

## **Trans Perspectives in Philosophy of Mind**

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### **1. Why (care about) trans perspectives in philosophy of mind?**

Trans philosophy and philosophy of mind seem to be concerned with radically different questions and issues. While philosophy of mind is concerned with the nature of the mind and its relation to the body and the external world, trans philosophy is concerned with explaining the nature of transness and its relation to the external world. However, both the rise of feminist philosophy of mind and the extension of trans philosophy beyond concerns with the metaphysics of gender point to possible intersections between trans philosophy and philosophy of mind, and to the importance of trans perspectives in philosophy of mind. This paper asks: What are trans perspectives in philosophy of mind, and how could philosophy of mind benefit from recognizing the importance of trans perspectives? I will proceed as follows: first, I will explain what I take philosophy of mind to be and what I take trans philosophy to be. I will do so by way of pointing to some of the history of each area and by pointing out the main questions addressed in each area. Based on these considerations, I suggest that philosophy of mind could benefit from acknowledging and incorporating trans perspectives. In order to get a clearer understanding of how acknowledging and incorporating trans perspectives in philosophy of mind might work, I briefly examine some examples of this and explain how they contribute to philosophy of mind and to the expansion of trans philosophy. Although my focus is on arguing that a consideration of trans perspectives would be beneficial for philosophy of mind, I also point out that trans philosophy of mind contributes to the expansion of trans philosophy and thus adds a valuable possibility for the future(s) of trans philosophy.

The key question in philosophy of mind is: What is the mind and how does it work (Vosgerau & Lindner, 2021)? The concept of mind employed in philosophy of mind has changed significantly over the course of history (Vosgerau & Lindner, 2021). In recent years, philosophy of mind has increasingly acknowledged that social factors influence how individuals' minds work (Spaulding 2018; Borgoni 2022; Eickers 2024, 2025), and that philosophy of mind can be enriched by drawing on other philosophical areas, such as feminist philosophy, social philosophy, and social epistemology. For a long time, philosophy of mind focused on individualistic approaches; that is, mental states were assumed to be only a matter of the individual mind. When philosophy of social cognition and other subdisciplines of philosophy of mind developed, social aspects of the mind were increasingly recognized. However, even in philosophy of social cognition, which can be seen as the subfield of philosophy of mind that most centralizes social factors, the focus has still been mainly on individual mental states and individualistic explanations of social cognition (see Schlicht 2023, 8f.). Some theoretical approaches to social cognition have focused on how neutral observers (i.e., neutral minds)

explain the behavior of others. Considerations of social identity, such as considerations of gender bias or the influence of oppressive social structures, have not been taken into account. Trans perspectives (among other marginalized perspectives) have thus not only been omitted from these accounts but have also been deemed irrelevant for explaining how the mind works.

Feminist philosophy of mind (e.g., Maitra & McWeeny 2022; Andrada & Flores 2023) and further critical, situated, and socio-structural perspectives on philosophy of mind (e.g., Slaby & Gallagher 2015; Zawidzki 2013; Ratcliffe 2007; von Maur 2021; Eickers 2025; Maiese & Hanna 2019; Tzima & Slaby 2024) have challenged this individualistic focus. Feminist philosophy of mind describes the practice of applying feminist methods and feminist theory to address problems in traditional philosophy of mind, and vice versa. A feminist approach to questions in philosophy of mind asks us to consider the ways in which placing different kinds of bodies at the center of philosophical analysis alters our traditional accounts of phenomena such as perception, intentionality, emotion, and consciousness. Feminist philosophy of mind "takes the three focal questions already mentioned—*What* is the mind? *Whose* mind is the model for the theory? *To whom* is mind attributed?—and treats them collectively rather than separately" (Maitra & McWeeny 2022, 3f).

Maitra and McWeeny (2022) also point to the thematic overlap between philosophy of mind and feminist philosophy. This can be applied similarly to trans philosophy and philosophy of mind. "Although they rarely use the same vocabularies as philosophers of mind, feminist philosophers have written extensively on the natures of consciousness, the self, personal identity, and agency, and have attended to differential experiences of these phenomena across social groups" (Maitra & McWeeny 2022, 2). Trans philosophy, too, has been extensively concerned with questions around personal identity, agency, and the self (see Bettcher 2019).

