Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Philosophy Theses

Department of Philosophy

8-12-2016

Feminist Perspectivism: A Revised Standpoint Theory

Chevan Lindsay
Georgia State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/philosophy_theses

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVISM: A REVISED STANDPOINT THEORY

by

CHEVAN LINDSAY

Under the Direction of Jessica Berry, PhD

ABSTRACT

The heart of this thesis is an examination into the relevant differences between Nietzsche's perspectivism and standpoint theory. Briefly, both standpoint theory and perspectivism have been subjected to various charges that dissolve into two major ones, which are worthy of additional scrutiny: the charges of essentialism and incoherence. My overall argument in thesis is that standpoint theory, in spite of recent feminist defense, is still susceptible to these charges, and this proves counterproductive to its aims of combatting marginalization. Moreover, I argue that Nietzsche's perspectivism provides a corrective to the short comings of standpoint theory.

INDEX WORDS: Perspectivism, Objectivity, Feminism, Nietzsche, Science, Standpoint

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVISM: A REVISED STANDPOINT THEORY

by

CHEVAN LINDSAY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2016

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVISM: A REVISED STANDPOINT THEORY

by

CHEVAN LINDSAY

Committee Chair: Jessica Berry

Committee: Sandra Dwyer

Christie Hartley

Daniel Weiskopf

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2016

DEDICATION

For my mother and father, Voidrey and Carlton Lindsay

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I express my sincere gratitude to my committee chair, Professor Jessica Berry, who has not only guided me throughout every stage of producing this paper but, who has also been a great mentor and role model for me as a writer, editor, and as a scholar, during my time here in the MA program. I also give special thanks to my committee member and supervisor, Professor Sandra Dwyer, who has been a constant source of support and warm encouragement throughout my entire tenure at GSU and whose patience and insights were invaluable in getting me through completing this paper. I cannot thank her enough for just being her. Moreover, I thank my committee member, Professor Christie Hartley for helping me develop a solid basis for researching and investigating feminist philosophical thought. I also thank Professor Tiffany King and Professor Megan Sinnott of the Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies Department at GSU for deepening my knowledge of feminist theory, and for my developing a more critical stance toward feminist literature. I am grateful for Professor Elise Springer of Wesleyan University for sparking my interests in feminist philosophy and objectivity. In addition, I thank my academic advisor and committee member, Professor Daniel Weiskopf, for offering his expertise in epistemology, which proved to be foundational to the evolution of this paper. I would be remiss to fail to also thank both Professor Neil Van Leeuwen, with whom I've enjoyed many casual conversations about my work and whose unsolicited advice I've very much appreciated, and Professor Andrea Scarantino, who allowed me to sit in upon his philosophy of science lectures which inevitably helped to inform my views. Last, but most certainly not least, I thank the friends I've made here in the MA program, who help to keep me sane and functioning, and who are just generally wonderful human beings. In particular, I thank Maria Mejia for her friendship,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

The idea that there may be any affinity between feminists and Nietzsche might seem, prima facie, implausible if not impossible. On the one hand, feminism, as a constellation of social movements, is concerned with the advocacy of women's rights and interests against the systemic abuse women suffer on account of being women in patriarchal culture. Feminists both highlight and seek to remedy the unfair treatment of women in all domains of life in the interest of achieving egalitarianism. In contrast, Nietzsche was most certainly unsympathetic to feminist causes. To put the point more bluntly, Nietzsche was no egalitarian of any sort. Throughout the corpus of his written work, Nietzsche not only privileges the values and the modes of life of the aristocrat over those of the plebian, but he also openly disparages the latter. In these ways, Nietzsche is properly understood as an anti-feminist. Indeed, in light of this stark contrast between these worldviews, it is tempting to dismiss outright any claim that Nietzsche and feminists, in fact, share substantive kinship. But this would be a knee-jerk reaction at best.

To the contrary, feminist theorists appear to parallel Nietzsche insofar as they reject the traditional ideal of objectivity. Specifically, the work of feminist philosophers draws our attention to the ways in which the ideals and norms governing the practices of mainstream epistemologies and scientific inquiry often exclude many perspectives. Among those ideals and norms, objectivity has been held as a prime culprit. Here, by objectivity, I mean roughly the view that there is a single absolute account of the way things are in world that is both achievable and analyzable for its truth-value independently of historical context, human interest, and social facts among other things. It is not merely the view that such mediating influences have no bearing on what we know or might be able to know. It is, more importantly, the view that the elimination of such mediating influences is, in fact, both desirable and achievable. In contrast, feminist critics

of objectivity and Nietzsche agree that our knowledge suffers in the pursuit of objectivity as such. Since the pursuit of objectivity, as traditionally conceived, undermines genuine knowledge on this picture, some feminist theorists have sought to reconstruct the concept of objectivity.

Like Nietzsche, standpoint theorists, for example, maintain that inquiry, by its very nature, is both context-dependent and guided by interest, and ought to be understood as such. However, when inquiry is understood as guided by ahistorical conceptions of objectivity, the perspectives of those conducting inquiry are obscured. Specifically, certain interests become represented as the sole constituents of an absolute representation of the way things are in the world, thereby marginalizing other views that have not been included. On the critical feminist account, this is one way in which the abstraction of such mediating influences from the way we understand and pursue inquiry produces skewed representations of what counts as genuine knowledge. In short, the idea is that clarifying and improving the notion of objectivity might better inform the ways we engage in inquiry, our judgments about what counts as knowledge, and, moreover, remedy the marginalization of women and others, who have been relegated to the margins of conventional thought and inquiry.

The heart of this thesis is an examination into the relevant differences between Nietzsche's perspectivism and standpoint theory. Briefly, both perspectivism and standpoint theory have been subjected to various charges, ranging from *incoherence* and *relativism* to *essentialism* and a*uthoritarianism*. As a matter of fact, the four charges actually dissolve into two major ones, which are worthy of additional scrutiny: the charges of *essentialism* and *incoherence.* My overall argument in this thesis is that standpoint theory, in spite of recent feminist defense, is still susceptible to these charges, and this proves counterproductive to its

aims of combating marginalization. Ultimately, Nietzsche's perspectivism provides a corrective to the short-comings of standpoint theory.

In what follows, in the first chapter I (2.1) define standpoint theory and clarify its aims, while I (2. 2) demonstrate how those aims are intended to be consistent with the concept of objectivity. However, I also (2. 3) highlight the recent defense of standpoint theory offered by Kirsten Intemann and (2.4) Kristina Rolin. Toward this latter aim, I present their respective accounts and highlight their weaknesses. In particular, I (2.5) argue that Rolin's contextualist intervention fails to adequately resist the essentialist charge. In response to this problem, I (2. 6) propose Nietzsche's perspectivism as a possible corrective to these issues while closing the first chapter, and I offer a contextualist interpretation of his perspectivism in the second chapter. There, as you will see, I frame Nietzsche's discussion about perspective around a concern for retaining some notion of objectivity while arguing that Nietzsche's preferences and value judgments are consistent with this concern. From there, I make the case in the final chapter that perspectivism retains the best of standpoint theory without jettisoning the concept of a standpoint; and, moreover, I show how my perspectivist proposal overcomes the charge of essentialism but, nevertheless, achieves objectivity in order to present and defend the practical application of my proposal. Moreover I show that my theoretical proposal has already been put into practice by black feminists like Patricia Hill-Collins and Angela P. Harris, whose respective work I discuss.

2   STANDPOINT THEORY AND ITS CRITICS

2.1   What is Standpoint Theory?

First and foremost, standpoint theory is a political and social epistemology that is motivated by the insight that those who are systemically marginalized within a hierarchically structured system of power relations may, in fact, be epistemically privileged. Standpoint theorists aim both to understand how some perspectives become dominant, gaining their authoritative status as knowledge claims to the detriment of marginalized perspectives, and to account for the contributions made by those who work from a marginalized standpoint to resisting the partiality of what counts as authoritative knowledge.

Moreover, standpoint theory is a response to various "value free" conceptions of inquiry and objectivity. Rather briefly, defenders of value-free inquiry contend that the justification of scientific results should not be based upon non-epistemic values such as moral or political ones. Gregor Betz, for example, characterizes objections to the value-free ideal as presupposing that policy-relevant scientific findings depend upon arbitrary choices: "To arrive at (adopt and communicate) policy relevant results, scientists have to make decisions which (i) are not objectively (empirically or logically) determined and (ii) sensitively influence the results thus obtained". Betz also suggests that the value-laden approach risks undermining democratic decision-making and personal autonomy in so far as policy-relevant research would be determined by a handful of experts as opposed to "democratically legitimized institutions" (Betz, 207; 219). In Betz's view, value laden-decisions can be systematically avoided by making uncertainties explicit and articulating findings carefully (Betz, 211-218).

