Chapter 8
Second Thoughts

Aesthetic Epistemology?

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A few years ago, one of my colleagues was confronted with an interesting question. In a graduate seminar in the Faculty of Education, she had asked students to select a week in which they would introduce the readings. The week before a text by Heidegger was to be discussed, the student responsible for introducing this text asked the instructor: "Can I *dance* Heidegger?" The instructor said no.

This little encounter became quite the topic for discussion in my Faculty, and it was clear that some of the students and faculty believed that the student's having been denied the opportunity to perform a piece of dance as a way of introducing a text by Heidegger in a graduate seminar was evidence of the oppressively positivist slant of the university and of an intolerance for other "ways of knowing."

Now, it seems uncontroversial to me that it is possible to "dance Heidegger" – if, by that expression, it is meant that there are dancers and choreographers who could insightfully interpret a text by Heidegger and share that interpretation in the form of dance. The real question raised by the exchange I described is thus not whether one can "dance Heidegger" but what, in the context of a graduate seminar in education, one might be doing besides dancing. For I should underscore that the graduate seminar in question was not a seminar in dance, nor in dance education or even art education more broadly, and so it seems fair to expect *something else besides dance* to take place when a student introduces a reading to her or his colleagues in such a context. That something else could, in the context of this graduate seminar and the charge to introduce the text by Heidegger, be imagined to be any of a number of things: summarizing the text, asking questions about its claims, putting forward an

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argument, comparing the text to other texts read in the seminar, and so on. The difficulty is that dance is not a medium very well suited to doing any of these things. So what is going on when someone asks to dance (or paint, for that matter) and to do so *as educational theory or research*?

The reason I raise this question is because the title of this book promises a discussion of "education, culture, and epistemological diversity," and yet I feel we have fallen somewhat short in the discussion of culture. Most of the examples given in the various chapters have been of culture in the sense of ethnicity, but there are other cultures in the academy that feel marginalized and make claims about epistemology and "ways of knowing." I use "culture" here much like C. P. Snow (1959/1990) did in his famous lecture "The Two Cultures." Snow observed in Cambridge in the 1950s that there were two cultures in the university whose members hardly spoke with one another: (physical) scientists and (literary) intellectuals. The gulf separating these two cultures did not remain confined to the academy, Snow argued, but extended to society more broadly:

> This polarisation is sheer loss to us all. To us as people, and to our society. It is at the same time practical and intellectual and creative loss, and … it is false to imagine that those three considerations are clearly separable. (p. 171)

The polarization, Snow argued, rested by and large on a mutual lack of comprehension, resulting in caricatures of the other side ("the kind of joke which has gone sour," p. 171), and a further reduced chance at conversation or collaboration. I am interested in a similar polarization that appears in Faculties of Education: between those educational researchers whose research attempts in some way – however critically – to respond to the traditional demand for objectivity and universalizability and those whose approach to research focuses on the subjective, the "authentic," and who feel that the university is inhospitable to such concerns.[1] The gulf separating these cultures also has implications for society more broadly, as it means that educational researchers often do not collaborate with researchers from the other culture, nor make use of their research, which impoverishes the work done on both sides – work that is, after all, about a collection of social phenomena we call *education*. I agree with Snow that "the clashing point of two subjects, two disciplines, two cultures… ought to produce creative chances," not stony silence (p. 172).

One prominent stream among those whose research focuses on the subjective and authentic is arts-based educational research (ABER), and I believe that the student's request to "dance Heidegger" can be understood most easily in this context. If ABER can be understood as, or as part of, a "culture" that encounters incomprehension when faced with another (and more established) culture, the question is whether it has, as Sorokin suggested, a distinct system of truth and knowledge, a distinct *epistemology*.

[1] Like Snow's characterization, the dichotomy I sketch here is a simplification, and many actual educational researchers will not recognize themselves as fitting in either one of these categories.

