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Oppression and Incredulity

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I demonstrate that arguments analogous to those that have been used to argue against descriptivism and internalism about natural kind terms like “water” can be used to argue against descriptivism and internalism about social kind terms like “woman.” Moreover, I show that these arguments shed light on the subtle and yet devastating ways in which oppressive social conditions can undermine a subject’s ability to transmit and acquire knowledge. In particular, I argue that a speaker can suffer testimonial injustice even when a hearer does not hold a prejudicial belief about her testimonial reliability, and that a subject can suffer hermeneutical injustice even when she does not lack the conceptual resources necessary to render her experiences communicatively intelligible.