Objectivity, Epistemic Objectification, and Oppression

Sally Haslanger

1. Kinds of Objectivity

The term 'objective' is used in multiple ways.[1] To begin, it is important to distinguish at least three different candidates for objectivity: objective *reality*, objective *discourse*, and objective *knowledge*. Here is how the terms are standardly (though controversially) used in current debates:

> Objective *reality* = what is 'out there', in some sense independent of us; how things are, regardless of how we think or speak about them.

> Objective *discourses* = discourses within which we can express facts.

> Objective *knowledge* = knowledge that can be justified in terms that are accessible to any rational agent.

There may be discourses that enable us to express facts that are not to be found in objective reality. For example, some would argue that secondary qualities, such as color, are not part of objective *reality* because color 'depends on us'. Nevertheless there are objective *facts* about whether a stop sign is red or blue. In contrast to color discourse, however, discourses about what's funny (allegedly) aren't even in the business of expressing facts. Color is not objectively real, but color discourse is objective; funniness isn't objectively real and its discourse isn't objective either.

Objective knowledge, in turn, is distinguishable from objective discourse for, of course, knowledge requires not just the possibility of expressing facts, but getting the facts right, and more. After all, it is *knowledge.* The thought, however, is that not all knowledge is *objective* knowledge. The demand for objectivity imposes a higher (or different) standard than what is required for other sorts of knowledge. For example, if one gained knowledge of God through mystical experience or revelation not available to all rational inquirers, this would not be objective knowledge. But if God is real, then presumably God is objectively real. So objective knowledge can't just be understood as knowledge of objective reality.

I describe these distinctions not to endorse them, but to consider how what might seem to be a politically neutral set of distinctions can function (along with other background assumptions) to sustain systems of subordination. The project in this essay is not to ask how we should best understand objectivity (in its various forms). Rather, it is to consider how the idea of objectivity is embedded in evolving social practices.

I am interested especially in cases of what we might call *epistemic objectification*. These occur when a group's actual or imagined epistemic weaknesses are wrongly taken to be due to their nature, or essential to them as a group. Epistemic objectification is often bundled with other forms of objectification that essentialize or naturalize subordinated statuses. It is important to identify how such moves discredit the voices of the subordinate or marginalized so their resistance is muted or distrusted. This discrediting is a form of testimonial injustice. But the injustice of epistemic objectification is more than testimonial. Certain models of objectivity, or objective reality, support what I call *status quo* reasoning that works, under conditions of oppression, to justify subordinating practices quite generally. Status quo reasoning is both an

epistemic injustice – since it is one factor in the perpetuation of epistemic marginalization – and also an epistemic tool of oppression.

Miranda Fricker has demonstrated vividly not only how prejudice gives rise to epistemic injustice, but how epistemic injustice is part of a loop such that it is both caused by *and* gives rise to injustice:

> Systematic testimonial injustices, then, are produced not by prejudice *simpliciter,* but specifically by those prejudices that 'track' the subject through different dimensions of social activity…when such a [tracker] prejudice generates a testimonial injustice, that injustice is systematically connected with other kinds of actual or potential injustice (Fricker 2007, 27).

As I see it, epistemic objectification is typically an important part of this loop. Individuals are subordinated and denied epistemic resources; this causes epistemic harms, sometimes in the form of epistemic deficits; contingent epistemic deficits within the group are then objectified, i.e,. treated as normal or natural, so not requiring or even allowing intervention; this rationalizes the denial of epistemic resources and epistemic credibility, thus perpetuating epistemic harm and, given the significance of knowledge both as an instrumental and final good, causing injustice broadly understood.

2. Normal, Natural and Good[2]
Let's begin with the idea that objective reality is structured: there are objective divisions between some kinds of things; these divisions aren't up to us; and the way the world works depends on these divisions. For example, there is an objective difference between hydrogen and oxygen. The difference between hydrogen and oxygen matters to the causal structure of the world. If we want to know how the world works, we should seek knowledge of chemistry, among other things.

