iSS International
Institute of Social Studies

Working Paper
No. 481

FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN SECURITY
BRIDGING RIFTS THROUGH THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF CARE

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September 2009

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ABSTRACT

The essay proposes to re-orient feminist debates on epistemology towards the care-security nexus as a pathway that can plausibly provide an integral understanding of a human-centred and eco-minded security. Seeing 'gender' in binary terms tends to produce an understanding of 'care' as 'female' and 'security' as 'male'. Care, when free from the constraints of gender as a binary construct, can play an important role in revealing the depth of ethical-political concerns and help expand the understanding of security. By revisiting the concept of care present in the two feminist innovations – situated knowledge and knowledge production as quilting – the essay shows that there are gains to be made in bridging existing rifts between feminist knowledge networks and beyond. The concept of situated knowledge gives significance to care as self-reflexivity – an ongoing process and a multifaceted nature of experience in the relation between the knower and the known. Knowledge production as quilting displaces the image of the solitary knowledge agent and provides a flexible approach to epistemology less constrained by teleological assumptions, appealing instead to interdisciplinary and inter-cultural cooperation. Both aspects of feminist epistemology are conducive to address the care-security nexus as an open and dynamic phenomenon, for which a successful inclusion of distinctive insights from different disciplines and cultural frameworks of knowledge would be a gain.

Keywords

FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN SECURITY
BRIDGING RIFTS THROUGH THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF CARE[1]

1   INTRODUCTION

This essay views feminism as a broad social movement made up of coalitions for egalitarian systemic changes. The relations between feminism and knowledge forms are historical, as are the types of coalitions fostered. Understanding feminist politics and its epistemology in these terms is helpful to reflect on the current challenges facing knowledge networks engaging with issues of security. Beyond war and peace, feminist politics today address many transnational issues such as trade and financial liberalisation, the impacts of their fluctuations across the world, the links between economic crises and environmental deterioration and their practical meanings for people's security in daily lives. Such politics require a mode of cooperation that can help bring to the surface the multiple ways in which knowledge is politically constituted and how it is translated into materially insecure modes of existence for specific groups of people. A human-centred approach to security opens up an opportunity to explore these issues and critically reflect on societal responses as well as the body of knowledge that informs them. Gains can be made through mutual learning and interdisciplinary and inter-cultural cooperation to address the interconnected aspects of human security and their ethical implications on different scales.

A major area of contention has been the interpretation of gender problems and the directions of feminist collective actions. The persisting dilemma between engaging with knowledge and policy-making bodies to rewrite gender from within, and/or maintaining autonomous critical voices external to the institutions of power, has placed limits on coalition building. Internal diversity and external pressure become intensified when feminist politics take on transnational and trans-local dimensions, especially when factors such as the geopolitical positioning of actors, resources and generation gaps within the women's movements are taken into consideration. Dominant knowledge systems have displayed a persistent insensitivity to how the contextual intersection between different structures of power can produce significantly varied experiences of exclusion and political subjectivity. A singular understanding of gender is incapable of capturing capture the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion. At the same time, an intersectional definition of gender – as a subject position emerged from the articulation of interlinked power structures – falls short of helping to foster political and

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cognitive alliances due to an overemphasis on the content of the subjective experience (Hancock, 2006). Differing approaches to gender knowledge, modes of engagement with the 'margins' and practices of participation can also fail to realize the commitment to inclusiveness (Ackerly, 2007).

This essay proposes to re-orient feminist debates towards the care-security nexus as a pathway that can plausibly provide an integral understanding of a human-centred and eco-minded notion of security. Seeing 'gender' in binary terms tends to produce the understanding of 'care' as 'female' and 'security' as 'male'. Yet critical feminist inquiries into 'development' and 'security' in daily lives show how the two domains are closely related – rather than two separate compartments as they have been styled for administrative purposes. Tronto's (1993) conceptual map helps to reveal how practices of caring are implicit in both domains. She identifies four ethical elements of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness; and delineates four modes of caring – caring about, taking care of, care-giving, and care-receiving. The 'public' side of 'caring about' is to be found in the construct of the political subject (deliberation and rationality). Likewise taking care of something is a 'public' activity resulting from the translation of deliberation into organizational agency. By contrast, care-giving and care-receiving acts are culturally constructed such that they are recognized primarily in private and emotional aspects of interpersonal relationships. Reworking this conceptual map to show the dialectical interaction between public and private modes of caring is important to extend feminist epistemology to human security, considered to be an open and dynamic phenomenon. Understanding how particular experiences are bounded by geo-political power structures may help to trace the differentiated meanings of human security and the hidden subjectivities that produce knowledge frameworks guiding action.

By viewing feminist epistemology as a canvas where the themes of care and security have been articulated in different ways – in response to particular needs and audiences — we might find an underlying unity in streams of thought that is valuable to foster alliances capable of integrating different aspects of security. Revisiting two distinctive features of feminist knowledge – 'situated knowledge' and knowledge-making as 'quilting' – may serve to reflect on emerging responses to today's realities: transnational politics with multi- and trans-local dimensions, and security-searching activities on a planetary scale. The former requires corresponding means of appreciation and communication of knowledge as flows of ideas between different locations and situations; and the latter requires a refashioning of 'identity' as unity – the *homo sapiens* whose survival depends on other life-forms and eco-systems – while recognizing the contextual power of identities and subjectivities as immanent in distributive justice and action for peaceful transformations.

2   THE WRITING ON CARE IN FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminist epistemology and knowledge networks are the outcomes of long-standing women's engagements with social movements inspired by diverse causes: anti-slavery, peace, national liberation, labour rights, sexual rights, faith-

based and environmental concerns. Recognizing the historical contingencies and the seemingly dispersed lines of thoughts is helpful to appreciate feminist epistemology and politics as ensembles of practices with distinctive rationales formed at various levels of social and political life. Approaching diversity in these terms would treat feminist thought not only as currently existing, but as something contingent on what Foucault refers to as a 'history of veridictions' (Foucault, 1984: 943). In other words, the entry point to the diversity of feminist thought would be to examine how a particular feminist discourse strive to validate itself in regard of specific audiences, and how a specific perspective comes to be considered as valuable and valid (or unconvincing) in a particular domain. Rather than isolated instances of 'doing gender' or 'acting feminist' in an idealized sense, feminist knowledge building is considered here as arising from care as a deeper stream of knowledge of the sense, manifest in diverse cultural forms of thinking and social action.

