



## **Is Feminist Epistemology Possible? A Critique of Jane Duran's Theory**

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### **Abstract**

This work makes a critique of the possibility of Jane Duran's Feminist Epistemology. The idea of a feminist epistemology, specifically, Jane Duran's gynocentric model endangers our quest for truth in epistemology in a manner that makes a gross mistake of attempting to equate facts with values. It does assert a subtle political constraint on the method and conclusion of the findings of a researcher on grounds that such conclusion does not support the feminist perspective. This is the central problem this work sets to investigate. This study employing the method of content and critical analysis holds that, Duran's claim that the whole of traditional analytic epistemology is inherently a psychological, hyper-normative and and rocentric does not constitute sufficient grounds for the jettisoning of traditional analytic epistemology for a feminist epistemology. The findings reveal that Unarguably, Duran has significantly conscientized us on the peculiarities of women as also both the subject and object of knowledge. Also, she has drawn our attention to possibility of certain masculinist traits she claims exist in analytic epistemology. However, while Duran's model has contributed substantially to the problem of knowledge, it falls short of an ideal theory of knowledge, leaving room for further debate and exploration. Consequently, in making the critique of the possibility of a feminist epistemology in the light of Jane Duran's, we argued and maintained the conclusion that these purported claims do not constitute grounds for the substitution of analytic epistemology with her feminist epistemology. Thus, whether there is a way of knowing that pertains to women or men for that matter as epistemic agents, the common search for

truth and logical reasoning as dealt with in analytic epistemology still remains valid. Therefore, this study recommends exploring alternative models that will consider and accommodate both genders in her approach to the epistemic impasse created by Duran.

**Keywords:** Hyper-normative, Gynocentric, Feminist Epistemology, Traditional Epistemology

### Introduction

Historically, and in different countries of the world, women have expressed their displeasure and dissatisfaction on matters bordering on their sexuality. Both in socio-political movements and within academic circles, they have articulated, in panoply of voices, their worries, demands and aspirations for justice (Walters 2005, p. 2). A significant hallmark of the second wave feminism is not essentially its vehement critique of theories and methodologies of both the natural and social sciences, but also its unrelenting quest for a feminist theory and even epistemology (Lazreg 1994, p. 45). This was due to the fact that feminist theorists claim to have found all theoretical frameworks and methods inadequate and ideologically masculinist in nature. Over the last decades feminist thinkers have advanced insightful critique of the economic, political and social beliefs and practices of a culture and society they perceive to be masculinist. There was less attention given to the underlying theories of knowledge and particularly, to the metaphysics that mirror and support patriarchal beliefs and practices. In addressing this problem, Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, raised a fundamental question, “are there – can there be – distinctive feminist perspectives on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology and philosophy of science?” (Harding, S. and Hintikka, M. B. ed., 2004, p. ix). It is herein that Jane Duran attempted to articulate and delineate what a feminist account of knowledge is, that is a way of knowing that is peculiar to women. This is done in her work, titled, *Toward a Feminist Epistemology* (1991).

This study discusses Duran's attempt to establish the possibility of an elaborate feminist epistemology on the basis of her dissatisfaction and problem with traditional analytic epistemology as ideologically and rocentric in its nature. The paper investigates the conditions that prompted her agitation against analytic epistemology leading to the eventual proposal of her gynocentric model which she claims is a viable alternative to the inherent hyper idealistic, apsychological and and rocentrism of analytic epistemology. This study is divided into four subheadings. The first, Feminism and the Idea of a Feminist Epistemology shows how feminism both as a movement and discourse within academic circles necessitated and birthed feminist epistemology. The second, Duran's Dissatisfaction with Traditional Epistemology investigates precisely the conditions that promoted Duran's proposal of a feminist epistemology. Thirdly, The Possibility of a Feminist Epistemology discusses her idea of an epistemology grounded on a feminist theory. Lastly, we did a Critique of Duran's Feminist Epistemology; here we looked at her version of a feminist epistemology, its benefits, promises and challenges and the study ends with a Conclusion.

