Lena Schützle, Barbara Schellhammer,
Anupam Yadav, Cara-Julie Kather, Lou Thomine (eds.)

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE AND VIOLENCE

Exploring Knowledge, Power, and Participation in Philosophy and Beyond

[transcript]

Lena Schützle, Barbara Schellhammer, Anupam Yadav, Cara-Julie Kather,
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Editorial

The book series **Philosophy – Enlightenment – Critique** aims to promote philosophical thinking dedicated to a future worth living for everyone in times of global crisis. Climate change, political and religious authoritarianism, and growing social inequalities – the manifold and interconnected issues of our time require a return to the power of reason. In the spirit of a new enlightenment, the series initiates a dialog between different philosophical schools and traditions that critically scrutinize the past and present and explore the ramifications of sustainable alternatives. This requires a re-examination, re-interpretation and revision of the philosophical canon. The series also reveals the emancipatory potential inherent in the interplay between philosophy and other disciplines such as technology or aesthetics.

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Cara-Julie Kather (she/they), born in 1999, is a PhD candidate at Leuphana Universität Lüneburg in the field of feminist and decolonial epistemologies. Her PhD work revolves around critical analysis of mathematics as a discipline and as a way of thinking. Her writing aims to question existing narratives and modes of thought and to create new ones in midst of all the chaos that is marginalization.

Lou Thomine, born in 1996, is a PhD candidate in the Cologne Center for Contemporary Epistemology and the Kantian Tradition (CONCEPT) at Universität zu Köln. She is interested in questions at the intersection of epistemology, social philosophy, and ethics.

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Preamble

Katherine Puddifoot

One of my roles as an academic philosopher in a United Kingdom institution of higher education is undergraduate admissions officer. This means that several times a year I am involved in Open Days. Students and their parents or carers are invited to our university to get information to inform their decision about whether they are going to apply to study with us or accept an offer of a place. In some of these Open Days we offer a taster of the type of teaching that we provide to undergraduates. On several occasions, I have provided a taster session of teaching on epistemic injustice. I invite students, and their parents, if they like, to think of cases where they have been disbelieved. Then I ask them to consider whether this may have been due to some aspect of their social identity: their gender, age, class, perceived racial or religious identity, and so forth. I am, many of you will recognise, getting them to begin to reflect on whether they personally have experienced epistemic injustice, specifically, what Miranda Fricker labelled testimonial injustice.[1]

The sessions go well. The students find the topic engaging. But what is often most satisfying to me is the responses of the parents, most notably, the mothers. Something happens to some of the mothers. They might begin sceptical or disinterested. Many of them have not studied philosophy before, and they might not have a good sense of what it is that their children are choosing to embark on when they apply for a philosophy course. At some point in the session though, a look creeps across many of their faces. I interpret it as the look of someone who feels like their experiences are being seen for the first time. Sometimes the look almost takes the form of panic. The panic of someone whose experiences of being dismissed – as a woman, middle-aged, sometimes from minoritized groups, and so forth – are being given recognition for the first time. The concepts of testimonial injustice, and epistemic injustice and epistemic violence more broadly, are tools to which they have not previously been exposed, which capture something profound about their experiences of being in the world.

I am proud that we give our undergraduate students the conceptual tools of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence early on in their academic careers, and their

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1   See Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing, Oxford 2007.

lives, when they study these concepts as first year undergraduates. These conceptual tools, like many others from social and feminist philosophy, give many of us resources to frame our experiences, and to articulate them to each other, and sometimes even to those in positions of power and influence over us. I hope that the undergraduates that we teach are thereby given a form of protection against at least a small amount of the confusion and loneliness that can be experienced when one's epistemic agency is curbed, undermined, or questioned.

However, something else often happens. Something that gives me less reason for optimism. Students reaching the middle or end of their studies – in their second, third and fourth years in higher education – often use the conceptual tools provided by their beginners' epistemology course, the concepts of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, and the concepts used to describe their various forms, to describe their experiences during their higher education. They might describe their contributions to class being dismissed; being excluded from group chats by dominant group members, which they later find contain sexist content; finding the ideas of marginalised thinkers are unduly dismissed as worthless by peers who are members of those same dominant groups. In some of the most worrying cases, they describe their experiences of being targets of sexual harassment or misconduct, and being given less credit than they are due when they report these experiences, including to the police. Perhaps the form of sexual harassment that they experience does not fit the stereotypical conception of harassment. In any case, many are not given the support that they need at a time of great vulnerability from the relevant authorities because their claim to have been harassed is not treated as credible. Depressingly, I sometimes see students begin to self-silence or truncate their testimony about their experience of harassment due to an increased sense that they will not be believed or taken seriously if they speak out.

These experiences, which I and colleagues have on a regular basis within the context of higher education, underscore the importance of the work in this volume, addressing epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in philosophy. And when I say 'addressing epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in philosophy' is crucially important, I refer to several senses of 'addressing epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy'.

Philosophical work addressing epistemic injustice and violence by honing the general theoretical concepts of epistemic injustice and violence is extremely important. The experiences of my students show how understandings of epistemic injustice and violence can be a lifeline to vulnerable individuals. My students can use these concepts to articulate their experiences to instructors and peers who are well-versed in the meaning of the terms. It is not only students in higher education that can benefit in this way. The theoretical concepts of epistemic injustice and violence can provide crucial support for the understanding and articulation of experiences of marginalised individuals from a multiple of backgrounds, and with various life

experiences – as is illustrated by the parents in my Open Day sessions, who come from a variety of backgrounds.

It is not only the experiences of individuals, however, that can be illuminated via the theoretical concepts of epistemic injustice and violence developed within philosophy. The limitations of social institutions, their policies, practices, and procedures, can also be illustrated using the philosophical tools of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence. When students experience sexual harassment, but their claims are not treated as credible by authorities they may experience being wronged as knowers due to the behaviour of individuals, but the policies, practices and procedures of the relevant authorities should also be scrutinised. They should be scrutinised to see if they are complicit in epistemic injustice or epistemic violence. Here, once again, the conceptual tools developed in philosophy can be utilised.

Once we recognise how the conceptual tools of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence can be applied to institutions, this raises the question of how well they apply to the institutions of higher education. Where students, and staff, experience disbelief or the felt tension of things being wrong – e.g. in the actions of staff or institutions, or the content of the curriculum – accompanied by the feeling of being unable to do anything about these wrongs, or marginalised individuals engage in practices of self-silencing or smothering of their testimony, the importance of addressing epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy takes on another meaning.

That this anthology encourages authors to address epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in philosophy in both these senses is greatly to its credit.

It would be a mistake to think that the primary goal of current and future work relating to epistemic injustice in philosophy is to develop and apply existing conceptions of epistemic injustice and violence, however. Epistemic injustice and epistemic violence are umbrella terms. They encapsulate a diversity of experiences and injustices. Via the process of identifying previously unacknowledged or underacknowledged examples of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, it is possible to provide the conceptual tools to capture a greater variety of experiences of marginalisation and discrimination, and to have a positive influence on a greater range of policies and practices. As more discussions open up about epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, new testimonies emerge – including in our philosophy classes – about previously unacknowledged or underacknowledged experiences of being treated poorly as knowers: excluded, dismissed, oppressed. Sometimes the experiences described by the testimony are neatly captured by existing theoretical formulations of epistemic injustice or epistemic violence. But often there are similarities, but also important differences, between the experiences articulated and epistemic injustice and epistemic violence as described in the existing literature. The general notions of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence seem to apply, but specific formulations of these concepts do not. These testimonies show that the project of

carving conceptual space for all forms of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence therefore rightly goes on, as it does in this anthology.

Work on epistemic injustice and violence can thus be understood as giving people conceptual tools to frame their experiences of injustice and oppression, inside and outside of higher education. It carves out new intellectual space, by identifying and labelling new forms of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence. It has the potential to challenge institutional norms, including the norms of higher educational establishments. It therefore involves intellectual and conceptual revision, and the challenging of disciplinary norms. It aims to rupture existing practices and patterns of thinking. We have seen a great deal of progress in this direction from work operating within the confines of philosophy's disciplinary norms and expectations, including the work of authors like Miranda Fricker and Kristie Dotson. But because of the revisionary and discipline-challenging nature of at least some work on epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, as well as the way that it speaks to fundamental experiences of social life experienced by minority groups who may often be excluded from higher education contexts, there is an important place for work operating outside the narrow confines of disciplinary expectations about excellence.

Artists, artworks, non-academic speakers, poetry, non-standard prose – each of these, and other forms of expression, have the potential to capture experiences of epistemic injustice and epistemic oppression that may be less easily captured operating within the confines of the disciplinary norms of academic philosophy. For example, where works are not confined to the objective third person perspective, perhaps posing questions rather than proposing answers, they may elicit personal experiences of injustice and oppression more effectively. Personal experiences of injustice and oppression may inform the reader's (or viewer's) understanding of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence generally. They may also elicit insights about specific forms of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence that have previously been unacknowledged or underacknowledged. All of which is to say that the nature of this volume, bringing together a diversity of approaches and perspectives on epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, places it in an excellent position to open up new discussions about epistemic injustice and violence while also presenting the challenge to institutional norms that the evidence of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in institutions calls for.

About the Project
An Introduction

Lena Schützle

Activists[1] and academics[2] repeatedly point out that forms of e.g. racist and sexist injustice can be found at the epistemic level. Thus, the spheres of knowledge production are analyzed with regard to inherent power structures and unjust dynamics. With the publication of Brunner's work *Epistemic Violence* and the translation of Fricker's book *Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing* into more and more languages, the discourse on epistemic injustice and violence has been reignited and is being negotiated in post- and decolonial, and feminist debates.[3] This book is dedicated to the special role of epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy. Philosophy often referred to as the love of wisdom has had and still has a huge influence on other sciences and our everyday lives. Not only the theories that have been produced by academic philosophy, but also the structures around the so-called ivory tower of academic philosophy have led to both emancipation and exclusion. Questions around *how* philosophy should be practiced, *who* should engage in it, and *what* philosophy should deal with are negotiable and controversial. By shedding light on the inherent unjust structures of (academic) philosophy, we hope to better understand this powerful discipline that impacts the academic landscape as well as our individual and collective ways of being.

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1   See e.g. Why is my curriculum white?, displacement of indigenous languages in favour of colonial languages, Vandana Shiva's critique of science etc.

2   Brunner, Claudia: Epistemische Gewalt. Wissen und Macht in der kolonialen Moderne, Bielefeld 2020; Fricker, Miranda: Epistemische Ungerechtigkeit. Macht und die Ethik des Wissens, München 2023.

3   See e.g. Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing, Oxford 2007; Brunner, Claudia: Epistemic Violence. Knowledge and Power in Colonial Modernity, Bielefeld 2020; Dotson, Kristie: Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing, in: Hypatia 26 (2011) 2, 236–257; Dhawan, Nikita: Hegemonic Listening and Subversive Silences. Ethical-political Imperatives, in: Lagaay, Alice/Lorber, Michael (eds.): Destruction in the Performative, Amsterdam/New York 2012; de Sousa Santos, Boaventura: Epistemologies of the South. Justice Against Epistemicide, New York 2014; Graness, Anke/Schirilla, Nausikaa (eds.): Epistemische Gewalt, in: polylog 50 (2023) 12 and many more.

Injustice and violence related to knowledge (production)

The use of academic terms holds the inherent potential to exclude people from a conversation. That being said, this book still has barriers since many of us editors and our fellow authors use academic terms that are not salient beyond the philosophical discipline. Here is a brief introduction to the central notions of the book: Epistemic injustice and epistemic violence.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge:

> Its central questions include the origin of knowledge; the place of experience in generating knowledge, and the place of reason in doing so; the relationship between knowledge and certainty, and between knowledge and the impossibility of error; the possibility of universal scepticism; and the changing forms of knowledge that arise from new conceptualizations of the world. All of these issues link with other central concerns of philosophy, such as the nature of truth and the nature of experience and meaning.[4]

The adjective "epistemic" thus points to something that is related to knowledge. For a very first understanding, we can say that epistemic injustice is an umbrella term for injustices related to knowledge and epistemic violence refers to violence resulting from power-structures that are related to knowledge. For me, the example of epistemic injustice at hand is the use of academic language as a means of exclusion. It is not the academic term itself that is unjust, but the social dynamic that – through language – determines who can participate in a conversation and who cannot.

According to Fricker, a distinction can be made between hermeneutical injustice and testimonial injustice – both forms of epistemic injustice.[5] While testimonial injustice occurs when a person is not believed due to prejudice, hermeneutical injustice happens when a person cannot make sense of her own experience due to a gap in common knowledge.[6] Brunner works with the concept of epistemic violence, which differs from Fricker's analysis not only because of the different discipline of origin. Fricker's theory is rooted in analytic and moral philosophy. Brunner's thoughts sprouted within the discipline of peace studies and is now also discussed in philosophical disciplines like Intercultural Philosophy.[7] According to Brunner,

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4   Oxford Reference, https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803 095755106 (12/03/2024).

5   See Fricker, Epistemic Injustice.

6   Fricker, Epistemic Injustice, 15.

7   See e.g. Brunner, Claudia: Ungerechtigkeit, Unterdrückug oder doch Gewalt?, in: Graneß, Anke/Schirilla, Nausikaa (eds.), Polylog 50 (2024), 9–23.

epistemic violence is a contribution to violent social relations that are inherent in knowledge itself, in its genesis, formation, form of organization and effectiveness. [...] It is connected in many ways to its colonial past and the still present so-called underside that constitutes it and is characterized 'by numerous forms of violence.[8]

The term *epistemicide*, coined by Sousa Santos, describes a specific form of epistemic injustice that aims to erase knowledge and knowledge systems.[9] The discourse on epistemic injustice and violence has been shaped and advanced both by feminist and postcolonial philosophers such as Spivak and by activists outside academia.

In this anthology, we bring the terms of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in conversation instead of separating the two concepts. We believe that both are intertwined and – especially within philosophical contexts – need to be considered simultaneously. Furthermore, we aim at broadening the terms "Epistemic Injustice" and "Epistemic Violence," e.g. by including works on classism, art, and animal studies. We believe that it is important to delve deeper into the understanding of various forms of oppression and violence. With a better understanding of when, how, and why philosophy reproduces exclusion mechanisms we become better equipped agents for tackling these structures. Lastly, we are convinced that the form of a publication should reflect the content. It is a project that allows space for autobiographical work, artistic work, and philosophical experiments in terms of knowledge creation.

How this book came into being

Defining a starting point means to determine where the story begins. Does this book project begin with Miranda Fricker's publication in 2007? Does it begin with Sabrina Kofahl, a former colleague of mine, who asked me whether we want to work on the topic of epistemic injustice together? Does it start with claims for justice on the streets? In the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh[10] I would need to say: the project never started and it never ends – we find ourselves in a continuation without beginning or

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8   Brunner: Epistemic Violence, 274.

9   See Sousa Santos, Epistemologies of the South. We took notice of the article "The walls spoke when no one else would" by Miye Nadya Tom, Catarina Laranjeiro, and Lieselotte Viane, and the vivid discussion around it, see Sexual misconduct in Academia. Informing an Ethics of Care in the University, Pritchard, E./Edwards, D. (eds.), New York 2023. As we will discuss later, themes around abuse in academia, denunciation, and the lack of caring institutions bothered us quite a bit during this project.

10   Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Zen-Buddhist monk, peace activist and founder of the monastery Plum Village in France, https://plumvillage.org (12/03/2024).

end. However, finding ourselves in the process of publishing an academic anthology, I choose to tell the story as follows.

This book project started after an international workshop at the Munich School of Philosophy in 2022. Philosophers and social scientists met in Munich to discuss the role of epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy. The workshop was organized by the Munich School of Philosophy, specifically the chair for Intercultural Social Transformation. It was a two days hybrid workshop supported by *pro philosophia e.V.* and the *Society for Women in Philosophy*. The program included academic presentations, artistic workshops, student poster sessions and a round table discussion. It was during this conference that the wish for a collaborative publication was expressed several times. After a short formation phase, we, Anupam Yadav (Pilani), Lou Thomine (Cologne), Cara-Julie Kather (Lüneburg), Barbara Schellhammer (Munich), and me, Lena Schützle (Munich), formed an editorial team, designed a Call for Abstracts, received numerous promising submissions and decided upon the final structure of the book. The quality and variety of abstracts that found their way to our desks were a huge motivation to keep on working on this topic. However, despite having all this tailwind, we faced some challenges along the way of publication.

Challenges along the way

One challenge in dealing with epistemic injustice and violence in an academic context is that we try to reflect on ourselves and our discipline within an academic system. This means that theoretical foundations, ways of doing, and unconscious notions may be unjust or violent itself. As academic philosophers, it is impossible for us to view and analyze epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy from the outside or from a neutral standpoint. Our positioning in the social structure, e.g. as cis female academics, shapes how we experience this discipline.

When we wrote the Call for Abstracts we explicitly invited scholars and non-academics to hand in creative pieces and testimonials besides the usual philosophical essay. We wrote:

> Contributions of academics and nonacademics are welcome. Artistic and body-centered inputs beyond the conventional scientific framework are welcome. [...] We highly encourage different formats of contribution: [...] You are also very encouraged to talk about experiences of alienation or exclusion in academia or other institutions since we are looking for a variety of perspectives and are very open to

also critiquing academia through concepts of epistemic injustice/epistemic violence.[11]

With this invitation we followed our conviction that in philosophy restrictions regarding the form of philosophizing produces exclusion and power imbalances. Upon the arrival of the abstracts we had to realize that things were more complicated than expected. It took us a lot of time to review, comment, and discuss submissions that deviated from the norm of an academic philosophical article. Which criteria do we apply to the creative pieces and how can we compare testimonials to each other to decide which one gets published? These questions were challenging but foreseeable. Especially those submissions, that included testimonials confronted us with unexpected challenges: how do we handle more or less direct accusations? What role do we take when asking for testimonials? Are there institutions that are legally equipped and skilled to handle such texts on epistemic injustice within academia?[12]

These questions became especially urgent when we received abstracts for testimonials from authors who wanted to write anonymously. Or, who included direct accusations towards other philosophers in their articles. As you can see in the book, those texts did not make it into our selection of articles. One reason we retreated from these articles was the premonition of legal insecurities for the authors and us. And at this point we found ourselves in exactly those power structures that we are reflecting on in our articles. Despite our distinct academic positions – some of us being PhD students, some of us professors – as editors of this anthology we were the ones to decide what gets published and who needs to look for other publication sites. Refusing testimonials from our book felt like reproducing certain forms of epistemic injustices. And it is true: we are part of the academic system that provides access to some and denies it to others. While some scholars in response to this dilemma retreat from the academic sphere more or less voluntarily, we took the path of looking at these injustices from within. And while this path can be promising because we can use the academic tools and resources, it also brings along the risk of being ignorant to inherent injustices.

As much as we wanted to be a part of disclosing injustices within academia, we also wanted to know our role. In this anthology you will find meta discussions of abuse and injustice, you will not find disclosures of actual misconduct of specific personas or institutions. From the number of testimonials or autoethnographic abstracts we received, we strongly believe that we as philosophers need more spaces in

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11   Retrieved from our CfA, https://hfph.de/forschung/wissenschaftliche-einrichtungen/global efragen/nachrichten/cfaepistemic (08/03/2024).

12   See e.g. the journal Hypatia.

which injustices can be named and justice can be demanded. Then, the term justice is moved to the center of the discourse.[13]

How to work with this book

This book entails various perspectives from philosophers, students, and artists. Although the chapters follow a certain order, reading the first one is not a prerequisite for understanding the last article. We invite you to start with the very beginning: the art work by Anna Paßlick on the cover. What do you see in the picture? How does the person on the cover feel? Read her own interpretation just below this introduction. After that, you might want to follow our structure or skip to the article that most speaks to you.

The first part of the book aims at *Understanding and Exploring Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Violence*. While writing the book we witness that the terms epistemic injustice and violence become more and more popular and the discourse is widely known in academic philosophy. Welcoming this development and its transformative potential for society, we also notice that it is necessary to continuously clarify terms. This is the reason why the first part starts by shedding light on epistemic injustice and violence. In Lieke Asma's article the reader can follow her thoughts on how epistemic injustice and the philosophical inquiry are related. Nicki K. Weber's article "Breathing Through the Epistemic Violence of the Unthinkable Black Experience" introduces the use of basic terms of this anthology – epistemic injustice and violence – and helps the reader to find their way into a discourse that covers complexity and mundanities simultaneously. This is followed by Tizia Rosendorfer's contribution. Rosendorfer lets the reader participate in the process of using poetry to illustrate epistemic injustice; she shares a re-written version of Goethe's poem Rhodology.[14] The fourth contribution of this section Nela Adam and Sylvia Agbih are interviewed by Cara-Julie Kather about forum theater as an embodied practice in philosophy. The pictures you see in the book were taken by Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn during a Forumtheater Workshop led by Adams at the Munich School of Philosophy.

The second section of the first part (1.2) focuses on epistemic injustice and violence in academic philosophy. With Lars Leeten's article the inherent classism of philosophy is brought to the center of the discussion. This is followed by Francesca

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13   See e.g. works on transitional and transformative justice.

14   We are aware that Goethe's poem has been interpreted as a romantization of rape, see e.g. Bortloff, Jens: Heidenröslein – Das me-too-Gedicht Goethes (5/8/2000), https://www.goethe -mannheim.de/Goethebrisant (17/4/2024). We trust that Rosendorfer's way of encountering the poem and redefining its intention is a productive example of engaging with problematic content.

Greco's perspective on the history of philosophy and how it relates to epistemically unjust notions. While Leeten and Greco focus on the discipline as such, Maren Behrensen takes the human dimension into account. Behrensen discusses analogies between epistemic violence in academia (i.e. academic philosophy specifically), and spiritual abuse. These three articles aim to shed light on problematic aspects of academic philosophy and to point out hinges where philosophy bears inherent unjust structures.

In section 1.3 we aim at expanding the scope of the discourse on epistemic injustice and epistemic violence. Lou Thomine argues that we need to widen our understanding of testimonial injustice – one form of epistemic injustice – to overcome the deficiency view. Clement Mayambala draws on linguistic injustice as a specific notion of epistemic injustice. This article is of great importance since it points towards a form of injustice that we as publishers reiterate by asking for articles in English only. Cara-Julie Kather then widens the scope not only by taking Maths and its inherent power structures into account, but by doing so in forms of lists that invite the reader to reflect upon their own experiences. With Namita Herzl, the reader has the chance to get to know women thinkers and how they used asceticism as philosophical practice. With that she reflects on two of the afore-mentioned questions: *who* is doing philosophy and *how* is it practiced. This is followed by Chiara Stefanoni's article in which the author shares experiences of teaching animal resistance in the classroom. Lastly, Lucienne Spencer and Matthew Broome widen the discourse of epistemic injustice to the topic of suicide claims. As you can see, this section contains a variety of themes which go beyond the standard discourse on epistemic injustice and violence.

The second part of this book *Questioning and Reshaping: Tools to Transform Unjust and Violent Epistemic Structures* is directed towards possible futures. We were tempted to put much more articles of this kind in the book because when working on epistemic injustice and violence, the problems become so evident that the urge to transform the system of (academic) philosophy becomes omnipresent. However, we acknowledge that firstly, there is still a lot of unpacking to do before this complex problem can be solved. And secondly, that while we are situated in unjust conditions, acknowledging is important to prevent further harm.

In Section 2.1 the reader can follow the process of maneuvering positionality in philosophy. It begins with Isabela Gonçalves Dourado who offers guidance for identifying exploitative structures in academia and academic philosophy. This is followed by a personal and structural reflection of Barbara Schellhammer asking "Who am I Doing Philosophy with Indigenous Peoples?" Lena Schützle's/my article on self-compassion and epistemic injustice offers a reflection on how to deal with the epistemic injustice we and others are facing in philosophy. This section is rich with questions and humble and honest maneuvering. We welcome the reader to continue this exploration.

In the last section of the book, we gather contributions that are disruptive tools in themselves or that reflect on transformative practices. Paloma Nana and Cara-Julie Kather experiment with sharing parts of personal and academic considerations in another way to conceptualize intellect. The reader might already be familiar with the comic artist Anna Paßlick who also designed the cover of the book. In section 2.2 she illustrates the above-mentioned dilemma of searching for tools to dismantle epistemic injustice and violence with reference to Sylvia Winter. Anupam Yadav and Baiju P. Anthony recall Ambedkar's critique of sacred narratives and liberatory practices to let the reader get a taste of how philosophy can play out on the political level in society. Jelena Jeremejewa introduces the reader to Ukrainian artists who use art as a way to transmit what cannot be transmitted via language alone. Jeremejewa offers this contribution and proposes the reader to grasp notions of war and humanity that cannot be grasped with words alone.

One thing is already clear: this book is a rich collection of perspectives, standpoints, and aspects of epistemic injustice and violence. We are in the process of learning and have learned so much from each contribution. For sure, five years from now, we would highlight different aspects, rephrase certain sentences and criticize terms and practices that are now included without further notice. We are looking forward to this collective learning process that has already begun and will definitely ignite once again after publication. If you want to get to know the authors a little more, get in touch with us or share our work, please take a look at the short biographies at the end of this book.

Thank you

We thank all activists, scholars, and change makers who put their finger in the wound so that the pain becomes impossible to ignore. We thank our philosophical ancestors who paved the way for critical thinking and analysis. We thank our spiritual ancestors, families, and friends who support us doing this work.

We thank all authors of the anthology for their valuable contributions, flexibility in the working process and courage to leave the familiar path. We specially thank Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn and Anna Paßlick for the design of the cover and Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn's powerful pictures of the forum theatre workshop.

We thank the supportive staff of the publishing house and all colleagues on the way who believed in this project.

We thank the NiedersachsenOPEN publication fund, the chair for Intercultural Social Transformation of the Munich School of Philosophy, Sven Bernecker, CONCEPT and the University of Cologne for the financial support, enabling us to publish this book with open access licence.

We thank the organizers of the World Congress of Philosophy who accepted our offer to host a Round Table on Epistemic Injustice and Violence in Philosophy in Rome in 2024. This gives us an opportunity to meet in person for the first time and discuss questions that came up during this publication process with an international audience.

Last but not least, we thank you, the reader. We hope that we can learn together and inspire one another to shift with participative and reflective agency towards change – in academic philosophy and beyond.

Lena Schützle, Munich the 10th of April 2024

About the Artwork

Anna Paßlick

One of the recurring issues in my work as a comic artist, researcher and illustrator is the question of how to depict violence in a way that evokes recognition and speaks to the viewer but does not feed into the cycle of violence from which it has sprung in the first place.

When engaging with realities of war and large-scale political violence, but also the small violences of everyday life such as racial profiling and epistemic violence, one has to somehow relate to the reader that these are the topics at hand. Yet, how explicitly does one have to visualize violences in order to criticize them and, relatedly, which images is the viewer left with when closing a book? I believe there are no universal answers to these questions. Rather, they have to be asked again, and again, whenever embarking on a new project.

When it comes to visualizing epistemic violence and injustice for the cover of this book, I was very happy to engage in a process of collective rather than individual meaning making. Together with the editorial team, Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn, and myself, we discussed the core intellectual and emotional messages of the book before I started making rough sketches. However, up until now, there was one important member still missing in the chain of visual meaning making for this book: you, the reader!

Until you opened this book, it was impossible to know if the anger, ambiguity, and hope that provided our emotional baseline for the cover made their way through to you. Therefore, I invite you to think along with me while reading and engaging with the contributions of this book: what did you feel when opening this book? What images do you think you will be left with when closing it? Do they reinforce violent power structures?

I think it is only in answering these questions together, that we can push towards disrupting the visual cycle of violence even further next time.

Part I
Understanding and Exploring Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Violence

1.1 Shedding Light on Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Violence

The pictures show scenes of a forum theater workshop led by Nela Adam, organized by Barbara Schellhammer and Lena Schützle at the Munich School of Philosophy in 2022. The topic of the workshop was borders (related to Schellhammer/Schützle (2022): Philosophie der Grenze). The participants developed two scenes, one depicting exclusion and border politics and the other picking up the issue of work-life-balance and gender inequality. All pictures were taken and edited by Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn. Read the conversation with Nela Adam, Sylvia Aghbi, and Cara-Julie Kather about Embodied Knowledge to learn more about forum theater and how it links to epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy.

Implicit Bias, Unconscious Discrimination, and the Nature of Philosophical Inquiry

Lieke Asma

1. Introduction

Research suggests that academic philosophy has an exceptionally hard time becoming more diverse. In contrast to STEM disciplines for example, the number of women receiving PhDs in philosophy has not gone up in the period from 1990 until 2015, but remained at around thirty percent.[1] Research from 2017 and 2018 shows that women compose at most 25 percent of U.S. philosophy faculty.[2] What is more, even considering this low number, citations and article submissions from women to top ranked journals are low.[3]

These data require an explanation. Why do women still not play a substantial role in philosophical inquiry? Several scholars have pointed out that the problem is not independent from the nature of philosophy.[4] Louise Antony distinguishes between two models: Different Voices and Perfect Storm. While some scholars adopt Different Voices and propose that gender differences explain why women leave philosophy, for example because women tend to have opposed intuitions[5] or dislike of the

1   Holtzman, Geoffrey S.: Rejecting beliefs, or rejecting believers? On the importance and exclusion of women in philosophy, in Hypatia 31 (2016) 2, 293–312, 301. Leslie, Sarah-Jane et al: Expectations of brilliance underlie gender distributions across academic disciplines, in: *Science*, 347 (2015) 6219, 262–265.

2   Schwitzgebel, Eric/Jennings, Carolyn Dicey: Women in philosophy. Quantitative analyses of specialization, prevalence, visibility, and generational change, in: Public Affairs Quarterly 31 (2017) 2, 83–105

3   Wilhelm, Isaac/Conklin, Sherry Lynn/Hassoun, Nicole: New data on the representation of women in philosophy journals: 2004–2015, in Philosophical Studies 175 (2018), 1441–1464.

4   For example, Antony, Louise: Different voices or perfect storm. Why are there so few women in philosophy?, in Journal of Social Philosophy 43 (2012) 3, 227–255. Holtzman: Rejecting beliefs.

5   Buckwalter, Wesley/Stich. Stephen: Gender and philosophical intuition, in: Knobe, Joshua/ Nichols, Shaun (eds.): Experimental Philosophy: Volume 2, New York 2014, 307–346.

combative nature of philosophy[6], Antony argues for the Perfect Storm view. In philosophy, she maintains, certain problematic forces converge, interact, and intensify each other. For one thing, even though women may not intrinsically dislike the combative manner of philosophy, it clashes with accepted gender norms for women.[7] It puts women in a double bind: if they respect gender norms, they are likely to be dismissed intellectually, and if they don't, they risk being seen as rude or domineering.[8] Another factor is that in philosophy the credibility of the researcher may play a more important role compared to other fields of inquiry[9], because philosophical inquiry is less firmly anchored by facts or data independent from the researcher, and depends more on personal intuitions.[10] Additionally, Leslie *et al.* argue that it is often assumed that philosophy requires innate brilliance, a factor that is sensitive to gender-coded stereotypes as well.[11]

Several scholars have pointed out that implicit biases may be an important contributor to this perfect storm.[12] Of course, explicit sexism and racism occur[13], but the problem also is that people unconsciously associate philosophy and rationality with white males. Conversely, women (and persons of color) are typically associated with everything philosophy is not: emotionality, subjectivity, and the body.[14] Such gender schemas, as Sally Haslanger and Antony take from Virginia Valian, condition our perceptions, shape our normative expectations, and influence the way in

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6   For example: Beebee, Helen: Women and deviance in philosophy, in: Hutchison, Katrina/Jenkins, Fiona (eds.): Women in Philosophy. What Needs to Change? Oxford 2013, 61–80.

7   Antony: Different voices, 238. See also: Friedman, Marilyn: Why should we care?, in: Hutchison, Katrina/Jenkins, Fiona (eds.): Women in Philosophy. What Needs to Change? Oxford 2013, 21–38.

8   Antony: Different voices, 238. Haslanger, Sally: Changing the ideology and culture of philosophy. Not by reason (alone), in: Hypatia 23 (2008) 2, 210–223.

9   Kirloskar-Steinbach, Monika: Diversifying philosophy. The art of non-domination, in: Educational Philosophy and Theory 51 (2019) 14, 1490–1503.

10   For example: Hutchison, Katrina: Sages and cranks. The difficulty of identifying first-rate philosophers, in: Hutchison, Katrina/Jenkins, Fiona (eds.): Women in Philosophy. What Needs to Change? Oxford 2013, 103–126.

11   Leslie et al: Expectations of brilliance. Saul, Jennifer: Implicit bias, stereotype threat, and women in philosophy, in: Hutchison, Katrina/Jenkins, Fiona (eds.): Women in Philosophy. What Needs to Change? Oxford 2013, 54.

12   Antony: Different voices; Beebee: Women and deviance in philosophy; Haslanger, Changing the ideology; Leuschner, Anna: Why So Low? On Indirect Effects of Gender Bias in Philosophy, in: Metaphilosophy 50 (2019) 3, 231–249; Saul: Implicit bias, stereotype threat. For a critical perspective, see Thompson, Morgan: Explanations of the gender gap in philosophy, in: Philosophy Compass 12 (2017) 3, e12406.

13   See, for example: https://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/ (11/9/2023).

14   Haslanger, Changing the ideology.

which we search for information and evaluate it, for example our decision to read certain work and whether we judge it as insightful or worthwhile.[15]

In this picture of implicit bias, the assumption is that unconscious psychological states like gender schemas causally explain why women remain underrepresented in philosophy. These psychological states can account for the gap between what people explicitly believe about women philosophers, and how they actually treat and evaluate them and their work.[16] However, we have to pay attention to the fact that these psychological explanations are invoked to explain a peculiar kind of discrimination as well. After all, we do not point to unconscious psychological states if we want to explain why a professor hires only male PhD candidates, if he explicitly states that only men have the innate brilliance to be successful philosophers. What is more, implicit attitudes may result in conscious evaluations. My expectation that my male partner will pay for dinner, for example, may be caused by gender schemas I am not conscious of, but I still consciously expect my partner to pay.[17] That means that in order to have a full picture of the problem, we should pay attention to the nature of unconscious discrimination itself, and examine how this might be related to the nature of philosophy.

In this chapter, I will argue that philosophy is particularly susceptible to unconscious discrimination, because its nature interacts with mechanisms that contribute to discrimination remaining hidden from view. In section 2, I provide two explanations of unconscious discrimination: misattribution and justification. In section 3, I argue that these mechanisms are likely to play a role in philosophy and, therefore, that unconscious discrimination is likely to occur. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. The Nature and Explanation of Unconscious Discrimination

Before I can continue, a definition of unconscious discrimination is required. Discrimination, understood as unfair treatment, typically involves responding to facts that are irrelevant for the evaluation, for example considering the person's gender or ethnicity when evaluating the quality of a paper or presentation. Accordingly, I take discrimination to be unconscious if the person is not conscious of such irrelevant facts playing a role in their evaluation.[18]

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15 Antony: Different voices; Haslanger, Changing the ideology; Valian, Virginia: Why so slow? The advancement of women, Cambridge 1999.

16 Beebee: Women and deviance in philosophy; Saul: Implicit bias, stereotype threat, 45.

17 See Asma, Lieke J. F.: Implicit bias as unintentional discrimination, in: Synthese, 202 (2023), 129. Gawronski, Bertram/Hofmann, Wilhelm/Wilbur, Christopher J: Are "implicit" attitudes unconscious?, in: Consciousness and cognition 15 (2006) 3, 485–499.

18 Asma: Implicit bias.

But how can we fail to realize which facts we are responding to? In the remainder of this section, I provide two explanations: misattribution and justification.

Misattribution involves failing to accurately identify the cause of your evaluation.[19] It comprises three elements: (1) the true cause of the feeling or evaluation, (2) the apparent cause, and (3) mistaking of one cause for the other.[20] In one classic example, men misattribute their arousal, that was in fact caused by a precarious bridge, to the attractiveness of the woman directly across it.[21] Misattribution is a well-known phenomenon in psychology, and as scholars in the field have emphasized, in the complexities of daily life, having a hard time attributing feelings or arousal to a certain source seems quite common. We do not always know what brought about our feelings, and we may very well ascribe it to a source that did not actually cause it.

Research shows that misattribution typically takes place under certain conditions. We do not misattribute a positive feeling resulting from having lunch with a dear friend to the movie we saw the night before, or our anger towards a dangerous driver to the old lady walking by. Factors that contribute to misattribution are: (1) the events taking place or facts being presented to the agent in close proximity in time and place,[22] (2) ambiguity of the target in relation to the aim,[23] and (3) applicability or conceptual overlap of the internal experience with the target or goal.[24] Simply put: misattribution can occur when the facts, evaluation, and goal allow persons to fill in the blanks in different ways, and when it makes sense to think that the apparent cause did cause the evaluation. An attractive woman can indeed cause arousal in a (heterosexual) man, for example. Another factor that may play a role, but has not been explicitly discussed in relation to misattribution, is the extent to which the ex-

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19   March, David S./Olson, Michael A./Fazio, Russell H.: The implicit misattribution model of evaluative conditioning, in: Social Psychological Bulletin, 13 (2018) 3, 1–25. Payne, B. Keith et al: An inkblot for attitudes: affect misattribution as implicit measurement, in: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 89 (2005) 3, 277–293.

20   Payne, B. Keith et al.: A process model of affect misattribution, in: Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 36 (2010) 10, 1397–1408.

21   Dutton, Donald G./Aron, Arthur P.: Some evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety, in: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 23 (1974), 510–517.

22   Jones, Christopher R./Fazio, Russell H./Olson, Michael A: Implicit misattribution as a mechanism underlying evaluative conditioning, in: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 96 (2009) 5, 933–948. March et al: implicit misattribution model. Payne et al: Inkblot for attitudes. Payne et al: Process model.

23   See Payne et al: Inkblot for attitudes.

24   Ecker, Yael/Bar-Anan, Yoav: Applicability increases the effect of misattribution on judgment, in: Cognition and Emotion 33 (2019) 4, 709–721. Ecker, Yael/Bar-Anan, Yoav: Conceptual overlap between stimuli increases misattribution of internal experience, in: Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 83 (2019), 1–10.

planation we can give is in line with our self-image and folk psychology.[25] Am I the kind of person that would experience arousal while crossing a precarious bridge, or does it make more sense to think the attractive woman caused it?

This brings me to justification. Often, if we do not respond to the facts correctly, we recognize making a mistake. Sometimes the mistake is obvious, for example when you try to open the door with the bike key or realize that you are about to cut an apple while making spaghetti. In other cases, we recognize the mistake when we have time to reflect. This is clear from an influential experiment in the field of implicit bias: the shooter task. In this task, participants have to decide quickly whether to 'shoot' a black or white man depending on whether the object they are holding is a gun or a benign object.[26] Even though participants tend to 'shoot' black men even if they hold a benign object, they recognize their mistake and are able to correct for their bias if they have the time to do so.[27]

But having time to reflect does not lead to success in all cases, for example in Uhlmann and Cohen's study.[28] Their participants had to choose a new police chief. They either had to choose between a streetwise Michelle and formally educated Michael, or between a formally educated Michelle and a streetwise Michael. The results showed that most participants selected Michael, and that they justified their decision by weighing the credentials of the Michael and Michelle differently: whichever credential Michael possessed, they took that to be more important. This result can be explained in terms of misattribution: even if the name 'Michael' caused the positive evaluation of that candidate, this could be misattributed to whichever credential he possessed. But what is more, even though these participants had time to reflect on their decision, they still did not recognize that they were using irrelevant information. They did not correct themselves like the participants in the shooter task did. This, I maintain, is because they could justify whichever decision they made: choosing the male candidate for a job is not inherently sexist and, what is more, streetwiseness and formal education are both important for police chiefs. From the perspective of the participants, regardless of the condition they were in, they could justify their decision and did not perceive themselves as making a mistake. Conversely, shooting a black man holding a benign object cannot be justified; it is obviously wrong.

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25   Stafford, Tom: The perspectival shift: how experiments on unconscious processing don't justify the claims made for them, in: Frontiers in Psychology 5 (2014), 1067.

26   For example: Payne, B. Keith/Correll, Joshua: Race, weapons, and the perception of threat, in: Advances in Experimental Social Psychology 62 (2020), 1–50.

27   Payne & Correll: Race, weapons.

28   Uhlmann, Eric Luis/Cohen, Geoffrey L.: Constructed criteria. Redefining merit to justify discrimination, in: Psychological Science 16 (2005) 6, 474–480.

Taken together, misattribution and justification can explain how discrimination can be unconscious in itself, not simply because it is caused by an unconscious psychological state. When we misattribute the source of our evaluation, i.e., when we are mistaken about the fact we are responding to, *and* we can justify our evaluation, it is possible that we respond to irrelevant facts without being conscious of doing so, i.e., without realizing that we are discriminating. Crucially, that means that the characteristics of the situation in which we evaluate play a crucial role. Does it allow us to fill in the blanks in a way that the evaluation does not involve unfair treatment? Does it offer alternative explanations that would justify the evaluation?

3. Unconscious Discrimination and the Nature of Philosophical Inquiry

Evaluating philosophical work, I maintain, is one of those situations in which our evaluations can be explained in different ways, because of which misattribution and justification are likely to occur.

A good way to make this clear is by comparing philosophical inquiry to a different case of discrimination: three black women working at NASA in the 1960s, who are portrayed in the book and movie *Hidden Figures*. These women were faced with several kinds of discrimination: their contributions were structurally underestimated or dismissed, they had to use separate toilets and coffeepots, and they were unable to become full-fledged engineers, because engineering could only be studied at a white school for example. Holroyd and Puddifoot have argued that these injustices may be the result of implicit bias.[29]

We should recognize, however, that many of the discriminatory decisions these women were confronted with are cases of *explicit* discrimination. Not allowing a black woman into engineering school because it is only open for white people or urging her to use a separate toilet because of her ethnicity are conscious and intentional responses to irrelevant facts. That is one reason why, near the end of the story, it became obvious that these women were discriminated against. But what is more, people at NASA came to recognize that these women were doing valuable work, and contributed substantially to NASA's success. An important reason for this is that the criteria for success in this context are quite clear: calculations are wrong or right, designs function or not, and the rocket reaches the moon or not. Because of that, there is little room for misattribution or justification. If the calculations a black woman makes are right, dismissing her work must have involved responding to the wrong reasons; her gender or ethnicity for example.

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29   Holroyd, Jules/Puddifoot, Katherine: Epistemic injustice and implicit bias, in: Beeghly, Erin/ Madva, Alex (eds.): Introduction to Implicit Bias, New York/London 2020, 116–133.

In philosophy, this is different. As other scholars have emphasized, philosophy is more indirectly grounded in facts, and involves intuitions and perspectives of the individual philosopher. What is more, philosophy is more or less characterized by disagreement.[30] This disagreement is not limited to the conclusions drawn, but is also about which method to use[31], or even what philosophers should be aiming for in their work.[32] Moreover, Antony emphasizes that in philosophy the introduction of novel ideas is common, ideas which others may not immediately understand. As a result, "the experience of hearing a novel good idea may – at least initially – be qualitatively identical to the experience of hearing a confused idea."[33] In other words, compared to engineering, in philosophy the criteria for success are less straightforward. We can judge a paper or philosopher as good for a variety of reasons, weigh these reasons in different ways, and sometimes we may not even know which criteria to use or how to use them.

As a consequence, there is ample room for misattribution and justification. The more criteria and ends are open to filling in the blanks, the more we can attribute our evaluation to a source that did not actually cause it but would justify our evaluation. A paper, presentation, or idea leaves a good or bad impression, and there are several explanations that present themselves at more or less the same time which may have contributed to your evaluation: the characteristics of the philosopher, the argumentation, the style of philosophizing, the tone, the examples used, but also the gender or ethnicity of the person. What is more, it is likely that philosophers see themselves as particularly objective and unbiased.[34] Because of this self-image, they may interpret their evaluations as objective and unbiased as well, even if they are not: e.g., "it could not have been gender or ethnicity that influenced my evaluation, there must be something wrong with the argumentation." In other words, even if your evaluation is (partly) caused by irrelevant factors like ethnicity or gender, the nature of philosophical inquiry makes it so that you may not recognize this. Misattribution and justification are lurking, and discrimination can occur and remain hidden from view.

Importantly, the same story may hold for credibility. Several scholars have pointed out that individual credibility plays a more important role in philosophy than in other fields of inquiry, because, indeed, it is more difficult to judge the quality of philosophical work.[35] Of course, credibility may justify our judgments to

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30   Bourget, David/Chalmers, David: Philosophers on philosophy. The 2020 philpapers survey, in: Philosophers' Imprint 23 (2023) 1.

31   Ibid., 11.

32   Dotson, Kristie: How is this paper philosophy?, in: Comparative Philosophy 3 (2012) 1, 3–29.

33   Antony: Different voices, 239.

34   Ibid., 236; Erden, Yasemin J.: Identity and bias in philosophy. What philosophers can learn from stem subjects, in: Think 20 (2021) 59, 120.

35   Antony: Different voices, 239; Holtzman: Rejecting beliefs, 302.

some extent; it makes sense to listen to the engineer instead of a physical therapist to evaluate which rocket design is best. But the problem is that in philosophy, our judgment of credibility may be based on irrelevant facts like gender or ethnicity as well, and because of the lack of clear criteria, we may not recognize that our judgment is the result of these facts.[36] Also here, misattribution and justification can explain how we can fail to realize that we use irrelevant criteria to judge a person's credibility as a philosopher.

Finally, these two mechanisms may also explain why women in philosophy themselves could make decisions that maintain the status quo. Recent research shows that differences in publications in top journals is not the result of less manuscripts by women being accepted. Rather, women submit less manuscripts to such journals.[37] Misattribution and justification could explain why women evaluate their papers as not good enough for top journals, think they have good grounds for this judgment, but in fact unintentionally and unconsciously discriminated against themselves. They may think of themselves as not possessing the brilliance to publish in top journals for example[38], but fail to realize that they are taking their gender into account to make this judgment. What is more, by not submitting to top journals, they substantiate facts they think may justify their judgment: "I haven't published in a top journal so far, why would I think I can do so now?".

4. Conclusion, and One Important Implication

In this chapter, I argued, by appealing to misattribution and justification, that philosophy is particularly susceptible to unconscious discrimination. It is relatively likely to believe your evaluation is the result of a relevant fact and justified, even if in reality it is based on irrelevant information like gender or ethnicity. This alternative perspective on the relationship between philosophy and implicit bias supports Antony's Perfect Storm model: philosophical inquiry interacts with psychological mechanisms that contribute to unconscious discrimination.

What is more, the picture I painted emphasizes the particular problematic nature of unconscious discrimination. When we discriminate unconsciously, we use irrelevant facts, but, for example because of misattribution and justification, we do not receive feedback that we made a mistake. All seems fine from the perspective of the person doing the evaluating. Which facts you actually responded to only becomes clear when you compare cases, like in experimental studies such as Uhlmann

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36   Hutchison, Sages and cranks.

37   Leuschner: Why so low?

38   Maranges, Heather et al.: Brilliance beliefs, not mindsets, explain inverse gender gaps in psychology and philosophy, in: Sex Roles: A Journal of Research 89 (2023), 801–817.

and Cohen's. That means that in real life it is often difficult to establish whether we have a case of unconscious discrimination. Would the evaluation of the exact same paper or presentation have been different if the person was white or male? That is hard to say.

This puts examples in the literature in a different light. Holroyd, Scaife, and Stafford give the example of Professor P who explicitly strives for fair treatment, but whose "evaluations of the equally good work of black students is slightly less glowing than that of white students."[39] But this is not a fact that can simply be perceived. How should the black students find out that their work was equally good, and that they were discriminated against? Maybe their papers were not as good as they thought. As a result, unconscious discrimination is the ultimate breeding ground for epistemic injustices that we often also do not immediately recognize: Professor P has ample opportunity to dismiss her students' perspective, and argue that even though the black students received lower grades, these grades are justified.[40,41]

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39 Holroyd, Jules/Scaife, Robin/Stafford, Tom: Responsibility for implicit bias, in: Philosophy Compass 12 (2017) 3, e12410.

40 See Collins, Patricia Hill: Black feminist thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, New York 2000. Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing, Oxford 2007.

Breathing Through the Epistemic Violence of the Unthinkable Black Experience[1]

Nicki K. Weber

Following up on recent debates on epistemic violence,[2] this paper is an attempt to sketch out how the black lived experience erupts from the epistemic realm and transforms into violently structured relations of racialized subjects. To be able to identify a plausible manner of how to use the term *epistemic violence* in this context, I begin by contrasting *violence* and *injustice* to ask what is gained by declaring certain unjust practices or relationships as violent – epistemic as well as non-epistemic. I then turn to Frantz Fanon's settlement of counter-violence as a *cleansing force* to explicate how the ability to breathe through the epistemic violence of the unthinkable black experience is crucial for the decolonization of the self.

1. Differentiating concepts of violence

The German term *Gewalt* (for violence) has many meanings. There are at least two ways to understand Gewalt.[3] First, derived from the Latin term *potestas*, since the 17th century it was understood as a necessary tool to constitute and uphold a political order, and to this day, it is the means of securing the established sovereignty of a state and its individuals with (liberal) rights. This application is still common in German when discussing state power (Staatsgewalt). But in general, Gewalt is used as a derivation from *violentia*, signifying the destructive understanding of violence as the type that destroys an existing order and counts as objectively wrong and corrosive. Today's generally negative usage of violence and its status as legitimate political power render the role of violence in establishing political orders invisible.

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1   This essay is a revised transcription of my contribution to the workshop "Epistemic Violence and Injustice in Philosophy" at the Munich School of Philosophy in early December 2022.

2   I am especially referring to the German-speaking context: See Brunner, Claudia: Epistemische Gewalt. Wissen und Herrschaft in der kolonialen Moderne, Bielefeld 2020. For specific English-language excerpts, see Claudia Brunner: Conceptualizing epistemic violence. An interdisciplinary assemblage for IR, in: International Politics Reviews (2021) 1, 193–212.

3   See Brunner: Epistemische Gewalt, 18.

Imperialism and colonialism, as well as their violent practices, are foundational for the *Westphalian commonsense* and the modern nation-state.[4] Still liberal societies are mostly described as inherently – or at least normatively – non-violent. Therefore, the destructive understanding of violence must be relinked to the understanding of violence as a constitutive force. A broad conceptual understanding of epistemic violence asks for the conditions under which such non-differentiations, as between the English words *power* and *violence*, or as constitutive vs. destructive, are established. The arbitrariness of such categorizations – as well as the vacancies they bring along – seems to be a keystone of the *Westernized* way of thinking. This is addressed by concepts of decolonization,[5] such as Claudia Brunner's conception of *epistemic violence*. To her, epistemic violence is broadly speaking "rooted in knowledge itself, in its genesis, formation, organization, and effectiveness."[6] For further clarification on how we can understand epistemic violence, I want to contribute a specific and contextualized understanding concerning the racialized black subject.

For the sake of this argument, I will differentiate between, first, *acts of violence*, second, *structures of violence* (or *violently structured relations*), and third, *experienced violence*.

I aim at a structural understanding of violence which does not cover the common understanding of someone doing violence to somebody else: in such a conception of a *direct form* of violence,[7] a person or an object gets physically hurt or feels pain caused by someone else. My account of epistemic violence excludes violent acts and focuses on *structures of violence* or *violently structured relations* that result in the experience of violence. I think it is not feasible – neither very empowering – to award individuals with the power to hurt someone epistemically. People who use certain practices, such as silencing or other forms of epistemic oppression, may be able to do so because of their positionality, which enables them to speak or act in a certain way, but not because they can unleash violent attacks within the realm of the epistemic. Speech acts may fuel hatred against minoritized groups and lead to physical violence. Still, there is a difference between violence that, in a physical sense,[8] aims

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4   See Grovogui, Siba N.: Regimes of Sovereignty. International Morality and the African Condition, in: European Journal of International Relations (2002) 3, 315–338, 316.

5   Brunner: Epistemische Gewalt, 19, 275. For an explanation of the term *Westernized* see Grosfoguel, Ramón: Epistemic Racism/Sexism, Westernized Universities and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long Sixteenth Century, in: Araújo, Marta/Rodríguez Maeso, Silvia (eds.): Eurocentrism, Racism and Knowledge. Debates on History and Power in Europe and the Americas, London 2015, 23–46.

6   Brunner: Conceptualizing epistemic violence, 204.

7   See Galtung, Johan: Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, in: Journal of Peace Research (1969) 3, 167–191, 170.

8   See Reemtsma, Jan Philipp: Die Natur der Gewalt als Problem der Soziologie, Frankfurt/M 2008.

at (re-)moving or destroying a subject's body and something that affects the status of affected persons, what epistemically means hurting them "specifically in their capacity as a knower."[9]

What does the term 'structural' in this context mean? The discourses on social contracts, imagined agreements on a society's moral and political rules, and especially Charles W. Mills' conception of a *racial contract*, offer us a hint. Mills' critique highlights how ideal-type approaches establish race relations since the signatories of the social/racial contract are the beneficiaries.[10] "A partitioned social ontology is therefore created, a universe divided between persons and racial subpersons [...] biologically destined never to penetrate the normative rights ceiling established for them below white persons."[11] Fanon calls this colonial *compartmentalization*,[12] or *Manichaeanism*,[13] and W.E.B Du Bois *color-line* – a structural, pre-political setting that shapes the relations between a dominant and an inferior group.[14] The racial contract's meta-agreements apply not only on a political or moral level but also on an epistemological one. To Mills, the setting in which these groups seem incompatible, is constitutive to, as well as upheld by, white ignorance – a peculiar ideology of injustice.

2. Contrasting epistemic violence and injustice

It seems paradoxical that, as Vittorio Bufacchi points out, one reason for the equation between violence and injustice was to outsmart a specific theory of justice over others. The influential modern social contract discourse, which Mills reacts to, arose from an area where political violence was omnipresent due to anti-war protests and the civil rights movements in the United States from the 1960s onward. So, liberal theorists linked injustice and violence to valorize their approaches and, against the backdrop of the ethical philosophy of Utilitarianism, helped shape theoretical meanings of violence – mainly as a moral violation of rights.[15] Unjust social contracts result in "a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional)."[16]

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9   Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing, Oxford/New York 2007, 1.

10   See Mills, Charles W.: The Racial Contract, Ithaca, NY 1997, 11.

11   Ibid., 16–17.

12   See Fanon, Frantz: The Wretched of the Earth, New York, NY 2004, 3.

13   Ibid., 51.

14   See Du Bois, W.E.B.: The Souls of Black folk, Oxford 2007, 3.

15   See Bufacchi, Vittorio: Violence and Social Justice, London 2007, 128–131.

16   Mills: The Racial Contract, 18.

Early standpoint theories in the Marxist tradition and later ones in feminist approaches emphasize the positioning of the cognitive agent. Belonging to a social group or living in a particular space or time undermines the claim of universal cognitive standards.[17] Assuming such standards and neglecting social practices and, above all, prevailing power relations evokes epistemic injustice. This phenomenon occurs when the field of knowledge is not equally distributed. The exclusion of certain individuals or groups is "social-structural rather than physico-biological"[18] and results in the presence of partial knowers – individuals or groups who cannot participate equally in acquiring knowledge due to e.g. the abilities or the status (as humans) society attributes them. This affects the way in which we identify certain (violent) acts against marginalized knowers as appropriate or inappropriate.[19] Even more, it explains the widespread ignorance about the lived experience of racialized people.

