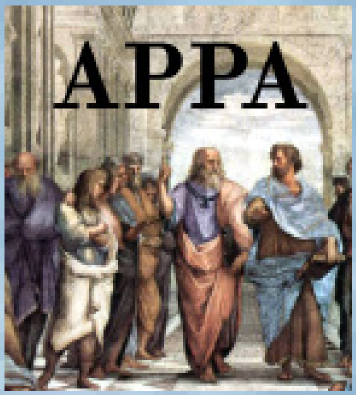

PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

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Nemo Veritatem Regit
Nobody Governs Truth

Book Review

Anthony J. Steinbock, *Moral Emotions: Reclaiming the Evidence of the Heart*, Evanston, IL:
Northwestern University Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0810129566. 354 pages.

Reviewed by Helen Douglas
Cape Town, South Africa

Moral Emotions: Reclaiming the Evidence of the Heart is a remarkable exercise in the phenomenology of humanness. For counseling philosophers who want to think beyond or outside the frame of psychology, it provides a rich and welcome resource that calls as much for response as for review.

This book is the third in Anthony Steinbock's ongoing project to describe personhood in relation with self, others, temporality and the transcendent in such a way as to transform how we imagine the social, public and political order. *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Northwestern, 1995) considers lifeworld and alienworld, normality, abnormality and generativity. It was followed in 2009 by *Phenomenology and Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience* (Indiana). *Moral Emotions* itself includes various teasers of topics to be developed in future work.

The book is divided into three parts: the moral emotions of self-givenness (pride, shame and guilt), of possibility (repentance, hope and despair), and of otherness (trust, loving and humility). Steinbock's goal is to show that these emotions each have "their own structure, their own kinds of evidence, their unique 'cognitive' styles, and are revelatory of the person as interpersonal—without them either being tied to rationality in order to be meaningful, or on the contrary, being ostracized from the sphere of evidence because they are not rational" (5).

This review will focus on two chapters in particular: pride and trust. The former to give a sense of Steinbock's approach and because pride is central to much of the following analysis; the latter because his articulation of the role of trust in human relations and beliefs also opens up its importance in therapeutic or transformative philosophical practices.

Steinbock designates "pride" in a very particular manner as an interpersonal (moral) attitude and experience that "arises when I live myself as the major, predominate [sic], or sole constitutive source in the presence of others as excluded, and limit myself to myself as self-grounding" (47). The "self-made man" who believes that everything he is is of his own making is the very portrait of pride. Although pride may be well pleased with itself, Steinbock assigns it a negative orientation as fundamentally deluded and self-limiting.

Contrary to its own conceit, pride is not original: the self does not make itself. Steinbock distinguishes pride precisely by its resistance to the interpersonal nexus and the exclusion of others in the constitution of meaning. This resistance and exclusion paradoxically indicate the earlier and continuing presence of others, and that something other than pride—in this sense of self-grounding—came first and has been forgotten.

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The situation of pride is, however, filled with "leading clues" that draw us towards a fuller appreciation of the self and how we are given as persons. Pride doesn't dream itself up out of whole cloth, but builds on basic personal and aesthetic experiences of being that are received as given. In this "natural attitude," I discover myself as unique and absolute, a distinct center of feeling and meaning. I am able to move and to will, and free insofar as I can move as I will. In my bodily and perceptual experience, I mark the origin of time and space, the here and the now: "in terms of self-temporalization, I experience myself as always was and as always will be … As absolute, I am the source of meaning and I am the meaning source of myself … Thus, we have the givenness of an eternal being in the process of becoming that is constitutively independent where the genesis of meaning is concerned" (43).

All these basic experiences, in their substance and value, serve as "lures" to pride. The self bites down—actively, creatively and mistakenly—and gets hooked. Steinbock thus recalls the views of Augustine, Dante, Rousseau and Marx that pride is the most dangerous emotion and the most difficult to overcome (48). However, his depiction of pride as a moral subjective attitude that arises within an interpersonal and spiritual framework of personhood, rather than an epistemic natural attitude that takes pride as a kind of belated starting point, raises both the desire and the possibility to do so.