Derived from women's act of positing themselves as a subject of knowledge in relation to gender constructs, along with other relations that made up their quotidian universe, feminist thought begun with the reflections on caring as the repetitive activities to sustain life. It questions why these are treated as secondary to other concerns in scientific theories and social reforms programmes and how this treatment coincides with the subordination of women, children and other life forms under specific political rules. Though feminist knowledge has a long history, its formal appellation as 'feminist epistemology' was known since women's massive entry into the academia in the Western world. These scholars took a critical stance towards the Enlightenment and affiliated scientific paradigms – considered to be tainted by three main heuristic biases: male, European and 'productive age' (Fox Keller and Longino, 1996). The goal of feminist epistemology is to identify the types of epistemic injustice[2] found in the world of science and to follow through their multiple consequences in social reforms programmes. The insertion of feminist values in the acquisition of knowledge, the questioning of its justification of validity and credibility in representation has revealed how particular ontological premises have buttressed the writings of gender, race and age and supported the translation of these thoughts into organizational agency. Proposed alternative frameworks for knowledge and practice on more egalitarian and inclusive terms have yet to address diversity both at the experiential level and in ontological frames.

Sandra Harding's seminal work (1986) discerned four main feminist epistemological approaches: empiricism, standpoint, post-modernism and post-colonialism. Harding's classification of different positions is useful to identify the lines of interactions, issues of contestation and possible innovation. Her narrow approach to empiricism initially identified it uniquely with positivism has shown to be problematic. She classified feminist empiricists as

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[2] The term 'epistemic injustice' was coined by Craig (1990) to refer to non-egalitarian norms of credibility that tend to lean more in favour of the powerful than they deserve while denying credibility to the powerless. This can occur both in testimony and heuristically.

those practicing natural and social sciences relying on logical positivist theories, which mystify social facts by first abstracting them and then treating them as reality. Harding maintains her scepticism about the possibility of correcting positivist science through a critique, in view of vested interests in the social structure of science and given the absence of a countervailing power by marginalised groups (Duran, 1998). The conflation between positivism and empiricism has led to sceptic, if not hostile, tendencies among post-modernist feminist knowledge agents towards empiricism as a paradigm. Markie (2008) notes that the original meaning of empiricism accords significance to the experience of the sense in shaping our concepts and knowledge. This aspect of empiricism is generally obliterated in some writings of post-modernist feminists even though the knowledge of the sense is a central feminist concern.

Since Harding's intervention debates on feminist social knowledge has produced a spectrum of epistemological positions. On the one end some scholars hold the view that there is merit in retaining the modernist foundational requirements of 'good knowing' in science, emphasising the significance of evidence, shared standards of justification and procedures in knowledge-making as a cumulative process. On the other end, some post-modernist scholars discard the idea of knowledge as a cumulative process, together with universal standards. They emphasise instead its context-dependency and culturally shaped modes of knowing, for which the standard of 'good knowing' may be understood as the ability to account for diverse subjectivities and voices.

Feminist-standpoint theory gravitates between the two ends of the spectrum and affiliated standards of 'good knowing' using the constants of the female lenses. Borrowing from Marxian debates on consciousness and class position, this body of thought tried to bring issues of gender identity, consciousness and cognitive style to bear on theorising in social knowledge and transformational practices. It establishes a close connection between an epistemic perspective and a social location of women. For example, women's practical experiences as central actors in systems of reproduction (Hartsock, 1987), as social objects on to which male desires are projected and acted upon (McKinnon 1987), or as possessing different cognitive styles (Gilligan, 1982),[3] are considered as significant realities based on which an alternative epistemological and moral perspective can be developed. In this view, the nexus of women's gender identity and social position is believed to be capable of sharpening their knowledge about gainers and sufferers from a social system built on the principle of male superiority. Men are considered uninterested to access this knowledge due to their privileged positions. In claiming to represent the world from the perspective of women's subordination, this stream of

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[3] Starting from the observation that women are more oriented towards concern and commitments that arise from relationships, Gilligan argued that women's identity is built on a relational self. Their moral judgments necessarily include feelings of compassion and empathy for others. 'Care reasoning' is a female feature – distinct from 'justice reasoning' as male. In care reasoning, women's own and other's responsibilities are grounded in social context and interpersonal commitments.

standpoint theory seeks to justify its epistemic authority about the condition of being *female* that can inform research and political programmes.

Socially and politically contested issues such as prostitution, pornography, sexual labour, sex-work, the value of domestic labour, women's choices and agency formed by different interests and subjectivities have placed limits on these claims. These issues urge scholars to scrutinize the character of social inequality that defines the sub-groups among women, the specific features of their marginalisation, their affinity and consciousness. Parallel to this, multiple transformations under the pressures of globalization and the diverse affect of connectivity on organisational strategies have exposed the limits of a hegemonic definition of gender – a single unit of analysis above other social categories – and pushed for the refinement of feminist-standpoint theory (Collins, 1990; Martín-Alcoff, 2007). Study of interactions between social categories – gender, race, age, class, sexuality – and the resultant experiences of inequality and political subjectivity, is now a core area of reflection and debate. A critical question, that various feminist knowledge communities contend with, is how to find ways to possibly draw from a diversity of epistemological resources in order to (a) make the intersection between different forms of social vulnerability more visible to the public eye; and (b) create an environment with necessary mechanisms to facilitate fair debates on the meanings of gender equality and justice in order to guide organisation strategies for change.

In revising standpoint theory Harding (1993) retains the view that partiality is the inevitable effect of the location of the inquirer, and emphasizes the need to place oneself on the same critical, causal plane with the objects of knowledge. She proposes the concept strong objectivity, taking into account the roles of 'good' as well as 'bad' values in the production of knowledge. Considering that the knowledge agent is always placed in an environment where cultural beliefs function at every stage of scientific inquiry[4] strong objectivity requires that scientists and their communities adopt practices of self-reflexivity to mediate the perspective of the oppressed groups and integrate the good values – such as democracy-advancing ones – to their projects. Thus, according to this perspective, an assessment of 'better' knowledge does not depend on eliminating subjectivity (beliefs and values) and conforming to some false ideal of objectivism. It depends on examining whether and how self-reflexivity and the incorporation of democratic values in scientific inquiry can generate new viewpoints that improve the understanding about gender relations in a given domain (Narayan and Harding, 2000; Crasnow, 2006).