Let me add one last differentiation before I proceed with alleged structures of violence. My argument is that actions labeled as epistemic violence do not have to be inevitably intentional since epistemic violence operates indirectly and primarily through structures. Rob Nixon distinguishes between *fast* and *slow violence*.[20] *Fast violence* is understood as a local event in space and time, loud and ordinarily spectacular. In contrast, the violence in structures of reality is *slow*. Slow violence is procedural and seemingly passive. Throughout time, it penetrates the structures of reality, becoming banal. For this, I take the basic assumption of postcolonial studies literally and do not understand 'the' postcolonial 'present' as different from 'the' colonial 'past'.[21] Historical lines connect colonial domination in human relationships structured by slow violence back to racialized hierarchies.

One argument against any understanding of structural violence is that it merely seeks to legitimize the revolt of the disenfranchised,[22] but also that violence cannot be thought of without perpetrators. It is claimed that it is our perception of reality that there is a gap between what is and what should be,[23] in other words the *actual* and the *potential*.[24] The increasing critique of violence aims at disclosing the

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17   See Mills, Charles W.: White Ignorance, in: Sullivan, Shannon/Nancy, Tuana (eds.): Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance, New York, NY 2007, 13–37, 14–17.

18   Ibid., 20.

19   Ibid., 22.

20   See Nixon, Rob: Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, Cambridge, MA 2011, 2.

21   See Hall, Stuart: When Was "the Post-colonial"? Thinking at the Limit [1996], in: McLennan, Gregor (ed.): Selected Writings on Marxism, Durham, NC 2021, 293–315.

22   See Baberowski, Jörg: Räume der Gewalt, Frankfurt/M 2015, 114.

23   See ibid., 117.

24   See Galtung: Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, 168.

violence that is rendered invisible in this way. Injustice here means violating some-body's body *and* dignity, [25] which Newton Garver formulates as an essential part of a scholastic understanding of a person's natural rights as well as within the liberal paradigm. This reflects today's day-to-day understanding, in which violence and in-justice are highly interconnected. We speak about violence as morally deficient. It "is tempting to rename acts of injustice as acts of violence; indeed, this polemical move is popular amongst those who want to emphasize the brutality and immorality of in-justice."[26] Thus, equating structural forms of violence with an individual approach to social justice is a slippery slope that one needs to be aware of when formulating argu-ments about structural dynamics.[27] An example: The individual approach to injus-tice is also present in the privilege discourses, which have led us to believe that spe-cific discriminatory actions can be avoided by reflecting on one's privileges within society. By replacing the term privilege with *license* or *right,* the picture changes be-cause unjust social structures must be questioned,[28] mainly how these structures are constituted for them to allow specific individuals or groups to act in a way that violates others. Talking about rights instead of privilege sheds light on the efforts of social movements such as the "political actions of women [...] committed to equal-ity that shifted mechanisms of power sufficiently for women to access institutions that historically had excluded them."[29] Individually giving up a privilege in a liberal gesture of goodwill or claiming *color blindness* is not the same as aiming to change a system or its structures, which are currently allowing specific individuals or groups to act in bad faith.[30] Racialized slavery, European colonialism, and segregation of blacks are interwoven examples of the systematic proliferation of hierarchies that perpetrate the insincere violation of humans' basic rights.[31] The conditions of pos-sibility of these violations are structural.

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25   See Garver, Newton: What Violence is, in: Bierman, Arthur K./Gould, James A. (eds.): Philos-ophy for a New Generation, New York, NY 1970, 359–370, 361.

26   Bufacchi: Violence and Social Justice, 145.

27   See Galtung: Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, 171.

28   Gordon, Lewis R.: Fear of Black Consciousness, London 2022, 103.

29   Ibid., 111.

30   Bad faith means allowing them to lie to themselves, or: to make yourself believe you have the unquestionable license to act in violation of the integrity of others, see Lewis R. Gordon: Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism, Amherst, NY 1995.

31   See Mbembe, Achille: Critique of Black Reason, Durham, NC 2017, 35.

3. The unthinkable black experience

Kristie Dotson frames epistemic injustices within three orders of exclusion.[32] Oppression of the first order concerns what Miranda Fricker calls testimonial injustice,[33] it is when "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word."[34] Oppression of the second order are problems of insufficient epistemic resources.[35] Fricker calls this hermeneutical injustice caused by structural bias. She addresses collective forms of social understanding,[36] i.e., the prevailing understandings and available resources for communicating the experiences of social groups. Even affected groups cannot understand their experiences to a certain extent. For example, societies in which words to describe sexual abuse are still to be found for affected persons to be able to communicate their experiences. Second-order oppression, such as Fricker's hermeneutical injustice or Mills' concept of *white ignorance*,[37] are non-structural and structural. For Fricker,[38] the predominant understandings and available resources result from social power relations. José Medina suggests that Fricker's context-sensitive conceptualization of hermeneutic injustice must be expanded to avoid a diffusion of responsibility.[39] Medina does not want to leave individuals and groups out of their hermeneutic responsibility and argues that due to the heterogeneity of social groups and polyphonic public spheres, experiences are always somehow communicable.[40] Unlike Fricker, it is not the available hermeneutic resources due to social power relations that are crucial but the struggles for hermeneutic hegemonies in which knowledge of the abstract experiences of marginalized individuals and groups is displaced. Even though Charles Mills also

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32   See Dotson, Kristie: Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression, in: Social Epistemology (2014) 2, 115–138.

33   Ibid., 123.

34   Fricker. Epistemic Injustice, 1.

35   See Dotson: Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression, 126.

36   See Fricker: Epistemic Injustice, 148.

37   See Mills, Charles W.: White Ignorance and Hermeneutical Injustice. A Comment on Medina and Fricker, in: Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective 3 (2013) 1, 38–43.

38   See Fricker, Miranda: How is hermeneutical injustice related to 'white ignorance'? Reply to José Medina's "Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities", in: Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective (2013) 2, 49–53.

39   See Medina, José: Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism. Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities, in: Social Epistemology (2012) 2, 201–220.

40   See Medina, José: Varieties of hermeneutical injustice, in: Kidd, Ian James/Medina, José/Pohlhaus, Gaile Jr. (eds.): The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice, London 2019, 41–53, 42 f.

stresses that structures matter, to him, this wishful ignorance plays a critical role in upholding hermeneutical injustice.[41]

Most importantly for now, Kristie Dotson identifies a third order of exclusion,[42] which, unlike the first- and second-order problems, cannot be solved within the existing epistemic system. They cannot be described using the resources of the hegemonic epistemic system. Unlike issues of testimony and problems of shared resources, these exclusions root in the deficits of the epistemic system itself. Third-order oppression is impossible to manage because it cannot be recognized as problematic by the knowers of the system.

I will solely speak of epistemic violence when dealing with irreducible oppressions of the third order.[43] This approach stresses that "the biggest obstacle to epistemic liberation [...] is that our shared epistemic resources are themselves *inadequate* for understanding their inadequacy."[44] Fanon's writings on the black experience embrace on this, as Lewis R. Gordon reminds us:

> Black experience should not exist since blacks should not have a point of view. Nonetheless, black experience is all that should exist since a black's subjective life should not be able to transcend itself to the level of the intersubjective or the social.[45]

Race is arbitrary and artificial, yet it has tangible consequences. Being black is a product of dehumanization and the epistemological ramifications are a double challenge. The initial challenge resides in rendering the racialized subject relatable – a task not intended to fulfill. Confronting the unjust attribution of cognitive capabilities and the alleged absence of epistemic resources, as existentialist, Fanon reinforces the first-person perspective of the black subject, which is in the act of encountering an epistemic system wherein intersubjectivity for it is deemed beyond reach.

The second challenge is on the meta level. It is not just the inability of the system to acknowledge the black experience but the inability to explain the failure that constitutes this exclusion in an epistemic system that proposes to be universally valid. This inability is the embodiment of a third-order exclusion. It is embedded into the

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41   See Bain, Zara: Mills's account of white ignorance: Structural or non-structural?, in: Theory and Research in Education (2023) 1, 18–32, 21 f.

42   See Dotson: Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression, 148.

43   Ibid., 132.

44   See Bailey, Alison: The Unlevel Knowing Field. An Engagement with Dotson's Third-Order Epistemic Oppression, in: Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collectiv (2014) 10, 62–68, 66.

45   Gordon, Lewis R.: What Fanon Said. A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought, New York, NY 2015, 148.

system itself and constitutive to the system. Afro-pessimism makes this point predominantly clear. "Blacks are not Human subjects but are instead structurally inert props"[46] of European political thought and action. This makes the excluded black experience, in a sense, eternal within European thought because the figure of the black as the other or the subaltern is a necessary backdrop, a meta-aporia, for its existence. Only a demarcation from it makes the description of what it means to be a human being possible. The black experience is locked within itself and is not relatable. This logic of enclosure, the words of Achille Mbembe,[47] affects the social status and the relationships of the racialized. This is because the subjects of the black experience are, within the given epistemic system, not recognizable as equal knowers and as persons.

To summarize, epistemic violence can, therefore, be further narrowed down to the violation of the integrity of a person and their capacities as a person through unjust structural premises. These shape human relationships between the dominant and the inferior based on historically grown epistemic injustices constituting the (given) epistemic system. The structural (dys-)functions materialize as the lived experience of the marginalized subject. Lived experience means the process in which the subject gains consciousness about themselves and their alienated reality.[48] The inferior subject lives in structured relations – constituted by violence – with human beings who are structurally granted a higher value within the shared epistemic system, which also legitimizes the unjust evaluation of specific actions against the inferior.

4. Fanon's self-violence: Bringing back the person

Epistemic violence is about dehumanization as well as it is about decolonization.[49] Against third-order oppression, Dotson articulates epistemic resilience that "concerns the scope of the domain for stability and the magnitude of disturbance required to motivate significant change."[50] Fanon reflects on this and gives us a reason to focus on a narrow term of epistemic violence.

Fanon's broad understanding of violence is fueled by the understanding that colonization sparks a specific type of violence with "a physical and a psychological component."[51] To Fanon, the colonial, and therefore the post-colonial regime, is a regime

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46   Wilderson III., Frank B.: Afropessimism, New York, NY 2020, 15.
47   See Mbembe: Critique of Black Reason, 35.
48   Gordon: What Fanon Said, 47.
49   See Garver: What Violence is, 361.
50   Dotson: Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression, 132.
51   Bufacchi: Violence and Social Justice, 169.

instituted by violence. As we already learned, the constitution of an order, as well as its duration, occurs through violence. This violence is (in-)visible "in everyday behavior, violence against the past that is emptied of all substance, violence against the future, for the colonial regime presents itself as necessarily eternal."[52] The notion of violence against the future lets us translate this to the postcolonial present. The violent effects of colonization continue "undermining the sense of identity and self-respect"[53] of those who today continue to count as inferior through racialization. Elsa Dorlin's inquiry of counter-violence sheds light on the significance of such defensive violence in colonial contexts.[54] The assumption is that violence plays a significant role to the inferior trying to "re-establish his or her own identity as a person of equal moral value, deserving the respect of others."[55] Or, as Fanon puts it, at "the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex."[56]

Fanon, therefore, recognizes at least two forms of counter-violence. First, the physical violence of African anti-colonial liberation movements. That is not part of my argument. Second, self-violence, meaning violence an individual directs toward oneself, aims at countering the black subject's – oneself – inferiority complex rooted in psychological violence. In epistemic terms, this counter-violence is a necessary result of an unjust epistemic system with its tenable third-order exclusions, which evoke epistemic violence.

5. By way of conclusion: Facilitating epistemic breathing

The systematic circumstances obstruct racialized people's abilities to gain awareness about their situatedness because of the structure of the epistemic system and the allocation of its resources. It affects their capabilities of what I call *epistemic breathing*. Self-violence, for Fanon, means agency that can be described as breaking out or creating meaning, even surviving. Self-violence is about detoxifying and healing a pathogenic subjectivity.[57] Decolonization to Fanon means, intellectually speaking, taking back control. Fanon aims at self-ownership, at existence. His understanding of colonial violence teaches us that for racialized subjects, epistemic decolonization is not a non-violent process because those who are named black are still faced with

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52 Fanon, Frantz: Why we use violence, in: Khalfa, Jean/Young, Robert J. C. (eds.): Alienation and Freedom, New York, NY 2018, 653–659, 654.

53 Bufacchi: Violence and Social Justice, 169.

54 See Dorlin, Elsa: Self Defense. A Philosophy of Violence, London/Brooklyn, NY 2022.

55 Bufacchi: Violence and Social Justice, 169.

56 Fanon: The Wretched, 51.

57 See Dorlin, Elsa: To Be Beside of Oneself. Fanon and the Phenomenology of Our Own Violence, in: South as a State of Mind (2016) 7, 41–46.

the lived experience of violence. Not only because they are part of the epistemic system, which cannot grant them equity but also because of the lack of epistemic resources to raise or sometimes even gain awareness of their situation. Reflecting on self-violence, Fanon speaks of *combat breathing* in the face of colonial domination.[58] He uses this term to refer to occupied breathing or breathing under observation. An organism needs to be able to breathe independently and still expresses the struggle for air – a collective good. Combat breathing is the reaction to a restriction or fixation affecting a vital function of existence.

Facilitating epistemic breathing begins with the critical inquiry on how these circumstances can be dealt with. As embodied subjects of academia, we participate in seminars and study knowledge that determines the possibilities of our existence. We breathe and share air amongst ourselves, and with thinkers and the ideas that are the foundation of our social and political life. It makes a difference if the air I breathe is only filled with thoughts of people and concepts that do not relate to my lived experience. For me, conceding the minimal function of epistemic breathing represents an attempt, in the face of hegemonic and Eurocentric orders of knowledge, to enable offerings not covered by the established canon. Fighting epistemic authorities means crossing boundaries. Disciplines must be transgressed, and methodologies, epistemologies, and normativity must be questioned. Epistemic breathing can be facilitated by taking this seriously. It is a crucial part of decolonization concerning our daily interactions and human relationships. Giving room to absent philosophies of critical resistance means bearing the possibility of more equal human relations. The quality of our human relations in turn defines our possibilities to a sincere reflection of human realities what in return is the way to deal with epistemic injustice and even more with epistemic violence.

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58   See Fanon, Frantz: A Dying Colonialism. New York, NY 1965, 65.

Rhodology (after G.)

Tizia Rosendorfer

Forever a sign
To denote the to be-found, the to-be-fetched
A narrow circle of words
Surrounds them
Slowly tightening the robes
Tightly
The Stars fly on a leash

In silence they stand almost enclosed
By alloying light and dust
The stream of time
Is what they say
Don't you quietly hear them bleeding?
(alle brauchen etwas, das ihr Blut auffängt)[1]
Stars fly on a leash
We strangle and it's what will be our death

Forever a blazing rune
To denote the disassembled, the rocked
Forms and colours
Run together tying the ropes
That we hold on to
That hold on to us

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1   Editors' note: intentionally left in German.

Goethe's song *Das Heidenröslein* describes an innocent scene at first: a "boy" sees a rose standing in a meadow – it "was so young and beautiful in the morning." But when he goes to pluck it, it threatens him with its thorns – "I'll prick you!" Finally, the boy breaks off the flower and: "he just has to suffer" [from the sting of the rose]. This scene, unfolding over three stanzas, leaves a certain tension. A superficially unambiguous scene suddenly takes on a threatening undertone. A complexly spun power structure interposes itself between Kabe and Rose, in which the boy can ultimately retain the upper hand, while the stabbing of the rose before its death (by plucking) remains in the reader's memory as the ultimate act of subversion. Goethe leaves open whether the plucking of the rose is to be chalked up as a triumph. The configuration of the figures in *Heidenröslein* seems like a prototypical representation of powerful relationships: the beautiful in itself, the defenceless (the rose), cannot (completely) resist the problematic attention of the boy. The boy's motif suggests an imperious enchantment that makes him want to possess the rose (against her will). Contrary to the obvious reference to gender roles and gender, the rose can be understood in terms of a structural moment of human appropriation of the world. In this sense, the boy represents a patriarchal approach to the world that is designed for power and possession and becomes violent at the sight of the rose at rest within itself. In the poem above, this theme is varied with regard to the current Global Climate Crisis. Man becomes violent towards the world, although the world will definitely show itself more defensible than the heath rose.

Embodied Knowledge

Nela Adam & Sylvia Agbih & Cara-Julie Kather

1. Leveling the Field: Knowledge Creation and Violence

Cara: Would either of you like to start sharing from your respective perspective what brings you to this conversation today?

Sylvia: I participated in a conference on epistemic violence and injustice at the Munich School of Philosophy because of my work at the Institute for Ethics and History of Health in Society. This conference started off with a one-day workshop on forum theatre. That is when I met Nela. This workshop was followed by two-day conference on epistemic injustice and violence. There, I met Cara.

Cara: Thank you! Nela, do you feel like sharing how you came to be in this workshop where you met Sylvia? How did you experience the workshop and the university-setting?

Nela: I was invited as a trainer for this forum theatre workshop where I met Sylvia.

In the evening of this workshop day, we performed the collectively developed scenes in the auditorium of the Munich School for Philosophy. That was great! Because only through visibility and collaboration with the audience can 'the theatre of the oppressed' become effective.

As a dance – and theatre – pedagogue, I work mostly body-oriented. Thus, I could feel a specific excitement before the workshop: What would it be like to give such a body-oriented input at the Munich School of Philosophy?

The answer is: It works! It works great! I was just very, very touched by the uptake of the workshop, by how open and receptive people were to this input. There was some great collaboration happening and a lot of joy seemed to be present in this workshop space.

Cara: Thank you! Shall we try collectively to describe what we consider to be the common thread pulling us together and into this conversation?

Nela: I perceive a hierarchical categorization between "body-oriented knowledge" and "scientific knowledge." The two are often treated as set categories and whatever counts as "scientific knowledge" tends to hold more power.

This was also the source of a specific tension for me moving into this philosophy-based space with my workshop. I was nervous about the uptake this approach would receive in such an academic setting.

I am interested to question this hierarchical order and this categorisation between "body-oriented knowledge" versus "scientific knowledge." Where do the two overlap? Are they this separated? Where does this implicit hierarchy come from? I have many questions.

Sylvia: To me, a connecting keyword is that of corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*). *Corporeality* emphasizes experience and what we can know through lived and unlived lives and moments. To me, this forms a connection: body-oriented knowledge and knowledge through lived experiences tends to be less present in academic philosophy than what is perceived as "theoretical knowledge."

And possibly, this should be different since there are many forms of knowledge and knowing. And I agree with Nela, that body-oriented approaches and forms of knowing are often diminished in their value: this diminishing can be understood as a form of epistemic injustice or epistemic violence.

Knowing through and with bodies tends to be marginalized through academic institutions. But that is what forum theatre offers: knowing bodies, embodied knowledge, knowing through living and moving and knowing through collective experience and exploration.

Cara: Thanks!

Nela, through your thoughts different forms of knowing and their hierarchization came up. And you Sylvia, talked about corporeality and experience as a form of knowing. Both aspects are part of what is being discussed in the discourses around epistemic violence and injustice. In a nutshell, these are discourses concerned with exploring how knowledge and power are interwoven with one another. So, they ask exactly your question, Sylvia: Which kinds of knowledge are taken seriously under which conditions? What is regarded as "practical knowledge" and what as "scientific knowledge" and what dimensions are there to this distinction?

The exclusion of corporeality and autobiography from certain spheres of knowledge is one of the dynamics analyzed and troubled by discourses on epistemic violence and injustice. These are exclusions closely related to marginalization and violence: they govern whose knowledges, voices, concerns, and perspectives are heard and under which circumstances they are heard. Oppression very often bears a physical dimension, a corporeal manifestation. Methods of the forum theatre form modes of experiencing and visilibilizing these physicalities as forms of knowledge.

Sylvia: That is so exciting, because precisely these corporeal manifestations of opression need expression! This visibility already is a form of resistance.

Nela: This is exactly the approach of forum theatre: forming modes of expression that do not center the verbal, the language, but the body – what it knows and what it does; what it can know and what it can do.

It can create forms of expression or knowledge that may not have been there before.

2. Forum Theatre: An Epistemic Practice

Cara: What actually is *forum theatre*? Nela, can you provide us with some historical context and the core thoughts of these practices?

Nela: Gladly! Forum theatre is a form of the *theatre of the oppressed*. There are different forms of it, i.e. *legislative theatre*, *invisible theatre*, *newspaper theatre*.

Augusto Boal, Brazilian artist and thinker, is considered to be the founder of the forum theatre. He developed and elaborated these forms of theatre in the 1960s and 1970s. One of his concerns was to provide people with a space to make their voices heard within the military regime governing his homeland at that time. He aimed to use theatre as a political action, political mouthpiece. Many scenes were set in the street and the work was very creative. For example, the classic separation of audience and performers was dissolved. And the hierarchization of knowledge was addressed through this collective work. This practice was not without its danger, precisely because it was so political. Augusto Boal himself suffered torture at the hands of the military dictatorship as a consequence of his resistance toward the regime.

Later, when he lived in the European context, his focus shifted more towards internalized oppression. Because in a military dictatorship it is somewhat obvious who the oppressed are and who the oppressors are. In modes of oppression the core of the oppression functions through an internalization of oppressive systems – inner voices and beliefs, what Boal himself called "the inner police officer."

Cara: Thank you so much! I also encountered Abdias Nascimento as a co-developer. He worked at the intersections of art, philosophy, and politics, opposing colonial devaluations and hierarchies with regard to knowledge.

Nela: That makes sense. Basically, the *theatre of the oppressed* was developed and practiced collectively. Boal is considered the founder, but his approach was, after all, to create a collective of oppressed groups of people that would make their own world of experience visible.

Cara: Can you give us a little more insight into the methodologies?

Nela: The methodology of forum theatre is very body-oriented and interactive. Scenes are created collectively, based on experiences of oppression by the participants of the practice. This is the core of it. And from there it can become more general or abstract. Often it is a challenge for people to really 'stay with the body'. It is important not to get caught up in discussion. Rather, the question is: How can I translate this experience that I have had into the body, how can I express it, how does it feel, how did it feel, how could it feel?

   Intuitive knowledge, embodied knowledge is addressed and sometimes even expressed in an intensified, a distilled way. This knowledge becomes tangible and visible through and with the body in extraordinary ways.

Cara: Would you each like to share a specific experience in the context of the forum theatre? Something that to you demonstrates this particular importance of corporeality and embodied knowledge?

Nela: I have a lot of memories of scenes that show my own oppression as a woman* in ways that give me goosebumps, touch me, and engage me.[1] But I can also share a scene that happened a while ago and is still very impressive to me. I'm thinking of a scene about racism and my internalization of it.

   Back when I was a student in Vienna, I was part of a forum theatre group together with refugees from different African countries. Our main topic was racism. In one scene I played 'the racist' and I remember how shocked I was by the fervor with which this role and the racist behavior and sentences left me. After all, I had thought of myself as an open-minded, reflected, left-leaning student. At that time, this made me realize how deeply certain racist behaviors and ways of thinking are stored and socialized in me – in my body memory.

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1   Marking the term "woman" with an asterisk (*) explicitly indicates that we are considering not only cis gender women, but all women. Additionally, this marking serves as a reminder of gender as a social category.

Participants playing a scene in the forum theater workshop led by Nela Adam at the Munich School of Philosophy in 2022.
© Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn.

Sylvia: I am reminded of a scene we developed in the workshop in Munich. At one point I was also very shocked with and by myself – just as you describe it, Nela.

We played a scene where people were queuing. And I was the one who decided who could come in and who could not. It was very explicitly about inclusion and exclusion. Then I did something in the play that we did not discuss previously, it just happened: I let two people in and then made them my accomplices. And that just happened. I realized, I used the two for my own purpose; I let them do violent work for me, to exclude the others.

I found it really frightening that it was so clear to me: yes, I'm using these people now. I just knew how to exclude, how to enact power. I knew it almost frightingly well, without having previously thought it through. That was quite terrifying. I was shocked how well I knew how to act violently and exclusionary.

Nela: I think both our stories show how unconscious power structures and dynamics can be felt and visibilized through practices of the forum theatre. Suddenly, these very deeply internalized knowledges have surfaced. Knowledge, we did not consciously create and maybe would not even want to possess.

Cara: Thank you! These scenes feel so powerful!

Just listening to your stories allowed me to feel with you this perceptibility constituted through corporeality, through embodiment – how knowledges are brought into existence through and with the body.

This reminds me that discourses on epistemic violence and injustice often entail the question of what is regarded as "violence" in the public consciousness and what is not. So much violence remains invisible and unnamed, for example any form of internalized or widely normalized modes of violence. I believe, these violences need to be visibilized and deconstructed collectively. Your two scenes seem to me to be very powerful examples of such vislibilizations happening.

3. Body and knowledge: Touching Borders

Cara: We now want to collectively trace the common threads moving through the forum theatre as practice and epistemic violence/injustice as a discourse. Sylvia, what connections stood out to you personally between Nela's workshop and the philosophical conference?

Sylvia: Basically, during the conference classical academic hierarchies receded strongly into the background. There was this communality, which is also integral to the forum theatre. And also, this presence of corporeality – for example, we were frequently asked to share about how our bodies felt, we stretched and moved together during breaks.

Cara: I know exactly what you mean. And these two aspects – community and physicality – are indeed core elements of forum theatre! Nela, how are you feeling about these notions of *epistemic violence* or *epistemic injustice*? Is there anything about them that reminds you of your own work or speaks to you in some way?

Nela: Yes, I realize that these terms do a lot to me. They give me the feeling of a very academic context and that quickly feels kind of debilitating if I'm being honest. Cara, could you speak more about these terms again?

Cara: Thank you for saying that!

The three of us are in a very peculiar situation here: we want to talk openly, on eye-level, touching borders together and being in a conversation that entangles all of our feelings, bodies, thoughts and experiences. Yet we remain part of a societal structure that strongly differentiates knowledge and modes of expression and also values them differently.

So, in this sense, even right now, we may experience exclusion through knowledge. And epistemic injustice is just that: injustice with regard to knowledge that can show in academic language, access restrictions to universities, exclusion of women or people of color in philosophy and so much more.

Discourses on epistemic violence and injustice often seek to explore and break down precisely such dynamics. They try to figure out how power and knowledge are entangled with one another: Who gets to be recognized as "knowing" under what conditions, in what spaces, and through which modes of expression?

There are countless exclusions in terms of who gets to count as a knower and *how* they get to count as a knower. These notions and dynamics are easily internalized. They have a life of their own and they creep up on us in many ways: one of them being this sort of unease you have just described, Nela – a weird sense of "not belonging" that can easily be alienating and debilitating.

These borders, these categorizations of forms of knowledge triggering unease and exclusion – they are symptoms and symbols of epistemic violence and injustice. And it might very well happen that we feel a lot of this unease whilst questioning and deconstructing the conceptual grounds these forms of unease stand on. I think that is because it is such a complex process, one we can only form collectively, with time, and with allowing ourselves to grapple with all these feelings these complex endeavors bring up.

Throughout this conversation we have often hinted at this notion that "the corporeal" as somehow mutually exclusive with "the intellectual." This is an important example of violent exclusions of knowledge and of a conceptualization of "knowledge" that enacts violence. I often think of a scene from my favorite novel here. The scene goes as follows:

Two women who have been friends for ages talk to each other – one of them a philosopher, the other a physicist. The physicist says that her physical appearance and the way she treats her own body have changed quite drastically over the course of her academic career. She describes making her experience "less feminine" over the years. She retells this process as a necessary decision: she says she had to choose between a body that is labeled "feminine" and between being a physicist, an "intellectual." She tells this as a story of having to choose between body and mind – a decision she believes women* are forced into under partriarchal systems.

To me, this scene is one that showcases that this exclusion of corporeality from concepts of knowledge is a question of power, even a tool of power: oppressed social groups have historically been and still often are assigned to the sphere of "the corporeal" in order to exclude them: to exclude them from "the domain of knowledge" and thus from the ever so powerful event of knowledge production, which simply remained a white and male sphere for many decades. And I believe we are still experiencing this imprint now. It is becoming somehow subtler. But it is still there. This exclusion of the body as a form of power is examined a lot in these philosophical discourses about epistemic violence and injustice.

In our exchange I found it so exciting and powerful that forum theatre is a practice that breaks down this impactful and violent demarcation between bodies and knowledge by openly regarding bodies and physicalities as modes of knowledge, as *being knowing*. The body then is not "the other" to the intellectual and to knowledge, but rather so very entangled with forming knowledges.

Nela: This scene you described touched me deeply just now. Functioning and being able to function in certain spaces are so often connected to such an unmarking of your own body. Appearance and bodies thus hold so many questions and also many fears and power games.

Sylvia: I agree! I feel like stressing the aspect that – to me – these deconstructions are not about dismissing science or the academic sphere. Rather, this is about the fact that knowledge can and may arise in many ways. And that the bodily aspect – this physicality and corporeality should not be excluded *per se*.

Nela, I find the idea of mutual complementation beautiful. The dichotomy between "practical knowledge" and "theoretical knowledge," between "the body" and "the mind" is utterly constructed. And I think it is time we stop believing there is a dichotomy there – so that different threads are allowed to merge and flow.

Cara: Yes! Absolutely! And I think that's what makes certain processes of deconstruction possible. I like these descriptions of collectives that form knowledge. Because I think that makes it necessary to question certain borders and to deal with them in some way and to relate to them. I think that's exactly what we were about in this process: touching the borders created through categorizations of knowledge, daring to touch, daring to question – together.

If we had to end this conversation with a kind of appeal, it would perhaps sound like this: we don't want to simply believe all categorizations with regards to knowledge. We want to form collective spaces and modes that touch the borders these categorizations make – touch them, question them, feel them, taste them, restructure them and tear them if we choose to.

So that we can decide together about borders and categorizations: which ones do we keep, which ones do we break down?

For this to happen we need collectives that are diverse in each and every sense of this word. This cracking open of borders means, among other things, to break with the separation of body and mind, with the separation between corporeality and knowledge!

Nela: Yes!

Sylvia: You have put that very beautifully. Thank you.

1.2 Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Violence in Academic Philosophy

Participants playing a scene in the forum theater workshop led by Nela Adam at the Munich School of Philosophy in 2022.
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Abundant Supply of Reasons
Tracing the Inherent Classism of Philosophy

Lars Leeten

1. Reason as privilege

Reason – the pride of philosophy – claims a standpoint of the neutral, the impartial, the innocent. It is made to reduce the biases of thought and the injustices of this world and it is supposed to be above these biases. That this claim is problematic is abundantly clear today. Philosophical rationality is not innocent. It is in many ways male-biased; it is Eurocentric; it has absorbed the racism of Western history. But what about bias based on *class*? Does philosophical rationality also carry traces of class prejudice? Does it maybe even represent the point of view of a privileged class? And if so, what would that mean for the possibility of unbiased philosophical reflection?

If one considers the *institutional* reality of philosophy, there are fairly simple answers to these questions. It is no secret that there is classism in academia; and philosophy is no exception to this rule. Access to universities is socially highly selective, and the participation in knowledge production is even more so. Professional academics from the working class or poverty class are scarce; and many of them will have experienced their share of classist discrimination, be it personal or structural. Many others, of course, leave academia at an early point because of an environment where members of lower classes are disadvantaged; in much the same way that many women leave academia at an early point because of patriarchal structures. The mechanisms are subtle, but their effects are palpable: there is no equality of opportunity in academia. In Germany, professorships are disproportionately awarded to male candidates – roughly 75% – and disproportionately awarded to members of the upper classes. In the course of the last decades, this tendency has even increased.[1] Despite all talk of 'diversity', academia seems to be in danger of becoming more and more dominated by a small fragment of our society who position themselves as epistemic aristocrats.

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[1] For Germany see e.g. Blome, Frerk/Möller, Christina/Böning, Anja: Open House? Class-Specific Career Opportunities within German Universities, in: Social Inclusion 7 (2019) 1, 101–110.

The unequal participation in knowledge production is an epistemic injustice of its own. It is problematic in a moral respect, and it also leads to one-sided perspectives and epistemic failure. Nevertheless, one might think that the problem of social closure is institutional only. Or does it run deeper? Let us begin by stating that it is by no means a new phenomenon. Academic discourse has been systematically distorted by class inequalities since its very beginnings. In the 4th Century B.C., Aristotle took it for granted that philosophy – at that time synonymous with 'science' – is for 'free men', i.e. male citizens who belong to a particular class. When he recommends the 'theoretical life' (*bios theoretikos*) as the happiest form of life he is thinking of those who are not engaged in labor, production or care work. For Aristotle there was no doubt that philosophy, as the noblest human activity, has its place where the necessities of life are taken care of, i.e. where one has plenty of *leisure time*, in Greek: *scholē*. Striving for wisdom is an end in itself: "as a man is called free (*eleutheros*) who is free for his own sake and not for the sake of another, so this knowledge alone is free among all."[2] In this view, those who work with their hands are excluded from philosophy from the outset: the 'unfree' man (*aneleutheros* – the word can also mean 'low' or even 'stingy' and 'penny-pinching') is *by nature* not suited to free reflection. Philosophy is not for small-minded, ordinary people who are absorbed by little everyday things. It is the business of those who, due to their social background, do not need to do any manual work and can afford to spend their time inquiring about things. In a certain sense, the original idea of 'philosophical reason' itself reflects a privileged social position.

One might lament these inequalities and injustices as a moral failure; and one might lament the epistemic deficiencies that result from it. It is however tempting to believe that they will not affect what philosophy and science are built on, namely the underlying concepts of knowledge, reason, justification, argumentation and truth. At first glance, the elitism of philosophy seems to mean only that many are excluded from *participating in* philosophical rationality; it does not seem that *philosophical rationality itself* is affected by classist prejudice. In this view, 'free knowledge' is not for everyone, the very idea of such free knowledge however remains valid. But can we really be so sure? Is there really an inner core of philosophical rationality that is immune to classism?

In this essay, I will attempt to question this very assumption. Just as our ideas of rationality are influenced by patriarchal and colonial patterns of thought, they might also be influenced by patterns of thought generated by class privilege. If so, we would have to spell out how our concepts of philosophical rationality – which have characterised philosophy and science more broadly to this day – are shaped by class prejudice. We would have to ask: In what sense could our concepts of truth, knowledge, reason, justification and argumentation itself be susceptible to classist

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2   Aristotle: Metaphysics, London/Cambridge Mass. 1913, 982b (my own translation).

thinking? What would that even mean? What would it look like if the claims of rationality, so central to philosophy, reflect the perspective of a ruling class? Since these questions have hardly ever been discussed we have to restrict ourselves here to some preliminary and tentative considerations. In the following sections, I will try to give a plausible initial account which could serve as a guide for further research.

2. Denaturalising the ability to 'give reasons'

Compared to other forms of discrimation such as sexism or racism, classism seems to be less conspicuous. Sometimes it is almost invisible. In societies that see themselves as meritocracies, where class differences are not only accepted but even welcomed by many, it is often not easy to decide where ordinary behavior corresponding to social status ends and where discrimination based on class begins. What some will see as classist humiliation, others will see as a justified claim to social privilege. Some will try to remind us that class differences are unavoidable because they correspond to different levels of productivity and performance. An unequal distribution of reason could be explained in much the same way: it is the upper classes, one might say, that have the education and intellectual resources that make a certain level of rational reflection possible. That members of the lower classes lack this capacity is perhaps regrettable, but it is a fact we have to live with. It certainly does not mean that we should involve those less cut out for philosophical debate. In any case, there is nothing wrong with philosophical reason itself.

To make some headway in this muddled situation, I will start with the following working hypothesis: class privilege comes with a set of *epistemic privileges* that can easily be *misinterpreted* as 'rationality'; while the *epistemic disadvantages* that result from belonging to a disadvantaged class can easily be misinterpreted as a lack of rationality or even 'irrationality'. To spell out these problems in some detail, we will look at the capacity that has been considered the core of human rationality since Plato's time: the capacity to 'give reasons'. We will assume that being able to give reasons in a certain required form is not a natural ability that distinguishes people as human beings, but in fact a possibility conditioned by a social position. Giving reasons is not a human capacity *per se*, given by nature. It is a practice the specific form and even the possibility of which is influenced by power inequalities. Those who judge a person's rationality by his or her ability to give reasons therefore run the risk of mistaking that person's social position as a natural capacity of rational reflection. This means that they will evaluate persons who cannot give reasons not as socially disadvantaged but as less rational, and that they will be blind to the fact

that the ability to 'give reasons' is rooted in a social position.[3] Talk of 'human reason' can thus easily become a form of *naturalising* social inequality.

Of course, some of what has been said here about epistemically privileged or marginalised positions could be equally applied to disadvantages based on gender or ethnicity; and these forms of disadvantage will intersect. Consequently, it will also be a task to work out what disadvantages are *specific* to classism. We may assume that the lack of capital will be the starting point of such investigations, i.e., as Pierre Bourdieu suggests, of financial, social and cultural resources. For now, however, it will suffice if we confine ourselves to the basic point that disadvantaged classes are to a much greater extent occupied in providing for the necessities of life. They are, by definition, less equipped with resources and thus have to expend much more to get to the point where they can have the kind of intellectual engagement that finds recognition among the ruling class. They lack leisure time or, to use the classic Greek expression: *scholē*. It has even been claimed that the standpoint of philosophical reflection is constituted by forgetting how much it is conditioned by *scholē*.[4] Accordingly, the point of view of those who are epistemically disadvantaged because of their social background can as a first approximation be characterised by the lack of leisure time. Their situation is strained, and the privileged person, unencumbered by life's necessities and unaware of the challenges of a working class or poverty class life, will always be at risk of misinterpreting the behavior associated with such situations of strain. Why does this person not behave in a reasonable way? This is the perspective from which forms of oppressed thought that (due to class disadvantages) are *not already* in the position of being able to give reasons appear as 'less rational', while an *ongoing* practice of giving reasons (facilitated by class privilege) will erroneously appear as expressing 'rationality'. Our question must ultimately be whether such misperception has become entrenched in the common notions of reason, truth, justification or argumentation. And one of the tasks here is to work out how this would become manifest. We have to explore possible starting points for a closer analysis by looking at particular elements of what it means to be epistemically privileged or disadvantaged specifically due to class.

Let us try to work out the broad outlines of such a perspective. Our premise now is that being able to give reasons cannot simply be regarded as a natural capacity. Rather, it is a social position, which here is meant to denote not only a socioeconomic position but also endowment with cultural and social capital. This implies that one can only give reasons when certain *epistemic groundworks* have already been cared for;

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3   How difficult it is to recognize one's own privileges *as privileges* is shown by Friedman, Sam/ O'Brien, David/McDonald, Ian: Deflecting Privilege. Class Identity and the Intergenerational Self, in: Sociology 55 (2021) 4, 716–733. In fact, members of privileged classes often misidentify their class backgrounds as 'working class'.
4   See Bourdieu, Pierre: Pascalian Meditations, Cambridge 2000, particularly the first chapter.

i.e. if one can fall back, for instance, on a functional language, on established concepts, on seemingly unambiguous interpretations of situations, on a stock of prevailing opinions, on a system of seemingly self-evident assumptions, on ready-made patterns of explanation. Not least, it involves a certain epistemic *self-confidence*, i.e. a conviction that my own beliefs will be seen as ones that are worth being justified in the first place. (Isn't the self-confidence that comes from a privileged social position even a prerequisite for someone to *make claims*?) Giving reasons requires a well-functioning system of clear meanings and firmly established premises. In a world without doubt, without ambiguity, reason-giving will proceed like a well-oiled machine. Generally, we can assume that the epistemic ground is prepared in this way for those who already are in a privileged position. Only from this perspective the possibility of giving reasons can be taken for granted so that it appears as a general human capacity.

In contrast, members of socially marginalised classes must first position themselves to be able to give reasons by doing the necessary epistemic groundwork and attending to articulation, interpretation, cognitive coping, preliminary clarification or rejection of dominant reasons. Metaphorically speaking, the privileged have an *abundant supply of reasons*, while the disadvantaged always have to make cognitive preparations in order to be able to present reasons. If we assume that members of the working class or the poverty class have fewer resources, in terms of time and energy, that they live in a situation of strain, we obviously have to presuppose that in most cases it is not possible for them to participate in the game of reason-giving as played by the privileged. But let us consider only the case where they do enter this game. Then, from the point of view of the ruling class, their rational activity will not manifest itself immediately as one of 'giving reasons'. Rather, the reasons must first be *formed*. In order for the required form of reasoning to become possible, the necessary work of preparation mentioned above – what we called epistemic groundwork – must take place. Just as in other areas of life the necessities are not already provided for, so here too the minimal conditions have to be established.

One could understand this intellectual work as a form of *coping*, which is necessary where one can no longer assume that the world is already interpreted in the sense of one's own interests and purposes – where one comes under the influence of other interpretations, which predominate in the social balance of power. Efforts have to be invested in the language and possible descriptions to be used, in interpretations of situations, in premises more friendly to one's own life orientation. Also, one has to cope with the fact that the ground one stands on is less firm, while at the same time the demands in the game of reasons seem to be higher. One has to take care of one's basic premises, where those in a position of social power can directly fall back on theirs. Where resources of time and energy are lacking, the full extent of this problem will become apparent. It will take considerable intellectual efforts to even *question* the tacit assumptions of dominant classes which are unconsciously shared

by society, the apparent self-evidences of privileged persons, their ready-made patterns of explanation – and these efforts will take the form not of giving reasons but of disordered doubting, random queries, of questioning what seems self-evident, of searching for words, occasionally even of stuttering or stammering.

If what has been said is right, the notion that any rational activity will become manifest as a case of 'reason-giving' in a narrow sense is itself a classist notion. At the same time, we would have to admit that the common understanding of philosophical rationality itself is indeed affected by classist prejudice. The central prejudice is that, for rational beings, there is always an abundant supply of 'reasons'. But what Aristotle called the 'free knowledge' of philosophy is in fact a social situation that brings with it a freedom from intellectual worry: the privilege of no longer having to provide for the foundations of one's judgments. One will have to ask to what extent all that is associated with this understanding of rationality – the long-established ideas of truth, of justification, of knowledge – is also biased in this way. Our next question has to be how this could look like.

3. Being – and not being – epistemically prepared

Let us assume that we got the general outlines of our picture right. We have an idea of what it might look like if social privilege enters into the understanding of reason itself. Of course, it is only an abstract idea so far, not more than a starting point for further investigation. The next step would be to describe in more detail the elements of classist bias in the philosophical concept of rationality itself. For this purpose, the distinction between 'being in the position to give reasons' on the one side and 'doing the groundwork for being able to give reasons' on the other side would have to be more finely broken down. In conclusion, an attempt will be made to at least outline a possible research program.

The focus must apparently be on the contrast between the person who lives in a socially unburdened situation that facilitates giving 'reasons' in the required form and the person who first has to get into the position to be able to participate in the game of reasons as played by the privileged. The contrast could be described as one between *being prepared* and *having to catch up*. And the question will have to be what exactly it means, epistemically, to be prepared or to have to catch up. Clearly, there are many aspects at play here, some of which may be typical of classist disadvantage, others of forms of oppression more broadly. Without going into these fine distinctions here, we will outline a few aspects in an exemplary manner.

We will first look at the aspect of *time*. The 'free' pursuit of wisdom traditionally arises from a situation of leisure, *scholē*. It is a situation without time pressure, where deliberation can go on indefinitely. This situation is of course fictitious, there is no space of reasons outside of time. Nevertheless, it seems clear that class priv-

ilege typically entails having sufficient time resources available for intellectual engagement. And this would imply that there will be such engagement even when the actual giving of reasons has not yet begun. Social privilege also means that there is room for playful debates and argumentative exercises that *prepare* you for the game of giving reasons. It implies a cultural capital that consists in the fact that some of the time required for thorough reflection has already been invested, that words have already been found, basic premises have already been articulated, that the integration of one's beliefs into a sociocultural network has already taken place. Those who can draw on this capital in the game of reasons are undoubtedly at an advantage over those who have yet to invest the time to make these preparations. This is the difference between those who already have enough reasons and can play them out like tokens, and those who first have to form their reasons in the required form, who are behind in the game of reasons from the outset.

The effect of this difference will be that, in the ongoing game of reasons, those who have had enough time and leisure will be *faster*, while the socially disadvantaged will need *more time*. (One is reminded of how Sextus Empiricus characterises the skeptics: while the dogmatists have already found the truth – or are certain that it cannot be found – the skeptics are those who are 'still searching'.[5]) And yet it would be a misunderstanding – an optical illusion, as it were – to think that those who are not prepared for reason-giving in the same way as those who have had enough *scholē* are in any way less rational. Perhaps, the only difference is that they begin the necessary intellectual work here and now, while others were privileged enough to have begun it long before. While some can make provisions, others do not have the opportunity to do so. Whoever understands giving reasons as the epitome of all rational activities narrows them down to their final phase and forgets how deeply they are ultimately anchored in the ordinary practice of life with all its worldly necessities. Wherever a reason is given, infinite things in the realm of thinking are already taken care of.

The second aspect follows directly from the first. The process of forming reasons requires that you get some overview of what is involved in the particular issue at hand. Some order needs to be established, interpretations of the situation need to be created, concepts need to be sorted so that the subjects can orient themselves at all. Someone still in the process of articulating reasons will therefore be much more occupied with the particular situation than someone who has already been able to do this work of interpretation and orientation. This work, in fact, consists to a large extent in subsuming things under rules; available time resources will, in other words, go into operations of *generalization*.

One can bring into play here the difference of *particulars and universals*: Philosophy has always understood itself as dealing with the general and abstracting from

5   Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Pyrrhonism, Cambridge Mass./London 1933.

the particular. In light of what has been said, we may surmise: It is the luxury of the unencumbered, intellectually carefree situation that makes this view possible. Those who can give reasons as required by philosophy are, so to speak, masters of the situation; they can already base their judgments on rules of interpretation. At the same time, they seem to have at their disposal a clarity and decisiveness that is not possible for those who are still searching for such rules, who are still busy bringing particulars under general forms. To be intellectually privileged is to be in the position to speak on the basis of *pre-established universals*.

The difference could also be presented as one of strategy and tactics. Where action follows a *strategy*, it is a well-planned approach based on long-term analyses of possible situations; *tactics*, on the other hand, are associated with situational, rather reactive behavior. Given this distinction, it is the privilege of one who is socially better positioned to act strategically, while someone from a more socially precarious position is on the defensive and has to rely on tactical action. In other words: reasons indicate the presence of a strategy. Where someone is busy with intellectual coping, tactics are called for. Here, concepts have to be invented, explanations have to be designed, and rules have yet to be formulated. In the game of reasons, under pressure to justify, there will also be the temptation to give *ad hoc* reasons that, on closer examination, prove to be hardly tenable. Those who have an abundance of reasons, who have them ready before the argumentation even begins, may frown on this behavior. But such behavior does by no means show a lack of rationality: it is *rationality under pressure*, under conditions of lack of time, a rationality that is seeking orientation, is preoccupied with particulars, and is therefore forced to proceed tactically.

Finally, to trace the inherent classism of philosophy we might ask how the *purposes* of rational activities are represented. Here the classical view is that true theory (*theoria*) has no specific purpose at all: that philosophical knowledge is 'free' also means that it is free from purposes. John Dewey speaks of the 'spectator theory' of cognition: the subject of knowledge is passive and receptive to the events in the world, it does not participate in them.[6] And, indeed, the question of what practical intentions are associated with knowledge and truth continues to embarrass us to this day, as the debates about pragmatism show.

In view of what has been said here, however, we must ask whether the notion of purposeless theory is not a self-deception, possible only where there is no longer any reason to worry about practical purposes. Doesn't the idea of a purely intellectual apprehension reveal the fantasy of a subject whose purposes are fulfilled so easily and unobtrusively that it is no longer even aware of pursuing purposes at all? If this is so, then it seems to be a fantasy of the privileged who have already been

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6   See, e.g., the first chapter of Dewey, John: The Quest for Certainty. A Study on the Relation of Knowledge and Action, New York 1919.

able to put their world into a purposeful, regulated order. Philosophical rationality, seemingly the highest form of knowledge, is not without purpose; only it does not easily become aware of its purposes because they are already provided for. The one who thinks without following purposes is the one who dwells in the realm of the universal, where one no longer has to take care of particulars – and who therefore forgets how much thinking is rooted in these particulars. The freedom that reason traditionally promises is built on very different, much more mundane premises than usually acknowledged. Philosophy therefore runs the risk of confusing established privileges with what is universally valid. Like all human reasons, the reasons of philosophy are full of hidden intentions, practical interests, one-sidedness, bias. This does not necessarily diminish the value of reasons; but it does mean that the idea of a pure, purposeless, neutral capacity for giving reasons is highly problematic, as it blocks critical reflection on these issues. Those who could already bring the world under general forms, who no longer have to wear themselves out realizing practical purposes and now have reasons in abundance, have not thereby arrived in the realm of pure rationality. Perhaps the social conditions only happen to be favorable for my way of thinking.

It is obvious that what has been said can only be very preliminary and more detailed discussions would have to follow. I have presented only a brief sketch of a far-reaching topic. It is not easy to avoid stereotypes in this matter. But given the extended feminist and postcolonial discourses around the implicit biases of philosophical thought, it is striking that the question of class is hardly ever brought into play in this way. As we have seen, there are many similarities to sexism and racism, but there are also peculiarities of classism that need to be better understood. In fact, we must assume that this form of discrimination and oppression has also been constantly effective in various ways throughout the history of ideas. And we must assume that in modern society, which sees itself as a meritocracy, classism will have an influence on what we understand as rational as well. This influence needs to be tracked down. The idea of an inner core of reason immune to classism is better seen as an empty dream.

An Unspoken Synecdoche
The History of Philosophy and its Epistemic Injustice

Francesca Greco

1. Epistemic Injustice: A Boundary Crossed

There is a form of epistemic injustice that has been perpetrated, and which continues to be reproduced, in the practice of writing histories of philosophy. This form of epistemic injustice can be likened to a synecdoche[1]: in the current canon[2] of the history of philosophy, a part – namely the history of Western[3] philosophy – has been

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1   A synecdoche in language is a figure of speech in which a part of something, such as a word or a phrase, is used to refer to the whole of it ("a pair of hands" for "a worker"), or where the whole of something is used to refer to a part ("the law" for "a police officer"). See https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/synecdoche (30.10.2023).

2   As Sandra Lapointe and Erich Reck argue regarding the term "canon," it is interesting to note that "the notion of a 'canon' was initially used by Christian theologians to refer to a list of texts considered to be genuine (i.e. arising from divine revelation) and accepted as sacred (Holy Scripture), thereby forming the basis of Church dogma. Later, the notion came to play a role in secular contexts as well [where] canons were seen as collections of works considered to be of exemplary quality, thus worthy of continued attention and teaching. […] One might argue that different traditions in philosophy have their own distinctive canons and that there is not one canon all philosophers ought to share; similarly for philosophical sub-fields, like ethics, aesthetics and logic. But the implications are the same in each case, and the same critical questions and reservations apply." See Lapointe, Sandra/Reck, Erich H.: Historiography and the Formation of Philosophical Canons, New York 2023, 3.

3   In this chapter, I use the adjective "Western" to refer to the Ancient Greek, Roman, western European, U.S. American, and mainly Christian philosophical traditions that form the actual canon in the history of philosophy and thus determine curricula and research fields in academia. I use the term "Western" exclusively in quotation marks in order to point out its problematic and constructive character, both as "a reduction of complexity in terms of cultures, religions, history, language and, of course, the diversity of philosophical theories" (see Graneß, Anke: Philosophie in Afrika. Herausforderungen einer globalen Philosophiegeschichte, Berlin 2023, 50) and as a "project, not a place" (see Glissant, Édouard: Caribbean discourse.Selected essays, Dash, J. Michael (ed.), Charlottesville 1999 (1989), 2). The label "West" or "Western" is in fact commonly used to highlight the power asymmetry between the industrialized countries on the one hand, and the so-called developing countries

taken to be the whole – namely, the history of philosophy in general. This synecdoche, however, is an unspoken one, since the custom of specifying the history of "Western" philosophy has taken hold only in the last 50 to 70 years.[4] If this synecdoche managed to creep in surreptitiously and unnoticed, it was certainly due to the tradition, forged over the past two centuries, of considering the history of philosophy, and philosophy in general, as an all-European affair which can at best be imported to other countries. Since the conflation of philosophy in general and "Western philosophy" has largely remained an unacknowledged presupposition, it has been difficult to evaluate the synecdoche and its effects seriously.

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on the other hand, and in this case may refer to a wider area than present-day (midwestern) Europe and the U.S.A., such as Japan or Canada. For a questioning of the notion of "Western Philosophy," see Platzky Miller, Josh: From the 'History of Western Philosophy' to entangled histories of philosophy: the Contribution of Ben Kies, in: British Journal for the History of Philosophy (20.4.2023), 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2023.2188898 (30/10/2023).

4   As far as I could research, with few exceptions – such as in Japanese (first publication in 1862) and Chinese (first publication in 1907), languages that start to use the term "Western" regularly from the 1920s onwards – the first references to "European," "Western," or "Occidental" philosophy can be found around the 1950s, and in most of the cases regarding translations of Bertrand Russel's *History of Western Philosophy* (1945). In parallel with the inclusion of U.S. American philosophy in the narrative of the history of philosophy, the adjective "Western" appeared in some titles of histories of philosophy. Regarding the earlier engagement with "Western" philosophies in Asian languages, it is also noteworthy that in several Japanese translations of some English and German works on the history of philosophy, the adjective "Western" (西洋, *seiyō*) or "European" (欧洲, *ōshū*) was added to the titles, as for example in the translation of Arthur Kenyon Rogers (trsl. 1914, orig. 1907), Karl Vorländer (trsl. 1929, orig. 1903), Windelband (trsl. 1918, orig. 1892 "European" was added; trsl. 1930, orig. 1892 "Western" was added), Albert Schwegler (trsl. 1939, orig. 1848), and others (cf. Krings, Arisaka and Kato 2022). In European languages the adjectives "European," "Western", or "Occidental" appear in the 19th century, once in French in 1872 and once in German in 1883. For a broader overview on the histories of philosophy in different languages see https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/histories-of-philosophy/philosophiegeschichten/ (30/10/2023).

Looking closely at historiography of philosophy[5] – that is, the history of histories of philosophy – we[6] realize that this has not always been the way for which the history of philosophy has been accounted. Moreover, and most importantly, over the last century, and even more so in recent decades, the history of philosophy has been struggling to become more and more global and plural, with all the difficulties – in terms of methodology and content – that can be expected from a systematic discipline that already crystallized its methods and content centuries ago.

The purpose of this chapter is to note some important changes in the historiography of philosophy since its formal origins in European historiography[7] to the present day, in order to trace the practices of exclusion perpetrated through this discipline in philosophy in general starting between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century[8]. This re-reading aims to make visible, in broad strokes, how the practice of writing histories of philosophy is based – at least since

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5   The expressions "historiography of philosophy," "history of the histories of philosophy," "philosophical historiography," or "historiography of the history of philosophy" refer to the study of the narratives of the past of philosophy in form of a history of this discipline.

