

Solidarity, Knowledge and Social Hope

The paper investigates the ideas of solidarity and social hope textured in critiquing western epistemology and politics of knowledge production. Richard Rorty's anti-foundationalist, anti-representationalist critique argues for the de-hierarchization of knowledge-claims. The cultural-conversational turn to knowledge and social hope in the creation of democratic community finds its rationale in the conception of human solidarity, in the most praiseworthy human abilities of trust and cooperation. The idea of social hope, a critical engagement of the knower with knowledge production in the feminist discourse, however, is another anti-essentialist stance that illuminates the various axes of domination, which the pragmatization of knowledge and methods does not account for. It is in this context, that the paper examines the politics of solidarity vis-à-vis knowledge construction in Donna Haraway, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Marnia Lazreg and argues that solidarity as dissent provides the knower a chance to articulate hope in the transformative goals of knowledge and education.

Keywords: *Critique of epistemology, Rorty, politics of knowledge, politics of solidarity, social hope*

Introduction

The Western epistemology situates knowledge-claims on a vertical plane either as rational, transcendental essences or as true representations in the Glassy essence of the knower's incorrigibility. The Cartesian epistemology has dominated the orthodox conception of philosophy as a "mirror of nature". This conception of knowledge as a perfect representation of reality is undergirded by a modernist prejudice of absolute truth, wedded to the absolute conception of reality. Richard Rorty's anti-foundational, anti-representational polemic against philosophy-as-epistemology, a seventeenth century disciplinary emergence, particularly in the writings of Descartes, condemns it as a *demarcative* project, an unnatural desire for certainty. In opposition to the verticality of the cognitive/non-cognitive, epistemology/hermeneutics hard/soft sciences divide, Rorty argues for the horizontal figure of epistemology. The horizontal configuration of epistemology appreciates many perspectives and points of view emanating from the diversity and heterogeneity of human culture as bona fide determinants of knowledge. Rorty's abiding faith in the universality of hermeneutic praxis rather licenses everyone to construct her own little whole, her own little language-game and crawl into it. Nonetheless, hermeneutics is also a hope for conversation, finding new skills, new virtues to learn and grow in confronting other cultures/domains in the most praiseworthy human abilities of trust and cooperation. Rorty charges the Platonic-Aristotelian conception of rationality *to penetrate appearance into reality* as weakening of social fabric, divisive of society into the lovers and deniers of truth. If the hierarchy of knowledge-claims refrains us from doing interesting things with methods, the idea of

1 solidarity as moral expansion, in being tolerant to even the wildest
 2 differences/cultures is a democratic hope for equal chance and opportunity of
 3 happiness for all. The utopia of liberal democracy sought in de-hierarchization
 4 and pragmatization of knowledge is, however, an expression of a deep-seated
 5 faith in human solidarity. Bernstein accuses Rorty of “deep humanism” that
 6 “*there is nothing that we can rely on but ourselves and our fellow human*
 7 *beings*” (2008, p. 22). The myth of solidarity, according to him, gives us only
 8 the idea of personalized progress, and does not radicalize the conception of a
 9 democratic life. Rorty’s critique of knowledge hierarchy replacing
 10 epistemology with social hope, however, does not address the exclusionary
 11 logic of subjugation in the production of knowledge. Seeing from the *below*,
 12 from the historical, embodied and agential accounts of experiences/meanings
 13 is a critical engagement with underlying patterns and structures of domination
 14 in the creations of meanings and bodies. Haraway, Mohanty and, Lazreg in
 15 problematizing the questions of identity and difference, entangled in the
 16 production of knowledge and meanings, theorize feminist solidarity as an
 17 analytic space to articulate alternative insurgent knowledges and pedagogies.
 18 The politics of solidarity vis-à-vis the politics of knowledge, in building
 19 connections *contra* the logic of ‘us vs. them, and in articulating oppositional
 20 practices, offers a new metaphor of *vision*. Conceptualization of knowledge in
 21 and through solidarity, as an ethical-political stance, provides the knower a
 22 chance to articulate hope in the transforming ideals of knowledge and
 23 education. In the following sections, the paper examines Rorty’s post-
 24 philosophical social hope and the feminist praxis of solidarity. From the
 25 feminist perspective of solidarity that accentuates the cultural-conversational
 26 account of knowledge, and offers an active dissent to the appropriationist logic
 27 of objectification we can rearticulate the idea of social hope.

