**How deep disagreements limit the epistemic benefit of social diversity**

Disagreements are epistemically useful when they make a revision of each interlocutor’s belief a rational requirement. This process of revision is beneficial as it allows for the rigorous assessment of each raised claim, enabling errors to be corrected and propositions to be defended. For this reason, so-called ‘deep-disagreements’ are troubling as they violate this epistemic function that disagreements ought to perform. In a deep disagreement, no opponent offers a reason considered compelling enough to encourage the other into belief revision — both opponents believe they are equally justified throughout the argumentative exchange. Consequently, epistemologists of disagreement often hold the view that a given disagreement carries potential epistemic benefit only insofar as it is not deep.

In this paper, I propose that the epistemically inert nature of deep disagreements undermines the social-feminist epistemic thesis that interactions between agents who are differently socially situated carry more potential epistemic benefit than interactions between similarly situated agents. The basis for my argument is that the interactions between differently situated agents are likely to constitute deep disagreements. This result follows directly from the recognition that deep disagreements are caused by the disagreeing opponents holding different fundamental and immutable prior beliefs, beliefs which they acquire through their particular social situatedness. Considering these fundamental beliefs as Wittgensteinian ‘hinge commitments’, or Foglinean ‘framework propositions’, allows for a linguistic assessment of deep disagreements as conversations between individuals who cannot fully understand the points raised by their opponents and thus cannot revise their belief as a result. Pairing this linguistic assessment with the social-feminist epistemic thesis suggests that agents acquire their fundamental beliefs (which underwrite their choice of linguistic products) through membership in a particular social group. Consequently, agents who belong to different social groups – and are therefore differently socially situated – are not likely to share common fundamental beliefs, leading to deep disagreements.

The likelihood of deep disagreements amongst differently socially situated agents puts considerable strain on the feminist claim that the disagreements that occur within socially diverse epistemic communities carry more epistemic potential than disagreement within homogenous communities. That is to say, the likelihood of deep disagreements threatens the very suggestion that a high degree of social diversity is epistemically beneficial in communities in which disagreement is an important source of interaction, such as in science or politics. To save the epistemic benefit of social diversity, I show how the related but distinct feminist thesis of epistemic privilege offers a stronger suggestion for how social diversity can be beneficial in times of disagreement. This thesis states that agents who are *multiply situated* – that is, members of multiple social communities at once – in virtue of existing on the margins of social groups are in an epistemically privileged position. This privilege manifests as the ability to understand multiple fundamental belief systems simultaneously, translating terms and concepts in one system into those familiar to the other. Thus, *multiply* situated individuals are extremely valuable for mediating disagreements between vastly different social groups, ensuring that the argumentative exchange is epistemically productive.

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