The first example of a history of the histories of philosophy was *De Scriptoribus Historie Philosophicae Libri IV* (1659) by Johannes Jonsius. In the 20th century comprehensive attempts to deal with philosophical historiography have been undertaken by Lucien Braun (1973), Martial Gueroult (1984–1992), Giovanni Santinello and Gregorio Piaia (1979–2004) regarding the European or "Western" histories of philosophy, and Elberfeld (ed. 2017) regarding the histories of philosophy in global perspective, thus including in the research horizon histories of philosophy in different languages worldwide such as Latin, German, French, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Hebrew, and others. For an overview of the history of the histories of philosophy, see Elberfeld, Rolf: Geschichte der Geschichten der Philosophie im Horizont verschiedener Sprachen weltweit. Erste Ergebnisse des Koselleck-Projekts, in: Polylog 46 (2021), 7–20. In addition, see the section "Bibliographies" in the book series Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective (Universität Hildesheim | OLMS Verlag), which started in 2022 and is publishing several bibliographies of histories of philosophy divided by languages worldwide and which are extensively introduced.

6   I use the term "we" in this context to address the reader(s) of this chapter who I accompany through my arguments. Nevertheless, the term represents a broad abstraction of the concrete reading person situated in a concrete environment and for this reason. I thus invite readers to envision at least one context other than their own in which this text might be read and to reflect on the similarities and differences.

7   Santinello identifies Renaissance historical activity as the premise of the genre *Historia Philosophica* that began to flourish in the 16th century. See Santinello, Giovanni: Storia delle storie generali della filosofia. Dalle origini rinascimentali alla "Historia Philosophica", Brescia 1981.

8   Here I take as a point of reference the works of Dietrich Tiedemann (1791), Johann Gottlieb Buhle (1796), and Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1798). One should note that the editions of Buhle's and Tennemann's works represent interesting cases in which histories of non-European peoples, mainly "Oriental," were excluded or added in later editions. For an account of these cases, see Greco, Francesca: A Look into the "Storia delle Storie Generali della Filosofia" in: East Asian Journal of Philosophy, 02 (2023) 01, 17–38, and for an account on the phe-

the end of the 18th century – on an epistemic injustice that is still silently reproduced and rarely questioned, not only in textbooks but also in teaching and research. To this purpose, I will begin by discussing the inherent plurality and transformative potential of philosophy, to which injustice is done by reducing its scope, and conclude with a reflection on the intricate entanglements – political, economic, and intellectual – that one has to deal with when questioning a discipline such as philosophy and its historiography.

1.1   The Sound of Philosophies

There is a certain plurality to philosophy, both in terms of the many different philosophical currents and the culturally specific approaches that exist within the "Western" landscape, as well as the diversity of philosophical approaches from different cultures worldwide. However, this inherent plurality is put at risk as philosophers[9] have become accustomed to regarding their discipline as a *singulare tantum*. This is due in part to the aspiration of "Western" philosophy to universality, which has excluded the philosophies of "non-Western"[10] countries, people, and traditions. One consequence of an at once narrowing of the concept of philosophy and a broadening of its scope is that philosophers worldwide have become so accustomed to their own absence – with regard to the absence or scarcity of women in philosophy as well – in their own discipline and that taking a stand – sometimes vehemently – against the *re*integration and expansion of the established canon of philosophy – namely, in the singular and universal – has become an automated, self-defending reaction. This reaction can be compared to plugging one's ears during a concert, for instance, when the sound of an audio cable interference becomes unbearable to hear.

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nomenon of orientalism see Bjarkö, Frederik: Orientalism in 19th-Century Swedish Historiography of Philosophy in: East Asian Journal of Philosophy, 02 (2023) 01, 61–98.

9   With this term I address every person who is doing philosophy (men, women, and diverse people) unless otherwise specified.

10   I use the term "non-Western" to refer to traditions outside the "Western" one, namely outside Ancient Greek, Roman, western European, and U.S. American, and mainly Christian philosophical traditions. I am aware that using this negative terminology presents at least two problems. The first one is the reproduction of a dichotomy that keeps the "West" at the center of attention and sets it up as universal measure. For the purpose of this chapter – which is to draw attention to the narrowness of the current canon that is limited to "Western" philosophy – this terminology serves to highlight the dichotomy created by the narrowing of the philosophical canon around the end of the 18th century. The second problem is the assumption of a clear separation between these two major blocs which does not take into account the exchanges and entanglements that occurred between these two supposed blocs. For an account on such entanglements, see Holenstein, Elmar: Philosophie-Atlas. Orte und Wege des Denkens, Zürich 2004; and for an extensive account on Africa see Graneß: Philosophie in Afrika.

The general concern is that philosophy becomes a cacophony without any intrinsic – and yet content-wise necessary – unity and coherence. However, this is not the experience of those, for instance, who have been to concerts in which – without detracting, of course, from the value of solo concerts – a set of instruments, sometimes very different from each other, play simultaneously in different musical keys, thus playing on their contrasts and interferences. In case of music, it would be impoverishing to discredit or devalue some instruments or some clefs in favor of others, such as the violin clef, which is privileged because it is the most used in European score notation, and would be defined as the most "perfect" correct one for reasons determined by those who use this particular clef. In the ensemble of global philosophies, European and "Western" philosophy in general has been granted this privilege, and non-European, "non-Western," and other philosophies are regarded as interferences.

1.2   Epistemic Ignorance

Silencing other philosophies, ignoring their actual and potential contributions, and making of Philosophy just a *singulare tantum* is an epistemic injustice – towards philosophy, philosophies, and philosophers – that can be found following the practice of writing histories of philosophy. This is something with which all philosophers, I venture, deal today without exception. Nowadays, in fact, it is difficult to not have heard about the voices from all over the world doing philosophy – in traditional and different ways – as well as demands for more diversity in the content and form of philosophizing.

As Linda Alcoff notes, epistemic ignorance[11] in the practice of philosophy, and the epistemic injustices that result from it, has many different facets. There are three principal ways in which one can ignore something: by (1) not being aware of something's existence at all, which is a kind of epistemic blindness; by (2) having heard about or acknowledged something without considering it further, whether out of selfishness or an implicit epistemic discrediting or devaluation; and finally by (3) more or less actively excluding something, which can range from violence (both epistemic to physical), oppression, and the imposition of supremacy.[12] What is important is not merely avoiding any kind of ignorance for the sake of justice; it would be

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11   See Alcoff, Linda: Philosophy and Philosophical Practice. Eurocentrism as an epistemology of ignorance, in: Ian James Kidd, Ian/Medina, José/Pohlhaus, Gaile Jr. (eds): The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice, New York 2017, 397–408.

12   Although in the first two cases listed above, the injustice resulting from ignorance is an almost unintended injustice, in the last case ignorance and injustice overlap and the intentionality of both marks a major difference with the previous two. It cannot be defined whether injustice comes from ignorance or the other way around. In this case, ignorance and injustice overlap.

philosophically much more productive to try to detect the reactions – one's own as well as those of others – to these kinds of ignorance and the injustices from which they derive. Regarding the presence of philosophical voices outside of the "Western" canon, and the number of philosophers who are currently speaking out on behalf of them, taking refuge inside the limits of the first form of ignorance is no longer possible: the line has been definitively crossed, and one cannot simply claim to not have known. Even if philosophy were to remain seemingly singular and strictly "Western," this would still be a reaction to the "interferences" caused or represented by "non-Western" philosophies. Otherwise, if philosophy gets declined in the plural, the faces and voices of philosophy will heavily change.

1.3   Epistemic Transformation

An acute form of epistemic injustice toward philosophy is, in fact, the belief that the history of philosophy has been, can be, or should be univocal. It is fallacious to think that philosophy *itself* has remained unchanged since the ancient Greeks after the innumerable processes of appropriation and reproduction of philosophies as they spread from one country to another – within Europe as well as in the global reception of its tradition.[13] The assimilation of "non-Western" traditions and practices into the "Western" canon, in terms of the interactions between "non-Western" traditions with each other and without "Western" mediation, will continue to transform philosophy. These transformations are not only about the number of pages written on philosophy in general and the history of philosophy in particular, but more importantly about how the image and narrative of "what philosophy is" will be profoundly affected by the relationships with other traditions, practices, and cultures, both outside and inside the "West." For some philosophers, this shift will be so radical that "philosophy" may seem unrecognizable, for example, as "哲学" (*tetsugaku*), "فلسفة" (*falsafa*), or even "thinking." The term "thinking," in fact, is sometimes used in different European and non-European languages to distinguish other kinds of thinking, wisdom, or knowledge from a pure philosophical thinking.[14] Embracing such a process of transformations does not mean, however, opening up to the idea that philosophy is simply about any form of thinking. On the one hand, as Franz Martin Wimmer notes, not all people explicitly formulate and document their thoughts,

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13   For an example of the wide variety of concepts collected under the name "philosophy" in the European tradition, see Elberfeld, Rolf: Was ist Philosophie? Programmatische Texte von Platon zu Derrida, Stuttgart 2006.

14   To this extent, see Krings, Leon/Arisaka, Yoko/Kato, Tetsuri: Histories of Philosophy and Thought in the Japanese Language. A Bibliographical Guide from 1835 to 2021, Hildsheim 2022, 21–30.

and only a few who do have their ideas retained in cultural memory, thereby building philosophical traditions of thought in different languages, societies, and times.[15] On the other hand, the assumption that *all* people philosophize would in turn be just as universalistic and totalizing as establishing *one* univocal definition of philosophy, universal in its scope but particular in its history.

2. An Unspoken Synecdoche: The Histories of Philosophy

An evident case of perpetrating epistemic injustice in the field of philosophy that I will address below is the discipline and practice of narrating histories of philosophy following a common thread produced exclusively in one tradition and imposed as universal elsewhere. This is the history of philosophy as it is told, taught, and researched in academia in the vast majority of universities to date.

2.1 The Status Quo

No matter where we are in the world, if we buy a book or take a course entitled "History of Philosophy," we expect to enjoy a *general*, no matter how in-depth, overview of the *entire* history of philosophy. We would not expect any further delineation or focus beyond what is promised by the title. Instead, what we generally find is a history of Ancient Greek and occasionally Roman philosophy; a bit of philosophy from the mid-West European Middle Ages, which is eventually connected with Islamic thought related to Aristotle; a couple of mostly central European modern philosophical currents such as the Enlightenment, Empiricism, and Idealism; if we are lucky, some U.S.-American authors from the 20th century; a sprinkling of national philosophies such as French, German, or Italian philosophy; and finally, some contemporary currents in philosophy such as phenomenology, existentialism, analytic philosophy, etc. The strong discrepancy between the general and even universal aspiration of the history of philosophy and its factually particular outcome should come as no surprise to many readers. The claim of the exclusively Greek origin of philosophy is widely accepted and far too rarely questioned or studied in depth.[16] This attitude,

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15   See Wimmer, Franz: Interkulturelle Philosophie. Eine Einführung, Wien 2004, 25.

16   In the European historiography of philosophy, the question of the origin of philosophy remained controversial until the 18th century, and the tradition of situating the beginning of the history of philosophy with ancient, oriental, or North African philosophies is carried out in parallel to the dominant trend of starting the narration from Thales. On questioning the beginning of the histories of philosophy from Thales, see Cantor, Lea: Thales – the 'first philosopher'? A troubled chapter in the historiography of philosophy, in: British Journal of the History of Philosophy (29/3/2022), 727–750; Graneß: Philosophie in Afrika, 57–69, 126–197; Zedel-

largely following authority and habit, is in truth quite unphilosophical insofar as critique and doubt are indispensable elements of philosophizing. This attitude has led increasingly to the identification of a general, all-embracing, and universal history of human reason with the triangulation of a Greek, European, and U.S. American history, often referred to as "Western."

The equating of "general" and "Western" philosophy comes to the extent that the latter adjective hardly needs to appear next to the designation "History of Philosophy," as one can easily verify in the shelves of nearly any university library or in bookstores. Since this is a generalized phenomenon in space and time, we will at first probably not even notice the absence of several philosophical currents, people, countries, and even continents.[17] In fact, at least in the last two centuries, we would experience more or less the same phenomenon across the globe, from Latin America to Japan (even this latter phrasing continues to operate with a geographically Eurocentric view of the earth's map, both concerning the central perspective on Europe and the relations between north-south). Reiterating this generalization naturally reinforces the purported truthfulness and credibility of its own finding, thus crystalizing the same narrative. Of course, the issue is much more complicated than it seems, both throughout the centuries and in different places. Indeed, this was not always the case in early histories of philosophy, and it is not the case nowadays, especially in the last twenty years considering the phenomenon of World Philosophies in different languages.[18]

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maier, Helmut: Der Anfang der Geschichte Studien zur Ursprungsdebatte im 18. Jahrhundert, Hamburg 2003.

17   On the website of the Koselleck-Project (see https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/histories-of-ph ilosophy (30/10/2023)) one can find a wide collection of materials on the histories of philosophy in several European and non-European languages which display the range of histories of philosophy of continents, regions, religions, teachings, people, nations, gender, disciplines, and areas of philosophy.

18   See ibid. for a wide collection of materials on global histories of philosophy in several European and non-European languages under the label of "Global Philosophies". Histories of philosophy have been considered "global" – with some exceptions – if they cover more than the "Western" and the three renowned Asian traditions of India, China, and Japan, including at least one region among Africa, Latin America, Oceania, and other regions of the world. According to the research in the project, the first account of global history of philosophy can be considered to have appeared in Japanese language in 1902. On this work, see Krings/Arisaka/Kato: Histories of Philosophy and Thought in the Japanese Language, 44–49. For an account on global histories of philosophy in European languages see Herzl, Namita: Global Histories of Philosophies in European Languages, in: East Asian Journal of Philosophy 02 (2023) 01, 5–16.

2.2 *Other* Philosophies

Let's return to our image of the bookstore, filled with these generic textbooks on the "History of Philosophy." We would be surprised and intrigued to find there – and also in academic philosophy curricula in general, as well as in other academic departments under the title of "Philosophy" – entire monographies and classes on "Eastern," "East-Asian" philosophies, typically devoted to Indian, Chinese or Japanese philosophy, or on "Oriental" philosophies, which may refer frequently to the sum of these three or to Near and Middle Eastern philosophy, but rarely to both. Sometimes these follow the formula "history of philosophy" by adding a predication such as "the history of East-Asian philosophies," "the history of Japanese philosophy," and at other times simply headline "East-Asian philosophy." We might be further surprised to find in those texts long stretches of time, and various topics and forms of philosophy covered, such as discussions between Buddhist monks. In fact, in such texts, the mentioned traditions are sometimes considered over millennia, and thus not only in the context of their encounter with European and/or American thought. Moreover, these traditions and practices do not rely solely on religion – as is often highlighted, sometimes overlooking how much Western thinking and acting relies, directly or indirectly, on Christian values – but also on different social and political patterns and practices which can be considered philosophical insofar as they contribute to the creation and discussion of knowledge. Since these *other* philosophical contributions from *different* currents, people, countries, and continents are rarely, or at any rate separately, treated from a "(general) history of philosophy" perspective, if one *wants* to find them – assuming that one knows about their existence – one has to look somewhere else, in other sections of the bookstore or in other university departments.

In addition, we might be no less astonished to eventually find texts and lectures – but hardly in faculties of philosophy – on African, Latin American, Caribbean, and Australian philosophy, the so-called "indigenous" philosophies, and other philosophies of different parts of the world from America to Oceania recounting Filipino, Indonesian, Caribbean, Ecuadorian, Kenyan, Ethiopian, Russian, etc.[19] philosophy or "thinking."[20] The inclusiveness of the term "thinking" shows in this case one con-

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19   Surely these geographic specifications can be as problematic as the absence of such specifications, revealing a universalistic and encompassing intent. Regarding national philosophies, for example, these can often increase nationalistic, exclusivist, and essentialist attitudes.

20   Not in every language is the term "thinking" used tendentially as opposed to the term "philosophy" – as is often the case in Japanese philosophy as we have seen above. In some languages, for example Italian, and depending on the research contexts, the two terms are used as synonyms without a strict demarcation of their proper domain. Reflecting on the use of the two terms, however, one can recognize a certain tolerance of plurality in the use of "thinking" which the term "philosophy" tends to standardize and universalize.

sequence that at least needs to be problematized. In fact, talking about "thought" instead of "philosophy" would shift the issue from *Philosophy* to the broader categories of *Intellectual History*, *History of Knowledge*, *History of Science*, etc., thus integrating philosophical traditions in a broader frame, but one which is not philosophy proper. In other words, through this move, almost exclusively "Western" philosophy would continue to be taught in the philosophy departments all over the world – perhaps with one or two exceptions here and there – while courses on (the history of) African or Japanese thought would be found in *other* faculties or degree programs such as Area Studies, Religion, Anthropology, History, etc. That is to say, nothing would be changed in the *status quo* in philosophy, neither formally in philosophy departments nor in the concept of philosophy itself, with the latter staying untouched in its singular and universal state. The philosophies related to *other* regions, peoples, or religions would remain excluded from the discipline of philosophy. However, suddenly one would wonder where all these "thoughts" came from, where they were hidden, and in which times and ways they were developed, documented, and pursued. We would continue to wonder if we should really take them seriously, as thinking altogether and as philosophies in particular.

2.3 Narratives Old and New

A wide range of people and countries were regularly addressed in the historiography of philosophy – even if not always in a good light.[21] Between the very first accounts of histories of philosophies in the 16th century until the establishment of the discipline in the 18th century, it was customary to begin the narration of a (general) history of philosophy from the "antediluvian," "pagan," "oriental," "barbarian," or "exotic" philosophies, integrating in different parts of the text the philosophies of the Orient, or specifically the philosophy of the "Chaldeans," "Persians," "Arabs," "Phoenicians," "ancient Egyptians," "Turks," "Sinesians," "Indians," "Japanese," "Jews," "Africans," "ancient Jews," "Shiites," "Thracians," "Celts," "Etruscans," etc.[22]

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21   The intellectual contributions of peoples other than the Greeks were often accepted as borderline cases and not as philosophy in the strict sense. Even if various forms of exchange between Greeks and other peoples are assumed in these examples (see Flashar, Hellmut/ Bremer, Dieter/Rechenaue, Georg: Frühgriechische Philosophie, Basel 2013; Jeck, Udo Reinhold (ed.): Die lautlose Invasion. Zur Auseinandersetzung griechischer Philosophen mit dem persischen Mythos, Hamburg 2017), the first examples of pure philosophy are set in ancient Greece. In the best case, these contributions were categorized as "thought" or "wisdom" because they were classified as unsystematic, under-complex, religious, superstitious, or pagan. Here, Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy are the main example.

22   This is exemplary in the works by Christoph August Heumann (1715), Jakob Brucker (1731), Elias Schmersahl (1744), Appiano Bu¬onafede (1766, 1785), Johann Gottlieb Buhle (1796), and Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (edited in 1829 by Johann Amadeus Wendt). For further

Besides these works, there are also entire monographs on non-European philosophies in various languages such as Latin and English. This usage persisted at least until the middle of the 18th century, a period when, for example, through Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz's interest in Chinese culture, the reference to non-European currents of philosophy experienced a genuine flowering to the extent of assuming a genuine complementarity of two origins and corresponding developments of philosophical thought.[23] This trend did not survive the 18th century.[24]

It was toward the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century that the genre of the history of philosophy underwent both a narrowing of its content and a widening of its scope. In line with the aspirations of the late Enlightenment and the historiography of philosophy inspired by Kantian thought,[25] the *philosophical* task of the history of philosophy was to trace the history of the whole human thought. And yet, following the same principles, what came to be called "human thought" had the clear characteristics of a logical, rational, systematic, and teleologically oriented thought. The result was equally clear: the general reason of all people on earth, as Wimmer describes it, "has a skin color and a gender and its high form thrives properly only on a cultural and religious underground: it is white, male, Hel-

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works see https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/histories-of-philosophy/philosophiegeschichten/ (30/10/2023).

23   See Wimmer: Interkulturelle Philosophie, 38.

24   In contrast to the widespread tendency of that period, some currents of philosophical historiography at the beginning of the 19th century continued to show an interest in the philosophies of different peoples and cultures and have developed in parallel with the Kantian approach to the historiography of philosophy, but their legacy has not been recognized as successfully as in the cases of the Kantian and Hegelian ones. Among such currents, we find, for example, the hermeneutic school (Santinello, Giovanni (eds.): Storia delle storie generali della filosofia. L'età hegeliana I (4.1), Padova 1995, 183–448; Santinello, Giovanni/Blackwell, C. W./Piaia, Gregorio (eds.): Models of the History of Philosophy. The Hegelian Age (4), Berlin/Heidelberg 2022; 3–130), the school of Schelling (see Santinello (ed.): L'età Hegeliana I (4.1), 349–412; Santinello/Blackwell/Piaia (eds.): The Hegelian Age (4),131-82), and later the approach of Dilthey (see Santinello, Giovanni/Piaia, Gregorio (eds.): Storia delle storie generali della filosofia. Il secondo Ottocento (5), 328–63). Such philosophical-historical currents incorporate, in general, stronger cultural, linguistic, religious, and cosmological aspects into philosophical thought and were not as quick as their contemporaries to exclude the presence of reason in other philosophical systems.

25   For more details about the "Kantian turning point" in the historiography of philosophy, see Santinello, Giovanni (eds.): Storia delle storie generali della filosofia. Il secondo Illuminismo e l'età kantiana (3), Padova 1988, 879–958; Santinello, Giovanni/Blackwell, C. W./Piaia, Gregorio (eds.): Models of the History of Philosophy. The Second Enlightenment and the Kantian Age (3), Berlin/Heidelberg 2015; 697–964. For its development into the Hegelian age, see Santinello, Giovanni (eds.): L'età hegeliana I & II (4.1 & 4.2); Santinello, Giovanni/Blackwell, C. W./Piaia, Gregorio (eds.): The Hegelian Age (4).

lenistic-Christian."[26] In other words, while reason was universal, its highest realiza-
tion nevertheless did not – or precisely for this reason – go beyond some enlightened
cultures and minds in the heart of – and so, not everywhere within – Europe. Accord-
ing to the criteria of progressive reason recognizing itself and being logically the only
one capable of realizing such heights, the history of philosophy should in turn be ra-
tional, systematic, and teleologically oriented. It should narrate the vicissitudes of
universal human reason, and yet it was born in Ancient Greece, rediscovered in the
European Renaissance after the dark epoch of the Middle Ages[27], and reached its
greatest flowering on German soil between the end of 18th and the beginning of the
19th century. Following this circular, self-reinforcing, and self-legitimating narra-
tive, the supposedly universal human reason crowns itself, heroizing its own history
and justifying the supremacy of Europe over *other* territories and cultures as well as
their thinking.[28]

From this period on, historians of philosophy dropped any reference to older
traditions other than the Greeks and let the history of philosophy begin clearly from
Thales. While the philosophical contributions of various ancient peoples were prac-
tically completely forgotten, from the 19th century onwards there began to be estab-
lished specific studies on Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Buddhist, Arabic, Jewish, etc.
philosophies in specialized research areas such as Indology, Sinology, Judaic Stud-
ies, Oriental Studies, Anthropology, Ethnology, etc.[29] Thus, research on non-Euro-
pean philosophies and their historiography could be developed in parallel with, but

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26   Wimmer: Interkulturelle Philosophie, 38. Translation by the author.

27   On the question of the periodization of the Middle Ages, see Libera, Alain de: La philoso-
      phie médiévale, Paris 1995; Speer, Andreas/Wegener, Lydia (eds.): Wissen über Grenzen: Ara-
      bisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter, Berlin 2008; Speer, Andreas (ed.): Knotenpunkt
      Byzanz. Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen, Berlin 2012; Speer, Andreas:
      Wie schreibt man die Philosophiegeschichte des Mittelalters?, in: Recherches de Théologie et
      Philosophie Médiévales 1 (2021), 283–311; Borgolte, Michael/Schneidmuller, Bernd: Hybride
      Kulturen im Mittelalterlichen Europa. Vorträge und Workshops einer internationalen Früh-
      lingsschule, Berlin 2010. Furthermore, there are historians of philosophy who exclude periods
      or currents of philosophy or who regard them as highly controversial, such as Adolf Schweg-
      ler with regard to the Middle Ages and Victor Cousin with regard to the Renaissance (see
      Couzinet, Dominique/Meliadò, Mario: L'institution philosophique française et la renaissance:
      l'époque de Victor Cousin, Leiden/Boston 2022; Schwegler, Albert: Geschichte der Philosophie
      im Umriss. Eine Übersicht, Stuttgart 1848.

28   Nevertheless, this process of epistemic injustice and ignorance began much earlier than the
      18th century, and was born of imperial and colonial projects, namely at least from the "discov-
      ery" of America and early attempts at colonization. See Alcoff: Philosophy and Philosophical
      Practice, 402; Elberfeld: Dekoloniales Philosophieren, 105–122.

29   See Schlegel, Friedrich von, Über die Sprache und die Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur
      Begründung der Altertumskunde, Heidelberg 1808; Windischmann, Karl Josef Hieronymus:
      Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte, Bonn 1827. Noteworthy is the work by John Wes-
      ley Powell, published in 1877 in New York, which offers an overview of the philosophy of the

not related to, the European/"Western" narrative on the history of philosophy. Various works have been published in European as well as non-European languages, but which have been ignored – probably in various forms – by the philosophical canon. It was only since the mid-20th century that serious discussions with "non-Western" philosophies have been slowly resumed and intensified thanks to new translations and more extensive research in the field of philosophy. This work began with the Asian continent (China, India, and Japan), contributing to the emergence first of comparative and then of intercultural streams of philosophy.[30]

In a similar but opposite trend to the narrowing of the philosophical narrative in the 18th century, the 20th century saw a disaggregation of the "general" historiography of philosophy which split into the historiographies of different epochs, national divisions, disciplines, and areas.[31] At the same time, especially from the middle of the century onward, several very different attempts for global openings in historiography of philosophy took place in different parts of the globe. Given the intent to expand the current philosophical canon, these attempts drew on knowledge collected in Area, Linguistic, Religious, and Anthropological Studies of various faculties. The phenomenon of "World Philosophies"[32] is very diverse and often still maintains a particular focus on the philosophies of India, China, and Japan. Despite the change in content and methodologies, it is still rare to see a balance between continents and eras, methodologies, and periodization. Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and Caribbean Islands, Southeast Asia, the Arab World, and several European countries are still largely marginalized in philosophy and little or nothing is done to support research in and about these regions.

North American Indians. See Powell, John Wesley: Outlines of the Philosophy of the North American Indians, New York 1877.

30   Elberfeld: Dekoloniales Philosophieren, 157–170.

31   See Santinello/Piaia: Il secondo Ottocento (5); Piaia, Gregorio: Storia della filosofia e decolonizzazione del passato, in: Piaia, Gregorio: Il lavoro storico-filosofico. Questioni di metodo ed esiti didattici, Padova 2001, 11–30.

32   To this extent, see the noteworthy project of the *Journal of World Philosophies* (see https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp (30/10/2023)) which "aims to develop the contours of a philosophical understanding not subservient to dominant paradigms and provide a platform for diverse philosophical voices, including those long silenced by accident, history, or design" (cf. Journal of World Philosophies – Homepage). See as well the podcast and book series of the *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* headed by Peter Adamson. Among other publications of the last 25 years under this label or orientation, see the *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle* (UNESCO 1998); *World philosophies* (Ninian Smart 1999); *Introduction to World Philosophy: A Multicultural Reader* (Daniel Bonevac and Stephen Phillips (eds.) 2009); *Filosofie nel mondo* (Virgilio Melchiorre (ed.) 2014); and *Key Concepts in World Philosophie* (Sarah Flavel and Chiara Robbiano (eds.) 2023). For a detailed account of the works on world philosophies in the last 20 years, see Herzl: Global Histories.

3. Conclusion: The Enmeshment of Justice and Injustice

Just as a discourse on *in*justice is inherently linked to justice, the opposite is also true: justice is also inherently linked to in*justice* , namely by virtue of their negative but nonetheless inseparable relationship.[33] As the negative cannot be separated from the positive it seeks to deny, so too is the separation of the positive from the negative only a linguistic illusion. An injustice – suffered as well as perpetrated – cannot, in fact, be erased by a just action, and so, as for our case, there is no just synecdoche – or other figure of speech – that could completely replace the unjust one which has been crystallized in the philosophical canon for centuries. While the historical realities of slavery and colonialism cannot be canceled, this does not mean that reparative action should not be taken. Furthermore, no one can say how philosophy would have developed without its "singularization" in the current canon – although it feels good trying to imagine it. Epistemic injustice is endemic in philosophy's canon and the signs of its consequences can be found in nearly every one of its areas. Since trying to erase injustice by erasing the "in" from "injustice" would bring us back to the mentioned linguistic illusion, so too would it be a mirage to think of eliminating or replacing the epistemic injustice present in the current philosophical canon. It is for this reason that the history of philosophy reveals itself to be in reality a history of

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33   This difficult and complex relation between the positive and negative cannot be discussed in detail within the scope of this chapter. Justice is bound to injustice because the concept of justice is necessitated and thus created on account of injustice, whether it has already occurred or will possibly occur in the future, in order to avoid them or to contain their consequences. Also, if justice is only a positive value to strive for, this means that the future situation has to become better than it is in the present in order to pass from a state of less perfection or justice (which can be addressed as unjust in relation to a higher justice) to a state of higher perfection or justice. Alcoff makes a similar argument regarding the concept of the "human" (see Alcoff 2017, 402). In this way, the negative is not only the opposite of and dependent on the positive, but rather the negativity of the negative opens to a variety of layers that also include not seeing, not understanding, not wanting, etc., as we have seen in the case of ignorance. One of the tasks of post- and decolonial philosophy is to bear the negative, to bring the negative into the focus of the investigation and for an enduring critical gaze without claiming for a positive, reconciliatory, and premature reversal of the same. On the relation between the negative and decolonial philosophy, see Elberfeld: Dekoloniales Philosophieren; Greco, Francesca: Die Begegnung mit den eigenen Schatten. Polylogisches Philosophieren in globaler Perspektive zur Zeit der Dekolonisierung, Wien 2022.

entanglements, whether just or unjust, or rather a *Verstrickungsgeschichte*,[34] that is, a *history of enmeshments* in the sense developed by Rolf Elberfeld.

Listening to the voices raised today from around the world – from New Zealand, to India, to South Africa, Nigeria and both Americas and more – casts a different light on the history of heroes of human reason, revealing thinkers and ideas that would otherwise have remained mere shadows.[35] In the history of philosophical enmeshments of power and knowledge, the narrative of a teleological unity of events becomes a mesh of intricate, unclear, ruthless, spiteful, and violent relationships which show the inherently contradictory and rough unity of this history of philosophy. Such philosophical enmeshments cannot simply be integrated – as if the epistemic injustice "non-Western" philosophies have undergone could be repaired in this way and so probably will almost once again be hidden – into the established framework of the history of philosophy as if one can – to put it bluntly – simply add a few names of women and non-Western cultures to the known history of great and almost exclusively male, Christian, white, and heterosexual thinkers. The discipline and narrative of philosophy must radically change its narrative in resonance with the global reach of its activity and with the enmeshments of its history in global history to give greater space to plurality and diversity, not only of the philosophies but also of the voices in them.

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34 *Verstrickungsgeschichte* (history of enmeshments) is a philosophical term coined by Rolf Elberfeld in his book from 2021 *Dekoloniales Philosophieren. Versuch über philosophische Verantwortung und Kritik im Horizont der europäischen Expansion*. This term refers in particular to the negative implications of philosophical arguments that have contributed to the establishment, justification, and implicit reproduction of colonialist power structures, or to the deliberate and ignored concealment and obfuscation of the same through various strategies of negation and immunization. Elberfeld claims to make this "negative" entanglement now visible alongside the interweaving entanglement of global philosophizing. This procedure implies an active stance against the negative effects of one's own work, which in turn would not have to be about taking destructive actions against the historical canon of philosophy or the "Western" tradition. Elberfeld formulates the following intention for the above-mentioned book: "In the present book, I would first like [...] to provide a philosophical response to the sometimes massive criticism that has been and continues to be directed at European history and philosophy – primarily by non-European thinkers – that does not ward off this criticism, but attempts to assume philosophical responsibility within the horizon of this criticism." Elberfeld: Dekoloniales Philosophieren, 12. Translation by the author.

35 For more details on this and also on the metaphor of shadows, see Greco, Die Begegnung mit den eigenen Schatten.

The Exalted Professor
Epistemic Violence in the Academy and its Analogies with Spiritual Abuse

Maren Behrensen

For Dr. Rachelle Dyanne Bascara (1983–2021), survivor, activist, and scholar.[1] This text is a small attempt to honor and continue her work.

This is not a text about the prevalence of sexual violence, harassment, and bullying (SVHB)[2] in academia, although this topic deserves more empirical attention.[3] It is about the epistemic violence[4] that accompanies and follows these phenomena;

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1   At great personal cost, Rachelle Dyanne Bascara fought against oppressive structures and abusive professors in philosophy, on behalf of the women, queer and racialized students and staff who are still made to feel as if they do not belong. She died suddenly in 2021, only one year after she had successfully defended her PhD thesis Towards a Unified Theory of Oppression, London 2020 https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/47619/ (9/9/2023).

2   I will be using SVHB as an umbrella term throughout the text. The conceptual borders between these terms are porous: sexual violence (e.g., rape) can emerge from previous sexual harassment (unwelcome sexual advances such as unbidden touching or lewd comments), and either can occur with or without bullying (physical or verbal intimidation over time). In turn, bullying can occur with or without sexual elements. While there are important differences between the terms, I am using them as a cluster here, since there are relevant parallels in terms of their the effects on victims (violence, harassment, and bullying undermine the victim's sense of their social environment), strategies used by perpetrators (rapists and harassers are often bullies), and institutional responses (complaints about sexual harassment and bullying are often subject to the exact same kind of epistemic violence detailed below); cf. Ahmed, Sara, Complaint!, Durham, N.C., 2021.

3   In particular, it needs more methodologically diverse attention. Cf. Linder, Chris et al.: What Do We Know about Campus Sexual Violence? A Content Analysis of 10 Years of Research, in: The Review of Higher Education 43 (2020), 1017–1040.

4   In my use of the term 'epistemic violence', I broadly follow Kristie Dotson's discussion of the problem in Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing, in: Hypatia 26 (2011), 236–257. Epistemic violence destroys relevant knowledge, discredits or disappears relevant testimony, and thereby undermines a speaker's sense of themselves as a knower. In Dotson's view (ibid., 240) it requires neither intention nor capacity, but merely a "failed communicative exchange owing to pernicious ignorance." (I suspect that epistemic violence in the

about how this epistemic violence normalizes SVHB, and trivializes its impact on survivors.[5] It disempowers survivors, keeps them from speaking out, and might even prevent them from recognizing the violence inflicted on them *as violence*. I will discuss the *structural* features of academic institutions generally, and academic philosophy specifically that contribute to this epistemic violence; and I consider them in analogy with spiritual violence,[6] because I think that there are important parallels between academic institutions and churches in how they (mis)handle SVHB in their own ranks.

SVHB occur in all segments of society. However, there are specific features of academic philosophy that exacerbate the problem of epistemic violence in the aftermath of SVHB; and (some of) these features can be understood in analogy to how the Catholic Church (mis)handled revelations of widespread SVHB in its institutions.[7] Despite public commitments to transparency and the prevention of SVHB, survivors regularly experience epistemic violence when they voice complaints. These complaints are relativized or ignored, and perpetrators shielded from consequences.

When we consider how institutions inflict epistemic violence, there are factors that are generalizable beyond academia or the Catholic Church, and I will discuss those under the rubric *institutional inertia*. In the final section, I then focus on specific parallel between the church and philosophy, focusing on the gendered distribution

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context I discuss here is typically intentional; but could be unintended.) Epistemic violence leads to testimonial quieting (an audience fails to regard a speaker as a knower) and testimonial smothering (a speaker censors their own testimony, because it is unsafe to speak; ibid., 242–251). Both forms of epistemic violence are directly relevant to the testimony of survivors of SVHB.

5   In this text, I will alternate between the terms 'survivor' and 'victim', using the first when the focus is on their agency after the attack and the second when the focus is on the perpetrator's actions and their impact. I recognize that either term has problematic connotations.

6   Sources for my understanding of spiritual violence are: Benkert, Marianne/Doyle, Thomas P.: Clericalism, Religious Duress, and Its Psychological Impact on Victims of Sexual Abuse, in: Pastoral Psychology 58 (2009), 223–238; Tobin, Theresa: Religious Faith in the Unjust Meantime. The Spiritual Violence of Sexual Clergy Abuse, in: Feminist Philosophy Quarterly 5 (2019), Article 5, https://doi.org/10.5206/fpq/2019.2.7290 (19/9/2023); Wagner, Doris: Spiritueller Missbrauch in der katholischen Kirche, Freiburg i. Br. 2019; Panchuk, Michelle: Distorting Concepts, Obscured Experiences. Hermeneutical Injustice in Religious Trauma and Spiritual Violence, in: Hypatia 35 (2020), 607–625.

7   I speak about this analogy as a philosopher who has worked in a department of Catholic Theology, and researched the specific question of how the Catholic Church has failed to respond adequately to these abuse scandals. I will leave it to the readers to consider whether and how what I have to say applies to other religious communities or other academic disciplines. Given recent examples of systemic abuse and violence in other religious communities, e.g. Protestant churches or Buddhist communities, other examples are available, but due to my own familiarity with the case, I will stick to the Catholic Church here.

of authority, language, and power. Before I turn to these points, I discuss how institutional (mis)handling of complaints about SVHB constitutes epistemic violence, and how this epistemic violence feeds back into "cultures of harassment."[8]

There is a considerable amount of empirical research and advisory reports on how to tackle "campus sexual violence" (CSV). It is important to note that much of this work does not seem to take academic hierarchies into account, and largely focuses on peer-to-peer violence.[9] As Linder and colleagues note in their analysis of research trends on CSV, many researchers do not consider power in their empirical research; and a significant share of the existing research focuses on individual "risk factors" for victimization (instead of structural factors, or the agency and responsibility of perpetrators).[10]

My focus here is different in that I am primarily interested in how hierarchy, prestige, and power are used to maintain cultures of harassment, and how they allow perpetrators and their allies to harness epistemic privilege in order to discourage and silence their victims. This neither covers all of CSV, nor all of SVHB within institutions; but this subset is particularly instructive for the analogy I intend to draw.

1. Patterns of Violence

To set the stage, I will identify patterns of epistemic violence that commonly accompany SVHB. This account builds publicly available accounts of high-profile cases of (alleged) SVHB in philosophy and adjacent fields in the humanities, and testimonies that were shared with me personally.[11]

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8   Cf. Johnson, Carrie Ann: The Purpose of Whisper Networks. A New Lens for Studying Informal Communication Channels in Organizations, in Frontiers in Communication (2023), https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2023.1089335 (16/09/2023).

9   The very notion of 'campus rape culture' invokes fraternities, sports teams, student parties, but not the relationship between teachers and students, or between senior and junior staff.

10   Linder et al., What Do We Know about Campus Sexual Violence?, 1024–1026,1031.

11   Kingkade, Tyler: University of Miami Sued over Handling of Colin McGinn Harassment Claims, in: The Huffington Post (16/10/2015), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/university-of-miami-lawsuit-mcginn_n_561fbe37e4b050c6c4a47ec1 (19/9/2023); Flaherty, Colleen: Another Harasser Resigns [Peter Ludlow], in: Inside Higher Ed (3/11/2015), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/11/04/northwestern-philosophy-professor-resigns-during-termination-hearing-over-sexual (19/9/2023); Baker, Katie J. M.: The Famous Ethics Professor and the Women Who Accused Him [Thomas Pogge], in: BuzzFeedNews (20/5/2016), https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/katiejmbaker/yale-ethics-professor (19/9/2023); Baker, Katie J. M.: UC Berkeley Was Warned about Its Star Professor [John Searle] Years Before Sexual Harassment Lawsuit (7/4/2017), BuzzFeed News, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/katiejmbaker/john-searle-complaints-uc-berkeley (19/9/2023); Flaherty, Colleen: Harassment and Power [Avital Ronell], in: Inside Higher Ed (19/8/2018), https://www.insidehighered.

It is important to note that these patterns can occur (almost), everywhere, precisely because they are rarely recognized as systemic.

Common features of epistemic violence in SVHB are *gaslighting*[12] (often in the form of victim-blaming) and *epistemic isolation*.[13] Perpetrators present their behavior as ordinary, dismissing any discomfort or harm inflicted on their victim; or they label their victim as "crazy" in order to claim that their behavior was "provoked"; and they seek to isolate victims from potential sources of support (e.g., family and friends). As a result, victims will doubt their own judgment, and refrain from sharing their experiences.

These features are also evident in publicized cases in academia. Perpetrators gaslight their victims by presenting their behavior as ordinary romantic interest or a special form of mentorship; even after they have come under scrutiny. On this point, they can often take advantage of institutional rules that may allow (some) sexual relationships between students and staff (or employees and supervisors) on the condition that these relationships do not lead to obvious conflicts of interest.[14] They can

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com/news/2018/08/20/some-say-particulars-ronell-harassment-case-are-moot-it-all-comes-down-power (19/9/2023); Bronkhorst, Xander: Professor is Forced To Resign; University Criticized for How It Handled Complaints, in: DUB (14/12/2020), https://dub.uu.nl/en/news/professor-forced-resign-university-criticised-how-it-handled-complaints (19/9/2023). The last case concerns a former ethics professor at Utrecht University, whose name I will not use here, since he is known to retaliate against those who speak out against him. See also: Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH): Harassment in Dutch Academia: Exploring Manifestations, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions, authored by Marijke Naezer, Marieke van den Brink, Yvonne Benschop in 2019, https://www.lnvh.nl/uploads/moxiemanager/LNVH_rapport__lsquo_Harassment_in_Dutch_academia__Exploring_manifestations__facilitating_factors__effects_and_solutions_rsquo_.pdf (19/9/2023); Youth Academy Groningen (YAG): Harassment at the University of Groningen, 2021, https://www.rug.nl/about-ug/latest-news/news/archief2021/bijlagen/1007-yag-report-harassment-at-the-ug.pdf (19/9/2023); Besley, Tina/Jackson, Liz/Peters, Michael A.: Named or Nameless. University Ethics, Confidentiality, and Sexual Harassment, in: Educational Philosophy and Theory (2021), https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2021.1952865 (19/9/2023).

12   Abramson, Kate: Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting, in: Philosophical Perspectives 28 (2014), 1–30; Sweet, Paige L.: The Sociology of Gaslighting, in: American Sociological Review 84 (2019), 851–875; Field-Springer, Kimberly et al.: (Re)claiming Stories in the #MeToo Movement. Righting Epistemic Wrongs of Physical, Mental, and Emotional Harms of Sexual Violence, in: Health Communication 37 (2022), 982–991, esp. 985–986.

13   Cf. Sweet, The Sociology of Gaslighting.

14   In the case at Utrecht University (Bronkhorst, Professor Is Forced to Resign), the perpetrator was fired on account of "creating a hostile work environment", but the fact that he had a sexual relationship with a PhD student at his own institute was not held against him: He was able to claim that he had merely failed to report this relationship, and that there was no conflict of interest because he was not directly involved in the supervision of these students. In the case of Colin McGill, the University of Miami treated the complainants report, which she believed to be an account of sexual harassment, as an account of a consensual relationship.

also take direct advantage of their reputation and institutional power. When professors harass their students, they can count on the students' reluctance to speak up, because the costs of doing so are typically much higher for the accuser than they are for the accused (and perpetrators also tend to remind their victims of this fact). Those subjected to SVHB in an academic context (at least initially) tend to be isolated from one another, unaware that other victims of the same perpetrator might be sitting in the same classroom or the office next door. If the accused has sufficient prestige, this will likely mobilize equally prestigious defenders who act as character witnesses for the accused, may attempt to smear the character of the accuser, and help to paint the complaint as a "conspiracy" against the accused.[15] Complaint procedures may be available, but unlikely to lead to meaningful change.[16] If perpetrators are sanctioned at all, the effects are rarely career-ending.[17] When complaints become public, they might be framed as arising from a "consensual relationship" between a professor and their student, mentee, or employee; such that the transgression itself can be transformed from SVHB into a mere "failure to report a relationship."

Descriptions of "grooming" in academic contexts are also remarkably similar across different cases: the perpetrator shows (supposedly) intellectual interest in a student or junior staff member, then academic opportunities are offered or hinted at, and after this "professional" basis has been established, sexual interest is expressed, effectively demanding sexual favors for continued support. At this point, SVHB can be transformed into a mere "conflict of interest" between "romantic affection" and academic meritocracy; and there is no longer any acknowledgement of the fact that institutional power was what allowed the perpetrator to establish these "relationships" in the first place.

A compounding factor is how within the discipline, SVHB is rarely regarded as a topic worthy of philosophical attention. In *Aftermath*, Susan Brison gives a philosophical account of surviving a brutal rape, and coming to terms with trauma in a

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15   This happened in the cases of Colin McGinn and Avital Ronnell, where both accused initially receive widespread public support from colleagues in their own and other fields.

16   Ahmed, Complaint!, Part I discusses numerous examples of how university bureaucracies and those that run them use complaint procedures against complainants, and keep things as they are.

17   As far as I can see, none of the complaints referenced above, in Fn. 12, was fully career-ending for the alleged perpetrator (Colin McGinn may be an exception here, in that he does not seem to have held an academic post since his resignation, and has published very little since then). In some cases, complaints affected the memory and legacy of the accused more than their active careers. In other cases, the accused kept their positions and the associated prestige, with minimal sanctions, and some impact on their reputation. Even in cases where the alleged perpetrators were dismissed, or threatened with dismissal, they were still able to continue their professional academic activities in other places, albeit in less prestigious and less secure positions.

society that is deeply hostile to survivors.[18] The book is the culmination of her sustained efforts to write a philosophy of sexual violence and trauma. In "We Must Find Words Or Burn," Brison describes how these efforts were diminished and silenced in the discipline.[19] In 1991, she was cautioned by her only female colleague not to write about rape until she would have tenure. At the same time, she encouraged students to speak out about their experiences, telling them:

> I was sexually harassed by my senior thesis advisor, and I kept quiet since I thought it was probably my fault, and, besides, I was headed to graduate school and did not want to have a "reputation". Then, during my first year of grad school, I was sexually harassed by one of my professors. I figured I would say something about it eventually, but first I needed to get my PhD.[20]

She recalls that in 1993,

> just after I published my first scholarly article on sexual violence, when, still an assistant professor, I had my annual evaluation meeting with my senior colleagues. They informed me that this article did not count as philosophy and that, if I wanted to get tenure, I should stop writing about rape. The nice one said, "I'm sure writing it was very therapeutic, but now you can put that behind you and go back to doing philosophy".[21]

She also notes how one of these colleagues harassed her when she was tenured over his protestations, and how she waited to apply for a well-deserved promotion until these two colleagues had either left or died, just to avoid their scrutiny.[22] Brison reads these reactions as a disciplinary attempt to control the agenda, and retain epistemic power. This epistemic "aftermath" of violence did not concern her credibility as a survivor. No one doubted that Brison had survived a horrific attack on her life, but her capacity to speak about sexual violence *as a philosopher* was still put in question.

There are lessons here for those who experience SVHB in academic settings. Even when there is *no* doubt about what occurred, there can still be disagreement about what it means. "This is why," as Sara Ahmed notes, "making a complaint about

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18   Brison, Susan: Aftermath. Violence and the Remaking of a Self, Princeton, N.J. 2002. The book just saw its second edition, a testament to its continued relevance.

19   Brison, Susan: We Must Find Words or Burn. Speaking Out against Disciplinary Silencing, in: Feminist Philosophy Quarterly 3 (2017) 2, Article 3, https://doi.org/10.5206/fpq/2017.2.3 (11/9/2023). The test was initially presented as a talk in honor of Catharine MacKinnon.

20   Brison, We Must Find Words or Burn, 4.

21   Ibid.

22   Ibid., 7.

harassment can often feel like being harassed all over again."[23] Maybe the perpetrator was just "socially inept" (but they are a socially inept *genius*, so we can excuse their behavior).[24] Maybe the student or junior staff member should have ended the "relationship," if they felt it was abusive; maybe it was all consensual. Maybe it will be enough to give the perpetrator a warning (and otherwise hope that whisper networks will keep potential victims away from them).[25] If something happened (even if we let it happen for years or decades) maybe we can still treat it as an outlier that does not reflect on our institutional cultures.

2. The Catholic Church: Spiritual Violence

Such patterns of epistemic violence in the aftermath of sexual violence are also evident in the institutional responses of the Catholic Church to revelations of systemic sexual violence in their parishes, convents, and schools. When public allegations were few and far between, the church would speak about "isolated cases" (as in the case of Gilbert Gauthe, the first Catholic priest to be tried and convicted for his crimes in a secular court in the United States in 1985).[26] When it became clear that the issue was widespread and systemic, the church promised "accountability"; but its version of "accountability" is built on more denial.[27]

The church no longer denies that its clergy bullied, harassed, raped, and even killed children in church institutions. It no longer denies that its hierarchs protected

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23   Ahmed, Complaint!, 44 f.

24   Cf. Babich, Babette: On the Status of Women in Philosophy, or Great Men, Little Black Dresses, and The Virtues of Keeping One's Feet on the Ground, Working Papers at Fordham University, New York 2009. Babich' main point is that men get away with 'messy' attire and 'messy' behavior, if they have a reputation as a distracted genius. Ironically, she notes Kripke as an example, while only mentioning his messy hair, but not his alleged behavior; ibid., 17. Sarah-Jane Leslie and colleagues' research on how attributions of brilliance and genius (raw, innate intellectual ability) affects gender distributions across the natural and social sciences provides instructive context for these observations; Leslie, Sarah-Jane; Cimpian, Andrei; Meyer, Meredith; Freeland, Edward: Expectation of Brilliance Underlie Gender Distributions Across Academic Disciplines, in: Science 347: 6219 (2015), 262–265.

25   Cf. Johnson, Carrie Ann: The Purpose of Whisper Networks.

26   Chatelain, Kim: Catholic Church Ignored 1985 Report Warning of Sex Child Abuse Crisis, in: The Times-Picayune (21/2/2019), https://www.nola.com/news/article_91ac5ee5-ed47-55b9-a6e9-ef72496a8900.html (16/09/2023).

27   I analyzed this failed accountability as a form of epistemic injustice in Behrensen, Maren: Die 'Aufarbeitung' der Missbrauchsskandale in der katholischen Kirche als hermeneutisches Unrecht, in: Wirth, Mathias/Noth, Isabelle/Schroer, Silvia (eds.): Sexualisierte Gewalt in kirchlichen Kontexten. Neue interdisziplinäre Perspektiven, Berlin/Boston, Mass. 2022, 159–188.

many of the bullies, harassers, and rapists. It does deny, however, that the institutional structure of the church contributed to these crimes; and it has set up complaint procedures that project accountability to the public, but retraumatize complainants, and fail to offer meaningful resolutions.[28]

In the face of "scandal," the Catholic Church has repeatedly prioritized the protection of its own reputation over real institutional change. Both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI (whose papacies saw the most significant revelations) have pushed the narrative of a *societas perfecta* tainted and corrupted by external evils.[29] The church's "accountability" comes with a serious epistemic cost: the expectation that the crimes committed under its roof are not discussed in terms of its institutional failure.

This expectation is in direct contradiction to independent reports[30] and first-person accounts[31] that highlight such institutional, epistemic factors: misplaced reverence for authority figures, the aristocratic hierarchy of the church, enforced celibacy, an extremely conservative and rigid ethics of sexuality, and the refusal to discuss sexuality and relationships openly in the education of priests. Perpetrators could rely on a network of "brothers" who made sure that complaints would be handled internally rather than turned over to the police and secular courts.

Perpetrators also frequently used their victims' faith to gaslight them. Physical violence becomes divine punishment, sexual violence becomes innocent "cuddling," while survivors are framed as having "tempted struggling priests," blaming victims

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28   I explore this point in more detail in Behrensen: Die 'Aufarbeitung' der Missbrauchsskandale, 177–180. My own account of this problem was heavily influenced by Born, Luna: Missbrauch mit den Missbrauchten. Mehr Träume als die katholische Kirche zerstören kann, Baden-Baden 2019.

29   Bergoglio, Jorge Mario (Pope Francis): Rede in der Eucharistiefeier zum Abschluss der Kinderschutz-Konferenz im Vatikan vom 21.-24. Februar 2019, published by the German Bishops' Council (DBK), https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2019/2019-02-24_Rede-Papst-Franziskus-Kinderschutz-Konferenz.pdf (19/9/2023); Ratzinger, Joseph (Pope Benedict XVI): Die Kirche und der Skandal des sexuellen Mißbrauchs, in: Vatican News (11/4/2019), https://www.vaticannews.va/de/papst/news/2019-04-papst-benedikt-xvi-wortlaut-aufsatz-missbrauch-theologie.html (19/9/2023).

30   See, for instance, Dreßing, Harald et al.: Sexueller Missbrauch an Minderjährigen durch katholische Priester, Diakone und männliche Ordensangehörige im Bereich der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Mannheim, Heidelberg and Gießen 2018, https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2018/MHG-Studie-gesamt.pdf (19/9/2023).

31   See, for instance, Haslbeck, Barbara et al. (eds.), Erzählen als Widerstand. Berichte über spirituellen und sexuellen Missbrauch an erwachsenen Frauen in der katholischen Kirche, Münster 2020.

for their own victimization.[32] Faith and dogma amplify the shame felt by survivors, further increase the threshold for speaking up, and erode their own agency and moral compass. Benkert and Doyle note:

> The youthful Catholic often believed the priest can do no wrong, therefore the sinfulness of any sexual action must be attributed to the victims. It has not been unusual for victims to blame themselves for the abuse and feel guilty at having led a priest into sin.[33]

Catholic priests are literally holy men, and as such, they are triply epistemically privileged: as divinely inspired authorities over lay Catholics, as men over women, and as adults over children.[34] When they abuse their institutional power to groom victims, gaslight them, or to protect other perpetrators, they commit *spiritual violence*. Spiritual violence uses a person's faith (religious texts, symbols, and rituals) against that person, undermining their sense of belonging in a religious community.[35] Not all spiritual violence is sexual violence, but all sexual violence in a church context is spiritual violence.[36] Spiritual violence is also epistemic violence: it shatters a person's knowledge of their social environment.

The fear and shame felt by survivors of sexual violence in church contexts are directly connected to their faith, and they have a direct impact on how they understand themselves and their religious communities (they turn the shameful behaviors of their attackers into their own shame). Spiritual violence as epistemic violence is a weapon:[37] it silences victims, protects perpetrators, normalizes violence, and prevents institutional change.

3. Institutional Inertia

Many human institutions, academia included, mirror many of the problems described above for the Catholic church. Institutions are inert, they tend towards preserving their established structures, and those who hold power within them tend toward preserving their power. Institutions do not need to be religious in order to inflict the kind of epistemic violence sketched above. As Paige L. Sweet notes:

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32   Tobin, Religious Faith in the Unjust Meantime, 8–10. Born, Missbrauch mit den Missbrauchten, frequently highlights this strategy in 'accountability' processes as well, calling it *Schuldumkehr*, reversal of guilt.

