, distrustful, and potentially violent, Locke's description of the family, or Rawls's description of the rational heads of households as representatives in the original position. As soon as we get to Pateman, however, almost all students become skeptics. They question where "exactly" in the text Hobbes says that the contractors are men (despite Pateman giving very detailed textual arguments on this); they claim that Mills has not demonstrated Locke's racial and pro-slavery conceptions of freedom and equality because "Locke never says anything like that in his text"; and they outright deny that sexism and racism could infuse Rawls's theory of justice because "the veil of ignorance protects from that."

In this final example, students employed "rational" standards they learned in philosophy to claim to be appealing to textual evidence. This is a good start: look to the text for evidence. But, upon closer examination, we see that students were not actually exploring the texts, but rather were requesting textual evidence as a way to avoid engaging. In other words, both Pateman and Mills offer extensive textual evidence citations from Hobbes, Locke, and Rawls to support their contentions, but students did not engage these arguments. Instead, they just insisted on more textual evidence to support their critiques against Hobbes, Locke, and Rawls. And they justified their refusal to engage the texts because Pateman and Mills violate "commonly held" norms of philosophy to offer objective and value-free arguments by including discussions of larger historical contexts around their relationship to social contract theory. As a result, students refused to grant them epistemic authority.

By contrast, because students perceive Hobbes, Locke, and Rawls as rational agents who presented rational, objective arguments, they accord them epistemic authority. In fact, the students implicitly and explicitly stated that Hobbes, Locke, and Rawls *must* deserve the epistemic authority they receive since they are part of the philosophical canon, whereas Pateman and Mills are "just here because of 'political correctness.'" In other words, they do not merit being taken philosophically seriously because they are included only to promote an agenda, not to aid in seeking truth.

As all of these examples illustrate, the reason/emotion split provides both fuel and cover for privilege-evasive epistemic pushback. Students are employing the tools we have taught them not to obtain knowledge, but rather, to block it; they are trying to keep the epistemic terrain smooth and slippery so that we can't get any traction to take them off of their epistemic home turf.

Before concluding this section, I want to explicitly discuss something implied in all of the cases: my social location and its relationship to privilege-evasive epistemic pushback. Although I do not have the space to go into detail here, I would be remiss not to at least acknowledge that in many of these cases, students were engaging in privilege-evasive epistemic pushback against what they perceived to be my feminist agenda. And the pushback I face likely differs from that faced by women and men of color or Muslim colleagues, for example. In the specific cases highlighted in this

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essay, for example, I think Dustin and Rachel thought they would "have cover" from me because they did not perceive me as invested in the issues. By contrast, Mike and the students in political philosophy courses perceive me as assigning material that pushes my agenda "as a woman."

More broadly, students often feel justified in dismissing the philosophical materials I assign in these areas on the grounds that they are part of my agenda, rather than "real" philosophy. In fact, I will often read student comments in course evaluations that explicitly state that we "wasted time" on the professor's feminist agenda, rather than doing "real" philosophy. But, what is "real philosophy"? It is what they have been told by the discipline it is: logic, arguments, rational discourse, value-free, objective texts. Materials seen to challenge these are dismissed as lesser knowledge (or not philosophy at all) but rather emotionally based, value-laden, agenda-driven politics. And thus, the discipline itself helps facilitate the pushback I, and so many others, face by supporting dangerous connections between perceived bias and emotions. And this suspicion is further supported by the fact that my white, middle-aged, heterosexual, male colleagues have told me that they have *never* encountered privilege-evasive epistemic pushback in their classrooms, likely, in part, because students do not see them as emotionally invested in the arguments.[8] As one student put it, the white men "just teach the arguments, they don't try to convince us of anything." Again, though I cannot fully explore these claims here, it appears that norms around reason/emotion facilitate privilege-evasive epistemic pushback in different ways not only in relation to students' perceived social locations but the professor's as well.

