According to Marxist theory, Marxism encourages people to seek their own doctrines of objective vision, its starting points offered a way to get to people’s own version of standpoint theories, insistent embodiment, a rich tradition of critiquing hegemony without disempowering positivisms and relativisms and a way to get to nuanced theories of mediation. (Haraway, p.578). Then, one important element of standpoint theories is one’s own, socially, politically or culturally, experience. So, I agree with the argument that we can attribute “epistemic privilege” to socially marginalized groups.

Starting off thought from the lives of marginalized people is one of the standpoint theories’ ideas. Women’s lives and experience were claimed as the grounds for knowledge. Starting off research from women’s lives will generate less partial and distorted results of research which target at women’s real experience and finally generate knowledge for this field. (Harding, p.128). The objectivity issues are argued frequently in standpoint theories. But as Harding mentioned in her text, “The epistemologically advantaged starting points for research do not guarantee that the researcher can maximize objectivity in her accounts; these grounds provide only a necessary —not a sufficient—starting point for maximizing objectivity.” (Harding, p.128). From above, what the objectivity that standpoint theories seek for is not to guarantee the absolute objectivity but to provide a helpful starting point. Why I think the socially marginalized groups can grasp “epistemic privilege”? Or we can ask why feminist standpoint theory is a valid research method? How it can get rid of its unscientific and unobjective bias?

First of all, standpoint theories are not ethnocentrism. The definition for ethnocentrism is the belief in the inherent superiority of one’s own ethnic group or culture. (Harding, p.129). However, socially marginalized groups not belong to this category, absolutely. Women’s lives and experience can provide a better starting point for research not means their own lives are the best starting points. This is quite a different matter. What feminist standpoint theories want to do is not to hide the possibility of women’s lives can provide important resources and encourage women to speak for themselves. Marxist theory also argued for the scientific aspect of starting off thought from women’s lives. Although many feminisms hold different standpoints and arguments, feminist standpoint theory would not deny that each and every of these groups are not a good place to thought start. It insists on that we can learn from all of them and change our patterns of belief. (Harding, p.131). On the contrary, feminist standpoint theory is not ethnocentrism but those people, whom want to neglect women’s lives and their experience, history, social situation, are sexist, racist, classist whose core is the representation of ethnocentrism.

Furthermore, some argued that “epistemic privilege” not suits for relativism. However, not to say that standpoint theory does not advocate relativism, instead, the fact that different people hold different ideas not means that it is not objective enough. When we discuss about the subject of knowledge, one of the characteristics of it should be embodied and visible. (Harding, p.132). What epistemic privilege advocates is that women as spokesperson are made them embodied and visible, which add the plausibility, but men’s thoughts are not banned by feminist standpoint theory. Supporting for epistemic privilege not means against socially mainstreaming groups express their own opinion because men also can speak for women. But what we stressed here is a good starting point.

Finally, Feminist do not need a doctrine of objectivity. (Haraway, p.579). As for the part of Marxism that Haraway agreed with, which is epistemic privilege can have a chance to seek for their own doctrines of objective vision rather than trapped by traditionally so-called science. Science could be rhetoric, a series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one’s manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power. (Haraway, p.577). What feminist standpoint theory want is a critical theory, and it wants women can have a chance to construct their own meanings and their own understanding of science. No matter white western lesbians or black feminist lesbians, or upper class women or lower class women, they have their differences and similarities. These multiplicity and diversity are feminist want for epistemology.

References

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