**Feminism and the Idea of a Feminist Epistemology**

What apparently began as an expression of dissatisfaction in the United States and Europe in the 60s and 70s both as a political movement and intellectual position committed to the quest for the liberation of women and an attempt to promote social, economic, cultural and political participation of women and to put an end to sexism in all its manifestations came to be known as feminism. Actually, the term feminism just like philosophy, clearly does not have a single definition acceptable to all feminist scholars. Rather there seem to be a crisscrossing of fundamental themes and concepts that cuts across many conceptions of feminism in spite of the scholar. The theme is essentially the claim that injustice is inherent in our society's structure, institutions and dynamics. Many of the feminist scholars part ways on the nature of what constitutes this injustice; this, thus, is what leads to a diverse spectrum of theories, scrutinies and engagements by feminists with the different branches of philosophy, movements or schools of thought within philosophy. Hence, we hear such nomenclatures as: feminist ecology, feminist empiricism, feminist epistemology, Marxist-feminism, feminist postmodernism, feminist sociology of knowledge, feminist standpoint theory, etc.

The basis of feminism's thesis is anchored on a neutralist ground. It proceeds with the belief that the human subject is a socially concrete and socially diverse being. Hence, the vast majority of feminists encourage suspicion of any sort of claim that propagates universalization. Certainly, the repudiation of universalization and an appeal for social specificity of the subject or object of knowledge is not a quintessential hallmark of feminism as many other theoretical perspectives equally places a premium on the socially concrete character of human beings as both the subject and object of knowledge. Rather, the uniqueness of feminism as a theory lies in its relentless attempt to draw our attention to the significance of gender and its ripple effect and dynamics in the diverse areas of human endeavours (Fricker and Hornsby 2000, p. 2). "The precise content of women's oppression varies for different women" (Stanley and Wise 1993, p.1). Consequent upon this, the variance in content of agitation among feminist the world over. Moreover, the analytic epistemology of the 20th century did provide a backdrop for the formulation and emergence of what is now known as naturalized epistemology (Duran 1991, p. 43). A framework that provided grounds upon which feminist epistemology launched attack on traditional epistemology and ventured into erecting its edifice of knowledge with special attention on the peculiarities of women both as subject and object of knowledge. Commenting on the emergence of naturalized epistemology and how it grants ground for the possibility of new theories and perspectives in epistemology, Richmond Campbell writes:

Almost three decades ago, W. V. Quine introduced the concept of naturalized epistemology by proposing that epistemologists should abandon their efforts to found the possibility of knowledge on first principles and should instead explain how knowledge is possible from within science. Though, other philosophers, such as Patricia Churchland and Hilary Kornblith, have followed Quine closely, still others, such as Alvin Goldman, Gilbert Harman, and Philip Kitcher, who also are drawn to mixing epistemology and science, have taken less radical approaches, seeing the theory of knowledge as incorporating scientific methods and results without being simply a part of science. Either way, the prospect of

combining epistemology and science has had widespread appeal (Campbell 1998, p. 1).

Essentially, feminist epistemology integrates into epistemology most of the theories and norms of feminism. Just like naturalized epistemology, it challenges traditional conceptions of knowledge. As traditionalists tend to explain the possibility of knowledge from a perspective external to science, value, and political interest. Feminist epistemologists on the other hand, seek to draw to our attention the ways and manner in which gender does and ought to influence our conceptions of knowledge, knowers, and practices of philosophical inquiry and justification of knowledge. Feminist epistemologists often consider science as an androcentric enterprise in its outlook and often sexist in methodology. "Therefore, explaining knowledge on the basis of science is likely to be problematic from a standpoint committed to the elimination of androcentrism and sexism" (Campbell 1998, p.2).

In the works of many feminist theorists such as; Jean Hampton, Elizabeth Lloyd, Susan Babbitt, Helen Longino, Elizabeth Potter, Susan Moller, Nancy Tuana, Naomi Scheman, Lynn Hankinson Nelson etc., we see a recurring emphasis on epistemology as situated knowledge. For these feminist epistemologists knowledge ought to reflect the peculiar perspective of the knower (Campbell 1998, p. 2). Duran points out that, works by Evelyn Fox Keller, Sandra Harding and Susan Bordo and others are both "broadly epistemological and straightforwardly feminist" (Duran 1991, p. 8). These feminist epistemologists predominantly have some underlying themes in common. In Duran's view, these themes include the following, that, "there is a masculinist, androcentric tradition that yields a hyper-normative, idealized, and stylistically aggressive mode of thought inherent in all of traditional epistemology" (Duran 1991, p. 8). These feminist epistemologists have taken up the task of identifying ways and manners by which dominant expressions of knowledge claims, whether in the form of conceptualization or practices, knowledge acquisition and justification of knowledge, places women and other minorities in a position of disadvantage. Hence, apart from drawing attention to these perceived injustices, they attempt to significantly reform the enterprise of epistemology to serve the interest of women and other minorities, by drawing to our consciousness the perceived misrepresentation and under representation of women as subject and object of knowledge.

