

# Privilege, Immorality, and Responsibility for Attending to the “Facts about Humanity”

*Anita Superson*

Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.

—Bumper sticker slogan

I want to join the progressive movement of philosophers who extend the notion of responsibility in socially sensitive ways, by arguing that the privileged are responsible for knowing and acting on certain basic facts about their subordinates that some of them overlook, an omission that is at the root of sexist forms of immorality, which will be my focus.<sup>1</sup> These basic facts are the familiar Kantian facts about moral agency, namely, that all persons are rational, autonomous beings possessing dignity and deserving of respect—what I will call the “facts about humanity.” I examine the main features of privilege in section II and show how it fosters the development of traits that cause immoral behaviors, sexist forms of which I examine in section III. I offer a Kantian argument in section IV that the privileged have an obligation to attend to the facts about humanity in the oppressed. My argument is threatened by the conjecture that the privileged cannot (i.e., lack the capacity to) attend to the humanity of the oppressed. I offer some preliminary suggestions to establish that they can and so are responsible for coming to see the oppressed as “likes”—as persons like themselves in the facts about humanity—which involves stepping out of privilege, developing sensitivity, and understanding the harms of oppression. The facts about humanity are ones that any reasonable person ought to attend to, and as such, ignorance about, indifference to, or disregard for them renders an agent blameworthy for resultant harms.

## I. Uncovering the Facts about Humanity in Women

Three interrelated themes repeatedly emerge in feminist philosophical literature: (1) that sexist stereotypes portraying women as weak, passive, subservient, overly emotional, sexual objects—either overly sexual or asexual in the case of black women—lie at the root of most issues in feminism;<sup>2</sup> (2) that women are devalued in a patriarchal society; and, most fundamentally, and, I believe, at the root of (1) and (2), (3) that patriarchy and its supporters muddle the bare fact that women are persons and thus deserving of relevantly similar treatment to men. Much feminist literature is devoted to uncovering the ways the first two points have been obscured by the complexities of patri-

archal assumptions, but once sexism is revealed in a multitude of issues, it becomes difficult to see how people can miss this most elementary point about women's humanity. Yet they often do, as I hope to show with examples of immoral, sexist behavior. And since they do, it is necessary to show why they do, to establish both that they have an obligation not to, and that they are blameworthy for not doing so.

To illustrate how the facts about women's humanity are not attended to because of stereotyping or devaluation of women as inferior beings, consider briefly the practices of door opening, rape, and abortion in the United States. When we require men no matter how burdened to open doors for (white, elite) women no matter whether they are able-bodied and unburdened, we stereotype women as incapable, render their true needs unimportant or irrelevant, and mock them by being falsely deferential,<sup>3</sup> and so deny women full personhood status and the respect this enjoins. When we legally permit men to have sex with their wives at men's discretion,<sup>4</sup> burden women with demonstrating that sex in extramarital rape was nonconsensual by showing, a century ago, "utmost resistance," and now, "reasonable physical resistance,"<sup>5</sup> instead of taking a woman's verbal refusal at face value, discount women's explicit rejection of sex with their dates as being part of a game of seduction or their own confusion, discount black women's resistance to white men's force or even deny their entitlement to resist,<sup>6</sup> and accept the myth that all women want to be raped, we devalue women by ignoring their desires and treat them as less than full, autonomous persons and stereotype them as promiscuous or frigid or as mere sex objects. And when we allow men to decide what women get to do with their bodies when it comes to procreation and abortion and muddle this point with talk about the personhood status of the fetus and the religious value of an absolute right to life (conveniently forgotten when the mother's right to life is at stake), or, as in the case of Latin American women, with talk of their alleged spiritual superiority that cashes out as being self-sacrificing and submissive to men,<sup>7</sup> we deny women the right to bodily autonomy and to full personhood status and treat them as mere vessels to be used for propagation of the species at any cost.<sup>8</sup>

I will argue that privilege contributes to the failure to attend to women's full personhood. More specifically, privilege tends to foster in those in the dominant group the traits of arrogance, self-centeredness, and a refusal to accept responsibility. These traits manifest themselves in different kinds of immoral behavior that are at their base failures to attend appropriately to the full personhood of others. One need not be a feminist or even see things through a feminist lens in order to recognize this basic point, for it is a point about humanity. One cannot, however, be a feminist if one does not appreciate this basic point.

My focus is different from that standardly found in the feminist literature, which is directed at the institutionalization of sexism. Although this is crucial to the sustenance of sexism, a sexist system is generated and sustained partly by the immoral behavior of identifiable individuals who have some power to eradicate it. I will focus on immoral behavior insofar as it is (unconsciously) generated by arrogance, self-centeredness, and a refusal to accept responsibility. These traits are held not generally, but in regard to one's posi-

tion of privilege. Importantly, I am not suggesting that they are possessed by all privileged persons; rather, privilege facilitates their development.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Privilege and Unbecoming Traits

I want to highlight some features of privilege feminists have outlined that are significant in the formation of the aforementioned traits in members of the dominant group. First, privilege, like oppression and unlike mere advantage, is a group concept in the sense that groups are privileged or oppressed, but individuals are so only in virtue of being members of such groups. Groups define a person's identity, give her a sense of history, affinity, and separateness, and even constitute her mode of reasoning and way of evaluating and expressing feeling.<sup>10</sup> Religion, race, gender, and class signify groups to which one belongs. For each group that is oppressed, a corresponding group is privileged.<sup>11</sup> A person might simultaneously belong to dominant and oppressed groups (e.g., a white, male, homosexual blue-collar worker), making him or her oppressed or privileged in different contexts in relation to other groups.

Second, privilege, like oppression, is systematic. The systematicity of oppression is revealed by the many related forces and barriers that restrain women and keep them from escaping their condition. For instance, women in abusive relationships are restricted by police disinterest, complicity in traditional gender roles, fear of death, lack of familial support, overcrowding of shelters, economic dependence, lack of health care, societal normalization of abuse, and judicial bias in awarding child custody. Marilyn Frye's well-known analogy comparing women's oppression to a bird's being locked in a cage is apt.<sup>12</sup> To understand that a bird is totally restricted and unable to escape its cage, we need to look at the cage macroscopically, viewing all of its lines and their interconnections. Likewise, according to Frye, to see that women are oppressed, we need to look not at isolated harms, but at all the systematically related forces and barriers that restrain them and prevent them from escaping.

To see the systematic nature of *privilege*, we need to examine its third feature, the kinds of benefits it confers to the privileged. Such benefits are broader than those from earned advantages, since privileges are accepted almost everywhere in the sense that being a member of a dominant group almost always counts in one's favor, which Alison Bailey designates as privilege's "wild card" quality.<sup>13</sup> White people enjoy the privileges of having their race widely represented in the media and culture, and of being able to talk with their mouth full, swear, dress in secondhand clothes, or be late to a meeting without having these things attributed to their race.<sup>14</sup> Further, the wild card quality of privilege can open the door to many other benefits, including the power that comes from being connected to others in a vast network of relationships.<sup>15</sup> A weak but privileged candidate can get tenure if his powerful friends can sway the dean to vote in his favor; a privileged department chairperson who supports him can count on the support of his superiors in the college. Privilege, then, turns out to be cumulative: Little benefits add up to a social position that in many situation can be readily cashed in.<sup>16</sup> Because privilege "snowballs" in these ways, it is omnipresent. Indeed,

privilege does not end when privileged individuals die because it gets institutionalized. That is, it is not that privilege is passed down, but that it persists systematically, and so is unlikely to change in the future. Charles Lawrence poignantly remarks in the context of hate speech that

[t]he goal of white supremacy is not achieved by individual acts or even by the cumulative acts of a group, but . . . by the institutionalization of the ideas of white supremacy . . . [which] has created conduct on the societal level that is greater than the sum of individual racist acts. The racist acts of millions of individuals are mutually reinforcing and cumulative because the status quo of institutionalized white supremacy remains long after deliberate racist actions subside.<sup>17</sup>

Because privilege is omnipresent, it allows the privileged to believe that their unearned advantages are earned—through their “native” intelligence, strength, and hard work—and to see their privilege as owed to them. The fact that benefits accorded the privileged are expansive tends to make the privileged come to expect them and to see themselves as deserving of them.<sup>18</sup> These facts facilitate arrogance in many privileged persons about their position. Privilege’s systematic nature encourages the privileged to deny responsibility for their role in the maintenance of others’ oppression because they can hide behind the system and blame it, or even blame the oppressed in virtue of their stereotypical traits for their own oppression.