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30 **Rorty’s Post-philosophy and Solidarity**

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32 Rorty’s anti-foundationalist, anti-representationalist critique of western
 33 epistemology is anti-Platonic. More precisely, it is anti-dualist and anti-
 34 essentialist. Drawing out appearance/reality, inside/outside, essence/accident,
 35 found/made binaries, according to him, is not a useful vocabulary now for the
 36 present finitist, experimentalist age that cares for a global, cosmopolitan,
 37 classless and a casteless society. In *Philosophy and Social Hope* (1999), Rorty
 38 charges the Platonic-Aristotelian conception of rationality in humankind’s
 39 most distinctive and praiseworthy ability *to penetrate appearance into reality*
 40 as weakening of the social fabric, divisive of society into the lovers and
 41 deniers of truth. The Platonic belief in the Really Real, soul’s immateriality
 42 and co-naturality with the outside reality, a divinely, non-human affiliation to
 43 some antecedent grounding is an escape from the human finitude, from our
 44 engagement with the contingent world. Platonism, to him, is an obstacle to
 45 social hope when what we are and what we should do is decisive upon some
 46 eternal, absolute truths. In quite an un-Platonic manner, Rorty defends his

1 idea of rationality in humankind’s most praiseworthy ability of trust and
 2 cooperation. Following his academic hero Dewey, he considers that
 3 abandoning the worn out Platonic vocabulary of dualisms “will help bring us
 4 together, by enabling us to realize that trust, social cooperation and social
 5 hope are where our humanity begins and ends” (Rorty, 1999, p. xv).

6 The idea of solidarity, a sense of community in making our institutions
 7 more just and less cruel, for Rorty, has no foundations in human nature; it
 8 rather stakes its claim in the human condition that “we all feel pain and
 9 humiliation in the same manner” (See, 1989). This imaginative sensitivity is
 10 thus thought of encompassing even the wildest differences. The articulation of
 11 human rationality as moral expansion in the ability of trust and cooperation
 12 envisages a democratic hope of equal opportunity and equal chance for
 13 happiness, a goal that Rorty says “is not written in the stars” (1999, p. xxix).
 14 The modern professionalized disciplinary privilege of philosophy as a “mirror
 15 of nature” that dichotomizes serious/non-serious, hard/soft sciences,
 16 epistemology/hermeneutics is of no hope in this regard. Against this divisive
 17 representationalist language that disconnects ‘will to truth’ from ‘will to
 18 happiness’, the hermeneutic turn, the universality of communicative praxis,
 19 learning and growing in confronting alien cultures and discourses, to him, is a
 20 vocabulary of solidarity, increasing our abilities to cope well with our
 21 contingent needs and purposes. This conversational vocabulary of evolving
 22 consensus repudiates epistemology’s desire for an ideal terminus, cracking the
 23 Code of all codes. Contrary to the desire for methodologically securing that
 24 our future is in the right direction of getting at the essences – human and non-
 25 human, the goal of inquiry, Rorty stresses, is to build our self-image of doing
 26 interesting things with methods, use them to reweave our beliefs, increase our
 27 chances of a better satisfactory future over the less satisfactory present.

28 Rorty’s de-professionalization of philosophy aims to regain its cultural
 29 position and accentuate the cultural-conversational character of all inquiries.
 30 According to him, “...philosophy is one of the techniques for reweaving our
 31 vocabulary of moral deliberation in order to accommodate new beliefs”
 32 (Rorty, 1989, p. 196). In *Philosophy As Cultural Politics* (2007), he
 33 emphasizes that philosophy has always been a transitional genre. Changing
 34 the discourse from the love of God to the more workable idea of truth, for
 35 example, is how philosophy has been insightful for humanity. Reweaving our
 36 beliefs and practices, changing the course of conversation, persuading new
 37 roles, and new social practices is the cultural value of philosophy that makes it
 38 *optional*. That is, one can choose it like a literary text or a novel, or poetry in
 39 meeting some needs. This takes away philosophy’s justificatory preeminence
 40 and authority in matters of truth, reality, god etc. that are believed to occur to
 41 us naturally.¹ And, this utilitarian ethic also does not make philosophy an
 42 expert giving a grand theory of risk management. “Cultural politics is the least
 43 norm-governed human activity”, Rorty states (2007, p. 21).

