

# IS TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY ANDROCENTRIC? A QUESTION AND RESPONSE IN THE LIGHT OF JANE DURAN'S FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

This study critically examines whether Traditional Epistemology is Androcentric in the Light of Jane Duran's Feminist Epistemology. In her work, *Toward a Feminist Epistemology* (1991), Jane Duran appears to have weighed the entire Western Traditional Epistemology on an epistemic gender-neutral scale or gender-inclusive scale, and in her observation and judgment finds it wanting of the charge of androcentrism. Hence, she sets out with the task of liberating epistemology from the 'parochial shackle' of androcentrism to a liberal and holistic feminist perspective through the framework of naturalized epistemology and more recent advances in the cognitive science, feminist theories and sociology of knowledge. The findings in this study reveals that Duran's feminist epistemology is simultaneously a reaction against androcentrism which she claims is inherent in traditional epistemological theorizing and her investigation into the possibility of a way of knowing that pertains to women. After engaging in a ground clearing attempt to establish her case against the traditional analytic epistemology which in her judgment is both androcentric and apsychological, Duran proceeds to lay foundation for a feminist epistemology and the possibility of a gynocentric model. Adopting the method of critical analysis, this paper is particularly concerned with her labeling of traditional epistemology as ideologically androcentric upon which she proceeded to advocate for a feminist epistemology. This study objects to the claim by Duran that traditional epistemology is androcentric and argues that contrary to her position, the theoretical traits of epistemology which she dubbed androcentric are in fact the product of the nature of the activity of epistemology as majorly a normative discipline.

**Keywords:** Androcentric, Gynocentric, Traditional Epistemology, Feminist Epistemology.

## INTRODUCTION

Advocacies for the proper redress of the injustices faced by women on the basis of their gender and the cry for inclusion is not just in the social, political and economic activities of society but also in an area of study such as Epistemology. As an idea, feminism's root could be traced to Enlightenment ideals of freedom and justice (Lennon & Whitford, 1994, p. 1). Influenced by the panoply of feminist theories and movements, there has been a systematic attempt to ensure that both as subject and object of knowledge, women are not left behind. Thus, scholars with interest in the subject matter have made attempts to articulate what they mean by a feminist epistemology, that is, a way of knowing peculiar to women. Moreover, while some of these feminist scholars work in epistemology are aimed at exposing the masculinity of different areas of knowledge (Lennon & Whitford, 1994, p. 1), others are concerned with articulating a way of knowing that pertains to women—feminist epistemology.

Some of the feminist scholars who have worked in the area of epistemology and have shaped the discourse of feminist epistemology include Evelyn Fox Keller (in her work, *Reflections on Gender and Science* and *A Feeling for the Organism*), Sandra Harding (in her work, *The Science Question in Feminism*) and Susan Bordo (*The Flight to Objectivity*) etc. With the aid of recent advances in areas such as Feminism, Cognitive Science, Philosophy of Science, Sociology of Knowledge and Naturalized Epistemology, Jane Duran in her work, *Toward a Feminist Epistemology*, sets out firstly, to argue that what has passed for epistemology, and particularly, analytic epistemology is ideologically androcentric, hyperidealized and normative (Duran, 1991, p. 19). Secondly, on the basis of her claim that traditional epistemology is inherently androcentric, she proceeds to establish grounds for her gynocentric model which she believes shall serve as a panacea to the androcentrism of the traditional epistemology.

Thus, this paper titled, *Is Traditional Epistemology Androcentric?: A Question and Response in the Light of Jane Duran's Feminist Epistemology* is primarily concerned with Duran's claim that thus far, what has been referred to as epistemology as a discipline concerned with the theory of knowledge is inherently an androcentric activity and hence, does not reflect the peculiarities of women as both subject and object of knowledge. This paper is divided into four parts and ends with a conclusion. Epistemology and feminism are the subject matter of the first part, here we tried to investigate if there is a relationship between epistemology as a sub-area of philosophy and feminism as an idea and socio-political movement. Secondly, we looked at the analytic theory of knowledge and the allegation of androcentrism, particularly with the aim of finding out what provided Duran with the overarching justification for her claim. The concern of third part is whether naturalized epistemology can save epistemology from androcentrism? Considering the nexus of naturalized epistemology with feminism, we tried to see if naturalized epistemology serves as appropriate framework, if we admit that traditional epistemology is indeed androcentric. The final part contains our response to Duran's claim that traditional epistemology is androcentric. Here we maintained that Duran's claim is not justified and that the theoretical traits that she labeled androcentric are in fact a product of the nature of analytic epistemology as a normative discipline.