Another major benefit of privilege contributing to its systematic nature is “cultural domination” or “cultural imperialism,” which is “the experience of existing with a society whose dominant meanings render the particular perspectives and point of view of one’s own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one’s group and mark it out as the Other.”<sup>19</sup> The first of three implicit ideas here is that a society’s culture will express the experiences, values, goals, and achievements of the privileged group that produces it and will represent their perspective on, and interpretation of, events as that of all of humanity, or, “the truth.” This ensures that the dominant group’s views define the culture. Those who see their own values and experiences repeatedly and exclusively expressed in the culture are likely to see their interpretation of the world as true, and to develop a self-centered perspective.

A second idea implicit in the notion of cultural domination is that the privileged have the power to ignore those they oppress. This prerogative is seen clearly in the ways the oppressed have to adjust their lives according to the dominant perspective. Minorities living in a white-dominated world are remade in the image of whites and have to learn to live, participate, make a living, be mistreated, be ignored, but rarely be appreciated in a white world, but whites do not have to participate in these ways in a minority world.<sup>20</sup> Since privilege gives those in power the prerogative to attend to the oppressed, it underscores the alleged exclusive importance of the privileged and thereby facilitates the cultivation of arrogance about their perspective as the only one, or the only one that matters. And it facilitates a self-centered focus on their own situation to the exclusion of the needs, values, and interests of the oppressed.

A third feature of cultural domination is that the privileged group stereotypes the subordinate group, which in turn contributes to the former's privilege. Stereotyping constructs differences between members of the dominant and subordinate groups and marks out the latter as having an alleged inferior essence typically associated with the body, while each member of the privileged group is seen as an individual who "is whatever he or she wants to be . . . and by their doings they are judged."<sup>21</sup> Privileged persons are marked by their rationality and its individual expressions, but the oppressed are marked by inferior traits that all members of the group are alleged to have. Further, stereotyping provides a justification for blaming victims for their own misfortune in virtue of their stereotypical traits (e.g., battered women deserve their fate because they are passive in not fighting back or leaving), which facilitates indifference to victims' suffering, preserves privileged persons' own alleged innocence, and encourages the privileged to deny responsibility for their role in the maintenance of their victims' oppression.

A fourth feature of privilege is that it is generally unrecognized by the privileged: They fail to see the connections between their unearned advantages and the harms of oppression. This is because privilege is hidden in structures, accepted rather than condemned in hierarchical societies,<sup>22</sup> taken for granted by the privileged because it is the status quo,<sup>23</sup> and accepted by the victims of a system that indoctrinates them into complicity about their subservient position. Such complacency about one's privilege is a mark of arrogance: The privileged can go about their business without having to check on the harms they may be perpetuating. Further, since the privileged often deny their privilege when it is brought to their attention, they deny responsibility for their role in the harms they perpetuate in virtue of their membership in a dominant group.<sup>24</sup>

### III. Immoral Behavior and Responsibility

Arrogance, self-centeredness, and denial of responsibility regarding one's privilege issue in a staunch resistance to recognizing, understanding, and eradicating women's oppression, and to having one's power threatened and taken away. These traits cause the agent to engage in various forms of sexist immoral behavior that in turn function to maintain privilege. Ronald Milo and S. I. Benn have independently identified a wide variety of immoral behaviors that are deeply and equally harmful to their victims.<sup>25</sup> I will use their categorizations as a framework for my discussion and examine a taxonomy of sexist versions of three categories of immorality, including those stemming from bad preferences or values, lack of moral concern, and lack of rational self-control. I am concerned (1) to show how arrogance, self-centeredness, and/or denial of responsibility function in each and thus explain why some privileged persons act in sexist ways; (2) to show that failure to attend to the basic facts about women's humanity through stereotyping or devaluation is involved in sexist immoral acts; and (3) to make some preliminary conjectures that I defend in section IV about blameworthiness and responsibility of the privileged in each case for such acts.

### *A. Immorality Caused by Bad Preferences or Values*

The category of immoral behavior stemming from bad preferences or values includes self-centered behavior (“preferential wickedness”), malignant wickedness, and perverse wickedness. The self-centered person, familiar to us all, knows what is wrong but out of self-love and a ruthless unconcern for the good of others pursues his own good.<sup>26</sup> His bad preference is for his own good to be advanced even at the expense of others’ good. Sexist versions of preferential wickedness include the “deadbeat dad” who chooses to spend his money on himself rather than on his children with unconcern for the financial sacrifices their mother is thereby forced to make, and the judge who rules in favor of the defendant in a sexual-harassment case on the grounds that men should be able to have “a little fun” in the workplace, with complete disregard for the unfair restraints such a policy would place on women’s advancement or even economic survival (as in the case of working-class women, who are particularly vulnerable). The self-interested person knows that women are deserving of respect equal to that generally accorded to men, but chooses to ignore this fact. He fails to respect women’s full personhood by stereotyping or devaluing them. His indifference to others’ welfare and complacency about a hierarchal system that allows it marks his arrogance and self-centeredness.

The malignantly wicked person, motivated by envy or resentment, does evil for its own sake.<sup>27</sup> His bad preference is that he takes the suffering of others to be an end in itself and a reason for action, which is reflected in the maxim according to which he guides his life.<sup>28</sup> A misogynist might see women getting ahead in his workplace and go out of his way to set them back. Perhaps at first he has selfish concerns—he does not want women threatening his position—but later he forgets these because his position is secure. He might seek to destroy the career of one woman whose success makes him intensely envious. But he then extends his maxim to apply to all women, including his subordinates, from whose failure he has nothing to gain; he simply is concerned with seeing them suffer and takes their suffering to be an end in itself, perhaps because he convinces himself that women are in certain respects fundamentally different from men and thus not deserving of relevantly similar treatment. Both Benn and Milo portray malignity as the worst kind of immorality—it is simply evil—but I believe that an even worse character is the malignant person who tries to get his victim to be complicit in the malignant person’s own warped beliefs. Such is the case with the slaveholder who convinces his slaves to be subservient and even to enjoy their position, and the misogynist who with the help of the system rewards women for their complicity by getting them to believe that they do not need feminism, that their value lies in their being attractive, and so on. In the case at issue, the misogynist may spread rumors about the competence of a female colleague, which effectually makes her work suffer and instills self-doubt in her own merit. He knows well that it is hard to overcome psychological damage but proceeds with wanton disregard for, or an intent to destroy, her well-being. By intending to make his victim suffer for the sake of suffering, the misogynist clearly devalues women and displays his utter disregard for

their equal-personhood status. He is arrogant in his belief that he, but no others outside of his group, deserves his privilege, especially if he tries to make his victims complicit in his warped beliefs. If he succeeds in convincing them, he can deny responsibility for his actions by claiming that even his victims believe that they do not deserve what is rightfully theirs.