In one of the earlier and much-cited accounts of ABER, Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner (1997) describe this type of research in the following way:

> First, arts-based research is engaged in for a purpose often associated with artistic activity: arts-based research is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities. For ABER, those activities are educational in character. Second, arts-based research is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or *design elements* that infuse the inquiry process and the research "text." (p. 95)

Thus, ABER is conducted for particular purposes, and the research process and product have particular features. Since the purpose of research is generally associated with the production of knowledge of some sort, Barone and Eisner explain what they mean by ABER's purpose of "enhancing perspectives":

> Educational research has traditionally been conducted for the purpose of arriving at knowledge that is highly valid and reliable, as truthful and trustworthy as possible. Honoring an epistemology that strives toward certainty, traditional research "findings" are meant to explain, predict, and sometimes control the outcome of similar future events. … If traditionalists generally seek to secure solid explanations and confident predictions, arts-based researchers aim to suggest new ways of viewing educational phenomena. …[I]t moves to broaden and deepen ongoing conversation about educational policy and practice by calling attention to seemingly common-sensical, taken for granted notions. (p. 96)

Barone and Eisner here position ABER as a set of approaches that are qualitative and interpretive. They see the particular purpose of ABER, in line with what artists have done for centuries, as proposing *new ways of looking* at things. Distancing ABER from research approaches that focus on certainty and predictability, they also distance ABER from the propositional knowledge that such more traditional research approaches typically strive for ("Based on this research, we know that …").[2]

What I want to focus on here is that although ABER does not aim to produce propositional knowledge, it does not get out of the knowledge business altogether. If the products of ABER are to "enhance perspectives" on educational phenomena, then such perspectives should, presumably, be insightful rather than trite, well-justified rather than unsubstantiated, and so forth. Just as five different paintings of Marilyn Monroe might be said to provide five different perspectives on Marilyn Monroe and hence an opportunity to *know* Monroe better (in a "knowledge by acquaintance" - sense of knowing), one could say that five different artistic renderings of an educational phenomenon offer an opportunity to *know* this educational phenomenon better.

Indeed, Barone and Eisner provide several criteria for assessing the quality of ABER *as research*. They are: (1) "illuminating effect – its ability to reveal what had not been noticed"; (2) "generativity – its ability to promote new questions"; (3) "incisiveness – that is, its ability to focus tightly on educationally salient issues

[2] I will leave aside here the fact that, within the "traditional" research approaches that are here painted as one homogeneous entity, there are significantly different views about what it means to say that one "knows" anything based on research. Popperians, for example, who believe hypotheses cannot be verified, only falsified, would argue that one never knows with full certainty that something is the case, and that research findings can only increase the confidence with which one believes something to be true.

and questions"; (4) "generalizability; that is, its relevance to phenomena outside of the research text" (p. 102). The usually important criterion of *truth* is not explicitly mentioned here, although when Barone and Eisner indicate good ABER should "reveal what had not been noticed," it seems to me that this does not include cases where the researcher claims something that had not previously been noticed *because it is simply not there*. The term "reveal" suggests that, whatever aesthetic media or methods s/he makes use of, the arts-based educational researcher needs to employ an observational acuity to be able to discern something in an educational phenomenon that has not yet been brought to light. Moreover, the researcher should be able to justify why s/he proposes the new perspective that s/he does, and how s/he has come to it.

Piantanida et al. (2003) agree that arts-based educational researchers, if they want their research to be taken seriously as *research* (and not only as *art*), would do well to articulate a "logic of justification" for their work:

> Viewed as a logic-of-justification, method is less a matter of precisely executed techniques than a matter of the philosophical assumptions that guide a researcher's thinking. These assumptions relate to what one takes to be reality (ontology) as well as to the nature of truth claims (epistemology) that one values (axiology). (p. 185)

In other words, just as is the case with educational research that does not make use of artistic media, ABER is informed by a conception of knowledge, and arts-based educational researchers should be able to explain how that conception is operative in their work.