As Michaelian (2008:75-76) points out among the good biases of particular interest to Harding is the political commitment of science to serve the interests

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[4] The selection of problems, the formation of hypotheses, the design of research (including the organization of research communities), the collection of data, the interpretation and sorting of data, decisions about when to stop research, the way results of research are reported, and so on (Harding, 2004, 136).

of the marginalized rather than the dominant groups. However, the concept of 'marginality' is hardly clarified. Accepting 'good' bias in this way means that the political can be considered internal to the epistemic without having to specify the beneficiaries on the margins. Furthermore this position is surprisingly close of the modernist antecedent of rationality, yet it is not supported by a meta-narrative to assess the validity of claims to strong objectivity (Michaelian, 2008: 78). Rolin (2006) points out that the bias paradox in Harding's epistemology is built on two main claims: epistemic privilege and situated knowledge. The assumption that a standard of impartiality (strong objectivity) enables one to judge some perspectives as better than others contradicts the situated knowledge claim — which purports that all knowledge is partial. A resolution to this paradox, Rolin suggests, is the adoption of a contextualist theory of epistemic justification that explains how claims to an epistemic privilege may be warranted when a broader shift in context calls into question the credibility of assumptions formerly accepted as an entitlement.

Rolin's suggestion may help in resolving the difficulties posed by the concept of intersectionality that shows how marginalized groups occupy a social terrain in which the interactions between multiple axes of power can produce unique experiences of oppression and subjectivities, structurally invisible to policy and law-making as well as to the politics of social movements (Crenshaw 1994, 2000). Applying the concept of an epistemic privilege in such cases remains problematic. As Hancock (2006: 250) observes, the restriction of understanding of intersectionality as an issue of 'content of the social experience' has led to what has been termed as an 'Oppression Olympics' where groups compete, rather than cooperate, in a struggle to obtain access to the fringes of opportunities and resources. How intersectionality works and what it does to the experience of inhabiting a 'marginal universe' depends on the specific location of the subject concerned. The challenge posed by intersectionality to feminist standpoint theory is greater than what Harding's concepts of 'strong objectivity' and 'epistemic democracy' have to offer. Marginality as a mode of existence can take many different forms, with distinctively different implications regarding the articulation of power and distributive justice[5]. When these are taken into account, the weakness of 'strong objectivity' is revealed, as it provides little insight on how to rank epistemic privileges.

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[5] Two examples of marginality involving multiple identities may serve to illustrate this point. A woman of colour who has been trafficked across border for sex work, who is 'rescued' and detained while waiting for judicial decision on asylum or repatriation can be identified by her marginal identities of gender, ethnicity, illegal worker, irregular migrant, and person in detention. In this 'in-between' mode of existence who is to decide which marginality identity should prevail based on which justification? Another example involves the circulation between multiple locations of marginality as experienced by many African nationals who undertake trans-Saharan or maritime migratory routes. They are in a semi-permanent transit status on their way to, and even when they reach, Europe. Each of these modes of marginality entails particular consequences for political economy, judicial systems and moral reasoning about inequality.

Haraway's (2004) concept of 'situated knowledge' – often used interchangeably with Harding's strong objectivity – begins with the acknowledgement of diversity and hybridity. She takes this as a starting point to guide the knowledge agent to find unlikely coalitions between systematically oppressed groups. In other words, she resists *a-priori* assumptions on oppression and affinity. Like Harding her post-structuralist analysis of science endorses the rejection of neutrality and context-free knowledge-making, while holding on to the quest for constant clarification by the knowledge agent about his/her positioning and evolving sense of affinity. Positioning always means partiality; and partiality can be justified by the active learning from a thoughtful and caring engagement with others. She explains: 'A part of my consciousness is microcosmic: every microcosm explodes into a universe as a function of what you are asking, not because it is out there waiting to show the interesting intersections or borderlands or whatever. It is your own relationship with what it is that you care about that opens up the borderlands that are interesting (Haraway in Schneider, 2005: 116, 120). Any act of caring is considered to have the potential to make the knowledge agent more worldly, through the multiplication of connections which her/his engagement develops. Careful attentiveness to others, including other systems and life forms would benefit scientific inquiry. 'As you care you change and you are changed, so that your questions change and your partners are different' (Ibid: 120). Positioning thus implies a process of constant ethical revision of one's relations towards others.

Positioning works together with 'diffraction' – defined as a method to record different patterns of knowing and seeing arising from the interactions with others, to track their impact on the course of the research process and note the subsequent understandings (Haraway, 2004). Whereas positioning serves to locate the knowledge agent relationally, diffraction serves to envisage the process of recording the knowledge developed. In her view interaction, interruption, difference, and possible discovery of novelty about affinity – rather than identity – produce the conditions for building coalitions.

Positioning and diffraction makes Haraway's version of social constructivism distinct from Harding's strong objectivity. It is characterised by a fuller notion of being 'relational' shown in her choice of position to be directed by the sense of care (caring about and caring to know) which she thinks is more likely to lead to the sense of affinity (as something to be gained rather than assumed). She also does not endorse a reduced understanding of empiricism as positivism and take distance from a teleological view regarding a pre-given value (such as epistemic democracy) as the determinant of transformative knowledge and change. In combining ethical, scientific and political concerns her proposal to interpret objectivity in terms of 'situated knowledge' gives consideration to the agency of both the subject and the objects of knowledge. Agency is mutually implicated in an ongoing creation of new hybrids of knowledge, or outcomes of the fusion of substantively different knowledge forms but capable of delivering more insightful explanations.