## **EPISTEMOLOGY AND FEMINISM**

Is there possibly a relationship between epistemology on the one hand and feminism on the other hand? How does epistemology as a branch of philosophy that is concerned with addressing fundamental problems and questions of knowledge and the clarification of what it means to know, (Rescher 2003, p. xiii) relate to the spectrum of socio-political movements and ideologies which seeks to establish the personal, social, economic and political equality of the both sexes called feminism? (Mendus 2005, p. 292). Does the feminist project which is concerned with activism for the social, economic and political rights of women some of which include but not limited to “right to: vote, hold public office, work, earn equal pay, own property, receive education, enter contracts, have equal rights within marriage, and maternity leave, access to contraception, legal abortions, etc.,” (Echols 1989, p. 23) have any nexus with epistemology?

Some of the recurring fundamental questions and problems bedeviling epistemology could be expressed as questions: What is knowledge and what are its essential features? From where does our knowledge originate (sources)? “How do we know (process or procedure)? What is the extent of our knowledge, is there actually a limit to what we can know? Etc.” (Moser & Nat 2003, p. 1). In the light of the feminist agitations, we may add new epistemological questions like: Do our biological or physiological constructions influence our quest for knowledge? Is there a way of knowing that is peculiar to both genders? These questions particularly, the two latter ones seem to draw us closer to the possibility of a nexus between epistemology and feminism. If we grant that there possibly is a nexus between epistemology and feminism, what exactly is the nature of the nexus? Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby did maintain that the nature of the nexus between epistemology and feminism is a friendly one. Referencing the brand of Michele Le Doeuff’s feminism, Fricker and Hornsby maintains that her feminism serves as a powerful instrument against prejudice and enables an individual to judge for oneself and grants the individual the “ability to uproot the habit of holding on to old opinions and to reveal women as rational knowers” (Fricker and Hornsby 2000, pp. 128-129).

If relations between feminism and epistemology were entirely friendly, then feminism’s contribution to the subject would be to point this out, as Astell did. ‘Feminist epistemology’ would be - epistemology aware of its own feminist implications. But there is more to the story than this, and there are many ways in which relations have not been entirely friendly. One central strand of the feminist contribution to epistemology has been to show how, when it comes to knowledge, women get left out. Another has been to show how, when it comes to knowledge, women get hurt. These partly overlap, since women may be hurt by being left out, but may be hurt in other ways too. (Fricker and Hornsby 2000, p. 129)

Both as object of knowledge and subject of knowledge, Rae Langton made an attempt to show how women may be left out in our quest for knowledge and the need for feminism or more precisely, feminist epistemology as a panacea to this undesirable negligence of women in the human epistemic quest. First, one of the ways women may be left out as objects of knowledge is that, “women might fail to be known” (Langton cited in Fricker & Hornsby 2000, p. 130). In the course of study of the various institutionalized branches of knowledge:

Women’s lives may be rendered invisible by particular bodies of knowledge, such as history, economics, medicine and philosophy itself. When historians chronicle only kings and dates and battles, women are left out. When economists analyze the relations between capital and labour, ignoring unpaid labour in the home, women are left out. When scientists study heart disease using male-only samples, women are left out. When philosophers define human beings as rational animals, assuming all the while that women are not rational, women are left out. To the extent that these things happen, women remain a kind of *terra incognita*. (Langton cited in Fricker & Hornsby 2000, p. 130)

Secondly, as subjects of knowledge, women may be left out of the human quest for knowledge by ‘failing to be knowers’ and this happens because they are often deprived of the knowledge men have. Langton maintains, that, from the earliest days of feminism it has been eloquently argued that women’s subordination is constituted in part by barriers to the knowledge to which men have access” (Langton cited in Fricker & Hornsby 2000, pp. 130- 131).