Piantanida et al. (2003) draw on Snow's distinction between the "culture of science" and the "culture of art" to suggest that ABER is disputing the hegemony of the culture of science and claiming a space for the culture of art in the larger educational research community. In order to do so effectively, they argue that arts-based educational researchers should be prepared to articulate what is distinctive about the logic of justification that guides their mode of inquiry:

> For some, the concept of a "logic of justification" may conjure up images of logical positivism that are at odds with the creative processes associated with artistic endeavors. This is an overly narrow conception of "logics." … Arts-based educational research as a distinctive mode of inquiry has emerged because scholars such as Barone, Bruner, Donmoyer, and Eisner have argued so persuasively for *aesthetic logics*. (p. 190, n. 3, emphasis added)

In the abstract of the article, the authors refer to these aesthetic logics of justification as "aesthetic ways of knowing." This suggests that a given piece of ABER tends to be guided by an epistemology that is different from the epistemologies that guide other educational research. Once again, we have arrived at the claim of epistemological diversity as bound up with the presence of different cultures in the academy and in the field of educational research in particular; the cultures in question here, however, are not ethnic cultures but the culture of science and the culture of art. Piantanida et al. do not articulate what these "aesthetic ways of knowing" are, or how they operate; the purpose of their article is, rather, to "call for ongoing and explicit discussions among arts-based educational researchers about the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of our work" (p. 190).

A few arts-based education researchers use the term "aesthetic epistemology"; Patrick Slattery (2003), for example, in his response to Piantanida et al. writes that he is concerned that his colleagues' call for the articulation of a logic of justification "might lead some researchers to apply a positivistic or modernistic process for advancing an aesthetic epistemology," but he does not indicate here what such an aesthetic epistemology might be (p. 195).[3]

Perhaps surprisingly, "aesthetic epistemology" seems to be discussed most in management education. Nick Nissley (2002) provides an account of "how aesthetic epistemology (aesthetic ways of knowing), or arts-based learning is informing the practice of management education" (p. 27). Evidently, Nissley does not clearly distinguish "ways of knowing," "ways of learning," and accounts of what counts as knowledge. "Aesthetic epistemology" in management education has been elaborated as a response to the perceived inadequacy of the dominant approaches to understanding management, and teaching and learning in management education. Nissley discusses two principal ways in which the arts can be used in management education: through "art metaphors" that inform thinking about the "art of management" and through art-perceiving and art-making by managers. Nissley's examples of using the metaphor of jazz improvisation to understand managers' need to be attuned to the situation, or of using dramatic role plays in management education, are uncontroversial. Unfortunately, he does not explain here what, if anything, is *epistemologically* distinct about the use of art by managers and in management education.

Nissley's argument draws on the earlier work of Antonio Strati, who did not use the term "aesthetic epistemology" but who did argue that more attention should be paid to the aesthetic dimensions of organizational life and the aesthetic experiences of people in organizations. Strati claims, for example, that "aesthetics are a form of knowledge and they have their own truth" (1996, p. 216) and that "it is possible to gain aesthetic, rather than logico-rational, understanding of organizational life" (1999, p. 7, as cited in Nissley 2004, p. 291). Based on this view, Nissley (2004) further elaborates how the use of arts can play a role in organizational knowledge and understanding. Of particular interest is his account of how artistic representations can "allow one to see what one is thinking and to inquire into that thinking" (p. 293). In other words, artistic representation, according to Nissley, can play a role in a process of clarifying and deepening one's thoughts by allowing for forms of representation other than linear prose.

[3] As Levisohn and Phillips have analyzed in their chapter in this volume, the term "epistemology" in general is used to refer to several different things, and it is no different with "aesthetic epistemology." While philosophers in that branch of philosophy known as aesthetics have discussed "aesthetic epistemology" in the first sense of the term as discussed by Levisohn and Phillips, the normative sense of epistemology of aesthetic judgments (discussions about how we can "know" that a painting is beautiful), I limit myself here to "aesthetic epistemology" in the second and third senses of the term as discussed by Levisohn and Phillips, that is, as a particular normative set of beliefs about how the arts or the use of artistic media produce knowledge or a description of such a set of beliefs.