But to characterize the value-laden approach in this way is to ignore the widespread consensus that values, in part, constitute the aims of research. As Elizabeth Anderson notes, mainstream philosophers of science generally agree that under-determination provides a space for values to play a role with respect to theory choice. Under-determination refers to the idea that the evidence available to us at a given time may be insufficient to determine what beliefs we should hold in response to it. As such, it is not as if feminists who critique scientific practice are introducing values into value-neutral projects; scientific inquiry is already value-laden. Anderson realizes that the fact that values already shape scientific inquiry does not, in itself, determine what sort of values are permissible, however, she argues that feminist values may properly influence both scientific method and theory choice.

In defense of the inclusion of feminist values, Anderson argues that practical interests such as predicting and controlling phenomena are also important in that they help support standards for theory choice. Namely, theories not only represent facts but organize them for our use precisely because practical interests ground our support for theory choice. While this is true, practical interests are not always identical to moral values; there seems to be a disanalogy between the feminist concern to combat sexism and the practical interest in predicting and controlling various phenomena. As such, the case for a feminist approach to science is still susceptible to various objections. As noted earlier, standpoint theory, in particular is susceptible to a range of objections, but much of the criticism that has been levied against standpoint theory, however, has been dismissed as illegitimate.

2.2   Foreground

In contrast to the assumption that proper inquiry requires value-neutral methods and neutral epistemic agents, standpoint theorists maintain that those who approach inquiry from an

interested standpoint may accrue epistemic advantage in terms of understanding a subject and learning the relevant facts. Specifically, standpoint theorists tend to emphasize the importance of beginning inquiry from marginalized perspectives. In this way, standpoint theory functions as a critique of the values and norms, such as objectivity, that guide inquiry. On the standpoint theorist's account, certain kinds of diversity enrich scientific inquiry rather than hinder it. However, there has been much disagreement about the merits of standpoint theory. In particular, it is not obvious what is meant by a standpoint, in the existing literature.

Earlier work seems to suggest that "standpoints" and "perspectives" are synonymous, and much of it implies that a standpoint applies to both individuals and entire groups. In recent feminist discussion about standpoint theory, however, a distinction has been drawn between the two: whereas the former term refers to groups, the latter term refers to individuals. However, even with this distinction in mind, the roles of standpoints and perspectives in standpoint theory remain unclear. Moreover, despite recent attempts to defend standpoint theory, I argue that the theory is still susceptible to the charges of incoherence and essentialism, two of many charges that have been levied against standpoint theory since its inception. It's important to note, however, that standpoint theory has been characterized in way that unfairly makes it susceptible to various criticisms. Nonetheless, even without these mischaracterizations, I argue that standpoint theory is still genuinely susceptible to the aforementioned charges of incoherence and essentialism.

2.3   Critique of Standpoint Theory and Recent Feminist Defense

Kristen Intemann characterizes the source of opposition to standpoint theory as faulty interpretations of what she identifies as the view's two central theses: the situated knowledge thesis and the thesis of epistemic advantage. We can characterize standpoint theory as follows:

1.   The Situated Knowledge Thesis: Social location systematically influences our experiences, shaping and limiting, what we know, such that knowledge is achieved from a particular standpoint.

2.   The Thesis of Epistemic Advantage: Some standpoints, specifically the standpoints of marginalized or oppressed groups, are epistemically advantaged (at least in some contexts).

On Intemann's account, both theses have been interpreted in ways that make them obviously false. Citing Haack, Bar-On, and Hekman as culprits, Intemann notes that standpoint feminists have been charged with reinforcing gender stereotypes and falsely attributing universal shared experiences to all women and oppressed groups because the situated knowledge thesis has been interpreted as the claim that women have a distinct way of knowing from that men (Intemann, 783). Moreover, standpoint theorists have been interpreted as claiming that membership in an oppressed group is sufficient for having a less distorted view of the world insofar as the thesis of epistemic advantage has been understood as bestowing epistemic privilege automatically in this way (Intemann, 783). We can understand both claims as versions of the essentialist critique of standpoint theory. Intemann argues that both the claim that the oppressed have a distinct way of knowing and the claim that membership in an oppressed group is sufficient for having epistemic advantage are clearly false. For one thing, members of social groups are individuals and, as such, do not necessarily share the same experiences, the same cognitive capacities, the same access to educational resources and outcomes, let alone the same views about everything. Moreover, as Intemann notes, we can easily think of cases where members of oppressed groups have a less accurate view of the world because they have

internalized their own oppression or lacked certain educational resources for attaining certain kinds of relevant knowledge (Intemann, 784).

Contrary to standpoint theory's critics, Intemann argues that it is consistent with the Situated Knowledge Thesis both to appreciate the complexity and contingency of individual social identities and to highlight the ways that these social facts are relevant to assessing various beliefs and evidence. Doing the latter does not necessarily mean neglecting the former, in her view. In short, Intemann argues that Standpoint theorists are sensitive to the fact that particular social locations that currently have epistemic significance can change over time. In response to charges of essentialism, Intemann defines "standpoint" as that, which is "achieved through a critical, conscious reflection on the ways in which power structure and resulting social locations influence knowledge production" (Intemann, 785). Citing Harding and Wylie, Intemann argues that standpoints do not automatically arise from social locations but rather result from scrutiny into how power structures shape knowledge in a particular context (Intemann, 785). In this way, standpoints do not involve a predetermined universally shared perspective of all members within a particular social group. Instead, standpoint theorists understand individuals as contributing to the achievement of a standpoint within an epistemic community. Specifically, Intemann emphasizes that communities rather than individuals achieve standpoints (Intemann, 786).

To be clear, Intemann defines the situated knowledge thesis as the claim that knowledge is achieved by epistemic communities whose members share a normative commitment to the aims of inquiry, resulting from critical investigation into how their individual experiences, in light of their social location, bear upon the essentials of scientific practice (Intemann, 787). This includes the formulation of research questions, the selection of methodologies, and the evaluation of background assumptions among other things (Intemann, 787). Standpoint theory

explicitly aims to understand and undermine social practices that perpetuate oppression, and to that end, Intemann argues that the inclusion of members of marginalized groups has the potential of increasing epistemic advantage within an epistemic community in that such individuals may be better able to reveal limitations with research questions, models and methodologies given that, "homogenous epistemic communities may be unknowingly insulated from criticism that could otherwise arise from individuals with different relevant experiences and evidence" (Intemann, 788). Intemann stresses that the epistemic advantage thesis applies to entire epistemic communities and not individuals (Intemann, 789). However, there still seems to be some tension between this last point and Intemann's original framing of the epistemic advantage thesis.

The claim that a standpoint represents a group rather than an individual is supposed to undercut the claims that group membership is sufficient to having epistemic advantage and that the oppressed have a distinct way of knowing, thereby resisting the charge of essentialism; however, Intemann's redefinition of standpoint is in tension with her rendering of the thesis of epistemic advantage. On the one hand, Intemann defines the situated knowledge thesis as the claim that knowledge is achieved by epistemic communities whose members share a normative commitment to the aims of inquiry, resulting from critical investigation into how their individual experiences, in light of their social location, bear upon the essentials of scientific practice: we are told that this includes the formulation of research questions, the selection of methodologies, and the evaluation of background assumptions among other things (Intemann, 787). On the other hand, Intemann also defines the thesis of epistemic advantage as the claim that, "[s]ome standpoints, specifically the standpoints of marginalized or oppressed groups, are epistemically advantaged (at least in some contexts)" (Wylie, 28). The latter rendition of the epistemic advantage thesis, suggests that there is something that unites the individuals in a marginalized

group such that they sometimes are epistemically superior in certain contexts. Given Intemann's account, it remains unclear how a group comes to achieve a normative commitment to inquiry. For one thing, if we have an account of groups having normative commitments, we should also draw a distinction between the individuals who make up the group and the group itself, and, with this distinction, there needs to be an account of the relationship between groups and individual perspectives, if groups are defined as having normative commitments. After all, it's not hard to imagine that the individual differences within a group could run into tension with the group's normative commitments.