33   Benkert and Doyle: Clericalism, Religious Duress, and Its Psychological Impact, 233.

34   Cf. Behrensen, Die 'Aufarbeitung' der Missbrauchsskandale, 178.

35   Ibid., 5.

36   Ibid., 8–9.

37   Cf. Tobin, Religious Faith in the Unjust Meantime, 20.

"When perpetrators mobilize [...] structural inequalities [...] and institutional vulnerabilities against victims [...], gaslighting becomes not only effective, but devastating."[38]

Academia weaponizes *dedication* in much the same way that churches weaponize faith. Dedication means the (spoken or unspoken) expectation to always be available to work, including weekends and vacations. It means enduring a hypercompetitive environment with few and long-delayed rewards, and treating it as a *vocation* rather than a job.[39] It can also mean perseverance in the face of bullying, harassment, and sexual violence; and being reluctant to complain about any of it (because "I still get to do what I love").

This institutional weaponization of dedication (partly) constitutes the meaning of what it is to be an academic.[40] It serves to keep us docile, while extracting additional resources from us. It is analogous to how churches as institutions weaponize faith to control their members and retain their social, political, and ethical relevance.[41] In either institution, perpetrators can utilize their victims' loyalty to the institution to ensure their acquiescence and silence.

The hypercompetitiveness of academia makes "success" even more dependent on personal networks than in other professional fields. Academic "legacies" and "schools" are one of the *schemas* of academia; and they tend to coalesce into implicit cultural norms, internalized by members, which explain why things are done in a certain way, and also why there is resistance to changing these ways.[42] Students and postgraduates quickly come to understand that the "goodwill" of an eminent figure in the field can advance their careers, and their "ill will" can end it. When

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38   Sweet, The Sociology of Gaslighting, 852.

39   Goguen, Stacey: Working at Philosophy, Part 2.5. How We Talk about Philosophy and Leaving It, in: Philosopher's Cocoon (16/2/2016), https://philosopherscocoon.typepad.com/blog/2016/02/working-at-philosophy-part-25-how-we-talk-about-philosophy-and-leaving-it.html (19/9/2023); Behrensen, Maren/Kaliarnta, Sofia: Sick and Tired. Depression in the Margins of Academic Philosophy, in: Topoi 36 (2017), 355–364, 362.

40   Sociological institutionalism (as a theory of institutions) might thus identify dedication as one of the norms or schemas that can explain why academia as an institution is so slow to change in this respect; cf. Amenta, Edwin; Ramsey, Kelly L.: Institutional Theory, in: Leicht, Kevin T./Jenkins, J. Craig (eds.): Handbook of Politics. State and Society in Global Perspective, New York/Dordrecht 2010, 15–39; cf. also Haslanger, Sally: What is a Social Practice?, in: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements 82: Metaphysics (2018), 231–247.

41   When I left the Lutheran church, I received a standard letter from 'my' parish (one where I had never attended church services) that 'reminded' me that I would not be able to be married in a church, or buried in a church graveyard.

42   Haslanger, What is a Social Practice?; cf. Amenta/Ramsey, Institutional Theory, 21, where the authors note it as a weakness of sociological institutionalism, that the theory seems better at explaining (political) stability than (political) change. This makes the theory attractive, however, as an explanation for institutional stability.

such an eminent figure assaults, harasses, or bullies them, and then expects their acquiescence or silence, they think (quite plausibly) that their careers are at stake. And they remain quiet.[43]

Intransparent (and sometimes perverse) institutional rules and procedures further raise the threshold for speaking up and demanding change. When official procedures are "nonperformatives," designed to stall complaints rather than advancing them,[44] those victimized by SVHB will conclude (again, quite plausibly) that the institution has no interest in protecting them. Academic institutions are rife with examples of implicit patterns clashing with explicit norms. They want to be seen as caring about certain causes, but if actually advancing those causes means change, they would rather not change. This is how commitments to "diversity and inclusion" can coexist with a near-complete lack of diversity among staff and students; and it explains why official policies against SVHB might do very little to protect students and vulnerable staff in practice.[45] And where there are no policies, but only whisper networks to protect the vulnerable, "there is a culture of harassment in [the] organization," and "sexual harassment is built into the organizational structure."[46]

This gap between implicit patterns and explicit norms serves to protect the institution's reputation, and placate those who demand change. It inflicts further epistemic violence on those who have been assaulted, harassed, or bullied by members of that institution; and it is utilized in the Catholic Church as well as in academia.

4. Gender, Language, and Power

So far, I have only discussed features that are common in academia, but not specific to philosophy; now, I turn to features of academic philosophy that make it particularly prone to inflicting epistemic violence on survivors. Again, the point is not to claim that other fields or institutions are "immune," but to consider exacerbating factors in philosophy.

The first point I want to highlight is the gendered demographic of the discipline, and its relation to gendered perceptions of philosophical aptitude. Like the Catholic Church, philosophy was and in many ways still is a "boys' club": both in

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43   LNVH, Harassment of Women in Dutch Academia, 14–16.

44   Ahmed, Complaint!, 29–68.

45   In their reaction to the report on harassment at the University of Groningen (which was published with the report), the board of the university notes: "A few years ago we installed a zero-tolerance policy and have instituted various mechanisms to support this policy. We deeply regret – as the report shows – that despite these efforts, the interviewed employees still experienced undesirable behaviour." YAG, Harassment at the University of Groningen, Reaction by the Board.

46   Johnson, The Purpose of Whisper Networks, 04.

terms of the actual composition of its hierarchy, and in terms of who is regarded as a competent member of the discipline (and potential "thought leader").[47] In 2008, Haslanger reflected on "surviving as a solo" (the only woman in her cohort) in a deeply hostile environment,[48] and noted that "feminist philosophers have been arguing for decades [that] the familiar dichotomies with which [...] philosophy defines itself map neatly onto gender dichotomies."[49] Philosophy itself, with its "seminal" arguments, its "penetrating" critiques, and its "rigorous," "rational," and "objective" demeanor, is framed as a fundamentally masculine activity.[50] In 2015, Sarah-Jane Leslie and colleagues presented evidence that philosophy (much more so than other humanities and social sciences, and many natural sciences) reinforced a belief in innate aptitude: good philosophers are not regarded as diligent or curious learners, but as *geniuses*. They found that this belief in innate aptitude correlates with gendered distributions of power and influence in a discipline: disciplines with a strong "ideology of smartness"[51] tend to have a low proportion of women.

Evidence suggests that while the proportion of women in philosophy continues to increase, their number at the postgraduate and professor levels remains low; and philosophy loses many women as they try to move up the academic hierarchy.[52]

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47 Of course, the Catholic Church is far more extreme than academic philosophy in that it still regards women as categorically unqualified to lead, and treats anatomical criteria of 'manhood' as a necessary condition of spiritual authority.

48 Haslanger, Sally: Changing the Culture and Ideology of Philosophy. (Not) by Reason Alone, in: Hypatia 23 (2008), 210–223, 211.

49 Ibid., 213. Haslanger restricts her claim to "Anglophone philosophy," but I am confident that it can be generalized over other languages and traditions.

50 Ibid., see also: Dotson, Kristie: Concrete Flowers. Contemplating the Profession of Philosophy, in: Hypatia 26 (2011), 403–409.

51 Cherry, Myisha/Schwitzgebel, Eric: Like the Oscars, #PhilosophySoWhite, in: Los Angeles Times (4/3/2016), https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0306-schwitzgebel-cherry -philosophy-so-white-20160306-story.html (19/9/2023).

52 Beebee, Helen/Saul, Jennifer: Women in Philosophy in the UK, on behalf of the British Philosophical Association and the Society for Women in Philosophy UK 2021, https://bp a.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-BPA-SWIP-Report-Women-in-Philosophy-in-t he-UK.pdf (19/9/2023). Their findings show that while women make up nearly half of all philosophy undergraduates, and half of all research masters, their proportion drops to a third at the PhD intake level, less than a third for PhD completions, and a quarter for philosophy readers and professors. See also Klonschinski, Andrea; Bratu, Christine; Herzog, Lisa: Förderquoten von Frauen in der Philosophie in Deutschland. Eine Erklärung der "Leaky Pipeline"?, Society for Women in Philosophy Germany 2021, https://swip-philosophinne n.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/DFG_LeakyPipeline_final_12022021.pdf   (12/12/2023). The authors summarize the findings of Klonschinki's previous analysis of the proportion of women in academic philosophy in Germany, which largely mirrors the findings of Beebee and Saul (although the increase of women at the professor level seems much steeper in Germany). Their main question here is whether and how gender bias in the distribution

The continued underrepresentation of women and a masculine-coded ideology of smartness likely reinforce each other (even more so when women at the top level of academic philosophy also buy into this ideology). Together, they foster the continued existence of networks where (White) men support each other[53] and protect perpetrators; and they foster the notion that intellectual authority in philosophy is not a skill, but a special personal quality (what Cherry and Schwitzgebel call "being good at seeming smart").[54] And the latter notion can, like the disciplinary culture as a whole, be weaponized by perpetrators: it allows "the messy genius" to invoke their special qualities against complaints.

Unwanted sexual attention becomes a special intellectual favor, initial acquiescence is reframed as an indicator that the victim was a willing participant. When victims attempt to maintain a professional relationship in spite of SVHB, perpetrators can use this to suggest that their sexual interest was reciprocated (this is victim-blaming of the same kind not unlike the "seduced priest" trope we encountered above).

Language plays a central role in this dynamic. Argumentation is central to philosophy, language is central to argumentation; and learning how to do philosophy is learning how to use language in a particular way.[55] I do not intend to address the question whether the "nature" of philosophy is fundamental critique, or whether philosophy is an inherently antagonistic activity.[56] It is sufficient to note that academic philosophy has a variety of linguistic, and hence argumentative styles; and that proponents of different styles might completely fail to understand one another (and then claim that their opponent's style is not worthy of proper philosophical engagement).

Learning about different philosophical styles and "schools" can then feel like one needs to "choose a team" and display loyalty to the team's "leader" (whether that leader be a dead or a living philosopher). Perpetrators know how to exploit this apparent gap between philosophy's apparent commitment to objectivity and

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of research funding distributed by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG, the largest funding body in Germany) affects the career prospects of women in philosophy.

53   Täuber, Susanne: Undoing Gender in Academia. Personal Reflections on Equal Opportunity Schemes, in: Journal of Management Studies 57 (2020), 1718–1724. Täuber was one of the main forces behind the YAG report on harassment at the University of Groningen; in March 2023, a labor court ruled that the university could fire Täuber, based on the claim that "Undoing Gender" was an unacceptable attack on the university itself. The firing sparked protests and concerns about academic freedom in the Netherlands.

54   Cherry/Schwitzgebel, Like the Oscars.

55   This is, perhaps, a view of philosophy inspired largely by Wittgenstein's later views.

56   Cf. Priest, Graham: What is Philosophy?, in: Philosophy 81 (2006), 189–207 and Dotson, Concrete Flowers.

rigor, and the fact that it is a language game that can be played in different ways.[57] Philosophers learn how to use the power of language to highlight certain aspects of reality. They can use this power to analyze, critique, and reconstruct *social* realities. But they can also use the same power to gaslight others and undermine their sense of social reality.

The communication scholars Graves and Spencer define gaslighting as "a discursive dynamic in which one social actor is empowered to dictate knowledge at the expense of another's sense of reality."[58] I quote their account of gaslighting here (rather than other, readily available philosophical accounts)[59] because their perspective does not make an attempt to engage in the philosophical debate and yet makes a philosophical point: they take (Aristotle's) rhetoric seriously as an explanation of how we construct social realities (persuade and build consensus) over things where there can be reasonable disagreement. And they show how this "construction" engages reason (*logos*), status (*ethos*), and emotion (*pathos*).[60] This use of rhetoric can go well: when someone makes reasonable claims (*logos*), from a well-deserved position of credibility and authority (*ethos*), and engages their audience's emotions without manipulating them (*pathos*). But it can also be dangerous: for instance, when it is used against victims of discrimination and violence, by discrediting or silencing their testimony with sophistry, from ill-founded positions of credibility and authority, while manipulating the audience's emotions.

The people who populate the discipline of philosophy are engaged in a shared (for better or for worse) project of rhetoric. They shape the social reality of what it means to be a philosopher. They are also trained to be *good at rhetoric* in this sense of co-shaping social reality. When the discipline itself is shot through with unacknowledged, gendered hierarchies, this presents a risk for dangerous rhetoric: toxic, but influential individuals in the discipline and their allies distorting what it means to be a philosopher; and using this distorted meaning to discredit those who speak out against SVHB.[61] As "philosophers," they claim to be on the side of reason, while complainants are presented as "emotional," "hysterical," or vengeful liars. The pattern is

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57   Behrensen/Kaliarnta, Sick and Tired, 359–362.

58   Graves, Clint G./Spencer, Leland G.: Rethinking the Rhetorical Epistemics of Gaslighting, in: Communication Theory 32 (2022), 48–67; see also Sweet, The Sociology of Gaslighting.

59   See, for instance, Abramson, Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting; Ivy, Veronica: 2017. Allies Behaving Badly. Gaslighting as Epistemic Injustice, in: Pohlhaus Jr., Gaile/Kidd, Ian James/Medina, José (eds.): The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice, New York 2017; Pohlhaus Jr., Gaile: Gaslighting and Echoing, or Why Collective Epistemic Resistance Is Not a 'Witch Hunt', in: Hypatia 35 (2020), 674–686.

60   Graves and Spencer: Rethinking the Rhetorical Epistemics of Gaslighting, 56–57.

61   And they might be successful precisely because they are bullies, not in spite of it; Täuber, Susanne/Mahmoudi, Morteza: How Bullying Becomes a Career Tool, in: Nature Human Behavior 2022, Correspondence, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01311-z (19/9/2023).

familiar from other fields, but in philosophy it is doubly toxic, because philosophy as a discipline claims to be devoted to truth and enlightenment. Precisely because of this outward commitment to non-violent interaction (and a presumption of non-violence extended to its practitioners), academic philosophy can become a "sphere of violence" that shields perpetrators and normalizes violence.[62]

Much like priests who promise salvation and offer only manipulation and spiritual violence, some philosophers promise enlightenment, but only offer bullshit and epistemic violence.

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62   Cf. Schotte, Dietrich: Was ist Gewalt? Philosophische Untersuchung zu einem umstrittenen Begriff, Frankfurt a.M. 2020, 194–196.

1.3 Expanding the Scope

*Nela Adam in the forum theater workshop at the Munich School of
Philosophy in 2022.*
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Expanding Testimonial Injustice
Beyond Externalism and the Deficiency View

Lou Thomine

Introduction

Our beliefs, whether true or false, can undoubtedly be influenced by our social environment. Power relations and social oppression can have a great impact on our beliefs, for example through knowledge exchange with other agents via testimony or scientific research, as it has been extensively discussed.[1] What has been seldom discussed in the literature are epistemic injustices in situations that do not directly involve multiple agents. That is, how our social environment impacts the attitude we maintain toward our own beliefs.

In this essay, I argue that an important way in which our attitudes toward our beliefs are impacted by the social environment is instantiated in cases where a subject has diminished credence in her reliability because of being stereotyped, and some of her beliefs and/or memories are modified consequently. I call such cases self-deficit of credibility due to stereotypes (henceforth SDCS) and I argue that it is crucial to pay attention to them.[2] This short chapter will assess the following question: *do we need a positive account of epistemic injustice*. The answer, to my view, is yes. I will thus

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1   For the former, see e.g. Daukas, Nancy: Epistemic Trust and Social Location, in: Episteme, 3 (2006) 1–2, 109–124; Dotson, Kristie: Tracking Epistemic Violence. Tracking Practices of Silencing, in: Hypatia, 26 (2011), 236–257; Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing, Oxford 2007. For the latter, see e.g. Longino, Helen: The Fate of Knowledge, Princeton 2002.

2   Note that this phenomenon goes further than a lack of self-trust (for discussions of epistemic injustice and self-trust, see e.g., El Kassar, Nadja: The Powers of Individual and Collective Intellectual Self-Trust in Dealing with Epistemic Injustice, in: Social Epistemology 35 (2021) 2, 197–209, or Leefmann, Jon: Social Exclusion, Epistemic Injustice and Intellectual Self-Trust, in: Social Epistemology, 36 (2022) 1, 117–127.). The subject experiencing SDCS is not merely lacking confidence in her capacity: she is 'self-gaslighting' herself (Dandelet, Sophia: Epistemic Coercion, in: Ethics,131 (2021), 489–510), that is, she might be deceiving herself to some extent. This particular aspect sets the originality of SDCS and one of its philosophical interests since it is unclear if one can be said to deceive oneself.

motivate the need for such an account by showing that some cases remain unaccounted for by existent theories and that a lot is at stake. The argument supporting this answer is the following:

- (a) SDCS instantiates a way in which our social environment impacts our attitude toward our beliefs and memories.
- (b) It cannot be accounted for by existent literature: it calls for the definition of a novel concept: epistemic subjection. Epistemic subjection occurs when a subject S is being, unreliable, unreasonable, or irrational, because of power relations.
- (c) Being unreliable, unreasonable, or irrational because of power relations is equivalent to being undermined in one's capacities as a knower.

Therefore, epistemic subjection is a kind of epistemic injustice.

Here, I first clarify SDCS. Then I specify the *desiderata* for a proper account of SDCS and motivate the need for a novel account. Finally, I discuss what is at stake in studying SDCS.

What is SDCS?

The case I aim to assess is the self-deficit of credibility due to stereotypes or SDCS. Note that it is distinct from testimonial smothering[3], or epistemic trustworthiness[4], since these only apply in the context of information exchange involving more than one agent, while SDCS does not involve any kind of information *exchange*. Existent theories cannot account for SDCS. This is because they lack y, call this y "epistemic subjection," to account properly for all its features. Consider the following case, introduced by Dandelet[5]:

The Beach Case: Imagine a subject S who has been the victim of an event E, a sexual assault. After E, she holds a memory including the belief that she has been sexually assaulted (P). But then, she begins to doubt her own memory and to question P. She does that because she lives in a sexist environment, and in such a sexist environment women are commonly stereotyped as not trustworthy when reporting sexual assaults. She starts thinking that she might have misperceived E, or that she might misremember E. Eventually, she holds a memory different from E and the belief that she has not been sexually assaulted (¬P).

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3   Dotson: Tracking Epistemic Violence.
4   Daukas: Epistemic Trust and Social Location.
5   Dandelet: Epistemic Coercion.

Dandelet defends that S's belief change is due to a reasonable elevation of S's epistemic standards. She indeed argues that S raises the norms by which she assesses her belief, e.g., she casts doubt on the reliability of her memory to meet the (alleged) epistemic standards of her community. Those standards are qualified as unfair by Dandelet: they are caused by social injustice and unjust stereotypes. Still, she holds the view that S is acting *reasonably*, namely, that being willing to meet the epistemic standards of one's community is reasonable. She states that the epistemic community is *coercing* S to raise her epistemic standards, thus responsible for the misleading memory. Dandelet then sets the concept of epistemic coercion.[6]

This case perfectly exemplifies the complex phenomenon of SDCS. Although I share with Dandelet a great interest in the mentioned phenomenon, I do not however subscribe to all of her conclusions. She claims that S is reasonable, but it is unclear how she supports that claim. S is now holding a false and *a priori* unjustified belief, which should be enough to question its reasonableness. This project aims to push further this inquiry. I claim that it is possible to consider S both unreasonable and suffering an unfair situation, by defending that she is the victim of some kind of epistemic injustice, namely, epistemic subjection.

Another important feature of SDCS is the *stereotype*. A stereotype is defined by Puddifoot as a "social attitude that associates members of some social group more strongly than others with certain trait(s)."[7] In SDCS, it seems that S is holding the attitude of associating *herself* with some social group and certain social traits. The question of whether a self-deficit of credibility can be caused by something else than a stereotype is an important one. Indeed, there are surely such cases, and their distinction with SDCS should be done. However, these are not the cases I focus on. This essay is dedicated to motivating an account for a *systematic* kind of epistemic injustice, and not incidental epistemic wrongs, as distinguished by Fricker.[8]

The justification for premise (a) is as follows: There are cases in which a subject's attitude toward her beliefs and memories is influenced by stereotypes. This results in a self-deficit of credibility due to stereotypes. Therefore, there are SDCS.

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6   The term 'coercion' has been criticized by Sally Haslanger in an online discussion of Dandelet's paper. She argues that coercion refers to 'a response to an action', i.e to repress that action, and is thus not right here. She proposes the term 'subjection' in reference to the unfairness of power's relation's normativity developed by among others Michel Foucault (Foucault, Michel: Surveiller et Punir, Paris 1975.). The term subjection indeed allows conceiving power as not merely repressive but productive, which seems to be the case in SDCS. Dandelet fully agrees and seems ready to change her concept's name; so do I. For more on the online discussion, see https://peasoup.deptcpanel.princeton.edu/2021/04/ethics-article-discussion-forum-sophia-dandelet-epistemic-coercion/ (09/04/2024).

7   Puddifoot, Katherine: How Stereotypes Deceive Us, Oxford 2021, 3.

8   Fricker: Epistemic Injustice, 27.

Now that we have a better understanding of what SDCS is, and why it is important to push further its inquiry, let us move to the next point, that is to determine what is required to account for SDCS and that no existent theory can do so.

What is required to explain SDCS?

Epistemic injustice theory and epistemology of stereotypes which may in principle be applicable to SDCS fall short. Indeed, the field of social epistemology has not consistently discussed the kind of case that SDCS instantiates. More or less close cases have been sporadically introduced, such as "doxastic coercion,"[9] "false confessions,"[10] or "anticipatory epistemic injustice,"[11] First, no systematic discussion of those cases has been held, which seems yet necessary. Second, while those cases share features with each other and with SDCS, they are not analogous. A distinction is required, which will provide us with some elements to work toward the explanatory *desiderata* for SDCS.

The literature on testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice (e.g., Fricker 2007) is also relevant to that question. Indeed, I suggest that some features are shared between classical cases of epistemic injustices and SDCS; however, a distinction would again be necessary. As I mentioned above, SDCS is neither about testimony nor collective hermeneutic resources. It thus cannot be accounted for by those theories.

An important point in SDCS concerns whether S is epistemically virtuous or not. We have already evoked in the first section that the "reasonable" aspect of S's behavior, alleged by Dandelet, is to be discussed. However, this point goes further than that. It will be required to specify whether S is *justified*, both in her original memories and beliefs (P) and her modified ones (¬P). We can already see that she might be justified in P since we are usually justified in believing our memories and the beliefs formed upon them. Although following Dandelet, it would seem that S is also justified in ¬P, since she is, in her words, *reasonable*. There is then an intrinsic tension here: can one be justified in believing both P and ¬P? Is SDCS an instance of epistemic *akrasia*?[12] A proper explanation of SDCS requires to answer those questions.

The epistemology of stereotypes, with the work of e.g., Puddifoot, will be a useful resource for understanding SDCS. In the Beach Case, a stereotype is involved in S's

9   McMyler, Benjamin: Doxastic coercion, in: Philosophical Quarterly 61 (2011) 244, 537–557.

10   Lackey, Jennifer: False Confessions and Testimonial Injustice, in: J. CRIM. L. and CRIMINOLOGY 43 (2021).

11   Lee, J. Y.: Anticipatory Epistemic Injustice, in: Social Epistemology, 35 (2021) 6, 564–576.

12   A state of epistemic akrasia is a state where you believe you ought not to hold a belief, but you hold it anyway. See e.g., Owens, David: Epistemic Akrasia, in: The Monist 85 (2002) 3, 381–397.

process of belief acquisition. However, it also seems that she is the first (and maybe only) victim of holding such an attitude. Puddifoot claims that stereotypes deceive us in many ways. It is thus necessary to figure out if, in SDCS, someone is deceiving someone (themselves), and how.

This point leads us to the literature about doxastic voluntarism and pragmatic encroachment. The question of whether S is *voluntarily*, *unconsciously*, or *pragmatically* changing her beliefs and memories is indeed central. Ultimately, what agency has S, if she is, as Dandelet suggested, *coerced*? Does *someone else* have the agency to modify S's beliefs and memories? These questions need a proper explanation, and the mentioned literature will contribute to it.

The question of the subject's agency in SDCS could benefit the study of the concept of *epistemic innocence* set by Lisa Bortolotti.[13] A belief is epistemically innocent if it is (i) epistemically irrational, (ii) has epistemic benefits for the subject and (iii) there is no alternative.[14] SDCS is (i) to be determined whether it is rational or not, (ii) has epistemic benefits for the subject and (iii) there is no alternative; it is thus so far a good candidate to be qualified as epistemically innocent. However, the very fact that we can also qualify this phenomenon as an epistemic injustice, as I will argue, implies that someone is to be held responsible for harming someone else. There is thus a tension between the innocence of the belief and the blame for the injustice. Moreover, the rationality alleged by Dandelet seems to be conflictual with the irrationality discussed by Bortolotti; it is unclear if they appeal to the same idea of "rationality," and it might be useful to clarify that point.

The justification for the premise (b) is as follows:

SDCS shares features with existent concepts in the literature. However, no existent concepts in the literature can explain all the features of SDCS. Therefore, SDCS requires a new concept to explain that epistemic practice can be subjected to power relations, namely, epistemic subjection. Epistemic subjection occurs when a subject S is being, unreliable, unreasonable, or irrational, because of power relations.

Now, we can see that our explanatory path has encountered ethics at several points, which leads us to the third and last point of the hypothesis.

Is SDCS an epistemic injustice?

As suggested above, SDCS has a highly ethical dimension. Is S *wronged*? If so, by whom, and how? I suggest that S is being wronged and that she might be wronged in a particular way. I argue that S is wronged *in her capacity as a knower*, that is, her agency to acquire (and maintain) true beliefs is undermined. S is indeed missing a

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13   Bortolotti, Lisa: The Epistemic Innocence of Irrational Belief, Oxford 2020.
14   Ibid., 26.

true belief (P), due to an unfair stereotype against her. But, and that is an especially interesting feature of SDCS, S is also *producing a false belief* (¬P). In a sense, she is doubly wronged: she is first unfairly missing knowledge, which constitutes an epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007), but she is also unfairly put in a position where she produces false beliefs.

Such a feature goes beyond epistemic injustice's classical framework. However, being put in a position to produce more false beliefs than we would have otherwise surely constitutes an undermining of one's capacity *qua* knower. This will constitute the central feature of epistemic subjection, by reversing the classical paradigm of epistemic injustice that assesses *deficit* of knowledge.[15] The Foucauldian idea of subjection allows thinking of power not as merely repressive but also positive, creating norms and behaviors. It will be argued, using SDCS as a central case, that epistemic practices can be *subjected* to power relations.

Moreover, S's capacity to acquire and maintain accurate memories is also threatened, which will allow us to explore the possibility of a kind of *mnemic injustice* that has not been assessed by Puddifoot yet[16].

The justification for premise (c) is as follows: SDCS undermines S's capacity *qua* knower. Undermining one's capacity *qua* knower is an epistemic injustice. Therefore, SDCS is an epistemic injustice.

What is at stake?

I have thus demonstrated that epistemic subjection exists as a kind of epistemic injustice and that it cannot be explained by the existent literature. As evoked in the previous section, the most substantial benefit of studying epistemic subjection would be the expansion of the epistemic injustice's framework by allowing it to account for the positive exercise of power in epistemic practices, by opening the possibility of the production of false belief to count as epistemic injustice. The concept of epistemic subjection is needed to do this.

A secondary, but not so trivial benefit is the reinforcement of links between ethics, epistemology, and the philosophy of memory by developing the idea that ethics, as it has been for epistemology, might be a useful resource to understand memory. SDCS illustrates that it is possible to misremember due to power relations

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15   Such a move has been made by Arianna Falbo in: Falbo, Arianna: Hermeneutical Injustice. Distortion and Conceptual Aptness, in: Hypatia 37 (2022) 2, 343–363, to conceptualize a positive form of hermeneutical injustice. She argues that the profusion of some hermeneutical resources and the way we use them can also create hermeneutical injustice.

16   Puddifoot 2021; Puddifoot, Katherine: Mnemonic Injustice, in: Wright, Stephen, and Goldberg, Sanford (eds.): Memory and Testimony: New Essays in Epistemology, Wright, Stephen/Goldberg, Sanford (eds.), Oxford forthcoming.

and stereotypes. This question might urge philosophers of memory to reconsider their subject and her alleged social location. To illustrate this proposition, recall that it is highly common in the philosophy of memory to use psychiatric subjects as cases; however, I suggest that such subjects are highly susceptible to epistemic subjection.

Last, but not least, it remains unclear if the theories mentioned in this chapter and epistemic subjection are fully compatible. This study might reveal high incompatibilities between epistemic subjection and existent theories, which might urge these philosophers to reconsider certain aspects of their theories. To illustrate this proposition, recall that Puddifoot's epistemology of stereotype proposes to use an evaluative dispositionalism to assess how we use stereotypes to acquire belief. However, she does so in the context of acquiring belief by stereotyping *someone else*, and not oneself. Her theory seems thus too narrow to account for SDCS, while SDCS is a way to acquire belief involving stereotypes.

The mentioned points show that solving this issue will require interaction with several debates that are found at the intersection of epistemology, ethics, and philosophy of mind. The conceptual engineering of a notion such as epistemic subjection will surely help create new perspectives on those subjects and might provide arguments to help push further their inquiry.

To conclude, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the social importance of the topic, and the substantial benefits that could be drawn from such research. Epistemic injustices constitute great harm, and so is subjection. Epistemic subjection needs to be understood, so we can change our epistemic practices to create fair epistemic environments.[17]

Conceptualising Linguistic Injustice as a Form of Epistemic Injustice

Clement Mayambala

1. Introducing the problem

The following thought experiment shall aid our understanding of the phenomenon of linguistic injustice, after which I shall define and analyse linguistic injustice in detail.

Imagine a multi-ethnic global south country C that is home to several indigenous languages.[1] Imagine also that C was colonised by one of the western superpowers that was involved in the colonization of the global southern countries. Given this colonial history, a western colonial master's language was imposed on the indigenous people of C as their only academic and official language: that is, as their only legitimized language of scientific communication.[2] Imagine too that the dominance of a western language in C's social and scientific discourses occurs at the expense of all the indigenous languages inherent in C. In fact, all the official doc-

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1   I use the terms "indigenous language," "mother tongue," and "local language" synonymously.

2   During colonial periods, colonisers imposed their European language onto the people in colonies forbidding them to speak their indigenous languages especially in academic and scientific discourses. Elsewhere, for example, I indicate how European languages that came as a result of colonialism are still dominating the academic and administrative spheres at the expense of indigenous African languages. For instance, there are more than 20 Anglophone countries in Africa. For some of these countries English is an official language and for others it is a *de facto* working language, instead of an indigenous language. There are also about 29 so called "French-speaking countries in Africa", more than 15 of them are known as Francophone countries (countries that use French as an official language instead of an indigenous language). Moreover, Portuguese is considered a national language in more than five African countries, not to mention Spanish-speaking African countries. See Mayambala, Clement: On the Epistemology of Excluded Voices, *forthcoming* in: Mahlert, Bettina et al. (eds.): Decolonizing Knowledge and Learning Systems in the Global South, New York 2024.

uments, schools, courts of law, research institutes, etc., in C operate using only the legitimized western language.[3]

There exists also a social-epistemic hierarchy in C that is predicated upon one's proficiency in the legitimized western language. That is, individuals in C who possess fluency in the legitimized western language often view themselves as epistemically superior and good at knowledge production. On the other hand, individuals in C who solely speak indigenous languages are often negatively stereotyped, and perceived as epistemically inferior and less good at knowledge production.[4] This negative stereotyping of non-speakers of a legitimized western language is often epistemically harmful to their epistemic agency: they are often excluded from contributing to meaningful epistemic interactions in C due to their non-proficiency in the legitimized colonial masters' language.[5] For example, speakers of only indigenous languages have their testimonies disregarded or viewed as insufficient in the courts of law due to their lack of proficiency in the legitimatized western language. In schools, teachers silence, police or penalise students when they communicate in their mother tongues in classrooms. In summary, students and speakers of only local languages in C are often forced to reject practicing their local language and culture[6] by acquiring a colonial master's language and culture.

In what follows, I shall draw on this imagined scenario to define and analyse the phenomenon of linguistic injustice and to situate it into Frickers' framework of epistemic injustice.

2. Linguistic Injustice

Linguistic injustice occurs when an individual or a group of people is excluded, silenced or hindered from contributing to meaningful social-epistemic interactions due to their non-proficiency in a legitimized (Western) language. For example,

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3   Take Uganda for instance, where English was introduced as an official and academic language during colonial periods. It is still used as the official language despite Uganda being a home to more than 10 local languages.

4   Sometimes, due to stereotype internalisation, non-speakers of a legitimized western language perceive themselves as epistemically inferior. For example, an individual shies away from meaningful epistemic discourses simply because she believes she is less good at knowledge production given her non-proficiency in the legitimized language.

5   Note that the unifying element of individuals perceived as epistemically inferior is, not their gender, race, class or religion as one might think, but rather their non-proficiency in the legitimized western language.

6   I use "language and culture" because there is often an interplay between one's language and culture. For example, "Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture." See Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi: Decolonising the Mind. The Politics of Language in Africa Literature, London 1986, 13 f.

"when a Black witness, like Rachel Jeantel, have their testimonies disregarded or viewed as insufficient in the criminal justice system due to their use of Black Language.[7]" This form of injustice is commonly prevalent in global south countries where colonial master's languages are still given undue preference as the sole legitimate means of scientific communication, often, at the expense of the indigenous languages. In our imagined case in C above, for instance, individuals who lack proficiency in the legitimized colonial masters' language are excluded from meaningful epistemic interactions that take place in schools and society. But let me use concrete examples from two global south authors to illustrate linguistic injustice. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, narrated a personal story of being punished at school for speaking Gujarati (local language), and at other times being rewarded whenever he spoke English.[8] Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, a prominent Kenyan writer, also narrates how he and other indigenous children growing up in his hometown were only allowed to speak Gikuyu (local language) at home, but at school, their language of education ceased to be the language of their culture and thoughts. He painfully recalls:

> … one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five canes on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford.
> *[However]* The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education.[9]

What one learns from Gandhi and Wa Thiong'o's insights is that once the superpowers of the global north colonized global south countries, one of the first things they did was to impose their European languages as the languages of power on the natives of those countries they colonised. In this way, colonial masters' languages became the only languages of intelligence, academics and political interaction, and the opposite was with the colonised people's indigenous languages: colonised people's

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7   Rachel Jeantel was a key prosecution witness when George Zimmerman was tried in 2013 for the murder of Trayvon Martin. However, because she spoke in *African American Vernacular English* (AAVE), her testimony was dismissed as incomprehensible and not credible. As I shall note below, non-speakers of legitimized western languages in the global south are familiar with the disdain shown toward Jeantel's testimony in the courtroom. See Baker-Bell, April: Linguistic Justice. Black Language, Literacy, Identity and Pedagogy, New York 2021, 20 f.

8   See Gandhi, Mahatma: Towards New Education, Ahmedabad 1956.

9   Wa Thiong'o: Decolonising the Mind, 11–12 f.

languages were, and at most today, considered good for speaking at home and in the fields, but not good for academic and scientific discourses.[10] The relegation of global south indigenous languages to realms outside scientific and academic discourses explains why Gandhi and Wa Thiong'o were punished at school whenever they expressed their thoughts in their local languages.

One might object to my citation of Gandhi and Wa Thiong'o by arguing that the world has fundamentally changed from what they experienced: to argue that linguistic injustice happens today as it happened in the early periods of the 20th century is false. I argue that this is a mistaken objection because linguistic injustice, as experienced by Gandhi and Wa Thiong'o, is not merely a relic of the past century. It is a reality that is still prevalent in many academic and learning systems of the countries of the global south. My personal linguistic experience at school, for example, is not much different from Gandhi's and Wa Thiong'o's. When I look back to my primary and secondary school days (a few years ago), I cannot fail to count the numerous times I was caned or subjected to corporal punishments at school for speaking Luganda – the local language of my tribe, Baganda, in central Uganda. Just as Gandhi and Wa Thiong'o were forbidden from speaking Gujarati and Gikuyu at their school premises during the colonial era, so was speaking Luganda in my case. Until today the Ugandan education curriculum for primary and secondary schools permits teachers not only to prohibit but also to punish pupils and students caught speaking local languages at school. In fact, indigenous languages in Uganda, and in Africa at large, are considered nonstandard academic languages i.e. languages inferior to English, French, German, Spanish, etc., the so-called "standard languages" of scientific discourses.[11]

Like in Gandhi's and Wa Thiong'o's testimony, my experience points to a linguistic injustice that systematically permeates the academic structures of global south nations since the colonial era, where global south indigenous languages are not accorded their due recognition in academia as they ought to be. Penalizing speakers of indigenous languages for communicating in their native tongues is an injustice that is inherently dehumanising, and it leads to other undesirable consequences, including negative epistemic consequences. In many global south schools and societies, for example, indigenous speakers especially children of school-going age are linguistically disadvantaged, faulted, punished and belittled if they speak their mother tongues in classrooms (recall my experience above). For these children, classrooms are often seen as linguistically violent and marginalising spaces to be shunned, and this contributes to early-children school dropouts. Moreover, punishing or prohibiting children from expressing their lived experiences in their local language occurs

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10   See "Never Write In The Language of the Colonizer" https://www.ttbook.org/interview/never-write-language-colonizer (3/8/2023).

11   See also Mayambala: On the Epistemology of Excluded Voices.

not only at school, but also sometimes at home. For example, some parents (those who have internalised the inferiority of their indigenous languages and culture) often reproach their children when they (children) use their mother tongues at home. This directly and negatively signals to the children that their mother tongue is not intellectually proper and valuable like a legitimized western language, and this is a point where language and race intersect with each other as Baker-Bell neatly puts it,

> [Indigenous] people's language experiences are not separate from their racial experiences. Indeed, the way a Black child's language is devalued in school reflects how Black lives are devalued in the world. Similarly, the way a white child's language is privileged and deemed the norm in schools is directly connected to the invisible ways that white culture is deemed normal, neutral, and superior in the world.[12]

There is a personal story to exemplify Baker-Bell's insight: When I came to Europe, I was awe-struck seeing how European children are encouraged and protected by their home governments to learn about their own cultures in their own mother tongues until when they voluntarily choose to learn other foreign languages. In fact, I became jealous of the ease with which white children speak their local languages at school, not having to worry that (a) someone is policing them or that (b) they will be punished for doing so. Then I started asking myself questions I could hardly answer: why are British, German, Portuguese, Italian, French, or Spanish children in schools not forced to learn Luganda, Gikuyu, Gujarati or at least any other language of the indigenous people of the global south? Why were Gandhi, Wa Thiong'o and I forced with the power of a cane on bare buttocks to learn to express our thoughts in a foreign European language? Why do many Ugandan school-going children today have to bear what I experienced in school?[13] Although I had no satisfying answers to these questions, asking myself such questions was a crucial moment for me in making sense of my lived linguistic experience at school and thereby coming up with the idea of writing this chapter.

One might ask whether I construe the notion of linguistic injustice as distinctly epistemic. The answer is yes, because language and knowledge are inextricably bound together: one's language plays a significant epistemic role in the production and transmission of knowledge. Or as Anna Chamot and Michael O'Malley argue, "Language is used by teachers and students for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge and skills [...], imparting new information, describing abstract ideas, and

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12   Baker-Bell: Linguistic Justice, 2 f.
13   See Mayambala: On the Epistemology of Excluded Voices.

developing students' conceptual understanding."[14] Let me expand the discussion about the distinctive epistemic nature of linguistic injustice by highlighting two ways in which linguistic injustice epistemically harms its targets.

First epistemic harm: individuals who exclusively speak an indigenous language are not taken seriously when they bear witness to their lived experiences, despite their ability to articulate their lived experiences in their local language (recall Rachel Jeantel's example). An explanation for this is that their local language is not regarded as a *bona fide* scientific language due to the legacy left by colonialism. As I noted above, since the colonial period colonial masters' languages became the only languages of intelligence and academics in many global southern countries, whereas colonised people's indigenous languages became relegated to the non-academic and non-scientific spheres. This therefore explains why testimonies of non-speakers of a legitimized western language are not taken seriously, especially in an academic setting.

Second epistemic harm: beliefs and bodies of knowledge produced or possessed by speakers of indigenous languages are not epistemically appreciated in academia as they should be. Wa Thiong'o offers us a perfect example here: once African scholars convened at a university in Uganda for a conference about 'What is African Literature?' Wa Thiong'o (a student of African Literature at the time) was shocked to learn that African scholars who had written and published their scholarly works in their indigenous languages were not invited to the conference. Invitations were given to other African scholars who had written and published their scholarly works in English. In his words,

> I, a student, could qualify for the meeting [conference] on the basis of only two published short stories, 'The Fig Tree' in a student journal, *Penpoint*, and 'The Return' in a new journal, *Transition*. But neither Shaban Robert, then the greatest living East African poet with several works of poetry and prose to his credit in Kiswahili, nor Chief Fagunwa, the greatest Nigerian writer with several published titles in Yoruba, could possibly qualify.[15]

According to this quotation, Shaban Robert's and Chief Fagunwa's bodies of knowledge (contained in their works in Kiswahili and Yoruba) were not welcomed and thereby not appreciated at a conference where they ought to have been given due credit; i.e. one being 'the greatest living East African poet' and the other 'the greatest Nigerian writer'. Unfortunately, the whole discussion about 'What is African literature?' was "based on extracts from works in English and hence they excluded

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14   Chamot, Anna/O'Malley, Michael: The CALLA handbook. Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach, New York 1994, 40 f.

15   Wa Thiong'o: Decolonising the Mind, 6 f.

the main body of work in Swahili, Zulu, Yoruba, Arabic, Amharic and other African languages."[16] The exclusion of that rich body of knowledge written in indigenous African languages, I argue, is an epistemic harm inherent in instances of linguistic injustice.

Before I proceed, let me make a recap of what I have discussed so far. I argued above that linguistic injustice or the domination of colonial masters' languages as the only languages of academic communication in the countries of the global south is epistemically harmful to the speakers of global south indigenous languages. The epistemic harm, as indicated above, is mainly twofold: firstly, individuals who exclusively speak indigenous languages are punished or not taken seriously when they bear witness to their lived experiences. An example given here is the policing and punishment of students who express their thoughts in their mother tongues at school. Secondly, beliefs and bodies of knowledge produced or possessed by indigenous language speakers are not epistemically appreciated in academia as they should be. An example given here was the exclusion of Shaban and Fagunwa's body of literature at a conference. If non-speakers of a legitimised western language are discredited as epistemically incompetent, and their testimonies or bodies of knowledge dismissed or never solicited in practices of knowledge production; then they are automatically wronged in their capacity as knowers something Miranda Fricker calls *epistemic injustice*. Below, I shall situate the notion of linguistic injustice into Fricker's framework of epistemic injustice.

3. Epistemic injustice

Typically, when a speaker S testifies that a given proposition *p* is true, the goal is for a hearer H to come to believe/know (given *that p* is true) that p. Otherwise, this testimonial exchange may go wrong as an epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice according to Fricker is the injustice that is inflicted on someone in their capacity as a knower. The person suffering epistemic injustice is not believed because they have a particular social identity a hearer prejudicially deems to be less credible.[17] An example is when a woman is not acknowledged when proposing an idea in a meeting, than when a man proposes the same idea later and gets recognised. Not acknowledging a woman, in this case, rests on the assumption that women generally propose less promising ideas than men do, and this *pace* Fricker is an epistemic injustice. Fricker cashes out two types of epistemic injustice: *testimonial injustice* and *hermeneutical injustice*.

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16   Ibid.
17   Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice. Power & the Ethics of Knowing, Oxford 2007, 1 f.

Testimonial injustice refers to the injustice done to an individual when others do not believe her testimony because she has a social identity associated with less credibility.[18] For example, when a (white) police officer disbelieves one's testimony because she is a person of colour. Women and people of colour (or sexism and racism cases) are the examples explicitly singled out by Fricker under testimonial injustice. However, Fricker also fleetingly hinted at the phenomenon of linguistic injustice when discussing testimonial injustice. She indicated how a person's *accent* carries not only *a social charge* but also *an epistemic charge* that affects how much credibility H affords S. She writes,

> Consider the immediate discursive impact of a speaker's accent, for instance. Not only does accent carry a social charge that affects how a hearer perceives a speaker (it may indicate a certain educational/class/regional background), but very often it also carries an epistemic charge. Accent can have a significant impact on how much credibility a hearer affords a speaker, especially in a one-off exchange. I do not mean that someone's accent is especially likely to lead a hearer, even an intensely prejudiced one, automatically to reject outright some manifestly believable assertions or, conversely, to firmly believe some otherwise incredible assertion. No doubt these things are possible, but given that for the most part it is generally in the interests of the hearers to believe what is true and not believe what is false, it would be a strong prejudice in an unusual context that would be singlehandedly powerful enough to have that sort of effect.[19]

Fricker does not develop further her notion of *one's accent* as carrying *social charge* and *epistemic charge* that affect how much credibility H affords S, nor will I do it here. But I shall expand her view by substituting *one's accent* with what I call *a speaker's non-proficiency in a legitimized western language*. Basing on what I have discussed in the previous sections, a speaker's non-proficiency in a legitimized western language carries a social charge upon which a hearer may rely to indicate a speaker's educational, class, or ethnic background. For example, Baker-Bells quotes a teacher at the "Black Language workshop" saying: "My assumption about people who speak this way *[Black Language]* is that they are from a lower-class and are uneducated."[20] On the other hand, however, a speaker's non-proficiency in a legitimized western language also carries an epistemic charge that affects how much credibility a hearer affords a speaker. Here Baker-Bell affords us another teacher saying, "I cringe when I hear my students speak in an indigenous language! It brings out the grammar nazi that lives in me."[21] Given this teacher's attitude, one might infer, she affords

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18   See ibid.

19   Ibid., 17 f.

20   Baker-Bell: Linguistic Justice, 22 f.

21   Ibid.

the speaker (student) no or less epistemic credibility simply because of testifying in an indigenous language that 'brings out the grammar nazi that lives in her'.

The move I am making (from Fricker's idea of *accent* to *a speaker's non-proficiency in a legitimized western language*) is meant to highlight how linguistic injustice fits in Fricker's framework of epistemic injustice on the testimonial injustice interpretation. Recall what we saw in the previous section whereby testimonies of non-speakers of a legitimised western language are often deemed less credible than the testimonies of their counterparts – those possessing proficiency in a legitimized western language. In this way, therefore, linguistic injustice is epistemically harmful on Fricker's account not only because it is fundamentally unjust, but also because it victimises its targets to the extent of seeing themselves as someone who has less of a right to contribute to the common pool of knowledge.

Fricker also describes a structural form of epistemic injustice called *hermeneutical injustice* which happens "when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences."[22] In other words, hermeneutical injustice happens when a dominant social group of people "colonise the knowing field's schemata by assigning meaning to the phenomenon in ways that reflect their understandings and their experiences of the world, leaving the rest of us to work awkwardly with the conceptual vocabulary they have crafted."[23] This is because "the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings."[24] Non-speakers of a legitimised western language can be said to be among certain social groups that often encounter inequality in hermeneutical participation. Given the collective social understanding of our imagined country C, for example, experiences of those individuals proficient in a legitimised western language are highly visible and plausible whereas the experiences of those individuals who are non-proficient in a legitimised western language are often rendered invisible and implausible. This is because where linguistic injustice prevails, there are often some hermeneutical gaps, for example, when teachers believe that there is something inherently wrong with a child who expresses her thoughts in her indigenous language at school. Another hermeneutical

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22 Fricker: Epistemic Injustice, 1 f.

23 Bailey, Alison: The Unlevel Knowing Field. An Engagement with Dotson's Third-Order Epistemic Oppression, in: Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective 3 (2014) 10, 64 f.

24 Fricker: Epistemic Injustice, 147 f. Moreover, Fricker uses Carmita Wood's experience to illustrate hermeneutical injustice. Wood systematically suffered from unwanted sexual advances from her boss. She later leaves her job and applies for unemployment insurance. At the insurance offices, Wood was asked why she left her job. Unfortunately, she was unable to describe what had occurred because of there being a lacuna in the collective epistemic resources to make sense of what she had experienced. As a result, she was denied compensation. Later she shared her experience with other women who had also had unwanted sexual advances from their bosses, and the term 'sexual harassment' emerged, ibid., 150 f.

gap, drawn from Baker-Bell's study of the intersection between language and race among students of colour, is that: "While many of the students suspected that their language was oftentimes disregarded due to them being Black, they had a difficult time trying to explain and make sense of how one could experience racism through language."[25] Black students' "difficult time" here is a hermeneutical gap that rendered them incapable of making sense of what Baker-Bell later termed as *linguistic racism*—racism that is at the intersection of black people's language and racial experiences. The existence of those two hermeneutical gaps signifies what Fricker calls *hermeneutical marginalization*, which occurs: "When there is unequal hermeneutical participation with respect to some significant area(s) of social experience, members of the disadvantaged group are hermeneutically marginalized."[26] In many social situations, members of disadvantaged groups are unable to generate "meanings about some areas of *[their lived experience and]* the social world.[27] This is almost what we saw in our imagined country C: i.e. although non-speakers of a legitimized western language (like Gandhi, Wa Thiong'o and I) could express their lived experiences in their own mother tongues, their indigenous languages did not count as standard mediums of communicating knowledge. It is only when they disregard expressing their lived experiences in their local languages and possess fluency in the dominant legitimized language of scientific discourses that their voices can be afforded credibility and intelligibility.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore a social problem I call *linguistic injustice*, and to situate it into Frickers' framework of epistemic injustice. Firstly, I have defined what linguistic injustice is; and argued that the domination of European colonial masters' languages as the only languages of academic communication in the countries of the global south is epistemically harmful to the speakers of global south indigenous languages. Secondly, I have situated and defended the claim that linguistic injustice is a form of epistemic injustice on both Fricker's testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice accounts.

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25   Baker-Bell: Linguistic Justice, 28 f.
26   Fricker: Epistemic Injustice, 153 f.
27   Ibid., 153 ff.

Abolish Math: 6 Lists on *Math* and Power

Cara-Julie Kather

First List: Statements commonly thought about *Math*
Second List: Clues that this notion of *Math* might be a Western institution
Third List: Reasons to Abolish *Math*
Fourth List: Ideas to Abolish *Math*
Fifth List: Questions on your relationship with *Math*
Sixth List: Questions on *Math* and Power

Associating *Math*[1] with Power might not intuitively make sense.[2] The six lists you will encounter here engage with *why* there could be this instinctive reluctance to relate the two, why there might be an interwovenness after all and how to react to that. The lists invite you as a reader to engage with them in whatever way suits you: feel free to browse the titles of the lists or the individual statements and see what irritates you, interests you, confuses you. The lists can be read chronologically but they don't have to be. So, feel free to skim, jump, engage the way you want to. The paragraph of the singular statements in the lists are explanations regarding the statement centered.

These lists reflect my own personal journey with *Math*: from being intimidated and fascinated to becoming aware of how *Math* relates to my sense of self and intellectuality. I then became critical about what I had been taught about *Math* in general as well as what I had been taught about my relation as a woman to *Math*. Now, I am proud to announce that, in alliance with those struggling to abolish the family or to abolish the police, I am struggling to abolish *Mathematics*. These calls to *abolish* are calls to deconstruct the concepts in question so radically that they no longer exist as we have come to know them. Hence, underlying this term of abolishment is a deep sense that the concept in question should not be "repaired" because it simply cannot be. This describes how some regard the police or family or marriage. It also describes

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1   I use italics for terms such as *Math*, *knowledge* or *rationality* to visibilize that I regard them as concepts specific to Western and patriarchal structures of power.
2   The words *Math* and Power are both capitalized to call attention to the dimension of dominance that both concepts entail. In the case of *Math* it also functions as a reminder that I am discussing a specific *Mathematics*, that is the one oriented around gaining epistemic authority and control.

how I nowadays regard *Mathematics* (as well as all the concepts included before). This might seem radical. Because it is. You are not required to be a *Math*-Abolitionist with me. You are however very warmly invited on your own journey with *Math*. However, I have come to use radical language and non-humble statements because I believe we are ready to be provoked into considerations and thought. You are therefore warmly invited to feel exasperated or irritated. I believe this is part of the deal of confronting what we *know*, e.g., what we know about *Math* and about our own being.

This paper ends with two lists that contain questions. This is my attempt of a counter-concept to the kind of conclusions that conventionally close academic papers. These conclusions feel very known to us and maybe even feel like something we need to close our reading with satisfaction. However, this paper does not want to be read like classical academic papers for two reasons. Firstly, I don't aim at the air of certainty and closure we academics usually strive towards. I want to end with many questions because there in fact are many questions. Much more than there are answers. Ending the paper with a conclusion would be a performance. One I am confident we can do without. Secondly, academic papers often put forth an 'I' that is giving an argument. With these lists, however, I would like *you* to be the center of attention and the center of the paper. This is not about me making clever points. It is about you reading just to see if there is anything in here that you feel like taking with you, diving into, running away from or being mad or sad or excited about. Let's go!

First List: Statements commonly thought about *Math*

a)   Mathematical knowledge is the pinnacle of objective, neutral knowledge.

Math is assumed to be a kind of *no-man's-perspective*: a way of knowing that is not connected to or dependent on socio-historical context.

It's a common belief that *mathematical knowledge* is the basis as well as the best example for such *context-free knowledge*. This is important in the sense that it shows the ideas of *objectivity* and *epistemic neutrality* (*neutrality regarding knowledge*) to be highly interwoven with the idea of *Math*: one points to another and argues the legitimization of the other.

b)   *Mathematical knowledge* is forceful: it's *the* knowledge you cannot (sensibly) argue with.

This second claim is highly connected to the first one: the idea being, that such *context-free knowledge* is the knowledge on which there *must* be agreement.[3] *Math*, and the knowledge it creates are often framed to be the things that one cannot possibly argue against – or at least not if this person wishes to be regarded as someone to be listened to.[4] This assumption makes the idea of *mathematical knowledge* a creator of *what it means to think* – or to do so in ways others can connect to: if *Math* is the knowledge, you cannot sensibly argue with, then it builds the boundaries of what it means to argue and *think sensibly*.

c) *Mathematical knowledge* is the pinnacle of the *human intellect*: it shows the best *human rationality* can achieve.

Math is oftentimes understood to show what *human intellect* can do: *Math* is thought to have the capacity to create *objective knowledge*.[5] This idea of *objectivity* is also built into the idea of *human rationality*: *Rationality* being understood as a way to create knowledge that does not stem from a specific standpoint.[6] The capacity for *rationality* and for *intellect* is usually understood to be specifically *human*. *Math* is a discipline and way of knowing that is often pointed to as a glamorous example of these qualities of *human thinking*. This assumption connects *Math* to ideas of *Rationality* and of what it means to *be human*: if *Math* is the pinnacle of *human rationality* then it is a kind of ideal that signals what it means to *think* and to be *human*.

d) *Mathematical knowledge* is independent of societal or historical context: it is *universal knowledge* that is the same for every culture and historical period.

This assumption is highly connected to common associations and expectations regarding *objectivity*, *neutrality* and *rationality*.[7] They all have a little bit of universalism

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3   See e.g., Shulman, Bonnie: What If We Change Our Axioms? A Feminist Inquiry into the Foundations of Mathematics, in: Littlefield, Melissa (ed.): Configurations, Baltimore/Marykand 1996, 435.