Like the self-centered sexist person, the malignant person knows that women are deserving of respect equal to that given men. The former chooses to ignore this, the latter, to render it void. *Prima facie*, each is responsible for getting rid of his bad preferences or values.

Finally, the perversely wicked person knows basic moral principles, but his ignorance that a certain act is an instantiation of a given principle makes him act wrongly.<sup>29</sup> He knows the basic moral principle "Rape is wrong" but, perversely, is ignorant that date rape is an instantiation of it, since he subscribes to patriarchal assumptions surrounding heterosexual courtship practices, including dating and sexual intercourse in which the man plays the dominant role. This scenario is fairly typical, since violence against women is so common and expected that many see it as normal rather than harmful behavior.<sup>30</sup> At base is his belief that women are sex objects to be used for men's pleasure, rather than autonomous persons whose sexual preferences ought to be respected. His bad values blind him to the wrongness of his acts. His failure to attend to the harms of date rape and his attention to sexist stereotypes are marks of arrogance that his privilege affords him. Frye argues that the arrogant man perceives the world and everything in it as being there *for him*, and that if a woman does not serve men, she is defective.<sup>31</sup> When it comes to sex, the arrogant man "decides" what the woman wants, regardless of her own interests and what best promotes her welfare. His behavior also indicates a denial of responsibility for recognizing that his own wrongful act is an instantiation of a basic moral principle he endorses. Milo rightly believes that if it is reasonable to expect a person to have taken precautions against ignorance, or to have investigated the facts and ascertained whether the particular act is an instance of the basic moral principle, then the agent is careless or negligent if he does not do so, and so blameworthy. As I will argue more fully below, it is reasonable to expect the privileged to know whether their acts violate the personhood of the oppressed. In the case at issue, the perversely wicked person is responsible for investigating whether date rape is an instance of a basic moral principle that enjoins respect for the personhood of women.

### ***B. Immorality Caused by Lack of Moral Concern***

Amoral wrongdoing occurs when an agent is either unaware of or indifferent to the wrongness of his act.<sup>32</sup> Moral considerations play no role in his practical deliberations, and moral beliefs do not motivate him to act. At least three kinds of immorality are caused by lack of moral concern: psychopathy, conscientious wickedness, and moral indifference. Psychopathy is the most extreme. The psychopath lacks the concept of moral wrongness because he lacks emotions such as love, values, and interests that are critical to moral understanding and being a part of a moral world. He fails to see how moral

or other concerns generate reasons for action for others or for himself, and to understand the complexities of morality, such as the concept of insulting a loved one, which involves being rude to someone who trusts him to be kind.<sup>33</sup> Unlike other immoral agents, the psychopath who acts in sexist ways is neither arrogant nor self-centered because he does not fully appreciate his privilege or his actions: He simply fails to understand at a fundamental level what he is doing. Thus he is outside of the scope of morality.<sup>34</sup> We might say that he is the only immoralist free from blame for his sexist behavior, if we believe that he cannot change and/or that he is not responsible for what he has become.<sup>35</sup> He alone legitimately cannot recognize women's humanity, since he does not even recognize his own moral worth, a point I will return to in section IV.

But other agents who lack moral concern fully understand the nature of their immoral acts and are blameworthy for performing them anyway. The morally indifferent person knows what it is for an act to be morally wrong but fails to have the appropriate "con-attitude," or negative attitude, toward his act because he lacks concern for the interests of others and feels no remorse or guilt about his indifference.<sup>36</sup> A man who does not intend to harm women but nonetheless knowingly participates in a system that advantages men at women's expense displays indifference to women's interests, which causes him not to use his position of privilege to try to change things. This idea is illustrated aptly in the case of eastern Indian men who participate in the practice of dowry, which devalues women and diminishes their autonomy in the choice of a mate. Trading on one's privilege, which affords one the luxury of being indifferent about the wrongness of one's acts and their effects on others, is arrogant and self-centered.

The conscientiously wicked person seems to be a step above the morally indifferent person because he governs his actions by a primary goal or principle that can reasonably be seen as good but does so "at the cost of a callous insensitivity to evil done by the way," which he knows or could reasonably be expected to know yet systematically disregards.<sup>37</sup> An employer who subscribes to the seemingly neutral and fair principle "Justice means giving each what he deserves" ends up knowingly favoring men in hiring because men, but not women, are encouraged to develop traits and skills needed for traditionally male jobs. He is blameworthy because he knowingly fails to accord women due respect by denying them opportunities readily granted to men. Since he knows or should know that the principle he endorses advantages the members of his sex at the expense of others, his continued endorsement of it is arrogant and self-centered. In sum, *prima facie*, both the morally indifferent and conscientiously wicked person are responsible for being indifferent to the facts about women's humanity.

### *C. Immorality Caused by Lack of Self-Control*

The classic case of immoral behavior resulting from a failure in self-control is weakness of will. Philosophers traditionally have defined the weak-willed person as one who knows what the right thing to do is, yet acts contrary to it by succumbing to emotion. Standard sexist forms of weakness



of will are those found in attempts to justify rape and woman battering. Typically such justifications point to ways in which the woman allegedly provoked the wrongful behavior—for example, she dressed provocatively, invited the rapist/batterer in, or said the wrong thing—which prompt the man’s emotional responses. Such responses reveal the man’s failure to take responsibility for his actions and his arrogance in appealing to an excuse that works mainly for the privileged. Since he allows himself to succumb to emotions in a way that devalues women by not attending to their humanity, as in rape and woman battering, he is blameworthy.

A more complex case of lack of self-control is that of moral negligence. The morally negligent person fails to act in accord with his own moral principles, is ignorant due to his negligence that what he does violates these principles, wants to avoid wrongdoing and prefers its avoidance to what he does, and is inclined to feel remorse upon reflection.<sup>38</sup> A wife abuser who knows that certain things will trigger his violence is negligent and blameworthy for not avoiding situations in which these things occur and for not seeking professional help. A person who harbors sexist or racist attitudes in a sexist and racist climate is morally reckless and blameworthy because he fails to pay attention to whether his attitude will prompt others to act on their sexist or racist attitudes.<sup>39</sup> And a person who accepts the principle “Discrimination is morally wrong,” but votes to hire a white male over a minority female and rationalizes to himself that she will get a better job, is blameworthy both for ignoring the harm done to women and minorities as a group and to the woman he slights, which is essentially a failure to accord her equal respect, and for denying responsibility for his actions.<sup>40</sup> In general, the morally negligent person fails to take precautions against his tendency to ignore the simple facts about humanity in others, which we can reasonably expect a person to attend to, because they are not difficult to understand. Those who fail to do so display arrogance and self-centeredness and are blameworthy.

To summarize: In cases of immorality caused by a lack of moral concern, the privileged person is or can reasonably be expected to be fully aware of the equal-personhood status of others but simply does not care about it. In cases of immorality caused by a lack of rational self-control, he is or should be aware of the facts about others’ humanity but fails to focus on this, succumbing instead to emotion. In cases of immorality caused by bad preferences or values, the person focuses on the facts of humanity in others but cares negatively about this in wanting to discount it or render it void. In each case, *prima facie*, the agent is blameworthy for disrespecting women’s humanity.