Perhaps this is what the student in the graduate seminar intended when she asked to "dance Heidegger": that by representing her interpretation of Heidegger's text in the form of dance rather than academic text, she would make available for her colleagues a different object of inquiry that might lead to a deeper understanding of the text in question. However, the artistic representation of the text is thus only one step in a process of achieving knowledge about the text: discussing the interpretation and having to justify one's views of the text remain other crucial components.

Moreover, a distinction should be made between the interpretation of a text an individual can achieve with the help of her or his own artistic representation and subsequent inquiry and the interpretation an individual can achieve with the help of someone else's artistic representation. In the case of the former, no great technical expertise is required in the artistic medium, as only the individual her or himself is asked to use the artistic product for further inquiry. In the case of the latter, much more technical expertise is required, as the artistic product now has to be interpretable by others who, typically, are much less schooled in the interpretation of such media than they are in the interpretation of linear prose. For example, I can, in the process of grappling with Heidegger's (1951/1971) essay "The Thing," draw a picture to get a better grasp of his argument about the "thingness" of a jug. The physical activity of drawing a line to create a separate space in the shape of a jug that was, just moments ago, part of the larger blank page may give me a better insight into Heidegger's point or may enable me to explain his point better in class. No great skill at drawing is required to arrive at this point, since the drawing is only part of my private process of grappling with the text, and it does not need to communicate anything on its own. It becomes a very different question if I want to create a drawing that can, on its own, convey what I would otherwise explain in words about the essay "The Thing." I would have to be an extremely skilled artist – and my students very experienced art interpreters – to pull that off. Therefore, if I were asked by a student whether s/he could offer a choreographic interpretation of a text to be discussed in a graduate seminar, I would insist that the student also demonstrate how the dancing allowed her or him to see what s/he was thinking about the text and how s/he continued her or his inquiry into the text based on the experience. That spoken or written further explanation and inquiry, and not the dance by itself, could then serve as points of departure for further class discussion.

Importantly, the examples of the use of artistic media I have considered so far have not suggested an "aesthetic epistemology" or any other distinctive epistemology in Levisohn & Phillips' sense of a different normative set of beliefs about knowledge and what distinguishes it from belief. Those educational researchers who identify more with the "culture of art" than the "culture of science" may have reason to perceive the university or the field of educational research as inhospitable to aesthetic concerns and examples, but it is not yet clear whether this perceived inhospitality has anything to do with *epistemology*. I therefore heartily endorse Piantanida et al.'s call to arts-based educational researchers not to shy away from "ongoing and explicit discussions … about the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of our work" (p. 190).

Plain Old Epistemology, But…

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It has often been commented that in the process of research, straightforward questions frequently become more complex; in my experience, this certainly holds true of philosophical inquiry – and alas, it is true of the contributions to this book. But a moment's reflection shows the "alas" is misplaced, for it is no service to anyone to mask complexities, to preserve a façade of simplicity where the issues are indeed complex. Important issues deserve to be treated honestly, and if they turn out to be complex, so be it! In the process of working on this book, and in particular in the course of working with my co-editor, I have been forced to grapple with some of these complexities and to re-think some of my initial suppositions (which is not to say that I have completely abandoned all of them).