4   See e.g., Shulman: What If, 435; Hottinger, Sara N.: Inventing the Mathematician, New York 2017, 7.

5   See e.g., Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician, 7.

6   See e.g., Harding, Sandra: Stronger Objectivity for Sciences, in: Em Construção: Arquivos de Epistemologia Histórica e Estudos de Ciência 5 (1995), 427.

7   I regard these notions to differ from one another but to be deeply interwoven, specifically in partaking in the ideal of a form of *universalism*. This interwovenness is discussed in e.g. Shulman: What If, 435; da Silva, Denise Ferreira: 1 (life) ÷ 0 (blackness) = ∞ − ∞ or ∞ / ∞. On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value, in: Hui, Yuk/Blackburn Walling, Marry and others (ed.): E-Flux Journal 2017, 6.

sprinkled into them in the sense that they all aim for something *context-free*.[8] This idea of *context-free knowledge* is connected to the suggestion that the knowledge in questions is fitting no matter what the context is. *Mathematical knowledge* is often claimed as the best and most obvious example for such *universality*: *Math* as a concept therefore legitimizes the notion of *universal knowledge* because it is narrated as a *proof* that this kind of knowledge does exist.[9]

Second List: Clues that this notion of *Math* might be a Western institution

a)   Universalism is connected to colonialism and patriarchy.

Universalism describes the idea of knowledge applying to any context because the knowledge in question is assumed to be *independent* of any such context.[10] The idea of universalism and the idea of its' specific authority were created from specifically Western and patriarchal standpoints[11]. To put it bluntly, what is considered universal and free of context actually established a Western, White and male perspective as "the universal one."[12] The idea of universalism itself was created to be associated with Western countries in order to conceptualize them as superior to colonized communities and countries.[13]

b)   The idea of *objectivity* and *neutrality* are claims to authority. And therefore, they are political.

Objectivity and *neutrality* are concepts used to argue the authority of a specific knowledge/way of knowing. Both of these ideas are conceptualized as epistemic ideals. To

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8   See e.g., Harding, Sandra: After Mr. Nowhere. What Kind of Proper Self for a Scientist?, in: Fehr, Carla/Fulfer, Katy (eds.): Feminist Philosophy Quarterly, Libaries 2015, 2; Shulman: What If, 435; da Silva, Infinity, 6.

9   See e.g., da Silva: Infinity, 6; Shulman: What If, 442; Mangraviti, Franci: The liberation argument, in: Standefer, Shawn/French, Rohan/Macaulay Ferguson, Thomas (eds.): Special Issue on Valerie Plumwood's Contributions to Logic, Wellington 2023.

10   Harding, Sandra: Geschlechtsidentität und Rationalitätskonzeptionen, in: List, Elisabeth/Studer, Herlinde (eds.): Denkverhältnisse. Feminismus und Kritik, Frankfurt 1989, 427.

11   Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician, 13.

12   See. e.g. ibid.; Harding: Stronger Objectivity for Sciences, 188.

13   Mbembe, Achille: Kritik der Schwarzen Vernunft, Berlin 2017, 30; Alexander, Jeffrey C.: The Dark Side of Modernity, Cambridge 2013, 114; Wynter, Sylvia: Proudflesh Interview, in: Russell, Darlene (ed.): Proud Flesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness 4 (2006), 5.

claim knowledge as *objective* or as *neutral* means ascribing to them a superiority towards forms of knowledge not described with these words. This built-in claim to authority is political in the sense that claims to epistemic authority are claims to a specific form of exercising power: claims to epistemic authority are claims to the sovereignty of interpretation, to the sovereignty of narrative and to the sovereignty of naming and not-naming. These forms of sovereignty are important parts of upholding and disguising sexual violence, to name one example.[14]

c) There is exclusion of many other mathematical practices and ways of understanding mathematics.

This becomes clear when contrasting different notions of what it means to mathematically *prove* something: the Western, universalist notion of a *proof* means to provide *epistemic necessity* – to be able to force someone to admit something.[15] Upapatti, the Indian version of proof, is oriented around providing a plausible argument – to communicate a certain idea or chain of ideas.[16] The traditional Chinese proof in turn is oriented around providing a viable information – to provide something useful for a specific way of living.[17]

The Western notion of *proof* universalizes itself and claims epistemic dominance whereas the other two situate themselves in a specific context: they are about a form of *workability* rather than being about *truth*, thus epistemic authority.

d) This idea of *Mathematics* is rooted in Western binarisms.

Binarism describes ideas that are conceptualized through the notion of two opposites. For example, the *emotionality-rationality binarism* conceptualizes both *emotionality* and *rationality* in mutual exclusion. These kinds of binary conceptions establish the idea of systems with two options that are opposed to one another.[18] Looking at the socio-historical context it then tends to be the case that one of those two options is conceptualized as superior to the other – the binary is a hierarchical one. These binarisms are Western and patriarchal in the sense that they have been created to establish Western and male supremacy: Women* as well as people of color, Black

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14   Manne, Kate: Down Girl. The Logic of Misogyny, Oxford 2017, 4.

15   Shulman: What If, 434 f.; Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician, 13, 125 f.; da Silva: Infinity, 6.

16   Shulman: What If, 435.

17   Ibid., 436–437.

18   Plumwood, Val: The Politics of Reason, in: Standefer, Shawn/French, Rohan/Macaulay Ferguson, Thomas (eds.): Australasian Journal of Philosophy 71 (1993) 4, 438.

people and colonized communities have been and still are continuously conceptualized within the allegedly inferior binary category, e.g. within *emotionality* and not *rationality*, within *passivity* and not *activity*, within *nature* and not *culture*.[19] This conceptualization is ever so present in Western frameworks that shape our knowledge and our understanding of ourselves and others.

e)   This idea of *Math* is connected to Western concepts of *rationality* and *being-human*.

Rationality is considered to be a capability that is specifically *human*.[20] The ideas of *being-rational* and *being-human* are therefore highly interwoven. In this arrangement the idea of *rationality* acts as a gatekeeper for *being-human* in the sense that you need to think and perform in ways considered *rational* for you to be considered *human*. Within these concepts of *rationality* and *being-human* therefore lie specific ideas on how to think and how to be. Those implications have been shown to be specifically Western and patriarchal notions, put in place to have the concept of *human* be exclusionary of marginalized groups of people.[21]

Math is interwoven with both of those ideas: it's considered the pinnacle of *human intellect*. Establishing *Math* as the best *rationality* has to offer makes *rationality* be conceptualized in reference to *Math*.[22] And claiming *Math* to establish the knowledge that *all humans* share[23] makes *Math* part of the concept of *being-human*.

Third List: Reasons to Abolish *Math*

a)   *Math* helps legitimize colonial and patriarchal concepts of what is *rational* and what is *human*.

Both, the idea of *being-rational* and the idea of *being-human* are conceptualized in a manner that makes it more difficult for women*, Black people, People of Color and

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19   Ibid.; Bronfen, Elisabeth: Over her dead body. Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic, Manchester 1993, 66; Harding, Geschlechtsidentität und Rationalitätskonzeptionen, 427.

20   Fanon, Frantz: Black Skin, White Masks, Philcox, Richard (transl.), London 2021, 20; Mbembe: Kritik der Schwarzen Vernunft, 102; Wynter, Proudflesh Interview, 1 f.

21   Mbembe: Kritik der Schwarzen Vernunft, 13; Fanon: Black Skin, White Masks, 111; da Silva: Infinity, 11.

22   Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician, 9; da Silva: Infinity, 11.

23   Like e.g. done here Ellenberg, Jordan: How Not to be Wrong. The Power of Mathematical Thinking, New York 2015, 10 f.; Brooks, Michael: The Art of More. How Mathematics Created Civilization, London 2021, 3.

other marginalized groups to fit these categories.[24] The concept of *Math*, *rationality* and *being-human* all share the universalization of a specific mode of thinking or being that has been conceptualized to fit patriarchal and colonial structures. The narrative of *Math* as the pinnacle of *universal knowledge* and therefore the pinnacle of *human rationality* makes *Math* a framework for the idea of *rationality* and the idea of being-human.[25] *Rationality* and *being-human* on the other hand are legitimized via referencing *Math* as the knowledge supposedly *all humans must* agree on.[26]

b)   *Math* helps to reinforce ways of thinking that favor binarism.

There is mathematical knowledge production out there that isn't construed to a binary system ("either true or false"). But *Math* is not one of those. Rather *Math* helps to legitimize and reinforce binarisms: the axiomatic method, which *Math* is based on, aims to establish *necessary truth*.[27] The search for epistemic dominance, that characterizes *Math*, is interwoven with binary thinking: if one wants to be epistemically dominant one has to a) establish that there is a *wrong/false* and a *right/true* and b) establish themselves as defender of the latter.

Binarisms are of colonial and patriarchal dimensions in the sense that they tend to create binary, hierarchical concepts that help conceptualized dominant groups as superior within this binarisms.[28]

c)   *Math* normalizes *universalism* and *objectivity* without reflecting on their colonial history.

The ideas of o*bjectivity* and of *universalism* have been used to invisiblize and lower the knowledges and general worth of women* and colonized groups. Dominant groups have had access to conceptualizing the ideas of *universalism* and *objectivity*. Therefore, those ideas reflect specific interests and favor the groups, that were most involved in creating them[29]: this makes it easier for white and male people to be recognized as *objective* or *universal* or generally meaningful in their knowledge or work and even general being. On the other hand, marginalized groups tend to be met with a certain

24   Mbembe: Kritik der Schwarzen Vernunft, 102; Wynter: Proudflesh Interview, 1 f.; Harding: Geschlechtsidentität und Rationalitätskonzeptionen, 427.

25   See da Silva: Infinity, 11; Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician, 9.

26   Ellenberg: How Not to be Wrong, 10 f.; da Silva: Infinity, 1; Shulman: What If, 436 f.

27   Shulman: What If, 434 f.

28   Plumwood: The Politics of Reason, 438; Bronfen: Over her dead body, 66; Mbembe, Kritik der Schwarzen Vernunft, 13.

29   Harding: Geschlechtsidentität und Rationalitätskonzeptionen, 427; Mbembe: Kritik der Schwarzen Vernunft, 102; Wynter: Proudflesh Interview, 1 f.

suspicion when it comes to recognizing their knowledges, their work or them as beings.[30] *Math* helps legitimize and normalize these concepts by reinforcing them in its practices and claiming to establish examples for *true objectivity/true universality*.[31]

d) *Math* excludes ways of (mathematical) knowing that don't oblige Western 'rules of thinking'.

In establishing and normalizing universalism and binarism *Math* favors modes of thinking, connected to male and Western supremacy.[32] Through the narrative of *Math* as the one and only *true* mathematical knowledge non*Math*, nonbinary, non-Western modes of mathematical knowledge are excluded and prevented from being perceived as mathematical knowledge. To this day, colonized communities are being made to study *Math* and unlearn any non*Math* mathematical knowledge they might have.[33] This needs to stop. And it will not stop as long as *Math* is understood to be the only mathematical knowledge – as long as *Math* is epistemically dominant.

e) *Math* naturalizes attempts to claim (epistemic) authority and dominance.

In his introduction to *mathematical thinking* mathematician Jordan Ellenberg claims *Math* to be "the science of not being wrong about things."[34] This reflects how *Math* is conceptually connected to the idea of *being right about something*, which is framed as an inherent goal – if not *necessity of thinking*. Steven Pinker for instance writes "It´s in the very nature of argument that people stake a claim to being right." Is it though?

Pinker's statement reflects the common naturalization of attempts to epistemic dominance: the narrative that *trying to be right* is just what you do when you *think*. *Math* is part of this normalization and naturalization because it is specifically the claim of *Math* to epistemic dominance that is conceptualized to make it *universal* and *epistemically worthy*.[35]

f) *Math* invisibles the exclusion and violence it contains.

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30   See. e.g. Ndikung, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng: Every Straw Is a Straw Too Much: On the Psychological Burden of Being Racialized While Doing Art, in: Hui, Yuk et al. (eds.): E-Flux Journal 2023, 4; Taussky-Todd, Olga: In Her Own Words, in: Case, Anne Bettye/Leggett, Anne (eds.): Complexities. Women in Mathematics, Princeton 2005, 4; Bayoumi, Moustafa: How Does it Feel to be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America, East Rutherford 2009.

31   da Silva: Infinity, 1; Shulman: What If, 436 f.; Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician, 13.

32   da Silva: Infinity, 1; Shulman: What If, 436 f.; Plumwood: The Politics of Reason, 438.

33   See. Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician, 134.

34   Ellenberg: How Not to be Wrong, 2.

35   da Silva: Infinity, 1; Shulman: What If, 436 f.

As demonstrated above, *Math* is a highly exclusive form of (mathematical) knowledge production, that – in a lot of ways – aligns with establishments of Western and male supremacy. At the same time the very concept of *Math* establishes the denial of the possibility of *Math* being a form of epistemic violence (of establishing power and violence in the realm of knowledge): *Math* is conceptualized around the idea of being *neutral, nonpolitical knowledge*. The persistence of this narrative renders it *nonsensical* to discuss the political implications and violent dimensions of *Math*.

Fourth List: Ideas to Abolish *Math*

a) Claim *Math*: Claim subjectivity and intellectual confidence not conceptualized to be yours!

Practice *Math* and see how it feels! Maybe try appropriating mathematical practices or studying them in different ways than how they were taught to you before: a good start could be *How to Free Your Inner Mathematician* by Susan D'Agostino. But really, it can be any kind of practice that has you getting to know your capabilities in *Math*. Try and make it something that is intellectually empowering.

This attempt is about knowing and getting to know your intellectual powers: eventually to claim concepts of *mathematical thinking* or *rationality* that were originally conceptualized to exclude you!

b) Engage with mathematics that are non*Math*!

Math is *Math* because of its claim to epistemic dominance (dominance in the sphere of knowing) – because of the idea of *forceful knowledge*. However, there are other mathematics out there – other ways of understanding what it means to *prove*. Developing a pluralistic notion of mathematics and getting to know non-forceful, non-dominant forms of knowing – mathematically and otherwise – abolishes *Math* as the absolutist epistemic institution it is right now!

c) Make *Math* look political since it already is!

Math normalizes and legitimizes Western and patriarchal norms of thinking and speaking whilst being conceptualized as the pinnacle of *nonpolitical/politically neutral knowledge*. Can we think of practices that make *Math* look and seem political (because it is)? Can *Math* be visible at demonstrations and other activist, pinnacle political, events?

d) Make *Math* art!

There are pitfalls to this idea, but I do think it can be a start. Practice *Math* or engage with *Math* in ways that lay focus on the role creativity and intuition play in *Math*-practice. Make *Math* a personal creative playground and visibilize aspects of *Math* less prominently captured.

Fifth List: Questions on your relationship with *Math*

a)   What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you are in any way asked to engage with *Math*?

Try to trace your initial reactions when *Math* is mentioned. For example, in the headline of this paper or in the description of a course or exercise. What feelings and thoughts come up? What are your guesses on where they stem from?

b)   Do you understand yourself or your intellect in any kind of reference (be it positive or negative) to *Math*?

This question is about exploring beliefs that you have about yourself and your ways of thinking: what kind of beliefs are present and are any of them in any way connected to *Math*? How do you feel about the kind of knowledge that is associated with *Math*?

c)   Would it change something in your life if you were to radically understand and feel yourself as "mathematically capable" or "mathematically incapable"? (Try both!)

You are invited to intensively engage with both of those beliefs. Start with radically regarding yourself as "mathematically incapable." How does it feel? What does it change? How does it make you regard yourself? Does it have meaning that extends *Math* as an academic discipline? If so, what are these dimensions?
    Do the same thing for the belief to be "mathematically capable"; what does that *mean* and *feel* like?
    You are invited to really feel both of those beliefs out!

d)   What kinds of attitudes towards *Math* or thoughts about *Math* would feel soothing?

Can you think of beliefs about or attitudes towards *Math* that make you feel at ease? That are maybe calming or relieving?
    What is it about these thoughts that gives way to relief or calm?

e) What kind of attitudes towards *Math* or thoughts on *Math* would feel empower-
    ing?

Can you think of beliefs about or attitudes towards *Math* that make you feel (intel-
lectually or otherwise) powerful? Perhaps strong or liberated?
    What is it about these thoughts that gives way to empowerment?

f)   If you had to regard *Math* in your political struggles and beliefs, what could that
     look like?

In whatever way you act out activism or political struggle: if *Math* had to be somehow
regarded or made to be part of these processes, what would that look like?
    What could be practices and effects stemming from this 'experiment'?

Sixth List: Questions on *Math* and Power

a) What modes of thinking do we need and want for the societal changes we desire?
    In what ways are they different from/similar to *Math*?

Decolonial and feminist epistemologies find structures of knowledge to be con-
nected to structures of power. This means we have to ask: in what regards do we
want to change existing power structures and what kinds of knowledge and modes
of knowledge production do we need to do so? How do these resistant forms of
knowledge relate to *Math*?

b) How do we behave towards universalism? When do we strategically engage with
    it and when do we try to subvert or dismantle it?

Universalist claims are appealing to make because of the authority they provoke.
It is this authority that makes them of strategic use. Still, they remain connected
to colonial and patriarchal structures of power. So, the question stands: how do we
choose between strategic uses and attempts to dismantle universalism?

c) How can mathematics be taught?

As Ludwig Wittgenstein remarked (and after him feminist and decolonial theorists)
to learn *Math* is interwoven with adopting an attitude towards *Math* that secures

the epistemic dominance of *Math*.[36] How can we teach mathematics in a pluralistic sense and engage with non-*Math* mathematics, considering this is where we come from?

d)   How can we fight further mathematical epistemicide?

Epistemicide is the mass murder that happens to certain knowledges, specifically to certain mathematical knowledges. What needs to be done on a broader scale to interrupt this process? What can be done on an individual scale to help fight mathematical epistemicide? Let's collect ideas!

e)   What attitudes towards knowledges/about *Math* do we need to not allow for *Math* to legitimize universalism and binarism?

How can we think (about) mathematical knowledge in ways that don't favor binarism and universalism?

f)   What do we need to not have the desire to *be right*?

I think this is deeply personal as well as deeply political: what do we need personally to not experience a need to *be right*? When do we have this need and when do we not? What might we need collectively to *not-need-to-be-right*?

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36   Wittgenstein, Ludwig: Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik, Frankfurt 1984; da Silva: Infinity; Shulman: What If; Hottinger: Inventing the Mathematician.

Asceticism as a Philosophical Practice
Exploring the Teachings of Sulabhā and Yeshe Tsogyal

Namita Herzl

Introduction

Epistemic injustice manifests itself in academic philosophy at least on three levels. First, a Eurocentric focus leads to a categorical exclusion of non-European philosophies.[1] Second, non-scriptural practices are marginalized, such as dance, meditation, or asceticism.[2] Third, until recently, women were excluded from the canon altogether, and those women who have been visible within the philosophical discourse in the last years are primarily of European origin.[3] In order to challenge the intersectional connection between these mechanisms of marginalization, in this paper I will invoke the ideas of Sulabhā (around 7th century BC) and Yeshe Tsogyal (around 7th century CE) – two women from India and Tibet whose ascetic practices have led to profound (self-)knowledge. I will argue, first, that asceticism is a philosophical practice that has received significant recognition within European philosophy, yet remains absent from academic engagement, and has consequently been marginalized as a philosophical pursuit. Second, that ascetic women thinkers from India and Tibet were already engaging with profound ideas of high epistemological value in ancient times. The aim of the paper is, on the one hand, to show how philosophy was practiced beyond the academically recognized scripture-based and Eurocentric

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1   See especially Garfield, Jay/Van Norden, Brian: If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is, in: The New York Times, The Stone (11/5/2016), http://www.nytimes.com/2016/0 5/11/opinion/if-philosophy-wont-diversify-lets-call-it-what-it-really-is.html (17/10/2023).

2   If we consider the philosophical canon – that is, what is taught and being published in the last decade – we can see a strong focus on scripture, literature and philosophical writings. Learning academic philosophy means studying books, articles, primary and secondary texts. This has been established since the early modern period in Europe. See Berger, Susanna/Garber, Daniel: Teaching Philosophy in Early Modern Europe, Cham 2021.

3   See Hagengruber, Ruth: The Forgotten Half of History. Why Women Philosophers Matter, Blogpost, (2/3/2023) https://blog.degruyter.com/the-forgotten-half-of-history-why-women -philosophers-matter (17/10/2023).

framework, and on the other hand, to reconstruct some ideas of hitherto omitted South- and East-Asian women thinkers.

Asceticism as a philosophical practice

The first endeavor of this paper is to show that asceticism can be interpreted as a philosophical practice and that this practice disappeared from academic philosophy. My presumption that asceticism as a philosophical practice is of great epistemological significance is based on the argument that ascetic training leads practitioners to profound insights about themselves and the nature of existence. Through the examples of Sulabhā and Yeshe Tsogyal, I will show that these individuals engage in an introspective journey that fosters philosophical understanding, as asceticism often involves a severe self-discipline which forces practitioners to confront their desires, attachments, and limitations. This process of self-exploration aligns closely with the fundamental questions of philosophy, such as the nature of desire, the self, and the human condition. Because asceticism encourages contemplation and meditation, the sustained focus on one's inner world and the environment can lead to deep introspection and a heightened awareness of the interplay between the mind and the external world.

Recognizing these characteristics of asceticism, one can argue that both mental and physical training is fundamental to achieve deeper insight and self-knowledge. Having this in mind, the question arises as to why there is no longer a focus on this practice in contemporary philosophy. When we study philosophy at universities today, the primary task is to read, understand, analyze, describe and critique texts. Physical practices such as dance, meditation, or asceticism, as well as oral philosophy, are excluded in these education systems and institutions. It is only when we look at current non-European epistemologies that we get access to such practices again. We thus find oral philosophical traditions in Africa[4] or dance as a source of knowledge in the practices of Native Americans.[5] Looking into the syllabus of western departments of philosophy, physical exercises are not emphasized as philosophical practices in the classroom, nor are African, Asian, or Latin-American philosophies part of the standard curriculum. This article therefore serves as a small contribution to the hitherto marginalized practice of asceticism, as well as the visualization of female thinkers from Asia who have carried out this practice.

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4   See Odera Oruka, Henry: Sage Philosophy Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy, Boston 1990; and Oluwole, Sophie Bosede: Socrates and Ọrúnmìlà. Two Patron Saints of Classical Philosophy, Lagos 2014.

5   See Welch, Shay: The Phenomenology of a Performative Knowledge System. Dancing with Native American Epistemology, New York 2019.

If we look at the history of European philosophy, we see that Aristotle was already aware of the contemplative aspect of ascetic practice as something akin to the philosophical pursuit of understanding the nature of reality. Because Aristotle has recognized the high benefit of training the mind and the body, asceticism serves as a central aspect of his ethics and doctrine of virtue.[6] Since ancient times, asceticism has been referred to as a practice within the framework of self-training for religious or philosophical motivation. The final aim of this training would be the acquisition of virtues, self-control, and the consolidation of character. In particular, the Stoa emphasizes the control of both thoughts and desires and understands asceticism as abstention and renunciation.[7] Renunciation, modesty, and self-control would therefore be a prerequisite for the path to contemplation and training the philosophical mind. For Schopenhauer, asceticism is practiced through chastity, poverty, and finally a voluntary hunger through which suffering can be overcome.[8] Nietzsche later demands for his conception of the Superman an exercise of negation to be achieved through asceticism, which means that renunciation, for example through fasting, can lead to a higher form of humanity. In his estimation, self-control and renunciation are necessary to achieve a "golden nature."[9]

However, to highlight that asceticism is an important aspect of training the mind and thereby for gaining self-knowledge, I present below two independent women from India and Tibet who, through their ascetic practices, gained incontrovertible insights and engaged with philosophically relevant ideas which are of high epistemological, ontological and metaphysical value. It is not clear to this day whether these women are merely mythological figures from ancient writings, as there is a lack of proof of their actual historic existence. Nonetheless, as their ideas are valuable in themselves, it is not primarily relevant to my paper whether they actually lived, as their arguments exist in the text and will be examined as such. I will put aside the question of the true existence of these two women for now and refer primarily to the ideas and arguments attributed to them as I engage with them as representatives for women thinkers in their time period.

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6   Lehn, Theres: Asketische Praxis. Die Bedeutung der Askese für das ethische Handeln und das menschliche Sein bei Aristoteles und Michel Foucault, Munich 2012, 14–15.

7   Francis, James A.: Subversive Virtue. Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World, Pennsylvania 1995, 1–11.

8   Schopenhauer, Arthur: Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I, Stuttgart/Frankfurt am Main 1960, § 68, 516–520.

9   Sprondel, W.M.: Askese, in: Joachim Ritter (ed.): Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, Basel/Stuttgart 1971, 539–540.

The learned renunciant Sulabhā

Sulabhā is a single woman and learned ascetic who, in the ancient epic *Mahābhārata*, wins a debate against King Janaka (around 7th century BC) in which she argues for her compelling concept of freedom, as well for there being no essential difference between a man and a woman apart from gender. Using her own example, she shows that a woman can achieve *mokṣa* (skt. liberation) by the same means as a man. The discussion between the ascetic and the king is one of the most important passages in the *Mahābhārata* with regard to the philosophical emancipation of women, as Sulabhā represents an independent woman who wins the philosophical debate by means of conclusive arguments and on the basis of her self-acquired knowledge. Contemporary research on the *Mahābhārata* has not paid much attention to this episode, nor has feminist research on ancient India given it the importance it deserves.[10] Perhaps the most famous debate between a woman and a man in an ancient Hindu text is that between the Indian philosopher Gārgī and the Vedic rishi Yājñavalkya[11] (skt. ṛṣi: ascetic, enlightened person), which takes place in the presence of King Janaka in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3:6 and 3:8). This debate can be seen as an example of the silencing of women in patriarchal society, for it ends with Yājñavalkya's threat that Gārgī's head would fall off if she asked more questions. Instead of appreciating her intellectual brilliance, she is silenced because of her philosophical interest.[12] Conversely, the discussion examined here – between King Janaka and the ascetic Sulabhā – ends with the silence of the male participant, who is famous for nothing less than being the king of philosophy.[13] Unlike Gārgī, Janka does not become silent because he has experienced epistemic violence, but his silence can be understood as approval of Sulabhā's speech as he seems to have run out of arguments to say something against her propositions.

Another significant factor of this story is that Sulabhā does not practice asceticism as a wife, as other ascetics in the *Mahābhārata* do.[14] As a single woman and independent ascetic, she is not part of an organized order or monastery. Instead, she makes her pilgrimage through the world alone and self-determined. Sulabhā's example shows that some women received occasional intellectual recognition in ancient India, but they were usually considered to be rare exceptions. Although the

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10   Vanita, Ruth: The Self Is Not Gendered. Sulabhā's Debate with King Janaka, in: NWSA Journal 15 (2003), 76.

11   Gārgī and Yājñavalkya also play an important role in the famous epic Upaniṣads. See Radhakrishnan, S./Mohanty, J.N.: Indian Philosophy, Oxford 2009, 111.

12   See Mills, Ethan: Learning from Gārgī's Silence, (5/2/2020): https://indianphilosophyblog.org/2020/02/05/learning-from-gargis-silence/ (5/12/2023)

13   Vanita: The Self Is Not Gendered, 80; and Shalini Shah, "Articulation, Dissent and Subversion: Voices of Women's Emancipation in Sanskrit Literature." Social Scientist 45 (2017), 80.

14   Like for example Kuntī or Damayantī.

narratives deal with individual cases, the idea that a woman is given the possibility of spiritual emancipation appears again and again within the eighteen volumes of the *Mahābhārata*.[15]

The story of King Janaka and Sulabhā, as narrated by Bhīṣma in the *Mokṣhadharma Parva* (skt. *mokṣa*; liberation, *dharma*: nature, quality, path, duty) in the *Mahābhārata*, is a significant episode that explores themes of liberation and the path to spiritual realization. King Janaka is often depicted as a symbol of a wise and virtuous ruler who is deeply committed to the pursuit of *mokṣa*. Sulabhā, a *yoginī* with extraordinary powers, becomes curious about King Janaka and his devotion to liberation. To learn more about him, she disguises herself as a beggar and approaches King Janaka. This act of taking on a beggar's form is a demonstration of her yogic abilities and her desire to test the king's wisdom and spiritual knowledge. The encounter between Sulabhā and King Janaka serves as a platform for a philosophical and spiritual discussion. Sulabhā discusses two important questions with King Janaka:

1) Is it possible to attain liberation while living a domestic life, fulfilling worldly duties, and maintaining relationships?
2) What is the highest form of liberation or the highest perfection of *mokṣa*?

These questions are at the core of the conversation between Sulabhā and King Janaka and deal with the pursuit of spiritual realization while living a worldly life. In response to Sulabhā's questions, King Janaka provides his profound insights into the nature of life, death, and the path to liberation. He explains that liberation from the cycle of birth and death is indeed possible for those who can transcend the attachments and desires of the material world. Janaka portrays himself as an example of a ruler who is spiritually awakened and simultaneously continues to perform his royal duties without being entangled in the worldly cycle of birth and death. This story underscores the idea that one can pursue a path of spiritual awakening and liberation while fulfilling worldly responsibilities and roles. The attainment of *mokṣa*, the highest perfection of liberation, is a central theme in this dialogue between King Janaka and Sulabhā, shedding light on the timeless quest for spiritual enlightenment within the context of a householder's life.[16]

The ascetic Sulabhā suggests to King Janka that despite his wealth and possessions, he actually has very little control and power. A king is always dependent on others, such as his advisors, and his life is shaped by the demands of others. Because of his obligations to the kingdom and the decisions to be made regarding war and peace, he could not live without attachments. Sulabhā claims that a king cannot be truly detached from the world because, in order to protect his kingdom, he must be

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15   Vanita: The Self Is Not Gendered, 81.
16   Mahābhārata 12.321.20–150 (Translation by Manmatha Nath Dutt).

suspicious of others, even if they mean no harm. He is also obliged to share the problems of all the people of his kingdom and must suffer sleepless nights because of it. Subsequently, Sulabhā relativizes the power of the king and especially the privilege that he has as a king by pointing out that other men are also kings of their own houses and have sons and wives in the same way. For these reasons, a king is not special in principle, but rather experiences mental suffering just the same as every human being, triggered by attachment, rejection, and fear. Finally, she addresses the notion of sovereignty by pointing out that with the king's sovereignty comes little joy, but rather a great deal of suffering. In this assertion, she deconstructs the king's original statement, which proudly asserted that the king's power is one of sovereignty. In her view, this power is ultimately not something desirable, but rather to be rejected because too many obligations come with kingship.[17]

With this argument, she claims that it is *de facto* impossible to attain liberation without living an ascetic life. She thus argues for the necessity of renunciation and asceticism in order to live truly liberated and to attain *mokṣa*.[18] For Sulabhā it is a *conditio sine qua non* to have an ascetic lifestyle in order to be free from desire, attachments, and suffering. After her argumentation, the story ends with the note that the king was not able anymore to reply or contradict. The fact that King Janaka – who represents a wise and enlightened ruler – remained silent after Sulabhā's discourse can be viewed as an endorsement of the ascetic path as a means to attain deep philosophical insight. In this interpretation, the story serves to highlight the idea that a life of asceticism, characterized by the renunciation of and detachment from worldly desires, can be a potent way to gain profound philosophical insight and to ultimately attain *mokṣa*. King Janaka's silence is a powerful symbol of the recognition of the value of asceticism as a way of knowledge in the pursuit of realization and understanding.

Yeshe Tsogyal, the queen of bliss

Yeshe Tsogyal is one of the most influential women in Tibetan Buddhism. Not only was she an effective teacher in her own right, but she was also the disciple and consort of Padmasambhava, also called Guru Rinpoche, a tantric master who brought the Indian Buddhist teachings of Vajrayāna (Buddhist tradition of tantric practice) to Tibet. Through her spiritual practice, Yeshe Tsogyal is said to have gained deep

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17   Mahābhārata 12.321.154–163.
18   Fitzgerald, James: Nun Befuddles King, Shows 'Karmayoga' Does Not Work. Sulabha's Refutation of King Janaka at MBh 12.308, in: Journal of Indian Philosophy 30 (2002), 647; Black, Brian: Sulabhā and Indian Philosophy, in: O'Reilly, Katharine R./Pellò, Caterina (eds.): Ancient Women Philosophers. Recovered Ideas and New Perspectives, New York 2023, 48–51.

insight into the nature of the mind, making her a guide for countless practition-ers of Tibetan Buddhism. Her main work is seen in the writing and dissemination of Padmasambhava's philosophy, which is explained in her autobiographical texts. According to the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, her writings emphasize the impor-tance of compassion, the cultivation of wisdom for the benefit of all living beings, and the value of the renunciation of worldly belongings and activities. Her teach-ings, ascetic and meditative practices, and life story remain a source of inspiration to this day.[19]

Yeshe Tsogyal's story is one of liberation, as she freed herself of her parents' op-pressive actions after they tried to force her into marriage. The Tibetan princess de-cided to step out of the monarchic structures that she was born into and to live an emancipated life as a Buddhist practitioner. As a result of this decision, she expe-rienced physical violence and was sent into exile. Before her retreat, she voluntarily gave away all her belongings to her former servants and dressed her body only with leaves. In the jungle, she fed on berries and rose hips and, according to the story, lived in harmony with nature and animals. After a few months, the Tibetan king, whose daughter-in-law she should have become, learned of her location and sent his son personally to her, accompanied by officials, to persuade her to come with him.[20] The princess refuses the request, explaining that asceticism is the only way for her to attain bliss. As she recounts to him:

> Your golden, turquoise jewelry and articles have a noble sheen, but my wearing leaves causes little harm. Your consuming meat and alcohol is delicious in your mouth, while my eating fruit ripens into bliss and heat in my body. You travel swiftly by horse, as I harness my circulating energy to reach the level of bliss. Your family is important and you have your father's solid name, while I am an excellent adept who practices the teachings as spiritual attainment keeps me company. No matter how noble your clan, how lofty your royal line, my mind's blissful basic na-ture is comfortable in a humble position. Worldly activities do not thrill me. Young man, you too should enjoy the wealth of the sacred teachings.[21]

In this key passage of the narrative, Yeshe Tsogyal refers to the philosophical practice of asceticism and meditation, which are fundamental not only to her own practice

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19   Klein, Anne C.: Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, and the Art of the Self, Delhi 2008, 15–18.

20   Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal: The Life and Visions of Yeshé Tsogyal. The Autobiography of the Great Wisdom Queen, Boulder 2017, 110–150.

21   Ibid., 152–153.

but also to Buddhist epistemology.[22] In her words, she clarifies that the highest bliss and concomitant freedom consists in the renunciation of worldly activities such as owning material possessions, consuming meat and alcohol, and the attachment to the family clan. In doing so, she refers to important anchor points of ascetic practice by addressing modesty and renunciation and claiming to be free of material desires for clothing, meat, or alcohol, thus demonstrating her advanced discipline. Finally, she refers to the richness of the sacred teachings of Tibetan philosophy, which seems more valuable to her than all material goods.

The parallels between the thoughts of Yeshe Tsogyal and Sulabhā are obvious, as they both argue for the necessity of renunciation in order to attain inner freedom from attachment. Sulabhā explains to King Janaka that he cannot experience liberation as long as he, a king, is in possession of material goods and insofar as he bears political responsibility. Similar is the argument of Yeshe Tsogyal, who, despite brutal consequences (being whipped and banned), chose not to live in the royal court in order to practice meditation and asceticism for the attainment of knowledge. Like Sulabhā, Yeshe Tsogyal insists on the importance of an ascetic lifestyle to liberate the mind from attachment. They both emphasize that one can only truly enjoy a liberated life if one is free of attachment from belongings and worldly affairs.

If we look at this argument from an epistemological perspective, an apparent interpretation could be that the knowledge they seek to experience true liberation is grounded in the practice of renunciation and meditation. Without these ascetic practices, they say, no liberation from attachment is possible, which makes them a necessary condition for understanding and embodying freedom. The argumentation of these two women can be summarized as follows:

- Premise 1: Beings who do not practice renunciation are attached to worldly activities and possessions.
- Premise 2: This attachment leads to mental and/or physical suffering.
- Premise 3: Because of the suffering one endures due to these attachments, it is not possible for them to be free.
- Conclusion: In order to free oneself from all attachment and the suffering associated with it, renunciation of fame and possessions is necessary.

From an epistemological perspective, the argument suggests that the knowledge that leads to true liberation is achieved through renunciation and meditation. Without these practices, one remains attached to worldly activities and possessions, leading to suffering and the inhibition of freedom. Therefore, the conclusion is that re-

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22   For a perspective from Buddhist epistemology on meditation see: Chandha, Monima: A Buddhist Epistemological Framework for Mindfulness Meditation, in: Asian Philosophy 25 (2015) 1, 65–80.

nunciation of fame and possessions is necessary to free oneself from attachment and its associated suffering.

Conclusion

Both Yeshe Tsogyal and Sulabhā were early exemplars of women who actively pursued forms of asceticism which, I argue, should be considered as philosophical practices. These two women provide profound historical examples of female ascetics with philosophical engagement. They challenged the gender norms of their societies by actively participating in ascetic pursuits and philosophy. In patriarchal contexts, their dedication and intellectual acumen were groundbreaking, and their recognition challenged prevailing stereotypes about women's roles and abilities. In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated that asceticism was historically acknowledged in European philosophy but later marginalized. Furthermore, it has highlighted the philosophical contributions of ascetic women from India and Tibet, emphasizing their recognition in ancient times. The paper's overarching goal was to reveal philosophy's existence beyond the confines of academically recognized, scripture-based, and Eurocentric traditions, while also reconstructing the ideas of overlooked Asian women thinkers.[23]

Challenging Epistemic Violence in Class
The Case of Animal Resistance

Chiara Stefanoni

1. Introduction

Even though one of the first metaphors for the critical and antidogmatic nature of philosophical pursuit is a stinging gadfly, to which Socrates compares himself in Plato's *Apology*, Western philosophy has mostly "forgotten" to exercise this same critical posture on the crucial issue of the distinction between humans and animals and its implications on the epistemological, ethical, and political levels, forgetting the same gadfly, so to speak. The mainstream of Western philosophy has long been responsible for providing rationally well-packaged legitimacy to anthropocentric prejudices of common sense and to existing forms of domination over animals.

Nevertheless, starting in the mid-1970s with the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* and with a surge in the early 2000s, there has been a significant shift in philosophy and the humanities in this respect: the so-called "animal turn," i.e., an increase in publications, conferences, courses, etc., and a qualitatively new interest in animals and their relations with humans.[1] Some even envisioned an exponential and global spread and academization of Animal Studies (AS) and Critical Animal Studies (CAS).[2] This seems, however, not to be the case, or at least not everywhere.

In this contribution, I will start by adopting the method of feminist storytelling to elaborate a brief frame narrative of my experience as a scholar doing philosophical research in the field of CAS. Second, I will draw on different material that I created for first-year students as part of a teaching activity on the topic of "animal resistance." The overall aim is to provide a reasoned and accessible overview of this recent debate in the field of CAS which has a crucial epistemological dimension and importance, while adopting a format that assumes the value of an instructor-stu-

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1   See Ritvo, Harriet: On the Animal Turn, in: Daedalus 136 (2007) 4, 118–122, 119.

2   See Best, Steven: The Rise of Critical Animal Studies, in: Journal for Critical Animal Studies VII (2009) 1, 9–52.

dents practice of challenging the epistemic violence[3] of the construction of human superiority to which philosophy largely contributed.

2. Small personal note

I started working as a guest lecturer affiliated with the Institute of Philosophy and Art History (IPK) at Leuphana University of Lüneburg (Germany) in April 2022. It was the first time that my research and teaching in the field of Critical Animal Studies were officially accepted and recognized as addressing a topic worthy of philosophical dignity, consideration and economical remuneration by an academic institution. It was the first time that I could "come out" proudly as an animal, antispeciesist philosopher, without having to hide behind a "more classical, philosophical and respectful" subject. "Don't do something explicit on animal exploitation," I was always advised – albeit in good faith and with the bitterness of those who suffered the same fate – by professors and colleagues when discussing possibilities of continuing after the PhD (which I had the luck and freedom to devote exclusively and extremely explicitly to animal oppression) with a scholarly career in Italy, my home country. The only option the Italian academia depicted for me was to follow a more traditional path, including, then, only surreptitiously, only sporadically, here and there, the animal question; for example, researching some specific philosopher's perspective on animals, or – even broader – research on "philosophy and nature". The animal question as subject matter per se and, consequently, I as a scholar, were ruled out from the very beginning, invisibilized and made absent, removed behind the scenes – just like the killing of around eighty billion of non-human animals per year – from the philosophical discourse of (Italian) academia.

3. Introducing animal resistance in class

In September 2022, I took part in the activities of Leuphana Opening Week for the academic year, devoted to the macro-subject "Turning Points." During this week, first-semester students are welcomed to their academic studies by engaging with a socially relevant topic, producing, as result of the work, a visionary and critical video.[4] My role was as an academic advisor for three project groups within the "Activists and Researchers" section. It involved proposing a subtopic, providing a short

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3   See Wadiwel, Dinesh: The War Against Animals, Leiden 2015, 33–36.

4   The videos produced were entitled: "The Year 2082", "How Recognizing Animal Resistance Could Change the World" and "Multispecies Solidarity" and screened during the last day of the week.

kick-off video, sharing relevant sources, and serving as a consultant for the students' work in progress. My project topic title was: *Do animals resist? Conceptualizing multi-species solidarity.*

In what follows, I propose an adapted transcript of the 15 minutes kick-off video impulse, in turn based on a draft article of mine.

3.1 Starting Points

Hello, I'm Chiara and this is the video presentation for the project topic entitled: *Do animals resist? Conceptualizing multispecies solidarity.* With this short introduction I hope to give you impulses to raise open questions, hypotheses and ideas. Let's start.

It has been amply demonstrated that animal exploitation particularly in the context of capitalist industrial agriculture, is a relevant cause of contemporary (socio-)ecological crises, first the climate change and the related extreme environmental events (such as floods, fire, heat waves)[5] and, second, pandemics.[6] I don't want here to adopt the typical environmentalist rhetoric modality of an overwhelming "data dump" of the percentage of gas emissions to produce meat and so on[7], I just want to highlight that one of the main causes of the Covid-19 pandemic was the high concentration of animals raised in industrial plants[8], along with the gradual erosion of autonomous living spaces of wild species with devastating effects, especially in the Amazon forest.[9] So, we would expect animal husbandry to play a prominent role in the public debate on climate change. However, it's not so. Not only at the institutional and academic level, but also by those who fight for climate justice, who invisibilize precisely animal exploitation and its centrality in the ecological crisis.[10] It seems that talking explicitly about animal liberation often

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5   See de Boer, Joop et al.: Climate Change and Meat Eating. An Inconvenient Couple?, in: Journal of Environmental Psychology (2013) 33, 1–8; Rockström, Johan et al: Planet-proofing the global food system, in:Nature Food (2020) 1, 3–5.

6   See Quammen, David: Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic, New York 2012; Wallace, Rob: Big Farms Make Big Flu. Dispatches on Influenza, Agribusiness, and the Nature of Science, New York 2016.

7   See Twine, Richard: Emissions from Animal Agriculture – 16.5% Is the New Minimum Figure, in: Sustainability (2021) 13, 6276.

8   See, for example, Brozek, Wolfgang/Falkenberg, Christof: Industrial Animal Farming and Zoonotic Risk. COVID-19 as a Gateway to Sustainable Change? A Scoping Study, in: Sustainability 13 (2021) 16, 9251.

9   See Recanati, Francesca et al: Global Meat Consumption Trends and Local Deforestation in Madre de Dios. Assessing Land Use Changes and Other Environmental Impacts, in: Procedia engineering 118 (2015), 630–638.

10   See Kemmerer, Lisa (ed.): Animals and the Environment. Advocacy, Activism, and the Quest for Common Ground, London 2015.

generates embarrassment and rejection. How can we talk, then, about it to bring this issue and its urgency to the center?

The traditional way in which animal advocacy and animal rights theorists talk about it is in terms of "the voiceless." Animal advocacy seems the most altruistic movement: a minority of kind-hearted humans reflecting, elaborating strategies and acting for the liberation of defenseless, weak, fragile, voiceless creatures, only for the sake of animals and to the detriment of their own interests. The origin of animal advocacy's slogan: "We are the voice of the voiceless," which draws from the first strophe of a (powerful and beautiful) poem by US writer Ella Wheeler Wilcox of 1910, is remarkable to grasp this perspective:

> *I am the voice of the voiceless;*
> *Through me the dumb shall speak;*
> *Till the deaf world's ear be made to hear*
> *The cry of the wordless weak.*[11]

Animals cannot speak, they are "wordless weak." According to Western philosophical and political tradition, rooted in the work of Aristotle, if they cannot speak, they are excluded from the political sphere and community. So, they are mute and, in the best of intentions, completely in need of someone to *speak for* them articulating their claims (for example, through the means of representative parties in parliament such as the Party for the Animals in the Netherlands[12]); or in the worst of intentions, easy to exploit and eliminate with impunity.

Such paternalistic and patronizing perspective can be labelled as a form of *human saviorism*.[13]

As you may guess, the idea of animal resistance deeply challenges this perspective. This concept has emerged in the last decades within the academic field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS) and the activism inspired by it. To put it briefly, CAS is an academic field devoted to the inquiry of human-animal relations with a direct focus on the circumstances and treatment of animals. It calls for conceptual renewal, methodological innovation and a further softening of disciplinary boundaries. The adjective "critical" – coming from a radical left-wing political tradition, in particular anarchism and Marxism – emphasizes the role of an engaging and engaged theory

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11   Wheeler Wilcox, Ella: The Voice of the Voiceless, in: Poems of Experience, London 1917, 43.

12   See Meijer, Eva, Learning Hope in the Anthropocene. The Party for the Animals and Hope as a Political Practice, in: Animal Studies Journal 11 (2022) 1, 145–172.

13   See "Stories of animal resistance – human saviorism and "voiceless" animals – Geertrui Cazaux [IARC2021]" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1P6CJD_pCg&t=489s (12/05/23)

to understand and challenge the material and epistemic power relations and violence that affects human and animals and the environment.[14]

3.2 Questions: Politics, Agency, Epistemology

Do animals resist? It is possible to unravel the notion of animal resistance along three analytical axes, closely related to each other, which are indispensable to the very possibility of formulating the question of whether animals resist: politics, agency, and epistemology. The dimension of politics is the central one, the great stake that the notion of animal resistance introduces; the question is: do animals resist? And so, are they political subjects? Are human advocates the only activists or are animal activists for their own liberation? If so, how can we replace savior narratives with solidarity or complicity?

To answer these questions, we have to enter the field of agency, asking: how do they resist? Do they have a political agency? Do they have a voice?

The background to both dimensions is the epistemological question, in a Foucauldian, critical sense according to which knowledge is grounded in an epistemological field (the *episteme*)[15] – always intertwined with conflicting power relations and affecting subjectivation processes – which define the rules according to which the true and the false are separated.[16] Knowledge, thus, is not a progressive investigation toward "an objectivity,"[17] toward an "ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted."[18]

What, then, counts as an act of resistance? What are the conditions of truth of this discourse? What counts as political agency? The problem here is epistemic, in so far as the act of resistance (and violence), its recognition by resister, recipient and witness is rendered visible by signification within the context of the dominant epistemological field. That is a problem of how we frame knowledge of animals and how this shapes what we can know and think is possible.[19] So, it becomes crucial to inves-

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14   See Best, Steven et al.: Introducing Critical Animal Studies, in: Journal for Critical Animal Studies 5 (2007) 2, 4–5; Taylor, Nick/Twine, Richard (eds.): The Rise of Critical Animal Studies. From The Margins to The Centre, London/New York 2014; Nocella II, Anthony J. et al. (eds.): Defining Critical Animal Studies. An Intersectional Social Justice Approach for Liberation, New York 2014.

15   Foucault, Michel: The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences, New York 1994, xxii.

16   Id: Truth and Power, in: Gordon Colin (ed.), Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977 by Michel Foucault, New York 1980, 131.

17   Id: The Order of Things, xxii.

18   Id: Truth and Power, 131.

19   See Wadiwel, Dinesh: The War Against Animals, Leiden 2015, 33–36; Id: Do Fish Resist?, in: Cultural Studies Review 22 (2016) 1, 196–242.

tigate this same epistemological field, not only showing that it is not neutral, rather that is affected by investment of various kinds (economic, institutional, political), but also highlighting its functioning and internal depth, so to speak.

Since the seventeenth century, this field is immediately a battlefield: animals have been in the balance between being considered objects of nature to be studied within the *Naturwissenschaften*, the natural sciences, and subjects to be included in the cultural sciences *Kulturwissenschaften*, in psychology, morality, politics, sociology.[20] Animals represent, to use Piazzesi's effective expression, the "sand between the two great gears of this dualistic system of knowledge"[21], which saw for a long time, and in part still today, the victory of the first model, namely the anatomical and mechanistic model, at the expense of the ethological model, which arose from interaction with cultural sciences and came to a later recognition. Therefore, when formulating the question of whether and how animals are political agents or can resist, it is good to be aware of these issues.

How then, in a society where dominant modes of knowledge are anthropocentric, can allies of animals read their defiant acts against oppression? The idea and politics of "animal resistance" themselves, in the light of what has been said, can be seen as theoretical-political practices challenging the current configuration of the epistemological field, with a view to its redefinition. Animal resistance is an attempt to think the outside, the Other which the field of truth silences and invisibilizes, with its intrinsic epistemic violence.

3.3 Approaches: intentionality, borders, biochemistry

CAS' scholars have proposed different conceptualizations of animal resistance. Here I propose a systematization of them by assessing their strengths and weaknesses. I define three approaches: intentionality, borders, and biochemistry. Each approach is a moment in a movement that goes, so to say, from the macroscopic to the microscopic: from the resistance identified in the striking attacks of animals in zoos and circuses to the resistance identified in "subcutaneous" biochemical processes *in the bodies* of farmed animals, passing through the resistance identified in the escape *of the bodies* of "animals without borders."

These options are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. When discussing animal resistance, we should avoid the universalizing tendency that seeks a definition that homogenizes the numerous nonhuman species who inhabit this earth. While some other animals may indeed be capable of resistance in the more

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20   See Piazzesi, Bendetta: La conoscenza degli animali, in: Mormino, Gianfranco et al., Dalla predazione al dominio: la guerra contro gli animali, Milano 2017, 159–229.

21   Ibid., 162.

traditional sense of showing reflective intentionality – as we will see – there is variation in the cognitive capacities and intention possessed, for instance, by a cow, chicken, dolphin, fish, or chimpanzee: thus it is necessary to pay attention to the multifarious features of the various kind of resistance that animals from different species and in different contexts of oppression put in place, as well as to the individual variables dependent on the singularity of each animal.

The first approach I briefly introduce is also chronologically the first one: Jason Hribal's work on animal rebellions, escapes and aggressions in the context of "entertainment" and vivisection.[22]

Hribal distinguishes between resistance and instinctive reaction, particularly in the case of circus elephants. According to him, although elephants, and like them all animals in captivity, have learnt through direct experience and through trial-and-error attempts which behavior will be rewarded and which will be punished, they often disobey orders or attack the trainer, thus demonstrating that they are acting against their own immediate interests and therefore intentionally and consciously.[23]

To those accusing such claims of anthropomorphism, with Hribal[24], we can return the charge to the sender as a mere human's egocentric defense with the sole objective of reasserting human exceptionalism and privilege. Moreover, with cognitive ethologists Bekoff and Pierce, we can adopt a "careful anthropomorphism" when making knowledgeable attempts to recognize other animals' standpoints, this must be done "carefully, consciously, empathetically, and from the point of view of the animal, always asking, 'What is it like to be that individual?'"[25]

However, we can try to be more radical and visionary, asking whether the human(ist) principles of political action are able to operate within the politic of differences between humans and non-humans or if the same political principles should be completely rediscussed.[26] Asking this last question is promising to answer the need of making agency and resistance visible precisely where they are subtler, as in

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22   See Hribal, Jason: Animals, Agency, and Class. Writing the History of Animals from Below, in: Human Ecology Review, 2007, 101–112; Id.: Fear of the Animal Planet. The Hidden History of Animal Resistance, Stirling 2010.

23   See Id. Fear of the animal planet: The hidden history of animal resistance [Interview]. Animal Voices Radio. CIUT. (18/1/2011), http://animalvoices.ca/2011/01/18/fear-of-the-animal-planet / (12/05/23)

24   See Id.: Animals Are Part of the Working Class Reviewed, in: Borderlands, 11 (2012) 2, 1–37, 24.

25   Bekoff, Marc/Pierce, Jessica: Wild Justice. The Moral Lives of Animals, Chicago 2009, 42.

26   Hribal's critique runs the risk of adjusting unilaterally the reading of animal resistance, which is, as we said, multifarious and context-sensitive, to a human canon, thus inhibiting the exploration and recognition of what could be the animals' own political potential, i.e., the "other kinds of politics", that animals could unlock in their own way. It is a question, to use the words of Michael Hardt, interviewed on animal resistance, of "assessing whether the principles of political action developed on the basis of differences between humans are able to operate within the politic of differences between humans and non-humans. Or perhaps [...] we should

farms and slaughterhouses, where intense forms of domination and discipline seem overwhelmingly one-sided and oriented to nullify escape or response. To answer this question, scholars have made efforts to read agency by untying it from intentionality and anchoring it to the *body*, exploring the "possibilities for deriving agency and resistance from the corporeal realm rather than (only?) conscious subjectivity."[27]

The most frequent episodes of resistance are *escapes* from slaughterhouses, farms, trucks, etc. These are all episodes of transgression of those narrow borders that circumscribe the place which is allocated to animals within highly urbanized human societies. For example, a cow dashing through the street in New York City – this is the story of Queenie – is "out of place."[28] Her embodied agency is an interruption of what we can call the established order of species with its allocated roles of species; her presence leads us to ask: what kind of material and symbolic boundaries the body of a fleeing animal is violating? First of all, a fleeing cow is violating the boundary of her property status, of being a commodity in the industry of meat production and, yes, precisely for this reason she is perceived as a dangerous threat by those upholding the status quo. She is violating the voiceless, the fragile construction. Is she voiceless in zigzagging through the traffic, hiding for days, eluding her capture?

There are a lot of distancing strategies to not see the political disruptive potential in these acts. For example, as Colling points out: "the media describe escaped animals as 'special' and 'unique' or having 'earned' their freedom. These attributions fail to challenge the property status of nonhuman animals, instead focusing on the specialness of the individual who broke free. Framing animal resisters as uniquely special endorses the idea that only these individuals deserve freedom, and that it's acceptable for other animals to remain captive due to a supposed lack of intelligence or ingenuity."[29] This framing works as a sort of "granting clemency": an exceptional and individual measure, based on an act of generosity of power that does not put into discussion this same power.[30]

What happens, then, when these bodies are unable to cross borders, to escape from their domination? What happens when animals are turned into totally docile

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ask ourselves whether the same political principles should be reconsidered". Filippi, Massimo et al.: Altre specie di politica, Milano-Udine 2016, 45.

27   Kowalczyk, Agniseszka: Mapping Non-human Resistance in the Age of Biocapital, in: Taylor, Nik/Twine, Richard (eds.): The Rise of Critical Animal Studies, cit., 183–200, 192.