In the defence of empiricism Nelson (1990; 1993) proposed a neo-empiricism that can avoid the implications of positivism. She draws on Quine's (1951) 'naturalistic' empiricism built on the view that theories are bridges of the scientist's own construction, constrained by their experience. All activities in knowledge-making and organizing science constitute a web of beliefs in

which the distinction between 'knowledge as discovered' and 'knowledge as a social construct' is artificial. Endorsing the view of science as part of, rather detached from, society Nelson extends Quine's view on beliefs held by the scientists to those embedded in the institutional arrangements in scientific inquiry itself. Institutional arrangements of science, not just scientists, are under the influence of political, economic and epistemological factors, which in turn affect the theories produced. Feminist knowledge – regarded as an emergent web of knowledge in which networks of scientists function within male dominated institutional rules of power – occupies a lower position in the hierarchy of cognitive labour and authority. She coins this phenomenon as 'androcentrism', rather than sexism or male bias, seeking to avoid biological reductionism and taking into account research findings that show how 'men' and 'women' are neither exclusively biological nor social, but enormously plastic and complex (Nelson, 1993: 190). The sciences – particularly natural sciences – are no longer concerned with ultimate truths but with data that is corrigible and revisable to fit agreeably into the web of beliefs. Empiricism, she argues, must be understood as a theory of evidence – distinct from empiricist accounts of science[6]. In this respect, androcentrism (in methodology, categories, organizing principles) can be corrected since in the advancement of science male scientists cannot afford to remain blind to what feminist scientists have made visible. Acknowledging this, she advocates that feminist scientists should incorporate political views, including those shaped by, and those that are shaping the experiences of gender. They should contribute to theories based on evidence through critical assessment among communities of knowledge agents.

Longino (2002) suggests four governing norms for interaction in a knowledge community: (a) publicly recognized forums for criticism; (b) an uptake of criticism; (c) publicly recognized standards; (d) interaction in mutual respect (allowing for differences in intellectual capacity and equality of authority of judgement). Prevailing scientific orthodoxies remain particularly challenging for the implementation of the principle of equal authority of judgement[7]. Moreover, Ackerly (2007) warns that deliberations within

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[6] As Quine pointed out modern empiricism has been conditioned by two dogmas. One is a belief in a fundamental cleavage between analytic truths – grounded in meanings independently of matters of fact, and synthetic truths – grounded in fact. The other is reductionism or the belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct – upon terms which refer to immediate experience. In the social sciences, empiricist accounts are characterised by the tendency towards operationalism, the desire to objectify and quantify, the emphasis on correspondence rules, deductive certainty, empirical tightness, and so forth.

[7] Cato (2009) explains: 'You cannot teach economics without maths, apparently, although you can teach it without morality. And the converse also applies. Because if you are part of a discipline that cannot function without counting then it cannot properly value what cannot be measured. Moral considerations are, for this reason, excluded wholesale from economics as taught in our universities'. http://www.theecologist.org/blogs_and_comments/commentators/Molly_Scott_Cato/ (accessed September 4, 2009).

transnational feminism is far from these aspired norms since the language of feminism and gender is not shared, and unequal access to feminist space remains a constraint. Politically driven consensus can also stifle marginal voices. Ackerly's warning resonates the post-colonial perspective, which treats the acts of seeking knowledge about, and ethical engagements of its actors with, 'Third World' subjects critically at best and with suspect at worst.

Spivak (2005), for example, calls for vigilance and attention to self-implication and cautions about the dialectics of 'self' and 'other' that refer only to upper-class multiculturalism. In a socially differentiated and hierarchical world, intellectuals do not function outside geopolitical institutions that circumscribe their epistemic agency. Pursing the goal of removing 'epistemic injustice' requires hyper self-reflexivity, critical narration and interpretation with accountability as regards the social realities scholars engage with (Kapoor, 2004). Referring to a specific group for whom 'epistemic injustice' matters significantly, she calls attention to the specific meaning of the 'Subaltern' in Antonio Gramsci's work, recorded by Ranajit Guha (Spivak, 2005). The term refers to 'the space of difference inhabited by those who have no access to the lines of mobility within a society', and emphasises a kind of class rather than identity – a class without political agency (but not necessarily without knowledge).

Spivak (2005: 311) asserts that contemporary use of the term 'subaltern' in the light of diversity and Diasporas has lost its meaning due to its conflation with identity. Urging scholars to revisit assumptions about epistemic responsibility, she points out the futility of responding to the silencing of the subaltern woman by representing that woman, or by presenting her as a speaking subject. Lacking of any class description, it is not possible for the new class of intellectuals to see class (like gender) as a social category that organises understanding and therefore cannot fully portray the subaltern subject. The impulse to rewrite the human, the body and the social figure (in rethinking politics, agency and connection) appears to her as a strategy to undo particular narratives. In doing so there is a tendency to retrieve information about layers of identities and transmogrify them into 'subject' with agency – as institutionally validated action. For this reason she considers the act of deconstructing science in itself as insufficient in safeguarding a political programme. It can only safeguard against generalisations about the 'subject' within the same paradigm of emancipation. Rather than rewriting, she posits that unlearning one's privilege (as one's loss) might be a better strategy since it opens up the mind for new creative possibility: rearranging one's own desire to learn from the act of learning about, and with, others must be a deliberate position (Morton, 2007: 172).

Code's (2008) approach to ecological thinking integrates feminist thoughts on situated knowledge, strong objectivity and post-colonialism to rework feminist naturalized empiricism through the language and practices of ecology. Ecological thinking acknowledges conflict and instability as realities and recognizes them at the same time as sources of strength. It offers a notion of 'inhabiting the world' as active, thoughtful, affectively, socially and responsibly engaged practices that address the complexity and ambiguity of the real. It invites reflections on *cohabitability* and *responsible knowledge* as key principles of this mode of 'inhabiting'. Codes' proposed concept of epistemic location

deepens the meanings of situated knowledge and standpoint by requiring scholars to scrutinize and specify a wide set of things in a given location where inquiry is to be made. Beyond the requirement to scrutinize the standpoint of the knower and the nature of the known, she proposes to discern subjectivities and specificities in regard to place, habitat, habitus and ethics. These requirements are significant in view of her consideration of a terrain of inquiry to be constitutive of enactments of subjectivities, not just a context against which particular subjective interpretations are played out (Code, 2006: 199). It is always in practice empirically informed, specifically situated, and locally interpretive. The responsibility of knowledge agents is to question themselves as their own "objects" of knowledge: how they come to acquire a given understanding and how they learn about, and negotiate across and through, an epistemic terrain to address issues of diversity and particularity. Code's notion of epistemic responsibility resonate Spivak's post-colonial critique, which directs thinking towards analyses of ethical-politics as a dimension internal to the knowledge agents beyond and above those that have given shape to a given terrain of inquiry.