### **Duran's Dissatisfaction with Traditional Epistemology**

A proper reflection on feminism and its numerous derivatives: feminist ecology, feminist empiricism, Marxist-feminism, feminist postmodernism, feminist sociology of knowledge, feminist standpoint theory, feminist epistemology, etc., would reveal that its philosophy and theories are largely and essentially reactionary. The entire spectrum of feminist theories is a reaction to the perceived ideological gender bias inherent in discourses in the various fields of human knowledge. In philosophy, feminist epistemologists argue that this ideological gender bias fails to accord equal status to women and other minorities as knowers with unique peculiarities. In fact, considering the multiplicity of voices engaged in discourses on feminist epistemology, some scholars are of the view that in order to capture this plurality of perspectives, it should be aptly referred to as feminist's epistemologies. Moreover, feminist

epistemologists place a premium on plurality, and this value on plurality is basically a product of the perceived homogenous and hegemonic features of traditional epistemology. Jane Duran, in her *Toward a Feminist Epistemology* (1991) lends her voice to the multiplicity of feminist voices, that argues that, the predominant practices of epistemology disadvantages women. Many of the feminist theorists have specific reason(s) for their reaction and the unique perspective from which they individually look at the perceived injustices faced by women. This in turn shapes their proposal of how this problem could be addressed. What precisely is the cause of Duran's dissatisfaction with traditional epistemology? In the chapter one of her work, titled, *Analytic Theory of Knowledge*, Duran opens the paragraph with the following lines: "Any assertion about the normative and hyper-idealized nature of contemporary analytic epistemology requires some support" (Duran 1991, p. 19). These lines are in themselves not conclusive of Duran's challenge with traditional analytic epistemology but a pointer towards the part her argument in expression of her dissatisfaction with traditional epistemology intends to toll. This normative nature of analytic epistemology Duran claims is expressed mainly through its detailed epistemic analysis of problems of knowledge and knowledge assumption. In tracing the historical roots of epistemology as a subfield of philosophy, she posits that epistemology is as old as the Platonic Dialogues but the present status or advancement made in epistemology as it is today, she avers, is largely due to the modern era; that is, the post-Cartesian period and partly also due to the 20<sup>th</sup> century that have witnessed more narrowly defined epistemological question. She gives the question of the fourth condition for knowledge as an example of this. Duran armed with Bertrand Russell's, *A History of Western Philosophy*, begins the task of showing the problem of the epistemic tradition of philosophy. She References Russell on the Cartesian architectural quest for indubitable knowledge and his eventual arrival at *cogito ergo sum*; thereby drawing attention to the subjectivity of certain knowledge as highlighted by Russell when following the logical expression of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. This, Duran's claim has been at the heart of contemporary epistemology.

Duran begins with *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, by Russell, in tracing some of the major epistemological theories and their influence on her Feminist Epistemology. She is of the view that the work foreshadows a good deal of the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century epistemology (Duran 1991, p. 21). She made effort to show that from the works of Descartes and even Russell's Logical Atomism that there is a "desire to place empirical knowledge on a footing equal to nonempirical or deductively ascertainable knowledge" (Duran 1991, p. 23). This situation in epistemology according to Duran manifest itself in the 20<sup>th</sup> century analytic quest, "and this was ushered in partly by Russell's attempt to establish a basis of irrefutability for sense-based contentions, beginning with the deployment of logically proper names" (Duran 1991, p. 23). It is this Russell's perspective that Duran blames for the moves amongst professional epistemologist to give "a tighter and narrower account of knowledge, or claims to knowledge derived through the senses" (Duran 1991, p. 23).

Furthermore, Duran in the subsection she titled, *Sense-Data Views: Normative Theories of Privileged Access*, argues that the sense-data theorists, in an attempt to obtain epistemic certainty subserviently sacrificed most of what would pass for an adequate ontology, "and in the process did, indeed, begin to encompass their own destruction" (Duran 1991, p. 25). From the stand point of necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge in approaching the



question of knowledge a thought held by American philosophers; Duran in reaction to the atomistic view and sense-data view, by the Austrian objections, points out that this brought about an attempt to tackle the conditions for knowledge from the perspective of analytically “tight necessary and sufficient conditions” (Duran 1991, p. 26). Duran held that this new standpoint ended up placing all cases of knowledge, “whether empirically derived or not, on the same footing” (Duran 1991, p. 26).

