



Towards a feminist standpoint on nature

Rosallia Domingo of De La Salle University Manila, Philippines

Abstract

Epistemological standpoint theory argues that dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by producing distorted and false accounts of nature that reinforces gender hierarchies. Thus, they also argue for an alternative feminist standpoint on nature, which they believe is more comprehensive, less distorted, and less false. Their main claim is that the marginalized positions occupied by women can become sites of epistemic privilege and can contribute to strong objectivity of research. This claim is impressed in Sandra Harding's (1993: 56) feminist standpoint theory: "Starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order."

To show the merits of the feminist standpoint on nature, this paper will discuss examples of discursive resources employed by scientists as they pursue knowledge of nature that make use of gendered cultural presuppositions that lead to our distorted understanding of nature. To argue for a feminist standpoint on nature, this paper will discuss the implications of distortions brought about by such cultural biases.

The paper will be divided into three parts: the first part will be a discussion of the epistemological standpoint theory and its claims, the second part will be a discussion of the cultural biases inherent in certain discursive resources on nature and its implications, and the third will be a discussion of the ways in which the standpoint of women can serve as resources for the sciences.

Keywords

standpoint theory, feminist epistemology, feminist philosophy