Some Emotion-Enhancing Critical Philosophical Practices

I do not want to give the impression that I am pessimistic. A growing number of scholars in recent decades who have shown that emotions are useful in the classroom (see Boler; Zembylas), and although specific practices and their effectiveness will likely differ by context, I think it is precisely by reclaiming emotions that we can resist privilege-evasive epistemic pushback in our classrooms. Before concluding, then, I briefly suggest three emotion-enhancing critical philosophical practices that have helped me productively navigate privilege-evasive epistemic pushback in my classes. The first helps students identify the emotions that they have been disciplined to suppress or deny. The second teaches students that emotions must be engaged to do philosophy well. The third connects students to their emotions to generate knowledge-producing epistemic friction rather than letting the students return to their epistemic home turf.

Critical Philosophical Practice I: Weekly or Daily Emotional Response Papers

In weekly or daily emotional response papers, students write two half-page responses identifying and reflecting on emotions provoked by class discussions and course

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readings. These responses are seen *only* by the professor (which the students know) in order to: (1) free them from concerns that would understandably emerge if they thought their response would be public and (2) avoid epistemic exploitation of students who occupy marginal social locations. In the first half-page, students identify an emotional response to something that arose in the previous class session. After specifying that emotion (or set of emotions), they must reflect on why they think that emotion was provoked and what they learned from that emotional response (either about themselves, course material, or something else). They do the same in a second half-page response to something in the reading for the upcoming class period.

This practice helps students see that emotions are, indeed, present in philosophy (and their interpretations of it). This critical philosophical practice, then, undermines the core of ideas about the reason/emotion divide and reduces privilege-evasive epistemic pushback by demonstrating that calling something an "appeal to emotion" is not *de facto* a legitimate source of critique. In addition, it puts into practice a habit of attention that works against the practice of undermining others' credibility by pointing to the fact that they (like all of us) are affective beings.[9]

Students tend to complain the loudest about how hard it is for them to connect to their emotions (most, after all, have not been trained to connect to their emotions), but the biggest caution regarding this practice is the risk of provoking or reconnecting students with traumatic, difficult emotions. The professor must be ready to deal with this positively.[10] If professors cannot or do not want to be in this position, then they should not assign this type of exercise both for their own protection and to avoid inadvertently damaging students. Still, most students, including those who occupy marginalized social locations or who confront traumatic experiences, find the assignment liberating and are grateful for the opportunity to include these aspects of their lives in the learning. So, it is worth it for those so inclined to assign it.

Critical Philosophical Practice II: Talk Back to the Author Activity

When dealing with a particularly contentious or controversial article, I sometimes have students complete a "Talk Back to the Author" activity. With this activity, I pass out a paper with provocative and significant quotations from a text and ask students to tell the author how they feel (justified or not) when they read them. For example, do students think that the author is saying something "stupid"? If so, why? What makes it "stupid"? Is the author mistaken or uninformed? Do they express a worldview with which you disagree? Does their point make you angry or excited? We then discuss the responses and reflect on what they teach us.

The primary purpose of this practice is to teach students that their emotions are epistemically fruitful resources for philosophical analysis. But this practice often has a secondary benefit, which is reducing privilege-evasive epistemic pushback. I am not sure exactly why this is, but I suspect it is because everyone's emotions are included. I think students feel as if the terrain of the unlevel knowing field flattens a bit such that they can all express themselves; everyone can be angry, frustrated, hurt, and so

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on. I also think they like having permission that they do not usually have to express anger and frustration and confusion at readings. It is exhausting to try to pretend emotions do not pervade the philosophy classroom when they are always present, and students feel it and know it. So, I think that part of the success of this practice is freeing them from the dictate. This emotion-enhancing practice, then, helps students see the epistemic value of emotions while fostering interesting philosophical conversations.

Another benefit of this exercise is that it helps use things that usually foment this pushback, such as white fragility, in the service of resisting it. If students' white fragility is activated, for example, then they can respond to the author directly, without having to obscure it. They can articulate their anxieties (without being singled out), which I suspect lowers the level of activation. Then, in the discussion, we can often turn the differing emotional expressions into a fruitful discussion that generates epistemic friction. And, when this fails, we can try to do so with a third practice, to which I will now turn.