Because pride basically dissimulates the self, it is not self-revelatory and one can't "get over" oneself by a self-generated choice or act of will. Taking off from phenomenology's root methods of bracketing particular experiences and the reduction of the natural attitude toward them—of not taking for granted things as given—Steinbock proposes a "moral reduction" that calls prides into question and reveals what he calls the "vocational self" or "Myself": "uniquely who I am with others in the moral universe" (120). Moral emotions, because they turn us towards others with whom we find ourselves already involved, are key to this reduction—particularly in experiences of shame and guilt, in which one finds oneself exposed before another.

In common usage, shame is a weapon of social coercion, experienced as humiliation and mortification. Following Max Scheler, Steinbock claims that this "debilitating shame" arises from "a disordered heart." Conversely, the "diremptive" experience of shame that he brings to our attention is one in which we find ourselves torn within ourselves and oriented towards a higher good. It is a "revelation of the self that is not neutral," in which I am "thrown back on myself before others" and "experience myself as revealed to myself, with an import and veracity" (80). Steinbock gives the example of a lax student who, when called to account by a loving and respected teacher, recognizes that he has let down both his teacher and himself: "[a]s an experience of genuine self-love and the positive value of self, shame, as 'a trailblazer to ourselves' is the basis of implicit and possible explicit self-critique … a way of overcoming self-deception … [S]hame can give us our bearings such that without it, we might remain lost" (77–78).

The experienced revelation that one's pride has been both mistaken and self-limiting—pride's downfall—opens the self to fresh possibilities of repentance and hope. The transformation and modalization of pride's straightforward ways of existing can liberate the self, both from otherwise fixed and predictable meanings and for something becoming otherwise (135). Steinbock's analyses of repentance, hope and despair in the following chapters foreground the moral and spiritual significance of being human in the world with others.

The discussion of trust in Chapter 6 is the linchpin of the book, just as trust itself, as a directly interpersonal relation, is foundational for social existence. Moreover, it reveals an alternate experience of freedom:

> in trust freedom is realized not as my ability to remain independent from others, but as being bound to others, so much so that an essential feature of trusting is interdependence and vulnerability. Whereas pride presupposes freedom and transcendence in the sense of excluding the contribution of others, trust presupposes freedom and transcendence in the sense of proffering myself to another in an open future, and being bound to them in this social and temporal movement. (195)

As with "pride," Steinbock delineates "trust" in a very particular manner. It is not "reliance," in which I find some thing or someone reliable based on past history and in terms of a certain role or function, such as a reliable car or a reliable babysitter. Trust establishes a relationship between one and an other that presupposes the freedom and transcendence of both.

Although I may have reason to trust, trust is not based on objective evidence but rather on "some givenness, some insight" (207), a sense that this other will not betray me or let me down, while at the same time knowing that they could. Contrary to self-centered pride, the trusting self is "de-centered, dis-positioned" (202). One binds oneself directly to the other, gives oneself over to the other in a manner that is essentially vulnerable but also freely given. One can't be forced to trust, although one can certainly be misguided in bestowing it.

The situation that calls for trust can be more or less fraught: the traveler who trusts a stranger to watch her bag or to give accurate directions, the dancer who trusts her partner to catch her, the patient who undergoes the surgeon's knife, or the soldiers together in battle. We rely on the other to play their part as "the doctor" or "the comrade," but trust is extended to the very person: "[t]rusting is a resting in, a relaxing into, and even an intimacy and a being supported by another" (210). These same situations can equally give rise to suspicion—in which case we will not trust. As Steinbock notes, trust is primordial: "[d]evelopmentally speaking, a child trusts first and foremost, and only learns distrust and mistrust as acquired postures" (209).

Trust also has spiritual or inter-Personal aspects (the capital letter, as with "Myself," indicating a sense of vocation and verticality). From my side, I can't violate the trust I give interpersonally. I can trust or not trust, but only the other can betray my trust. In order to experience self-betrayal, I must also be in an inter-Personal relation with the deeper sense of Myself. As Steinbock explains, "I can betray Myself not because I trust myself, but because I stand in an inter-Personal relation as not self-grounding. I betray myself when I betray another's trust in me as who I am" (218). Moreover, "the inner armature of any interpersonal trust is this vertical trust that comes from and within the inter-Personal nexus, and which is itself generative of trust" (ibid.).

In binding myself to the other, I expose myself "to more than what is given" (207). Trust is "oriented toward the other person as mystery, as 'transcendence', and thus toward an open future, co-constituting interpersonal space in a fundamental way" (265). In this way, it can also be understood as a "religious act," which Steinbock defines as "a kind of experiencing that lives from, however implicitly or broadly, the dimension of the Holy" (212).

