



The Critical Investigation of the Relationship between Implicit Bias and Skepticism

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Abstract

Research Article



In this paper, we attempt to explain the concept and types of “Implicit Bias” by outlining its various meanings. These biases can be indirectly identified in anyone through experimental tests. These biases have different epistemological consequences, namely skepticism. Jennifer Saul has argued that we have very compelling reasons to believe that our judgments, decisions, and evaluations of propositions and arguments are influenced by the social groups that the person making that argument or statement is a member of. Thus, she points out that we make mistakes in the majority of the judgments we make on a daily basis. In light of this, we may be skeptical about the need to take practical action. We argue that Saul’s view is ambiguous in several ways: 1) Her discussion of skepticism depends on adopting a certain type of meaning for implicit bias and does not necessarily include other meanings. 2) In Saul’s view, the mind does not participate in the creation of belief and acts as a neutral machine. 3) Saul’s argument is self-defeating. 4) She has not given precise and general criteria for implicit bias effectiveness. 5) Her evaluation of traditional skepticism’s ineffectiveness in society is incorrect. Finally, 6) the degree of effectiveness varies from person to person, and the extent of its strength or weakness differs from person to person.

Keywords: implicit bias, skepticism, epistemology, judgment, Jennifer Saul.

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Introduction

Today, there is general agreement among researchers in the fields of social psychology and experimental psychology – and consequently, philosophy – that we have beliefs that affect our actions, evaluations, judgments, relationships, etc. These beliefs have been discussed in various fields. Implicit biases reflect our beliefs about categories such as racial groups, jobs, women, nationalities, LGBTQ community members, political and moral values, etc. Implicit biases are considered unconscious. This is the most common reading of this. In this reading, one is unaware of the biases that affect judgment, evaluation, decisions, etc. By means of some tests, the most well-known being the “implicit association test: IAT,” it is possible to prove the existence of such biases. Implicit biases are also commonly interpreted as “dissonant and unendorsed.” The person denies the existence of these biases and asserts that they do not reflect his true self. The most common readings of bias itself are: 1) bias as a bad thing and something that is normatively bad, and 2) bias as a neutral thing, that is, it is explored here why a trend is considered bad or good.

Bias-related doubt

According to what has been expressed about implicit biases, Jennifer Saul discusses the fact that implicit biases lead to another type of skepticism. She calls this “bias-related doubt.” For her, what we know about implicit biases indicates that there are very compelling reasons to believe that we cannot properly trust our knowledge-seeking. For example, when we make a mistake about the quality of an article, we have actually made a mistake about the quality of an argument. We evaluate that argument based on components completely unrelated to its quality. Our knowledge is influenced by the author’s social group. In fact, we accept an argument that we have not really accepted, and we reject an argument that we have not really rejected. Rather, we have accepted or rejected the social groups of the argument proponents. Moreover, implicit bias affects not only our judgment when accepting or rejecting people’s testimony but also who we consider credible. Even when we evaluate the evidence or the argument itself, we are still affected. Implicit biases not only affect how we choose who to trust they also influence us when we think we are judging something that has nothing to do with people’s credibility. In addition, evidence such as “shooter bias” indicates that implicit bias actually impacts our perception. Hence, she concludes that we require practical and collective action to ward off the threat of this type of skepticism. Unlike the traditional type of skepticism, which has no effect on our social life. According to her, stereotypes based on implicit biases can be completely dismantled only if we reconfigure our social world. This can be accomplished by creating more inclusive workplaces where women, people of color, and people with disabilities are in positions of authority. In addition, it can be done by putting men in nurturing roles.

Discussion

The following points can be mentioned in criticizing Saul:

1- Saul considered bias a bad thing. According to this reading, the mind plays no role in cognition and functions as a neutral machine. A point of view based on empiricists like Locke and Hume, as well as logical positivists.

2- Saul’s argument is self-defeating. If what she says about our knowledge-seeking faculties is assumed to be true, then this argument includes her own point of view and actually refers back to itself.

3- This type of skepticism is different in everyone, and its examination in everyone depends on conducting precise experimental tests; therefore, we cannot determine a general criterion for all people. It is also worthwhile to consider that the way experimental tests are performed will have a direct impact on the results obtained from them.

4- The skepticism that originates from implicit bias is different for each person in terms of its type and degree of influence. Although we could say that our judgments are influenced by implicit bias, it is impossible to say how much this effect is.

5- Whether we read implicit biases depends on our theoretical position about their meaning. A different position can bring completely different results. Saul's skepticism does not necessarily include all implicit bias readings, and it cannot be related to all of them.

6- It is not true that traditional types of skepticism have no effect on our practical lives. If we are convinced that an evil demon dominates our minds, much of our certain knowledge will disappear and the quality of our epistemic life will be reduced.

Conclusion

We noticed that Saulish skepticism faces serious difficulties considering different readings of implicit bias. We also examined Saul's view about how these biases lead to skepticism. Although Saul's view is thoughtful and needs attention, we believe that the evidence and arguments she uses to justify her claim are not sufficient. In addition, they are not compatible with other readings. As a result, even though Saul's view should be taken seriously, there is currently no strong evidence to support the point.

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