Several factors contributed to my developing a philosophical interest in the general topic that is the focus of this book (my educational, social, and political interests, on the other hand, were fostered by my experiences as a high school teacher of science in an extremely diverse setting and by my later work with impressive, socially aware graduate students in Australia, Stanford, and elsewhere). First, I had a great difficulty in understanding what was meant by "an alternative epistemology", especially when this alternative seemed to pay no heed to what I regarded as a necessity – the requirement that there be some coherent ways of warranting the knowledge-claims that were being advanced under the ambit of this so-called "alternative" (that is, for distinguishing false from true or likely-to-be-true beliefs). I still harbor this attitude, which is why I admire Catherine Elgin's (1996) remarks quoted in this book's Frontispiece: commitments or beliefs or knowledge-claims are tenable only when they have a "place in a maximally tenable system in reflective equilibrium" (pp. 117–118); this is coupled in my mind with the words of John Dewey (1938/1966):

> We know that some methods of inquiry are better than others in just the same way that we know that some methods of surgery, farming, …or what not are better than others…. we ascertain *how and why* certain means and agencies have produced warrantably assertible conclusions, while others have not and *cannot* do so. (p. 104)

This puzzlement about "alternatives" in epistemology came to a head in several discussions and public exchanges I had with my friend and colleague at Stanford, Elliot Eisner, about art as an alternative form of knowledge; I argued essentially that it was not a "maximally tenable" alternative epistemological system. Claudia Ruitenberg also discusses this position in her "Second Thoughts," and I will return to it below.

However, I should stress here that for what seems like eons I have recognized that there can be – indeed that there are – alternative views about what counts as acceptable ways of establishing truth and error in knowledge-claims, about what types of evidence and arguments are allowable, and so forth. Thus, it is clear to me

that there are alternative ways of *doing or applying* epistemology (although, of course, it is open to debate which if any of these ways of pursuing epistemology are "tenable" or "better" in Elgin's and Dewey's senses), but saying there are alternative *ways* within epistemology is quite a different matter from saying that there are *alternative epistemologies*. One reading of the multicultural epistemology sources discussed throughout this book is that they are, indeed, advocating for alternative ways of proceeding within epistemology – ways that display sensitivity to cultural diversity issues (in a way that parallels the call by feminist epistemologists for the field to proceed with "feminist sensitivity"). Personally, I am not completely convinced that this *is* the right way to read this literature, but if it is, then certainly the point that is being made is both valid and important.[4]

Another factor that helped to pique my interest in the topic pursued in this book was the event that occurred at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, which I described early in the roundtable discussion in the previous chapter. As I indicated there, I was horrified by the speaker's disdain for epistemology yet bemused by her obvious desire to keep using the term that she admitted she did not understand. What on earth was going on?

Partly as a result of this experience, I eventually inveigled Jon Levisohn to join with me in authoring the essay that now appears as Chap. 3; it had the distinction of being rejected by several leading journals, whose referees (almost certainly the same people) claimed not to understand the basic distinction that was drawn between "knowledge" and "belief". Again, I was perplexed: why was a distinction that is clear enough to students in "Philosophy 1" so difficult for experienced researchers to comprehend? Or were they dissembling, and if so, why? Having a distaste for continued rejection, Jon and I put the essay aside, until that taxi ride in Kyoto with Claudia Ruitenberg.

Working with Claudia over the past 2 years has given me a heightened sensitivity to the uses of language. Her attitude essentially is a Wittgensteinian one (although she may not have acquired it from this source) – there are many language games, and each has a different point or focus. What I had (rashly?) taken to be a muddled attempt to play the "philosophy game" using the term "epistemology" might instead, Claudia insisted, be a clear move in an entirely different game. I needed to be more intellectually generous, more interpretively flexible – and I have to concede that she was right. On the other hand, she has yet to learn from me (perhaps!) the danger in being overly charitable. When, for example, someone appears to be misusing a word or to be saying something nonsensical, it might be the case that – providing we can find the right interpretive context – they are actually saying something profound or are extending the use of the word in a way that is of great potential social importance. But my view is that charity should not be unbounded; sometimes a word *is*

[4] An interesting philosophical complexity arises here: how many internal changes or "improvements" need to be made before the traditional epistemology can be said to have been transformed into a new one? The sources discussed in this book do not pursue issues such as this, perhaps another indication that it is a mistake to identify their concerns as being philosophical.