Steinbock also places trust at the base of knowledge and belief:

> When I trust, I do more than live in a straightforward belief attitude: I invest myself "personally" in the other person, and therefore in what the other person says or in how the other person acts. I give myself over to him or over to her "word." Trust binds me to another. Accordingly, even if trust pertains to the acceptance of scientific truths, trusting itself still resides in the moral sphere because in this case it is that through which one scientist is bound to another. The binding character of knowledge is rooted in the binding character of trust. (206)

I confess that I find this a startling notion. Put differently, it suggests that how and what we know or believe depends on how and whom we trust. On reflection, I think that this is probably true and that it has significant ramifications. Let me roughly sketch this out, if only to indicate how Steinbock's delineation of the interpersonal can open up fresh and useful thinking about philosophical practice.

Consider the tangles of belief that our visitors arrive with. There is the base of received knowledge, acquired in the family, school and culture, some of which may be specific to the person, some of which "everybody knows." They also have experienced the world for themselves and learned directly from that. They have come to know some things about the world and their place in it. When shaken by contradictions between what they know and what they experience, how do they make sense? They have to decide what is reliable, in the objective sense of functionality and predictability, but also what is trustworthy, in the moral sense of interrelatedness and "de-centered" grounding. From a natural and trusting attitude of belief, they're brought into question and, if their trust has been betrayed (by a mistaken or disordered heart), into suspicion. There's a lot at stake. When they don't know what to believe or what can be trusted, they are confused, beside themselves, lost.

If philosophical practice is meant to help people find their bearings, it isn't enough to get the facts straight. Wittgenstein is right that we also get confused by language, but there's more to it than that. For anything meaningful to occur, the relationship between us has to be trusting and trustworthy, precisely in Steinbock's sense: interdependent, vulnerable, presupposing freedom and transcendence, proffering oneself to the other in an open future, and being bound to them in this movement.

For the counselor, this means welcoming the other as a legitimate other, just as they are. As I've described elsewhere, I believe what they say, but I don't assign any meaning to it: that's the work we must do together, and I trust their capacity to do so. This isn't based on principle or faith but on, as Steinbock says, "some givenness, some insight," my sense of the presence of this person. From the first, I find myself trusting and, since trusting generates trust, this encourages the other to trust me—which obliges me to be trustworthy, as the other also tries to honor my trust. Thus, even as we are engaging with the stuff of the visitor's situation, our interpersonal relatedness is also inter-Personal. They find their bearings as we find our bearings with each other. We learn a thing or two. And the binding epistemic character of this knowledge is rooted in the binding ethical character of trust. This is what constitutes a therapeutic relationship.

As we struggle to change our ways of thinking and how we see the world, which is the task of philosophical practice, it is fundamentally important to reconsider the question of what counts as evidence. Anthony Steinbock's *Moral Emotions: Reclaiming the Evidence of the Heart* hits the frozen expanses of academic philosophy like an icebreaker, opening a new passage and new ways to go on.

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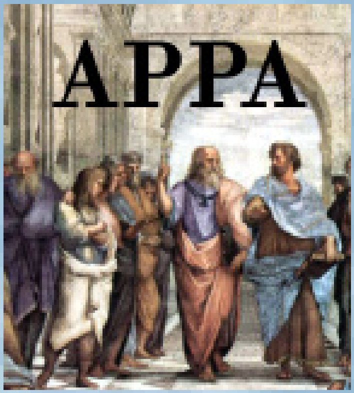
Helen Douglas opened her philosophical counseling practice in Cape Town in 2002. Publications include *Love and Arms: Violence and Justification after Levinas* (Trivium, 2011) and various articles on philosophical practice in critical times, which can be found at www.philosophy-practice.co.za.



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Aims and Scope

Philosophical Practice is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the growing field of applied philosophy. The journal covers substantive issues in the areas of client counseling, group facilitation, and organizational consulting. It provides a forum for discussing professional, ethical, legal, sociological, and political aspects of philosophical practice, as well as juxtapositions of philosophical practice with other professions. Articles may address theories or methodologies of philosophical practice; present or critique case-studies; assess developmental frameworks or research programs; and offer commentary on previous publications. The journal also has an active book review and correspondence section.

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