In light of these considerations, I take philosophy of mind to be concerned with asking what the mind is and how the mind works. However, I do not take philosophy of mind to be restricted to individualistic approaches. Rather, I take the question of how the mind works to include questions about how social factors and structural considerations, especially social identity and possible related structural injustices, shape the mind. This is also recognized by Cristina Borgoni (2022), for example, who emphasizes the significance of addressing bias and prejudice in philosophy of mind, underscoring the necessity of examining social structures and of acknowledging the political role specific psychological phenomena play:

Because implicit biases involve a particular form of prejudice, and prejudices concern corrupted ways of treating certain social groups, they are political phenomena. Having them and acting on them promote certain social structures that benefit certain groups at the expense of others. Precisely because the primary question in the philosophy of mind concerns the constitutive aspects of certain

psychological phenomena, it is crucial to understand implicit biases as phenomena that play this particular political role. (Borgoni 2022, 145)

Like feminist philosophy, trans philosophy has offered a fundamentally different starting point for how to do philosophy - one that might fruitfully challenge the remaining individualistic focus in philosophy of mind, while at the same time enriching critical, feminist, and socio-structural approaches to philosophy of mind. Talia Mae Bettcher criticizes mainstream areas in philosophy for pretending that their perception of the world is universal. "Philosophers' worldly perception is obviously shaped and limited by their social milieu: It's culturally, geographically, and temporally indexed" (Bettcher 2019, 656). But this situatedness (and construction), Bettcher continues, is rarely acknowledged in mainstream areas in philosophy and mainstream approaches to philosophy. Trans philosophy, according to Bettcher, can offer this "centrality of worldly perception in philosophical method" (Bettcher 2019, 656) that other philosophy areas, including philosophy of mind, often lack. "Trans philosophy needs to proceed from pretheoretical sociality among trans people—whatever form that takes (...)" (Bettcher 2019 656).

Amy Marvin (2019) makes a similar point in her essay on the history of trans philosophy, and further shows how trans philosophy seems to function differently from mainstream philosophy:

By emphasizing trans people's knowledge and lived experiences, trans philosophy runs at odds with much of mainstream professional philosophy, in which trans people are seen as politically biased or self-deluded as opposed to the unsituated, unbiased, disengaged philosopher. What many philosophers do not acknowledge, however, is that the distant, critical, non-trans writer has actually been the historical norm when it comes to practitioners of trans scholarship.

Robin Dembroff (2020) addresses the related point of "philosophy's transgender trouble". They point out:

Whose commonsense constitutes philosophically legitimate commonsense? Whose pretheoretical concepts and terms constrain philosophical inquiry? And whose intuitions are philosophical intuitions? (...) the commonsense of the racialized, poor, queer, transgender, or disabled is considered philosophically irrelevant "ideology," "activism," or "delusion." (403)

Trans philosophy, then, "cannot be determined by subject alone", as Bettcher (2019) puts it. "It must be undertaken, rather, with an overarching aim of exposing and combating trans oppression, of illuminating and enacting a kind of trans resistance." (Bettcher 2019, 4).