#### IV. The Argument for Responsibility of the Privileged

I now need to defend the conjectures I have just made about responsibility and blameworthiness. My argument is presented in two stages. First, I offer a Kantian defense that the privileged have an obligation to attend to the basic facts about humanity in the nonprivileged, despite the fact that arrogance, self-interest, and failure to accept responsibility lead them not to do so. Second, I aim to show that excusing the privileged from their obligation on the grounds that it may be difficult for them to step out of their position

of privilege, and to fully appreciate the equality of their subordinates, is inappropriate. It is possible and not as difficult as we might initially believe for the privileged to do so, and so they are responsible for knowing and doing what we would expect a reasonable person to know or do, including attending to the facts about others' humanity.

For starters, anyone who is a rational, autonomous being possessing dignity and deserving of respect can understand these facts about himself or herself, since they are fundamentally what makes us persons regardless of our gender, race, class, and other largely unchosen personal aspects of ourselves. Kant himself says that we all first recognize our own humanity, and then we cannot help but recognize the humanity of others.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Hill fleshes this out much more fully. He asks why our rationality makes us necessarily recognize others' humanity and argues that we must respect each person as a potential co-legislator of morality and engage only in conduct on which we would expect all reasonable people to agree.<sup>42</sup> The root idea is the familiar position Kant defended in the second version of the Categorical Imperative, the Principle of Humanity, which says that one ought never to treat oneself or another merely as a means to one's own ends. The Principle of Humanity requires not just that a person understand these facts about himself, but that a reasonable person put himself in another's shoes—step out of his position of privilege and put himself in the position of the oppressed—in order to know his obligations. Additionally, Kant's Universal Law Formulation requires that one ask oneself whether one can will—both imagine and want—a maxim to be a universal law. Whether one would want it turns on whether it would put one in a situation in which one would not autonomously, but only if coerced, consent to be. This requires that a privileged person imagine *himself* not being in a privileged position and having the maxim in question apply to him. These two versions of the Categorical Imperative, then, entail that the privileged can come to know how the *non-privileged* would feel, based both on how they themselves would feel if in that situation (i.e., that of being nonprivileged rather than privileged), and on the Principle of Humanity which underscores the equal personhood of all rational beings. Or so I shall argue.

A good starting point for defending the view that the privileged have an obligation to respect the humanity of the nonprivileged is an argument offered by Barbara Herman that is intended to show that the strong man has an obligation to aid the needy.<sup>43</sup> Familiarly, Kant argues that a man well-situated in life who sees others struggling with great hardships but, being indifferent to their needs, has no desire to help them, nevertheless has a duty to aid the needy.<sup>44</sup> Herman presents an objection to Kant's view offered by Sidgwick, who contends that the strong man has good reason to believe that the increased security he would get from having the help of the needy were he to find himself needy is too high a price to pay for not taking the risk that the tables will be turned and he is needy. The strong man formulates the egoistic maxim "When I am in a position to help, but would rather not do so, I am not to aid the needy" and believes that he should risk being in a position where the tables are turned and he needs aid. Sidgwick contends, in other words, that the strong man is rational to believe that he will never be needy.

Many versions of immoral privileged persons that I discussed in section III are in a position similar to that of the strong man. They would adopt a comparable maxim: "When, because of my privilege, I am able to attend to the basic facts about humanity in the nonprivileged, I am not to do so." Herman attempts to defeat Sidgwick's objection by showing that even the strong man has an obligation not to engage in sexist versions of immoral behavior, since both duties (i.e., aiding the needy and refraining from sexist behavior) require disarmament of privilege and attention to the humanity of others.

A Rawlsian response to Sidgwick's objection is to introduce a veil of ignorance that masks a person's disposition to take risks. Under the veil of ignorance, the strong man will not know whether he is risk-averse, so he cannot count on cashing in on his position of power. But Herman rightfully rejects this solution, because for Kant, "the embeddedness of the person in the particular is the natural and necessary starting point of moral judgment."<sup>45</sup> That is, the Categorical Imperative procedure assesses actions through their maxims, which express the agent's conception of what he is doing and why and so are particularized (i.e., reflect interests and desires constitutive of privilege) in the way that the veil of ignorance disallows. Maxims must include information that the veil of ignorance excludes.

Herman's own solution relies on the possibility of an agent's going through life without needing the aid of others. Her argument relies not on contingent factors such as risk-taking or privilege, but on the Kantian "facts" about human nature. She states it this way: "for any end, it is not possible for an agent to guarantee in advance that he can pursue his end successfully without the help of others," and this will happen if either (1) there are ends that the agent wants to realize more than he could expect to benefit from non-beneficence and that he cannot bring about unaided, or (2) there are ends that it is not possible for any rational agent to forgo.<sup>46</sup> Herman relies on the second point to show that the strong man has a duty of mutual aid. Human nature dictates that we have needs for certain things, skills, and other persons to pursue those of our ends that, if left unmet, prevent us from continuing in our activity as rational agents. Ends that come from the "true needs" of human agents are those that it is not rational for anyone, including the strong man, to forgo for the sake of other contingent ends. Thus the strong man would not be rational to adopt the egoistic maxim in favor of satisfying his contingent ends over ends whose realization contributes to his rational activity. Even the strong man, in virtue of his being a dependent, rational being, cannot control whether he has needs that may require help in being fulfilled. According to Herman, the same reasoning can be used to rule out maxims that are based on exclusively self-interested helping, such as those about helping only certain others marked out by one's preferences and prejudices—it is not rational for one to restrict in advance the nature of the help available.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the strong man has a duty to aid the needy so that they may continue in their activity as rational agents, even when he is indifferent to their needs, because he cannot guarantee that he will not need the aid of others in realizing ends he himself has that come from true needs.

We might think that a similar argument would apply to the privileged regarding their obligations to the nonprivileged, but both Herman's discus-

sion of angels in the context of the duty of mutual aid, and my earlier remarks about privilege, raise a concern. According to Kant, angels are like humans in that they are rational, but unlike humans in that they are not vulnerable and dependent, since they lack the true needs humans have. Herman argues that angels do not have a duty of mutual aid because they *can* will a world in which no one helped the needy, since they themselves will never be needy. It is not a contingent fact, but part of angels' nature, that they "can guarantee that they will never be compelled to want help in the pursuit of ends that they rationally cannot abandon."<sup>48</sup> Humans, in contrast, cannot be indifferent to others because they can reasonably expect that at some point they, too, will be dependent. Angels and humans, then, do not have the same duties.

Are privileged persons more like the strong man than like angels? Certainly it is not a fact about the *nature* of the privileged that guarantees they will not need the help of others. Like the strong man, the nature of the privileged dictates the logical possibility that they *will* need the help of others in pursuit of their own rational activity. In this respect the privileged person is more like the strong man and less like an angel, so Herman's argument about the duties of the strong man applies equally to the privileged person. But perhaps this is too quick. Recall the features of privilege. A group's privilege often lasts for generations, "long after deliberate racist [or sexist] actions subside," because it is institutionalized. It is sustained quietly, omnipresently, and even through complicity of the oppressed. It is reasonable to believe that men as a group in a patriarchal society such as our own can count on being in a position of power over women for quite some time, especially since women's progress is typically met with episodes of backlash.<sup>49</sup> Since ending women's oppression and men's privilege would take a long time and be quite difficult to achieve, males now in existence can count on the fact that they will not need women's help if the tables were turned. Certainly no fact about their nature guarantees this, but men in a patriarchal society seem to be in a position quite different from that of the strong man, who can lose his money in his lifetime, if not overnight. That men will retain their power seems more certain than that particular individuals will flourish. At the least, the position of men seems to fall somewhere between that of the strong man and that of angels. Thus, unlike the clear case of the strong man, men may not have an obligation to aid women.