Kristina Rolin, in fact, suggests a distinction between socially grounded perspectives and standpoints but does not provide much detail. As Rolin notes, it is unclear what is meant by a perspective in feminist standpoint epistemology. According to Rolin, a socially grounded perspective is not merely a view from a social position but is rather, "a matter of doing research with certain moral and social values" (Rolin, 127). Rolin goes on to say that a socially grounded perspective is "something that an individual can achieve in her inquiry", but she does not provide an account of how an individual can do precisely just that (Rolin, 127). Surely, we can imagine that a person has certain values as a result of her social position, but several questions remain. For one thing, what values ought to be achieved, on Rolin's account? Moreover, is there a difference in kind between the values that are achieved and the values one already has prior to inquiry? And, how does one achieve these particular values when conducting research?

2.4   The Bias Paradox and the Contextualist Intervention

One route toward answering these questions while resisting the charges of essentialism and incoherence has been the identification of what has been referred to as standpoint theory's "bias paradox". On Kristina Rolin's account, the bias paradox arises because of the tension

between both of its claims: the thesis of epistemic advantage and the situated knowledge thesis. Whereas the thesis of epistemic advantage claims that underprivileged socially situated perspectives are less distorted than more privileged ones, the situated knowledge thesis asserts that all perspectives are socially situated. However, insofar as the former claim suggests that there is some impartial standard by which it is possible to adjudicate among various social perspectives, the latter claim is undermined and vice versa. As such, we cannot be committed to both claims without contradiction if both claims are true. If they're contradictory, both claims can't be true. However, Rolin argues that the bias paradox becomes a live problem only insofar as the theory in its earlier articulations presupposes a foundationalist theory of justification. To remedy this, Rolin argues that we can elide the bias paradox by adopting contextualism. In Rolin's view, a contextualist theory of justification allows one to assess the relative merits of a socially grounded perspective, without evoking the image of the "view from nowhere".

In epistemology, contextualism is the view that knowledge attributions depend upon the context in which they are uttered. Simply put, knowledge is context-dependent. As David Hunter notes, contextualists disagree about which contextual factors matter in terms of ascribing knowledge (Hunter, 105). Keith De Rose, for example, claims that what varies in every context are the epistemic standards that a statement S must either meet or fail to meet in order for that statement to be deemed true or false. In Robin McKenna's view, facts about the relevant alternatives and possibilities that those in a certain context ought to consider play a central role in determining the epistemic value of knowledge ascriptions (McKenna, 102). Despite these and other differences, contextualists generally agree that facts about the psychology of the knower and the "conversational-practical situation" influence the truth values of uttered statements.

Under a contextualist theory of justification, the legitimacy of including moral values becomes more explicit, in Rolin's view. According to Rolin, a contextualist theory of justification maintains that epistemic justification occurs within a context of assumptions that function as default entitlements (Rolin, 128). That is, an entitlement to one's preferences is the default position when one engages in inquiry, but one has a duty to defend or revise one's beliefs as soon as it challenged with appropriate arguments. Moreover, the person who challenges a default entitlement has the burden of proof.

2.5   Standpoint Theory's Essentialism

However, even with Rolin's adoption of a contextualist theory of justification, it remains unclear how standpoint theory achieves coherence or how it even accomplishes its aims. Despite some ambivalence about the value of a standpoint to feminist theory and practice, Rolin, nonetheless, retains the concept in her account, and this, I argue, is counterproductive to her revisionist account of standpoint.

First, (1) if Intemann and Rolin are right, even if standpoints are achieved and not predetermined, the concept still refers to a static view that a group ought to achieve. Indeed, (2) a standpoint places a normative requirement on the members of a relevant social group to achieve a concrete uniform view, in their view. So, (3) the standpoint becomes identified with a social group. (4) If, on their account, a standpoint makes it possible to adjudicate among various socially-situated views, then group membership is sufficient to having epistemic advantage. If (5) is true, then (6) the claim about group membership implies context-independence, which is contrary to the Situated Knowledge Thesis, that all knowledge is situated. So, (7) if group membership is, in fact, sufficient to having epistemic advantage, then standpoint theory is rendered incoherent, since this claim runs into tension with the Situated Knowledge Thesis.

Moreover, if (7) is true, then (8) we create a gulf between those who speak on behalf of the marginalized, and the marginalized themselves, since to create a standpoint is to abstract individual differences within groups, which may turn out to be those of underrepresented groups. And, if (8) is true, then (9) standpoint theory potentially reifies social hierarchy, contrary to its aims. The salient problem here is that standpoint theory is susceptible to marginalizing perspectives, the very problem against which the theory was developed. It seems, as such, that the priority of emphasizing the achievement of standpoint is, at best misguided.

In sum, standpoint theory, as a research program, is still essentialist despite the efforts of Intemann and Rolin in that it reifies the fuzzy notion of a standpoint by emphasizing the need to achieve it, presumably in every instance of feminist research and inquiry, but to the detriment of discovering a variety of results consistent with feminist aims. The emphasis upon achieving the standpoint seems to constrain the fruitfulness and range of feminist research that is intended to take social facts such as race, gender, and class, into account whenever feminist inquirers aim to identify and resist the oppression and suppression of minority perspectives. And in my view, feminist research should be open, at the very least, to a pluralism of methodologies given the sheer variety of ways in which social facts intertwine, and that when we take these phenomena into account, we are often led to judgments that contradict mainstream and dominant perspectives as exemplified in the work of black feminists.

Feminist women of color have advanced discussions about gender oppression, precisely because they have taken note of their individual differences from mainstream feminist discussion. When it comes to inquiry into social phenomena, it is crucial to identify the perspectival context, which includes the interests, beliefs, and the situation of the researcher and

her relationship to her subjects, referencing any standpoint. To quote legal theorist, Angel P. Harris:

It is a premise of this article that we are not born with a "self", but rather are composed of a welter of partial, sometimes contradictory, or even antithetical "selves." A unified identity, if such can ever exist, is a product of will, not a common destiny or natural birthright. Thus, consciousness is "never fixed, never attained once and for all"; it is not a final outcome or a biological given, but a process, a constant contradictory sate of becoming, in which both social institutions and individual wills are deeply implicated.

We can interpret Harris' account of the multiple and contradictory self in a perspectivist framework. One way of explaining Harris' claim is that, who you are and who you are deemed to be is always context-dependent. The ways in which we are treated is not dependent on some static identity but rather how on contingent facts such as how we are perceived, as individuals, in any context and our actual and perceived relationships to ever changing social institutions and ideas, among other things. Another way of interpreting Harris account of the self, is that she is highlighting the importance of recognizing the intersections of our social identities as such instead considering these identities as analyzable as separate entities that can added together; after all, human beings are not fragmentary in that kind of way (Harris, 588). As Kimberle Crenshaw has highlighted, it is the intersection of our identities that are meaningful when doing feminist and anti-racist work. An intersectional framework allows us to appreciate the complex ways men and women stand to each other in social hierarchy. An intersectional framework allows us to appreciate, for example, that some men are, in fact, oppressed because of the way their social status as men intersects with their other identities such as being black or being gay.

And of course, an intersectional approach allows us to appreciate the contexts where black men and gay men do, in fact, stand in oppressive relations to other demographics, respectively.

In some contexts, race, for example, is a relevant difference when assessing women's exploitation and oppression in the labor force. Patricia Hill-Collins' discussion about the insider-outsider status of black domestic workers provides a powerful example:

Countless numbers of Black women have ridden buses to their white "families," where they not only cooked, cleaned, and executed other domestic duties, but where they also nurtured their "other children", shrewdly offered guidance to their employers, and frequently, became honorary members of their white "families." These women have seen white elites, both actual and aspiring, from perspectives largely obscured from their Black spouses and from these groups themselves. On one level, this "insider" relationship has been satisfying to all involved. The memoirs of affluent whites often mention their love for their Black "mothers", while accounts of Black domestic workers stress the sense of self-affirmation they experienced at seeing white power demystified—of knowing that it was not the intellect, talent, or humanity of their employers that supported their superior status, but largely just the advantages of racism. But on another level, these same Black women knew they could never belong to their white "families." In spite of their involvement, they remained "outsiders".