Another aspect of epistemology discussed by Duran is American Analytic Epistemology; precisely Edmund Gettier's classical reaction to the traditional epistemological conception of knowledge as justified true belief. She examined Gettier's reaction to an extent and advanced her arguments about the nature of 20<sup>th</sup> century epistemology on the basis of her analysis of Gettier's reaction. Duran points out in her observation of Gettier's analysis of Tripartite view of knowledge and counter reactions to Gettier, that, no reference whatsoever was made to the human cognitive process. In her words:

What sorts of facts about cognitive and neural functioning are relevant?  
One wants to inquire why it is that elements of memory storage, retrieval from memory, sensory retention of images, capacity for inferring logical structure, and other sorts of cognitive capacities –all relevant to the sorts of examples utilized -are never referred to in the theories of relevant counterexamples? (Duran 1991, pp. 29-30).

From her observation, she reveals that epistemological theories had originated in a sheer a psychological manner and have held on to this a psychological character from the 60s and 70s. This a psychological character of epistemological theory became a cause of concern amongst epistemologists and forms the needed grounds for “another important move in theory of knowledge” (Duran 1991, p. 30).

Duran in the subsection titled, *A Naturalized Theory of Knowledge* tries to expose the roots of naturalized epistemology. She sums it thus:

The causal theories at least alluded, however briefly, to cognitive processes, and the nature of the theories themselves with their emphasis on material-world relations between objects that might come to the attention of the epistemic agent through the use of the senses lent itself to further reference to the actual functioning of intellectual and cognitive faculties. In addition, the late 1960s and early 1970s saw an enormous rise in the development of what came to be known as 'cognitive science' the intersection of areas such as psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence, computer simulation, and computer science itself (Duran 1991, p. 35).

In spite of little or no response to these developments in the aforementioned fields by philosophers to the materials generated in these new frontiers of knowledge, “it was clear from the outset that the material was immediately relevant to issues in philosophy of mind” (Duran 1991, p. 35). Duran goes on to show the rise and need for naturalized epistemology particularly

as a precursor to her idea of feminist theory of knowledge. The rise and advance of cognitive science was not entirely embraced by epistemologist such as Goldman, but by the 70s, Duran noted that things began to change. Works by Hilary Kornblith *Beyond Foundationalism and Coherence Theory* and Quine's *Epistemology Naturalized* had apparently begun to suggest the need for a replacement of epistemology by natural and social sciences. Subsequently, a new wave that generally did not call for a replacement of epistemology but the recognition of epistemology that works and that explicitly relates to the possibility of knowledge acquisition began to surface. Duran contends that naturalized epistemology is less androcentric and certainly less normative. She used *Beyond Foundationalism and Coherence Theory* (1980) a work by Hilary Kornblith, and tried to show as argued by Kornblith that, "the question of whether or not the actual cognitive functioning of agents could be relevant to epistemology as practiced by professional philosophers" (Duran 1991, p. 36) leads to an a psychologistic approach to epistemology; this, she thinks is a mistake. Duran further takes on Foundationalism and Coherentism challenging them as theories that are a psychological in nature. That is, that they fail to tell us anything about the functioning of epistemic agents, "and each theoretical stance may be thought of as a recommendation for the way in which epistemic agents should perform the task of justification, if that task of justification were to be performed ideally. But human agents seldom perform epistemic tasks in an ideal manner" (Duran 1991, p. 40). Therefore, it is on the basis of these perceived inadequacies that Duran proceeded to propose the project of a feminist epistemology.

### **The Possibility of a Feminist Epistemology**

In an attempt to establish her account of feminist epistemology, Duran admits that there has been a multidisciplinary endeavour among scholars across sociology, psychology and political science to articulately delineate what a feminist account of knowledge is; that is, a way of knowing that is peculiar to women. This has attracted the attention of some epistemologists too; particularly, within the feminist tradition a number of attempts have been made by certain philosophers towards establishing grounds as forerunners of the idea of a feminist epistemology. Some scholars who within the framework of naturalized epistemology have made a case for a feminist epistemology include Evelyn Fox Keller, Sandra Harding and Susan Bordo, among others. Their works are admittedly both broadly epistemological and straightforwardly feminist. However, Jane Duran incorporating the advanced and contemporary subfields of analytic epistemology, feminist theory and philosophy of science births *Toward a Feminist Epistemology* (1991). It is believed that her work is the first to distinctly and elaborately put forth a supportable epistemology required for the delineation of a feminist theory of knowledge.