*The usefulness of trans perspectives in philosophy of mind*

In light of this, bringing trans perspectives into philosophy of mind would not mean illuminating a niche area of philosophy of mind or considering *one* specific standpoint, but rather bringing in a range of socio-culturally situated and engaged perspectives that fruitfully enrich philosophy of mind. Bringing trans perspectives into mainstream areas of philosophy such as philosophy of mind does not mean simply *using* a trans perspective to make an argument, as in philosophizing *about* trans issues, but arguing from *within* trans perspectives, as in doing trans philosophy. C. Jacob Hale (1997) makes this vividly clear in his essay on how to write about transness (from non-trans perspectives but also in trans-trans contexts). He writes that trans experiences should not be presented "as monolithic or univocal" (Hale 1997). He continues, "Ask yourself if you can travel in our trans worlds. If not, you probably don't get what we're talking about" (Hale 1997). Perry Zurn (2023) contextualizes Hale's essay and characterizes Hale's essay as an "invitation to theorize on the rough ground of living and struggling together" (71). Zurn also makes clear that Hale thinks of the rules spelled out in his essay as "'epistemic guidelines' rather than puritanical standards of conduct" (Zurn 2023, 73). Trans perspectives in philosophy of mind, or trans philosophy of mind, this way, contribute to doing away with rigid boundaries between different approaches to philosophy and the different epistemic norms upheld within these systems, such as the analytic/continental divide. That is, trans perspectives may not just be useful for mainstream areas of philosophy to illuminate these specific perspectives, i.e., trans philosophy of mind is not aimed at illuminating 'the trans mind', nor does it make such a reductive and pathologizing claim. Rather, trans perspectives shed light on how subjective experiences, embodiment, and world-embeddedness, including obstacles and exclusions that impact one's particular position and (possibilities of) embodiment, impact what we perceive, know, and experience, how we perceive, know, and experience, and how we interact with what we perceive, know, and experience. That is, traditional issues considered in philosophy of mind, such as self-knowledge, mind-body relations, the problem of other minds, reason and emotion, etc., herein clearly appear from within trans perspectives as actual, real-world issues, and as issues to be addressed as such, from real-world informed stances, rather than as abstract issues unrelated to lived realities. This is akin to Bettcher's formulation of the 'WTF'. According to Bettcher, transness includes living in what she refers to as 'the WTF', where understanding one's own body, how one is perceived by others, and what is happening are all urgent real-world matters that don't require abstracting away or fantasizing about what-it-is-like possibilities, that are still dominant in (analytic) philosophy of mind. Bettcher emphasizes: "We trans people live an "everyday" shot through with perplexity, shot through with WTF questions. We live in the WTF. We did not need philosophy to uncover its perplexity. It was already there" (Bettcher 2019, 651).

We may also consider the usefulness of trans philosophy of mind alongside feminist philosophy of mind and critical phenomenology. Critical phenomenology means the philosophical practice of suspending "commonsense accounts of reality in order to map and

describe the structures that make these accounts possible, (...)" (Guenther 2020, 15). That is, subjective experiences, particularly emotions and affectively structured phenomena are considered to be crucially impacted by social norms, values, and practices in critical phenomenology (see von Maur 2021; Thonhauser 2023). Trans philosophy of mind is not only to be seen as oriented along lived realities as isolated subjective experiences, but also as taking into account how social forces influence lived realities and minds, respectively.

A similar point is made by Scheman (2022) in the feminist philosophy of mind volume: "Feminist perspectives shift attention to understanding persons as both bodily and social, and knowledge as interpersonal and interactive" (Scheman 2022, 243). Scheman argues for the claim that mental states are not physical particulars because they have the integrity that they do (meaning, they can be explained, have specific causes and effects, can be named and referred to) but because they are socially salient patterns. According to her, it is through the social practices we perform that "we interpret as meaningful bits of experience that may well be related in significant, nonsocial ways" (Scheman 2022, 249). This way, the mental can be(come) real. A consequence of this view, as Scheman points out in reference to Lugones (2003), is that we make each other up. Making each other up, here, means: "set the terms in which we will be intelligible, mark out the patterns of salience that construct the phenomena of mentality" (Scheman 2022, 252). This is necessary, in Scheman's understanding, as some people's existences or lived realities are rendered unintelligible (see Scheman 1997). Trans people, thus, are 'impossible beings' (Scheman 1997, 131) as our lived realities are not normalized and not included in the commonsense. This applies to philosophy of mind as well: as philosophy of mind has focused on individualistic approaches and approaches that are based on 'possible beings' and normalized minds and assume universality of normalized minds, philosophy of mind has failed to address non-normalized existences, such as trans existences. This includes the questions of what this failure to acknowledge the non-normalized means for understanding the mental, and how this restricted perspective on the mental has impacted models and theories.

Trans experiences and perspectives, in this sense, can not only constitute *trans philosophy*, but also expand the boundaries of other philosophical disciplines, such as philosophy of mind, epistemology, and ontology, among others. The focus of this paper is to ask what trans perspectives in philosophy of mind are, and how philosophy of mind might benefit from recognizing and incorporating trans perspectives. In doing so, the paper also suggests that a consideration of trans philosophy of mind contributes to expanding our understanding of what trans philosophy is, and thus adds a valuable possibility for the future(s) of trans philosophy. In the following, I briefly look at three examples of trans perspectives in philosophy of mind and explain how they contribute to philosophy of mind and to the expansion of trans philosophy.

