

Emotion in Feminist Standpoint

Epistemology

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Introduction

Within the institution of science lies a generally accepted set of preferences for investigative processes, known as the Mertonian norms. These are regarded as the code of conduct for any person given the responsibility of advancing human knowledge, with the motivation behind them being to maintain an efficient and ethically proper scientific enterprise. Of the four norms, disinterested investigation - the aim to work for the scientific endeavour itself instead of personal gains - proves to be more complex when the realm of social epistemology and its hypotheses on social biases is introduced. The production of knowledge is no trivial matter when we reveal the context in which both its conceptualization and justification are founded upon. Consider the life journey a single person experiences: perhaps their past interactions with nature shapes their view on environmental issues, or tribulations that corrupts their perception of the world. One of the main premises of social epistemology is that all knowledge is situated and partial because every person - who may be the founder, supporter, and teacher of knowledge - experiences a unique life which distinguishes them from

all other people. We call these people the situated knower along with their beliefs, opinions, and experiences, the situated knowledge.

Theories relating to these biases in knowledge production demand critical reflection on the justification behind dominant epistemic authorities, and to reveal pervasive components which undermine rationality and objectivity. Social categories such as race, religion, and political affiliation are obvious examples for the differences in values possessed by individuals. We can see the depth within the formulation of situated knowledge and begin to analyze perceptions on knowledge and the social groups which control them. The primary motivation in feminist epistemology is to define the proper justification of epistemic privilege, but this consequently brings about the promotion of activism surrounding discriminated epistemic groups as a result of these corrupt structures. We then naturally segue into examining relevant evidence which support the observations of the biases. However, considering the complexity of knowledge production and justification which begins at the individual and is extended to societies at large, the construction of hypotheses relating to these biases are difficult and inefficient. Rather, the feminist theory grounds their perspectives We begin with a resolution to the bias paradox which eases the tension between the notion of epistemic privilege and the premise of situated knowledge. We then introduce the phenomenon of emotion, focusing more on its properties and consequences rather than theorizing on the intricacies of cognition. From this general account of emotion, we analyze its role currently within epistemic structures and propose a more justified perspective that ought to surround it. (more diversified collection of standpoints increases objectivity on the societal level. this is our motivation for eliminating marginalization of social groups from epistemic privilege due to unprecedented prejudice.)

The Bias Paradox

The bias paradox exists because of contradiction between two premises of the first depiction of feminist standpoint theory as explained in Sandra Harding's *Feminist Epistemology*: (1) unprivileged social positions are likely to produce knowledge that is less partial and distorted than those from privileged positions yet (2) all scientific knowledge is situated. The second claim appears to undermine the first because if valid, then it contradicts our notion of the standard of impartiality by which we can judge social positions from. We can see that the second premise is reasonable by our notion of the situated knower and proceed by assuming this is valid.

Within Kristina Rolins' critique of the bias paradox, they argue that the first premise introduced by Sandra Harding utilises a foundationalist theory and how a contextualist theory is more justified and also solves the paradox. First, foundationalism involves two assumptions: the first being that there are basic beliefs which serve as the foundation for further knowledge to be inferred or deduced from, and second, there are beliefs which function as basic based on their content alone. Altogether, the standard of impartiality in this perspective is foundational, rigid, absolute. The bias paradox emerges when this notion of impartiality is juxtaposed with the situated knowledge thesis which claims that all beliefs are partial in themselves. Contextualist theory rejects the second premise of some beliefs acting as basic in virtue of their content alone, and rather considers them to function as default entitlements. The default entitlements are context dependent and ultimately construct the framework for the standard of impartiality. What could these default entitlements be? Rolins suggests: uncontested epistemic beliefs or epistemic, moral, and social values relevant for justification

or the consideration of evidence for judging. Contextualism enables us to judge one social position as better than another by constructing a context dependent standard of impartiality, while simultaneously maintaining the claim that scientific knowledge is partial.

An implication of this theory is the relativistic nature of knowledge with respect to societal values accepted as the default entitlements. This assigns greater objectivity and a higher standard of impartiality to be the responsibility at a societal level rather than individual. This supports the axiom of diversity in feminist theory as explained by Harding, "the subject of feminist knowledge - the agent of these less partial and distorted descriptions and explanations - must be multiple and even contradictory" (Rolins, 125). The position held is that a homogeneity of social positions in an enterprise is less likely to be epistemically valuable, efficient, and reasonable than that of a diverse collection of standpoints.

Emotion: a first account

How different are emotions from knowledge? Based on Alison M. Jaggar's interpretation, emotions have two components: the first being the sensory component and the second being a cognition which processes the feelings. In observing that social, political, and ethical movements induce emotional responses within many people, or in seeing that debates on morals and laws also provoke the same reaction, we can infer that the cognition of feelings is intimately connected to the value and belief system of the person. That is to say, emotions and values are intertwined and mutually affect one another. In addition to the intentionality of emotion, we can view mature emotion as socially constructed. To integrate into society is to observe and negotiate the values possessed by the individual alongside those of other

people. It is thus necessary for the individual to act appropriately; the cognition is learns to align itself to the standards for behaviour, progressively determining proper reactions for the feelings arisen.