28   On this approach and the story of Queenie see Colling, Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era.

29   Ibid., 86.

30   Reggio, Marco: Do Nonhuman Animals Resist? Critical Geographies, Decolonial Theories, and the Case for Veganism as Multispecies Solidarity, in: Springer, Simon et al. (eds.): Vegan Geographies. Spaces beyond Violence, Ethics beyond Speciesism", Woodstock 2022.

and defenseless creatures – not even able to move any more – by hyper-antibioti-
cized feedstuffs, debecking, overcrowding, as in the case of chickens? Is there here
full cohesion of the animal with the production apparatus, the zeroing of any pos-
sibility of resistance? At first glance, it would seem so. The disproportion of forces
at place has now reached such a point that, as mentioned above, the animal is gen-
erated, managed and disposed of in such a way as to coincide almost perfectly with
its usefulness for human activities. Yet, such a reading not only leaves no way out,
but also prevents us from seeing what can happen "under the feathers" of a hen:
that is what could happen at the microscopic level, precisely. Attempts to frame an-
imal resistance in these terms begin, as a fertile source of mobilization of thought
and not its exact application, from the Foucauldian perspective on power and re-
sistance, which actually runs longitudinally through the whole discourse on animal
resistance, in particular from the idea that where there is power there is resistance.[31]

The zootechnical power has acted since its beginnings on animal bodies, imme-
diately configuring itself as biopower. Today it has assumed an increasingly molec-
ular, biochemical connotation due to genetic engineering and the massive use of
drugs. In such "subcutaneous" framework we can read as expressions of involun-
tary agency and resistance even basic biological processes, such as strictly physical
diseases that interfere with production. An example could be that of mastitis, an
infection of the mammary gland which leads to tissue damage and a decrease in
milk quality, including the possibility of pathogenic bacteria and contamination by
medication. This is a very common disorder among the so-called "dairy" cows, due
to forced separation from their offspring and continuous milking. Mastitis forces to
negotiate limits to a productivity that it would instead like to be unlimited, reducing
reproductive cycles and milking and, in general, improving confinement conditions.

A crucial element in both the approaches just sketched, which is a direct conse-
quence of the material and corporeal conception of resistance, beyond (exclusively)
intentionality, is the focus on the *effects* that these actions (trespasses and biochem-
ical processes) trigger at the system level. In the case of the fleeing cow Queenie in
New York streets, for example, her race, whatever her intentions, disrupted the dif-
ferential power distribution of a given system: she triggered national media atten-
tion; public outcry; activation of a solidarity network; freeing of the surviving chick-
ens and the release to Farm Sanctuary. To sum up, "given the political and social
context, the important question is not whether Queenie intended to inspire social
change (or free the chickens), but rather what her actions demonstrated about the
environmental and social structures around her, and her own will to live, as well as
the implications of this knowledge for social change."[32]

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31   See Foucault, Michel: The History of Sexuality: 1: The Will to Knowledge, London 2019.
32   Colling: Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era, 98.

3.4 Conclusion and Impulses

To conclude, the questions and approaches on animal resistance here addressed are a fertile starting point, certainly to be further developed, to recognize animals as resistant political subjects and antagonists fighting for their freedom: as activists for animal liberation with whom, we humans, can become allies and accomplices. With that being said, I leave you with some impulse questions,

- Be attentive: can you acknowledge acts of animal resistance in your surrounding?
- Narrate: what could be innovative, non-patronizing ways to tell these stories?
- Act: what could be actions of solidarity with animal resisters?

Suicidal Ideation and Testimonial Injustice

Lucienne Spencer & Matthew Broome

Introduction

According to the Office for National Statistics, 5,275 suicides were registered in England and Wales in 2022.[1] In the provisional Quarter 4 2022 data (October to December 2022), there were 16.8 suicide deaths per 100,000 males (1,036 deaths registered) and 5.3 suicide deaths per 100,000 females (340 deaths registered). Psychiatric illness constitutes the most common cause of suicide worldwide.[2] The most common psychiatric illnesses attributed to suicide are depression, substance use disorder and psychosis; however, people diagnosed with anxiety, personality disorders, eating disorders and PTSD are also at high risk.[3]

Preventative strategies are being developed to curtail these high rates of suicide, including new methods of identifying people who are of high risk, crisis management, more effective follow-up care and caution around reporting suicide in the media.[4] Despite increasing concern for ever-high suicide rates, reports of the intent to kill oneself are frequently met with incredulity, with potentially fatal results. In this paper, we identify an overlooked means of tackling high rates of suicide by addressing how claims of suicidal ideation are received. High-risk individuals with suicidal ideation are too often overlooked by the healthcare system because their suicide claims are dismissed as deceitful. By addressing the testimonial injustice met by people with suicidal ideation and rethinking how we receive claims of suicide, we can build more effective suicidal prevention strategies.

1   Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 5 April 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, Quarterly suicide death registrations in England: 2001 to 2021 registrations and Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2022 provisional data.

2   Brådvik, Louise: Suicide Risk and Mental Disorders, in: International journal of environmental research and public health 15 (2018) 9.

3   Ibid.

4   Garrat, Katherine et al., Suicide Prevention: Policy and Strategy, in: House of Common Libraries, Number CBP-8221, 2023.

Epistemic Injustice in the Philosophy of Psychiatry

In her opening to 'Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Injustice', Fricker asks: "What does the concept of epistemic injustice do for us? What should we want it to do?"[5] While some would have us believe that we live in an era where dissonant voices are louder than ever, in reality, most are still straining to be heard. To amplify these voices, it is vital to understand the mechanisms that silenced them in the first place. The concept of epistemic injustice offers a distinct way to expose previously obscured complex epistemic inequalities that silence some of the most marginalised in our society.

Why apply the concept of epistemic injustice to the philosophy of psychiatry? Psychiatric healthcare has distinct social power structures that can be found in no other institution. Fricker defines "social power" as "a practically socially situated capacity to control others."[6] In the case of psychiatry, this social power, bestowed upon the clinician by their training and clinical expertise, takes on a unique form.[7] The clinician possesses the power to legally detain a person under the Mental Health Act; to define the state of mind of their patient and to position them in a conclusive diagnostic category; to prescribe treatment to their patient, sometimes in the form of medication that may transform their mental state significantly.

This social power is primarily used to positively impact the lives of people with psychiatric illness by alleviating unwanted symptoms and providing tools for recovery. Nevertheless, research has shown that epistemic asymmetries in the healthcare system may sometimes fuel testimonial injustice, whereby the testimony of a patient is given an undue credibility deficit.[8] In this paper, we use the concept of testimonial injustice to highlight the silencing of those with suicidal ideation.

Stigma and Suicide

According to Fricker, seeking knowledge from our environment is an essential aspect of human nature.[9] A key part of gaining knowledge is through the testimony of other people. To seek out reliable testimony, we possess a faculty of "testimonial

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5   Fricker, Miranda: Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Injustice, in: Kidd, Ian James/Medina, José Pohlhaus, Jr., Gaile (eds.): The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice, London 2019, 53–60, 53.

6   Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing. Oxford 2007, 13.

7   Carel, Havi/Kidd, Ian James: Epistemic injustice in healthcare. A philosophical analysis, in: Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy, 17 (2014) 4, 529–540, 530.

8   Kidd, Ian James/Spencer, Lucienne J/Carel, Havi: Epistemic Injustice in Psychiatric Research and Practice, in: Philosophical Psychology, 2022.

9   Fricker: Epistemic Injustice, 86.

sensibility": a "perceptual faculty" that allows the hearer to view a speaker in an "epistemically loaded" way. Through this perceptual faculty, certain people appear epistemically reliable.[10] The upshot is that persuasive prejudicial attitudes cause certain groups to register as epistemically unreliable through our testimonial sensibility. In this instance, the marginalised speaker is vulnerable to testimonial injustice.

What are the identity prejudices that may influence the way we receive testimony from people with suicidal ideation? Although the person in question is likely to have intersecting identities that further undermine their credibility (regarding their race, gender, sexuality etc.), people with suicidal ideation are likely to encounter at least a double identity prejudice as someone who is 1) perceived to be mentally ill and 2) as a person with suicidal ideation or with a history of suicide attempts.[11] Concerning the first identity prejudice, there is much research on the entrenched, multidimensional prejudicial attitudes towards people with mental health problems, according to which such people are perceived to be crazy, dangerous, socially awkward, unpredictable, or even less than human.[12]

While the stigma attached to suicidality and mental ill health overlap, suicidality is more likely to be perceived as selfish, incompetent, emotionally weak, and immoral.[13] Although suicide has largely been decriminalised[14], the perception that suicide is morally wrong persists. People who have attempted suicide frequently report their actions being perceived as emotionally abusive: "The immediate reaction is, 'How dare you do something to me when we are trying so hard to help you?'"[15] Rimkeviciene *et al.* include an example of one person whose partner was able to obtain a domestic violence order against her following a suicide attempt: "In court the patient received the following explanation: 'cutting myself in self-harm was an act of violence that I've created against him'."[16]

There are two key categories in the literature on epistemic injustice in psychiatric illness thus far. The first are people perceived to be too irrational or "crazy" for their

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10   Ibid., 70.

11   It is worth noting that the stigma attached to mental illness in turn contributes toward suicidality (Rüsch, Zlati et al.: Does the stigma of mental illness contribute to suicidality?, in: Br J Psychiatry 205 (2014) 4.

12   Boysen, Guy. A./Chicosky, Rebecca. L./Delmore, Erin E.: Dehumanization of mental illness and the stereotype content model, in: Stigma and Health, 8 (2023) 2, 150–158.

13   Sheehan, Lindsay L et al.: Stakeholder Perspectives on the Stigma of Suicide Attempt Survivors, in: Crisis 38 (2017) 2, 73–81, 3.

14   However suicide is still illegal in several countries; see (Mishara, Brian L./Weisstub, David N.: The legal status of suicide: A global review, in: International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 2016, 54–74).

15   Rimkeviciene, Jurgita et al.: Personal Stigma in Suicide Attempters, in: Death Studies, 39 (2015) 10, 592–599, 595.

16   Ibid.

testimony to be reliable. In this category, we would place people who have unusual experiences, delusions or have been diagnosed with psychosis. The second category includes people whose psychiatric illnesses are not taken seriously, so their testimony is dismissed as exaggerated or attention-seeking. This category would include people with Borderline Personality Disorder, Depression and OCD. In some cases, people with psychiatric illnesses find themselves in a double-bind, suffering from the stigma of both categories: they are perceived to be simultaneously "crazy" and yet "attention-seeking." This is known as a "wrongful depathologisation," whereby the experiences of the marginalised person are concurrently stigmatised and trivialised.[17]

The immorality attached to suicidal ideation gives the stigma they experience an additional quality to other forms of pathophobia.[18] A person with suicidal ideation may happen to do immoral things; we hold the view that people with mental illness may have moral responsibility for their actions.[19] However, the stigma we refer to considers the suicidal ideation itself to be immoral. This immorality can be perceived in two ways. Firstly, suicidal ideation is deemed genuine and immoral due to the harm caused to friends and relations if the person were to end their life. Secondly, the suicide claim is considered disingenuous and merely a ploy to attain some further goal. This second understanding of the immorality attached to suicidal ideation is of concern here, as it is the form of stigma that most commonly tracks people with suicidal ideation into the healthcare system. In what follows, we will demonstrate that the unique stigma attached to people with suicidal ideation leaves them vulnerable to testimonial injustice whereby the speaker's testimony is downgraded or dismissed altogether due to implicit identity prejudices. Unlike most forms of testimonial injustice identified in the epistemic injustice literature, whereby testimony is dismissed as fallible or exaggerated, suicide claims may be considered deceitful.

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17   Spencer, Lucienne/Carel, Havi: "Isn't everyone a little OCD?": the epistemic harm of wrongful depathologisation, in: Philosophy of Medicine, 2 (2021) 1.

18   People with suicidal ideation are not the only people with psychiatric illness who are perceived to be immoral. This too could be said of people with addictions and of people with eating disorders. Future research should explore the impact of these 'immorality' prejudices in cases of epistemic injustice.

19   In line with Broome, Matthew/Bortolotti, Lisa/Mameli, Matteo: Moral Responsibility And Mental Illness: A Case Study, in: Cambridge Quarterly Of Healthcare Ethics, 19 (2010) 2, 179–187.

Testimonial Injustice

A recent study by Bergen et al examined cases in which patients seeking emergency care for self-harm and suicidality.[20] Using conversation analysis, Bergen *et al.* found cases of testimonial injustice in the emergency department as claims of suicidal ideation had been undermined, questioned and recharacterized by healthcare practitioners.[21] Through several different communication practices (such as speaking over the patient, challenging the authenticity of the patient's suicidal ideation and attempting to confront the patient with inconsistencies in their account), some clinicians demonstrated that they were not sufficiently receptive to their patient's testimony.

Such testimonial injustice can be found in narratives of suicidal ideation in the literature. Consider the following example:

> Tom is 22 and has made a couple of serious attempts on his life following prolonged periods of depression. "When I regained consciousness after the last attempt", he said, "I was told 'If you really want to kill yourself, you would have done it'." Tom, like many other people, feels like when he now contacts the crisis team, they treat him brusquely. "It is like they will only take me seriously if I actually die.[22]

Petrea Taylor (2020) (2022) has developed studies showing that suicide claims from women are particularly likely to be dismissed as attention-seeking and manipulative, as they encounter additional misogynistic identity prejudices. Below are some of the reports collated by Taylor:

> Even if you tell [clinicians] you were suicidal, it is not taken seriously. They almost refuse to treat you. They refuse to talk to you. You are just worthless... You can come out of [the hospital] feeling three times worse than when you go in with a crisis... because [the clinicians] are too judgmental.[23]
> "I just said to [psychiatrist], "You aren't listening to me!" [Psychiatrist responded],

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20   Bergen, Clara et al.: Implying Implausibility and Undermining versus Accepting Peoples' Experiences of Suicidal Ideation and Self-Harm in Emergency Department Psychosocial Assessments, in: Frontiers in Psychiatry 14 (2023).

21   Ibid.

22   Watts, Jay: Some Mental Health Services Are Telling Patients: 'If You Really Wanted to Kill Yourself, You Would Have Done It.', in: The Independent , (14/12/2017), www.independent.co.uk/voices/mental-health-nhs-suicide-crisis-untrained-staff-high-risk-underfunding-a8110186.html (12/04/2024).

23   Taylor, Petrea: System Entrapment: Dehumanization While Help-Seeking for Suicidality in Women Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence, in: Qualitative Health Research 30 (2019) 4, 530–546.

"Well nothing is wrong with you."[24]
"[the new psychiatrist] came in and said, "You are manipulating the system…"[25]

Beyond self-reports, institutionalised testimonial injustice is reflected in the language surrounding suicidal ideation.[26] The very language implemented in the context of suicidal patients betrays inherent sigma, as such patients are not referred to as 'communicating' or even "confessing" suicidal urges but of "threatening suicide."[27] This terminology suggests that the patient is blackmailing the clinician, using the 'threat' of suicide as part of an ultimatum to force them to give in to the patient's demands. This language is particularly prevalent in psychiatric concepts such as "contingency based suicide" and "malingering." We shall proceed to address each in turn.

"Contingency-based suicide" is a term coined by Lambert & Bonner (Lambert & Bonner, 1996)[28] and can be defined as follows:

These patients may communicate their suicidality as conditional, aimed at satisfying unmet needs; secondary gain; dependency needs; or remaining in the sick role. Faced with impending discharge, such a patient might increase the intensity of his suicidal statements or engage in behaviors that subvert discharge. Some go as far as to engage in behaviors with apparent suicidal intent soon after discharge.[29]

The authors add that such patients may have "mood disorders, personality pathology, substance use disorder, or a history of serious suicide attempt."[30] In their guide on discharging patients who "threaten" "contingency-based suicide," Bundy *et al.* provide the case study of Mr K, who is described as "male sex, white race, low-social support, mood disorder, substance use disorder (SUD), and chronic pain."[31] Bundy *et al.* recommend not taking Mr K's threat of suicide seriously as "his statement that

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24   Taylor, Petrea: Challenging the Myth of "Attention Seeking" Women with Suicidality. A Grounded Theory Study about Applying Counter-Pressure to Manage System Entrapment, in: Issues in Mental Health Nursing 43 (2022) 7, 613–624, 616 f.

25   Ibid., 617.

26   Frey, Laura M et al.: What's in a word? Clarifying terminology on suicide-related communication, in: Death Studies 44 (2022) 12, 808–818.

27   Ibid.

28   Lambert, Michael. T./Bonner, Johnnie: Characteristics and six-month outcome of patients who use suicide threats to seek hospital admission. Psychiatric Services, 47(1996) 8, 871–873.

29   Bundy, Christopher/Schreiber, Matthew/Pascualy, Marcella: Discharging Your Patients Who Display Contingency-Based Suicidality. Six Steps, in: Current Psychiatry 13(2014) 1, e1-e3, 1, https://www.mdedge.com/psychiatry/article/79222/depression/discharging-your-patients-who-display-contingency-based (12/04/2024), 1.

30   Ibid.

31   Ibid, 2.

he will kill himself if discharged appears to be an expression of unmet needs (housing, pain management) that is representative of his limited and often-maladaptive coping and skills, rather than an indicator of imminent risk of death."[32] Bundy *et al.* suggest that Mr K's case can be distinguished from an authentically suicidal patient purely from Mr K's use of an ultimatum in his testimony to clinicians. Note that, in the case study of Mr K, the so-called "ultimatum" is as follows: "if I am discharged then I will kill myself." Bundy *et al.*'s account fails to draw a clear distinction between a case that could be fatal and one that could be a manipulative ploy. This inability to distinguish between the two is because both cases look outwardly the same, as we cannot fully determine the patient's intentions.

People with mental health problems are often some of the most marginalised in our society. From these outskirts, they are less likely to enter higher education or find employment and have an increased risk of crime victimisation, poverty, and homelessness.[33] Therefore, relief from a poor socioeconomic position would be advantageous to the patient with suicidal ideation; such external benefits should not be cause for downgrading their testimony. Moreover, those in a poor socioeconomic position are naturally a high-risk group for suicide.[34] It is important not to let a patient's socioeconomic status impact the credibility of their suicidal ideation.

The literature on contingency-based suicide uses language that reflects a battle between the "demanding" and "unyielding" patient and the "caring" yet "fearful" clinician who must not "give in" to the patient's "manipulative" behaviour; discussions mainly surround the doctor's fear of liability versus the scarcity of resources, particularly hospital beds.[35] The literature on contingency-based suicide exposes an inherent identity prejudice against psychiatric patients that portrays them as controlling and deceitful. These identity prejudices may lead clinicians to downgrade the credibility of suicidal claims.

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32   Ibid.

33   Mental Health Taskforce. The Five Year Forward View For Mental Health. England.nhs.uk 2016, https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf (12/04/2024).

34   Stack, Steven: Contributing factors to suicide: Political, social, cultural and economic, in: Preventive Medicine, 152 (2021).

35   Wilson, Jo. E. et al.: Identifying and addressing the hidden reasons why patients refuse discharge from the hospital, in: Psychosomatics 57(2016) 1, 18–24; Wedig Michelle. M. et al.: Predictors of Suicide Threats in Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder Over 16 Years of Prospective Follow-Up, in: Psychiatry research, 208 (2013) 3, 252–6; Berlin, Jon. S.: The Joker and the Thief. Persistent Malingering as a Therapeutic Impasse, in: Psychiatric Times. Psychiatric Issues in Emergency Care Settings 2 (2007) 5; Lambert, Michael. T.: Suicide Risk Assessment and Management. Focus on Personality Disorders, in: Current Opinion in Psychiatry, 16 (2003) 1, 71–76.

A similar narrative can be found in the literature on malingering. The DSM-5 defines malingering as "the intentional production of false or grossly exaggerated physical or psychological symptoms motivated by external incentives."[36] The DSM-5 claims that malingering is not in itself a psychiatric illness. What differentiates malingering from psychiatric disorders whereby the patient feigns, exaggerates or creates illness (e.g. Munchhausen's Syndrome), is the pursuit of external benefits. This may include drugs, evading criminal prosecution, avoiding work or school, paid leave from employment, or shelter. According to the DSM-5, malingering "should be strongly suspected" in the following situations:

a) A medicolegal context e.g. a patient presents with an illness while facing trial.
b) Marked discrepancy between the individual's "claimed stress or disability" and "objective finding and observation".
c) Lack of compliance with diagnostic evaluation, treatment regimen and follow up care.
d) Presence of anti-social personality disorder.

According to a study conducted by Rumschick and Appel[37], in one month psychiatrists suspected one-third of patients of malingering, and 20% were strongly or definitely suspected of malingering. Of those strongly or definitely suspected of malingering, patients with suicidal ideation comprised the majority (58%).[38] Of the patients who claimed suicidal ideation and were suspected of malingering, 18% were admitted, 32% were held, and 50% were discharged.[39]

Regarding people with suicidal ideation, the second of the malingering criteria appears to be particularly problematic. It does not seem possible for the clinician to identify a discrepancy between the individual's claim of suicidal ideation and 'objective finding and observation'. As in contingency-based suicide, there is no measure to verify the suicide claims objectively. In addition, a lack of compliance with diagnostic evaluation, treatment regimen and follow-up care is not at odds with genuine suicidal ideation. Moreover, to dismiss a claim of suicidal ideation on the grounds of an anti-social personality disorder appears to be epistemically unjust; although a person with a personality disorder may sometimes be dishonest, this is not a good reason to apply a confirmation bias and discredit their claims as malingering, especially when the results could be potentially fatal.

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36   American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: dsm-5. 5th edn. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association. 2013, 726.

37   Rumschik, Sean. M./Appel, Jacob. M.: Malingering in the psychiatric emergency department: Prevalence, predictors, and outcomes, in: Psychiatric Services, 70 (2019) 2, 115–122.

38   Ibid., 118.

39   Ibid., 119.

To be clear, we recognise that some people who make suicide claims may lie to gain some external benefit. Indeed, one study reported that 12% of hospitalized patients they interviewed who had reported suicidal ideation admitted in anonymous surveys that they had lied or exaggerated the suicidal ideation to gain admission.[40] However, we do argue that in attempting to distinguish those with genuine suicidal ideation from malingerers, the decision made by the clinician risks being unintentionally influenced by identity prejudice. In these instances, people with suicidal ideation may be met with testimonial injustice.

We do not suggest that all, or even many, clinicians are insensitive to those with suicidal ideation. They are often very sympathetic and successfully prevent suicide in their patients. Moreover, clinicians are restricted by pressures on time and resources, impacting the quality of care delivered to people with suicidal ideation. Nevertheless, testimonial injustice does sometimes occur. When it does, it is through implicit biases despite the clinician's best intentions. Indeed, the clinician may have morally good motives for de-prioritising a patient they perceive as being deceitful to dedicate time and resources to those who need it. Moreover, in some cases, the healthcare system itself, as opposed to individual clinicians, maintains an environment of testimonial injustice.

Testimonial Smothering

Kristie Dotson adds to the literature the concept of epistemic "violence" as an essential way of understanding some of the extreme forms of silencing that emerge from unequal epistemic climates.[41] A sub-section of epistemic violence includes what Dotson terms "testimonial smothering."[42] Testimonial smothering occurs when "the speaker perceives one's immediate audience as unwilling or unable to gain the appropriate uptake of proffered testimony."[43] Drawing on Hornsby and Langton's speech-act account of silencing, Dotson attributes testimonial smothering to a failure to take up the speaker's speech-act. After a prolonged experience of "pernicious ignorance," the subject is coerced into "self-silencing."[44]

In discussing suicidal ideation with friends and family members, people are often met with evasiveness: "If we don't talk about it, well, it's not an issue. If we talk

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40   Rissmiller, David A. et al.: Prevalence of Malingering in Suicidal Psychiatric Inpatients: A Replication, in: Psychological Reports 84 (1999) 3, 726–730.

41   Dotson, Kristie: Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing, in: Hypatia, 26 (2011) 2, 236–25.

42   Ibid., 244.

43   Ibid.

44   Ibid.

about it, well, then it is an issue and we'll have to deal with it."[45] Kidd identifies this as 'aversive pathophobia', a vice commonly displayed in individuals around ill people:

> Aversiveness might include flat refusals or expressions of reluctance to interact with them, or, when that cannot be avoided, adoption of behavioural styles that tend to diminish the quality and frequency of those interactions – staring and glaring at the visible signs of illness, for instance, or peremptory tones of voice, or monosyllabic answers to questions.[46]

In the discussion of suicidal ideation, aversive behaviour may be motivated by the high stakes of the conversation and the vulnerability of the person in question. There may be a fear that the person with suicidal ideation is so fragile that one may say the wrong thing and push them over the edge. The context of such a conversation is charged with intensity, heightened emotions and a feeling of exposure. And yet, whatever the motivation behind aversive behaviour, it is likely to create an environment that silences those with suicidal ideation. People are likely to truncate their testimony regarding suicidal ideation because their audience is perceived to be ill-disposed to receive it.

This testimonial smothering may be more commonly performed by males, who are more likely to avoid discussing suicidal ideation outright than females. A study conducted by Balt et al found that boys "rarely included straightforward disclosure of suicidal thoughts or clearly recognizable suicidal behaviour."[47] Boys would be more likely to make ambiguous hints or jokes, if suicidal ideation were to be mentioned at all.

In the context of the healthcare encounter, there is evidence that patients intentionally omit, or even deny, their experiences of suicidal ideation to the clinician. A study by Blanchard and Farber showed that, in a sample of 547 people, 31% claimed to have denied to their therapist the suicidal ideation they had been experiencing.[48] A leading cause of being deceitful about suicidal ideation can be attributed to the aforementioned stigma attached to suicide: "It's really embarrassing,

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45   Rimkeviciene, Jurgita et at.: Personal Stigma in Suicide Attempters, in: Death Studies 39 (2015) 10, 592–599, 595.

46   Kidd, Ian J: Pathophobia, Vices, and Illness, in: International Journal of Philosophical Studies, 27 (2019) 2, 286–306, 292.

47   Balt, Elias et al.: Gender differences in suicide-related communication of young suicide victims, in: PloS one vol. 16,5 e0252028. 21 May. 2021, 6.

48   Blanchard, Matt/Farber, Barry A.: Lying in psychotherapy. Why and what clients don't tell their therapist about therapyand their relationship, in: Counselling Psychology Quarterly 29 (2016), 90–112.

you know what I mean? Especially in my world, where no one would expect me to do that. I just was so embarrassed."[49]

A further reason for denying suicidal ideation is due to a belief that their testimony will not be taken seriously:

> I don't feel they would have done anything. [...] I just feel like they would just be going, 'Well, you're an alcoholic and these feelings are normal and so on and so forth. There's nothing we can do for you. You just have to get through it.'[50]

In a further study conducted by Blanchard and Farber, results showed that 17% of people with suicidal ideation often blamed therapists for "discouraging disclosure": "either because they failed to ask, did not seem to care enough, or seemed unsympathetic. Those noting this motive implied that they would have disclosed their suicidal ideation had it not been for something about their therapist."[51]

Although Dotson argues that in a case of testimonial smothering the marginalised individual silences their own testimony, she clarifies that the responsibility lies with those who create an environment where such self-silencing is enabled.[52] In the words of Joseph H. Obegi: "If people are saying on paper that they have thoughts of suicide and then deny it when we talk to them, the problem is us…There is something going on in the interaction and how we are asking that is discouraging disclosure."[53]

Conclusion

In January 2018, the UK government announced a "zero suicide ambition" for mental health patients treated in hospitals. While we believe significant strides have been made towards "zero suicide," we propose that an environment of well-attuned testimonial sensibility is essential to achieving this goal. As there is no accurate way of distinguishing between genuine and disingenuous suicide claims, we must take each one seriously. We also argue that it is essential that we attune our testimonial sensibility so that our judgements are not skewed by intersecting identity prejudices, such as socioeconomic positions. While the individual may be able to at-

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49   Richards, Julie E. et al.: Understanding Why Patients May Not Report Suicidal Ideation at a Health Care Visit Prior to a Suicide Attempt: A Qualitative Study, in: Psychiatric Services 70 (2019) 1, 40–45.

50   Ibid., 42.

51   Blanchard/Farber: Lying in psychotherapy, 130–131.

52   Dotson: Tracking Epistemic Violence, 244.

53   D'Arrigo, Terri: Half of patients with Suicidal thoughts deny it, in: Psychiatric News 2021, https://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.pn.2021.10.9 (23/08/2023).

tain external benefits through their suicide claim, we should not assume that this is the overriding reason for the claim or that the claim is deceitful. In demonstrating well-attuned testimonial sensibility to suicide claims, we can create an environment whereby individuals with suicidal ideation are less likely to participate in self-silencing. We hope to have shown that philosophical approaches, such as epistemic injustice, may open up new ways of thinking about suicide prevention strategies.

PART II

Questioning and Reshaping: Tools to Transform Unjust and Violent Epistemic Structures

2.1 Maneuvering Positionality in Philosophy

Participants playing a scene in the forum theater workshop led by Nela Adam at the Munich School of Philosophy in 2022.
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Collaboration or Exploitation?
Identifying Epistemic Exploitation in Academia

Isabela Gonçalves Dourado

Introduction

What is the role of scholars whose work has activist intentions? According to Michael Apple[1], "critical educators must [...] act in concert with the progressive social movements their work supports," thus giving their own "expertise to agendas surrounding movements." He claims that some further conditions should be met in conjunction with this collaboration with social movements, such as "being a committed member of a society that is scarred by persistent inequalities" and "mak[ing] use of our privilege to open the spaces at universities and elsewhere for those who are not there."

This paper engages with the discussion by considering how sometimes what may seem like a fruitful collaborative project is in fact another case of exploitation of the oppressed and less privileged. I endorse the idea that researchers and educators should do their best to contribute to social and political movements. However, this is not always done in a genuine way. Here I shall specifically introduce and discuss two cases of collaboration that turn into exploitation, one between Global North and Global South researchers, and another among the Global South community itself. Both examples are drawn from projects related to anti-colonial, decolonial and post-colonial research.

The role of diversity

I would like to make explicit that I firmly believe that collaboration is essential. I am in agreement with those who defend the idea that diversity of views is a sign of progress, objectivity and justice. However, a somewhat meritocratic sentiment

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1   Apple, Michael: Challenging the Epistemological Fog. The Roles of the Scholar/Activist in Education, in: European Educational Research Journal 15 (2016) 5, 512–513.

has surfaced within the philosophical community through Peter Singer's voice.[2] To paraphrase him: why should we work with researchers from underdeveloped countries if we already have better and more established ones in our own community? What this entails is the following narrative: there are no reasons to work with non-western, or non-white, or non-male dominated academic communities if white male dominated spaces are where the most recent and developed projects are located. An underlying assumption of this narrative is that of the inferiority of non-western research. This inferiority would be expressed, for instance, in terms of their lessened access to resources and a worse command of the standard scientific language, which in turn would result in worse scholarship.

This "inferiority of non-western research" claim is present when Singer argues that philosophers from the Global South are not even participating in the same discussion as he and his peers are. One could say that Singer is correct if we understand that "participating in the same discussions" means to partake in the most prestigious academic environments. This narrative can be defeated if, as Helen De Cruz suggests, we shift perspectives and realize that the problem is not on the side of the underrepresented philosophers. The onus is not on them to "catch-up" to the higher level where Singer is standing.[3] The notion of academic prestige must be questioned. In this context this means that the structural insularity of most anglophone western philosophy departments must be recognized and deconstructed.[4]

An integral part of these institutional structures is the academic publishing system. De Cruz shows us that "the way in which anglophone, western departments cite, invite and hire primarily from each other is not purely due to meritocratic reasons." Inspired by Schliesser's statement that "professional philosophy is best compared to a credit economy with currency controls,"[5] she argues that this way of structuring our professional interactions and activities "further amplifies existing inequities," since the ones that most benefit from the credit economy "already have so much structural advantage in terms of research funds and academic freedom." She concludes with the claim that "more engagement with philosophers outside of

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2   See Gross, Daniel: Peter Singer Is Committed to Controversial Ideas, in: The New Yorker (25/4/2021) https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-interview/peter-singer-is-committed-to-controversial-ideas (27/4/2023).

3   De Cruz, Helen: Why We Ought to Collaborate with Philosophers across the Globe. A Reply to Peter Singer, in: The Philosophers' Cocoon, 2021, https://philosopherscoc oon.typepad.com/blog/2021/04/why-we-ought-to-collaborate-with-philosophers-across-th e-globe-a-reply-to-peter-singer.html (27/4/2023).

4   See Schwitzgebel, Eric et al.: The Insularity of Anglophone Philosophy. Quantitative Analyses, in: Philosophical Papers 47 (2018) 1, 21–48.

5   Schliesser, Eric: Major League Philosophers and an Adjunct, in: Digressions&Impressions 2015, https://digressionsnimpressions.typepad.com/digressionsimpressions/2015/10/when-major-league-philosophers-talk-to-the-rest-of-us.html (27/4/2023).

the credit economy would diversify the field." This diversification would improve our chances of building out a truly global philosophical community. For instance, having more genuine international collaboration could mean more discussions about philosophies of indigenous peoples or feminisms of the South in Anglo-Saxon philosophy departments, a movement that could benefit students from underrepresented groups in philosophy departments in the Global North.

The main concern I want to raise here is that even when people are actively looking to establish international collaboration, there are still significant and complex challenges. One such challenge is connected to the idea of a credit economy in academia but expanded to all social relations, where the currency is social credit (fame, prestige, recognition, admiration, gratitude). This notion of a social credit economy within academia is at play in the two cases I analyze here.

Epistemic exploitation and epistemic appropriation

Two concepts from social epistemology are relevant to this discussion: epistemic exploitation and epistemic appropriation. In Berenstain's words, "epistemic exploitation occurs when privileged persons compel marginalized persons to produce an education or explanation about the nature of the oppression they face."[6] There is an intersectional understanding of oppression and privilege underlying her account: "Someone is a marginalized person within a context of epistemic exploitation if they experience the oppression about which the education is demanded and the person demanding it does not."[7] The kind of epistemic exploitation I wish to highlight occurs when a researcher who is not a member of a given oppressed community decides to develop a collaborative project with them, but only or primarily does so for social credit benefiting their own career, without actually caring to generate research aiming to improve the community, be it directly by helping to change their social reality, or indirectly by lending their privileged position as a researcher to bring more attention to the problems within this community.

Here it is important to discuss the different meanings we may say that someone belongs to a community or group. There is a broader and a contextual sense of belonging. Think of possible cases of North American Black feminists exploiting the work of Latin American Black feminists.[8] In the broader sense, we may say that both belong to the same community of Black feminists. A contextual sense of belonging

6   Berenstain, Nora: Epistemic Exploitation, in: Ergo 3 (2016) 22, 569–590, 570.

7   Ibid.

8   See Perry, Keisha-Khan: The Groundings with My Sisters. Toward a Black Diasporic Feminist Agenda in the Americas, in: The Scholar & Feminist Online Rewriting Dispersal: Africana Gender Studies 7 (2009) 2, https://sfonline.barnard.edu/the-groundings-with-my-sisters-towa rd-a-black-diasporic-feminist-agenda-in-the-americas/ (14/9/2023); Rodrigues, Cristiano et

shows us that there are critical boundaries within the broader communities. On this level, the Latin American and the North American Black feminists do not belong in the same group, so an inter-group exploitative relationship would be considered.

Cases of epistemic exploitation are even more dangerous when involving epistemic appropriation. According to Davis, epistemic appropriation is the sum of epistemic detachment, the phenomenon of dominant groups valuing and acquiring epistemic resources developed within the margins but proceeding to overtly detach them from their producers, and epistemic misdirection, which happens when these resources produced by marginalized knowers are "utilized in dominant discourses in ways that disproportionately benefit the powerful."[9] Focusing our attention on academic settings, we may consider how the intersectionality criterion mentioned above proves to be useful once again, as there is a dynamic of exploitation and appropriation between (a) people from social movements and marginalized groups and (b) people affiliated to universities (without allegiance to social movements or belonging to marginalized groups). In a general way, this dynamic can be described as (b) visiting (a) pretending to have benevolent intentions in establishing a relationship but are doing so to earn epistemic credibility and social credit for prestige among their peers and admiration among their subordinates.

This kind of dynamic can be subtly observed in various supposedly activist practices. A particular case is of what I call "ghost social project." These projects overtly state their purposes as beneficial to the public, but covertly are centered in promoting their organizers' image and influence through different mediatic tools. For instance, when scientists from the university visit traditional rural communities, such as the Brazilian *quilombos*, wanting to enlighten them on sustainable and agroecological practices, while completely ignoring and discrediting how the practices of such communities are already sustainable and have been so due to their generational knowledge which precludes any destructive relationship towards nature. It is interesting to note that these visits connected to supposedly social projects are always put on the spotlights of newspapers and social media as a way to maintain or acquire more social credit, but these activities seem to not lead to structural changes to the academic system.

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        al.: Ativismo Feminista Negro no Brasil: do movimento de mulheres negras ao feminismo interseccional, in: Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política 2021, e238917.

9   Davis, Emmalon: On Epistemic Appropriation, in: Ethics 128 (2018) 4, 702–727, 705.

Two cases of epistemically harmful collaboration

Let us now consider the two cases:

(1) The inter-hemisphere case: A socially privileged Latin American researcher invited to present in Europe taking advantage of the ignorance of their hosts about the context of specific areas of Latin America that they propose to discuss to gain more social credit by talking about decolonization over a given indigenous community without properly addressing the issue.

(2) The intra-hemisphere case: A socially privileged researcher in a Global South country that just started publishing and participating in decolonization debates about a given indigenous community in their country to take advantage of their amplified voice as a researcher only to gain social credit without genuinely caring or contributing to the debate and the community.

Both are seemingly following Apple's condition to "act in concert with the progressive social movements their work supports." Even so, there are epistemic harms present. This means that either Apple's condition is not enough to guarantee a non-exploitative collaboration relationship, or that the researchers from (1) and (2) are in fact distorting what "acting in concert" should mean, thus not following his condition. In case (2) the researcher is even aware of their privileged position, which Apple highlights as a useful tool for promoting social causes, but their use is only for self-benefit. What seems clear is that one can join collaborative efforts for their own sake and manipulate the situation in ways that greatly diminishes the chances of getting ousted or reprehended, as they can make it seem like they are acting in concert with the causes and demands of the marginalized community in question.

How can we identify and avoid these situations? Case (1) and case (2) have slightly different symptoms and diagnosis; thus they require similar, but not the same response. The first case is more related to epistemic appropriation since the researcher is intentionally presenting a simplified and superficial understanding of the epistemic resources from the indigenous community without necessarily misdirecting it completely, as this could prompt a negative reaction from their European hosts. Here the epistemic exploitation is more subtle. The Latin American researcher does cite and appears to recognize some portion of the original producers of the knowledge. What may at first seem like genuine recognition and a proper use of sources to support their project, is in fact an instance of tokenization, in the sense that this portion of the original producers are unilaterally and superficially included in the work, and a lot of other relevant and important sources are arbitrarily left out of the discussion, otherwise the Latin American researcher would have a harder time claiming originality to their contribution. The second case involves epistemic exploitation more explicitly, as the researcher is in their own territory, thus being able to enjoy

the benefits from being in a dominant position, safeguarded by their peers from retaliation coming from the margins.

Addressing case (1) comes with various challenges, such as the problems of the reviewing and publishing system in academia mentioned above, where the prestige keeps out those without the right credentials, and the credit system makes it so that the ones with the right credentials have to continuously compete, so that even if they would like to engage in collaborative work with underrepresented communities, they are pressured into delaying or cancelling these plans as it would not help them accrue more credits. One suggestion would be to seek trustworthy consultants from within the contexts, which is not an easy task, and might generate a form of anxiety and distrust where there is never enough guarantee that the chosen people are not manipulating their images. Responding to case (2) is even more difficult to achieve as it requires a more radical change in the structure of research and higher education institutions, seriously facing up to forms of corruption that come from the credit economy model.

Should Global North researchers completely refrain from contributing to discussions on decolonization if they are not directly collaborating with Global South researchers? No. My point here is to make way for more research on socially relevant topics such as this one. But these research projects without direct collaboration should also be done with care and respect, and not primarily to gain social credit. If that is the case, then what does collaboration without exploitation look like? I believe that the work by Renck and colleagues, "Taking fishers' knowledge and its implications to fisheries policy seriously," is a good example.[10] A group of European researchers collaborated with Latin American researchers from the relevant regions in order to understand more about the fishing practices of marginalized communities living by the riverside. The study explicitly discusses the challenges and risks of such international and transdisciplinary projects and proposes policy changes based on the knowledge produced by the artisanal fisheries in order to improve their social and material reality. Instead of bringing the focus unto themselves as proponents of an innovative project, the work raises awareness for the struggles faced by the marginalized group. It avoids the problems identified in both (1), since there is genuine collaboration between Global North and Global South researchers, and (2), as there is genuine collaboration between researchers and oppressed communities. In other words, it does not involve epistemic exploitation of Global South researchers, nor does it engage in epistemic appropriation towards the fishing community.

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10   See Renck, Vitor et al.: Taking Fishers' Knowledge and Its Implications to Fisheries Policy Seriously, in: Ecology and Society 28 (2023) 2, article 7.

Cautionary tale

"Decolonization is a career move." This assertion means that there are cases in which the choice to work on decolonial studies is primarily motivated by one's self-promotion. It was recently posted online by postcolonial and queer studies researcher Sandeep Bakshi, and it carries one of the key messages that motivate this paper. Bakshi is making a general claim prompted by a specific instance of malpractice within the decolonial studies field: the sexual misconduct case of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, prestigious Portuguese sociologist, and left-wing activist, famous due to his works on decolonization. It illustrates well the complexity and systematicity[11] of the problem of epistemic exploitation and appropriation in collaborative projects: a prominent figure in the field of decolonization, who supposedly is an ally to the marginalized knowledge producers, is in fact are using them to acquire both academic and social credit.

The scenario is as follows. Three women who underwent Santos' supervision at the Social Studies Centre in Coimbra, which was founded by him, accused Santos and other members of abuse of power and sexual harassment via an anonymized chapter published on a Routledge book about sexual misconduct in academia. Soon after publication, two main reactions occurred.[12] First, retaliation from Santos through interviews[13] and a letter called "Journal of a Defamation."[14] Second, support for the victims through a manifest signed by Portuguese researchers.[15] The power imbalance in this case became even clearer due to the recent publicization of a previously private letter in solidarity of Boaventura de Sousa Santos signed by almost eighty "prominent personalities from several countries," ranging from authors who are also facing sexual harassment accusations, such as John Comaroff[16], to admired scholars, such as Lewis Gordon, Chantal Mouffe, and Etienne Balibar.

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11   See Mansfield, Beck et al.: It's Time to Recognize How Men's Careers Benefit from Sexually Harassing Women in Academia, in: Human Geography 12 (2019) 1, 82–87.

12   Pritchard, Erin, et al.: Sexual Misconduct in Academia. Informing an Ethics of Care in the University, London 2023.

13   See Câncio, Fernanda: Boaventura dá primeira entrevista sobre acusações: "Fui feminista toda a vida. Mas é preciso distinguir as lutas genuínas", in: Diário de Notícias, (12/7/2023) ht tps://www.dn.pt/sociedade/boaventura-da-primeira-entrevista-sobre-acusacoes-fui-femin ista-toda-a-vida-mas-e-preciso-distinguir-as-lutas-genuinas-16683463.html (14/9/2023).

14   See Santos, Boaventura: The Journal of a Defamation, in: Other News – Voices against the Tide, (18/4/2023) https://www.other-news.info/the-journal-of-a-defamation/ (14/9/2023).

15   "WE ALL KNOW" BUALA, (18/4/2023) https://www.buala.org/en/mukanda/we-all-know (13/9/2023).

16   See Xiu, Meimei: Harvard Prof. John Comaroff Faces New Allegations of Misconduct in Amended Suit, in: The Harvard Crimson (29/6/2022) https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2 022/6/29/comaroff-amended-complaint/ (14/9/2023).

Routledge unilaterally decided to "permanently withdraw" the chapter.[17] Before we move on to discuss how this case also involves epistemic exploitation and appropriation, first let me describe how it fulfils all the standard conditions of reactions to sexual misconduct accusations in academia:

- Unequal standing: a prominent figure in a trending field with a lot of political and epistemic power is accused of sexual harassment by former students and receives massive support from their powerful peers.
- Delayed justice: the accusation occurs years later because the victims feared even stronger victim blaming.
- Alternative means: the victims chose to avoid the legal and institutional means for the accusation since those are intentionally ineffective in such cases.
- Credibility deficit: the victims' accusation is dismissed as personal revenge and ideological dispute, as well as other forms of undermining their credibility.
- Silencing: the chapter is deemed false and lacking in scientific rigor, withdrawn from publication.

One important consideration is that this example represents just the tip of the iceberg. As the manifest "WE ALL KNOW" vehemently puts it,

> asymmetries in power lead female researchers, dependent on the institution's validation for their financial and even migratory security, to silence their abuse to avoid problems or even retaliation. […] To date, in the two days since the chapter was made public, there were dozens of public testimonies and as many complaints – all reporting a reality undeniably known and tolerated for decades.

One of the testimonies that surged after the publication of the chapter is especially relevant for our purposes, as it draws connections to how Boaventura practiced epistemic exploitation and appropriation. An Argentinian indigenous activist, Moira Millán, described in an interview how Boaventura de Sousa Santos attempted to sexually abuse her in 2010.[18] In an open letter addressing Santos, Millán highlighted how his work engages in epistemic exploitation and appropriation:

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17   See Morgan, John: Sexual Misconduct Book Chapter 'Spiked' after Professor Objects, in: Times Higher Education (THE) (12/9/2023) https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/sexual-misconduct-book-chapter-spiked-after-professor-objects (13/9/2023).

18   See Kotowicz, Ana: Moira Millán, a indígena argentina que acusa Boaventura de tentativa de abuso: 'Ele que me olhe na cara, nos olhos, e negue o que me fez', in: Observador, (14/9/2023) https://observador.pt/especiais/moira-millan-a-indigena-argentina-que-acusa-boaventura-de-tentativa-de-abuso-ele-que-me-olhe-na-cara-nos-olhos-e-negue-o-que-me-fez/ (14/9/2023).

You have been the beneficiary of large sums of money to investigate our struggles and the mechanisms of colonization and oppression that we still suffer. You are part of academic extractivism, (…) using us as guinea pigs for your research that grants you privileges and power. You are incapable of considering reciprocity with the peoples and activists, who are leading the fight against colonialism and oppression.[19]

Her speech must prompt us to cast doubt on the legitimacy of Santos' motivations to do sociological and philosophical research on the Global South. Nirwal Puwar has picked up on this issue of epistemic exploitation and appropriation and framed it as a center-staging process, through which figures such as Santos propose to bring knowledge from the South to the North, but "it is they who become the flag bearers of this enterprise" in place of the marginalized knowers who produced the now suddenly valuable resources.[20]

Conclusion

This paper is a cautionary tale of how there can be hidden and overlooked challenges to genuine collaboration within research contexts. It is successful insofar as it contributes to a broader comprehension of the risks involved in inter-communal collaboration and provides some tools for both reflection and action to those who recognize the importance of seriously accounting for the multiple layers of injustice underlying the structures of academia. I believe that any solutions to cases like the ones presented above are not to be carelessly generalized. I am not very optimistic about the effectiveness and implementation of solutions to these issues in a universal way. The necessary changes at least begin to spread through local initiatives around the globe. The lesson to be learned is that we need collaboration and diversification, but this must be done to produce research that seriously and consistently cares for the issues addressed, and not to satisfy the urge for academic and social credit.

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19   Fúnez-Flores, Jairo: A thread on Indigenous Mapuche Activist Moira Millan's Open Letter to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in: Twitter, (11/6/2023) https://twitter.com/Jairo_I_Funez/status/1667869718902972419 (14/9/2023).
20   See Puwar, Nirmal: Puzzlement of a Déjà vu: Illuminaries of the Global South, in: The Sociological Review 68 (2020) 3, 540–556.

Body, Place, and Story – Who am I Doing Philosophy with Indigenous Peoples?

Barbara Schellhammer

Introduction

This text is a personal account of my experiences with Indigenous peoples and communities in Canada over the last 25 years. I am very grateful for this book and the opportunity it offers to reflect on the intricacies between knowledge and power – workings I have felt since my early school days. In my work as philosopher, I often rely on phenomenological approaches that are bound to concrete life experiences. Yet, when I write "philosophical" texts that have to stand the test of rigorous academic procedures, I can rarely allow myself to be guided by my intuition, the knowledge of my body or deeper layers of experience. This is not to say that "checks and balances" in the academe are not important. Also here, in this book, we included a peer review process (even if it is on a smaller scale with "just" the editors reviewing). The question however is, who or what structural, historical, or cultural presumptions lay the foundation for the guiding principles and criteria of such procedures? Who decides for what reasons what is "worth" to be published?

According to phenomenological principles, I will develop my thoughts on the entanglements of knowledge and power based on my experience. It will be a personal account of becoming a "philosopher,"[1] and more particular a philosopher who is (com)passionate about doing philosophy with Indigenous peoples. Saying that still comes with a lot of doubt and hesitation – for many reasons, two stand out: My own life story of becoming a "knowing person", even an "intellectual," and my experiences with Indigenous peoples in Canada. I have the feeling that both are interrelated. Yet, I find myself hesitant to draw the lines too quickly as I cannot compare my situation to the traumatic history of colonial suppression and violence of Indigenous peoples. Who am I to feel drawn to and in a very subtle, yet profound way close

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1   Writing these lines in English, I find myself feeling awkward not to be able to write "Philosoph*in*". It has never really occurred to me before. There is something about being a "woman philosopher" that has – I gather – a lot to do with my way of becoming a "philosopher" questioning my abilities and skills.

to my Indigenous colleagues and friends? Both lines of experience will guide this text.

Moreover, the question "who am I" has at least two different connotations: First, a rather critical one, who am *I* as a white woman and academic who has been trained in the European tradition desiring to learn more about and dialogue with Native American thought? Everything along the lines of cultural appropriation, questioning my motivation, wokeness and political correctness belongs here.[2] The second implication emphasises the "am" on a very existential level. It refers to a number of experiences which touched on my being, which changed me as a person. It deals with a number of deep doubts, with the limits of dialogue, and the limits of being understood. It traces down some of the undercurrents of unconscious motivations of my own biography as well as the heavy burden of a colonial past and present I have been feeling ever since I had the chance to be with Indigenous peoples.

As I said, I am grateful for the opportunity to uncover and better understand the sometimes diffuse and hazy emotions when I am in intercultural spaces, when I write or teach about Indigenous philosophies and when I converse with Native colleagues and friends. I sense that this conscious practice of "self-care and truthtelling" is necessary to better understand what "knowledge," "participation," and the "power of discourse" mean and hence to create a finer sense for epistemic injustices.

Thus, my text has three parts, all of which look at the connection between power and knowledge: In the beginning, I will reflect on my bumpy road of becoming "an academic." Secondly, I will draw from key experiences with Indigenous peoples – experiences that helped me to grasp or "know" things without being able to (rationally) understand or even explain them. Thirdly, I will look at some of the critical demands that come with a growing sensitivity to injustices, privileges, and power differences in the academic, and more particular, philosophical world. Here, the concept of telling the truth (Greek *pharresia*) could be helpful as it is also a political term challenging the power of discourse as well as the power of a certain kind of knowledge.

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2   It is significant to note that many of the terms used in the context of minority rights have a turbulent history and can be harnessed to many different, often problematic wagons. Yet, they came from a place of marginalization and suppression and thus convey an important message in its original meaning. Often, they were captured and distorted in pejorative and sarcastic ways. "Identity politics" for example is a term coined by the *Combahee River Collective*, a Black feminist lesbian group who stated that their strength to face oppression needs to come from their own identity, because nobody else cares. "Woke", too, comes from African American groups who demanded a vigilant and sensitive attitude ("stay woke!") when it comes to racism or sexism as well as social inequalities. The meaning of a word is its use in a language (Wittgenstein) – it lies in what language does. The terms mentioned here are full of tension and always in danger to be (mis-)used by all kinds of political camps, and to fall into negative extremes, although they carry important messages.

1. Struggling to be also someone who "knows"

In *Indigegogy*, the book the Cree Scholar Stan Wilson invited me to be part of, he uses a metaphor describing his experience of learning how to use the tools of Western science: "I feel much like I am in a birch bark canoe on the open ocean at night trying my best to keep from being swamped and then dragged along in the monstrous wake of the passing great ship *American Hegemony*."[3] Although I come from this great big ship Stan talks about (or at least its European tradition), I felt so close to him in his flimsy canoe. I wasn't very good in school, in fact my first school years were marked by massive self-doubt, the feeling that everyone else in my class could do, understand, and know everything better than me. I probably did not fit to what the German school system considered valuable – at least not when it comes to performances that show in grades. The experience of not being able to keep up, of not having the prerequisites to be part of the group who is "good" or even "very good," led to an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness. It was a troublesome experience to be caught on that big iron ship without the ability to escape its logic. I ended up at the "Hauptschule," the lowest stream of the quite competitive school system in Germany. I already mentioned it in the introduction: I can by no means compare my feeling of powerlessness within the normative constraints every educational system brings about with the brutality of an educational system that deliberately set out to "kill the Indian in the child." At least my "ship" was safe, quite to the contrary of Stan's fragile canoe.

I remember that it was one sentence that changed everything for me. It came from my teacher in grade 5, an older man who seemed to have seen more in me than other teachers before and myself. It was simple and yet so very powerful, he just said: "You are not stupid." It was as if someone really thought that I have the capacity to keep up with my peers, to even be good in all the things that I was supposed to know – and it turned out that I actually was.

However, it wasn't "good enough" to enter university. Thus, I "had" to study social work first to gain the credentials needed to access the "real" academic world. This first degree brought me to Canada where I conducted my social work practicum working with juvenile sex offenders in open custody. Most of them were Indigenous (although only about 5% of the population are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit).[4] Soon

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3   Wilson, Stan/Schellhammer, Barbara: Indigegogy. An Invitation to Learning in a Relational Way, Darmstadt 2021, 71.

4   There are a number of problems with the term "Indigenous". It encompasses a wide range of very diverse cultural groups and diminishes their diversity in tradition, language, and geographical region. Moreover, it stems from the Latin *indi-gena* ("inside" and "born") and defines peoples in relation to their colonizers, it thus is a colonial term. Other words like "Aboriginal" are not less problematic – the prefix "ab-" carries a negative connotation as in "*ab*normal". The Canadian constitution (of 1982, section 35) considers three Indigenous groups: First Na-

I learned about the horrific colonial past which is still very much alive in today's Canada. I wanted to know more about the connection between cultural loss(es) and the overwhelming psycho-social suffering I experienced.[5] This was the beginning of the doctoral research for my PhD in philosophy.

2. Who am I who wants to know?

For that I offered my services as a social worker to the Inuvialuit (Inuit living in the Western region of the Canadian Arctic called Northwest Territories) while at the same time disclosing that I would like to do research using Clifford Geertz' thick description. This approach seeks to just be with people in "the field" without any "methods" like questionnaires or other pre-scripted means of data collection. Culture, for Geertz, resembles a "web of significance" people create by living together at a certain time and a certain place. The analysis of it, Geertz explains, is not "an experiential science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[6] It seemed obvious to me that people being robbed of their culture and with it their significance lose the very ground they live on – in Canada they literally lost the land and soil their identity sprung from. It pained me that their incredible knowledge and creative skills to live in one of the most threatening environments on the earth seemed to become obsolete.