## 2. What are some examples of trans perspectives in philosophy of mind?

Finding examples of trans perspectives in philosophy of mind is extraordinarily difficult for a number of reasons. First, depending on how broad our understanding of philosophy of mind is, the examples I list below as trans perspectives in philosophy of mind may not be recognized as such or may not be recognized as philosophy of mind. The same is true of some socially informed approaches to philosophy of mind, or approaches that incorporate structuralist explanations into philosophy of mind. Such approaches may be seen as bordering on philosophy of mind, but not as *really* being concerned with the central question how the mind works. Second, trans philosophy has had to emerge from the margins and is still an emerging philosophical subdiscipline, so there are few texts that can be placed alongside trans philosophy in other branches of philosophy, even by self-definition. I would like to present some cases that might be considered as examples of how trans perspectives might contribute to philosophy of mind, even if these cases do not technically belong to philosophy of mind (or even if the authors do not consider themselves philosophers of mind). In order for trans perspectives to contribute to a more expansive understanding of philosophy of mind - and also of trans philosophy - it is necessary to adopt an understanding of philosophy of mind that goes beyond individualistic frameworks. As noted above, I take philosophy of mind to be concerned in one way or another with the question of what the mind is and how it works. I take this question to include a consideration of how social and structural factors, especially social identity, and possible related structural injustices, shape the mind. This parallels Maitra & McWeeny's understanding of feminist philosophy of mind as taking "the three focal questions (...) *What is the mind? Whose* mind is the model for the theory? *To whom* is mind attributed? — and treats them collectively rather than separately." (Maitra & McWeeny 2022, 3f). Based on this understanding of philosophy of mind, we can briefly identify the following examples of trans perspectives in philosophy of mind:

### (1) *Talia Mae Bettcher's "Trans Identities and First-Person Authority"*

Bettcher distinguishes between different notions of first-person authority and asks what it means to say that one has first-person authority over one's gender. To answer this question, she examines what first-person authority is, explores various cultural practices of doing gender, and explains the role that intersubjectivity plays in first-person authority. In examining what first-person authority is, and specifically considering the role mental attitudes play herein, Bettcher's paper can be considered to speak both to the broader question 'How does the mind work?' and the question 'To whom is mind attributed?'. For example, Bettcher (2009, 102) points out how first-person authority operates intersubjectively and emphasizes that communicating one's mental life (including one's gender identity) asserts first-person authority in social contexts:

In publicly avowing an attitude, the first person has in some sense staked a social claim and certified a view about their mental life on which we can "bank." In avowing an attitude, one authorizes a view of one's mental life that is then fit for circulation.

Bettcher (2009) further explores where things can go wrong in avowals of mental attitudes. She points out that "third-person assessments of mental attitudes (and gender self-identities) are interpretative in nature" (112), as our first-person avowals are embedded in specific contexts. However, she says, "What seems problematic is the attempt to avow somebody else's mental attitudes on their own behalf" (102). Bettcher does not treat these questions as merely epistemic, or merely about the nature of mental attitudes, but also addresses their social and ethical implications, and thereby points to an intersection of philosophy of mind with social philosophy as well as ethics. Specifically, Bettcher distinguishes between epistemic and ethical first-person authority, and formulates the goal "to understand FPA as an ideal for that which already exists in less-than-politically-ideal practice, to help transpeople treat ourselves and each other better" (99). This leads her to understand first-person authority not as "constituted by a serious epistemic advantage (...); rather, it is ultimately a kind of ethical authority" (Bettcher 2009, 100). Bettcher thus emphasizes that our relation to ourselves is not primarily epistemic, but agential and relational: we construe our minds in interaction through practices. This implication may be considered to directly speak to philosophy of mind and bring trans perspectives into philosophy of mind. By investigating first-person authority and the role that individuals and epistemic communities play in it, Bettcher explores issues central to the intersection of philosophy of mind and (social) epistemology and does so from a trans perspective.