Critical Philosophical Practice III: "Tell Me, How Does That Make You Feel?"

The third critical philosophical practice is intended to disrupt as it is occurring the privilege-evasive epistemic pushback that is specifically related to testimony already offered by students from marginalized groups, and/or to texts by authors from marginalized groups, and prevent it from derailing the conversation or undermining the author's epistemic authority. When someone is actively engaging in privilege-evasive epistemic pushback, stop the conversation and simply ask the person engaging in the pushback, "how would you feel if X's[11] claim were true?" Often the student will respond with some core idea or aspect of their identity being challenged or being false. In other words, they affirm that their response is a defensive one. White students in particular tend to focus on some key aspect of white privilege being challenged or taken away from them (real or imagined) and the fears that entails. Rather than critique these responses, I validate their fears and encourage them to delineate how those emotions might be influencing their interpretation of the text or comments. Sometimes, I will ask the whole class to do the exercise (for example, if it is highly contentious or I am concerned the student will be singled out negatively). After exploring the connections, I point out how our analysis has been enhanced by the open discussion of emotions and emphasize that good philosophy requires us to recognize both information and our emotional response to the information to gain knowledge. Doing this with students often generates productive epistemic friction that sparks some introspection and that then paves the way to re-engage in productive conversation; it often brings us back to the epistemic rough ground. Again, I cannot say definitively, but my intuition on how this occurs is that when fears are all validated, people don't feel the need to hold onto them nor to "prove" themselves "right." In other words, they do not feel attacked, so they do not feel defensive. This lack of fear and defensiveness then enables the class to get into the more complicated

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issues—this is not a binary choice with a winner and a loser so people do not have to try to win. They can explore ambiguity. They can feel more comfortable on the rough ground.

Moving Forward, Emotions Centered

Dustin, Mike, Rachel, Lewis, and my political philosophy students were not the first students to engage in privilege-evasive epistemic pushback and they will not be the last. But students like Ashley, Kate, and Jackie and their professors are entitled to learn and work in classrooms where it is recognized and challenged so that the epistemic violence is stopped and the unlevel knowing field becomes easier to traverse. It is epistemically and morally damaging, unjust, and exhausting to endure privilege-evasive epistemic pushback. The good news is that we can resist it. And one way to do it is to promote and center the very emotions our discipline seeks to suppress.

Notes

1. Naomi Scheman also discusses the issue involving trust and knowledge.

2. See, for example, Marilyn Frye, "On Anger," in Frye 1983, and María Lugones, "Hard to Handle Anger," in Lugones 2003.

3. Dotson defines testimonial quieting as not recognizing the speaker as a genuine knower.

4. Again, here Dotson defines testimonial smothering as occurring when the speaker silences or smothers herself in an effort to protect herself or in recognition that she will not be given uptake or heard.

5. Although each discipline imposes rules that privilege reason, I believe that the core place of rational justification in the discipline of philosophy marks the philosophy classroom in particularly powerful ways. So, though some of these dynamics exist throughout education, philosophy's specific norms around reason and emotion facilitate and disguise students' privilege-evasive epistemic pushback in those classrooms with particular fervency.

6. These events are composite descriptions of classroom exchanges that happen on a regular basis. All names and details in the case studies have been fictionalized to protect anonymity.

7. I refer to the category WOMAN in this way following Frye's convention of using small capital letters to refer to categories.

8. To be clear, I am not implying that privilege-evasive epistemic pushback never occurs in classes of white, male professors; I know a colleague who is white, male, and queer, and he faces privilege-evasive epistemic pushback in his political philosophy and ethics courses where he presents some similar material. I am stating, however, that the social location of the professor is a strong factor in the presence and form of privilege-evasive epistemic pushback and that, because they are perceived as rational and objective with respect to the topics, white, male, heterosexual colleagues face this much less often.

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9. Thank you to Gaile Pohlhaus for helping me see this even more clearly.

10. I want to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.

11. X refers to a specific student who is challenging the other student's position or a specific text that does so.

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