As Wylie (2006: 7) observes, the expansion of the scope of 'the social' in feminist epistemology has shed light on the forms of epistemic diversity that track power and institutional conditions that have the capacity to systemically suppress dissenting voices. Addressing these social dimensions of knowledge would require the refinement of models of deliberation as well as the kinds of empirical research that illuminate the group dynamics, patterns of social inequality, and institutional conditions that generate epistemic diversity and the structure its reception.

Reflecting on Thayer-Bacon's (1999) use of the metaphor of quilting to define constructive thinking as a trans-active socio-political process – in which knowledge agents need to establish a common language to work together to produce something purposeful and of value – we may consider feminist debates on social epistemology as a process of quilt making, in which work might have been hampered by different ways of understanding 'empiricism', 'gender' and 'feminism'. Far from being distinctive blocks, feminist approaches to knowledge (empiricism, standpoint, post-modernism and post-colonialism) have transformed one another through their interaction, and in turn are transforming the fabric of feminist social epistemology. Attention to practices of co-learning in the making of responsible knowledge agents may help to achieve as a form of knowledge that can express the holistic character of knowing about 'self' and 'other' in a model that replaces the image of the solitary knowledge agent with a relational one.

3   QUILTING GENDER INTO 'SECURITY' AND 'DEVELOPMENT'

Gender matters have been implicit in security and development policy frameworks but have been written through the male eyes. A policy field and a domain of knowledge, 'development' emerged at the end of World War II within the agenda of international cooperation for peace as one of the two main set of issues: (a) control over the arms race (nuclear and other weapons

of mass destruction), (b) promotion of 'modernisation' – the economic and social development of post-colonial societies – conceived as instrumental in achieving peace. In a bifurcated world dominated by the Soviet Union and the United States, the meaning of 'security' was fragmented by administration: foreign policy was divorced from policy related to international political economy. This gave rise to two separate fields of study – security and development. Security studies are concerned with rationale for or against war, and development studies with the rationale of modernisation. Bipolar writing depicted the global order as 'free' versus 'communist' worlds – each one hustling for the reigning position – obliterating any significant alternative meanings. In the modernisation model the 'modern' is counterposed with the 'traditional'. Tradition is treated as a residue of history expected gradually to vanish in the linear progression towards an ideal system of the 'free world'. In the communist model 'collective interests' were counterposed with 'individual interests' – the later being treated as a historical feature of capitalism expected to disappear in a linear progression towards a classless society. Both systems adopted a mechanical worldview in which the human subject is treated as a fairly fixed and stable element whose desires and identities can be moulded for the greater good of the respective social projects.

Gender was written in the capitalist vision of equality as a distinction between 'instrumental' and 'expressive' qualities of being males and females. Gender *difference* justifies the social roles assigned to each gender as being natural (Parson and Bales, 1955). By contrast, gender was written in the communist vision of social equality as *sameness[8]:* something primary to the aspiration of a classless society. The efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) set up after 1945, combined with several decades of agitation by feminists from different political strands, galvanised a new consciousness to change the above visions and the status they ascribed to gender.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979; continuous attempts to give substance to women's rights have revealed the fallacy of 'impartiality' in structures of governance and assumptions about 'tradition' as being historical residues. The six decades of women's engagement with the United Nations have to some extent transformed the practises of development agencies in all domains of gender justice: work, health, education and gender-based violence (Jain, 2005). But the discrepancy between the world of legal rights and the world of social positioning remains a challenge. Feminist scholars have shown how social identities (gender and ethnicity) and class position pre-structure the conditions of entry to a political community and the market, and how 'traditions' – deeply embedded in cognitive structures – bestow institutions their power of consequences (Agosin, 2001).

Various aspects of these problems were raised in critiques of 'development as modernisation paradigm' emerged in the 1970s. Arising from concerns

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[8] For example Mao Zedong's famous slogan 'women hold half of the sky'.

about the interplay of culture, gender and international political economy this critique sought to reveal the social positions of women as agents of change in the development process. In 1985, a collective – Development Alternatives with Women in a New Era (DAWN) – presented a manifesto which put forward a definition of 'development' as constituted by evolving systems characterized by intrinsic violence causing multi-layered crises in social reproduction (Sen and Crown, 1987)[9]. The manifesto posited the thesis that gender issues in 'development' are embedded in a broader context of cumulative violence growing out of priorities given to trade (both national and international) rather than to security in daily life. The consequent degrading impacts on both rural and urban environments were triggering new and complex poverty-generating processes. These in turn caused a deepening of social divisions and intensified oppression by way of transferring the burdens of production adjustments and costs on to specific groups: women of the working poor. Women's protests and resistance had led to states exerting their disciplinary powers with increased militarization. The manifesto called for qualitative change in social relations and improved interaction between all the levels of society – household, community, market, state and inter-state. A wholesale reduction in military expenditure was demanded to divert resources into more socially oriented activities. An emphasis on women as agents-of-change brought to the fore their capacity of seeing and acting on gender-based issues of justice in different arenas.

Critique of the DAWN manifesto has been directed at its structuralist understanding of gender and its tendency to homogenize women's interests which does not give sufficient attention to how gender identities are articulated through diverse discursive practices of inequalities (Marchand and Papart, 1995). Women's actual experience, consciousness and organisational strategies are often neither predictable, nor reducible to any single aspect gender oppression (Chhachhi and Pittin, 1996). A continuing thread in DAWN's view is to be found in Enloe's (1989) insights on the link between 'development' and 'militarization.' She places the social construction of masculinities and femininities within the connection between export-oriented growth strategies and security issues and demonstrates how the presence of military bases in developing countries coincided with direct foreign investment (in light industries, agribusiness and tourism). The masculine ideal of the warrior is to be found in a continuum of protector, conqueror and exploiter of the feminine and feminised 'Other'. Enloe (2000) brings to light the phenomenon of militarization as a gradual process through which something becomes controlled by – depending on, or deriving its value from – the military and militaristic criteria. In masculine-dominated societies this subtle process encroaches on civil institutions and social space, hence clear-cut distinctions between the two domains of the civil and the military may well be a fallacy.