(2) *Gayle Salamon's "The Sexual Schema: Transposition and Transgender in Phenomenology of Perception"*

Salamon's work revisits issues in phenomenology and philosophy of perception, focusing in particular on embodiment and the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and applies this work to trans experiences. The focus of her work is to understand the epistemic weight of subjective experience and embodiment (in relation to gender) and to contrast it with objectivist views. Salamon's work speaks directly to the debate about embodied cognition, which is still one of the central debates in philosophy of mind, especially given developments in recent 4E approaches. 4E approaches to mind and cognition regard cognition to be embedded, embodied, extended, and enactive (or any combination thereof). While traditional philosophy of mind, cognitive science and neuroscience have focused on the mind and the brain in isolation from the rest of the body and the environment bodies are surrounded by, 4E theorists emphasize the intricate, reciprocal relationship between minds, bodies, and the environments they occur in. Specifically, embeddedness entails that the environment plays a structuring, constitutive role for cognition (see Hutchins 1996). Embodied cognition means that cognition

and minds depend not only on brain processes but also crucially involve other bodily reactions, and these constitute or realize a kind of behavior or interaction with the environment (see Shapiro 2012; Hufendiek 2016). Extended mind theorists argue that the material environment is sometimes incorporated into our cognition (see Colombetti & Krueger 2015). Enactivism focuses on the active role played by the cognizer in their relation with the external world – cognizers have 'sense-making' capacities that shape the reality of the external world as we perceive it (see Thompson 2007; Thompson & Stapleton 2008).

For these debates, a consideration of Salamon's work may add important layers of complexity that could enrich 4E approaches on the question of what the mind is, and on the question of how mind attribution works. Gender, and even more so trans perspectives, have not been considered here, even though they intricately shape our bodily self-perception as well as the embodiment of certain mental states, such as certain emotions. I will say more about this below.

(3) *Perry Zurn's work on curiosity (e.g., Perry Zurn: "Puzzle Pieces: Shapes of Trans Curiosity" or Perry Zurn & Dani S. Bassett: "Curious Minds")*

Zurn explores curiosity both in relation to transness and more generally. He not only explores the political dimensions of curiosity, but also asks what curiosity is, how it relates to knowledge, and thus explores the relevance of curiosity to the mind. That is, Zurn's research on curiosity borders on questions raised in philosophy of mind, such as questions about emotions and desires, but also questions about intersubjectivity.

In his essay *Puzzle Pieces*, for example, Zurn reflects on research on curiosity and transness as bridging individualistic and structuralist approaches. He states that "curiosity is a trained affect, embedded in a habitus, appearing on individual and collective registers. Curiosity is something one or more persons feel and what one or more persons do" (Zurn 2018, 11). And he continues:

As such, curiosity might be defined as a material and discursive multivariant praxis of inquiry, coupled with certain affects and neurological signatures, and traceable in individuals and groups. Thus, in the following analysis of curiosity's role in trans objectification—and especially in trans freedom, the question is both how does curiosity feel and how does it function? How are the practices of gazing, querying, investigating, experimenting, and worldtraveling lived and deployed?

By identifying trans people as both objects and subjects of curiosity, Zurn reflects on both the question of mind attribution and the social aspects or biases that influence mind attribution, as well as questions of agency over one's own mind. Zurn states: "To be trans, (...), is a journey, a discovery, a quest, an exploration, an evolution, involving experimentation, observation, imagination, and so, so many questions. It is a vortex of curiosity" (2018, 12). Zurn's research programme, here, connects to Bettcher's discussion about ethical first-person authority and the implications for philosophy of mind discussions of the complexities of self-knowledge. Rather than understanding transness as something that we come to suddenly explicitly know

about ourselves, or as purely epistemic first-person authority, Zurn emphasizes the explorative and experimental nature of transness. Transness, on this understanding, is also imaginable as something that is, at least in part, construed in interaction and through social practices (see Bettcher 2009).

Furthermore, and Zurn hints at this when he calls curiosity a trained affect, curiosity can be considered an (epistemic) emotion, it enables us to see how knowing and feeling are related, and is thus a part of philosophy of mind and emotion. And so trans curiosity can be seen as a trans perspective on curiosity, adding a trans perspective to philosophy of mind.