Presumably the difference between hydrogen and oxygen is not an accidental or contingent difference. It's not as if a hydrogen atom could have had eight protons (though we might have called the element with eight protons 'hydrogen'). Each element has a nature that is responsible for how it interacts with other things, giving rise to regularities in its behavior. For example, oxygen dissolves in water, oil does not, due to the chemical composition of each. This leads to a common assumption:

Essentialist Assumption: Robust regularities are not accidental. They are due to the natures of things.[3]

But how do we determine which regularities are 'robust'? After all, oxygen doesn't dissolve in frozen water. And how much oxygen dissolves in a quantity of water depends on temperature, pressure, etc. Typically, to learn the natures of things we look for regularities under 'normal' conditions. Water is 'normally' a liquid, and oxygen dissolves in liquid water.

However, the idea of "what's normal" has two importantly different uses.

1) "What's normal" is a statistical concept: what's normal is what is statistically probable. (Normally, barns are red. Normally, November is a rainy month)
2) "What's normal," is a normative concept. What's normal is how things "ought" to be, or how things are when circumstances are "favorable." (Normally, humans begin to use language before age two. Normally, we respect others' property)

The notion of a nature (or essence) provides a link between the statistical sense of normal and the normative sense: Things manifest their nature under normal conditions. And what happens by nature is fitting or right. Or sometimes, what happens by virtue of an X's nature is fitting for Xs.[4]

This line of thought allows that what's natural for something isn't inevitable. Accidents happen. The natural course of things can be disrupted. In some conditions things manifest a 'deformity', their nature isn't fully expressed, e.g., a normal pregnancy will result in a normal offspring, but not all pregnancies or offspring are normal. A claim that something is abnormal is not just a statistical claim about how rare it is. If high lead levels are found a water supply and, as a result, the majority of the children are born with cognitive challenges, we would not conclude that these challenges are normal for children. So the link between the statistical and normative senses of 'normal' relies on a further assumption:

Normative Assumption: Things should express their natures and under normal/favorable circumstances they will. Abnormal/unfavorable circumstances are not good and should be avoided or changed.

Note, however, that the epistemic value of the link between what's normal and what's essential is questionable. If we know what is essential to X, we can determine the normal/favorable conditions for X because those are conditions under which X reveals its essence and behaves in ways that are natural for it. But if we don't know what is essential to X, it is not clear what conditions are normal/favorable for it. There is a temptation, then, to fall back on the statistical sense of normal, for that may be our best evidence of X's nature.

The problem, however, is that what's statistically normal for a kind is *not* always due to the nature of that kind because it may be caused by unfavorable or socially manipulated circumstances. For example, under conditions in which women are denied access to formal education, it will be unsurprising if they are ill-equipped to compete intellectually in the public sphere: their vocabulary and conceptual repertoire may be stunted, their reasoning may make reference to considerations that are not considered relevant. This may be interpreted, however, as "natural" for women, not a result of their contingent social circumstances; as a result, arguments that they should be given access to formal education fall flat, for women don't display the cognitive capacities that would make efforts to educate them fruitful.

Moreover, what's due to the nature of the kind is *not* always good or worth protecting (what *ought to be*), because we are sometimes in a position to improve on what's natural. For example, on one interpretation the whole point of society (cooperation, education, medicine, etc.) is to improve upon the natural. So both the essentialist and the normative assumptions are misguided. In short, what's 'normal' is not always natural, and what's natural is not always best. The corollary is also important: what is abnormal or unnatural is not always bad.

3. Status Quo Reasoning

The *Essentialist* and *Normative Assumptions,* provide excellent resources to reinforce the status quo. Suppose we aren't in a position to make assumptions about the natures of things. But the natures of things (in chemistry and also politics) matter. If we make policies that require people to behave in ways that are contrary to human nature, it is a problem. Aiming to 'stick to the facts', suppose we note that on the whole, Fs are G, e.g., that women are nurturing. Suppose we also note that very often when we try to change Fs to be non-G, we fail, e.g., when we put

Draft: 12 July 2016

women in highly competitive environments, they are unhappy and unsuccessful. It is tempting, then, to conclude that Fs are G by nature: Fs being G is not only statistically normal, but also normatively normal, e.g., that women are by nature nurturing. Or at least, we conclude that this "way things are" should be accommodated. If being G really is part of the nature of Fs, then if some Fs are not G, we should regard those Fs as defective and in need of correction, or we should anticipate that they will revert to their nature when circumstances normalize.