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[9] This manifesto emerged from consultations among women's grass-root organisations in several regions in the 'developing' world (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean).

Post-colonial scholars have demonstrated the link between masculinity and military force in the forging of a homogenised national entity. Wieringa (1996), for example, analysed how the inscriptions of social constructs of sexuality, gender, class and ethnicity in the nationalist discourses in Indonesia during the creation of the New Order led by Suharto (backed by the foreign policy of the United States) were consciously crafted into a strategy to destroy the socialist-inspired women's organization. The triangulation of power – between gender construction plus the sexualisation of women's identity at one angle, and state and nation at the other two angles – provided the legitimacy both for brutal acts against the corporal and personal dignity of members of this organisation, and the social marginalization of survivors. In the case of 'miracles of development' within those countries aspiring to catch up with the West, the conflation of national identity, modernisation and industrial competitiveness was built on the cultural construct of gender in those value-systems present in families, communities, firms and states (Truong, 1999). Furthermore, in order to ensure policy success, security agreements had been made between allies, which involved the sexualization of women's identities and covert organization of commercial sex to care for the needs of employees of the security apparatus (Truong, 1990; Moon, 1997). Such social experiences confirm the more general historical continuity of masculinity. As Rai (2002) has clearly demonstrated, emasculated norms of nationalist responses have been woven into anti-colonial struggles and nationalist agendas. National strategies of 'development' have mostly tended to reinforce gender inequalities and produce complex intersecting power structures of class, gender and ethnic identities that cannot be easily accommodated by the language of gender equality.

Feminist scholars concerned with gender issues in global political economy, have revealed how neo-liberal structural reforms introduced in the 1980s has been guided by a body of knowledge based on androcentric, middle-class and 'productive-age' standpoints. This has 'naturalised' specific activities central to quotidian issues of security – found for instance in caring relations within the social economy (Young, 2003), and in maintaining the balance in ecological relations, sidelining the value of such activities in national and global accounting systems and excluding them from planning processes (Beneria, 2003; Elson, 2002). Feminist analyses of contemporary processes of economic restructuring are giving significance to changing boundaries of institutional responsibilities for care provisioning and services. Activities in this crucial but invisible domain – the coined appellation being 'the care economy' – involve both paid and unpaid work. Being both purchasable (under a variety of arrangements) and/or subsidized, services in the care economy straddle public and private domains; contraction in one type of arrangement affects another. Care deficits in industrialised countries arose from a convergence of factors such as the increased percentage of elderly persons, rising women's entry into the labour force, the withdrawal of state subsidies for caring activities and the introduction of the new *'workfare'* regime by which *employment* rather than the state provides the basis for social entitlements (Razavi, 2006). The global 'care' chains – with migrant women from low-income countries as care providers – now cater to the 'care deficits' in high-income countries. *Per pro* migrants' remittances, care for dependents in their countries of origin is sustained and

the burdens of any debt crises therein are eased. Gender, ethnicity and age influence relations of labour in global care chains as well as differential treatment by employers and by the state (Chang, 2000; Sassen, 2003). Spike Peterson (2003) shows how the rise of finance-driven decision-making processes along with increased fragmentation and flexibilisation of labour have together forged complex and transnational circuits of integration between productive, reproductive and virtual economies. Inequalities of race, gender, class, and nations have interacted in ways that structure the scaffold supporting the ideals of neo-liberal globalisation.

Contributions to the study of intra- and inter-state conflicts by feminist scholars in conflict studies have highlighted how gender underpins a war system and how rape can be used as a tool to destroy the manliness of the 'Other' with humanitarian implications (Farwell, 2004; Hutchings, 2000). The nexus between militarization and masculinity can also result in violence against men and boys who are deemed to be the protagonist 'Other'. Selective targeting of males – based on their ethnicity, sexual orientations, religious affinity – for massacre, sexual abuse or forced recruitment in armed conflicts – is an especial issue which confronts the hegemonic understanding of gender violence being coincidental with violence against women (Carpenter, 2002; 2006). Conventional security studies conducted within the binary understanding of gender are likely to produce non-congruent definitions of gender-based rights and, thus, disadvantage those who do not fit such established categorisations. A focus on women as individuals with rights to protection – though necessary in view of the depth and scale of violence facing them during protracted conflicts and crisis situations – is insufficient to address the deeper seeds and the subsequent manifestations of violence. Multiple processes of gendering and the re-configuration of social divisions have produced complex terrains of power in which systematic abuse no longer fits the clear-cut framework of 'Us' and 'Them'.

The discursive changes within UN organisations and governmental agencies to respond to these problems are based on an a-historical and a-political understanding of gender. This understanding classifies gender under the rubric of women's rights, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, and has limited relevance to women (and men) positioned at an intersection of different axes of social power. The tendency to write 'gender' in the planning machinery without sufficient contextual understanding of its meaning can reinforce experiences of social exclusion resulting from gender identities which do not fit the templates of planners. Issues of participation and representation can acquire instrumental values and therefore can become socially meaningless at best, oppressive at worst (Saunders, 2002). Viewing 'development' and 'security' from diverse feminist epistemological perspectives reveals the many circuits of power that connect the two domains and how their administrative separation at national and international levels are more virtual than real.

To recapitulate, critical writing of gender into the canvas of 'development' and 'security' has produced in the last decades what may be considered as another 'quilt'. The craft of quilting involves the handling of differences in texture and form; differences are not necessarily discerned on the basis of *a-priori* conceptions but require a full engagement with the materials to sense, feel

and see how they may fit together in small patches, which then – when assembled – allow the broader patterns to emerge (Flannery, 2001). These contributions have come from diverse feminist knowledge networks, drawing insights from different streams of feminist epistemology and motivated by a common concern about the contemporary unjust word order.

4 HUMAN SECURITY AND THE ONTOLOGY OF CARE

Built on a 'relational ontology' care offers an alternate understanding of social reality. It posits that the constitution of each and every entity in the human-scale reality is made up of a nexus of relationships, and all entities have a shared being and a mutual constitution. Caring for the self in this regards also means an openness to 'otherness', to that something that can neither be totally dominated and controlled, nor made to acquire features of the 'self' – otherwise there is no one with whom to have a relationship (Slife, 2005: 159, 167).