¹Rejecting philosophy’s claim of epistemic authority, *pace* Brandom, Rorty argues that the question of authority, particularly epistemic authority, belongs to social practices and any belief in the ideas of truth, reality, objectivity other than the society are the ‘disguised moves’. (Rorty, 2007, 7)

1 Rorty's idea of philosophy as cultural politics aims to repudiate not only
 2 philosophy's justificatory pre-eminence but also that of any other discourse
 3 that upholds a universalist, essentialist position. At the same time, it
 4 accentuates the cultural-conversational nature of inquiry that we can be
 5 appreciated as the idea of tolerant epistemology and hope for a democratic
 6 future. Rorty's 'redescription' of philosophy, striking off the age-old
 7 disciplinary antagonisms between philosophy, poetry and sophistry, indicates
 8 this position. To him, both philosophy and poetry in claiming ineluctable
 9 truths, and in confronting the ineffable respectively are unpragmatic and
 10 unreliable, *the public relation gimmicks*. The metaphors of grandeur and
 11 profundity, the absolute conception of reality and encountering the ineffable
 12 in the depth of one's soul, liberating philosophy and poetry from any
 13 conceptual mutation, assign privilege to rationalism and romanticism
 14 respectively.² Alluding to Isaiah Berlin, Rorty concedes that both
 15 universalism and romanticism, in exalting reason-passion divide, are the
 16 expressions of "the infinite" (of the ontotheological tradition). The idea of
 17 infinite in universalism or rationalism is that of an over-arching framework
 18 something against which nothing else has any power and romanticism's idea
 19 of infinity abandons all constraints "in particular all the limitations imposed
 20 by the human past... It is the idea of perfect freedom decoupled from that of
 21 perfect knowledge and of affiliation with the invulnerable" (Rorty, 2007, p.
 22 83). Rorty's argument is that universalism (including Habermasian
 23 metaphysical proclivity to universal validity in his defense of communicative
 24 rationality) dramatizes the need for intersubjective agreement and
 25 romanticism dramatizes the need for novelty, need to be imaginative in
 26 finding newer solutions to our contingent problems. Philosophy, according to
 27 him, balances both these needs. Without invoking the promise of universal
 28 validity and evading from responsibility, cultural politics of new, imaginative
 29 ideas, new prophesies negotiates a space that aligns philosophy with poetry
 30 and sophistry. Neo-sophistry, the cultural role of philosophy, and inquiry in
 31 general, has been looked at as hope envisaging the democratization of
 32 knowledge and creation of democratic community.

33 Democratic hope, Rorty argues, requires experimental tinkering with
 34 liberal institutions and not any philosophical foundation. Although the
 35 articulation of the political does not entail from the common human essence, a
 36 philosophical *back up*, Rorty's idea of democratic hope in trusting human
 37 abilities to cooperate and find newer solutions to contingent needs and desires
 38 is a deep faith in human solidarity. His idea of solidarity, a non-methodic
 39 account of rationality, is that of civic virtues of "tolerance, respect for the
 40 opinions of those around one, willingness to listen, reliance on persuasion
 41 rather than force" (1991, p. 37). On this account of rationality, more like the
 42 differences of 'sane' and 'reasonable' than the rational/irrational,
 43 cognitive/non-cognitive divide, Rorty has argued, that science (differentiating

²The latest variant of this divisive and less useful vocabulary, according to Rorty, is C. P. Snow's "two-cultures" syndrome, i.e., whether human beings can attain their fullest potentiality by using rational or imaginative faculties (2007, 74).