This observation about the naturalizing of the social world is not new: if the social world is a certain way (statistically), it must be due to nature, so good and right, and we shouldn't attempt to change it. This has implications for both objectification and marginalization.

a. Objectification

The term 'objectification' is used in multiple ways (Papadaki 2015). The most common use occurs in moral theory in the context of a Kantian prohibition against treating individuals as means only and not as ends. To fail to recognize someone as a moral subject and to use them, against their will, simply to satisfy one's needs or desires, is to treat them as an object and do them a moral wrong. Objectification in this sense is connected with other morally problematic features of one's action including: denial of the other's subjectivity and agency, belief in their instrumentality, fungibility, violability, claims of ownership (Nussbaum 1995), reduction to body or appearance, and silencing (Langton 2009).

However, 'objectification' is also used in a more general sense for a process of projection whereby an object is taken to have certain properties inherently that one only experiences or desires it to have (Langton 2004). For example, according to Hume, we objectify color, the necessity of causation, and value. In the case of persons, such objectification often depends on a desire-driven or projective illusion about the object of one's desire. Wanting someone or something to be a certain way, one comes to believe it is through processes such as 'phenomenological gilding', wishful thinking, and pseudo-empathy. Perpetrators who use another as a sex object, often do so under a projective illusion, i.e., they objectify the individual in both a Kantian sense and a projective sense.

There is another wrong, however, that can also be considered a form of objectification (Haslanger 2012, Ch. 1, Langton 2000). The *Essentialist* and *Normative Assumptions* entail that, in general, things have natures that call for a certain sort of treatment. For example, it may be that human beings are, by nature, rational, and their rationality calls for respect. As we saw above, a problem arises when we don't have knowledge of the natures of things and take statistical regularities to be evidence of natures. We are then apt to take accidental features of things to be 'given' by nature, or essential to them. In this sense of objectification, a group of things is (wrongly) viewed and treated as a kind of object, and the accidental properties in question are taken to be part of its nature. For example, this occurs in the 'naturalizing' of social roles: the characteristic roles that members of a group occupy are taken to be an expression of their kind's nature.[5]

Consider sexual objectification. In paradigm cases of sexual objectification one person is treated merely as a sex object for the other's pleasure. This is plausibly a violation of the Kantian principle that persons should not be treated as mere means. But it would be wrong to understand sexual objectification simply as one-off occurrences or even a form of relationship between individuals. Typically sexual objectification is a cultural phenomenon and the vivid examples

we are usually asked to reflect upon are manifestations of it.[6] The objectification of women, for example, involves a cultural interpretation of what women are *for*. Women are *for* satisfying men's desires. (In the case of sexual objectification, *for* satisfying men's sexual desires.) Even if the majority of people in the culture in question do not explicitly hold this belief, it may reasonably be postulated as an interpretation of the background ideology in a culture that regularly positions women as the caretakers (sexual or otherwise) of men. This form of objectification occurs as an organizing cultural frame: women have a nature (to serve and please men), and their nature suits them to function in particular social roles (wives, mothers, girlfriends).

The objectification of women plausibly combines both a projective and naturalizing error (women are *for* the satisfaction of men's needs), and a Kantian error (so we may treat them as tools). As suggested above, once a system of subordination is in place, naturalizing of social roles can happen just through what might appear to be a harmless, even objective, generalization from the evidence. For example, we might ask: are women or men better suited to nurture the young? Look around. Women are still overwhelmingly the primary caregivers of children (in addition to the sick, aged, disabled). Statistically, that's normal. And given this work, women have, in fact, developed abilities to nurture infants that most men have not developed. Of course there are women who are not mothers, who don't have nurturing tendencies, and who function well in competitive environments, but they are not 'normal'. If the actual world supports the idea that women are better suited to nurture the young, the *Essentialist* and *Normative Assumptions* easily kick in. So even if women appear to be effective competitors in business, industry, science, their nature may exert itself to override these 'unnatural' inclinations at any time, and it is a risk to include them fully. Moreover, the struggle that mothers in fact have in the workplace just proves that our sense of what's right and good for women is correct. If a working mother's life were easy, that would be unnatural given her nature to nurture. This is status quo reasoning at its most powerful. The world supports what we expect because we have made it that way. (Wittig 1993, 11-12)

This exemplifies the 'looping effect' of social kinds. Hacking (1995) describes the looping effect this way:[8]

> New sorting and theorizing induces changes in self-conception and in behaviour of the people classified. Those changes demand revisions of the classification and theories, the causal connections, and the expectations. Kinds are modified, revised classifications are formed, and the classified change again, loop upon loop. (370)

Note, however, that Hacking's loops always involve agents appropriating the classification as part of their intentional actions and even identity. An agent is labeled a 'refugee' and enacts the behavior taken to be characteristic of refugees, eventually incorporating the status of refugee in her identity; if refugees organize and change how refugees are viewed and treated, the theory of refugee must update to accommodate this (Hacking 1999, 9-10).