being misused, and sometimes an otherwise intelligent person *is* talking nonsense. There is a brilliant essay by Ernest Gellner (1973) that shows it is almost always possible to find a context that will "save" an incoherent statement. Warning of "over charitable exegesis", he wrote:

> In science, the best safeguard may be a vivid sense of the possibility that the initial theory which is being saved may have been false after all; in sociological interpretation, an equally vivid sense of the possibility that the interpreted statement may contain absurdity. (p. 44)

Thus, the one defect I see in Claudia's interesting and scholarly essay (Chap. 6) is that she is extraordinarily thorough in suggesting readings or interpretations of the writings of advocates of multicultural epistemology so that their use of the term "epistemology" and its cognates becomes sensible. A charitable person, with ingenuity, can accomplish this "resignification" – and she accomplishes it well, but overzealously! On the other hand, I suggest (and in fact did suggest in the literature review in Chap. 2) that if close attention is paid to the context in the text in which these quasi-epistemological references appear, a simpler and more warranted interpretation leaps out, to which I now turn.

The upshot, then, is this: In my (perhaps uncharitable) judgment, some – probably many – multiculturalists misuse the term "epistemology" simply because they do not know much about philosophy (there is nothing sinister about this – all of us have lacunae in our knowledge base and are apt to misuse technical words from unfamiliar fields); some knowingly misuse the word in a new domain in order to take advantage of its intellectual cachet – which it is hoped will transfer over to this new context; and some are not misusing the term at all but are attempting to make an important point about some genuinely epistemological matter. (Perhaps they are arguing that the scholarly community needs to recognize the existence of quite different, alternative epistemologies, or perhaps they are making what to my mind is a more sustainable claim that epistemological procedures need to be improved, that there are better ways to pursue epistemology.) Whatever their point, however, it requires a considerable degree of philosophical acumen to argue, and, of course, it demands full, clear, and careful exposition (which I judge to be lacking so far in the relevant literature).

This discussion can serve as segue to consideration of the key epistemological thesis that at least some multiculturalists seem to be quite explicitly canvassing (if their words are taken literally) and which was the focal issue with which this book set out, namely, that there are "alternative epistemologies." In her "Second Thoughts," my co-editor uses as an illustrative example the position held by Barone and Eisner, and others, that the field of art provides a case of such an alternative, and she introduces her discussion with the story of the student who asked permission to "dance Heidegger." Despite our differences, my co-editor and I have pretty much the same position on the issues here, although perhaps Claudia is again slightly (but only very slightly) more charitable than I am (for she finds a context in which the student's request is uncontroversial). This interesting example provides a relatively simple context in which I can make clear the deficiencies I see in the view that there are so-called "alternative ways of knowing" – and pretty obviously, it is an example that

calls to mind Molefi Asante's claim, discussed in Chap. 2, that at least in the Afrocentric cultural context, dance is one of the "sources of knowledge, the canons of proof, and the structures of truth."

Stated in my uncharitable way, to suppose that a person could "dance Heidegger" (or use dance as a canon of proof or to convey the structure of truth) is, to use Gellner's words, incoherent and/or absurd. One can certainly perform a dance that expresses one's feelings or attitudes toward Heidegger's writings – personally, I would rush on stage, writhe about, then tear out my hair, a performance that would convey its point clearly enough. And if one could boil down Heidegger's work to some simple thesis, such as "the loneliness of Man," no doubt this could be conveyed (although this hardly counts as "dancing Heidegger," and members of the audience might well offer different interpretations of what the performance was about and might not even recognize the Heideggerian reference). But feelings and attitudes and "sound-bite" interpretations are not the issue here. How could a dance convey Heidegger's philosophical *theories and conclusions*? He makes many distinctions and devises a variety of concepts, using technical language and lengthy arguments. How can a dance summarize a lengthy and technical argument? And how can a dance offer an assessment or a possible refutation of one or all of these elements? Finally, an interpretation or assessment or summary is itself a knowledge-claim and therefore is open to dispute and possible refutation. Can one look at a dancer's pirouette and meaningfully remark "I think you have misinterpreted Heidegger's point here…"? Could a spectator who knows nothing about Heidegger or German philosophy come away from the dance performance saying "My word, that concept of *Dasein* is really profound"? Dance simply does not come close to being an adequate epistemological medium or even to being an inadequate one – it is a "category mistake" to suppose that it is an epistemological system at all.