In chapter four of her work, titled, *Toward a Feminist Epistemology*, Duran made an ingenious attempt to develop a rigorous naturalized feminist epistemology based on strands of theory taken from each of the first three aforementioned feminist theorists. By way of proper clarification on what she meant by feminist epistemology Duran made a conceptual delineation of her view thus:

An overview of what has come to be known as 'feminist epistemology' inevitably omits or leaves out a great deal of material, since the scope of feminist epistemology is so large; nevertheless, it is feminist epistemology, as it has been constructed in approximately the last decade, that is of crucial importance for the intersection of naturalized and gynocentric strands that I hope to create here (1991, p. 103).

Duran argues that, the mere fact that analytic epistemology has been, in its major constructions, an androcentric method should not mean that it cannot be reconstructed and used for feminist purposes and that analytic philosophy is a tool that can be employed for feminist purposes. Duran proposed to create a feminist theory of knowledge by employing one or more of the strands of naturalized epistemology on grounds that these strands of theory are "already less distanced, less normative, and less idealized than many of the moves in analytic epistemology that preceded them, and they seem to lend themselves much more easily to the feminist project" (Duran 1991, p. 106). In her view, feminist epistemology maintains the claim that the special perspective of women is an epistemic perspective that yields its own theory of knowledge and ontology.

The crux of Duran's feminism is directly tied into much of the work in naturalized epistemology that reminds us that current work in cognitive science emphasizes the fact that knowledge cannot be divorced from context. In other words, cognitive science stresses the fact that for all knowers—male or female, adult or child—the actual modes of cognizing and coming-to-knowledge are heavily reliant on context. She argues that the contextual nature of knowledge and the interactional pattern of knowledge acquisition are thus two areas that have been emphasized in feminist theory and that are ripe for expansion in a theoretically rigorous direction under the pull of naturalized analytic epistemology. Duran further draws attention to the physiological and cognitive procession of informing as unique to females thus:

The emphasis on the bodiness of feminist theory is also an emphasis on the senses. Whether it is female sensitivity to pain, to cyclical changes, or other hormonal capacities particular to females, it is clear that the feminine modes of knowing that have been described in the literature are related to bodily functioning in a way that the classic androcentric theory is not. Now here the fact that the pull is toward the senses rather than away from the senses provides fertile ground for further theorization. As Goldman has documented, recent work in cognitive theory emphasizing perception, visualization capacities, and even auditory and tactile discrimination. It is, of course, completely true that the work cited by those, interested in cognitive theory is intended to be applicable to all humans. But until the recent moves in naturalized epistemology, only feminist theory seemed to have any interest at all in trying to integrate an account of sensory awareness into its epistemology (1991, pp. 113-114).

With emphasis on contextualization, communicative awareness, and bodily awareness Duran proceeds to develop some relatively unrefined lines of theory with regard to epistemic justification of feminist epistemology. It is on this grounds that she addressed at length the



feminist concerns that an and rocentric method cannot fully articulate a woman-centered epistemology.

Duran aims at establishing a framework or model for epistemic justification that would be simultaneously naturalized and gynocentric. Thus, in achieving this, she employed materials from contemporary research areas such as naturalized epistemology, philosophy of mind and philosophical psychology. She drew a model of epistemic justification contending that it is both gynocentric and naturalized. She also consistently maintained the feminist concern that an and rocentric method cannot adequately articulate a woman-centered epistemology. Commenting on the gynocentric model she explained that we need to understand the gynocentric outlook as connected and not distanced from the fundamental grounding of epistemology, knowledge acquisition and epistemic justification. She writes:

As feminists, we desire a gynocentric model of epistemic justification that is applicable cross-culturally and that, perhaps more importantly, enlightens our view of the multifarious ways in which women live, work, and communicate. In addition, we need a fleshing out of the role of nonverbal communication, since it is crucially important from a gynocentric point of view (Duran 1991, p. 178).