I have asked my question in terms of the privileged but drawn my conclusion about men. This calls for clarification. A person can be privileged vis-à-vis different groups to which she or he belongs. In contemporary U.S. society, the most privileged group is that of heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian, upper-class males of European descent. One objection to my view is that members of this group cannot count on being in this privileged group their entire lives, since some of these features about themselves may change. For instance, a person might discover that he is gay, willingly change his religion, or unwillingly become disabled. I have two responses. First, since I am writing about sexist forms of immorality, I have focused my comments strictly on male privilege vis-à-vis female subordination. Even males who lose one or more of these features retain their privilege vis-à-vis women, and my points hold for them. Second, I believe that even in the uncommon scenario

of a man who undergoes a sex change operation, the man retains his privilege vis-à-vis women if he has accrued enough privilege, if his family, friends, and co-workers still perceive him as a man and treat him accordingly, and so on. The same can be said for the other features of privilege that can change.<sup>50</sup> Like the privilege of groups, the privilege of individuals who were members of privileged groups does not easily die. I can draw my conclusion, then, more generally about the privileged, not just about men, though it is stronger when applied to men because of the unlikeliness of a change in gender.

Kant would, of course, reject this relation between privilege and duties, since it still is grounded in a contingent fact about the privileged, rendering morality changeable and our duties not universally binding. But for what it matters to the privileged person when privilege has been and will be sustained for generations, he *can* expect not to be in a position of subordination in his lifetime. It *seems* to be rational for him to count on being privileged in a way that it is not rational for the strong man to count on his not needing anyone's help. Although there is no guarantee that all heterosexual, Christian, upper-class males of European descent will forever be in a position of privilege and independence, *this* particular man can bet that the conditions of privilege are such that he will not be dependent and vulnerable vis-à-vis the nonprivileged in his lifetime. This point is stronger when we consider men's privilege vis-à-vis women. And that seems sufficient for him (though not Kant) to be rational in rejecting certain duties to the nonprivileged. Thus, it behooves us to offer a better Kantian argument for the obligation of the privileged to the oppressed.

Herman's argument relies only on the Universal Law Formulation of the Categorical Imperative. I want to offer a stronger Kantian argument that relies on all three versions of the Categorical Imperative. The Principle of Humanity requires persons not to use others or themselves merely as means to their own ends, but to respect the rationality—marked by the ability to have interests, form goals and plans, and so on—of self and others. The Principle of Autonomy requires that the maxims rational beings arrive at when universally legislating be autonomously legislated by all. It rules out as sources of heteronomous morality maxims obeyed out of inclination. All three versions of the Categorical Imperative are related, with the Principle of Autonomy underlying the other two. When one violates the Universal Law Formulation, one makes oneself an exception to obeying morality. But when one is universally legislating, no one else would autonomously consent to one's doing so, because these others would be treated merely as means to one's ends. Others would consent only if they were coerced by, say, fear of punishment or a desire to please others. Similarly, one would never autonomously consent to others' violating the Universal Law Formulation, because such violation would involve one's being treated merely as a means to the ends of others. One would obey a maxim that allowed others to be exceptions only if one were coerced.

All three categories of immorality discussed in section III involve treating persons merely as means to the ends of the privileged and involve maxims that nonprivileged persons would never autonomously agree to follow. In cases of immoral behavior caused by a lack of rational self-control, the privileged person does not adequately focus on the rational agency of the non-

privileged but lets his passions get the best of him. In cases of immoral behavior that has its source in a lack of moral concern, the privileged person does not care about the rational agency of the nonprivileged. And in cases of immoral behavior stemming from bad preferences or values, the privileged person either disregards or disrespects the rational agency of the nonprivileged. In each case, the nonprivileged would not autonomously consent to such treatment because it would involve their being treated merely as means to an end, say, by having their interests ignored or set back.<sup>51</sup> In essence, disparate treatment of women amounts to failing to attend to the Kantian notion that all persons, including women, are equal in virtue of their rationality, and instead either degrading women or treating them as essentially some *x*, where *x* is a property that is deemed inferior, such as one associated with the body.<sup>52</sup> Rationality is an interesting property because it simultaneously marks a feature common to all persons yet distinguishes each person from all others. For Kant, a person's capacity for rationality is marked by her or his having the ability to make plans and have goals, interests, and desires. This explains its commonality. But it is from one's rationality that one's individuality stems, as evidenced by the unique set of interests, desires, plans, and goals each person has that mark her rationality. Recognizing the rationality of others means respecting, not renouncing, their individuality. One respects another's rationality by or through respecting her interests, desires, and the like, and not favoring these features of the rationality of one's self or one's group. I believe that failure to do this is exactly what goes wrong in the cases of immorality I have discussed. The privileged in these cases fail to respect women's individuality while seeing members of the privileged group as individuals in their own right. Either they devalue women by associating them with traits deemed inferior and not associated with rationality, or they treat all women the same by stereotyping them on the basis of these traits they are alleged to have rather than respecting the unique individuality of each woman. But women would not consent to being devalued or treated differently on this basis unless they were coerced, typically by their own oppressed state. Thus, since this behavior clearly fails the third version of the Categorical Imperative, it is morally wrong and the privileged have an obligation not to engage in it but to attend to the facts about humanity in the nonprivileged.

My argument is complicated by the fact that in order for the privileged to appreciate fully the idea of women as rational, autonomous persons deserving of respect relevantly similar to that accorded men, they need to see women as *likes*. My view is that they are responsible for stepping out of their position of privilege to see this. Put another way, the privileged might insist that since "ought" implies "can" (Premise 1), and they cannot come to see the nonprivileged as likes (Premise 2), they do not have an obligation to attend to the humanity of the nonprivileged. I want to show that they *can* see the nonprivileged as likes; thus I want to undermine the argument by rejecting the second premise. If I am right, the privileged cannot be excused on the grounds that they are unable to see the nonprivileged as likes and so are responsible for doing so and blameworthy when they fail to do so.

An initial objection to my account is that it is too liberal in that it succumbs to the view expressed in the adage "I don't see color (gender, etc.), I

just see people" and obscures the systematic nature of privilege.<sup>53</sup> But my account of equal humanity, or of *likes*, does not mean that we are entitled to ignore race, gender, and class of persons that situate them in the world. Rather, it means that these features must be taken into account in that they shape a person's desires, interests, goals, and so on, which mark her rationality. In emphasizing the equal humanity of all, I mean to emphasize the fact that we are more than just our gender, race, and class, while at the same time not deny that these features shape what marks our rationality. Moreover, I believe that the privileged's not recognizing the equal humanity of the oppressed lies at the base of all oppression and so is paramount.