But the causal mechanism of looping need not always proceed through the activity of classification or theorizing or the identity and intentionality of the agents involved (Haslanger Ch. 3; cf. Mallon 2015); and the looping may occur in different directions. As social institutions and structures evolve, material opportunities shift so that the patterns of action and interaction change. We can unintentionally 'make people' be a certain way through large structures that are not under anyone's control and are not conceptualized, e.g., the interactions between educational,

employment, and residential opportunities, together with transportation, health care, and judicial systems, can create social regularities, and notably inequalities, that are not intended or even apparent to us. (Tilly 2002, 28) In objectification, the failure to recognize the structures that give rise to the regularities leads us to attribute the regularities to something intrinsic to the agents (Haslanger 2014a). The *Essentialist* and *Normative* Assumptions take hold. The 'labels' that we then apply to those socially positioned in the structures may *or may not* be taken up as identities.

This is clearly relevant to the issue of epistemic injustice (Haslanger 2014b). During oral argument in a recent affirmative action, *Fisher v. University of Texas,* before the Supreme Court[9], the late Justice Antonin Scalia said:

> There are those who contend that it does not benefit African Americans to get them into the University of Texas, where they do not do well, as opposed to having them go to a less-advanced school, a slower-track school where they do well.[10]

It is tempting to read Scalia as engaged in a kind of epistemic objectification of African Americans: African Americans have not done well at the University of Texas (he claims); this reveals something about the epistemic potential of African Americans (as opposed, e.g., to the workings of bias or stereotype threat at the University of Texas). As a result, a school that is less demanding is more 'fitting' for African Americans.

Epistemic objectification comes in a variety of forms; in each case one's status as a knower is conditioned by assumptions concerning one's proper social role or function. For example, in the case of women, objectification has historically depended on the projection of male desire: women are *for* meeting men's (sexual, childbearing, domestic) needs. In the case of African Americans, objectification is about labor: Blacks are *for* menial labor or domestic work; they are the 'enslaveable' (Smith 2006, 67). Robert Moses has argued that even now, in the United States, African Americans are provided only a 'sharecropper education'.

> A sharecropper education is an education of lowest expectations. Because people do a certain kind of work, their education is directly tied to this kind of work; they learn no more than is necessary to complete the task.[11]

In the contemporary economy, 'sharecropper education in the age of cotton has been transported alive and kicking into the age of information'.[12] This, of course, is an epistemic injustice: Blacks who are granted only a sharecropper education within the context of a knowledge economy are prevented from developing the epistemic capacities and confidence that are essential to full participation, thus rendering them systematically vulnerable to injustice.

The educational system creates looping effects, even if those upon whom the needs are projected do not identify with the characteristics attributed to them. For example, stigmatizing meanings of the Black body generate mistrust that alienates Black teens from school; the lack of education and access to professional success reinforces the racially stigmatizing meanings (Haslanger 2014b). But such looping does not depend on Blacks identifying with their role in providing menial labor, or dis-identifying with educational achievement per se. Alienation is from a school system that demeans and degrades them. We should never assume that people don't want what they can't have.

> As was true of the southern civil rights movement, where sharecroppers, maids, day workers, and others who were expected to be silent found their voice, meaningful school reform will require the voices of students and communities demanding the quality

education that too many assume they can't handle and don't want. (Moses & Cobb 2001, 12)

Objectification, then, has multiple forms that support each other. Society is structured so that those occupying certain social positions exhibit regularities of behavior (or other features) whose social origin is invisible; cultural explanations of these regularities take them to flow from the natures of those occupying the social positions. This is what we might call naturalization or, more generally, ideological objectification. This, in turn, can support a projective fantasy that the structures we are aware of are actually fitting for those so-positioned; the structures are apt for those with such natures. This is projective objectification. And if the fantasy is that the world (and the nature of those socially positioned as our partners, workers, etc.) is such as to satisfy our desires, then the subjectivity and autonomy of the other is eclipsed as we treat them as a tool for such satisfaction, while thinking this fitting. This is Kantian objectification. Each of these leads to significant epistemic injustices:

- *Ideological objectification* obscures the contingent social origins of our social (and epistemic) structures, impairing our capacity to identify *gaps* in shared hermeneutical resource (and the *causes* of those gaps).
- *Projective objectification* promotes a sense that people are where they belong and the epistemic status quo is just or fair or inevitable.
- *Kantian objectification* deprives those thus positioned of the subjectivity and autonomy constitutive of genuine epistemic agency (See Fricker (2007, 44) and Pohlhaus (2014) on 'truncated subjectivity.')

When one is treated badly, and told that it is fitting, and the treatment is supported by both the institutional and ideological structures that dominate one's milieu, no wonder people come to accept it and conform their behavior: loop upon loop.

b. Marginalization

Inferences supported by the *Essentialist* and *Normative Assumptions* are key to marginalization. In a milieu dominated by White people, a Black person is not normal. If the outlier is not normal, then they, or the circumstances, are unnatural and there is need of correction. Of course, one's racial ancestry, cannot be corrected, but the situation calls for adjustment. The effort to correct may focus on behavior or attitude. Or perhaps, since race itself cannot be changed, the conclusion is that Blacks are inherently defective and appropriately marginalized. Substitute for 'Black person' in the argument any non-dominant group descriptor. The world doesn't always reinforce our judgments of what's natural and right with perfect regularities, but that poses no challenge to an ideology that includes the *Normative Assumption*. Rather, the world's imperfections provide us opportunities to set nature on its proper path.

In the case of the disabled, the *Normative Assumption* has particular power to rationalize intervention. The very definition of disability seems to cast disabled persons as (normatively) abnormal. They are defective and so require treatment. Moreover, local impairment is often generalized to the whole individual: recently in an airport next to my husband who is in a wheelchair, an airline employee asked me: "What is your husband's name?" as if the fully alert individual in the wheelchair in front of him couldn't answer even that simple question on his own. Looping again: prejudice against the disabled together with the Essentialist and Normative Assumptions renders them as "by nature" incompetent, which denies them credibility and

epistemic respect, which deprives them of resources and access to meaningful engagement, which fosters further prejudice. The problem is both testimonial and hermeneutic, for the disabled are not only ignored or discredited, but typically their experiences of illness or disability are interpreted through the lens of the medical profession rather than in terms that are meaningful to the individual affected. (See also Carel and Kidd 2014.)

The implications of such assumptions of "abnormality" have prompted some theorists and activists to adopt the social model of disability. The social model distinguishes 'impairment' from "disability'. *Impairment* consists of the disabled person's physical 'defect' or 'limitation'. *Disability* consists in the ways in which society allows or causes an individual's impairment to disadvantage them unjustly. For example, on the social model, being myopic is an impairment, but for most of us it isn't a disability because we have access to prescription glasses or contacts. But myopia is a disability for those who are poor and uninsured because their myopia goes uncorrected due to a lack of economic and social resources, and this has consequences for their ability to function fully in society. (See also Cooper 2007.)

The advantage of the social model is that it locates the condition to be changed in the social context rather than the disabled person's body. However, the social model seems to accept the idea that disabled bodies are impaired in a way that makes them inherently defective. But this is far from obvious. Shelley Tremain (2001) argues that, contrary to the assumptions of the social model, impairment is not a purely natural state. Even what counts as an impairment depends on the social context and, more specifically, is managed through a social/governmental/medical process that 'reads' bodies in terms of what can and cannot be treated. In particular, the very idea of an impairment arises through what she calls a 'diagnostic' mode of reasoning that focuses attention on features of individuals that are assumed to be in need of being fixed or managed. But by whose lights, and for what purposes? Elizabeth Barnes (2009, 2014) convincingly argues that to assume that disability (or impairment) is inherently bad depends on a skewed conception of human health and well-being. She argues, in keeping with many disability rights activists, that 'being disabled isn't something that's bad for you. Disability is, rather, a natural part of human diversity - something that should be valued and celebrated, rather than pitied and ultimately 'cured'' (2014, 88; also Barnes 2016). Both the diagnostic paradigm and the misunderstanding of well-being impose substantial hermeneutic injustices.