1 science as a ‘community of solidarity’ from science as ‘community of
 2 objectivity’) is a moral exemplar, an exemplar of increasing intersubjective
 3 agreement about what truth is, “a commendatory term for well-justified
 4 beliefs” (1991, p. 24). He also emphasizes, “these are the virtues which
 5 members of a civilized society must possess if the society is to endure”
 6 (Rorty, 1991, P. 37). The shift in the conception of human rationality as
 7 accurately mirroring reality to the vocabulary of edification, hermeneutic
 8 openness, a moral expansion of a ‘free and open encounter’ across exotic
 9 cultures/discourses thus suffices to weave the political utopia of a liberal
 10 society.

11 Rorty’s post-philosophical utopia of a democratic community seems a
 12 natural corollary to his anti-Platonism. The political entails, as if, from
 13 abandoning the divisive rationality, the language of binarisms. This
 14 presupposes deep human solidarity. Richard J. Bernstein accuses Rorty of
 15 going against his own grains and presupposing deep humanism replacing the
 16 ‘epistemological myth of the given’. The ‘historical myth’ of solidarity, deep
 17 fellow feeling in envisaging a democratic community, Bernstein argues, also
 18 does not align with Dewey whom Rorty considers his academic hero. Deplete
 19 with any resistance, any political discourse, conflicting and incompatible, the
 20 radicalization of the democratic life that Dewey emphasized, in Rorty’s
 21 pragmatism, is only an ‘aestheticized pragmatism’ of tolerant celebration of
 22 self-making, self-creation toward one’s own progress. Solidarity or ‘we-
 23 identity’, in the naturalness of our shared habits, cultural consensus is only a
 24 benign phenomenon having “no genuine resistance, no otherness” (Bernstein,
 25 1987, p. 554). Bernstein’s criticism of the naivety of solidarity for a political
 26 program of liberal democracy is insightful in examining the discourse of
 27 knowledge and solidarity from an ethical-political angle. Inasmuch as
 28 knowledge-construction is power-nexused, the *givenness* of solidarity
 29 provides no critical stance. The naivety of methodological solidarity in
 30 replacing epistemology with social hope falls short of this goal when the
 31 ethical-political underpinnings of the exclusionary logic of western
 32 epistemology and science are not being taken into account.

33 The discourse of knowledge is political through and through insofar as
 34 our identities, meanings and bodies are constructed/erased in the creation of
 35 knowledge. The language of trust and cooperation cultivates the idea of
 36 tolerant epistemology in the naivety of moral expansion, but it fails to analyze
 37 the power structures anchored in the making of knowledge. In fact, solidarity
 38 too is hegemonic; plays the politics of existential-epistemic erasure inasmuch
 39 as it essentializes the other. The Western/Eurocentric academic feminism in
 40 voicing for the Third World women rather solidifies the third world difference
 41 in the normative ordering of the western, Eurocentric knowledge as *the* form
 42 of knowledge. Nevertheless, the feminist discourse also theorizes solidarity as
 43 a dissenting voice against the dominant power-nexused western epistemology
 44 and science, and equally against the western feminist scholarship about the
 45 Third World women. In what follows, the paper examines the theorization of
 46 feminist solidarity in the conceptualization of radical knowledges and

1 pedagogies toward the emancipatory and transformative goals of knowledge
 2 and education. In surveying 25 years of the feminist epistemology project at
 3 *Hypatia*, Helen Longino (2010) stresses moving beyond our borders and
 4 absorbing multiculturalism in reshaping the epistemological project.
 5 Theorization of trans-national solidarity as a decolonizing stance resonates
 6 this spirit to learn/unlearn the feminist position in reshaping knowledge and
 7 education. To the transforming ideals of knowledge and education, feminist
 8 trans-national solidarity works as both a means and an end.