To see the nonprivileged as likes, then, the privileged need to develop sensitivity.<sup>54</sup> Among other things, this involves, first, directing one's attention away from one's self and toward other people and things in the world, that is, overcoming one's view that the self is the only important moral concern. To see women as likes, men need to step out of their privilege, which sustains self-centeredness and arrogance about their own status. This is similar to Maria Lugones's notion of "world-traveling," that is, "traveling" to the world of others who occupy a different position in the social hierarchy. The privileged who world-travel come to see things from the perspective of the oppressed, who do not share the experiences or the histories of the privileged, and come to see how the oppressed see them. Lugones uses the example of whether she is playful or not: In some worlds she finds that she is, but in other worlds, she is serious. The dominant group in a particular world constructs our concepts and the identities of persons who occupy the world. Lugones believes that one cannot cross boundaries of different worlds with an arrogant man's construction of concepts such as playfulness—one needs to give up such an attitude if one wants to world-travel, which must be done out of friendship, not obligation.<sup>55</sup> Undoubtedly, men's seeing women as likes is more difficult to do, because of privilege's systematic nature, than, say, recognizing what fairness demands. Yet men must recognize their privilege in order to see women as likes, and this in turn is a first necessary step in eradicating unjust systems of privilege and oppression, since denying women's basic humanity is at the root of all women's oppression. If men do not see this, or deny it, disregard it, or do not care about it, there remains little or no hope of eradicating women's oppression.<sup>56</sup>

Second, sensitivity involves exercising a "critical appreciation for what is morally relevant about the situation of those who are affected by [a person's] behavior."<sup>57</sup> In our interactions with others, one fact that is always morally relevant is a person's equal status as a person. Sexist behavior involves an inappropriate attitude about the morally relevant fact of women's equal status as persons. To see women as likes, men must critically appreciate women's personhood status, which is grounded, as it is for men, in their rational natures as marked by particularities. Seeing women as likes essentially requires rejecting sexist stereotypes about them.

Seeing women as likes requires an understanding about basic features of morality that the psychopath lacks. The privileged must know what it means for a person to have values, deep emotions, and rational concerns and must see that these things yield reasons for action. They *themselves* must have

values, and emotions such as love, remorse, and concern for others, all of which contribute to their having full moral understanding and living a full moral life, in order to know and appreciate that the oppressed have values and emotions that generate reasons for action for them, too. Men must understand complex moral concepts and rules, most notably, the complex hurts involved in sexism. To understand such hurts fully, they need to see the interconnections between “the lines on the cage,” or the systematically related forces and barriers that serve to restrain the oppressed, not simply individual disadvantages (e.g., lacking equal pay) the oppressed suffer; they need to see that seemingly simple things can add up to major setbacks for an entire group of people; they need to see that privilege for one group means systematic disadvantage for another; they need to see that certain harms done to individuals can reverberate through their entire group; and they must appreciate the concerns of the oppressed. Lugones believes that the privileged need to understand “not as an observer understands things, but as a participant, as someone who has a stake in them understands them.” On Lugones’s view, men must enter a genuine dialogue with women in which women let men know how men perceive themselves according to women, and men let women know how they see women. This aids in a shift in men’s perception.<sup>58</sup>

Laurence Thomas argues, in opposition to my view, that the privileged cannot come to know the position of their subordinates because they cannot grasp the latter’s experiences: “it would be moral hubris of the worst sort . . . to assume that by way of rational imaginative role-taking, à la Kohlberg, one could ever begin to grasp the depth of that person’s experiences—the hurts, pains, and anxieties of that individual’s life.”<sup>59</sup> Understanding these experiences, according to Thomas, is not possible as a matter of ratiocination, but of having been a subject of such experiences oneself. Thomas believes, for instance, that heterosexual men cannot imagine how a female rape victim feels, since they cannot grasp or even barely imagine the fear of rape that permeates women’s lives or know the awkwardness a female rape victim experiences if she tries to become romantically involved with a person who belongs to the same category as the one who harmed her, and they do not have to deal with social attitudes that make them targets of sexual violence. Under patriarchy, men and women have different emotional configurations because they are socially constituted differently, which makes them experience things in different ways.<sup>60</sup> In a racist society, a white person who is attacked by a group of blacks may suffer great emotional harm and come to fear blacks and to harbor racist stereotypes about them, but a black person who is attacked by a group of whites will experience the attack as a reminder that he is a second-class citizen.<sup>61</sup> That privileged persons are socially constituted differently from the oppressed means they do not experience how the oppressed view themselves as less than full and equal members of society and do not know their profound sense of vulnerability that comes partly from painful memories of discrimination they have experienced. Both being the subject of such experiences and having memories of them are necessary for the privileged person’s being able to imagine himself in the shoes of his subordinates.<sup>62</sup> So they cannot put themselves, as it were, in the shoes of the



oppressed. Thomas is suggesting that under patriarchy men cannot understand the complex hurts involved in women's oppression, a feature they share with the psychopath, but for the reason that they are socially constituted differently. So they cannot come to see women as likes. But if we carry this line of reasoning further than Thomas does, and in a way contrary to Thomas's own view, the objection is that since men cannot come to see women as likes, they are not responsible for doing so: We cannot reasonably expect a person to see his subordinates as likes if it is not possible for him to do so. Thus, men are not blameworthy and do not violate any moral obligation if they disrespect women.

As much as I find compelling Thomas's argument about the privileged not being able to step into a position of subordination, if we accept it, then my Kantian argument in favor of the nonprivileged rejecting maxims that dictate treating them as mere means to ends will not succeed. Thomas would not find this problematic, for his own argument is that the privileged should engage in what he calls "moral deference," according to which there is a presumption in favor of those who speak in an informed way about their experiences specific to their position of subordination to which others do not have access. A morally decent person, he believes, should have an attitude of moral deference in an immoral society.<sup>63</sup> Moral deference is meant to be a way of listening to another's moral story, seeing how the other has been emotionally configured by the moral pain she has suffered, but without bearing witness to it. It allows one to acquire "sensibility to the way in which a self-respecting oppressed person lives in the world."<sup>64</sup>

Thomas's insight about grounding a moral obligation for the privileged that would have them come to hear nonprivileged persons' stories is a valuable one. But for one thing, I am trying to offer an argument that has broader appeal so as to reach even those who are not "morally decent." Like Kant's, it is one of consistency: If the privileged see themselves as deserving of certain treatment, and if they see the nonprivileged as likes, then they ought to see the nonprivileged as deserving of relevantly similar treatment, and act accordingly. So I need to respond to the challenge posed by Thomas's view that the privileged cannot understand the complex hurts of oppression because they do not experience them.

Additionally, contrary to Thomas, I believe that the privileged *can* come to understand such complexities, for several reasons. I will focus on gender privilege and leave aside philosophical worries about a person's knowing another's mental state. First, aside from psychopaths, men can understand the nature of complex moral hurts in general. Since they may have experienced the degradation of being punished in humiliating ways by abusive teachers or parents, they can understand what it is to have their own humanity not respected in this nonsexist way. Men can understand the complex harms that they perceive to be inflicted upon them because they are men, which is at the root of "male bonding." This experience allows men to put themselves in each other's shoes, which gets them closer to group harm, though certainly not the harms of oppression. Yet some men understand stereotyping, a component of oppression, and strongly resist male stereotypes even though most are positive and men are their beneficiaries.

Second, just as a white person can come to understand her racial privilege when its features are made known to her, men can understand their gender privilege, which is itself a complexity of morality that is systematic in nature. Of course, though, men may miss their gender privilege because it is hidden in social structures, or might resist it when it is pointed out to them. Since oppression is the flip side of privilege, involving systematic harms instead of systematic benefits, understanding privilege can give men a foot in the door to understanding oppression resulting from the systematicity of each.