(4) *Work on trans phenomenology, incl. gender dysphoria and gender euphoria (e.g., Gayle Salomon: "Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality"; Florence Ashley: "What is it like to have a gender identity?"; Tamsin Kimoto "Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and Phenomenological Forays in Trans Life")<sup>i</sup>*

Work in trans philosophy on gender identity and on gender dysphoria is often seen as located in philosophy of gender or (social) ontology or trans studies, but some of it can also be seen as located in the trans philosophy of mind and trans phenomenology. Particularly papers that are located at the intersection of trans philosophy, philosophy of gender, phenomenology, and philosophy of mind might well be considered as contributing trans perspectives to philosophy of mind.

At the intersection of trans phenomenology and trans philosophy of mind is, for example, Salomon's book "Assuming a Body" (2010), which includes a more detailed discussion of bodily awareness and materiality in relation to gender. Salomon argues that bodily materiality is best understood through phenomenological accounts, such as Merleau-Ponty's account of what materiality feels like. Thus, Salomon's work is directly concerned with the mind's relationship to the body and the external world.

Tamsin Kimoto (2018) makes use of Salomon's approach. Their paper explores the phenomenology of both hormonal transition and transphobia, drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and Salomon. Specifically, they explore how "Fanon and trans phenomenological theory rework, rewrite, and retheorize what it means to be embodied in the world" (18). That is, Kimoto's work is not only a piece of trans philosophy, but also a pertinent contribution to the canon in phenomenology, to the understanding of embodiment, and to the understanding of the mind-body connection in philosophy of mind.

Florence Ashley's (2023) paper is located at the intersections of philosophy of mind, trans philosophy, and phenomenology. She argues that "understanding gender identity as phenomenologically synthesized out of gender subjectivity, out of our everyday experiences of ourselves as gendered" (1070). Ashley also discusses gender dysphoria and gender euphoria as key components of understanding gender identity. These experiences underscore the emotional and psychological realities of having a gender identity. Thus, Ashley also speaks immediately to the relationship between the mind and the body and, of course, to the what-X-is-like question.

The texts and research examples presented here of what trans perspectives in philosophy of mind might be and offer at the very least show us what it might mean to investigate trans perspectives in philosophy of mind, and how trans philosophy and philosophy of mind might be linked. Trans perspectives in philosophy of mind may prove particularly fruitful for debates about embodiment, emotions, desires, social cognition, but also for debates about knowledge, inquiry, and consciousness. That is, trans perspectives can provide compelling cases for the questions framed by Maitra & McWeeny's definition of feminist philosophy of mind: "*What is the mind? Whose mind is the model for the theory? To whom is mind attributed?*" (Maitra & McWeeny 2022, 3f).

Work on trans phenomenology, in particular, but also work in trans philosophy of mind, in general, can also help to break down artificial philosophical boundaries and rigid epistemic systems, such as the analytic/continental divide in philosophy, as mentioned before.

In what follows, I will focus on one of these questions - to whom is mind attributed? - because I believe that much progress has been made in recent years in bringing socio-structural perspectives to bear on related debates, especially debates located in philosophy of social cognition and emotion, where the question of mind attribution is particularly relevant.

### **3. To whom is mind ascribed?**

Philosophers who research social cognition and emotion have recently begun to examine the ways in which social norms, biases, and epistemic injustices influence our social cognition, emotions, and social interactions (Eickers 2025; 2024; Spaulding 2018; Zawidzki 2013). Social norms specify normal or acceptable ways of being in society and regulate our emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Bicchieri et al. 2018). In other words, they prescribe the appropriate conduct for individuals within a given social context. As Brownstein et al. (2018) elucidate, social norms "come with a complex motivational oomph" (63). The pressure to conform to social norms in social interaction is significant (cf. Bicchieri 2006).