11 **Feminist Solidarity: A Praxis**

13 The language of hope, utopia with uncompromising accounts of
 14 rationality and objectivity is the vision that the feminist successor science
 15 aspires for. When Haraway says, “science has been utopian and visionary
 16 from the start; that is one reason “we” need it”, she envisions hope in science,
 17 in knowledge (1988, p. 585). However, when objectivity symbolizes
 18 transcendence, she emphatically argues that omnipotence and transcendence
 19 are not our goals; we rather want a better livable, partially shared world and
 20 not a faithful ‘real’ account of the world. Haraway aims to unmask the
 21 totalitarian narrative of science, the verbose of the representationalist
 22 epistemology of truth, the codified canonical cognitive laws, and science
 23 academia and research controlled by the few male, white elitist knowers in
 24 mustering the language of objectivity and transcendence. Taking the
 25 dominant metaphor of ‘vision’, she calls the science rhetoric a god’s trick, an
 26 ‘unregulated gluttony’, a devouring unrestricted vision “to see and not to be
 27 seen, to represent while escaping representation” (1988, p. 581). This is
 28 equally true for the rhetoric of ‘truth’ in the relativist and social constructivist
 29 positions.

30 Haraway claims that unmasking the elusive, unmarked, unembodied,
 31 unaccountable position is important because it threatens the sense of collective
 32 historical subjectivity in which the idea of feminist objectivity can be
 33 articulated. The politics of ‘they vs. us’, the one who can see infinitely and
 34 remain elusive, the privilege of the few elitist knowers, and the one who are
 35 not allowed not to have bodies, she argues, can be unmasked from our
 36 positioning along the various axes of race, class, gender etc. A reflective
 37 practice of understanding how our meanings, bodies get made is critical
 38 positioning, an attempt to see the making of situated agency from *below*.³
 39 Against both the totalitarian, reductionist logic of single vision and the
 40 relativistic positions of being nowhere and everywhere, Haraway sees a
 41 promise of objectivity in the knowledge from *below*, from the subjugated
 42 accounts of repression and denial. The promise of objectivity is the possibility

³ Talking about the marginalized communities of women in the global south and north in analyzing systematically the broader patterns of domination and exploitation, Chandra Talpade Mohanty also emphasizes attention to historical and cultural specificities in order to understand their “complex agency as situated subjects” (2017, p. 967).

1 of sustained critical and interpretive inquiry from these standpoints.
 2 Interpretation, translation, deconstruction, webbed connections, and ‘hope for
 3 transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing’ is a chance for
 4 change and transformation (1988, p. 588). Haraway makes it clear that
 5 feminism loves livable objectivity, “...another science: the sciences and
 6 politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood”
 7 (1988, p. 589). Critical positioning promises objectivity in partial connections,
 8 in a *stitchable* vision of a larger and objective grasp of things. She explains,
 9

10 “Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision. The knowing self is
 11 partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is
 12 always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join
 13 with another, to see together without claiming to be another. Here is the promise
 14 of objectivity; a scientific knower seeks the subject position, not of identity, but
 15 of objectivity, that is, partial connection” (Haraway, 1988, p. 586).
 16

17 The incompleteness of the partial connections not only promises
 18 objectivity; it also defies closure, a full grasp, a complete vision in solidifying
 19 one’s identity. Against the politics of the fullest vision, splitting of mind and
 20 body, subject and object, the epistemology of partial connections, Haraway
 21 claims, gives us visual clues, the knowledge centres/nodes to learn how
 22 meanings, bodies and our identities are created. This is to play solidarity in
 23 politics, in making webbed connections, in joining power-sensitive
 24 conversations to disrupt the politics of knowledge making, and asserting our
 25 position in it. Contrary to the politics of immediate vision, a discursive
 26 creation of isomorphic identities, the optics of webbed connections allows us
 27 to see the complex multiple inequalities ingrained in the historical and cultural
 28 materialities.⁴ The larger, stitchable vision at once coalesces solidarity with
 29 objectivity.⁵ Solidarity in the collective subject position, engaged in the
 30 politics of webbed connection, deconstruction, and interpretation is a dynamic
 31 critical agency subverting the totalitarian vision in the making of knowledge,
 32 meanings, and identities. Moreover, solidarity as a new metaphor of
 33 knowledge is illuminating of the power structures in the fabric of
 34 epistemology.