Aspects of a relational ontology on the matters of security at the international level are to be found in the Brandt Commission Report (Independent Commission on International Development, 1980). The report envisaged the crisis at the end of the 20th century as one in which state and inter-state institutions have failed to address human deprivation, the spread of disease, environmental stress, political repression and the arms race. The 'inevitability' of a crisis required an understanding of 'security' which goes beyond the sovereign rights of a government, to include both the multiple referents of security – institutions, communities and persons – *and* the relationships that link them. Achieving people-centred security (human security) is defined as a collective endeavour, which must recognise the significance of the *quality* of relations between nations, citizens and their part in the ecosystems. The report brought to the fore the multi-dimensional and interconnected character of *vulnerability* of human beings and their societies, albeit restricted to relations between nation-states. Re-reading the Report in the light of the ongoing contributions to the fields of human development, human rights and human security reveals a historical continuity of ideas along with fuller understanding of both the role of institutions and the 'social' as a multi-layered entity. In a globalized world the 'social' transcends the boundaries of nation-states and demands a corresponding conception of 'justice'.

Work on a normative account of human development began in the late 1980s as a joint effort between two South Asian male economists, Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen. The American feminist philosopher Martha Nussbaum joined the team in the 1990s. This enterprise – sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme – began with a conceptual framework for human development, the main goal of which is to build a human-centred parameter for the assessment of development impacts in order to re-orient policy. Its concept of human development extends the meaning beyond the rise or fall of national incomes to include the social, political and cultural environments which foster (or obstruct) people's capability to develop their full potential and to lead productive and creative lives in accord with what they

themselves value. It seeks those meanings of development that are more reflective of human lives (Gasper, 2004). The Human Development Annual Report (first launched in 1990) provides a yearly worldwide assessment of the major dimensions of wellbeing: health, education, employment and longevity. The concept of Human Security was first introduced in the 1994 Human Development Annual Report and became more finely tuned in the following years[10]. Endorsement of the concept of human security galvanised efforts by policy makers and civic organisations to draw up and act upon specific forms of direct violence and insecurity, such as landmines, recruitment of child soldiers and trade in small arms. This endorsement also led to the establishment of the International Criminal Court. In 1999, a Human Security Network was launched composed of 12 like-minded countries[11], as well as activists and scholars. The goal was to establish an informal and flexible mechanism to bring a 'human security perspective' to bear on political processes aimed both at preventing or solving conflicts and at promoting peace and development. Japan and Canada – in 1998 and 2000 respectively – took the bold step of trying to make human security the defining characteristic of their foreign policy. The then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, instituted a Commission on Human Security (co-chaired by Amartya Sen and Sadako Ogata) whose report released in 2003 has resulted in a permanent UN Advisory Board on Human Security.

The prominence of the Human Security concept is growing in different regions. In the European Union there is increasing recognition that the security of European citizens cannot be separated from human security elsewhere in the world, and that contribution to global human security on the part the Union is exigent (Glasius, and Kaldor, 2006). The links between climate change, human security and violent conflicts has recently been brought to the fore, with a realisation that the intersections between different social dimensions of vulnerability – such as fragile livelihoods, poverty, weak states and large-scale migration to neighbouring areas – can indeed provoke violent conflicts (Barnett and Adger, 2007).

The contributions of Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (1995; 2000) gave a fuller understanding of human development from the perspective of moral theories

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[10] The 1994 report defines the major dimensions of human security as follows : (a) economic security: the ability of a government to assure every individual a minimum requisite income; (b) food security: guaranteed physical and economic access to basic nutrition; (c) health security: guaranteed a minimum protection from disease; (d) environmental security: protection from short- and long-term ravages of nature and from human-made deterioration of the natural environment; (e) personal security: protection from physical violence – whether from external states, or internal sources of violence including abuse in personal relations; (f) community security: the protection from loss of traditional relationships and values, also from sectarian and ethnic violence; (g) political security: receipt of full respect for basic human rights.
[11] The network includes Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Slovenia, and Thailand. South Africa participated as an observer.

based a species-specific concept of capabilities. Nussbaum links the articles of the Universal Bill of Rights with 10 basic capabilities[12], clearly stating her commitment to make the nation-state and inter-state institutions more accountable. Sen does not commit himself such classification and prefers to keep the definition of human capabilities as a process of deliberative democracy (Gasper, 2005; Truong, 2006). Sen's silence on which capabilities matter the most is puzzling for many. Giri (2000) points out that Sen's concept of human development omits an ontological striving for a deep conceptualisation of self and self-realisation in which the meaning of 'development as freedom' needs to be accompanied by the meaning of 'development as responsibility'.

A more friendly reading of Sen's work on human security would suggest that he seeks a more apposite conception of the 'social' in which human subjects have 'plural affiliations': a conception which perhaps demands a corresponding conception of 'justice' and 'responsibility'. The notion of 'plural affiliations' would seem to require a historical dimension to be made explicit. Sen (2001) distinguishes between *international equity* and *global equity*; the former referring to just and fair relations between nations as aggregates; the latter to just and fair practices by diverse institutions operating across borders (firms and business, social groups and political organisations, non-governmental organisations of different types). These institutions have to face issues of purpose, relevance and propriety – issues that cannot be dissociated from concerns of justice (and responsibility). The contributions of these institutions to human capabilities and freedoms need to be subject to evaluation. Sen (2001) seems to suggest a multi-level approach to matters of global justice. This will need placing the social practice of all institutions operating across borders in their contextual boundaries, vetting the values they hold and the legitimacy of their actions and outcomes. Taking this route would require more specificity on the matter of the level, the actors, the evaluator and standards appropriate to the assessment of security enhancement and human fulfilment. It requires an understanding on how any combination of the seven components of human security are intermeshed to produce a specific situation that threatens (or protect) the vital core of human lives.

There is a great degree of resonance between feminist critiques of development, ecological thinking and the type of reasoning in the 'Human Security' discourse – notably in its shift of security concerns from the state to society, and the emphasis on democratisation to build a meaningful commitment towards planetary well-being. Concerns about the narrow understanding of group rights and a singular understanding of identity require security concerns to be more epistemologically grounded and rooted in particular geo-political contexts (Hudson, 2005; Hyndman, 2004). The demand for such 'situated' understanding and action does not imply a whole rejection of universal norms, rather, a more reflexive approach to: (a) the existing

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[12] These 10 are: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; relations with other species; play; control over one's environment at the political and material levels.

institutions; (b) their contextual performance; and (c) their capacity to pursue (or dislocate) human security goals.