The case of black domestic workers is one example of the ways in which white women stand in oppressive relationships to black women, whose housework and childrearing goes largely unrecognized in larger society. As Hill-Collins demonstrates with this example, white American women were, historically, complicit with the heteropatriarchy that oppressed them by placing the conventionally-feminine duties of housework and childrearing that they were

assigned on the backs of black women, who originally were not even compensated for the task,

let alone considered human de jure and de facto. Given the intersection of structural white racism

and gender hierarchy, black female bodies have been seen, in many ways, as more accessible and

controllable than their white female counterparts. With this context in mind, one might even

wonder whether black women face sexual harassment in the workplace to same degree as white

women, in contemporary American society. To answer this new question, it is not sufficient to

refer to a "woman's standpoint" that leaves out the individual differences among them.

2.6   A Brief Perspectivist Proposal

In response to this problem, I propose the adoption of a framework that prioritizes

perspectives in order to combat the very sort of marginalization, to which standpoint theorists

have drawn our attention. Namely, I propose to adopt Nietzsche's perspectivism as a corrective

to this weakness in standpoint theory. As already noted in the introduction to this thesis, it seems

odd, prima facie, to turn to Nietzsche as a resource for feminists, but his perspectivism shares

with standpoint theory a fervent opposition to the myth of "value-free" modes of inquiry and the

values that perpetuate such myths, and Nietzsche's perspectivist framework, as such, is

promising to feminists regardless of the content of Nietzsche's own values and attitudes.

3   A CONTEXTUALIST READING OF NIETZSCHE'S PERSPECTIVISM

3.1   Introduction

Many Nietzsche commentators interpret Nietzsche's perspectivism as a theory of truth. For them, Nietzsche's claim that all knowledge is perspectival is intended to be true unconditionally. If they are right, however, we are left with what Welshon has called the 'paradox of perspectivism'. Simply stated, the claim that it is not the case that there is at least one statement that is absolutely true across all perspectives can only be absolutist, and is, as such, incompatible with perspectivism's claim that all claims are perspectivally true, thereby rendering perspectivism incoherent. In light of Nietzsche's proposal within GM III, 12 for a future objectivity, I recommend that we turn to theories of justification as opposed to theories of truth in order to better understand Nietzsche's perspectivism. Specifically, I contend that a contextualist theory of justification can do just this while overcoming the alleged paradox of perspectivism. Contrary to Welshon, I do not ascribe this theory to Nietzsche, as he does, but rather claim that contextualism is fruitful for understanding Nietzsche's methodology in The Genealogy. In short, I argue for a contextualist reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism, but, importantly, this interpretation is crucial for outlining a model of analysis that is able to serve as a corrective to standpoint theory's incoherence.

In this chapter, I argue for a contextualist reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism. In what follows, I (3. 2) explain the concept of perspectivism as it appears in GM III: 12 , and (3.3) I define and elaborate upon the paradox of perspectivism. At the same time, I also explain how the paradox can be avoided. To that end, I (3. 4) introduce and explain what contextualism is, and I clarify why adopting a contextualist theory of justification is superior as a means of reading Nietzsche's perspectivism. Finally, I (3.5) propose a contextualist interpretation of Nietzsche's

critical analyses in which I demonstrate that Nietzsche's prima facie contradictory preferences and claims can, in fact, be reliably justified within a contextualist framework of interpretation.

3.2   What is Perspectivism?

We can understand perspectivism in two important ways. It is as much a view about the conditions of knowledge as it is a view about what it takes to be objective. To the first point, what is labeled as Nietzsche's perspectivism is the view that it is a condition of knowledge that knowers apprehend the world from the "outlook", if you will, of their particular needs and interests. Moreover, Nietzsche sketches this view about knowledge against the "god's eye view" conceptions of knowledge, the sort of ideals that guide aspirations to conducting "value-free" inquiry. Relatedly, to the second point, Nietzsche offers his perspectivism as a corrective to this view about the objectivity of "disinterested" standpoints:

> Henceforth, my dear philosophers let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject"…There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this—what would that mean but to castrate the intellect? (GM III, 12)

Of course, there is no single interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivism that his commentators agree upon, and many of these interpretations are incompatible with each other. Addressing all of these various interpretations is beyond the scope of this chapter, and it is not fruitful for the task that I am about to lay out. Put simply, against the many Nietzsche

commentators, who interpret Nietzsche's perspectivism as a theory of truth, I recommend that

we treat Nietzsche's perspectivism as an approach that is more fruitfully thought of as a

contextualist theory of justification rather than as a theory of truth in order to avoid the alleged

paradox of perspectivism.

3.3   The Paradox of Perspectivism

If perspectivism were a theory about truth, then there would be at least one statement that

would be true across all perspectives, according to which, it would not be the case that there

were at least one statement that was absolutely true across all perspectives. The paradox of

perspectivism arises since this claim can only be absolutist, and is, as such, incompatible with

perspectivism's claim that all claims are only perspectivally true. However, the question remains

whether Nietzsche, in fact, is committed to the claim that, "it is not the case that there is at least

one statement that is true across all perspectives". Indeed, Welshon maintains that Nietzsche's

perspectivism is, in fact, a view about truth, and that the paradox of perspectivism is a real

problem for Nietzsche.

I contend, however, that the paradox of perspectivism becomes a live problem for

Nietzsche only if we assume that Nietzsche had a robust theory about truth. Specifically, if we

accept Welshon's claim that perspectivism denies the possibility of a statement that is true across

all perspectives, perspectivism is rendered incoherent because it succumbs to the paradox. But,

this claim blatantly runs counter to Nietzsche's overwhelming opposition to dogmatism. Indeed,

the idea that Nietzsche rejects the possibility of such a perspective amounts to another version of

the mythic "god's eye view" for which he reproves philosophers: the view from everywhere,

which is just as dogmatic and psychologically impossible for us as the view from nowhere. If

Nietzsche's perspective metaphor is meant to undermine ascetic aspirations for knowledge in the

ways noted above (and it is), then it also undercuts any metaphysical reading that has been assigned to it. Furthermore, if we understand Nietzsche's perspectivist metaphor as expressing a view about justification rather than truth, the possibility that there could be an absolute trans-perspectivally true statement is consistent with perspectivism's basic tenet that all perspectives are situated.

To be sure, even though Nietzsche rejects the ascetic objectivist's goal of determining the truth about the way things are, as they really are independently of any human perspective, it is not immediately clear what the end of enriching our knowledge in the ways that Nietzsche suggests is possible is. One might think that the goal is to complete our knowledge, in part, by incorporating every perspective. However, as Jessica Berry highlights, following Nietzsche's visual metaphor, "there will be an upper limit to the number of perspectives I can enjoy on any one object, owing simply to my own finitude" (Berry, 25). This is in direct contrast to the ascetic portrait of knowledge that suggests that complete knowledge is both desirable and achievable. On the picture Nietzsche provides us, our scientific inquiry and our resulting knowledge remain incomplete. In this way, the scope of human endeavor with respect to what is possible to apprehend is significantly deflated: namely, it does not make any sense to attempt to determine the truth about the way things are, independently of any human standpoint, and as such, it seems inappropriate to saddle Nietzsche with any robust metaphysical claims about truth and reality. To say, for example, 'Nietzsche holds that there is no truth' is to present Nietzsche as having a final say about a topic that is beyond the scope of what is humanly possible on Nietzsche's own terms.

However, with all this said, it remains unclear how we can make sense of the positive claims that Nietzsche actually makes. Indeed, Nietzsche regards the philosopher's myopic pursuit of truth, as an absolute value, as an "error" (GM III, 12), but we might wonder upon what

grounds is Nietzsche justified in rendering such a judgment. As Lanier Anderson notes, there have been charges that perspectivism is a version of wholesale relativism such that it is not immediately clear how Nietzsche is able to offer any principled reasons to support his views about perspective when we consider what those views entail . As stated earlier, Nietzsche suggests that our knowledge claims do not capture the way things are in the world but rather the way those things appear to us within a certain perspective (GM III, 12). If Nietzsche is consistent, he must understand his own views about perspective as limited by a particular perspective such that he is committed to understanding his perspectivism as a point of view among others. Indeed, Nietzsche says of the philosopher that "… "being conscious" is not in any decisive sense the opposite of what is instinctive: most of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided and forced into certain channels by his instincts". As a defense, Nietzsche cannot claim that his views represent the way things actually are in the world without contradiction. For those who claim that perspectivism amounts to wholesale relativism, perspectivism undermines any reasons that could possibly justify it. The question remains whether Nietzsche is able to offer principled epistemic grounds for preferring his view over others. If no such epistemic grounds are possible, Nietzsche's preferences are rendered purely arbitrary or crassly relativistic.