But even more than that, I experienced a jumble of feelings that I could hardly get sorted. Looking back many years later, I sense that at the heart of things stood a strong feeling of helplessness in midst of a lot of pain. I worked with a woman who just lost her husband to suicide, still being bruised from his last hitting her. Another woman shared with me, still shocked about herself, that she wounded her neighbor being drunk so much that this person had to be flown out to a hospital. I could tell many more stories of children hiding from their abusing parents or people freezing to death – stories that are horrific enough to feel desperate. However, my sense of helplessness came from a different place, it had to do with severely questioning my role in the community. I did not know who I was for the people and – what was even more daunting – I did not know how to express myself and how to connect with them. I was not Canadian, hence not directly related to what happened during the

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tions, Metis, and Inuit. (Monchalin, Lisa: The Colonial Problem. An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada, Toronto 2016, 1 ff.)

5   With terms like "cultural genozide" and its main strategy to establish residential schools to "kill the Indian in the child" this connection becomes utterly clear. Since the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada the term "cultural genocide" has been officially used. (Summary of the TRC Report: https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-conten t/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf (16.11.2023), 1).

6   Geertz, Clifford: The Interpretation of Cultures, New York 1973, 5.

colonization of the Inuit. Yet, I was of course sticking out as this tall white woman representing "modernity," a "privileged elite," and "civilisation" – I was white in a racist context. I realised that my helplessness was not so much about the "knowledge" I was after, it was much more about knowing how to connect, how to gain trust. I longed for it, sometimes also feeling quite lonely, while at the same time questioning my intentions. Here again, one incidence changed a lot for me.

Together with a number of youth and an elder from the community Ulukhaktok, I went on a winter fishing trip. We were supposed to fish the supply for the winter. It was extremely cold on the sled, travelling for many hours over land and the ice-covered sea. Once we arrived, I realized that I had frozen one of my toes. After a quick inspection, the elder decided that I should go back to see a nurse and ordered two hunters to pass by on their way back to take me with them. It was obvious that they disliked the order very much. Their sleds were full of fish and animals, therefore I had to sit on the back seat of their skidoo. I felt extremely vulnerable and dependent while they were not speaking a single word with me. I don't know how long it took until we arrived in the community. The woman I worked with was already waiting for me. She helped me from the skidoo and brought me to the nursing station. She wrapped me in warm blankets and took off my boots. She gently took my bare foot and tucked it under her T-shirt to warm it against her belly, to my great protest. She calmed me down and explained that she had brought up three children and knew what to do in the event of frostbite. I did not know what to do, trusted her and let go. Not only did I feel the healing warmth for my feet, I was in contact, enjoying the impression of safety and closeness.

After a while of just being silent, I found myself sharing with her my troubles of not knowing how to connect and how embarrassed I felt that I had to be brought back to the community. She did not say much – if anything at all. But I got this very deep impression that she was listening. In my notes I wrote: "It was good to talk *with* her in this moment of complete exposure about the most pressing questions of my research – questions I usually only shared with my peers by talking *about* them (the Inuit)."[7] I was even able to share with her my uncomfortable feelings of representing the colonizer, feeling the heavy burden of what happened and with it all the horrible things also social workers had done to Indigenous peoples, e. g. taking away their children during the so called "Sixties Scoop"[8] arrogantly assuming that they know best what is good for their children. In these moments of vulnerability and deep

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7   Schellhammer, Barbara: "Dichte Beschreibung" in der Arktis. Clifford Geertz und die Kultur-revolution der Inuit in Nordkanada, Bielefeld 2015, 264.

8   The "Sixties Scoop" refers to a period in which a series of policies were enacted in Canada that enabled child welfare authorities to take ("scoop up") Indigenous children from their families to place them in foster homes, from which they would be adopted by white families. Despite its name referencing the 1960s, it began in the mid-to-late 1950s and lasted into the 1980s.

connection, I gained so much more knowledge about living in the far North, than with everything else that I had learned before – all the factitious knowledge that gave me the wrong impression of power and control. I understood the elder's reservations of learnings that come from books when it comes to their relevance of living on and off the land. The land is teaching its inhabitants, for example, that it does not matter where you come from, but you need to be able to rely on each other to survive.

It was just recently that I realized how my attention shifted from an emotionally loaded sense of the injustices and injuries that have been done (it may have also been something like compassion or even pity that I am not proud of), to a strong desire to involve Indigenous thought in mainstream, "Western" philosophy pursuing to decolonize it. I am now eager to shift what is at the margins of philosophy to its center, and thus to question "philosophy" itself. In other words, my attention shifted from a state of shock, maybe even moral injury, from seeing victims and survivors of cultural genocide to the awareness of how important Indigenous philosophy is to face some of the most pressing problems of our today's world, for example with regards to theories of sustainability and environmental ethics or alternative juridical systems ("restorative justice") seeking to heal instead to punish. However, not being Indigenous myself, this created a different set of problems with regards to knowledge and power.

3. Knowing between a rock and a hard place

I have a number of non-Indigenous colleagues and friends in Canada who say that they would never touch anything that is related to Indigenous issues as it was too "hot," too much of a "mined terrain." I gather that socio-cultural sensitivities still seem to be rising, even after (or maybe also because of) the "Truth and Reconciliation Hearings"[9] that took place across the country. We experience a growing sensitivity here in Germany, too, e. g. questioning Karl May's projections of Native Americans including distorted representations of history while ignoring its colonial tragedies.[10]

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9   The TRC was a result of the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement* and involved hearings across Canada in which Indigenous people shared what they had suffered through and in the aftermath of the "Indian Residential School System". The commission started its work in 2008 and presented its final report in 2015.

10   The literary scholar Hartmut Lutz coined the term "Indianthusiasts" to designate German enthusiasts for North American Indigenous peoples and their cultures. Most of the enthusiasm originates from Karl May's adventurous stories which are coming under increasing criticism, because they paint and reinforce a stereotypical and racist picture of Indigenous peoples – even if it is positive.

After Stan and I had finished our manuscript, we gave it to several people to read and comment on it. One of our Indigenous proof-readers warned us that the weaving of my thoughts into Stan's text could come across as white validation for Indigenous voice. And he added in a very assertive way that Stan would have his own voice. His comment hurt, it hit me on a very profound level. That was exactly *not* what I wanted, at the same time I was afraid that he may be right, and people could think that way. I was lost considering giving up the whole project and offered Stan to publish the book just with his words without mine. However, this was not an option for him, he wanted this to be a joint project, modeling how different cultures could come together, even after a very hurtful history. Still, I wondered what it is that I can say in midst of this sensitive atmosphere – or should I better say nothing at all? It felt like touching a wound that still takes a lot of time to heal. I realized that we probably cannot escape history or just look at it from the outside. The historical strings of harmful relationships are attached to us. I am entangled in them – with who I am, where I come from and what I represent. It hurt, because I felt misunderstood, and – what is even more difficult – I did not know what I could do about it. How can I write in such a way that it transports what I want to say – and that I can be sure, it does not reproduce colonial patterns? I probably can't. What I put on paper becomes a life of its own. What we say changes its meaning in the process of getting heard.

Yet it doesn't seem to be helpful either when white academics start to whine and feel sorry for themselves. During an online conference on co-creative research with Indigenous peoples, somebody mentioned that this whole talk of white researchers about their self-doubt is just another way of bringing *their* issues in the foreground, it is just another form of epistemic arrogance.[11] Once more, I wondered what it was that I can say.

I learn a lot from Stan in these things. His gentle and unexcited way to deal with sheer racism as well as with exaggerated political correctness often brought me down and out of my emotional carousel. Some time ago I wrote a text in which I started by pointing out my privileges (what seems to be one of the "should's" for white academics) – Stan just asked how I would know that I am privileged? He did not say it, but I got his point by thinking that he may also insinuate that I am suggesting that he isn't. In a different text I quoted (without knowing) a queer "pretendian" (short for: pretend to be Indian). An Indigenous woman who read my first draft was very clear in saying: "Don't quote this person!" I fully understood why she got so upset. Pretending to be Indigenous seems to be the most all-encompassing form of cul-

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11   This reminds of Robin DiAngelo's (2018) analysis in *White Fragility* that it is difficult for white people to see what they cannot see as white people, that it is simply not possible for them to experience what "people of colour" experience. Yet, particularly white people who think that they are liberal, "left", super-reflected, responsive, etc. are enforcing persistent forms of systemic racism.

tural appropriation. Somewhat similar was my experience of receiving a peer review comment for a text that I had written about Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth*.[12] Her book touched me deeply, particularly with regards to my relationship with nature, the nature that I am, and with something a number of Indigenous authors call "sovereign erotics." The reviewer's critique was that I would come across as "a white woman going Inuk [. . .], which was much critiqued and parodied for its New Ageists ideas and practices of appropriation of Indigenous cultures."[13] I talked with Stan about it – he wasn't quite as clear about this issue by simply stating that culture can be learned – it even *has* to be learned, that is the very nature of culture. What is morally wrong about people being drawn to Indigenous ways, he asked, practicing them respectfully and involving them into their lives? We emailed back and forth asking us where the line is between the necessary respect for minority groups and "too much of the good," to much political correctness, e. g. when comes the point when land acknowledgements at the beginning of a meeting turn into an empty phrase, in a "thin" formula that lost its "thick" meaning? What gets lost in the translation of traditional knowledge and practices – especially when they move from an oral tradition to text, from a living entity to a list that can be checked off? Traditionally, protocols made sure that any knowledge passed on would be living.

This may bring me back to the question: Who am I? What is my intention of writing, following certain protocols and trying to be sensitive to this space between myself and another culture? The Cree scholar Margaret Kovach talks about the importance of a "good heart" and a "good mind" from which writers are able to convey a positive spirit in their words.[14] To ask ourselves who and where we are when we write or do intercultural philosophy with Indigenous people, to check for whom or what we are writing for, is imperative to maneuver through the many shoals and currents of epistemic violence.

Here, I find the Greek concept of *pharresia* helpful. It means to speak the truth, to get real with regards to all the things that move us including all our less glorious motives like the desire for recognition, to be a knowledgeable person, to show how incredibly morally reflected one is and so on.[15] However, telling the truth is not just a practice of honest self-exploration and frank self-expression, it is also a political practice which is necessary to encounter unequal relationships between power and knowledge, to fight epistemic injustices. Although not everything went well during

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12   Tagaq, Tanja: Split Tooth, Toronto 2019.

13   Peer Review 1 of Schellhammer, Barbara: Reading "Split Tooth" – Lessons of the Sovereign Erotic I take away and still grapple with, in: Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien (ZKS), 43 (2023) 73, 94–107.

14   Kovach, Margaret: Indigenous Methodologies. Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts, Toronto 2009, 7.

15   I mostly refer here to Michel Foucault's *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres: le courage de la verité*. The course he taught at the Collège de France from 1982–83.

the "Truth and Reconciliation Hearings,"[16] it gave Indigenous people the chance to tell the truth about their experiences being stripped off their culture. It confronted the rest of Canada with the bare brutality of colonization.

I guess I will not stop to write or to teach Indigenous philosophy. However, I will also never come to an end asking myself who I am and why I do what I do. Thus, I will continue this wavering learning journey. It gives me a lot of hope that Alice Keewatin suggests in the foreword of our book that "words are not exclusionary" as "spirit is not bound by language or culture, it travels through pure hearts."[17] I asked Stan if he can teach me to paddle with him in his canoe. Before I jump from *Hegemony* into the open ocean, he suggests, I should make sure to see an Indigenous craft available for the rescue.[18] Indeed, I need people like Stan to help me find a way, even in uncomfortable places between a rock and a hard place. It is not me getting out of this, it is people like him or the women in Ulukhaktok accepting me, trusting me, giving me the impression that I am capable of learning from them.

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16   Schellhammer, Barbara: Truth and Reconciliation in Kanada. Zur Bedeutung indigener Philosophietraditionen für die Heilung des kulturellen Genozids unter Ureinwohnern, in: polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren 42 (2019), 61–73.
17   Keewatin, Alice: Foreword "A doorway to the book", in: Wilson, Stan/Schellhammer, Barbara: Indigegogy, 17 f.
18   Wilson/Schellhammer: Indigegogy, 73.

Self-compassion and Epistemic Injustice

Lena Schützle

There is a fundamental tension when philosophers occupy themselves with epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy. Where does this tension come from? Reading and writing about epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy, philosophers are in a constant state of self-reflection and critique of their own profession. What makes the difference here to meta philosophical questions is that they are also impacted to varying degrees by the injustice and violence that is inflicted by this profession.

One strategy to release this tension is pretending to retreat to the place of an independent observer who miraculously philosophizes without being part of the profession philosophy, and who certainly is not a common member of the society that is confronted with power structures. Besides the question whether this is even possible, it should be clear in this book, luckily, that this is not the path we are taking. Instead, we move in a field of tension between concern, criticism, analysis and rebellion. In order not to burst under this tension, it might do philosophers, working on epistemic injustice in philosophy, good to deliberately deal with challenging feelings at certain points. I believe that self-compassion – and I will explain how I understand this term – can help, to some extent, to deal with the recognition of one's own ignorance or experience of discrimination. Moreover, this might even represent an important step towards reducing epistemic violence in academic philosophy. Let me sketch how firstly ignorance and secondly the experience of discrimination can play out when studying epistemic injustice.

Whether we are philosophers in academia or not, we need to deal with our own ignorance.[1] Again and again we will encounter perspectives that we have so far blanked out. As most of the chapters in this book demonstrate, this ignorance has enormous effects on our environment. This ignorance can be a defense mechanism in order not to deal with systems of domination or internalized mechanisms of oppression, and is in itself a fatiguing matter in the long run. But unless we learn

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1   I retrieved this term from Mills, Charles: White ignorance, in: Sullivan, Shannon/Tuana, Nancy (eds.): Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance, New York 2007, 11–38.

other ways to dismantle and work with our own ignorance, we tend to believe that there is no alternative.

Furthermore, academic philosophers as well as non-academic scholars are faced with racist[2] and sexist[3] texts, mechanisms of exclusion in academia and blunt as well as subtler discriminating behavior in everyday life. Since philosophers are not independent observers, but also marked by societies' categorizations, discriminating texts at times target their readers. As a BIPoC philosopher[4], it may have an impact on your mood, thinking capacity, and motivation if you (have to) read racist passages like those from Kant.[5] Similarly, as a queer person it might be an extra effort to translate heteronormative, gendered theories so that it fits your lived experience.

In the following, I want to (1) make some general remarks about epistemic injustice in the field of philosophy of compassion before I explain (2) how I use the term self-compassion in this text. I will (3) argue that facing epistemic injustice in philosophy can be emotionally and physically demanding in different ways. Subsequently, I will (4) discuss how self-compassion can be a strategy to cope with such challenges; all the while keeping in mind that self-compassion does not do away with epistemic injustices. Finally, I (5) offer two examples of how this approach could be implemented in practice before I (6) conclude.

In this paper, I consider both positions: people who contribute to injustice and violence within philosophy (e.g. through ignorance) as well as people who suffer from these forms of epistemic injustice and violence. Because, firstly, we can find ourselves in both roles simultaneously. And secondly, both roles activate emotional and cognitive responses that can be detected and cared for on an embodied level.

1.   Discourse on compassion in academic philosophy

When studying the philosophy of compassion, or related phenomena like sympathy and empathy, we quickly come across well-known Western philosophers like Augustinus, Schopenhauer, Hume etc.[6] Increasingly, we also find philosophers who engage in non-Western approaches, e.g. Ohashi's phenomenology of compassion. However, whether so-called non-Western approaches are vividly discussed depends

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2   See e.g. Abundez-Guerra, Victor Fabian: How to deal with Kant's Racism – in and out of classroom, in: Teaching Philosophy 41 (2) 2018, 117–135.

3   See e.g. Mercer, Christia: The Philosophical Roots of Misogyny, in Philosophical Topics 46 (2) 2018, 183–208.

4   BIPoC is an abbreviation for Black and Indigenous People and People of Color.

5   See e.g. Kant, Immanuel: On the Different Human Races, in: Mikkelsen, Jon M. (trans. and ed.): Kant and the Concept of Race: Late 18th Century Writings, New York 2013, 55–72.

6   See e.g. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (31/3/2008) https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/empathy/#HisInt, (04/04/2024).

on structural systems of knowledge that are imprinted by epistemic hierarchies (see chapters before).

We can ask ourselves what theories of compassion are disregarded within academic philosophy and why? The concept of Ubuntu[7] for example, has, in the last years, gained popularity in European and US-American (intercultural) philosophical discourses. However, it is always referred to as African philosophy or ethnophilosophy, marking the "otherness" of this approach. Ethnophilosophy is not just another discipline within academic philosophy. Once marked as the "other" it receives a negative connotation.[8]

Similarly, but different, we can witness an interest in the Buddhist concept of compassion (Sanskrit: karuṇā). While many Western blogs are filled with references to these ideas[9], philosophers – if at all – usually refer to Western canonical thinkers when talking about compassion. We can see a gap between the discourse of non-Western concepts of compassion and Western concepts which can be crystallized at the dualistic distinction between embodied or practical on the one hand and theoretical on the other.

Apart from asking which theories of compassion are discussed and cited, I come across another striking question when reading philosophical texts on compassion. Do the authors that I consult have to show compassionate behavior in order for their theories to be legitimate? Does their lifestyle say something about the validity of their theory? If so, what does that say about the concurrence of sexist notions in an opus on compassion? Can we rely on philosopher's theories on compassion when they also managed to construct a theory of race? These questions exceed the scope of this paper and will be discussed elsewhere.

This small digression has shown that philosophizing about compassion is itself bequeathed and would lend itself to a deeper analysis from the perspective of epistemic violence. Questions of interpretive authority, positioning, and integrity play a crucial role in thinking about compassion. Nevertheless, in the following, we will focus on the question to what extent self-compassion can support us in dealing with our own ignorance or experiences of discrimination within philosophy. For this, we gradually approach an understanding of self-compassion.

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7   A philosophical concept and Bantu term, that can be translated as "humanity", see Mugumbate, Jacob Rugare/Chereni, Admire: Now, the theory of Ubuntu has its space in social work, in: AJSW 10 (2020) 1, vi.

8   See Spivak, Gayatri: Can the subaltern speak?, in: Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, London 2007, 271–313; Kresse, Kai: Zur afrikanischen Philosophiedebatte, in: Polylog 2 (2000), https://lit.polylog.org/2/ekk-de.htm (03/11/2023).

9   See e.g. https://karunaintegratedwellness.com (03/11/2023).

1.1   What is compassion?

So, what do I mean when I talk about compassion? The most obvious translation would be "to suffer with somebody." Although this is a common interpretation of compassion, I think that the notion that compassion is simply sharing the suffering of another is misleading. Despite the etymological root, "[compassion] is feeling *for* and not feeling *with* the other."[10] Compared to compassion, empathy is rather limited to the "vicarious psychological reaction to the situation or psychological state of another,"[11] while compassion can be understood as an attitude that can be trained.[12] A model of compassion that convinces me the most is the ReSource Model by Tania Singer *et al.* from social neuroscience. Here, compassion is described as an "attitude to life, a way of relation to the 'self', others and the world"[13] which can be trained. It consists of three elements: presence, affect (emotional-motivational capacities), and perspective. The capacities of all three elements complement each other in such a way that they promote a compassionate attitude toward life. Therefore, one can firstly train the capacity to recognize what is happening within oneself and in the environment. Secondly, training emotional components such as the intention to release suffering, the capacity to accept difficult emotions, and open-heartedness as of care and gratitude, is necessary to attain a compassionate attitude. Lastly, the capacity to empathize with oneself and others while seeing the impermanence of the current situation constitutes the third crucial element for a compassionate attitude.[14] Compassion is thus not a spontaneous emotion, nor is it a solely emotional *or* mental capacity. Rather, it is an attitude that can be trained on multiple levels. This embodied training exceeds purely theoretical pondering and is a crucial part of engaged or transformative philosophy.

In a nutshell, compassion is an attitude that is rooted in presence, heart qualities, and perspective taking. In its complexity it helps us relate to self, others, and the world with care and concern while maintaining a certain distance that prevents us from overidentification.

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10   Singer, Tania/Klimecki, Olga: Empathy and compassion, in: Current Biology 24 (2014) 18, R875-R878.

11   See Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy: https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/themat ic/empathy/v-1 (10/11/2023).

12   Singer, Tania et al.: The ReSource Project. Background, design, samples, and measurements, Leipzig 2016², 17.

13   Ibid.

14   See ibid., 24.

1.2   Does compassion help overcome epistemic injustice?

Following Anupam Yadav's and Baiju P. Anthony's presentation in Munich 2022, compassion practices might be effective in reducing epistemic injustices. Stereotypes or biases are a causal element of testimonial injustice. They inform whose testimony is regarded as truth bearing and whose voices are ignored. According to Yadav and Anthony, the "[virtue] of compassion helps the hearer to step back from the prejudicial exclusions prompted by him."[15] In this regard, compassion helps to reflect upon internalized biases that are responsible for testimonial injustices.

In a collaborative writing project with Lieke Asma (also author of this book), we are exploring the extent to which compassion can reduce implicit bias. Studies with the keywords "compassion" or "empathy" and "implicit bias" are examined, carrying promising titles that point into that direction. However, it has not yet been proven whether compassion or empathy really reduce implicit bias. One of the main difficulties is that empathy and implicit bias are closely intertwined. Therefore, it does not make sense to say that one causes or reduces the other, but rather that empathy may be the predisposition of reduced biases.

However, there is a more foundational level on which we can address compassion and epistemic injustice. That is, as compassion towards ourselves, when facing epistemic injustice and violence in philosophy. This does not resolve any injustice nor does it do away with violence that happens on a daily basis. Rather, it shifts the perspective from seeking outward solutions to an inward emotional inventory and more resilience.

2.   Self-compassion

Self-compassion is a specific expression of compassion directed towards ourselves. It is a caring attention of what moves oneself without falling into the trap of self-pity. Kristin Neff is one of the most popular scholars in the field of self-compassion. In her book *Fierce self-compassion. How women can harness kindness to speak up, claim their power and thrive* (2021), she takes up the cudgels for the powerful, angry side of compassion. Often, compassion is understood as a gentle attitude, which glosses over any effort to resist. However, compassion can also give rise to a fierce reaction that

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15   Yadav, Anupam/Anthony, Baiju: Indian & Western Approaches to Epistemic Liberation: A Comparative Study, Munich (2/12/2022).

draws healthy[16] boundaries. Kristin Neff uses the image of mama bear. Mama bear is very kind and sweet towards her cubs as long as what is dear to her is safe. Yet, when her little one is in danger she will react with a loud roar and bared teeth. I don't want to take this metaphor too far since I don't agree with the gender binary she reproduces in her book (she addresses cis women only and in combination with this the metaphor of mothering appears in a very gendered context)[17]. What we can take away is Neff's notion of fierceness that can accompany a self-compassionate attitude.

Sitting alone at my desk and practicing the above-mentioned elements of compassion is a great step towards a compassionate attitude towards oneself. Valarie Kaur states that "for those of us whose bodies were denigrated by society, breathing [...] is a revolutionary act."[18] Individual practices of self-compassion can be important tools for people who experience discrimination on their own bodies. But there is more to self-compassion than dealing with challenging situations individually. Valarie Kaur talks very convincingly about how self-love would be better replaced by the term "loving ourselves." This would translate to self-compassion as "being compassionate towards ourselves." I would like to expand on this term a little more, because we can learn from this notion of self-love about self-compassion.

Loving ourselves expresses collective awareness and action that stand against individualistic thinking. Loving ourselves means supporting or claiming structures of care for oneself *and* others. While self-compassion might translate to individual meditation exercises, loving ourselves means making these exercises available to others, practicing it with each other, and, as a consequence, freeing each other from the pressure to get this "sorted out" on our own.

Loving ourselves also means setting boundaries when necessary. bell hooks makes a strong case that setting boundaries can also be loving.[19] It is precisely out of appreciation for a colleague(s) that we are committed to set boundaries or point out misconduct. This is not just about how we ourselves feel in their presence, but about what impact their behavior might have on others. Of course, this work can only be done if there are enough inner and outer resources, such as a supportive network.

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16   Setting "healthy boundaries" is a problematic notion in itself. What is healthy, what is unhealthy? What we usually mean when talking about healthy boundaries is that the boundaries are in line with our own well-being and feel appropriate. What for one can be a healthy boundary can be harmful for others.

17   Many thanks to Cara-Julie Kather who nudged me towards feminist notions of mothering that exceed the gender binary: e.g. "Revolutionary Mothering – Love on the Front Lines" by Gumbs/Martens/Williams (eds.).

18   Kaur, Valarie: See no Stranger. A Manifesto for Revolutionary Love, London 2020, 216.

19   hooks, bell: All about love. New visions, New York 2001.

If there is no inner capacity to address grievances, it still remains that to love, or in German, "Zu Lieben" can mean setting boundaries. A notion that can also be found in Hornscheidts books *Zu Lieben als politisches Handeln* (2018).

3. Can we move through epistemic injustice with self-compassion?[20]

As stated above, it is energy-intensive to deal with discriminating texts, especially when you yourself have been marginalized by society on the basis of these discriminatory systems. The feelings and physical reactions that arise while reading require brain capacity, influence the ability to concentrate, and discourage free, visionary thinking. Of course, there are other cases where reading racist or sexist theories motivates people to write better texts and to stand up for their own values. Here, however, I am interested in the moments when the subject matter of a philosopher's work claims mental capacities that hamper their performance. In advance, I am afraid I can offer no redemption for this. Philosophical texts are challenging, not only because they may contain inhumane theory or are exclusive in nature. They might also challenge us in our world view, let us at best question the given. This does not pass us by without leaving a trace. To a certain degree, philosophical texts are meant to be disruptive and challenging. However, when philosophical texts are e.g. misogynistic, i.e. unjust or violent, we need strategies to acknowledge these difficulties and react constructively.

In her lecture "Moving through racism with love," Huaping Lu-Adler talked among other things about her coping strategies as a Kant scholar. In a very personal and philosophically strong narrative, she lets us participate in an understanding of love inspired by Charles Mills, bell hooks, Thich Nhat Hanh and Valarie Kaur that can support philosophers in dealing with racism in philosophy. She affirms that non-judgement and self-love can help philosophers deal with (their own) ignorance and discrimination. Besides acknowledging the epistemically and emotionally demanding effort to unveil epistemic injustices, Lu-Adler motivates philosophers to make use of one's own positional power and practice "active hope."[21] Dina Mendonça claims that self-pity is a strategy to gain resilience against injustices.[22] Mendonça distinguishes self-compassion from self-pity and posits that self-pity, though so

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20   This headline is inspired by Huaping Lu-Adler's talk "Moving though racism with love", (08/01/2023) online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJw0YIWnhCA (28/10/2023). Thank you, Huaping, for your important work and inspiring exchange.

21   I assume she referred to Joanna Macy's work that is displayed in Chris Jonestones and Macy's book
Active Hope (2012).

22   Mendonça, Dina: Self-Pity as Resilience against Injustice, in: Philosophies 105 (2022) 7.

frowned upon, has a transformative power. Self-compassion, according to Mendonca, is the state to strive for when responding to powerlessness in the face of injustice. Along the way, however, it is helpful not to exclude self-pity.

> The pain that accompanies self-pity is uncomfortable and makes people move in the directions of change as to transform the conditions of the overall experience.[23]

Let's not be too flowery: all self-compassion practices combined do not do away with the injustices we are facing in the world. Self-compassion is not the solution for the injustices and violence mentioned in this book. Rather, it might be a path through which we are able to continue questioning, critiquing and changing the systems of oppression we face.

4. Reading this book with self-compassion

Even while reading this book, it might be overwhelming to read about injustice and violence or to even find elements of one's own oppression biography depicted in some chapters. In this section, I want to decipher what it would mean to read this anthology with an attitude of self-compassion.

First of all, it would mean to feel your own body while reading or during reading breaks.

- What body sensations and feelings come up?
- Do I feel the impulse to distract myself?
- With which topics do stronger feelings arise?
- At which points do I feel "nothing"?

Thoughts and judgments can also be noticed and noted. What situations am I reminded of? Which people, voices, stories suddenly appear?

Secondly, at any time, it is very legitimate to *take a break*. Books sometimes seem neutral or factual, but reading about violent structures and oppression can be emotionally challenging. Take a break to call a trusted person or to rest. A practice of self-love, according to Kaur, might also be to read and discuss this book together from the beginning. In a group setting, critical points can be discussed, one's own experiences shared, and emotions witnessed and held.

Thirdly, perspective taking adds a more cognitive level: perspective taking on self and others. Since in this book you come across several authors, editors, artists, and characters, there are many ways to sharpen the perspective on others. Since this

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23   Ibid., 11.

is one important purpose of this book, I assume that taking perspective on others needs no further explanation. Perspective taking on self, in turn, is not a common attitude in academic philosophy. It becomes relevant, for example, if you can identify with the position of an unfairly treated group in one of the articles. You are confronted with your own societal positioning. Subsequently, unease, anger, or other emotions may arise. Perspective-taking on self in this context means remembering the complexity of one's self. One does not only inhabit one single position in society, either marginalized or privileged. The complexity can be reflected in experiencing multiple forms of discrimination and simultaneous privilege. For example, as a woman in the philosophical academic context, I am disadvantaged because of discriminatory structures. At the same time, however, as an editor and research assistant, I have interpretive power through the system of classism, among other things. Looking at myself through this lens evokes agency.

5. Bringing this practice to shared academic spaces

Reading violent texts or texts that deal with violence is one thing. As a person, involved in academic philosophy, it also occurs that we find ourselves in spaces where we are witnessing such forms of violence and where topics are discussed that are physically and emotionally challenging. On the one hand, some people will find it helpful to cultivate inner awareness and compassion in these moments. Taking a break, doing a quick body scan, or calling a friend after the session are part of individual coping strategies. On the other hand, the facilitator or professor can support a self-compassionate atmosphere by different means.

To give an example, let me come back to our workshop on epistemic injustice in philosophy that laid the basis for this anthology:

Almost every discussion session started with the question of how the people in the room are doing right now – physically and emotionally. Even if the answers were not extensively formulated and shared, it seemed to me that the mood in the room changed significantly. Inviting movement (short stretching or standing up, if possible) also supported the discussion that followed in a way that people shared questions and concerns that came from a more honest and humbler place. Different people participated in the discussion, uncertainties were shared and otherwise quieter voices were heard.

Attempts like these should not be romanticized. Of course, it was still not a setting where all bodies and all emotions had space to express themselves. We were still in the Munich School of Philosophy, that is: in an academic, Catholic institution. This is historically significant, because marginalized people have been excluded from such spaces for a long time and still are. E.g., people with mental disabilities

have little or very difficult access, women were not allowed to study, study fees keep the academic privilege to a few, etc.

It can also be discussed whether it is not encroaching to ask about feelings and emotions in a potentially unsafe space like this. What if people shared more deeply about their woundedness? Have we as a team been able to respond adequately at all? Certainly not. In fact, the discussion time was short, the schedule was set and we were limited in terms of personnel and resources. However, the feeling that stuck from that moment is one of more shared responsibility for the needs in the room. This was also reflected back to me by individual participants. I felt that by asking open questions about feelings and body sensations, all participants were able to take more responsibility for their own needs and the needs of others.

Loving ourselves in the philosophical academic context means, for example, creating shared spaces where difficulties can be talked through. Often these spaces arise far from any institutionalization. However, spaces within academic institutions that are explicitly established for BIPoC and/or queer scholars, for example, can at least provide a place for networking that then can lead to more intimate exchange.

6. Conclusion

This text started with an acknowledgement of the emotional labor that can arise from dealing with epistemic violence and injustice. Philosophers who engage in epistemic injustice and violence are confronted with their own ignorance on the one hand, and with structures of discrimination against them on the other. The same is true, of course, for non-academic scholars; plus, they have to face disciplinary barriers manifesting in language, access barriers and more. In response to this, I propose to cultivate self-compassion.

Self-compassion is a particular kind of compassion that can be directed toward an individual as well as a community. Inspired by Kaur, the "self" in "self-compassion" shifts towards "ourselves" and the egocentric floor is left behind. A compassionate attitude towards ourselves can show in many different ways, e.g. listening, sharing, setting boundaries.

Adopting a self-compassionate stance while engaging in epistemic violence may not lead to its abolition directly. Chances are, however, that dealing with challenging emotions in such a way will be more successful, leaving more energy to do the much-needed work of addressing epistemic injustice in philosophy and beyond.

2.2 Forming Disruptive Tools and Transformative Practices

Members of the audience engaging in a scene that the participants of the forum theater workshop presented at the Munich School of Philosophy in 2022. Forum theater is about practicing ways to transform oppressive situations, the audience can change the scene by taking over the role of the oppressed character.
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Revolutionary Intellect
A Conversation on Becoming and Unbecoming Intellectual

Paloma Nana & Cara-Julie Kather

In this contribution, we, Paloma and Cara, explore the idea of intellectuality as friends and intellectual partners. In doing so, we are deliberately moving in a non-conventional format of knowledge production: we engage in a conversation that is based on our biographies and situated knowledges, a conversation that illustrates how power and knowledge are interwoven in our own lives. This contribution is based on four conversations we shared with one another. These four conversations are mirrored by the sections of this piece: Institutionalization of Intellect, Sexualization and Intellectuality, possibilities to reclaim intellectuality, and our very own attempt to subvert the notion of intellectuality: considering menstruation as intellect.

Our investigation thus moves through the entanglements of theoretical perspective, political exploration and personal reflection. We propose the autobiographically orientated conversation amongst friends as a mode to make epistemic violence visible, to name it, to survive it, to resist it.

This politically searching conversation took place over the course of six weeks and is also one of the modes of our friendship in general. Like Fred Moten, we too believe that "study is what you do with other people."[1] Thus, our friendship is study and here we share small parts of both this study and our friendship.

1. Institutionalization of Intellect

1.1 Existing in institutional spaces

Cara: I would be interested to know what perceptions of our abilities, intellectual or otherwise, shaped our upbringing. What did we believe about ourselves and our

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1 More, Fred/Harney, Stefano: The Undercommons, Wivenhoe/New York/Port Watson 2013, 110.

thinking and what was projected onto us by others? Perhaps we could go on a brief time travel?

Paloma: That is an interesting question. Early on my parents taught me that it was important to assert yourself (as a Black child) in a school or educational context; that requires you to be able to write and speak and thus become visible. Being aware of the power of language, they would encourage us to develop a versatile vocabulary. Precisely because neither of them had studied or completed any formal professional training. For them there was this constant need to prove that a lack of academic qualifications did not equate to being incapable of intellectual (or intelligent) thought and action. Furthermore, we were also perceived as a migrant extended family and thus directly labeled as precarious and deficient by *white* supremacist society. After we returned to Germany from Cameroon, when I was about two and a half years old, my father stopped speaking French[2] with us. He feared that our German would deteriorate if he were to raise us bilingually. This was an attitude (and myth) that he had internalized due to his own pressure to conform and assimilate into German society. Being exposed to demeaning stereotypes, prejudices and racisms about Black children or children of color in general, it felt like an urgency to become this eloquent, high-achieving persona in order to be acknowledged and taken seriously in this system. I wanted to embody the 'perfect' counter-image to these external narratives that ascribed precarity, impulsiveness, non-conformity and laziness to Black children. I therefore felt pressured to perform an institutionalized, normative and rather non-resistant form of intellectuality – and discipline – in order to protect myself from being treated like an unpleasant 'caricature'.[3]

Cara: Perhaps what you describe also implies a subversive reversal of roles since ideas of intellectuality and academic success have been usurped and claimed by dominant social groups to such a large extent: and there you were claiming them for yourself. Both because you had to and because you could…
When I was in school, I often felt the conformist pressures of the school system. I think even before I knew myself to be autistic, I did sense that this institution must be governed by a thing not at all my mode: neurotypicality.

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2   It never occurred to my father to teach us his native tongue, Mədmba. The devaluation of indigenous languages by the former colonial regime continues to impact the way diasporic communities relate to their vernaculars, in particular when considering bilingual parenting.

3   When I speak of a 'caricature', I refer to the distorted and stereotypical images and assumptions that are imposed on Black children by white supremacist society. Every Black child or child of color should have the right to be loud, impulsive or underperforming without experiencing immediate devaluation and pathologizing; a devaluation that is often universalized in the case of marginalized groups because the Black child or child of color is likely to be forced into the role of a representative of *all* Black children.

I regularly moved in ways disruptive to these structures – often inadvertently, sometimes also intentionally. These disruptions of mine were made out of an entanglement of both inability and unwillingness to conform. I believe that my ability to exist in this educational system while moving disruptively through it was possible due to *white* privilege to a large extent.

Paloma: How did your perceptions of your intellectuality change throughout your schooling?

Cara: The uncertainty as to whether I would be able to graduate affected my self-image in terms of whether I could perceive myself as intelligent or intellectual. I remember that I attempted to delink the notion of intelligence/intellectuality from the institution of the school in order to develop a self-image that was not primarily attached to this degree. But I also remember that I did not really manage this delinking at the time. I was also (both implicitly and explicitly) considered 'stupid' because I struggled with the school system and also with the admission to the A-levels. Looking back on it, I feel like the school system confronted me with my neurodivergence in that it made me feel *like I was diverging from I-don't-know-what*. This is certainly no coincidence, because schools confront you with particular norms of thinking and speaking and you often have to comply or at least you try and then very possibly there is a lot of shame when you fail. And also, very possibly there are accusations connected to 'your diverging': I remember being deemed deviant, scheming, even evil by some teachers regularly.

How one can and does relate to these norms set by educational systems is shaped by complex structures of privilege and marginalization.

My relation to my own intellectuality was highly shaped by the institution of the school. While simultaneously there were very playful modes of intellectuality in my life: Like you, I too was committed to being creative in the realm of language. That was one of my places to play, it still is. Growing up, these playful engagements with writing and reading felt very 'non-institutional' to me. However, looking back on it I believe that the association between the written word and intellectuality is still a highly institutionalized concept, even an institution itself.

1.2 Discipline

Paloma: I would like to talk about discipline. It is a crucial topic for me because nowadays I often refuse to or 'fail' at being disciplined, especially in intellectual processes, when I am intentionally or subconsciously seeking distraction – particularly

in an academic context. I often find it difficult to function consistently and to work through the tasks expected of me rigorously, following a specific scheme.[4]

Cara: With any form of creative or intellectual work, I often wonder if the idea of discipline is actually fitting. I feel that there is a very linear understanding of productivity in this notion; as though you can always function in roughly the same way. I feel that the notion of discipline is misleading, misconstrued. This idea that you can somehow achieve anything through discipline alone, or that this is always the recipe for every kind of situation is highly absurd. Simultaneously, I do understand why people (have to) adopt this as a principle for themselves to hold on to sometimes.

Paloma: You are right about that. I can also understand that there is an existential urgency to it, especially for people who experience discrimination and/or marginalization. If you belong to a less privileged community or 'class', where climbing the social ladder and gaining visibility becomes your life's work, you might need to adopt this notion and movement of working your way up with 'iron discipline'.

Discipline can be incredibly rewarding when exercised carefully. I grew up with this credo myself, but it led to me feeling burnt out at an early age. And I do not think that discipline always suffices to achieve social or economic advancement in the end; political and economic factors, questions of accessibility and privilege are not considered at all in this notion. This is quite reminiscent of the "American dream," a hegemonic, perhaps colonial idea of productivity that must always be (monetarily) exploitable.[5]

Cara: To me, this idea of discipline also seems to resonate with a "masculine-coded" rigor. It presupposes the exclusion of emotions: all these structures urging you to do, to produce, to not feel, but to *do*. This notion of intellectuality so centered around allegedly unemotional productivity seems to me to move in modes very capitalist

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4   For theoretical exploration of the notion of discipline that is closely linked to our discussion see Chamayou, Grégoire: The Ungovernable Society. A Genealogy of Authoritarian Liberalism, Cambridge 2021. For theory and activist practices exploring linearity and Western clock time as forms of colonial power see the work of Rasheedah Phillips, for example: Phillips, Rasheedah: Black Quantum Futurism. Theory & Practice, Philadelphia 2021.

5   References regarding the aestheticization of smart women in popular culture: Baghat, Pragya: The Burden of Beauty. Female Nerds in Pop Culture are Still not Free, in: Smashboard.org, https://smashboard.org/the-burden-of-beauty-female-nerds-in-pop-culture-are-still-not-free/ (02/02/2022); Matoon D'Amore, Laura (ed.): Smart Chicks on Screen. Representing Women's Intellect in Film and Television, Lanham 2014.

and very masculine coded.[6] Emotions are initially excluded in favor of some kind of efficiency that is supposed to 'take you somewhere' – wherever that may be. . .

Paloma: Yes. . . there can be an internalized harshness that primarily serves others: an employer, an industry. That reminds me of a 'great old saying' that I often had to hear in relationships or work contexts: "Diamonds are made under pressure!"

Cara: I hate that! You have diamonds and they are pressed very hard and then polished. But it puzzles me that there is any attempt to apply this to people. . .

Paloma: "Just do it!"[7], another popular slogan. I have heard it several times now and I can acknowledge its merits; at least I know how important and helpful it is to find a starting point in creative or existential processes, yet this phrase is quite reductive. I think that even finding a starting point cannot always happen 'just like that' depending on your life situation, on your mental and/or physical constitution, on social conditions, infrastructures and your positionality within that, – or it is at least extremely difficult and exhausting.

To summarize

Calls to discipline and calls to function in institutional spaces both share that they create an exclusive form of normativity: to be existent within traditional notions of intellectuality is to function within the idea of linearity and within institutional spaces and structures, governed by whiteness, neurotypicality, and masculinity.

2. Sexualization of Intellectuality, Intellectualization of Sexualization

Cara: When it comes to the sexualization of intellectuality, I feel reminded of a situation you told me about in a previous conversation we had: you were speaking and

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6   For reflections on the call to discipline and its linkage to masculine socialization see Sagar, Jack: Why are Young Men Obsessed with Discipline?, in: Oxford Political Review (16/08/2020) https://oxfordpoliticalreview.com/2020/08/16/why-are-young-men-obsessed-with-discipline/ (14/04/2024).

7   In 2015 US-American actor Shia LaBeouf went viral with his satirical motivational speech "Just Do It!". Originally written by CSM art student Joshua Parker, who intended it as a mockery of the corporate health and fitness industry, the video became an actual source of motivation and call to productivity and discipline for many of its recipients (see comments section below the video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXsQAXx_aoo&ab_channel=MotivaShi an (4/4/2024).

got interrupted with the words "You're so intelligent!". I find this scene so emblematic of situations in which our intellectuality is not seen as a world of its own, a logic, a force – but perhaps simply as another reason to desire you or to find you attractive. Sometimes this may also reflect a certain hetero cis-male self-image: wanting to have a partner who they can classify as intellectual. And this intellectuality of the partner is not primarily seen as something intrinsic and vibrant, but is subject to the man's authority of interpretation. Not infrequently, such self-image includes the dimension of class: that one's partner should facilitate one's own 'class advancement' or 'class preservation'.

Paloma: I also had to think about this incident. It was clearly not an intellectual exchange at eye level. And it was not an act of attentive listening either, but rather of looking at me while I spoke; perhaps this also included a certain emphasis on the physicality of speaking – a particular attention to the lips and hands which also implied the sexualization of those very body parts.
However, I also had to think about how I experienced a devaluation of my intellectuality in my school days, when I was labeled "asexual," "unexciting," and "unattractive" *because* I was a good student.

Cara: That seems quite familiar and very typical to me; this binary of only being classified as either smart or feminine.

Paloma: That leads me to the figure of the muse; or other narratives about the *intelligent*, usually "*normatively beautiful*" woman[8], or a woman who is considered unconventionally beautiful *because* of her intellect. I think there is a historical and pop cultural dimension to this figure of *the clever woman*.[9] But this cleverness simply exists for the male gaze and becomes valuable primarily or only through said gaze. That is how I felt in the situation we were just talking about. He was facing me in his position of a 60-year-old artist and kept staring at me. I also felt like I was *being made* into his muse; as though I merely existed for his inspiration and was speaking primarily for this purpose.[10]

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8   When referring to 'woman' we refer to a socio-political concept; to a societal role. With 'woman' we speak to all whose lives are shaped by being marked as *woman*. For theoretical reflections on the usage of 'woman' see Young, Iris: Gender as Seriality, in: Signs 19 (1994) 3, 713–738.

9   References regarding the aestheticization of smart women in popular culture: Baghat: The Burden of Beauty; D'Amore: Smart Chicks on Screen.

10   We want to point out two specific examples that can be illustrative of the ambivalence of the figure of the muse: In an interview with the Screendaily, titled "'Parallel Mothers' star Penélope Cruz on her intense working relationship with Pedro Almodóvar" Penélope Cruz discusses her ambivalent relationship with filmmaker Pedro Almóvar, who considers her

Cara: I think this figure of the muse is of high importance in this context. The idea of a muse reveals this dominance that is exercised over intellectuality by those perceived as women: this dynamic through which these intellectualities are only allowed to exist in reference to men.

I also believe that with this comes an intellectualization of certain forms of sexualization and dominance: certain forms of sexualization, even abuse are considered beautiful, intellectual, and the assaultiveness of a situation is overlooked or euphemized as part of an intellectual, artistic process. One example of this is the historicity of men writing (about) women: these texts often appear complimentary but actually they impose *his* gaze on *her* and she is portrayed as valuable only in reference to him. She and her value only exist as something he created.[11] I believe this kind of writing is alive and well even today: it is often part of stalking as a form of patriarchal violence: symbolizing that when women are stalked by men they become *his object.*[12]

Paloma: I agree with you. I am also reminded of the way some designers sexualize and patronize their models, or about some director's obsessions with their star actresses. I am certain that the figure of the muse still exists. Perhaps nowadays the phenomenon is subtler, because due to fear of criticism and reputational damage the industry is more cautious and perhaps also a little more sensitized than 10 years ago. But in my opinion, the basic character and narrative still exist – most definitely behind the scenes, and also moving through everyday lives and through the everydayness of (patriarchal) violence.

To summarize

Sexualization and intellectuality are connected in (at least) two ways: historically as well as contemporarily, they are manifested in the form of an 'intellectualization' of

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his muse. In the *taz* – article entitled "Missbrauch in der Modebranche: Die unguten alten Zeiten" designer Wolfgang Joop's interview is discussed where he romanticised sexual violence against models and framed this form of violence as an essential "part of the artistic world."

11   The literary format of "Minnesang" is a prominent example that showcases the historicity of this kind of writing: in "Minnesängen" women are praised by men. These women tend to get intensively idealized in these poems – but only in their role as an object for *him*; as something making *him* happy, appealing to *his* gaze, bettering *his* life.

12   I encountered this exact form of writing *about* women when I was being stalked, and other women-survivors of stalking recount very similar experiences: Donna Freitas discusses her experience of being stalked in her memoir *Consent*, also focusing on the role that his writing about her played in the stalking. I write about my story in *Liebe, sagt er* – recounting very similar events and thoughts as Freitas.

sexualization and assault. This is a specific form of trivialization of patriarchal orders, acts, and violences.

There are also historical and contemporary forms of sexualization of intellectuality: modes in which a woman's intellectuality is solely moderated and acknowledged through a male gaze.

3. Reclaiming Intellectuality

Cara: Do you remember the first time you perceived yourself as intellectual or smart?

Paloma: I am trying to remember if there was any such pivotal moment. I think I had a first sense of my own intellectuality when I learned to read at age 4 or 5. I thought that this would unlock other worlds for me; worlds that had preceded me or were in the process of becoming. At the same time, I knew that society and the educational system expected this from me and I thought: Yes, I've got this now! It was definitely a major experience. Yet it is interesting that, at the time, I associated intellectuality so strongly with language and writing; especially with reading certain books that also promised a meta-level or intellectual relevance – perhaps because they had a philosophical or political impetus or simply because there was something 'serious' about them. I also dealt with slavery, racism and colonial trauma early on in my literary explorations. There was a lot of severity and melancholy, and that felt 'mature' and 'monumental' at the same time: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) or *Anna Karenina* (1878) of them were such big, canonized names – Milan Kundera, Leo Tolstoi, Martin Luther King amongst others. Black authors such as Noah Sow (*Deutschland Schwarz-Weiß*, 2008) and May Ayim (*Farbe bekennen*, 1986) also had a significant influence on my thinking as a teenager. However, since anti-racist literature/research and its corresponding discourses were not given any space in the classroom, I found it difficult to perceive knowledge productions with such proximity to my own biography and experiences as 'adequate' intellectual content in *white* spaces. In fact, such discussions were even brutally devalued by my classmates and teachers, deemed too "emotional" and not "universal" enough.

Cara: Yes, this makes a lot of sense: this devaluing of anit-racist and anti-colonial intellectualities as 'emotional'…

I can relate to growing up with a lot of canonic notions on what counts as 'intellectual literature', and only realizing much later the white and male dominance in 'the canon'.

I relate to your perspective – that there was this identification with reading and language; that learning to read and being able to read at an early age was such a big deal. In general, I identified with language and storytelling at an early age. For me,

this practice was often detached from the written word and involved telling stories orally. It turned into writing later. . .

Paloma: Interestingly, I immediately feel reminded that as a child I also defined my intellectuality by this dreamful desire to become a novelist. I was also extremely passionate about singing, drawing, playing and dancing. It was a whole world of its own where I could pursue my fantasies and thoughts freely. I even considered artistic or physical expression to be forms of intellectuality, certainly also because I was privileged enough to have parents who encouraged our creative interests and sought out community spaces in which we could express ourselves in these ways. I am convinced that intellectuality is always a question of needs, one's own positionality, socialization, expectations and access (privileges, marginalizations). However, I think it is reductive and presumptuous to assume that people are only intellectual or intelligent if they can write, read, speak or express themselves creatively. I think it is important that we become more sensitive towards different modes of understanding, of expression, of exploration, of study and of interaction without falling back into hierarchies and categorizations. To me, intellectuality is directly linked to situated knowledges, to informal, non-institutionalized activities, and the ability to perceive oneself in relation to one's environment.

Cara: I find it striking how we both described and related ourselves to writing and language just now: The predominance of writing and language is evident in both of our experiences as a structure that also exhibits a hegemonic dimension. Still, neither of us spoke of intellectuality as a competition or instrument of gaining authority over others, which queers the conventional association of intellectuality and power. Instead, we both described how we created and inhabited our own worlds – partly through playfulness in written and verbal modes . . .

Paloma: . . . as well as playfulness and world-making through modes that involve our bodies, whether it is dance, music, love making, cooking or any other form of sensual or bodily knowledge creation.

To summarize

Attempts to *reclaim intellectuality* engage with (im-)possibilities to react to and exist within notions of intellectuality that are exclusive. Attempts to reclaim intellectuality give rise to practices subverting conventional spaces and notions as well as to creations of spaces and concepts of intellectuality that do not rely on traditional parameters of what such *intellectuality* is and can be.

4. Menstruation as Intellectuality

Cara: With this last one of our conversations we wanted to commit to sketching a notion of *menstruation as intellectuality*.

Paloma: Yes! We want to move through this claim and sketch it out to form one example of how intellectuality might become re-defined, subverted, different to its white and masculine modes.

Cara: Yes! I believe what originally sparked our interest here is to consider how both the notion of intellectuality and the notion of menstruation can undergo changes, subversions when there is an account of menstruation as a mode of intellectuality, as an event with epistemic texture and dimension.

Paloma: We want to form a sketch of such an account together: a) to form an example of reclaiming, redefining what intellectuality means, b) to form an invitation to engage with this deliberately unfinished sketch, with this beginning of an account. How do we want to start?

Cara: I feel like asking: does the fact that you are menstruating right now change anything about your comfort in this conversation we are sharing right now?

Paloma: It certainly does. Before we started our conversation, I was worried that I would not be a great conversation partner today. I was afraid that my current state would restrict my ability to think and speak 'properly'. But I have to admit, the opposite is the case. I feel surprisingly clear and comfortable talking to you. During my menstruation, certain topics, vulnerabilities, questions and insecurities become much louder and more explicit – they move through me with particular urgency. This can be positive and negative. Sometimes I make important decisions during this particular time, which then accelerate turning points in my life.

Cara: Yes! Certain questions and topics impose themselves with a different, a particular force.

Paloma: Totally! There is a need to listen to your body, to explore yourself, that is created through distinctly intense sensations. I think this experience *can* be enriching to some extent, but also quite painful and straining. At times I am incredibly inspired to write during menstruation. Then it is not about producing something that is valuable for a particular institution, it is perhaps more about the writing itself, about accessing my own feelings and a certain physical and emotional exhaustion. This intensity of feelings can inspire me to find words for certain matters.

However, I do not intend to romanticize menstruation as such. Of course, this creativity could also be encouraged by the circumstance that one can be *forced* to slow down during menstruation and thus devote oneself to other topics and processes – provided that the menstruation coincides with a day off. Menstruations that are physically and/or mentally very distressing also relate to questions of privilege and socio-economic positioning in particular: Can I take a day off without expecting existential consequences? Or am I forced to work, or – if this is physically impossible – pushed into a further precarization of my life situation?

Until recently, I had to deal with extreme menstrual symptoms myself, which significantly reduced my quality of life. So, my experience of menstruation was very different at that time.

Cara: It is really important that you addressed this! I also don't see menstruation as a homogeneous phenomenon here, but rather as one that forms and shapes many different realities.

Paloma: And, we firmly distance ourselves from trans-exclusive forms of feminism that connect the notion of menstruation to the notion of womanhood in order to exclude trans and non-binary people. For us, menstruation is not a 'marker of womanhood' or of any gender for that matter.

Cara: Absolutely. We are trying to queer intellectuality and make the epistemic dimensions of menstruation visible. Many valorizations of menstruation fall back on stereotypical and biologistic images of women: for example, by valorizing menstruation because it enables motherhood. That is not our point. We want to explore menstruation in its epistemic dimension: we are interested to ask ourselves what it does to our thinking, knowledge, writing and intellectuality.

Paloma: Exactly! And for me, the effect is oftentimes a certain intrusiveness, that creates an urge to find expression.

Cara: At times, I even experience a sheer necessity to write, to express myself. It is an intellectuality that does not reproduce this institutional productivity. The cycle as an image and constitution also represents a sort of counter-concept to a capitalist linearity that aims to produce robotic-like constancy. The rhythmicality of a cycle is completely different, more like waves.

Paloma: Which brings me to the idea of menstruation as resistance, in that it can urge us *to exit*; from work contexts, from certain spaces and expectations. However, the act of quitting or leaving often requires a certain privilege. And yet, regardless of

whether such an 'exit' is possible, our existence perhaps demands it and that alone contains a dimension of resistance.

Cara: I can relate to this, because we do not necessarily 'leave' voluntarily, it can be extremely painful. And that is closely connected to processes of exclusion: I can conform to certain norms less or not at all while I am menstruating. For example, it affects my relation to speaking: the physical act of speaking usually happens very effortlessly, almost automatic. When I menstruate, however, the act of speaking suddenly becomes perceptible to me in its physicality. I can literally feel the physical act of speaking – forming words and expressing them through sound. I then often find it more difficult to speak in structured sentences or even to speak verbally at all. It feels like a change of perspective on language and speaking; that also contains knowledge: for example, about the relevance of speaking and language in our world, about the supremacy of these forms of expression, or about my speaking and what it actually is and means.

