Sebiha Güngör

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*Explain the logic of epistemic privilege developed in Marxist theory. Do you think that we can attribute “epistemic privilege” to socially marginalized groups? If so, is any of the groups listed above in your view more epistemologically privileged than the others? Why? If not, would you agree with theorists such as Susan Hekman (1997) that all positions are equally partial and no perspective is epistemologically privileged?*

Standpoint theory argues that social position affects knowledge. It is basically about origins of knowledge which states your location, where you stand, gives you a certain amount of knowledge. Epistemic privilege is marginalizing people in position of knowledge. In other words, a specific position can give the knower more access to knowledge. As Mellor (1997) stated disadvantage produce a perspective on social order which is denied for the advantaged. Marxist theories of the epistemic privilege of working class is in line with that argument of feminist standpoint theory (Mellor, 1997). Women’s double responsibilities attained to them in production and reproduction gave them wider understanding of range of activities within experiences of humanity which is wider perspective on materialist world view. (Mellor, 1997)

In my opinion, we can attribute “epistemic privilege” to socially marginalized groups. As Harding (2004) stated oppressed groups turn oppressive features into source of insight ‘about how dominant society thinks and is structured’. As Hartstock (1983) stated women’s experiences give them a perspective which can be critical to oppression of institutions and patriarchal ideologies. It means their standpoint give them *chance to challenge the status.* To illustrate, the privilege comes from knowing the inside out what is like to be woman under male supremacy. As Collard (1988) argues abuse and oppression of women as well as their experience of mothering can give them better understanding and better situation to solve it because it is *their own experience.* On the other hand, it may also make them more sensitive to knowledge of abuse and oppression by supremacy.

In my opinion, while I agree that where women stand gives them specific knowledge and some privilege of assessing the status quo, it is important not to universalize or essentialize the women as a source of knowledge and privilege. One example of that can be seeing women closer to the nature and giving them more responsibilities on protection. For instance, this may create essentialized images for women such as the women as mother, women as nurturer or birth-giver.

Overall, where women stand give them chance to know and critical eye to solve the problems caused by oppression. This ‘view from below’ make them *more epistemologically privileged than the others.*  That’s why experiences of women and minorities, marginalized groups are valuable as a source of knowledge. Development of feminist epistemology is important because it shows us what women ‘lived’ and shows the ways to solve the problems. Experiences of marginalized groups should be used as vantage point to change and challenge and create a different kind of social order which include more justice.

References

Mellor, M. (1997). Feminism and Ecology: An Introduction. NYU Press.