Thus, I want to stress that central to any epistemological system is the guidance it provides about the assessment of the viability of the claims or hypotheses or theories that are advanced by those who work within that particular framework. What kinds of evidence are acceptable? How should evidence have been collected so that it is valid? What forms of argument are acceptable? Who, if anyone, counts as an epistemic authority? How are errors and faulty conclusions recognized? Without such guidance – without the ability to recognize errors and invalid arguments, without the ability to detect weak or misleading or compromised evidence, and so forth – an epistemic system is not, as Elgin put it, "a maximally tenable system"; in fact, it is not an epistemological system at all, and as a way of producing tenable beliefs (that is, tenable knowledge-claims), it seems liable to lead to disaster when relied upon in a hostile universe. (Could a fisherman in a Southeast Asian village, for example, survive for long if he had no way of distinguishing what were likely to be false beliefs about the weather at sea from those that were likely to be true?)

I should point out that I have been discussing the production of what might be called large-scale beliefs, beliefs about what the world contains and about how it operates. (I have not been concerned with the kind of "atomic" beliefs that Lorraine Code also disdains; it will be recalled that in Chap. 5, her starting point was the traditional epistemological formula "S-knows-that-*p*," where the "p" was a rather

trivial thing such as a patch of red about which she said she cared very little.) And in this context, I have found the work of feminist philosophers (for example, Code herself, Helen Longino, and a number of others represented in the Alcoff and Potter volume) to be extremely enlightening. Such knowledge is not produced by solitary knowers who are cut off from all social and cultural influences; rather, as Elgin (1996) again put it, such knowledge is like a "medieval tapestry…the work of many hands," that is, "understanding and knowledge are collective accomplishments" (p. 116). But to actually *be* an "accomplishment" rather than a phantasm, the epistemological guidelines within which the relevant collectivity or community or cultural group is operating must be *viable* ones.

I also judge that there is much to be said in favor of Lorraine Code's critique, alluded to above, of traditional, Western epistemology that often has taken as its starting point a decontextualized knower who is confronting a patch of red or somesuch and is concerned about whether he or she is justified in believing that it is, indeed, a patch of red. (Code also points out that epistemology would look quite different if it took as its starting focus cases of "knowledge by acquaintance" where the subjectivity and positionality of the knower could be argued to be epistemically relevant.[5]) It is a long way from knowing a patch of red to knowing that viruses can cause disease or knowing that the ethnic group to which one belongs has systematically been victimized by the structure of the economic system operative in society, and it is even further to knowing what to do about this injustice. The 64,000-dollar question is whether multicultural epistemology can help direct this complicated journey or whether plain old epistemology can rise to the challenge (old but updated with multicultural sensitivity, that is, with sensitivity to the concerns raised by those who are pointing out that cultural diversity issues are largely invisible in the way epistemology currently is pursued). I opt for the second alternative.

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[5] I am sympathetic to this point, to a degree. The result of an analysis is often strongly determined by the case or example that is taken as representative and thus a focus for the analysis; I have called this the "foxtrot problem" (Phillips 2006, pp. 12–13). I do not go all the way with Code, for I hold that subjectivity is not a virtue in many epistemologically important inquiries, although it might well be crucial in the kind of cases that she (and Ruitenberg) focuses upon – knowing a person, for example.

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