Feminism as socio-political movement and ideology or doctrine appears to be a herculean task when it comes exhaustively delineating what it is from what it is not. However, from a historical perspective, it cannot be disputed that, “over the centuries, and in many different countries, women have spoken out for their sex, and articulated, in different ways, their complaints, their needs, and their hopes” (Walters 2005, p. 2). One of such complaint among women though not without some male sympathizers against what they perceive to be a patriarchally biased or dominated society is what Jane Duran refers to as androcentric epistemology. In her work, *Towards a Feminist Epistemology*, Duran alleges that hitherto the rise of naturalized epistemology in the 1960s a great deal of what has passed for epistemology since the era of Plato is ideologically androcentric. She holds the overt emphasis on pure and speculative reason devoid of the influence of human passions and physiological functions alongside the conception of women as the ‘other being’ enslaved to bodily functions and incapable of separating her reason from the body as held by traditional epistemologists as the cause of “a tradition in epistemology that is at once virtually exclusively normative and staggeringly androcentric” (Duran, 1991, p. 8).

### **ANALYTIC THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE ALLEGATION OF ANDROCENTRISM**

The idea of a feminist epistemology, at least, Duran’s version, is a product of a reaction to the perceived prevalence of a male-dominated or biased conception of epistemology that does not accord equal or adequate cognizance to the unique feminine features on the discourse in the theory of knowledge. Traditionally, in philosophy, normative epistemology refers to those aspects of epistemology that are dominantly concerned with first-order theorizing with regards to such recurring questions and problems as; what is truth? How can we know? How ought we to form justified belief? etc. Alvin I. Goldman delineates three conceptions of epistemology on the basis of their aims and functions. They are; Descriptive Epistemology, Analytical Epistemology and Normative Epistemology. He warns that these three conceptions are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive (Goldman, 1985, p. 29). In her attempt to show the masculine nature of what passed as epistemology prior to the advent of naturalized epistemology, Duran appears to use the terms: analytic and normative interchangeably. She believes that the normative nature of analytic epistemology manifest itself in the course of our epistemic analysis of these problems of knowledge and the presuppositions we hold about knowledge (Duran, 1991, p. 19). In the part one of her work, entitled, *Androcentric Epistemology*, Duran sets out to establish what she terms the “normative and hyperidealized nature of contemporary analytic epistemology” (Duran, 1991, p. 19). In tracing the historical roots of epistemology as a sub-field of philosophy, she contends that epistemology is as old as the Platonic Dialogues but the present status or advancement made in epistemology as it is the case today is largely due to the modern era, that is, the post-Cartesian period and partly also due to the twentieth century that have witnessed more narrowly defined epistemological question. An instance of this question is the question of the fourth condition for knowledge. Predominantly utilizing Bertrand Russell’s, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Duran embarks on a task to establish the problem of the epistemic tradition of philosophy. Referencing Russell on the Cartesian architectural quest for indubitable knowledge and his eventual arrival at *cogito ergo sum*, Duran draws attention to subjectivity of certain knowledge as highlighted by

Russell when following the logical expression of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. This, she claims, has been at the heart of contemporary epistemology.

Duran went on to highlight some of the major epistemological theories and their influence; she begins with Russell's logical atomism. She is of the view that the work foreshadows a good deal of the history of twentieth-century epistemology and from the works of Descartes and even Russell's logical atomism she tried to show that there is a "desire to place empirical knowledge on a footing equal to non-empirical or deductively ascertainable knowledge" (Duran, 1991, p. 23). This underlining pattern in epistemology she contends manifest itself in the twentieth-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 perspective of Russell that Duran blames for the move among professional epistemologists to give "a tighter and narrower account of knowledge, or claims to knowledge derived through the senses" (Duran, 1991, p. 23). In the subsection entitled, *Sense-Data Views: Normative Theories of Privileged Access*, she proceeds to argue 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). In reaction to this atomistic and sense-data view, by J. L. Austin's objection, Duran points out that this brought about an attempt to tackle the conditions for knowledge from the view point of analytically "tight necessary and sufficient conditions" (Duran, 1991, P. 26), by American philosophers. From the stand point of necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge in approaching the question of knowledge, Duran held that this new standpoint ended up all cases of knowledge, "whether empirically derived or not, on the same footing" (Duran 1991, p. 26). Even the American analytic epistemology is not without its own impediments. In examining Edmund Gettier's classical reaction to the traditional epistemological conception of knowledge as justified true belief and the panoply of reactions to Gettier's thesis in the twentieth-century were all purely obsessed with normativity. Neither Gettier in his hypothetical examples nor scholars with their counterexamples responding to his work cared to at least make reference to the human cognitive process as that of rational agent seeking knowledge. Yet these cognitive dimensions of humans play a vital role both in the generation, storage and retrieval of human knowledge.