For Duran, what is meant by feminist epistemology or feminist epistemics is a model that is not only grounded on inherently female practice or pragma but that is also applicable to women across and inter-culturally. Duran emphasized the importance of nonverbal means of communication and the sensitivity of the female to such communication in general. Thus, she clearly stated that her model “allows for acquisition of knowledge, or justification of knowledge claims, to be accomplished on the basis of informal input that is both verbal and nonverbal, straightforward and nuanced, articulable and only somewhat expressed” (Duran 1991, p. 184). It is an upshot of Duran's gynocentric model that knowledge acquisition, that is, epistemic justification is a context and culture-related process. Thus, it is due to this process of knowledge acquisition that makes Duran's model applicable to all contexts and cultures (Duran 1991, p. 185). This gives the gynocentric model fluidity not found in nonnaturalized models and also makes it profoundly relevant to that particular critical area of contemporary feminist theory that deals with the pluralistic nature of women's voices. The gynocentric model is anchored on her *Context Communicative and Principle* (CCP). The model provides the basis upon which any choice made in knowledge acquisition will be largely determined by context. She admitted that CCP implies a thoroughgoing relativism, and it cuts across both interculturality and intra-culturally (Duran 1991, p. 197). Most importantly, CCP is also applicable to most sorts of situations that do not call for the extremely normative and distanced view of the and rocentric theorists. Furthermore, she believed that CCP is applicable to children and also adults in non-western culture. With regards to the nexus between nonverbal communication, sexuality and CCP, Duran asserts that nonverbal, gestural communication is erotically connected to the feminine accounts of knowledge. To explain the foregoing, Duran appealed to Object-Relations Theory. The product of the Object-Relations theory is based on the claim that males experience intimacy with females as a powerful, nonverbal form of merging

and to some extent, regression. On the other hand, females' experience of male-female intimacy has learned over time to associate intimacy with both verbal and nonverbal of feelings and emotions. This assumption from the foregoing brings to us the idea that almost all our accounts of sexual relations are essentially androcentric even the ones inspired by women. Hence, Duran perceives androcentrism overwhelmingly in both sexuality and in the acquisition of knowledge. This is termed androcentrism because the separation of the knower from the known is strongly emphasized. This type of knowing is problematic because it misses the point of connectedness that is typical of female intimacy (Duran 1991, p. 190).

Consequently, Duran's gynocentric epistemology is conceived as an epistemological model that merges knowledge with the object, while gynocentric eroticism is typically characterized by an intentionality directed towards the other person coupled with the desire to know the other person as a true person. The relationship gynocentrism has with CCP is that what is constitutive of epistemic justification such as genuine questioning and sceptical doubt are not likely to occur in sexual contexts, even though they cannot be avoided in nonverbal contexts.

### **A Critique of Duran's Feminist Epistemology**

The contribution of Jane Duran cannot be underestimated first, to the discourse of feminism, to the domain of socio-political philosophy and sociology and secondly, to epistemology. Her contribution to epistemology is certainly not without an audacious courage that challenges the entire analytic tradition not merely as inherently inadequate but as tending towards androcentrism. It does amount to a form of epistemic injustice that the history of epistemology has been tried by Duran and found wanting of the charge of been inconsiderately androcentric and as psychological. Like men, women are epistemic agents, and both subject and object of knowledge. To deny or disregard their peculiarities of knowledge acquisition on grounds that it does not essentially measure up to the hyper-idealized normative model of traditional analytic epistemology as highlighted by Duran would be unfair. Consequently, Duran's proposal of the Contextualistic and Communicative Principle (CCP) in establishing grounds for the fluidity of her gynocentric model created much room for an approach to understanding the process of knowledge acquisition from a sociological ground. The CCP model depends on the notions of coherence, context, and interpersonal communication (Duran 1991, p. 134). This, therefore, brought about the recognition of the environmental and social conditions of the knower as essential factors worthy of consideration in epistemic justification. Duran apparently draws our consciousness to the fact that the process of knowing does not in any way happen in a vacuum. On the contrary, she emphasizes the intricacies of the process and the social environmental factors that shapes the process of knowledge acquisition. However, the whole idea of a feminist epistemology appears strange and challenges the entire edifice of traditional analytic epistemology as we know it. What are the problems inherent in the idea of feminist epistemology specifically as proposed by Duran?