Third, although I believe that the harms of oppression, including stereotyping, exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and violence targeted at people in virtue of their group membership, are unique, at base both sexism and oppression are failures to attend to the facts about woman's humanity. Still, oppression is more complex than cumulative acts of sexism; it is systematized sexism. To understand the harms of oppression, the privileged need to see the interconnections between the forces that restrain the oppressed. The systematic nature of oppression, its hiddenness, and its general acceptance make it more difficult for the privileged to attend to the common humanity of their subordinates than for generally immoral persons to do so in their victims. But this is a point about its being difficult to see, not impossible to understand.<sup>65</sup> Thomas's objection is that understanding the position of subordinates is not a matter of ratiocination, but all we need to show to refute Thomas's objection is that the privileged can understand *enough* about their subordinates' position to understand the nature of their immoral acts. Certainly some privileged persons, such as the malignant person who does evil for its own sake, understand the nature of their acts. Even without having experienced the harms of oppression, the malignant person knows enough about the nature of his acts to know how his victims will feel when they experience them, since he takes *his victim's response* to be the very object of his acts. Those who lack rational self-control, such as the weak-willed, also are not impeded by a lack of understanding of the harms of oppression, but by emotion. They understand the wrongness of their acts. Those who lack moral concern fail to understand the harms of oppression because they do not care about understanding it, not because they are unable to do so. So while I agree with Thomas that men and women under patriarchy are socially constituted differently, I believe that this does not constrain them in the way they might be were they biologically or psychologically constituted differently.

Finally, men can come to understand women's oppression by consciousness raising and by likening it to other oppressions they themselves might experience as members of marginalized groups, such as U.S. southerners, homosexuals, minorities, members of the working class, and so on. Most men are members of at least one of these groups. For the others, my other points stand.

If these suggestions are jointly sufficient for men to understand the complex hurts involved in women's oppression, then men can come to see women as likes. If they can come to see women as likes, then they should not be excused from responsibility for doing so and blame when they do not. By

my Kantian argument, privileged men who see themselves as deserving of respect should on pains of inconsistency see women as deserving of the same. Sexist privileged men who act in immoral ways that involve disrespecting women are blameworthy for doing so.

*I thank Alison Bailey for many useful suggestions on this paper.*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>I will focus on sexist forms of immorality and the privilege men have vis-à-vis women on the basis of gender. People can be privileged vis-à-vis others who are oppressed on the basis of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, and ability, to name a few.
- <sup>2</sup>These stereotypes have traditionally applied to white women, though some apply equally to nonwhite women. Stereotypes parallel the images of beauty to which women are expected to conform (e.g., extreme thinness and submissiveness and passivity). As the beauty images shift for nonwhite women to become more like the standards for white women, as it is evident in fashion magazine ads they are doing, we would expect the stereotypes to shift, too, so that those traditionally applied to white women will apply equally to other women as they “progress.”
- <sup>3</sup>See Marilyn Frye’s significant work on oppression, “Oppression,” in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing, 1983), 1–16, at 5–6. Certainly black women did not have doors opened for them: Recall Sojourner Truth’s lamenting that no man ever helped her into a carriage or over a mud puddle, and her rhetorical response, “And ain’t I a woman?” See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1991), 14, quoting Sojourner Truth, as cited in *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life*, ed. Bert J. Loewenbert and Ruth Bogin (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 235.
- <sup>4</sup>See Keith Burgess-Jackson, “A History of Rape Law,” in *A Most Detestable Crime: New Philosophical Essays on Rape*, ed. Keith Burgess-Jackson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15–31, for an insightful history of U.S. law on rape. A few states have yet to repeal common-law statutes that take consent to marriage to mean consent to sex at the husband’s discretion.
- <sup>5</sup>Susan Estrich, “Rape,” in *Feminist Jurisprudence*, ed. Patricia Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 158–87.
- <sup>6</sup>Neither enslaved nor nonenslaved black women in the antebellum South could legally be raped. See Adele Logan Alexander, “‘She’s No Lady, She’s a Nigger’: Abuses, Stereotypes, and Realities from the Middle Passage to Capitol (and Anita) Hill,” in *Race, Gender, and Power in America: The Legacy of the Hill-Thomas Hearings*, ed. Anita Faye Hill and Emma Coleman Jordan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3–25, at 9.
- <sup>7</sup>For an interesting discussion of the “cult of the Virgin Mary” as practiced by Latin American women, see Evelyn P. Stevens, “*Marianismo*: The Other Face of *Machismo* in Latin America,” in *Gender Basics: Feminist Perspectives on Women and Men*, ed. Anne Minas (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1993), 484–90, abridged and reprinted from *Female and Male in Latin America: Essays*, ed. Ann Pocatello (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).
- <sup>8</sup>A point made powerfully in Judith Jarvis Thomson’s famous paper “A Defense of Abortion,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1971): 47–66.
- <sup>9</sup>Of course, even some women treat other women in sexist ways, though not because the former are privileged. Rather, they are indoctrinated into sexist beliefs. Such internalized oppression is also a part of sexism. In my “Right-Wing Women: Causes, Choices, and Blaming the Victim,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 40–61, I argue that women who internalize and act on sexist beliefs are not blameworthy for doing so, though men are, because men benefit from sexism and women do not. In another paper, “The Deferential Wife Revisited: Agency and Responsibility” (unpublished; short version presented to the Central States Philosophical Association, October

12, 2002), I argue that women who live out sexist stereotypes such as being deferential are not responsible for their behavior, since they have no reason to change, which requires being visionary in a patriarchal context.

- <sup>10</sup> Iris Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," *Philosophical Forum* 19, no. 4 (1988): 270–90, at 273.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 275–76.
- <sup>12</sup> Frye, *The Politics of Reality*, 12.
- <sup>13</sup> Alison Bailey, "Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's 'Oppression,'" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29, no. 3 (1998): 104–19, at 114.
- <sup>14</sup> Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," in *Gender Basics: Feminist Perspectives on Women and Men*, 2nd ed., ed. Anne Minas (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2000), 30–38, at 32–34. McIntosh lists forty-six such privileges.
- <sup>15</sup> J. Harvey, *Civilized Oppression* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 37–55.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 38, and Virginia Valian, *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).
- <sup>17</sup> Charles R. Lawrence III, "If He Hollers Let Him Go: Regulating Racist Speech on Campus," in *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment*, ed. Mari J. Matsuda et al. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993), 53–88, at 61.
- <sup>18</sup> See James P. Sterba, "Understanding Evil: American Slavery, the Holocaust, and the Conquest of the American Indians," *Ethics* 106 (1996): 424–48, for an insightful discussion revealing these traits in American slave owners, the Nazis, and Spanish oppressors of American Indians.
- <sup>19</sup> Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 285–86. Sandra Bartky refers to this phenomenon as cultural domination. See Bartky, "On Psychological Oppression," in *Femininity & Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, ed. Sandra Lee Bartky (New York: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall, 1990), 22–32, at 25.
- <sup>20</sup> Maria Lugones makes this point about Hispanics living in a white-dominated world. See Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice,'" in *Feminist Philosophies*, 2nd ed., ed. Janet Kourany et al. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1999), 474–86, at 478. Reprinted from *Women's Studies International Forum* 6, no. 6 (1983): 573–81.
- <sup>21</sup> Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," 285–86.
- <sup>22</sup> Harvey, *Civilized Oppression*, 39.
- <sup>23</sup> Bailey, "Privilege," 113.
- <sup>24</sup> McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 31–32.
- <sup>25</sup> S. I. Benn, "Wickedness," *Ethics* 95 (1985): 795–810; Ronald D. Milo, *Immorality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).
- <sup>26</sup> Milo, *Immorality*, 185; Benn, "Wickedness," 797–98.
- <sup>27</sup> This person is the opposite of the Kantian ideal who does duty for the sake of duty. Kant himself, though, did not believe that anyone could act for the sake of evil.
- <sup>28</sup> Benn, "Wickedness," 805–10. Milo categorizes malignity as a form of moral indifference (*Immorality*, 185).
- <sup>29</sup> Milo, *Immorality*, chap. 2.
- <sup>30</sup> In an interesting article on woman battering, Wayne Ewing states that research shows that denial is common in batterers: "Over and over again, abusive men will ask what the fuss is all about. They hold as a right and privilege the behavior of assault and battery against 'their' women. Our groups in Denver are filled with men from all walks and circumstances of life to whom it has never occurred that battering is wrong." Ewing, "The Civic Advocacy of Violence," in *Gender Basics*, 2nd ed., 203–12, at 205. See also Susan Griffin, "Rape: The All-American Crime," *Ramparts* (September 1971): 26–35, for an enlightening discussion of the normalization of rape in American society.
- <sup>31</sup> Marilyn Frye, "In and Out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love," in *The Politics of Reality*, 52–83, at 68–70.
- <sup>32</sup> Milo, *Immorality*, chap. 3.