In the case of disability, both the *Essentialist* and *Normative Assumptions* function in rather complex ways. If we assume that it is not just statistically but also normatively normal for adult humans to, say, walk without assistance, then walking is natural and fitting, and those who cannot without assistance are not just different, but defective. Likewise for cognitive disabilities: those who cannot process information quickly or who are challenged by complex social interaction are defective, even though such differences can also be advantages (Grandin 2006). The *Normative Assumption* provides the evaluation of the condition as a 'defect' and the *Essentialist Assumption* locates the defect in the individual.

Disability is usually considered a defect with respect to human nature, but it is worth noting that human conditions, understood as natural conditions, can be objectified too. Consider multiple sclerosis. It is statistically normal for those with multiple sclerosis to have difficulty with walking and balance. If we take these challenges to be a normal consequence of MS, then the *Essentialist Assumption* takes this to be indicative of a nature – but what nature? It seems to be the nature of MS to cause people difficulty with walking and balance. But this can seem to license two conclusions: (i) people who have MS and don't have difficulty with walking and

balance don't *really* have MS (which is false), or (ii) it is fitting for people with MS to have difficulty walking, so we shouldn't expect otherwise. This has the result that if you have MS, either you exemplify the nature of MS and can't avoid it without (invasive?) intervention, or you don't really have it at all.

These patterns of inference also apply to other social categories. Recall above that we considered that race (or sex) might be considered a defect: Blackness is abnormal and so a defective way of being human. Suppose we consider Blackness as a human condition, something like a disability. If we look for statistics about Blacks, they may seem to support conclusions about the nature of Blackness. Under social conditions in which Blacks are systematically subordinated, the "nature" of Blackness will look pretty grim. Suppose the conclusion is that being Black carries with it being disposed to criminal activity. Then if we follow the pattern of inference outlined in the previous paragraph, we should draw two conclusions: (i) Blacks who aren't disposed to criminal activity aren't *really* Black, and (ii) it is fitting for those who are Black to be disposed to criminal activity, and we shouldn't expect otherwise, at least not without (invasive?) intervention. This has epistemic consequences as well, for example, in education: (i) Blacks who do well in school aren't *really* Black, and (ii) it is fitting for those who are black to do poorly in school, and we shouldn't expect otherwise.

Thus, ideological objectification relying on the *Essentialist* and *Normative Assumptions* can help us explain two kinds of loops: loops in which what we have created is entrenched, and what we have disvalued is either marginalized or 'legitimately' changed. Objectification doesn't just affect what's in our heads; it affects what exists, what regularities are to be found, what types of things there are, and so even what natures are manifested in the world. The material world reinforces our tutored dispositions. Racial classification and stigmatization, reinforces racial segregation, which reinforces racial identity, which reinforces racial classification and stigmatization. Social structures, good or bad, constitute our lived reality; they also affect how the world evolves, what is and isn't in it.

4. Epistemic Objectivity, Epistemic Injustice, and Social Critique

I've already suggested that our efforts to be (epistemically) objective, to 'stick to the facts', are implicated in the process of objectification. According to the dominant model of epistemic objectivity, we are objective in our inquiry if and only if our beliefs are justified in terms accessible to any rational inquirer. If one also assumes that we cannot have objective knowledge of value, then to be objective, our inquiry should be value-free.

Interestingly, the *Normative Assumption* seems acceptable even within inquiry that seeks to be objective. If the sense of goodness at issue is just what's 'fitting" for something given the nature of its kind, then the thought is that we have a naturalized form of value that is knowable through rational inquiry. Biologists can tell us what is normatively normal for mammals and marsupials: we can tell when a cat or a kangaroo is deformed and even identify possible causes of the deformity. So why not think that if we investigate human beings empirically, we too can determine what is natural and so fitting and good for them?

My own view is that empirical investigation is crucial for understanding what is good for humans and other things; and I'm even sympathetic to some claims about natures. But 'empiricist" moves that draw inferences to natures from statistical regularities are clearly not valid. And as feminists and others have argued for several decades, we should resist the claim

that objective inquiry must be value free. (For example, Mills 1988; Longino 1990; Anderson 1995; Intemann 2010). A full discussion of epistemic objectivity would take us well beyond the limits of this chapter. Focusing on the issue of objectification, however, the task is to determine when a regularity is something that can and should be disrupted (which isn't simply a question of its naturalness!), and when it is one that we should accommodate.