However, I argue that Nietzsche's positive claims are the result of a contextualist method of justification, and this contextualist reading shows that Nietzsche's preferences are neither wholly arbitrary nor self-undermining. In what follows, I provide a brief outline of what the contextualist approach to knowledge looks like, and I offer evidence for this contextualist interpretation of Nietzsche's work in the Genealogy.

3.4   The Contextualist Evaluation of Knowledge

As Rysiew notes, contextualism is a radical departure from traditional ways of thinking about epistemic issues, according to which the conditions or standards for knowing are insensitive to facts about the conservational partners, their interests and preferences, the conversational situation, and so forth (Rysiew, 2). Indeed, contextualism was historically a response to the problem of skepticism. In the words of David Lewis, knowledge seems elusive at times: "For no sooner do we engage in epistemology— the systematic philosophical examination of knowledge—than we meet a compelling [skeptical] argument that we know next to nothing".

In response to the skeptic's challenge, the contextualist offers that once we define the parameters of the conversation, we actually find out that we know a lot. For example, when I ask my roommate whether or not the dishes are clean, he knows that I am not referring to all the dishes that have ever existed but rather the dishes in the sink; and when he tells me that they are, in fact, clean, I am in a position to verify his claim. In a philosophy classroom, I might doubt the existence of this table I see before me, but at Thanksgiving dinner I know exactly where the table is. And, I might not know what it is to conceive of what justice might be in itself, but I do know, in fact, that the arbitrary enforcement of punitive rules is an injustice given our standard of equal treatment under the law. In a similar way, I believe that Nietzsche's positive beliefs and claims are the result of his defining the conversational context in such a way that creates and identifies the standards according to which Nietzsche judges his adversaries. Here, it is helpful to focus on Nietzsche's critique of philosophers.

3.5   Perspectivism's Contextualism

Crucially, Nietzsche's critique of philosophers is rooted in his interest in what is conducive to healthy living rather than the truth as such. It is important to note that Nietzsche's

discussion about philosophers arises during his explanation, and subsequent criticism, of ascetism. Briefly, ascetism means different things for differently constituted humans such as artists, priests, and intellectuals. Moreover, the pursuit of the ascetic ideal leads to a certain sickness that manifests itself differently in different contexts, different people and different spheres of life on Nietzsche's account. Even though there is a plurality of forms of ascetism, Nietzsche identifies one common denominator: that the ascetic ideal is harmful to human beings in general in that its pursuit betrays an unhealthy tendency toward self-hatred and an absurd contempt for life itself. As Jessica Berry notes, Nietzsche characterizes the sickness of the ascetic intellectual as an unhealthy obsession with objectivity understood as disinterested contemplation (Berry, 21). The goal of striving toward disinterested contemplation is sick and perverse on Nietzsche's account insofar as Nietzsche understands all inquiry as conditioned by the affects and interests that constitute all who could even think of engaging in inquiry. On Nietzsche's account, human organisms do not experience the world in terms of what might be called "brute facts" in themselves but rather interpret the world. Affects and drives always shape experience insofar as they predispose an agent take certain features of her environment and all therein as more salient than others.

Simply put, to desire something like "pure reason" and "disinterested contemplation" is not only to merely desire the impossible but to express the unhealthy wish to eradicate oneself, on Nietzsche's account. Specifically, it is as if the ascetic intellectual wishes to flee his own body in order to engage in a peculiarly human life-activity. In Nietzsche's view, the idealization of a concept such as objectivity as disinterested contemplation betrays a historic and systemic denial on the part of western philosophers that life itself is the source of all human activities, all human aspirations, and all human values. Moreover, by presenting their values and experiences of the

world as absolute, the adherents of the ascetic ideal render other values and ways of life as marginal:

The ascetic ideal has a goal---this goal is so universal that all the other interests of human existence seem, when compared with it, petty and narrow; it interprets epochs, nations, and men inexorably with a view to this goal; it permits no other interpretation, no other goal; it rejects, denies, affirms, and sanctions solely from the point of view of its interpretation…it submits to no other power, it believes in its own predominance over every other power, in its absolute superiority of rank over every other power—it believes that no other power exists on earth that does not first have to receive a meaning, a right to exist, a value, as a tool of the ascetic ideal, as a way and means to its goal, to one goal (GM III, 23).

To the contrary, context matters when Nietzsche assesses the value of objectivity where context refers, in part, to Nietzsche's interests, hence his focus on "our future objectivity":

But precisely because we seek knowledge, let us not be ungrateful to such resolute reversals of accustomed perspectives…to see differently in this way for once, to want to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future "objectivity"—the latter understood not as "contemplation without interest" (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability to control one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge (GM III, 12)

Specifically, Nietzsche highlights the necessity of employing a variety of perspectives as a corrective to traditional philosophical inquiry. In this way, Nietzsche provides us with a brief outline of what genuine objectivity looks like: an aggregation of perspectives. Since perspectives are limited and variable, different perspectives reveal different aspects of things, and an aggregation of them will provide a more complete "view" of the world, in principle. Lanier Anderson, for example, explains that exploring other perspectives without succumbing to a dogmatic attitude thereby offers us the chance to generate a better understanding of the world insofar as we enable ourselves to account for the things obscured by the particular perspective we inhabit (Anderson, 18). However, it is unclear how such a task is achievable given the ways in which our various points of view are circumscribed by our drives and affects. Nietzsche does not provide us with an outline for achieving this task, but this is not important for the subject of this chapter. The crucial question is on what grounds is Nietzsche entitled to proffer this perspectivist thesis over the god's eye view", given what his perspectivism entails.

One helpful route toward answering this question is to consider Nietzsche's comments about the nature of science. Specifically, Nietzsche claims that science, like inquiry in general, rests upon assumptions:

Probably this is so; only we still have to ask: To make it possible for this discipline to begin, must there not be some prior conviction—even one that is so commanding and unconditional that it sacrifices all other convictions to itself? We see that science also rests on a faith; there simply is no science "without presuppositions." The question whether truth is needed must not only have been affirmed in advance, but affirmed to such a degree that the principle, the faith, the conviction finds expression: "Nothing is needed more than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value."

Simply stated, our interests imbue all of our projects with value. Science is held as valuable as a means of pursuing truth because of the prior conviction about the value of having truth in the first place. This alone, of course, does not vindicate science as a superior means to truth over others. And by analogy, Nietzsche's convictions about the value of perspective does not demonstrate that his perspectivism is superior as a route to knowledge than other routes. However, as explained earlier, it is our interests that create the standards by which we adjudicate relevant methods and values. Nietzsche is entitled to his perspectivism as a means to obtaining knowledge insofar as it satisfies his goal of appreciating what he defines as a "perspective", and it is this interest from which Nietzsche derives the standard against which he assesses the value of "disinterested" objectivities. For example, Nietzsche suggests that Kant's concept of the "intelligible character of things" is incoherent on the grounds that for Kant, "things are so constituted that the intellect comprehends just enough of them to know that for the intellect they are—utterly incomprehensible" (GM III, 12). We can never have knowledge about the way things are, in Kant's view, because for Kant, knowers lack a "god's eye view". Given Kant's account, Nietzsche justifiably dismisses it as lacking the conceptual resources to offer a coherent account of our experiences according to the epistemic standards derived from Nietzsche's interest in "perspectives".

It's important to note, however, that Nietzsche's assessment about Kant's account of knowledge does not, in fact, prove that Kant is absolutely wrong. Just as in the case of the skeptic who denies the possibility of knowledge given the Dream Argument, there could be a context in which Kant's claim about knowledge is, in fact, justified. Nietzsche claims that Kant's account is incoherent because of the way he interprets the central claims of Kant's account;

namely that, it seems Kant believes we lack knowledge of things in themselves while apparently

holding, at the same time, that we know that these same things do, in fact, exist. It is, of course,

incoherent to claim that a thing exists and that that same thing is unintelligible; both claims

cannot be true. But this is not the only interpretation that is available to us. We might be able to

save Kant's from the incoherence charge levied against him if we treat Kant's account as

primarily epistemological rather than metaphysical. Specifically, we need not interpret Kant's

concept of the thing of itself as part of a robust metaphysical proof once we grasp Kant's

methodology in the Critique of Pure Reason.