In this vein, the ethics of care can strengthen a vision on human security, which accords significance to diversity, particularity and context (Gasper and Truong, 2009). Hutchings' (2000) application of care ethics to international relations shows how care ethics do not blend well with the accepted value of 'universality of rights' because care discourses are deeply tainted by gender constructs – conflating acts of caring as they do with the female identity, and giving the male prototype as the benchmark to validate ethical judgements. Informed by conception of a 'fixed and stable subject' rights discourses tend to marginalise care as stream of thought in global affairs – except in humanitarian intervention. Yet care ethics can help reveal how the virtual dichotomy of violent and non-violent means of international intervention is problematic. From the lens of care the gendered effects of 'non-violent' economic sanctions would appear capable of provoking more profound forms of violence since they undermine quotidian security and turn violence inwards without any external physical force. Likewise, 'rape as a crime against humanity' can be non-transformative since it is build on a given understanding of the gender of the offenders and victims, and is considered a crime only in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups. The hegemonic meanings ascribed to 'violence', 'non-violence', 'rape' in international intervention can benefit from deepening understanding of the characteristics of a particular condition of its occurrence, and that of its judgement, which can help correct and/or challenges the fixed nature of moral assumptions. Care ethics in this regard would appeal to intuitiveness and self-reflexivity in understanding and judging to identify an injustice stemming from institutional rigidity which fails to recognise gendered power relations within a particular structure and decision making process (Hutchings, 2000). In other words, a justice system should be able to interrogate itself to arrive at careful judgements (or to practice care as self-reflexivity and prudence in judging to enhance its competence).

Engster (2007) takes a rather different track and seeks to integrate care ethics with political theory. He begins with the acknowledgement that inter-dependence is a realist view of humanity, meaning to say, care giving and care receiving have evolved as universal and permanent features of human society. Engster echoes Hutchings in demonstrating how Western political theories are deeply gendered and therefore create a dichotomy between 'particularistic' care and 'universal' justice. He offers a notion of care that is aligned with natural law theory where he demonstrates that the responsibility to give care facilitates the most basic goals in life (survival, development and basic functioning). Bringing care back into the realm of moral reasoning is imperative because its erosion has the potential to generate chaos and anarchy. Engster offers a 'rational theory of obligation' within his theory of care, defined as one which goes beyond the dominant practice of provision for one's immediate group. It seeks to produce collective caring arrangements that address the needs of a society. This obligation is grounded neither on sympathy nor compassion but on the fact of interdependence. Care theory in Ensgter's view can serve as a minimal capabilities theory because it does place emphasis on human needs –

and to some extent tallies with the theory of justice advanced by Nussbaum – although he resists her listing of capabilities as being too closely linked with the Western model of democracy and calls for greater flexibility to account for cultural diversity. Generally, care theory calls for public support to sustain a flexible and decentralised approach to caring activities, which maximises the particularity of context and allows the space for individuals to determine how they may arrange care in ways that can protect their 'autonomy'.

Baker et al (2004) treat dependency and autonomy as different moments in the human life cycle rather than binary opposites, and offer a model of an egalitarian society. In their view an egalitarian society must pay attention to: (a) equality in economic relations and access to resources; (b) equality in the social and cultural domains: systems of communication, interpretation and representation (media, education, the churches) ensuring equality of respect and recognition of differences; (c) equality of power in both public and private institutions (formal politics, governing boards, work committees, family/personal relations); and (d) equality in affective relationships (being able to receive and provide on equal terms love, care, and solidarity which operate at different sites – personal relationships, work relations, community and associational relations). Affective equality integrates concepts of autonomy and interdependency with our understanding of equality and 'citizenship'; it recognises the citizen as an economic, social, cultural and political actor as well as a universal caregiver and care recipient.

These contributions show the acknowledgement of a 'relational ontology' present both in the writing on human security and care, although the degree of depth of being 'relational' may differ. In the human security discourses the notion of 'relational' tends to be restricted to the links between pre-defined separate entities and does not necessarily address how each and every entity can be a mutual constitution through interaction with one another. Feminist discussions on care gravitate towards a deeper level of being relational, inclusive of but beyond institutions, to address also the process 'subjectivation' – or the making of the social subject as a relational subject through thoughtful interaction and mutual transformation.

5   CONCLUSION

By deepening the dimension of the social in epistemology from a gender perspective, feminist scholars have provided an opportunity to reflect on the role of care in real lives and in epistemic interactions, and how the values of care (attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness) can help create new pathways to understand the social world. Care, when free from the constraints of gender as a binary construct, can show its wider relevance for social transformation built on an affinity among humans, between them and other life forms. Analogous to water, care has neither shape nor colour, adopting as it does the particular shape of the object that contains it. A subject may express the sense of care in the particular context in which she/he is situated through institutionally recognized forms. Beyond this aspect care has a larger meaning: the recognition of mutual constitution – or how the 'self' is to be found in 'others' and the 'others' in 'self'. Care in this meaning can help

direct human intention and action towards self-reflexivity to promote the benign rather than predatory side of being human for a cognitive alliance in support of an eco-minded and human-centred security to be possible.

Institutional rigidity that fails to fully honour affinity among humans and between them and other life forms and to accept the changes required to achieve a more secure and sustainable future can benefit from Rolin's ideas of contextual epistemic justification. By calling into question the credibility of formerly accepted assumptions on harms and benefits and placing these justifications on a given scale of social and ecological disharmony, contextual justification can be extended beyond the epistemic privilege accorded to a given subject position humans occupy but also to its relationships with other life forms. Haraway's notion of diffraction and Spivak's concept of hyper self-reflexivity – though articulated from different standpoints – may be understood as the recognition of different types and moments of 'awakening' through an open attitude in epistemic interaction and the recognition of other possibilities of knowing. Code's notion of responsible knowledge and co-habitability underlines careful treatment of the relations between different knowledge systems and values co-operation and co-learning. These are important to direct the schooling of the knowledge agents towards relationality and epistemic humility in order to learn and become holistic.

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