There are two tendencies embedded in the *Essentialist* and *Normative Assumptions* that should be resisted in order to make progress on these tasks. The first is an individualism that locates the source of social patterns in individuals and ignores or rejects structural explanations of those patterns (Haslanger 2015). The second is bias towards stability and the status quo, in particular, the presumption that if this is the way things really (naturally) are, it is good (or good enough). Social critique must be prepared to destabilize the individual and the "normal" conditions in which individuals interact, if it is to be successful in undoing the objectification that has made the social world what it is. Epistemic justice is not just about hearing the testimony of others, or expanding our hermeneutical resources (though both are important), but also undertaking to dismantle the structures through which we objectify epistemic agents to suit the purposes of capitalist, ableist, White supremacist, patriarchy.

Works Cited

Anderson, Elizabeth. 1995. "Knowledge, Human Interests, and Objectivity in Feminist Epistemology." *Philosophical Topics* 23(2): 27-58.

Barnes, Elizabeth. 2009. "Disability and Adaptive Preference." *Philosophical Perspectives* 23(1): 1-23.

_____. 2014. "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability." *Ethics* 125(1): 88-113.

_____. 2016. *The Minority Body*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boyd, Richard. 1999. "Homeostasis, Species and Higher Taxa." Robert A. Wilson (ed.), *Species: New Interdisciplinary Essays*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 141-86.

Carel, Havi and Ian James Kidd. "Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare: A Philosophical Analysis." *Medicine, Healthcare and Philosophy* 17(4): 529-240.

Cooper, Rachel. 2007. "Can It Be a Good Thing to Be Deaf?" *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 32(6): 563-583.

Daston, Lorraine & Peter Gallison. 2007. *Objectivity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fine, Kit. 1994. "Essence and Modality." *Philosophical Perspectives* 8 (ed. J. Tomberlin): 1-16.

_____. 1995. "Senses of Essence." Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Diana Raffman, Nicholas Asher (eds.), *Modality, Morality, and Belief: Essays in Honor of Ruth Barcan Marcus*, pp. 53-73.

Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grandin, Temple. 2006. *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior*. New York: Harcourt.

Hacking, Ian. 1986. "Making up people." Thomas C Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery (eds.), *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 222-236.

_____. 1995. "The Looping Effects of Human Kinds." Dan Sperber, David Premack, and Ann James Premack (eds.), *Causal Cognition: A Multi-disciplinary Debate,* pp. 351-383.

_____. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Haslanger, Sally. 2012. *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. 2014a. "The Normal, the Natural and the Good: Generics and Ideology." *Politica & Società* 3: 365-392.

_____. 2014b. "Studying While Black: Trust, Opportunity and Disrespect." *DuBois Review* 11(1): 109-136.

_____. 2015. "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?" *Philosophical Studies* 173(1): 113-30.

Honneth, Axel. 2006. *Reification: A Recognition-Theoretical View*. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, March 14-16, University of California, Berkeley. http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/h/Honneth_2006.pdf.

Intemann, Kristen. 2010, "25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now?",*Hypatia*, 25(4): 778–796.

Langton, Rae. 2000. "Feminism in Epistemology: Exclusion and Objectification." M. Fricker and J. Hornsby (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 127–145.

_____. 2004, "Projection and Objectification", in *The Future for Philosophy*, Brian Leiter (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 285–303.

_____. 2009. "Autonomy-Denial in Objectification." *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification. New York: Oxford University Press*, pp. 223-240.

Longino, Helen. 1990. *Science as Social Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

MacKinnon, Catharine. 1989. *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mallon, Ron. 2003. "Social Roles, Social Construction, and Stability." F. Schmitt (ed.), *Socializing Metaphysics.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 327–53.

_____. 2007. "Human Categories Beyond Non-Essentialism." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15(2): 146-168.

_____. 2015. "Performance, Self-Explanation, and Agency." *Philosophical Studies* 172(10): 2777-2798.

Mills, Charles. 1988. "Alternative Epistemologies." *Social Theory and Practice* 14(3): 237-263. Special Issue: Marxism-Feminism: Powers of Theory/Theories of Power.

Moses, Robert P. 2010. "Constitutional Property and Constitutional People." Theresa Perry, Robert P. Moses, Joan T. Wynne, Ernesto Cortés, Jr., and Lisa Delpit (eds.), *Quality Education as a Constitutional Right*. Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 70-92.