It is crucial to understand that Kant aims to provide us with a philosophical

justification for the things we already know. By way of example, Kant is not attempting to prove

that we know mathematics in the Critique of Pure Reason. Instead, he wants to explain how it

could be that we do know things about mathematics. In the same way, Kant attempts to

philosophically vindicate synthetic a priori judgments, which are neither analytically confirmable

like mathematical equations nor do they seem to be informed by our experiences. These

synthetic a priori judgments appear to ground our understanding and experience of the world,

and it is Kant's aim to make sense of how such phenomena could be possible for us given what

we already know or assume to be true (Kant A50/B51). In other words, given the recognition

that we lack agency over some of our experiences, as is the case with a priori synthetic

judgments, it makes sense to infer that these experiences must be determined in some way by an

external source, which is to only say that they are given to us by something else (Kant A26/B42).

With this in mind, I propose the following amendments to Nietzsche's portrayal of Kant's

premises:

C1: We experience involuntary phenomena.

C2: Something else is responsible for our involuntary experiences.

C3: We know that things in themselves exist.

C4: We know that things in themselves somehow determine our involuntary phenomena.

C5: We cannot know anything about the things in themselves other than that they exist   and that they somehow determine our involuntary phenomena.

The reasoning behind C3 and C4 is clear given Kant's methodology; he must have a way to explain involuntary phenomena, and this is it. Rather than interpreting C5 as a strident metaphysical claim about the way the world is, it is more fruitful to view it as simply suggesting that the role the things in themselves play in his system is only as an explanation for how 'given' phenomena are possible. Of course, to say anything else about this explanation would be going beyond our epistemic limits, and there is no basis upon which to make any such claims, on Kant's account.

Contrary to Nietzsche, we can understand Kant as claiming not that knowledge is impossible, but rather as arguing that we have reason to be suspicious of any strident claim about our capacity to know the world absolutely given certain presuppositions that seem unavoidable when we reflect on what we actually know or believe to be true. Of course, with the qualifications I've just outlined, Kant would have to revise his claim and say it is possible that human beings cannot know objects given everything else he has presented to us. With that said, someone might be tempted to object that Kant is operating on unfounded assumptions, but this response ignores Nietzsche's insight that all inquiry begins with presuppositions.

It is possible to appreciate both Kant's and Nietzsche's accounts of knowledge, once we realize that they are focusing upon different aspects of the human experience. Whereas Kant aims to provide an explanation for a certain feature of experience that humans generally share, Nietzsche, in contrast, emphasizes the differences among human individuals, within human individuals, and among various human groups. With this in mind, it is not at all obvious that we can rank-order both thinkers' accounts in absolute terms given the substantive difference in scope and focus between the two accounts. It could very well be that this substantial contrast between the two leads either thinker to very different initial assumptions. It seems natural to appeal to something like a "thing in itself" given Kant's more general focus, whereas the same appeal isn't obviously evident to Nietzsche who has an interest in appreciating fine-grain differences. It is understandable why Nietzsche would take for granted many of the things that Kant does not precisely because the two are involved in very different projects that nonetheless provide us with two critical standpoints about the human experience. So rather than dismissing one account or another outright, we can appreciate the insights of both without contradiction, and doing this improves our knowledge on the whole, which is the consequence of taking Nietzsche's perspectivism seriously, in my view.

Again, the fact that I am able to justify both Kant's and Nietzsche's accounts of knowledge does not mean that I am arguing for unreflective relativism. It is not that we lack a means of adjudicating between both accounts, but rather that multiple prima facie incompatible accounts can be justified once we identify the relevant contexts. By analogy, the contextualist does not need to appeal to an absolute standard of knowledge in order to reject the skeptic's account. Indeed, it is sufficient for the contextualist to identify the context-specific standards and goals according which his own assessments are justified. And with this in mind, it is not

inconsistent, for example, to regard both the claim that the contextualist knows his roommate washed the dishes and the skeptic's claim that he does not know that his roommate washed the dishes as justified. Rather, it's just that the contextualist's standards for knowledge ascriptions do not count as sufficient for knowledge in the skeptic's context, and, alternatively, that the skeptic's standards for knowledge ascriptions are too demanding in the contextualist's context. Moreover, the fact that we are able to justify both accounts does not mean that we are thereby unable to compare the two. For example, the skeptic is just wrong to claim his belief that knowledge is impossible is a universally descriptive one because, as a matter of fact, we can clearly show that different contexts demand different standards for knowing. However, the judgment I've just rendered does not show that we, in fact, ought to recognize different standards for knowing. Again, one might be tempted to object that there is no theory-independent way of choosing between either account of knowledge, but this objection ignores that the neither the contextualist nor Nietzsche are interested in providing a theory independent account of knowledge.

Overall, taking account of the context dependence of Nietzsche's claims saves him from charges of incoherence. Moreover, Nietzsche's rejection of certain forms of ascetism becomes less ambitious under this reading than if his central critique of them were about their truth-conduciveness. That is, I am often able to assess the epistemic merit of another perspective by referring to my own epistemic standards insofar we share those standards. In this way, it is plausible to prefer one perspective over another for epistemic reasons without appealing to the kind of foundationally innocent, epistemically pure vantage point that Nietzsche rails against. Moreover, it possible to appreciate a plurality of prima facie incompatible perspectives. Both

insights are crucial for the case that perspectivism offers contemporary standpoint theorists a

corrective that has yet to be articulated in recent defenses of standpoint theory.

4   A FEMINIST CASE FOR PERSPECTIVISM

4.1   Introduction

Though I argue, in this chapter, that perspectivism is better able than standpoint theory to overcome the essentialist critique that has been levied against it, it is important to note, however, that I do not, in fact, dismiss the concept of a "standpoint", outright. In fact, I will show that Nietzsche's perspectivism does, in fact, provide room for understanding and analyzing standpoints; nonetheless, on my account, the standpoints are always in relation to the relevant perspectival context, the focus of my contextualist-perspectivist proposal. In this way, Nietzsche's perspectivism, I argue, provides a framework that salvages the best of what standpoint theory has to offer without succumbing to its faults, which I will elucidate in this chapter.

To sum up, my proposal for a contextualist-perspectivist framework recovers the individual perspective that is so easily obscured when we emphasize the standpoints of groups in feminist analysis. Rather than reading my project as a rejecting of the concept of a "standpoint", it is more apt to see it as decentralizing the concept in order to make room for highlighting individual differences, which is an important task in any commitment to social justice. In so doing, my proposal, moreover, resists the threat of dogmatism, which is, I argue, the main target of Nietzsche's perspectivism. Ultimately, this proposal aims to safeguard against counter-productive exclusionary practices in feminist inquiry.

Unfortunately, for our purposes, though Nietzsche presents his perspectivism as a corrective to conventional understandings of knowledge and inquiry, he does not provide us with a method for utilizing perspectivism. The central task of this chapter is to demonstrate how feminists can use perspectivism as a corrective to standpoint theory's faults.

In what follows, I (4.2) frame Nietzsche's discussion about perspective within a concern for retaining some notion of objectivity. Although standpoint theory has also been offered as a corrective to the concepts and practices regarding conventional understandings of objectivity, I (4.3) demonstrate how standpoint theory, nevertheless, succumbs to the aforementioned essentialist critique in spite of recent attempts to reform the theory by first offering an interpretation of Nietzsche's "future objectivity" that in turn highlights the potential dogmatism of standpoint theory, as it stands. In response to this challenge, I (4.4) make the case that perspectivism retains the best of standpoint theory without jettisoning the concept of a standpoint; and, moreover, I show how my perspectivist proposal overcomes the charge of essentialism but, nevertheless, achieves objectivity.

4.2   Objectivity

Insofar as Nietzsche and feminist philosophers share a concern about objectivity, it is important to first get clear about what I mean about objectivity before I propose Nietzsche's perspectivism as an alternative to both stand point theory and value free conceptions of inquiry. Briefly, objectivity is usually expressed in terms of spatial metaphors of distancing oneself from something like a perspective. To be objective is to stand back from our perceptions, beliefs and opinions and subject all of these to scrutiny of some sort. As Stephen Gaukroger notes, objectivity requires a degree of indifference. Put simply, we desire objectivity, in part, so that we can justifiably rank-order knowledge claims. Feminists certainly do not believe their claims and those of sexists, for example, are epistemically equal, and neither does Nietzsche with respect to his adversaries. But if we want to adjudicate among knowledge-claims, it is not sufficient to regard all claims as merely expressing preferences that would be wrongly evaluated in terms of being either right or wrong.