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)

It is her observation and judgement that vast majority of what passes as analytic epistemology is not only hyperidealized and ideologically androcentric but originated in sheer apsychological manner and have held on to this apsychological character from the 1960s and 1970's. This apsychological character of epistemological theory became a cause of concern among epistemologists and forms the needed grounds for "another important move in the theory of knowledge" -naturalized epistemology (Duran, 1991, p. 30).

Duran's allegation of androcentrism as an underlying ideological current underpinning contemporary analytic epistemology majorly springs forth from these her analysis of the theoretical traits of traditional epistemology. Particularly, in the light of an analysis of

knowledge in terms of “logically necessary and sufficient conditions, lack of allusion to descriptively adequate models, the importance of counter-examplification, putative universalizability of conditions and so forth” (Duran, 1991, p. 44). It is in fact these kinds of traits that Duran and other feminist theorists describes and labels androcentric. The structuring of traditional Western epistemology is inherently and purely normative in its approach in theorizing about knowledge without adequate consideration of what humans engage in cognitive activities, in quest for knowledge, actually do go about it. On the contrary, it seems too obsessed with what approach the ideal would-be knower ought to take in arriving at knowledge. This hyperidealized nature of epistemology is not only too stringent an approach to theorizing about knowledge but also narrows the bounds of a holistic approach to epistemology. These aforementioned traits of analytic epistemology are in fact repudiated by Duran hence, her advocacy for a more naturalized theory of knowledge liberated from the shackles of the stringent and hyperidealized normative foundations or analytic epistemology. However, the question at this juncture is this: how would a naturalized epistemology deliver epistemology from the undesirable allegation of androcentrism, if we grant that in fact those aforementioned traits are indeed androcentric or a product of androcentrism?

### **WOULD A NATURALIZED EPISTEMOLOGY SAVE EPISTEMOLOGY FROM ANDROCENTRISM?**

In the part one of her work, entitled, *Androcentric Epistemology*, Duran seems to have weighed the entire Western traditional epistemology on an epistemic gender-neutral or gender-inclusive scale, and in her observation and judgment finds it wanting of the charges of androcentrism. Thus, she sets out to liberate epistemology from the parochial shackles of androcentrism to a ‘liberal and holistic’ feminist perspective through the framework of naturalized epistemology. If we assume that all the enumerated problems inherent in analytic epistemology as argued by Duran is indeed androcentric, how would a naturalized epistemology salvage epistemology from its undesirable androcentric trait? Duran is of the view that yes, her gynocentric model grounded on the framework of naturalized epistemology would save epistemology from androcentrism. The embracive nature of naturalized epistemology as a cluster of philosophical views that advocate the adoption of empirical methods and the utilization of the empirical findings of certain fields of study in understanding epistemic phenomena is considered a panacea to the overt masculine nature of traditional epistemology by Duran. Tracing the roots of naturalized epistemology, she pointed out that: “The late 1960s and the early 1970s saw an enormous rise in the development of what came to be known as cognitive science, the intersections 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. 3).

Duran considers the rise of naturalized epistemology as a necessary precursor to her idea of feminist theory of knowledge. The rise and advances of cognitive science was not entirely embraced by epistemologists, but by the 1970s things began to change. For instance, such work as *Beyond Foundationalism and Coherence Theory* by Hilary Kornblith and

*Epistemology Naturalized* by W. V. Quine had apparently begun to suggest the need for a replacement of epistemology by natural and social sciences. Kornblith in the beginning of his essay explicitly acknowledges the view predominant in positivist epistemology that epistemological questions should be divorced from psychological questions on grounds that epistemology is traditionally considered a normative discipline. This view Kornblith believes is mistaken and rather supports “a psychological approach to the questions about knowledge and justification” (Kornblith, 1980, p. 597) like Quine and Alvin Goldman. Quine expresses similar view when he speaks of epistemology thus:

Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence, of natural science. It studies a natural phenomenon viz. a physical human subject. This human-subject is accorded a certain experimentally controlled input certain patterns of irradiation in assorted frequencies for instance, and in the fullness of time the subject delivers as output a description of the three-dimensional world and its history. (Quine, 1969, pp. 82-83)