- <sup>33</sup> Antony Duff, "Psychopathy and Moral Understanding," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1977): 189–200, example at 197. See also "A Clinical Profile," in Hervey Cleckley, *The Mask of Sanity: An Attempt to Clarify Some Issues about the So-Called Psychopathic Personality*, 5th ed. (St. Louis: Mosby, 1976), part III, 337–64.
- <sup>34</sup> Jeffrie G. Murphy argues this in his "Moral Death: A Kantian Essay on Psychopathy," *Ethics* 82 (1972): 284–98. Thomas Hill would disagree, since he argues that we are all potential co-legislators of morality, and that we should err on the side of including the wrong people within the bounds of morality rather than on the side of excluding them. See his "Must Respect Be Earned?" in *Respect, Pluralism, and Justice: Kantian Perspectives*, ed. Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 87–118.
- <sup>35</sup> Neil Scheurich, a psychiatrist at the University of Kentucky, attributes most psychopathy to being raised in abusive homes (personal communication). See also I. A. Menkiti, "The Resentment of Injustice: Some Consequences of Institutional Racism," *Philosophical Forum* 9, nos. 2–3 (1972): 227–49. Menkiti argues that we should not ignore the social causes of psychopathy, especially forces of racial oppression that shape the psychopath's character. Yet at the same time, Menkiti does not absolve the psychopath of responsibility, though he does not elaborate on how much responsibility to attribute to the person and to society.
- <sup>36</sup> Milo, *Immorality*, chap. 6.
- <sup>37</sup> Benn, "Wickedness," 801.
- <sup>38</sup> Milo, *Immorality*, chap. 4.
- <sup>39</sup> Larry May, "Shared Responsibility and Racist Attitudes," in *Sharing Responsibility*, ed. Larry May (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 36–54.
- <sup>40</sup> Milo, *Immorality*, 106–113. Stephen L. Darwall, "Self-Deception, Autonomy, and Moral Constitution," in *Perspectives on Self-Deception*, ed. Brian McLaughlin and Amelie Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 407–30.
- <sup>41</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 35–36, AKA 428–429.
- <sup>42</sup> Hill, "Must Respect Be Earned?" 94.
- <sup>43</sup> Barbara Herman, "Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons," in *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, ed. Barbara Herman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 45–72.
- <sup>44</sup> Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 32.
- <sup>45</sup> Herman, "Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons," 51.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.
- <sup>49</sup> See Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991).
- <sup>50</sup> On the flip side, even if, for instance, black women gain economic power so that they no longer suffer from class oppression vis-à-vis men, they still suffer from gender and racial oppression in that they are seen as "unfeminine, castrating matriarchs" and bad mothers who belong to "improperly structured families." See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, particularly chap. 4, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images."
- <sup>51</sup> Christine Korsgaard says that for Kant, when a person treats another merely as a means to his own ends, it is impossible for the other to assent, because she is given no chance to do so: She is either deceived or coerced, the latter being my concern. Further, Korsgaard explains that a maxim that violates the universalization principle is one in which the person acts as if the action were in his *particular* reason, not the reason of a *human being*, which gives it special weight and force. See her "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 15 (1986): 328–40, at 332, 338.
- <sup>52</sup> My argument is Kantian, but not Kant's. Kant makes a number of controversial points about women's role in morality, especially in connection with rationality. For an interesting and thorough discussion of these points, see Nancy Tuana, *Woman and the History of Philosophy* (New York: Paragon House, 1992), 62–69. According to Tuana, Kant believed, on the one hand, that women are rational beings, yet, on the other hand, that women are unwise to develop their rational capacity and that a husband should tell his wife what her will consists of, which is inconsistent with a rational agent's deter-

mining her own will. Kant's sexist beliefs about women's social role preclude him from accepting my argument.

- <sup>53</sup> Alison Bailey has raised this objection. See her insightful "Locating Traitorous Identities: Toward a View of Privilege-Cognizant White Character," in *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*, ed. Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 282–98, at 293.
- <sup>54</sup> Larry May outlines these and other features in "Insensitivity and Moral Responsibility," in *Sharing Responsibility*, ed. Larry May (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 56–70, at 57–58.
- <sup>55</sup> Maria C. Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception," in *Free Spirits: Feminist Philosophers on Culture*, ed. Kate Meheuron and Gary Percesepe (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 121–28; reprinted from *Making Face, Making Soul*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990).
- <sup>56</sup> Bailey argues that being sensitive to the pain and anger of the oppressed is cultivated by learning to see oneself as others see one, for which "world travel" is essential. She defends a nonliberal view of "respond-ability" toward the oppressed, which includes not just the idea that affective attitudes such as stereotyping contribute to a climate of attitudes in which the oppressed are more likely to be harmed (a position defended by Larry May), but the notion that the guilty parties should support those they harm and create a community in which this harm is done away with. That is, Bailey is arguing for a stronger obligation on the part of the privileged than I am putting forward here. See Bailey, "Taking Responsibility for Community Violence," in *Feminists Doing Ethics*, ed. Peggy DesAutels and Joanne Waugh (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 219–34. I find Bailey's argument persuasive, but I think that the privileged must first see the oppressed as likes, and I am arguing merely that since they *can* do this, they are not excused from their obligation to do so.
- <sup>57</sup> May, "Insensitivity and Moral Responsibility," 57.
- <sup>58</sup> Lugones, "Have We Got a Theory for You!" 478, 480. Lugones gives her argument in terms of Hispanic women and white women, but we can apply what she says to all privileged persons in relation to the relevant nonprivileged persons.
- <sup>59</sup> Laurence Thomas, "Moral Deference," in *Moral Issues in Global Perspectives*, ed. Christine Koggel (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview, 1999), 180–91, at 181; reprinted from *Philosophical Forum* 24 (1992–93): 233–50.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.
- <sup>65</sup> Bailey agrees. See her "Locating Traitorous Identities," 286. Traitorous identities are persons who belong to dominant groups but refuse "to animate the scripts that whites are expected to perform," including racist behaviors and attitudes that reinforce unjust hierarchies and sustain white privilege. Traitorous persons choose to try to understand their privilege, are critical of it, and take responsibility for it (292–93). The view I am defending is that the privileged have an obligation to become traitorous, which, for Bailey, requires world-traveling in the sense that Lugones defends. That is, the privileged must learn about the lives of the oppressed and get out of their own world in which their scripts are never challenged (296).