What is more, to understand all knowledge claims as preferences at bottom is to misrepresent the ways in which we actually treat knowledge claims when we converse with each other. Consider, for example, that in cases of disagreement, we observe that we sometimes alter our opinions in view of another perspective. That is to say, we change our opinions about an issue because we acknowledge we were wrong initially, and making this assessment requires us to appeal to reasons independent of our fundamental preferences, which are often the result of our upbringing, culture, and personal interactions among other things. If we lack these independent reasons for choosing any view, then epistemically speaking, the views of an anti-racist, for example, are just as good as those of a member of the KKK.

To understand our various knowledge claims as mere preference, as some critics of standpoint theory do, is to remove any rational means by which either of the aforementioned characters might eventually change his opinion, and, as such, there is no clear way of adjudicating between either perspective, on this picture. In my example sketched above, we would only have recourse to our given preferences. Not only does such a world view deprive both feminist projects and Nietzsche's critiques of legitimacy, but it denies the possibility of disagreement, in particular. In short, it would be impossible to evaluate any perspective as 'reasonable', 'unsound', or as any other epistemic value-laden adjective, and this is not the case in actual conversation, at least descriptively: I will make the normative case later, of course. We must be able to adjudicate among knowledge claims and perspectives on principled grounds in order for disagreement to be possible. To do this, we need a coherent account of objectivity.

Given my generic account of objectivity earlier, one might think that objectivity requires the elimination of all perspectives, but distancing oneself from a specific perspective does not necessarily mean the elimination of perspectives altogether. One might plausibly consider our

received vantage point from another perspective in order to achieve some degree of the critical distance that objectivity requires. But it is not obvious how we should go about switching perspectives or even whether switching perspectives will achieve what we demand from objectivity. In fact, it is unclear how we go about adjudicating between the two accounts of objectivity I just offered. Of course, this shows that the concept of objectivity is neither clear nor straightforward. As Gaukroger notes, different understandings of the term "objective" generate different expectations that are not entirely independent of one another, which is to say, crucially, that the form that objectivity takes is dependent upon specific goals and specific domains (Gaukroger, 3-4). This last point dovetails with Nietzsche's discussion about perspective, which arises within his critique of the traditional philosophical pursuit of knowledge.

4.3   Perspectivism

As I've stated in Chapter 2, context matters when Nietzsche assesses the value of objectivity where context refers, in part, to Nietzsche's interests, hence his focus on "our future objectivity"

But precisely because we seek knowledge, let us not be ungrateful to such resolute reversals of accustomed perspectives…to see differently in this way for once, to want to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future "objectivity"—the latter understood not as "contemplation without interest" (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability to control one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge (GM III, 12)

Although it is unclear, I admit, how Nietzsche's proposal for a "future objectivity" is achievable given the ways in which our various points of view are circumscribed by our drives and affects, on Nietzsche's account, what is far more important, in my view however, is the task of unpacking the significance of Nietzsche's proposal, in principle. In short, I argue that Nietzsche's perspectivism is not merely a proposal against value-free inquiry, but rather, more fully, a prescription against the threat of dogmatism to what he deems genuine and fruitful inquiry.

Central to Nietzsche's perspectivism is what he describes as, "…the ability to control one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge" (GM III, 12). That is, even though we are limited by our perspectives, Nietzsche suggests that we are not hopelessly confined to them in some way. Particularly salient, here, is the suggestion that we are able to change them, and Nietzsche offers this proposal as a methodological corrective to that which guides traditional philosophical inquiry.

Given Nietzsche's claim that there is only a "perspective knowing", value-free inquiry such as the traditional philosophical quests that Nietzsche critiques, are not only incoherent and psychologically impossible, in his view, but they also manifest in dogmatic ways. There is an important sense in which the pursuit of objectivity, as traditionally conceived, does violence. As with any other ascetic ideal, the pursuit of value free inquiry, "permits no other interpretation, no other goal; it rejects, denies, affirms, and sanctions solely from the point of view of its interpretation…" (GM III, 23). Genuine inquiry, as Nietzsche understands it, is threatened when inquiry is pursued in a dogmatic way, insofar as various perspectives, which would otherwise reveal information, would not be even be considered by the self-described value-free inquirer. In

fact, the dogmatist ends all inquiry by clinging to his predetermined point-of-view. This is, in fact, what the emphasis that standpoint theorists place on standpoints presents to feminist inquiry. As I contend against contemporary defenders of the theory, standpoint theory fails both in terms of being coherent and in resisting the threat of essentialism. Indeed, the threat of essentialism arises from a dogmatic attitude toward inquiry in spite of recent feminist defense of standpoint theory.

With this in mind, we might interrogate the way standpoint theorists have framed their methodologies. Rolin notes, for example, that feminist standpoint epistemology's use of such terms as "perspectives" and "standpoint" imports various spatial and visual imagery, and, as such, has created more problems than it solves (Rolin, 134). In particular, the term "standpoint", in Rolin's view, "evokes an image of a position where one stands and views the object of inquiry from a particular "perspective" (Rolin, 134). That is to say, the concept of a standpoint, as such, seems to import a foundationalist theory of epistemic justification into feminist epistemology insofar as the imagery that is associated with it plausibly leads us into thinking that we need something like a "view from nowhere" in order to compare various perspectives. As Rolin describes it, foundationalism is the view that basic beliefs that are justifiably held without resting on further evidence, and that basic beliefs are basic in virtue of their content. If standpoint theory is indeed, foundationalist in this way, there are seemingly no non-arbitrary grounds for preferring standpoint theory over any other theory of knowledge. Furthermore, there is no reason to adopt the various preferences that standpoint theorists defend, which entails that there are no non-arbitrary reasons for privileging minority perspectives.

As discussed in Chapter 1, though Rolin draws an important distinction between the concepts of perspective and standpoint, respectively, her proposal neither offers us an account of

the relationship between the two nor a plausible account of how we ought to overcome the pitfalls of standpoint theory. Of course, Rolin, in fact, argues that the adoption of a contextualist theory of justification resolves the aforementioned paradox, again as discussed in Chapter 1; however, without a revised account of how we should understand the concept of a standpoint, Rolin's adoption of a contextualist theory of justification, as she defines it, does not, in fact, overcome the bias paradox. And as I have argued in Chapter 1, Rolin's retention of the concept of a "standpoint", as she defines it, potentially reifies social hierarchy.

4.4   Perspectivism Reinterpreted

Given what I've presented so far, one might argue that feminists ought to jettison the concept of a standpoint, however, I argue, in fact, that there is reason to think that such a move would be counterproductive to feminist aims. On this point, it is helpful to consider Kirsten Intemann's example of early feminist recognition of sexual harassment in the workplace:

Consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s provide an example of how groups of women were able to reflect on their individual experiences and collectively identify patterns they were not able to recognize on their own (Smith 1997). Individual women had experiences, such as being groped by a male co-worker, which they had previously interpreted as accidental, imagined, or deserved. But, when multiple women in the group reported similar experiences, their individual interpretations became inconsistent with the data. As a group, women were able to see patterns in their experiences, identify relationships between those patterns and oppressive arrangements, and achieve an understanding of how systems of oppression limit and shape their knowledge. In this sense, like feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism is also a social epistemology, which takes the locus of justification to be epistemic communities rather than individuals (Intemann, 786).

Here, there still seems to be something salvageable from Intemann's standpoint approach. To reiterate, standpoint theory explicitly aims to understand and undermine social practices that perpetuate oppression. In this example, the result of women forming consciousness-raising collectives was to identify sexual harassment in the workplace as a phenomenon, contrary to mainstream views of the dynamics between the sexes in the workplace. On Intemann's account, the consciousness raising collectives resulted in new knowledge that ultimately resulted in the creation of legislation to protect women from sex-based discrimination in the workplace, thereby further approaching formal equality between women and men.

However, I argue that while it is true that the epistemic community was crucial for identifying patterns of discrimination, it does not follow that the group has a perspective. Intemann fails to draw a distinction between the conditions for knowledge and the conditions for being a knower. The individual women who shared their respective accounts were the knowers, each of whom recognized that she was subject to various degrees of harassment on the job, and the epistemic community provided space for women to share their experiences and to identify a pattern. This is to say that consciousness raising groups consisted of individual knowers, who had distinctly individual experiences that could, nonetheless, be generalized by individuals with specific interests, which, in this case, involved identifying, explaining and ultimately ceasing what was suspected to be a social phenomenon and not simply just any individual woman's experience.