Recall that knowledge is situated and undergoes a process of justification to determine its level of impartiality, validity, and value in relation to the greater body of knowledge. If a society adopts a set of values, whether they are moral, social, or epistemic, it inevitably affects the components of the emotions in every member through their interaction with the rest of the community. If we move away from the basic interpretation of emotion, called the "Dumb View", where it only sees it as uncontrollable, predominantly reaction based, and stagnant, we see that the human experience relies heavily on emotion.

Emotions in practice

It is unfathomable to propose that the desired character of rationality is one in which their cognitive component, which identifies and processes feelings, is suppressed. For it allows the pervasive state of being entirely unaware to one's own emotion and value system to be glorified and idealized. This is often seen in the scientific endeavour where scientists are expected to work solely for the purposes of the greater scientific movement, as mentioned in the introduction of the Mertonian norm of disinterestedness.

The norm itself is appropriate for the venture of epistemic investigation, however, it brings about issues in society related to the marginalization of social groups who are characterized as "emotional" and "chaotic". As part of feminist theory, this classification intentionally works to the benefit of the dominating social positions to maintain their privilege. Although

erratic behaviour and emotionally driven behaviour is not desirable for the pursuit of rationality, neither is the subdued and concealed reactions as part of the stoic image of the disinterested scientist. Moreover, Rolins argues that emotions are active engagements, never ceasing to be integrated into all aspects of experience. Thus the standard of dispassionate investigation is a myth and an unrealistic expectation; what we have been dealing with instead is the suppression of the emotional faculties. How could the neglect of a major cognitive structure be a desirable component in the investigative process, which depends heavily on both the identification of external evidence through the senses and the mind which identifies and reacts to them? That is, to reject the role of emotion in epistemology is to ignore a large portion of the individual epistemic justification process.

In support of feminist theory, we illuminate these oppressive structures through examining how they are incorporated into society, and ultimately perpetuated by uncontested and naive social standards. In our account of emotion, we can observe subtle forms of bias which undermine the epistemic privilege of certain social positions. For example, women are thought to be more emotional and thus less rational, as if the situation is either/or and cannot be both. This is flawed in our perception of emotion, since women are capable of having a deep connection with their emotions, or have developed a wide range of them. To have no awareness of one's emotions is not to say that they are capable of exerting control over them. I propose that stoicism should not be the milestone of rationality, if our goal is to maintain a standard of impartiality that is epistemically superior. Further, the inspiration required in the generation of hypotheses benefits from having the clearest and insightful outlook on the phenomena and factors involved in the production of knowledge.

There are times where moral and social values are appropriate for grounding the justi-

fication of knowledge and beliefs, where they suffice as pieces of evidence at least in those contexts. There are many occasions in scientific history where the default entitlements, the framework of supported assumptions, involve prejudiced claims, thriving in the disorganization of skepticism and refrain from thorough criticism. Several examples of gender bias have been hypothesized throughout history in "Gender and the Biological Sciences", but also a sticking example in support of greater social diversity in the sciences: "unprivileged" or minorities (based on context) are likely to contribute different perspectives and knowledge. This is dubbed the "outsider-insider" position, where the individual is an outsider to regular social positions but is familiar and involved in the epistemic area or context.

Discussion and Outlook

To summarize the flow and motivation of this essay, we began with a resolution to the bias paradox by adopting a contextualist theory of epistemic justification. From this we relax the tension created in asserting that all scientific knowledge is situated and partial. Through this relativistic and context dependent lens, we can assign greater value to the cognitive process of emotion, which under foundationalism has little significance. We modify the primitive "Dumb View" of emotion to include the notion of cognition, the interpretation of raw feelings and argue that it is not unfavorable, but rather necessary and deeply connected to many of the other value structures within an individual. Ultimately, this opens the possibility of the myth of dispassionate and socially isolated or supervening investigation and demands that we direct more attention to the scrutiny of the default entitlements by which our inquiry are grounded on.

As a reflection upon our findings with current happenings and the state of science in the public eye, I would like to comment on the political issues involving deception of facts and the great dissonance between conflicting political parties. The polarization of political affiliations as largely seen in the United States (see: the Berkeley protests in 2017), is fueled by the exaggerated depictions of the opposition and a commitment to defend their own values and beliefs. Under social epistemology, the different standpoints involved in the interaction of different political representatives increases the likelihood of less distorted perspectives. However, because of the lack of productive communication from all sides, the distortion is not minimized, but rather, amplified. My argument here is not for issuing blame in these controversial situations, but rather to highlight the importance of the awareness of the value systems which by which people operate under.

References

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