Spaulding (2018) and Del Pinal & Spaulding (2018) examine how bias operates in social cognition and interaction. They argue for a more or less pluralistic understanding of biases and do not merely focus on implicit biases. Instead, they understand biases as social biases that operate in different cognitive structures. They specify that a social bias is an association between a social category and a feature. For example, we tend to associate the category 'woman' with the trait 'family-oriented' or with the affective trait 'warmth'; this association, according to Del Pinal and Spaulding, is a social bias. In addition to Spaulding and Del Pinal's work on bias in social cognition and interaction, there are various case studies of the influence of bias on cognition in philosophy of mind. For example, there is work on bias in perception. Research on bias in perception suggests that bias affects the way we perceive the world, and

that this has epistemic consequences, such as questions of reasonability or justification when we act on the basis of biased perception (see, for example, Siegel 2020, LeBoeuf 2020). This may be relevant in legal contexts or in moral judgments. LeBoeuf (2020) argues that biases operate not only at the level of perception, but also by being social and embodied. Individuals, according to this understanding, enact biases through their socially embedded bodily behaviors, and at the same time, biases are "enacted by social groups as a whole. Implicit biases 'live in' the bodies of individuals and also in the social world" (LeBoeuf 2020, 51).

Understanding biases as social highlights the influence of biases and social norms on mind attribution and social interaction. For example, if biases affect the way an individual perceives the world around them, due to their membership of a specific social group, they also affect the way they perceive and interpret the social behavior of others. If an individual harbors an implicit bias against individuals belonging to group Y, due to their membership in group X, they may be more prone to ascribe specific social behaviors to members of group Y, as opposed to others. They may also exhibit a proclivity to engage in particular modes of interaction with them. Consequently, biases and social norms also interact with or influence our knowledge of others (see Beeghly, 2020), thereby potentially giving rise to biased social cognition and interaction.

The connection between bias and social norms and gender and transness is evident: if social norms and bias influence our social cognition, emotion, and interaction, this includes gender norms and biases surrounding gender (which, in turn, also interact with norms and bias around race, class, disabilities, and so on). Some research on social cognition explicitly addresses this issue (e.g., Spaulding 2018). There is also a substantial body of social psychology and interdisciplinary research on emotion that specifically highlights the influence of gender norms on emotion attribution and emotional expression.

#### *Example: Emotions*

In this section, I will point to examples that illustrate research on gender and emotion. I will briefly look at how this might affect trans perspectives in particular, and why this in turn points to the importance of trans perspectives in philosophy of mind. Some of the research I am citing here is not exclusively located in philosophy of emotion. Rather, it is situated at the intersections between social psychology, gender studies, and philosophy. Nevertheless, philosophers of emotion, particularly those working within the domains of philosophy of mind and psychology, have made extensive use of this research.

A number of studies have been conducted with the objective of demonstrating the relationship between gender and emotion attribution, as well as the impact of emotion on gender attribution. The following examples illustrate this research: Hess et al. (2009) found that individuals who expressed happiness were more likely to be categorized as "feminine", while

those who expressed anger were more likely to be categorized as "masculine". In a similar vein, Albohn et al. (2019) examine the role of gender information in facial cues and its impact on behavioral predictions. This may have particular implications for trans individuals, as their gender identity may be incorrectly or differently categorized depending on the situation. Facial information plays a significant role in how individuals categorize and interact with others. How this information is categorized is influenced by social norms and stereotypes, such as gender, and is subject to cultural variation. Even identities that are thought to remain largely hidden, such as transness for some trans people, are more likely than average to be recognized from a static image of a face alone.

Even mere social categorization of an ambiguous face as "male" or "female" is enough to elicit a preferential response bias that is congruent with gender-emotion stereotypes. When gender ambiguous faces were expressing joy, they were more likely to be categorized as female than male, and these faces were expressing anger were more likely to be categorized as male. (Albohn et al. 2019, 38; see also Hess et al. 2009)

In philosophy of emotion, and in particular in the trans philosophy of emotion, there is work showing how gender norms are related to the emotional marginalization of trans people (and explaining what emotional marginalization means) - arguing that trans people (as well as inter- and non-binary people) may not conform to (or appear to conform to) prevailing emotional norms (cf. Eickers 2023). There is also work on trans joy (Ainscough, manuscript), which argues that trans people are often unable to express joy in ways that are accepted in dominant social contexts. And there is work on trans affect at the intersections of gender studies and philosophy; in particular, Hil Malatino's "Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad" (2022). In this work, Malatino locates negative feelings, such as anger and exhaustion, at the center of transness and analyzes the complexity of these feelings for shaping trans experiences.