35 The theorization of solidarity as a complex, active oppositional agency or
 36 “we-identity” has also been exploited for articulating alternative insurgent
 37 knowledges and pedagogies. Solidarity is vacuous, benign without the inner
 38 dissent. The idea of feminist solidarity created in opposing all kinds of

⁴Against the monocular vision, Catharine A. MacKinnon similarly talks about intersectionality as a method, a distinctive stance of tracing social dynamism. She says, “intersectionality focuses awareness on people and experiences—hence, on social forces and dynamics—that, in monocular vision, are overlooked. Intersectionality fills out the Venn diagrams at points of overlap where convergence has been neglected, training its sights where vectors of inequality intersect at crossroads that have previously been at best sped through” (2013, p. 1020).

⁵Rorty also talks about objectivity in terms of intersubjectivity or community of solidarity, but his idea pertains to the context of repudiating the mind or language-independent intrinsic reality. In Haraway, solidarity coalesces with objectivity, with critical, situated knowledges.

1 oppressions in the male/female androcentric power binary, Mohanty argues, is
 2 a vacuous conception of womanhood or universal sisterhood. Women’s
 3 identity as oppressed and exploited, devoid of an active resistance to
 4 understanding the structures of domination and power is benign. In the same
 5 vein, effacing the categories of race, class, nation and abstracting gender from
 6 its complex locatable socio-cultural, political history is benign. The creation
 7 of an isomorphic, homogenous, coherent conception of women’s identity like
 8 the third world women/women of color, devoid of active resistance is a
 9 hegemonic assertion of power. Endowing solidarity to such a homogeneous
 10 construct is a denial of agency, struggles of resistance, and a chance for
 11 transformation. Assaulting the Western/European feminism, specially the
 12 American feminist scholarship about the Third World women, Mohanty
 13 argues that the discursive homogenous creation of the third world women
 14 (rather the characterization of third world difference by the same token) as
 15 historically inert, socio-politically and economically dependent, oppressed,
 16 marginal category is an essentialist identity politics, a power move. It is rather
 17 a reflexive stance of projecting the superiority of western women as secular,
 18 progressive and transforming.

19 In her anti-racist, anti-capitalist critique of western academia and
 20 scholarship, Mohanty theorizes solidarity as an active struggle “to construct
 21 the universal on the basis of particulars/differences” (2006, p. 7). In revisiting
 22 “under Western Eyes” (1986), she emphasizes that the idea of difference
 23 allows us “to explain the connections and border crossings better and more
 24 accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns
 25 more fully” (2006, p. 226). A dialectic engagement of differences and
 26 commonalities, pluralities and universality that makes the “common
 27 differences” visible provides an analytic space for articulating methodologies
 28 of dissent, and strategizing action to combat oppressions. The idea of
 29 solidarity in the relationality of identity and difference not only subverts the
 30 modern totalizing vision of power and domination; it also subverts the politics
 31 of coopting heterogeneity, differences, and the politics of multiculturalism.

32 As benign variations of cultural diversity, the notion of difference serves
 33 the politics of internationalization, accommodation and commodification of
 34 education, according to Mohanty. The idea of “harmony in diversity”
 35 bypasses power, conflicts, and the threats of disruption. On the other hand,
 36 difference defined in hierarchization and domination, is not accommodative
 37 of the incommensurables. The need, therefore, is a strategic analysis of
 38 diversity and power, disrupting empty cultural pluralism as well as the
 39 vocabulary of domination. In the context of the globalized academia,
 40 particularly the U.S. academia and its higher education restructuring that sees
 41 an upsurge of various courses and programs including cooptation of black
 42 studies/feminist studies/ethnic studies, Mohanty criticizes the
 43 internationalization and commodification of education and stresses the need
 44 to democratize the university space for dialogue, dissent and transformation.
 45 A comparative feminist study program, for example, which is based on “add
 46 and stir” method, adding the examples of non-western or third world/south

1 cultures, she argues, is a clear politics of flattening distance and difference.
 2 The dichotomous ‘us vs. them’ leaves the power relations and hierarchies
 3 untouched in the way the local (the western) is connected with the global (the
 4 other non-western world). Internationalization of the feminist studies program
 5 and other programs through depoliticizing, flattening of differences makes
 6 them consumable commodities in the logic of globalism.