Firstly, we need to understand the essential tasks of epistemology as a branch of philosophy. Epistemology is concerned with a variety of questions about knowledge and related topics. "The task of epistemology, is to clarify what the conception of knowledge involves, how it is applied, and to explain why it has the features it does" (Rescher 2003, p. 12). The first and primary approach to epistemology is the rule-giving or principle-stating approach, hence, its

normative outlook. Explaining the normative nature of epistemology, Alvin I Goldman says this: "epistemology is often concerned with rationality and irrationality, with justification and the absence of justification, with warranted and unwarranted belief. Now 'rational' and 'irrational', 'justified' and 'unjustified', 'warranted' and 'unwarranted' are all evaluative or normative expressions" (Goldman 1985, p. 35). With the overt repudiation of traditional analytic epistemology as not only and rocentric but as hyper-idealized and a psycholocial Duran obviously calls for a naturalized process to epistemology. In fact, it is fair to assert that her feminist epistemology or the entire panoply of feminist epistemologies are anchored on naturalized epistemology. Especially, "advances made in recent years in merging lines of research in the cognitive sciences with epistemology" (Duran 1991, p. 43). It is the appeal to psychology in addressing epistemological questions or attempt to reconnect epistemology with psychology that shakes the foundation of epistemology as a normative branch of philosophy. However, Duran fails to establish how such connection should be made. She is yet to clarify just how precisely such links should be established and most importantly, the problem of the possible impact her approach would have on the direction of epistemology. Secondly, the major challenge with Duran's gynocentric model is that it creates much allowance for relativism given its overt emphasis on contextualism as seen in the Contextualist and Communicative Principle (CCP). She believes that objectivity as pursued by analytic philosopher would imply narrowing the grounds of what qualifies as knowledge or epistemic justification in order to meet the rigid idealized normative standard. Moreover, her gynocentric model that emphasizes the CCP largely adopts material from recent empirical data from cognitive science and psychology that makes it nearly impossible to see a clear-cut demarcation between epistemology and psychology. In fact, it could be argued that Duran does not mind the jettisoning of epistemology for the adoption of the findings of cognitive sciences which in itself is a ceaseless stream ever-new discovery.

Thirdly, considering Duran's analysis of analytic epistemology and her dissatisfaction with it as a tradition that is inherently and rocentric, a psychological and hyper-normative, one would have expected her to jettison the analytic epistemology, but she never did. In fact, she calls for a reconstruction of analytic epistemology. She did admit the possibility of feminist epistemology landing in a conundrum particularly, when feminist philosophers attempt to employ the very methods and materials, they have dubbed and rocentric. Often utilizing such methods and materials as the most useful tools for developing new lines in advancement of their theory. This singular act proves the indispensability of analytic epistemology if not to feminist epistemology, to discourses pertaining to foundationalism in epistemology. Therefore, for feminist epistemology to be taken seriously as a theory it needs such foundation.

Finally, if we grant that there is actually a way of knowing that is peculiar to women as epistemic agents in their own right as Duran argues with support from contemporary findings in the field of cognitive science, does this constitute grounds for her dissatisfaction and claim that analytic epistemology is and rocentric? Is analytic epistemology that is essentially normative not necessary for epistemology? How do we then proceed in seeking truth, establishing logical reasoning and maintaining standards of what shall constitute grounds for justification of our knowledge claim? The challenge with Duran's feminist epistemology is that it seems to jeopardize our quest for truth in epistemology in such a manner that it makes a gross

mistake of equating facts with values. Hence, it often asserts political constraints on the conclusions of our findings both because it does not favour the feminist perspective and promotes its values and ideology. The quest for knowledge ought to be objective and not subject to the sentiments of the feminist perspective because what is truth ought not to be gender sensitive, at least epistemologically speaking. Facts remains fact and values value, the attempt to mix these have plunged epistemology into a congeries of contradictory and irreconcilable perceptive in our common quest for truth and knowledge.

### Conclusion

The idea of a feminist epistemology as proposed by Jane Duran has significantly drawn our attention to the peculiarities of women as both subject and object of knowledge. Her dissatisfaction and reaction to analytic epistemology birthed her gynocentric model. No doubt, she did a beautiful job in drawing our attention to the estranged situation of women as epistemic agents. This paper admits and appreciates the attention drawn to these seemingly masculinist tendencies inherent in traditional epistemology. However, the critique maintains that the idea of a feminist epistemology might land us in a conflation of facts with values. The quest for truth and the justificatory conditions or standards in epistemology as a normative discipline would be negatively hampered with, with the consideration of the congeries of feminist perspectives like that of Duran.

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