However, subsequently, a new wave literature in epistemology that generally did not call for a replacement of epistemology but the recognition by epistemology of works that explicitly are related to the possibility of knowledge acquisition began to surface. Duran 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 apsychologistic approach to epistemology and this is a mistake. Furthermore, she 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 the epistemic agent, “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” (Duran, 1991, p. 40). However, this is not the case as human agents seldom perform epistemic tasks in an ideal manner. Duran remarks of the naturalizing project thus:

If contemporary analytic epistemology may be thought of as non-naturalized and androcentric, the current naturalization of theory of knowledge at least strikes the positive note of moving in another direction. If, as some theorists have contended, gynocentric thinking tends to concern itself with the particular and the contextualized (or as Bordo has it, the “View from Everywhere”), the newer naturalized material is already somewhat less androcentric simply insofar as it is more context sensitive and less concerned with a highly idealized universalizability. (Duran, 1991, p. 4)

From the foregoing, we can easily notice the rigid and hyperidealized normative emphasis of analytic epistemology been challenged by a more embracive, descriptive, empirical and collaborative attempt to grasp not just the epistemic process of knowledge acquisition and justification but the cognitive or psychological process of an epistemic agent within the naturalized epistemology framework.

## **IS TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY ACTUALLY ANDROCENTRIC? A RESPONSE IN THE LIGHT OF DURAN'S FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY**

Feminism as a distinct philosophical idea has turned into an umbrella term for a plethora of meanings and usages, hence, making it a difficult task to exhaustively and adequately delineate what it precisely is in a single definition. Even within feminist thinking, there are divergent and often contradictory views (Lennon & Whitford, 1994, p. 1). However, in spite of this definitional challenge, there are basic tenets or commonalities shared by feminist theorists in spite of their individual peculiarities or area of interest with regards to the perceived injustices faced by women by virtue of their gender as women in different areas of life. Such areas encompass the social, political, economic and even personal or private aspects of women's life. Epistemology is also not exempted; it is one area feminist theorists have taken up to articulate the peculiarities of women's experience as both object and subject of knowledge. Duran's feminist epistemology is simultaneously a reaction against androcentrism which she claims is inherent in much of traditional epistemological theorizing and her investigation into the possibility of a way of knowing that pertains to women.

After engaging in a ground clearing attempt to establish her case against the traditional analytic epistemology which in her judgement is both androcentric and apsychological, Duran proceeds to lay foundation for a feminist epistemology and the possibility of a gynocentric model. In the third chapter of her work, she provides an overview of what has come to be known as feminist epistemology, particularly, as it has been constructed by other feminist theorists interested in epistemological problem and who engaged in a task she describes as being of "crucial importance for the intersection of naturalized and gynocentric strands" (Duran, 1991, p. 103) of thinking that she intends to create. Some of the feminist theorist that featured majorly in Duran's work include: Evelyn Fox Keller, Sandra Harding and Susan Bordo. And other hosts of feminist theorists such as: Ruth Hubbard, Helen Longino, Elizabeth Prior and Robert Pargetter, Loraine Code, and Alison Wylie are some of the scholars who part of their works as previewed by Duran enabled her to clearly delineate what she meant by feminist epistemology. Moreover, the works of some feminists specifically the French feminists like Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray etc. whose works were influenced by the general Continental tradition in philosophy and serves as a source of variation from traditional philosophy.

Having employed these numerous literatures in an attempt to elaborately establish grounds for a feminist epistemology from the feminist theories of these scholars, what does Duran delineates as feminist epistemology? For Duran, what is meant by feminist epistemology or "feminists' epistemics" is a model that is not only grounded in inherently female practices or pragma but that is also applicable to women cross and inter-culturally. Central to Duran's feminist epistemology is the emphasis on the importance of nonverbal means of communication and the sensitivity of the female to such form of communication in general. Thus, she asserts 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). Moreover, it is an indispensable tenet of Duran's Feminist Epistemology that knowledge acquisition, that is epistemic justification is a context and culture-related process. Hence, it is due to this process of knowledge acquisition she claims that her model is applicable to all context and culture-related process (Duran, 1991, p. 185). She believes this

provides her model with the fluidity not found in non-naturalized model 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 Crux of Duran's model having been expressed, we are left with the very pertinent question: Is traditional epistemology androcentric? Considering that the overarching justification of Duran's Feminist Epistemology is based on her observation and conclusion of the nature and inadequacies of traditional analytic epistemology. Is Duran's claim actually the case that analytic epistemology is androcentric? In response to this, we argue otherwise with three major reasons, that Duran is not justified in labeling analytic epistemology as androcentric.