7 To combat the dominant global normative ordering of knowledge,
 8 Mohanty theorizes solidarity as “the active creation of oppositional analytic
 9 and cultural spaces” (2006, p. 196). Taking Jodi Dean’s idea of “reflective
 10 solidarity”, “I ask you to stand by me over and against a third”, she articulates
 11 insurgent knowledges and pedagogies of dissent in the creation of third
 12 voice/solidarity to decolonize knowledge and practice (Mohanty, 2006, p. 7).
 13 As our “ideas are always communally wrought, not privately owned”, she
 14 argues the need for “systematic politicized practices of teaching and learning”
 15 (2006, p.1, 196). Haraway holds the same view when she argues that situated
 16 knowledges are “about communities, not about isolated individuals” (1988, p.
 17 590). Since our experiences in any coercive hierarchy co-imply the dominator
 18 and the dominated, politicizing and developing strategies of dissent in the
 19 public/communal sphere prevents them getting frozen into one’s personal,
 20 psychological space. Rather, engaging the opposite ideologies makes the
 21 power dynamics visible.

22 Talking about the comparative feminist studies/feminist solidarity model,
 23 Mohanty insists on engaging marginalized experiences, stories of struggles
 24 and resistances located in different histories of colonization in a classroom
 25 teaching practice. A relational, cross-cultural classroom environment that
 26 authorizes the third world/marginalized students’ experiences/narratives as the
 27 legitimate ‘objects’ of knowledge is not about being sensitive and
 28 accommodative of their voices. It is to create a public, cross-cultural discourse
 29 emphasizing that our experiences are not personal; instead, they are deeply
 30 historical, colonized. This is illuminating of hierarchies of power in which the
 31 first and third worlds are co-implied. Similarly, engaging with the experiences
 32 of race as shared experiences of certain ideologies, certain histories that define
 33 both white and black at the same time, is to prevent the social collapsing into
 34 frozen binaries of personal positions. Mohanty reinvigorates the feminist
 35 stand – ‘personal is political’ so that an effective public discourse is created
 36 about transforming knowledges. An active public culture of dissent in the
 37 forms of pedagogies and institutional practices is important to politicize
 38 knowledge, power and experiences enabling us understand where we stand in
 39 the public realm of knowledge and education.

40 In a similar context of the essentialist, reductionist practices, rooted in the
 41 global politics of the central/peripheral, superior/inferior, which the feminist
 42 project itself questions, Marnia Lazreg criticizes the U.S. and Eurocentric
 43 academic feminism as conceptually and methodologically flawed; rather,
 44 there is an unwillingness to explore other than the colonized social sciences.
 45 Euro-American feminist writings about the North African and Middle Eastern
 46 women taking the ‘religious’ paradigm as *the* explanatory model, and

1 representing them as the traditionalist and why they are not transformative is
 2 “a reductive, ahistorical conception of women” (Lazreg, 1988, p. 85). Lazreg
 3 argues that the concept of difference has always been a stumbling block for
 4 the Western social sciences. It is used more to understand their own
 5 institutions better than understanding the different world-view. Specifically
 6 taking the case of the western feminist writings about the Algerian women,
 7 she points out that there is an inherent contradiction in voicing for them (of
 8 course from an outsider’s perspective) and ‘disowning’ them as entirely
 9 ‘different’, and hence making learning and teaching about them an
 10 impossibility. That ‘they are so different’ from us, unprogressive, un-
 11 transforming, dominated and oppressed is a coercive optics of the
 12 dichotomous ‘*us vs. them*’. This deprives the Algerian women of their self-
 13 presence, of being, of their lived-reality, having ability to think, resist and
 14 grow. Lazreg argues, “... difference is seen as mere division. The danger of
 15 this undeveloped view lies in its verging on indifference. In this sense,
 16 anything can be said about women from other cultures as long as it appears to
 17 document their differentness from “us.” This bespeaks a lack of concern for
 18 the complexity of difference as well as a simplification of difference to mean
 19 “particularity,” that is to say, unmediated singularity” (Lazreg, 1988, p. 100).