Moses, Robert P. and Charles Cobb Jr. 2001. "Organizing Algebra: The Need to Voice a Demand." *Social Policy* 31.4 (2001): 4-12.

Nussbaum, Martha. 1995. "Objectification." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 24(4): 249-291.

Papadaki, Evangelia (Lina). 2015. "Feminist Perspectives on Objectification", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/feminism-objectification/>.

Pohlhaus, Gaile. 2014. "Discerning the Primary Epistemic Harm in Cases of Testimonial Injustice." *Social Epistemology* 28(2): 99–114.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. 1979/1762. *Emile: Or On Education.* Allan Bloom (ed. & trans.). New York: Basic Books.

Smith, Andrea. 2006. "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy." Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, (ed.) *The Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*. Boston: South End Press, pp. 66-73.

Tilly, Charles. 2002. "The Trouble with Stories." *Stories, Identities, and Political Change.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Tremain, Shelley. 2001. "On the Government of Disability." *Social theory and practice*, *27*(4): 617-636.

Wittig, Monique. 1993/1981. "One is Not Born a Woman." *The Straight Mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. 1999/1792. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution.* Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[1] My understanding of these issues has been greatly enhanced by teaching a graduate seminar on objectivity with Stephen Yablo (fall 2015). Thanks to him and to the seminar participants for their insights.

[2] I've discussed some of these issues in connection with generics in Haslanger 2012, Ch. 1 & 17; Haslanger 2014.

[3] Ron Mallon (2007) has offered compelling arguments that "essentialism" is both too strong and too weak a view to capture the target of social constructionist critique, because a contingent causal homeostasis amongst a cluster of properties is sufficient for a natural kind (Mallon 2003, 2007; Boyd 1999). Of course the argument depends on what conception of essence one has in mind. In contemporary metaphysics certain assumptions are common, viz., essences can, in principle, be captured by necessary and sufficient conditions for being that (kind of) thing; not all properties that something has necessarily are part of its essence; a thing's existence depends on its satisfying the conditions for its essence (it couldn't exist without having the relevant essential properties); and everything that is a member of a kind has an essence (Fine 1994, 1995). 'Essence,' however, is sometimes treated as synonymous with 'nature' as in a *thing's (or kind's) nature.* I use the term 'nature' instead of 'essence' because it is more flexible and allows for kinds of variation not permitted by 'essence.' I have kept the term 'essentialism' because of its historical significance in these debates, but do not commit to the theses just listed. 'Naturalism' is not an adequate substitute because it has very different connotations.

[4] There are actually two different claims at issue here. We sometimes use the term 'kind' for substance kinds such as *horse* or *human*, and sometimes for qualitative kinds such as *liquid* or *living*. Social kinds are confusing because they function in some ways like substance kinds, but are not essential to their members, so are more like qualitative kinds, e.g., mother, professor. In considering the nature of an individual (me), what's at issue is the substance kind (*human*). But I am also a mother and a professor, and insofar as there is something it is to be a mother, and a professor, these

too have natures. They are qualitative natures, or natures of the relevant properties/relations. But they are not part of my nature. And it may not be fitting for me to be either a mother or a professor. This is a source of much confusion, but I won't elaborate on it here.

[5] There are two ways this might happen. For example, the characteristic roles that women occupy may be taken to be part what it is to be a woman. If one is essentially a woman, than these characteristic roles become part of one's nature or essence. Or the characteristic roles that mothers occupy may be taken to be conditions on what it is to be a mother. Even if one is not essentially a mother, those who are mothers can be 'real' mothers only if they satisfy these conditions. See also fn. 3.

[6] On the general idea of objectification, or reification, as a social, even structural, phenomenon, see also Honneth 2006, e.g., p. 100.

[8] Also Hacking: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n16/ian-hacking/making-up-people "Making Up People," *London Review of Books* 2006.

[9] http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/fisher-v-university-of-texas-at-austin-2/

[10] http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/09/politics/scalia-black-scientists-scotus/

[11] http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct01/vol59/num02/Algebra-and-Activism@-Removing-the-Shackles-of-Low-Expectations%E2%80%94A-Conversation-with-Robert-P.-Moses.aspx

[12] http://www.qecr.org/press/17-robert-p-moses-we-tolerate-a-sharecroppers-education