To be clear, my perspectivist proposal allows the inclusion of standpoints, so long as they are defined by the relevant perspectival context; this includes, the beliefs and interests of the researcher, the conversational context, and the goals of the research in question, among other

things. In Intemann's example, it is not problematic to generalize about women's experience about sexual harassment if the goal of inquiry about the phenomenon is to identify it as something to which women are subject on the basis of sex, regardless of individual differences. However, it is wrong to infer from this critical standpoint about sexual harassment that all of women's experiences can be generalized in the same way. In short, feminists must be able to consider and dispose of various hypotheses when inquiring into the realities of oppression and social injustices.

If we consider the work of black feminists, it is clear that my theoretical proposal for perspectivism has already been utilized in practice. As noted in Chapter1, feminist black women and women of color have, quite arguably, been sensitive to context in this way, as matter of combatting mainstream occlusion in white-dominated spaces for inquiry. Angela P. Harris' account of 'the self', as discussed in Chapter 1, shows that the scope of perspectivism extends to our ability to identify the multiple and shifting identities when feminists are attuned to context in the ways I have already described. Similarly, Patricia Hill-Collin's critical black feminist standpoint is viable given the relevant contingencies of race and class when she assesses the status of black American women to that of white American women. In other words, black feminists have advanced feminist work by identifying the context of justification before developing standpoints, which is precisely the substance of the theoretical case I am proposing.

It's easy to be led to think that the women who participated in the consciousness raising groups were of the same age, race, educational background, among other things; these differences do not come up at all in Intemann's discussion. Again, to speak of a "woman's standpoint" is to abstract these differences from our thinking in order to come up with generalizations that ultimately guide the ways in which we categorize information about the

world. To be clear, I am not recommending that feminist researchers absolutely steer clear of drawing generalizations. In Intemann's example, the judgment about women's experience of sexual harassment in the workplace is justifiable given the aims of the inquiry that led to that assessment; namely, it was suspected that sexual harassment is a phenomenon that many women experience on the basis of sex. To reiterate, however, we are not then entitled to use this contextual generalization as an absolute barometer, against which we measure the experiences of all women, regardless of the many differences among them. Such an absolutist approach to understanding women's experiences would, no doubt, occlude other socially relevant ones in other contexts such as Hill-Collins' example of black domestic work within white homes. In sum, the generalizations we arrive at through a contextually sensitive inquiry are always revisable in light of new questions, new interests, new evidence, all of that is to say in a word or two, new perspectives.

5   CONCLUSIONS

In sum, the variety of complex social phenomena that is relevant to feminist inquiry demands the use of a variety of methods in order to evaluate them for the purposes already stated. What I am arguing in this final chapter is that a perspectivist framework, as inspired by Nietzsche's perspective metaphor, allows feminist research to be, in fact, pluralist insofar as the focus shifts from a group's standpoint to an individual's perspective. And if feminist research is intended to combat the oppression and suppression of minority perspectives, an emphasis upon a standpoint, independent of any context or perspective, is counterproductive by all definitions given thus far, and an account that centralizes perspectives, the perspectivist framework, is a corrective to this major roadblock to feminist inquiry.

    To be clear, the standpoint is secondary to identifying the perspectival context, in my perspectivist proposal. In fact, we may not even require the creation of standpoints at all in some contexts. We can still salvage the idea of a standpoint in a perspectivist framework without occluding individual perspectives or succumbing to the "god trick", the incoherent belief that one can represent the world without being represented, as if one can erase all traces of oneself from one's goal-oriented research.

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, Elizabeth. "Knowledge, Human Interests, and Objectivity in Feminist Epistemology." Ed. Edward Minar. *Philosophical Topics* 23.2 (1995): 27-58. Web.

2. Anderson, Elizabeth. "[Book Review: Scrutinizing Feminist Epistemology: An Examination of Gender in Science]." (n.d.): n. pag. Web.

3. Anderson, Elizabeth. "Uses of Value Judgments in Science: A General Argument, with Lessons from a Case Study of FeministResearch on Divorce." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 19.1 (2004): 1-24. Web.

4. Anderson, R. Lanier. "Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism." *Synthese* 115.1 (1998): 1-32. *JSTOR*. Web.

5. Annis D. B. (1978), A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification. American Philosophical Quarterly: Vol. 15, No. 3 , pp. 213-219.

6. Berry, Jessica N. 2005. "Perspectivism as *Ephexis* in Interpretation." *Philosophical Topics* 33(2): 19-44.

7. Betz, Gregor. "In Defence of the Value Free Ideal." *European Journal for Philosophy of Science* 3.2 (2013): 207-20. Web.

8. Clark, Maudemarie. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. Print.

9. Cohen, S. (1984), Justification and Truth. Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition: Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 279-295.

10. Collins, P.H. (1986) Learning from the outsider within: the sociological significance of Black feminist thought. In Hartman, J.E. andMesser-Davidow, E. (eds) *(En)gendering*

Knowledge: Feminists in Academe, pp. 40–65. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

11. Conway, Daniel. "The Slave Revolt in Epistemology." *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Ed. Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998. 252-81. Print.

12. Cox, Christoph. 1999. Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation. (Berkeley: University of California Press).

13. Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." Stanford Law Review43.6 (1991): 1241. Web.

14. DeRose, K.: 1999, 'Contextualism: An Explanation and Defense', in John Greco and Ernest Sosa (eds.), The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology, Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 187–205.

15. Gaukroger, Stephen. *Objectivity: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

16. Gemes, Ken. "Nietzsche's Critique of Truth." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1 (1992): 47–65.

17. Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14:575-99.

18. Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*. ed. Linda Nicholson, 190-233. New York: Routledge.

19. Harding, Sandra. "?Strong Objectivity?: A Response to the New Objectivity Question." *Synthese* 104.3 (1995): 331-49. Web.

20. Harris, Angela P. "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory."*Stanford Law Review* 42.3 (1990): 581. Web.

21. Hartsock, Nancy. 1983. "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism." In Harding and Hintikka 1983, 283-310.

22. Hunter, David. (2009), Contextualism, Skepticism and Objectivity. Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy: Vol 85, pp. 105-128.

23. Intemann, Kristen. "25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now?" *Hypatia* 25.4 (2010): 778-96. Web.

24. Katsafanas, Paul. "Nietzsche on Agency and Self-Ignorance," Journal of Nietzsche Studies 43(2012), pp. 5-17.

25. Leiter, Brian. 1994. "Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals" in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, and Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's "On the Genealogy of Morals"*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press).

26. Mckenna, R. (2013), Epistemic Contextualism: A Normative Approach. Pacific Philosophical Quarterly, 94: 101–123. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0114.2012.01447.x

27. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, Walter Arnold Kaufmann, and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. On the Genealogy of Morals. New York: Vintage, 1967. Print.

28. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Walter Arnold. Kaufmann. Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future. New York: Vintage, 1989. Print.

29. Quine, Willard Van Orman. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism." *Can Theories Be Refuted?* (1976): 41-64. Web.

30. Rolin, Kristina. "The Bias Paradox in Feminist Standpoint Epistemology." *Episteme* 3.1-2 (2006): 125-36. Web.

31.   Rose, Hilary. 1986. "Women's Work: Women's Knowledge." *In What is Feminist: A Re-examination,* ed. Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley. 616-83. New York: Pantheon.

32.   Rysiew, Patrick. (2011), "Relativism and Contextualism," in A Companion to Relativism, edited by Steven D. Hales (Blackwell): 286-305.

33.   Smith, Dorothy. 1987. "Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology." *In Feminism and Methodology*, ed. Sandra Harding, 84-96. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

34.   Welshon, Rex. "Saying Yes to Reality: Skepticism, Anti-realism, and Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Epistemology," Journal of Nietzsche Studies 37 (2009), pp. 23-43.

35.   Wilcox, John. 1974. Truth and Value in Nietzsche. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) pp. 98-126.

36.   Wiley, Alison. "Why Standpoint Matters." *Science and Other Cultures: Issues in Philosophies of Science and Technology*. By Robert Figueroa and Sandra G. Harding. New York: Routledge, 2003. 26-48. Print.

37.   Williams, Bernard Arthur Owen., and Josefine Nauckhoff. *Nietzsche: The Gay Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.