Trans perspectives in philosophy of mind could particularly help shed light on the question to whom mind is attributed, and questions around phenomena that connect gender and mind. Research could also explore the emotional effects of gendering and misgendering, linking psychological processes to work on emotional injustice (see, e.g., Pismenny et al. 2024) and moral emotions such as anger (Srinivasan 2018; Cherry 2018).

In this way, trans perspectives in philosophy of mind can help to combine socio-structural considerations with philosophy of mind, thus enriching philosophy of mind.

#### **4. How to trans perspectives in philosophy of mind**

After exploring why we should care about trans perspectives in philosophy of mind, what they might be, and exploring a specific question in philosophy of mind related to trans perspectives, I will offer some concluding thoughts on how we might incorporate trans perspectives into

philosophy of mind, as in the question: do we need to adopt a specific methodology or theoretical framework in order to incorporate trans perspectives into more mainstream branches of philosophy?

What does it mean to propose that trans philosophy can offer a "centrality of wordly perception in philosophical method" (Bettcher 2019, 656) and that trans philosophy "needs to proceed from pretheoretical sociality among trans people—whatever form that takes (...)" (Bettcher 2019, 651), especially when considering trans perspectives in philosophy of mind? The approach and framework called for here may seem to imply doing philosophy from *within* a trans perspective. However, as Bettcher (2019), Hale (1997), and Zurn (2023) point out, there is no one trans perspective, and trans scholars working on transness are also situated in specific social locations that produce multiple specific trans perspectives rather than one unified trans perspective. Integrating these thoughts and approaches might suggest, for example, the use of feminist standpoint epistemology (e.g., Harding 1992). This might enable to bring trans perspectives into philosophy of mind (or other mainstream philosophy) in a way that starts from the pre-theoretical sociality among trans people that Bettcher points out, and in a way that does not take trans perspectives as uniform.

While feminist standpoint theorists argue that marginalized people may be epistemically advantaged in knowing "some things better than those who are comparatively privileged (...), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their experience" (Wylie 2003, 26), they also caution against (mis)assuming that experiences are uniform across a particular social location. Trans people are members of very different communities depending on race, class, where they live, where they were born, language, disabilities, etc. Though as individuals we are located across different communities, as trans scholars we are also engaged in knowledge production around transness that ideally enhances the understanding of some of the communities we belong to. This allows for doing trans philosophy (including trans philosophy of mind or trans epistemology or trans ontology, etc.) with the "aim of exposing and combating trans oppression, of illuminating and enacting a kind of trans resistance" (Bettcher 2019, 647), even if achieving this aim cannot be guaranteed.

Bringing trans perspectives into (mainstream) branches of philosophy such as philosophy of mind, then, does not mean relying on a specific social category - even if it is a category that the scholar associates with themselves - but rather critically evaluating that specific social category and one's membership in it from within in order to make room for the advantaged epistemic access that membership may entail.

Bringing trans perspectives into mainstream branches of philosophy, such as philosophy of mind, may also entail a special kind of responsibility. Elucidating the knowledge of oppressed communities and communities currently under attack, even when done "from within", requires

special care and caution in order not to engage in epistemic exploitation (see Berenstain 2016) or potentially harm the respective and associated communities.

## 5. Final remarks

The aim of this paper was to explore what trans perspectives can contribute to philosophy of mind, and thereby to mainstream approaches in philosophy more generally. Specifically, the paper asked: What are trans perspectives in philosophy of mind, and how could philosophy of mind benefit from recognizing (the importance of) trans perspectives? What do trans perspectives do other than illuminate trans perspectives? I explained that I take philosophy of mind to ask what the mind is and how the mind works and to acknowledge how social factors, including gender identity, influence how the mind works. In light of this, I suggested that philosophy of mind could benefit from acknowledging and incorporating trans perspectives as they shed light on matters of the mind via lived realities that are embedded in specific socio-structural systems rather than considering questions about the mental as abstract problems. Although the focus of this paper was how a consideration of trans perspectives could be beneficial for philosophy of mind, I also sought to imply that our understanding of trans philosophy might be broadened by considering work on trans perspectives in philosophy of mind.

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<sup>i</sup> For further examples see also: C. Riley Snorton's (2009) "A New Hope: The Psychic Life of Passing", and Talia Mae Bettcher's (2020) "Trans Phenomena".