Firstly, it is necessary to note that, Duran did not directly assert that analytic epistemology is androcentric but did so indirectly on the basis of the theoretical traits she observed. Such traits include the "normative and hyperidealized nature of contemporary analytic epistemology" (Duran, 1991, p. 19). Also, "analysis in terms of logically necessary and sufficient conditions, lack of allusion to descriptively adequate models, the importance of counterexamplification, putative universalizability of the conditions (of knowledge) and so forth" (Duran, 1991, p. 44). One could argue that some, if not all of these traits are not essentially androcentric but could be an attribute of the nature of the task of analytically theorizing about knowledge. Moreover, the prevailing *zeitgeist* of the era (analytic tradition) which was in itself a reaction against such continental philosophies as existentialism and phenomenology, etc. was concerned with the primary emphasis on language and logical analysis in elucidation of meaning and proper usage of language and by extension our attainment of knowledge. There was a need to precisely and clearly state what conditions were required for an ideal knower to be justified in his or her claim to knowledge. It is this normative aspect of analytic epistemology that Duran appears to be dissatisfied with and thus, believes it is androcentric. It apparently seems to be the case that without judging analytic epistemology to be androcentric, she possibly would not have had the grounds to introduce her feminist epistemology. This is arguably unnecessary as naturalized epistemology largely undertakes the investigation of the contexts, social and individual peculiarities in the task of theorizing about knowledge.

Secondly, the normative nature of analytic epistemology requires these theoretical traits (normative, hyperidealized, stringent, narrow and obsession with universalizability) which Duran dubbed androcentric, are in fact some of the basic traits that sets analytic epistemology apart from other aspects of epistemology as a normative discourse also concerned with the task of outlining the basic conditions of knowledge. Moreover, as a branch of philosophy, epistemology is a normative discipline that is primarily concerned "among other things, with questions about how reasoning ought to proceed. Such questions can be answered, we are told, independently of investigation into the processes that in fact occur when reasoning takes place" (Kornblith, 1980, p. 597). Despite the fact that, like Kornblith, Duran thinks that this approach is mistaken, we need to be clear that it is the nature of epistemology as a normative enterprise involved in the theoretical analysis of knowledge that warranted such theoretical traits that Duran dubbed androcentric. Regardless of how we decide to label those theoretical traits of analytic epistemology, we cannot expect that the nature of a discipline engaged primarily with a normative task pertaining to fundamental questions and problems of knowledge should be similar with that of a discipline that is engaged with a descriptive activity.

Lastly, without conceding, if we grant that analytic epistemology is indeed androcentric, then one would have expected that Duran's Feminist Epistemology should call for a total

jettisoning of traditional epistemology and should erect or at least provide us with an idea on how to erect a new epistemological edifice but no, she does not. Rather, she held that it is still relevant to epistemology. To put it in her words: “However, androcentric the tradition of the professional epistemologists has been up to now, it has the virtue of being a rigorous method of inquiry and being a finely tuned philosophical apparatus” (Duran, 1991, p. 15). Given the option she chooses, it is fair to think that she actually does have a problem with the stringent and narrow nature of theorizing and not necessarily because analytic epistemology is *per se* androcentric.

## CONCLUSION

If indeed there is a way of knowing that is peculiar to women as both the subject and object of knowledge, naturalized epistemology does justice to that. Duran’s idea of a feminist epistemology, we admit, has raised awareness about the peculiarities of women as knowers. However, the inadequacies of analytic epistemology do not provide Duran with an overarching justification to label analytic epistemology as androcentric on the basis of its prevailing theoretical traits as a normative enterprise. Drawing our attention to a way of knowing that pertains to women do not necessarily require a reactionary response to analytic epistemology and its eventual labeling as androcentric by Duran. The theoretical traits of analytic epistemology pointed out by Duran we argue, posit and hold as a product of the normative nature of analytic epistemology and are not necessarily and essentially androcentric as she claims.

In conclusion, with regards to Duran’s claim that traditional epistemology is androcentric, this study concludes that those theoretical traits which she labels as androcentric are not androcentric, but are by-products of the nature of the task of epistemology as normative discipline. With three major reasons, the paper objects to Duran’s claim that traditional epistemology is androcentric.

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