20 This divisionary stance of an indifferent, unmediated singularity
 21 undermines the underlying phenomenon of intersubjectivity. That is,
 22 perceiving the ‘otherhood’ not just as *different*, but also as having their own
 23 world like ours, according to Lazreg. Intersubjectivity, a shared consciousness
 24 in this sense provides an epistemic lens to recognize the otherhood as a
 25 distinct historical reality combating the logic of objectifying otherness. About
 26 the Algerian women, Lazreg writes, “Women’s daily activities, the rituals
 27 they performed, the games they played, their joys and sorrows constitute the
 28 foundation on which families and their reproduction were and still are based.
 29 While the contents of these acts may be different, families in other human
 30 societies have similar foundations” (2019, p. 17). Their world-view, and even
 31 their silences circumstantial, structural as well as strategic amidst the colonial
 32 conditions, are eloquent, she concedes. Providing an epistemic stance to their
 33 lives, struggles, resentment is to prevent them being objectified. The
 34 methodology of intersubjectivity, in making sense of their concrete historical
 35 subjectivity, serves as a dehegemonizing tool against the logic of
 36 appropriation, essentializing differences that makes any comparison, any
 37 cross-cultural understanding an impossibility. Lazreg argues,

38
 39 “To take intersubjectivity into consideration when studying Algerian women or
 40 other Third World women means seeing their lives as meaningful, coherent, and
 41 understandable instead of being infused “by us” with doom and sorrow. It means
 42 that their lives like “ours” are structured by economic, political, and cultural
 43 factors. It means that these women, like “us”, are engaged in the process of
 44 adjusting, often shaping, at times resisting and even transforming their
 45 environment. It means that they have their own individuality; they are ‘for
 46 themselves’ instead of being “for us”. An appropriation of their singular

1 individuality to fit the generalizing categories of “our” analyses is an assault on
2 their integrity and on their identity” (1988, p. 98).

3
4 Differences erased by either essentializing otherness or domesticating
5 them in homogenizing multiplicities is a coercive logic of appropriation.
6 Intersubjectivity or intersubjective consciousness, an affirmation of cultures
7 not being too strange, allows us to recognize otherness, which otherwise
8 would succumb to the hegemonic binaries of first/third, north/south worlds.
9 Differences, if not frozen, can be brought into critical perspectives through
10 cross-cultural readings of the marginalized experiences, locations and
11 histories. Like Mohanty, Lazreg too emphasizes engaging the local with the
12 global, particularities with commonalities so that it is illuminative of the
13 universal concerns such as transcultural values of freedom and social justice
14 though not neglecting the distinct singular cultural individualities. The
15 dialectical engagement of differences in asserting feminist solidarity is a
16 critical stance *contra* the flattening of the differences in the coercive logic of
17 ‘us vs. them’. Theorizations of solidarity in the ideas of critical positioning,
18 common differences, and intersubjectivity in Haraway, Mohanty and Lazreg
19 respectively radicalize the notions of the knower and knowledge in relation to
20 articulating social hope. The naivety of solidarity, in Rorty, as moral
21 expansion of heterogeneity and differences, is inadequate to deal with the
22 politics of exclusion in the project of epistemology.

23 24 25 **Conclusion**

26
27 In changing the metaphor of “mirror” to “redescription”, Rorty’s vision
28 of democratic society, a hope to repair social fabric damaged by the divisive
29 foundationalist, representationalist epistemology derives from a deep trust in
30 human solidarity. De-hierarchization and pragmatization of knowledge sought
31 in methodological solidarity, however, is unilluminating of the ethical-
32 political underpinnings of the production of knowledge. The idea of feminist
33 solidarity, in crossing boundaries, in building connections provides a new
34 metaphor of *vision* to critically engage with the questions of existential-
35 epistemic erasure in the politics of knowledge construction. In the feminist
36 discourse of the interwovenness of solidarity and knowledge, which
37 overcomes the postmodern skepticism about identity and a threshold of
38 disappearance of difference, the knower gets a chance to engage herself
39 critically and reshape the landscape of knowledge and education.

40 41 42 **References**

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