Paloma: I know that, too. One might inhabit a physicality that is different from other phases of one's cycle.

Cara: True. I would like to talk about blood and bleeding. What do you think?

Paloma: Alright, what do you have in mind?

Cara: To me, this confrontation with my own menstrual blood also appears like a space of learning and research that you are exposed to. You have to make so many decisions while encountering your blood: How do I absorb it? (How) Do I want to touch it? These are all research questions, I believe.

Paloma: I think that is a beautiful thought and describes pretty much how I feel right now. I had to really examine my bleeding because a few weeks ago I had an unusual spotting that preceded my period. Your words also reminded me of the moments when large lumps of tissue leave my body; that is a very specific, oftentimes extremely satisfying, sometimes even comical, or at other times discomforting experience and feeling. Usually these lumps look like little creatures to me. They too are something to consider, to study. Especially this almost ironic simultaneity of attending everyday or professional life with its tasks and obligations, for example a job interview, while your body releases bloody creatures. It strikes me because it *still* requires so much precaution, improvisation and discipline from me *not* to be distracted, distressed or amused by it.

Cara: That is so exciting to hear, because I have very different bodily experiences with menstruation. When I bleed everything is very fluid and this flow and fluidity affects me a lot. Sometimes I also have the feeling that I read differently – as if I was flowing into a story or a world of thoughts. There just seems to be this rhythm of fluidity that feels to me like it has bearings on my endeavors of study. For a long time, I did not realize how different menstrual blood is for different people – it was often presented as this homogeneous, universal phenomenon, even though that is not true at all. For example, I do not encounter creatures in my menstrual blood like you do.

Paloma: I agree. These are very distinct and unique worlds of experience.

Cara: I believe that if menstruation was to be recognized as a form of intellectuality – perhaps an intellectuality of its own, one that changes what it means to be intellectual – menstruation would be much more valued and even more visible. And intellectuality in turn would have a very different meaning. Above all, it would not be linear and linked to a certain performance.

Paloma: This idea of 'menstruation as intellectuality' actually prompts me to go deeper into questioning to what extent my menstruation changes how I perceive and value my own intellectuality, especially in institutionalized intellectual spaces.

To summarize

Menstruation as intellectuality is a catchphrase that we choose as a starting point for an associative reclaiming of intellectuality. We believe that menstruation generates many forms of knowledge, research and expression and both requires and makes logics and spaces. Examples of the epistemic texture to menstruation are a) particular urgencies that can be experienced in menstruation, b) particular changes that form knowledges on the structures in place or c) the ways one might be thrown into studying one's body in and because of menstruation.

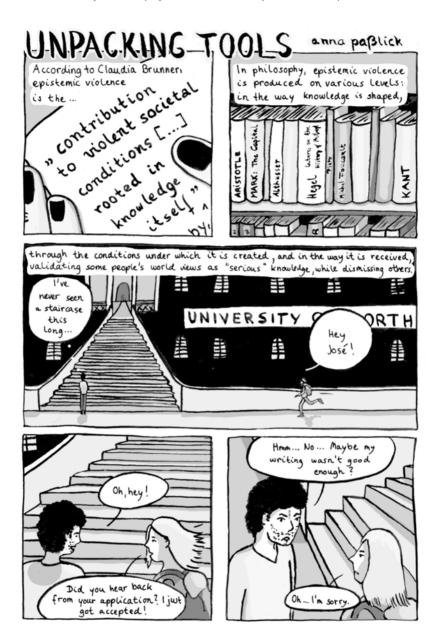### 5. This was: our conversation on becoming and unbecoming intellectual

For this contribution we moved through four conversations, and shared fragments of each of these conversations here. First, we explored how we grew up with notions of intellectuality deeply governed by academic institutions, that reflect the hegemonic structures in Germany and other Western countries. Second, we felt and thought our way through some of the entanglements of sexuality and intellectuality that we have come to witness in our own lives. Third, we explored possibilities and spaces we have found to be helpful in reclaiming, redefining, subverting what

it means to be *intellectual*. Fourth, we sketched out our own attempt to redefine intellectuality in committing to a consideration of menstruation as intellectuality.

All four of these conversations are only shared in small parts here. We aim for this contribution to be a space that facilitates curiosity and helps give rise to unruly intellects. We believe committing to incompleteness, to sketches, to autobiographies, and intuitions is part of such a movement. With this, we give thanks to every soul that engaged with this piece, with these chunks of our friendship, with these bits and pieces of our continuous conversations.

Unpacking Tools

Anna Paßlick

Yet, are any of these actions really grabbing at the root?

According to academic and artist Denise Ferreira da Silva, affirmative action is increasing globally.²

However, there is also a rise of the global security apparatus,⁵

NEWLY PLANNED DEPORTATION CENTRE

BER AIRPORT

TUNNEL

one of the deadliest institutions to manifest racism through deportations, border policing and an expanse in prison building.⁶

NO TO BER DEPORTATION!!!

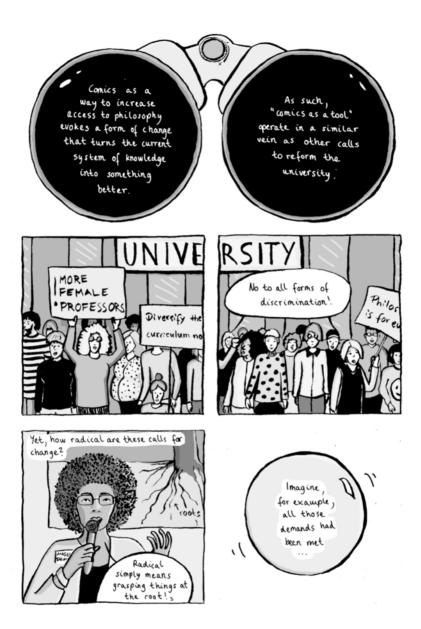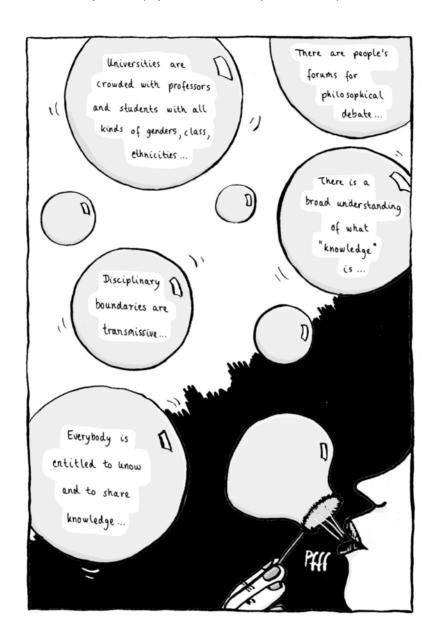Harvard University inaugurates first Black President
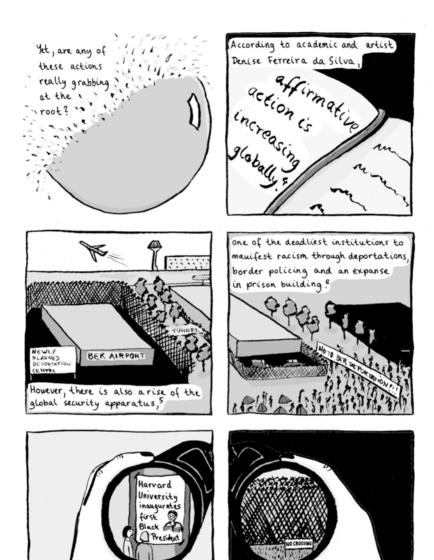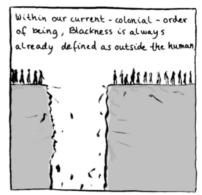
NO CROSSING

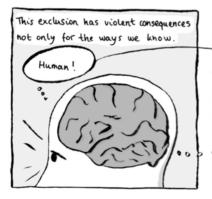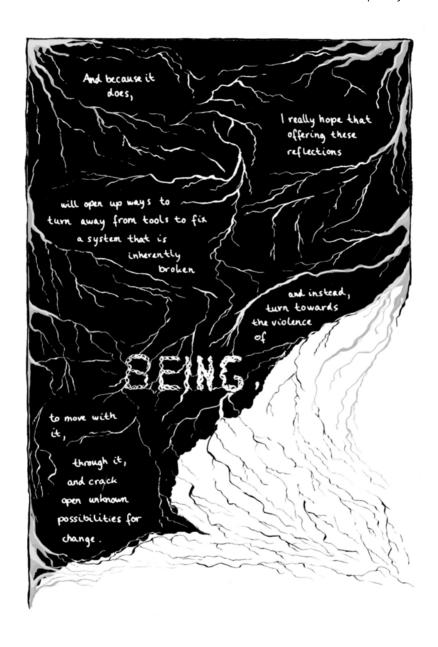These two opposing trajectories might feel like a contradiction.

References

It is impossible to try and summarize all thinkers, artists, conversations, and life encounters that have brought this comic into being. As you may have noticed throughout the comic, I have indicated quotes with quotation marks and small numbers, whereas indirect references carry only numbers. I have tried to keep the overall amount of references within the comic as minimal as possible to not disrupt the reading flow while still being transparent about the origins of my thinking. Three important influences outside of the ones already quoted throughout this comic have been Frantz Fanon's understanding of violence in the colonial context[8]; Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's way to theorize "justice" in "What Justice Wants"[9] as well as David Scott's interview with Sylvia Wynter.[10]

Notes

For more information on the planned BER deportation centre and what to do about it, please read: https://www.theleftberlin.com/ber-airports-new-deportation-centre/.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the numerous people who have contributed to making this comic sharper and clearer. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Without your support, these pages would not exist.

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*   [1] Brunner, Claudia: 2015, https://epistemicviolence.aau.at/index.php/en/home-2/ (15/05/2023).

[2] Gade, Satwick: Capitalism 101, https://thenib.com/capitalism-101/ (22/11/2023).

[3] Davis, Angela: Women, Culture & Politics, New York 1990.

[4] Ferreira Da Silva, Denise: The Racial Limits of Social Justice: The Ruse of Equality of Opportunity and the Global Affirmative Action Mandate, in: Critical Ethnic Studies, 2 (2016) 2, 184–209.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Wilson Gilmore, Ruth: Abolition Geography. Essays towards Liberation, London 2023, 109.

[7] Wynter, Sylvia: Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument, in: CR: The New Centennial Review 3 (2003) 3, 257–337, 260

[8] Fanon, Frantz: The Wretched of the Earth, New York 2007.

[9] Tuck, Eve/Yang, K. Wayne: What Justice Wants." Critical Ethnic Studies 2 (2016) 2, 1–15.

[10] Wynter, Sylvia: The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter, Small Axe8 (2000), 119–207.

Ambedkar's Critique of *Sacred* Testimonies and Liberatory Practices

Baiju P. Anthony & Anupam Yadav

Introduction

Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956), a contemporary Indian thinker and the chief architect of the Constitution of India, has significantly impacted the socio-religious landscape of India. His vision of social change derives from the subversion of the "grand narrative" rooted in the Hindu religious scriptures which govern the religious-cultural predicament of Indian society. Ambedkar's method can be regarded as critical, hermeneutic, inter-textual and historical in nature. It is through these methodological stances, he vehemently questions the role of Vedic testimony for committing violence of social injustice, particularly, in shaping the destiny of the Untouchables[1] and women. In intertwining social injustice and knowledge-question, Ambedkar can be aligned with the contemporary Western discourse on epistemic injustice that has evolved interest in critically evaluating the testimonial aspect of knowledge. As a valid epistemic practice, testimony, in the ordinary sense, is recognition of the cognitive labour and epistemic contribution of people in terms of their beliefs and justifications. Articulation of testimony, particularly, in creating and fostering social identity which is exclusionary in nature, nonetheless, is the site of epistemic, ethical and social injustices. Besides the idea of personal testimony, there is another conception of testimony, where certain texts are granted insurmountable authority. When the textual authority becomes coercive in constituting social identities and causing social pathologies, the method of critical hermeneutics, in bringing the texts within the ambit of interpretations

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[1] The Untouchables or Dalits, below the category of Shudras in the Hindu social system, were considered so because they were forced to remove human waste and animal carcasses. Ambedkar termed them 'broken men'. (Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji: The Essential Writings of B R Ambedkar. New Delhi 2002, 114). The term untouchable is rarely used by Indians, including Indian anthropologists, who prefer to use various euphemisms such as 'harijans', a word coined by Gandhi, which means the people of God, or Scheduled Castes, their official name in modern India. The Untouchables are distributed over hundreds of castes all over India.

and reconstruction serves as a tool for social change. It is against this sense of testimonial verdict in the hegemonic Hindu religious scriptures, that Ambedkar's critique and life-long activism is associated with. This paper analyses Ambedkar's critique in relation to 1) how does social injustice emanate from epistemic injustice and 2) how can he contribute to the contemporary Western discourse of epistemic injustice and liberatory practices?

1. Testimony in Indian Philosophy

Indian philosophical systems, recognize testimony as a valid source of knowledge. The words of trustworthy persons are considered secular (*laukika*) testimony but fallible, while the Vedas[2] (the oldest extant texts of India) are considered impersonal and infallible. The Vedas are considered the valid source of supra-sensible or extra-empirical knowledge because their author is the all-knowing God. Among the systematic Indian epistemology in the philosophical systems of Mīmāṁsā, Sāṁkhya, Nyāya and Advaita, testimony is considered a valid source of knowledge. The Mīmāṁsā believed in the Vedas, originally orally transmitted, and considered them as consisted of meaning-bearing sounds[3] which are equally eternal.[4] They are self-evident and *apaurusheya* (not composed by any human person). Sāṁkhya also holds the view that human persons cannot be the authors of the Vedas as the liberated ones have no concern with them, and those who are not liberated are not competent for this work.[5] The Vedanta, particularly, the Advaita, says that whenever there is a conflict between perception and inference (inferential reasoning) as sources of knowledge, the knower should accept the latter; similarly, in a situation of conflict between inference and scriptural testimony, the latter is to be accepted.[6] Indian epistemologies grant inherent validity and authority to the scriptures on the Hindu ritualistic and sacrificial practices. Given the epistemic

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2   Veda means "sacred knowledge", and divided into four parts: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. Each Veda has sub-divisions: the Samhita "Mantra" collections, Brahmana "theological/ritual commentary," Aranyaka "wilderness texts," and Upanisadas "metaphysical treatise" (See Flood, Gavin: Vedas and Upanisads. in: Flood, Gavin (ed.): The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism. Maldon 2013, 66–101, 69).

3   Samadder, Sanjoy: Indian and Western Perspective of Verbal of Testimony, Calcutta 2015, 28.

4   The authorial argument of Indian philosophers affirms the eternality of the Vedas. The particular order of words in the Vedas is considered as permanent because the words in the Vedas are not arranged by any agent, human or divine (See Mahadevan, T M P: Outlines of Hinduism, Michigan 1961, 133).

5   Sanjoy: Indian Western Perspectives of Verbal Testimony, 35–36.

6   Ibid., 102.

role of scriptural injunctions, they constitute the conceptions of knowledge, justification and rationality and thereby people's beliefs, identity and the moral purpose of life. In legitimizing the foundation of society, and also in building the narrative of what could be an "ideal society," they occupy epistemic privilege and exercise social power. However, the epistemic-social dynamics of Vedic testimony results in a society which is stratified and ruled by the upper class called the Brahmans. The Brahmanical hegemony in holding socio-political and economic power, is divisive in creating a class-structure.

According to Ambedkar, the religious literature of the Hindus, includes (1) The Vedas, (2) The Brahmanas, (3) The Aranyakas, (4) Upanishads, (5) Sutras, (6) Itihas, (7) Smritis and (8) Puranas having no superior and inferior distinctions[7] until the claim made about the infallibility of the Vedas. He argues that the Hindu Scriptures are enmeshed in contradictions and absurdities which make the infallibility of Vedas a "riddle."[8] The ancient sages treated Vedas as a human and historical product[9] and some respectable and authoritative groups even opposed the Vedas as books of authority.[10] According to Ambedkar, there was also a time in India, when the Vedas along with tradition, moral instructions and agreement in an assembly were considered authorities until the time of Gautama, the founder of Nyaya school and author of *Nyaya Sutra*, when the Vedas occupied the sole authority. He also objects that there is anything spiritually and morally elevating in Vedic injunctions. Analysing Ambedkar, Sikder points out that the higher caste used them as methods to establish themselves as the sole authority and induced fear that people would be deprived of the joys of heaven, if the Vedic injunctions were not followed.[11]

Ambedkar's critical approach to the scriptural testimony becomes significant in questioning the legitimacy of *Varna*[12] system, the four-fold division of classes as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. This four-fold division finds its basis in *Purushasuktha* hymn of Rig Veda 10.7.90.1-16 which presents a grand view of "primordial man" dissecting himself to create the human society. The hymn says, his mouth

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7   Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Writings and Speeches Vol. 4, Maharashtra 1987, 53.

8   Ambedkar identifies different riddles in relation with Hindu practices: 1) the riddle of knowing why one is a Hindu, 2) the riddle in declaring the Vedas as unquestionable and infallible, 3) the riddle of Ahimsa, 4) the riddle on infighting of the Hindu gods and 5) the riddle on the human and animal sacrifices (See Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji: Riddles in Hinduism the Annotated Critical Selection, New Delhi 2016).

9   Ambedkar: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, 29.

10   Ibid., 31

11   Sikder, Sayanti: An Overview of Five Riddles from Ambedkar's "Riddles in Hinduism", in: http s://www.allaboutambedkaronline.com/ (20/11/2023).

12   Literally 'varna' means colour and it originates form the word 'Vr' which means classification. See Karan, Balaram: Varna Jati and Reverse Discrimination, Calcutta 2022, 20.

becomes the priestly class (Brahmins), his arms warriors (Kshatriyas), his thighs artisans (Vaishyas) and his feet servants (Shudras). Beneath is the place for the Untouchables.[13] Also, among different theories on Indian caste system, the "traditional theory"[14] presents caste as of divine origin and an extension of the *Varna* system. *Varna* and caste, often used interchangeably, represent two forms[15] of social stratification. *Manusmriti* (one of the legal texts of Hinduism) advocated the *Purushasuktha* hymn as a divine injunction and claimed that the hierarchy is established by assigning each group its duties and obligations based on birth and corresponding status and privileges. Also, it enforced restricted socialization as marriages between the members of different castes and eating together were prohibited. Ambedkar calls these scriptural directives as of "criminal intent and anti-social in its results."[16]

In consonance with the above-mentioned hymn, Bhagavad Gita Chapter 18, verse 41, states that occupations of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras are well-divided on the basis of inherent gunas (qualities): sattva (purity), rajas (valor), and tamas (darkness). Each social group takes up activities according to their natural tendencies and skills, and contribute to the welfare of the society. Four *Varnas* dwelling on three gunas, however, is illogical according to Ambedkar.[17] Also, the ideal of four-fold division is faulty as "the lumping together of individuals into a few sharply marked off classes is a very superficial view of man and his power"[18] and it does injustice both to the individual and the society.[19] The Gita also directs that a wise man should not produce doubts in the minds of ignorant persons toward the observance of the duties of *Varna* and warns that salvation without it is not possible. This means however great a devotee may be, a person from lower class, has to live and die in the service of the higher classes. Societal acceptance of the testimonial injunctions, Ambedkar argues, form a shared set of normative beliefs and dogmas about the class-composed society.

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13   Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji: Who Were the Shudras, Bombay 1949, 11.

14   Ghurye, Govind Sadashiv: Caste and Race in India, Bombay 1969, 162–163.

15   The distinctions between the two are: 1) *Varnas* are four in number whereas castes are innumerable, 2) The caste system is based on birth while the *Varna* system is based on occupation, 3) *Varna* system has the sanction of the religion, that is, Hinduism, whereas the caste system does not have this sanction (Ibid., 792).

16   Tharoor, however, critiques Ambedker's sweeping denunciations of Hinduism as they left no room to admit those Hindus, who rejected and refused caste rules. According to him, Hinduism of spiritual enquiry and philosophical debate by Vivekananda and Sree Sankara were inclusive in nature. Moreover, the Hinduism of the Bhakti movement and of millions of Hindu homes encouraged pluralistic practices. (See Tharoor, Sasi: B.R. Ambedkar Flawed Genius, in: https://openthemagazine.com/lounge/books/br-ambedkar-flawed-genius/ (22/11/2023).

17   Ambedkar: The Writings of B R Ambedkar, 279.

18   Pandit, Nalini: Ambedkar and the Bhagavad Gita, in: Economic and Political Weekly 27 (1992) 21/22, 1063–1065, 1065.

19   Ambedkar: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, 321.

2. Scriptural Dominance and Social Marginalization in the Indian Context

The *Varna* system in invoking the idea of eternal servitude, Ambedkar argues, has created the category of Untouchables, the official doctrine of Brahminism.[20] An Untouchable is refused public water facilities, education, places of worship, eating with other classes etc. The discriminatory practices, supported by the scriptures, have made the Untouchables a depressed class. This is a unique phenomenon unknown to humanity, except the Hindus, where "power, position, money and politics fail in front of the caste-based discrimination."[21] Ambedkar himself suffered the brunt of social discrimination and deprivation since childhood as he belonged to the Mahar community, a category of untouchable. The Indian caste system, finding its basis in varna, creates a graded social order based on birth and perpetuates hierarchical structure in fixity of occupations, graded wage structure, forced labour, and graded punishments. Equally, education, knowledge and salvation are debarred for Shudras[22] and also for women. Ambedkar writes:

> India is the only country where the intellectual class, namely, the Brahmins not only made education their monopoly but declared acquisition of education by the lower classes, a crime punishable by cutting off of the tongue or by the pouring of molten lead in the ear of the offender.[23]

Hindu Scriptural injunctions, especially *Manusmriti* besides sanctioning the *Varna*, treated women as subservient to men having no independent power of decision for marriage, selection of partner, choices of life and right to dignity portraying them

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20   Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 96.

21   Pahari, Ananya: Analysis of Caste-based Discrimination through the Spectacles of Bhimayana. Incidents in the Life of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, in: The Creative launcher 6 (2021) 5, 90–100, 99.

22   Under the system of Chaturvarnya, the shudras were subjugated by brahmins and were placed at the bottom of the gradation and were subjected to innumerable ignominies so as to prevent them from rising above the conditions fixed for them by law. Ambedkar considered the Untouchables and the Shudras as servile classes (See Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 146, 385). Scholars also opine that early representatives of the people who were later called Untouchables were of a lower status than the Shudras. Sometimes they were called "the fifth caste," but brahmin authorities insisted that they were outside the Aryan social order. It is likely that all Untouchables were later labelled as "Shudras," (See Gandhi Raj S: The Practice of Untouchability. Persistence and Change, in: Humboldt Journal of Social Relations 10 (1982) 1, 254–275, 259.

23   Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 146.

as seducers and responsible for unjust acts.[24] Social stratification sanctified by the scriptural injunctions creates a dominant narrative that makes the lower class and caste a sub-human category. Ambedkar is equally critical of his contemporaries in endorsing the *Varna* system and not doing enough for the depressed class.[25]

3. Ambedkar's Critique of Scriptures and Contemporary Discourse of Epistemic Injustice

Ambedkar's critical views on social injustice draw heavily from the epistemic wrongs caused by the Hindu scriptures. The Hindu scriptures, as a dominant normative framework, infested with power of social exclusion, if analysed with Miranda Fricker's theory, would be a "practically situated capacity to control other's action"[26] and augment "powerlessness" to the lowest strata. The prejudiced and disadvantaged position of the Untouchables and women can also be aligned with Fricker's notion of testimonial injustice, the credibility-deficit on account of a person's perceived social identity, and hermeneutic injustice for denying them the resources for understanding and producing the testimonies of their experiences of social exclusion.[27] The situation in this context is more serious as the marginalized is devoid of the right to speak as a participant of a community. One may also relate it with the notion of "epistemic smothering,"[28] a coerced silencing, which is the product of history of marginalization in which power structures create or preserve a given social order impeding speaker's capacity as an epistemic agent by restricting her access to epistemic exchanges. The epistemic authority of the Scriptures perpetuates social exclusion and hence epistemic silences. And, as Amandine Catala argues, the severe imbalance of power between the dominant and nondominant groups arbitrarily characterizes the nondominat group as epistemically unworthy.[29] Imbalances of power and resources between the oppressed and the oppressor

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24   For example, Manusmriti 15:9 – *By running after men like whores, by their fickle minds, and by their natural lack of affection these women are unfaithful to their husbands even when they are zealously guarded here.*

25   Ambedkar argues that Gandhi endorsed that *Varna* is a matter of birth, so, profession is a heredity. This made class and income structures sacrosanct leading to rich/poor, high/low, owner/worker divisions leaving no room for social endosmosis. (See Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 160).

26   Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing, Oxford 2007, 13.

27   Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Oppression and Epistemic Privilege. in: Canadian Journal of Philosophy, 29 (1999) 1, 191–210, 207–208.

28   Dotson, Kristie: Tracking Epistemic Violence. Tracking Practices of Silencing, in: Hypatia 26 (2011) 2, 236–257, 244.

29   Catala, Amandine: Democracy, Trust, and Epistemic Justice. in: The Monist 98 (2015) 4, 424–440, 429.

also diminish practical ways of effecting social change. Such social conditions which hinder the ability of individuals to live worthily demands the necessity of apt "recognition" that neutralizes structural prejudices as Paul Giladi[30] argues, and the formation of "network solidarity"[31] that fosters pluralism for effective resistance. Ambedkar advocated for genuine recognition of the depressed class[32] and formed diverse networks[33] amongst them to exterminate privileges of the higher castes. For him, "the wall built around caste is impregnable and the material, of which it is built, contains none of the combustible stuff of reason and morality. Add to this the fact that inside this wall stands the army of Brahmins, who form the intellectual class."[34] At the All India Depressed Class Conference (1942), Ambedkar's appeal was to "educate, agitate and organize"[35] themselves. Lack of education minimizes the aspirations of the Untouchable; therefore, education is necessary for free thinking and to ameliorate their lives.

Social inequalities and sufferings within the Indian society, resultant upon the *sacred* scriptures, and importantly, hard resistances to social change forced Ambedkar to reconstruct the "text" which upholds democratic values. His faith in the constitutional democracy, in the Constitution of India, in his life-long struggle for social-political justice for the marginalized is built on several interlinked notions. In a society where untouchability and inequality had been institutionalized, based on Hindu scriptures, Ambedkar realized that the marginalized people will not get dignified life without the Constitution. His activism and demand for social justice has a unique blend of rationality and religion as the basis of democratic living. Religion, for him, is ethical to the core, and is a matter of principles. When it deteriorates into rules, it becomes a repository of commands or prohibitions. Religion as principle is intellectual in nature and offers useful methods for right course of action.[36] Ambedkar is equally emphatic that annihilation of caste requires only a notional change[37]

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30   Giladi, Paul: Epistemic Injustice. A Role for Recognition, in: Philosophy & Social Criticism, 44 (2018) 2, 141–158, 145.

31   Medina, Jose: The Epistemology of Resistance. Gender and Racial Oppression Epistemic Injustice and
      Resistant Imaginations, Oxford 2013, 308.

32   Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 9.

33   Sudhakar, Santhosh: Mukti Kon Pathe. Caste and Class in Ambedkar's Struggle, in: Economic and Political Weekly 52 (2017) 49, 61–68, 63.

34   Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 297.

35   Tandale, Dadasaheb: Educate, Agitate, Organize. Rising to the Clarion Call of Dr. Ambedkar, in: South Asian American Digital Archive https://www.saada.org/tides/article/educate-agitate-organize (10/4/2024).

36   Ibid., 298.

37   Ibid., 289.

to correct the fallacious caste-based discriminations. Antithetical to the Brahmanical orthodox ideology, he finds in Buddhism the egalitarian values of rational-moral society.

Ambedkar's embracement of Buddhism, and finally his religious conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism, is also not without rational interventions. He disagrees with the Buddhist doctrine of noble truths as it represents the Brahmanical theory of action (karma) and rebirth. Human suffering, for him, is socially inflicted, hence, living a dignified life is also to be cultivated as a social value. This social character, nonetheless, is available in the Buddhist principle of righteousness[38] which embodies wisdom (prajna) and love (karuna). For Ambedkar, a rational Buddha, whose activity is animated by the desire to uproot injustice and oppression is driven by an ethic of care.[39] He views democracy as *true* religion which provides ethical and rational basis in principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.[40] As Stroud remarks about Ambedkar, the trio "served as semi-transcendent values that offered a fallibilistic flexibility that was foreign to the Vedic tradition of sanatan (eternal) philosophy and dharma (morality) that he targeted in his anti-caste philosophy."[41] While liberty, as against subjugation, is an "'effective and competent use of a person's powers,"[42] regarding equality, he argues that "humanity is not capable of assortment and classification."[43] Ambedkar may be criticized for making the text of the constitution *sacred*, but he would rather defend it as a rational demand for "attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen"[44] for associated living, where many interests could be consciously communicated. Participation in the "conjoint communicated experiences"[45] would end isolation and bridge a gulf between society and individual toward the fullest realization of human capabilities. If the infallible texts are subversive of this vision, democracy cherishes it in the virtues of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Scriptural testimonies constitute the social fabric, people's beliefs and practices. Ambedkar's critical reading of the Hindu religious scriptures and practices of social exclusion on the basis of what knowledge is and who has the right to know brings an ethical turn to the discourse of epistemic practices. This can be understood from

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38   Ibid., 59.

39   See Loftus, Timothy: Ambedkar and the Buddha's Saṅgha. A Ground for Buddhist Ethics, in: Caste A Global Journal on Social Exclusion 2 (2021) 2, 265–280, 267.

40   Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 189.

41   Stroud, Scott: Justice Democracy and Liberation. Ambedkar's Navayana Pragmatism and the Tortuous Path of Social Democracy, in: The Journal of Speculative Philosophy 37 (2023) 1, 41–60, 51.

42   Ambedkar: The Essential Writings, 276.

43   Ibid., 277.

44   Ibid., 276.

45   Ibid.

the perspective of virtue epistemology which assigns importance to intellectual virtues for cultural reformation and human flourishing. We can draw a parallel between Jose Medina and Ambedkar. Medina concedes that vices affect one's capacity to learn from others and facts, and inhibit the capacity of self-correction and being open to corrections from others.[46] Ambedkar's democratic principles of liberty, fraternity and equality present a conception of society with the ideal of social endosmosis[47] where there is a respect for diversity and tolerance of learning and un-learning. Such a vision of democratic society, as a corrective norm of virtue epistemology, assists seeing democracy as an epistemic institution. Elizabeth Anderson talks about structural remedies for massive structural injustices of role and spatial segregations[48] in terms of the virtue of epistemic democracy by which she means "universal participation on terms of equality of all inquirers."[49] She recommends integration across all social domains through "comprehensive intergroup association on terms of equality,"[50] as a remedial measure against social practices and structures leading to epistemic injustices. Ambedkar's critique emphasises democracy[51] as a virtue in building a shared reality to have the possibility of correction in the dominant narratives and vulnerabilities of the marginalized. Fricker too argues that virtues become necessary for correcting "prejudicial distortions"[52] and combating oppressive structures. Seeing democracy as a "way of life" towards integration, as an institutional virtue, in interweaving epistemic and social justice makes it a liberatory practice. In subverting scriptural dominance and replacing it with the "text," i.e., the Constitution, democracy can be upheld as a virtue in safeguarding the marginalized from epistemic and social injustices.

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46   Medina: The Epistemology of Resistance, 31.

47   Social endosmosis as a free flow of ideas, values and practices upholds the value of fraternity in Ambedkar's writings. The term is also used by American pragmatic philosopher John Dewey, who was a professor of Ambedkar (Democracy and Education, 1916).

48   According to Anderson, role segregation is the assignment of social groups to different hierarchically-ranked roles, and spatial segregation is the assignment of social groups to different social spaces and locations (Anderson, Elizabeth: The Imperative of Integration. Princeton 2010, 9).

49   Elizabeth, Anderson: Epistemic Justice as a Virtue of Social Institutions. in: Social Epistemology 26 (2012) 2, 163–173, 172.

50   Ibid., 112.

51   The political philosophy of Ambedkar on democracy is a vast concept and it includes political, social and economic elements. It's a safeguard for the minority. Democracy offers a framework for solving problems through deliberations. Democracy as a transformative government is capable of changing the lives of citizens.

52   Fricker, Miranda: Epistemic Injustice and a Role for Virtue in the Politics of Knowing, in: Metaphilosophy, 34 (2003) 1/2, 154–173, 170.

Conclusion

Ambedkar's critique of the Hindu *sacred* scriptures for inflicting inequalities and social pathologies for the Untouchables and women provides insights into understanding social injustices as emanating from epistemic wrongs committed by *sacred* testimonies. It also seeks an epistemic stance, entirely different from the infallibility of certain texts, in the rational-moral conception of democracy as providing conditions needed for associated living. Unlike the Brahmanical idea of the Hindu society based on gradation and rank, Ambedkar emphasises the attitude of respect and reverence toward fellowmen. His conception of democracy as a *true* religion in fostering the virtues of equality, liberty and fraternity envisages the idea of dignified life in living together. Having its basis in the Buddhist principles of wisdom and love, democracy as an intellectual virtue interweaves epistemic-social questions. Effectuating social change in a society that is deeply class and caste-ridden requires massive structural remedies and Ambedkar sees the possibility of correction in the institutional virtue of democracy. Insofar as the contemporary Western discourse of epistemic injustice seeks conditions of epistemic and social justice in democracy, Ambedkar contributes to the same vision.

I See Something You Can't See

Jelena Jeremejewa

> Behind the hypnotic facades of institutionalized placation, a war is being waged.
> A war that can no longer be said to be simply economic or even social and human-
> itarian, since it is all-encompassing, since it is a war on what we've known to be
> true. While everyone is well aware that existence has a tendency to become a bat-
> tlefield where neuroses, phobias, somatizations, depressions and anxieties blow
> up into numerous withdrawals, no one is able to grasp the course or the stakes
> of this war. Paradoxically, it is the totality of this war, no less in its means than its
> ends, that enables it to shroud itself in invisibility.[1]

I see something you can't see[2]

Epistemic violence and injustice in art is a complex issue that affects artists and cu-
rators, spaces and exhibition techniques, as well as society as a whole. It is an un-
usual one, because the question relates to the ways in which knowledge and igno-
rance, power and powerlessness intersect and lead to the marginalization and exclu-
sion of certain types of knowledge and experiences beyond the art world. As modes
and forms of knowledge that are not primarily derived from scientific research, all
of these particles play a weighty role in the production and reception of art, as do
those of naiveté, lack of awareness and disinterest, skepticism, and ignorance.

   In this essay, I will present some examples from spatial art, painting, and video
art, which methodically as well as aesthetically point to problematic historical impli-
cations and habits of seeing and which, have so far been systematically pushed into
the position of non-existence as far as their knowledge desideratum is concerned.

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1   TIQQUN Grundbausteine einer Theorie des Jungen-Mädchens, Berlin 2009, 11, translation by
    the editor.
2   The complete article was written in German. It was translated by Lena Schützle (ed.) and Erin
    Schafranek.

But where is it? I can't see it…

Anna Schapiro's current work *Offene Geheimnisse* (English: Open Secrets, pictures 2–3) in the Leibnitz Hall of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities consists of three parts and involves a controversial conversation that refers to the numerous historical overlays and fractures from the host institution.

The former Kassensaal of the Preußische Seehandlungsgesellschaft, where the first part of the work was shown, was built between 1901 and 1903. From 1918, it served as the Prussian State Bank, where the customers of that time could make their deposits and withdrawals, while also recording profits and losses. Everything relating to their business endeavors with the enormously expanding world. A relationship in the manner of a colonial dominion that divided the world into sovereign owners and available resources.

The tiled floor in the foyer of the hall, which was laid at the beginning of the century, is decorated with swastika patterns dating back to the time when the symbol was still innocent, before it was appropriated and misused by the Nazi atrocities. Today, numerous visitors find it difficult to distinguish the swastikas as such, even though it is quite obvious. When the artist asked the manufacturer Villeroy-Boch, the answer was: "Both tile designs have been in the collection since the end of the 19th century and the swastika symbol has been part of many cultures for a long time."

Picture 1
© Schapiro

At the opening event, Anna Schapiro placed a ticking clock and a chiselling hammer in the foyer, which directs visitors to her work. The QR code takes you to a study

by the Scientific Services (*die Wissenschaftliche Dienste*) on behalf of the German Bundestag on the removal of unconstitutional symbols from the property of third parties.[3]

Not only the floor, but also the walls bear traces, albeit from a different time. Right before Germany's capitulation, during the conquest of Berlin, the building was taken by the Red Army, the sandstone pillars bearing the marks of their machine guns. The victors over fascism, the liberators of the concentration camps were mostly men. Weary heroes, themselves survivors of a catastrophe instigated by Germany. Men who took revenge on the female population of a defeated Germany. Their commanders, decorated with medals, were at the same time the builders of another, no less bloody and brutal dictatorship escalating far beyond the GDR. This victory and its superficial reception veiled irreconcilable ideological differences.

Picture 2
© Schapiro

The tiled floor in the Leibnitz Hall has remained untouched by it all. And now Anna Schapiro is applying a new and temporary addition to it, adding a powerful layer. A 20x8 meters ink print opens up an expressive and abstract color space that

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3   https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/413654/2be32c19e2c86feecc6a55dcd9a92f6a/wd-7-080-07-pdf-data.pdf (28/10/2023).

evokes countless connections within this environment, even without having to ex-plicitly reference the artist's Jewish origins. Schapiro was born in Moscow and came to Germany as a small child with her family as a Contingent refugee.

A complex history mirrors a complex technique. First, the floor is covered with strips of rice paper, upon which the artist applies color pigments and inks dissolved in water in a process involving numerous steps. The wet and fragile paper soaks up the pigments, transfers them to the floor, is carefully moved, and finally carefully removed. The different sections of color transferred onto the floor are watercolored – shimmering, velvety and shiny depending on the way the light falls and the angle from which they are observed (pictures 2–3).

Picture 3
© Schapiro

Blue to purple, green and yellow, sections of color merging into each other as organic and cosmic structures, muscle fibers, x-rays and bone fractures, all bearing the pattern of the small fragments within the rectangular tiles that make up a whole picture. In its fragility, the work refers to a painful absence of an *original*, the source, the origin. These come to the fore in the second part of the work, when the floor work has been removed and the paper strips themselves have been put on display.

The initial questions of Anna Schapiro's work touch on the infinite interfaces and hierarchies between academic, institutional, artistic and historical knowledge along

with the unwillingness to know, and address, that "ontological cleft"[4] between abstract and "safe" knowledge; extending to the economically safeguarded existence of the Eurocentric perspective on the past as well as the present. Its monopoly and interpretative sovereignty over people often in their midst, often on the felt peripheries, all within their vulnerability, fragility and contradictions. A gap between those who have suffered the fate and those who have archived it, thought it through and theorized it. Those who will write books about it and make films and create works of art. Those who will research it, look at it, consume it. Timothy Snyder is a historian who writes about the specificity of the German politics of remembrance:

> …the Germans are absolutely right that democracy requires continuously confrontating history, especially with regard to the Second World War and the Holocaust. […] But the history at stake here is not only German history, because almost all German murders took place in territories that Germany brought under its control only after 1938.[5]

Different experiences of violence, specific injustices, genocides and epistemicides, unheard voices that cannot be separated from the history of Western knowledge systems, are alluded to in Anna Schapiro's work, but never fully narrated. However, the work can be read as an invitation to take a more human approach towards those relations of inequality, power, and domination that are inherent in knowledge and sciences, while also having become invisible during the analysis process.

The unique interplay of the work and space raises the question about the role of knowledge in this timeless procession of injustices, blind spots, and silence. Our line of sight dictated by the work addresses us directly – from above we look down on a defenseless, exposed groundlessness. There, where the ground gave us support and steadfastness only a short time ago, a curtain opens. A curtain that delicately and gently lays itself over everything, not to cover or shroud, but to reveal.

I see something you can't see

In 2015, following the annexation of Crimea, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the occupation of the eastern territories, Ukrainian artist Lesia Khomenko painted a series of works that, at first glance, do not fit into her previous large-scale practice

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4   Apffel-Marglin, Frédérique: Introduction: Rationality and the World, in: Apffel-Marglin, Frédérique/Marglin, Stephen A. (eds.): Decolonizing Knowledge. From Development to Dialogue, Oxford 1996, 1–39, 3.

5   Snyder, Timothy: Falsche Erinnerungen, in: Konarzewska, Aleksandra/Schahadat, Schama/Weller, Nina (eds.): "Alles ist teurer als ukrainisches Leben" Texte über Westsplaining und den Krieg, edition. fotoTAPETA__Flugschrift Berlin 2023, 128–136, 132.

of frameless paintings. *After The End* plays with the relationship between knowledge and ignorance, consisting of smaller, framed watercolor drawings hidden behind a frosted glass panel. This acts as an amplifier of the performative boundary between what the artist knows, feels, and depicts and what the viewer sees and puzzles over (picture 4).

Picture 4
© Khomenko

> I myself have recently rethought this work. It was created in 2015 and is about the future. Now in 2023, as I find myself in this very future, I am discovering many new details in this work. This work is about the impossibility of transferring experiences. On the one hand, it was difficult for us in Kiev in 2015 to really understand those who had lost their homes in the East. So I compared my quiet, safe life to the life that was beyond our experience. I kept 'silent' chronicles of my life at home. All my peaceful sketches were overlaid with the feeling that there was war in my country. It is such a contrast – the images themselves and the context of their creation.[6]

The lack of clarity provokes an effort on the other side, which is inevitably connected with knowledge, and the will to know. Any complexity that might imply or lead to a

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6   Interview with the artist, August 2023.

singular interpretation has to be worked through; an understanding does not come automatically. The viewer focuses and focuses in the hope of recognizing, of recognizing "correctly" and gradually begins to doubt themself: is there such a thing as "right" knowledge (pictures 4–5)?

Picture 5
© Khomenko

After the full-scale invasion, Khomenko had to leave Ukraine with her daughter; her husband has been fighting on the frontline ever since. As an artist, she is faced with the question of how to transfer her own knowledge which has explosively grown due to the outbreak of war – a kind of knowledge that no one ever wanted – into art in order to reach people. For this specific knowledge about war, its concepts and its sounds proved to be incompatible to and isolated from a peaceful world to which one belonged only a few short months ago.

At the time, frosted glass was part of her artistic strategy, in which the correct or final image only emerged through the blurriness of the glazing.

By chance, my gallerists discovered that the painting under the glass looks clearer from a distance, while it looks rather blurry up close. For me, this also became a

metaphor for historical distance. Whereas the blur then addressed my imagination and longing, today it addresses memory from that same historical distance. The work changed its meaning, but it still speaks of a certain 'blindness' in relation to the present moment. [7]

In doing so, by no means does the artist act as a holder of knowledge in the process of withholding something from the viewer, for the blurring also always appeals to the viewer's own self. On the other hand, the blurs are a strong visual reminder of the obscurity of the brutalities dominating the visual field: of the dead, injured, and tortured. Images which can be interpreted as anything but peaceful, and refer to one's own vulnerability as well as that of others. A filter or soft focus carefully constructed between me and the world in order to be able to endure it.

In contrast, the painting Khomenko made in 2023 for the exhibition *Motherland* in Berlin's Ephrahim Palais is characterized by a different arrangement of visibility and invisibility. The work titled *A Moment of Silence* shows soldiers gathered at the grave of their fallen friend during a minute of silence, when all words and mourning songs have fallen silent. A moment of silence as a ritual or immaterial tribute next to a material gravestone.

> The image is based on my research into the self-portrayal of soldiers in war on social media. Soldiers retouch and obscure their faces, pixelate and shadow the backgrounds for security reasons, because you never know who will see it.[8]

What lies in front of us is not a study, but a captured moment, like a photograph. Faces are pixelated and covered, while the postures and arrangement of the mourners literally hanging in the air, are fragmented, evoking a terrible premonition that they themselves won't be alive much longer.

No eye contact, no attempt to be identified, the painting itself is a memorial (picture 6).

For all its ambiguity, however, the work wants to share its knowledge, to communicate something of itself – it longs to escape the realm of the personal into foreign, peaceful and safe environments. The deconstruction of the figures is the first step of the process of translation from digital to pictorial language. Detached from information, utility and sobriety, deprived of intensity and instant media accessibility, Khomenko's practice makes the experience of horrendous suffering digestible for outsiders and perhaps even the unsuspecting. It softens, spares details, hints at the sore points without touching them and cements together the divide between us and them.

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7   Ibid.
8   Ibid.

Picture 6
© Khomenko

How, why, and with whom to share the knowledge that has mutilated and raped you? An experience that has neither meaning nor use nor application, at least not in the Western European world, in this chic hall with freshly painted walls and faithful parquet floor lining the new magnificent exhibition spaces. The intersecting axes of differences are politicized and ethically charged. They force their way into the spotlight and into relevance – posing the question of how to bridge this chasm between one's own experience and letting others know? Who does this gap protect, and from what?

The reality of war and destruction unfolds directly for those who are at its mercy, here and now. It may still be possible to intervene in it. The reality of its pictorial or mediatized orchestration, whether intentional and strategic, or accidental and impotent and desperate and unintentional, which is misappropriated in the hands of other storytellers and philosophers is belated, displaced and inaccessible (if the names and numbers scrawled on the torture chambers, drawings of the children, recordings from phone cameras *had a purpose* for those who made them). How is knowledge created from it? What loops of legitimation do experiences have to go through so that the most resistant fragments can ascend into the pantheon of intelligible knowledge?

Experience amalgamated into works of art is threatening as well as threatened by deceptive knowledge, along with the inability to digest it as it is, to be spat out. Who are the people in the picture? Who are they beyond the role of soldier? Beyond the grief and fear? Who were they before the war broke out and made them into what they are depicted as now?

As I write this, up to 10,000 soldiers are being held in Russian captivity, according to human rights groups. A large number of them have been and are being tortured with electrical currents.[9]

Repeat after me

Picture 7
© Yuriy Biley, Pavlo Kovach, and Anton Varga

The HD video work *Macht es mir nach (English: Repeat after me)* by the Open Group, founded in Ukraine in 2012, was shown as part of the exhibition *Kaleidoskop der Geschichte(n)* in Dresden's Albertinum. In it, internally displaced persons, gathered at a camp in the city of Lviv, reenact different types of weapons they have experienced and heard. Beforehand, they briefly share their fate and conduct a kind of karaoke session by asking the viewer to imitate the sound they just made. Their sounds are then transcribed into sequences of letters and faded in to make it easier to imitate. In front of the flat screen monitor is a microphone, a kind of technical bridge for the acoustic approach to the unknown; physical knowledge that the people have acquired and which the artists want to pass on. By imitating different types of weapons, the sound sequences convey fragments of the experience that has

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9   Ukrainian prisoners of war say they were tortured at Russian prison (16/8/2023) https://www
     .bbc.com/news/world-europe-66453692# (25/8/2023).

become part of everyday life in Ukraine, but which, according to the artist Yuriy Biley, has its target audience mainly abroad (pictures 7–8).

Picture 8
© Yuriy Biley, Pavlo Kovach, and Anton Varga

The work was presented together with other pieces of work as part of the *Peilung* series at the DAAD Gallery in Berlin. The screening program called *Talking about myself? Talking about You*, which was previously shown at the Voloshyn Gallery in Kiev in the summer of 2023, aimed to present the process of performing trauma as an artistic method.

In Berlin, the audience consisted mainly of Ukrainians and Germans with an affinity for art and culture. The collective experience of watching, the absence of the microphone being pointed directly at people's faces liberated and loosened up the audience, who made themselves comfortable on chairs and beanbags in the dark, to hum, to rattle, to make sounds… Gratefully, yet hesitantly they responded to the invitation to connect to the artwork by repeating the sounds.

At the same time, this staged gesture of the internally displaced people also embodied their inability or unwillingness to speak about what they had suffered, a way of reducing them to the traumatic fragment of a human biography, the spotlight into which violence and destruction had drawn these "lesser people." Have the communicative threads of spoken language already been severed? And can their symbolism be in part deciphered by us through imitation? Or the flipside is that everything has

been said long ago, verbal communication has failed, led to nothing, could not avert the worst. And so there is nothing more to say but so much more to understand.

Sasha Kurmaz's work titled *I want to tell you about it* is a completely different story, in which the artist together with an actor circumvent spoken language to expressively illustrate something that cannot be said:

> My body unexpectedly and quite sharply reacted to the atrocities committed by the Russians in the region of Kyiv. I was stunned and paralyzed with internal tension. The loss of the verbal ability to communicate with the world around me, and the ability to physically control one's own body in general became the impetus for creating this work.[10]

And yet, in both works, the audience becomes a witness to the testimony of others. Who or what is really raping or overpowering whom here? Whose desire is aroused or satisfied? Do the traumatized civilians with their trauma overpower the artists? Do the artists overpower us, by aestheticizing and exposing someone else's trauma as well as their own? In which power structures of visibility and invisibility are these works of art entangled?

The division of labor seems to be deeply rooted in predefined roles: between those who have suffered it and us who want to interpret and understand their experience, connect with it.

What role do the newly traumatized Ukrainians fulfill for the German spectator? And vice versa? Exhausted and increasingly bored by the media and press coverage of bloodbaths in foreign countries, sometimes in the form of artistic documentaries, serving the constant demand for artworks that comment on the victim's experience. The ambivalence of this narrative is often not tolerated, swept under the rug.

In the current political context, there are not any satisfactory answers to the perpetually uncomfortable questions when, for example, arms deliveries to Ukraine are systematically delayed while the liberation of the occupied territories, which is directly dependent on these deliveries, is simultaneously criticized. This time the atrocities are being committed by others. "It's not our war" was sprayed on the walls of houses and central locations in Berlin last fall/winter, challenging solidarity with Ukraine.[11]

"You are just a coin, passed from hand to hand. Your future is the price of other people's prosperity and security," Nikita Kadan summarized on the podium at the

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10   «Я хочу розказати тобі про це» Саша Курмаз | "I want to tell you about it" Sasha Kurmaz, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AcyXZfEBZY (17/11/22).

11   Stohnushko, Polina: Das ist unser Krieg (4/4/2023) https://www.monopol-magazin.de/das-ist-unser-krieg?amp (10/3/2024).

Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin in September 2023 and in his work titled *We are the price* (picture 9).

Picture 9
© Nikita Kadan

In search of a possible answer, Snyder retrospectively traces the fatal blurring of the difference between responsibility and guilt in German society, which he observes as a historian:

> For this reason, the politics of remembrance have always been interwoven with Germany's foreign policy towards former Eastern Europe and Asia (German: Ostpolitik), sometimes in a twisted way. [...] The combination of Ostpolitik and politics of remembrance led Germans to forget their own history, and in the process made a new war in Eastern Europe possible in the first place.[12]

As a result of Germany coming to terms with the past (German: Vergangenheitsbewältigung) and 75 years after the end of the Nazi era, the question of responsibility for Germany's war of extermination is still confined to Russia, changing perspective remains tenuous and is met with massive resistance not only from the business community, but also from scientific and cultural communities. Kateryna Mishchenko tries to summarize it through an economic lens: "Somehow everything is more ex-

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12   Snyder: Falsche Erinnerungen, 129, commentary by the author.

pensive than Ukrainian life,"[13] while the Ukrainian writer Victoria Amelina, who was fatally injured in a Russian missile attack less than half a year ago, warned about another "executed renaissance" of Ukrainian culture by imperial Russia:

> There is now a real threat that Russians will successfully execute another generation of Ukrainian culture, this time by missiles and bombs. For me, it would mean the majority of my friends getting killed. For the average westerner, it would only mean never seeing their paintings, never hearing them read their poems, or never reading the novels that they have yet to write. [14]

A loss to be borne?

As Susanne Strätling points out, such historical changes of perspective promote an increase in knowledge, a shift which is imperative not only in Germany, but the world over. However, such changes also require a concurrent – and no less radical – loss of knowledge, a practice of "systematic unlearning,"[15] without which one falls into old colonial habits, imagining oneself as a victim in the face of one's own abundance of power.

The trauma of war must first become an experience in all its temporal and spatial complexity, of perspectives, that of people and that of landscapes. Its raw realism must come closer to concepts and theories with which research operates. And this step requires effort on both sides, because wars and violence first render people mute, blind, then dead.

Experience that has been repeated for centuries and by many, at some point ceases to be experience and can be addressed as a structural problem. Against the anxiety-ridden uncertainty about the underlying contexts, about one's own roles in them, and about the existence of something that cannot be represented in all works of art. Works of art that, despite everything, make an honest attempt to try.

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13   Mishchenko, Kateryna: Irgendwie ist alles teurerer als ukrainische Leben in: Konarzewska, Aleksandra/Schahadat, Schama/Weller Nina (eds.): "Alles ist teurer als ukrainisches Leben" Texte über Westsplaining und den Krieg, edition.fotoTAPETA. Flugschrift Berlin 2023, 137–139, 139, translated by Erin Schafranek.

14   Amelina, Victoria: Cancel Culture vs execute culture. Why Russian Manuscripts don't burn, but Ukrainian manuscripts burn all to well (31/3/2022) https://www.eurozine.com/cancel-culture-vs-execute-culture/ (26/8/2023).

15   Strätling, Susanne: Zeitenwende. Ein Begriff des 24. Februar 2022, in: Mischchenko, Kateryna/Raabe, Katharina (eds.): Aus dem Nebel des Krieges Die Gegenwart der Ukraine, Berlin 2023, 215–226, 223, translated by Erin Schafranek.

The unrepresentable in art always refers to the unimaginable in epistemology, in reality, also in politics. Svitlana Matviyenko's allegory of "vertical occupation"[16] leads down and up, beyond the obvious human victims, and wants everyone *to know* about the permanent pollution of the Ukrainian environment, from the groundwater to the air we breathe, which will remain long after the invaders have been expelled from Ukraine.

Short biographies of artists mentioned in the text

Frédérique Apffel-Marglin was first a student of Indian classical dance (Orissi style) and did field research among the temple dancers of Jagannath Temple in Odisha in Eastern India in the mid-1970s. Her later field research was among agricultural communities in coastal Odisha. Apffel-Marglin was a research adviser at the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) in Helsinki, an affiliate of the United Nations University, from 1985 to 1991.

Timothy Snyder is an American historian specializing in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Holocaust. He is the Richard C. Levin Professor of History at Yale University and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. He has written several books, including Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin, On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century, The Road to Unfreedom, and Our Malady. Several of them have been described as best-sellers. Snyder serves on the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Susanne Strätling is a German Slavicist and literary scholar. Her work focuses on literature and mediality, poetics and poiesis, history of concepts and knowledge, poetic and political metaphorology of building under socialism and rhetorical theory. From 2018 to 2020, she was Professor of East Slavic Literatures and Cultures at the University of Potsdam. Since 2020, she has been Professor of General and Comparative Literature with a focus on Slavic Literatures at Freie Universität Berlin.

Kateryna Mishchenko is an author, curator and co-founder of the independent Ukrainian publishing house Medusa. She taught literature at the National Linguistic University of Kyiv and worked as a translator in the field of human rights. Her essays have been published in Ukrainian and international anthologies and

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16   Matviyenko, Svitlana: Vertical Occupation (4/3/2024) https://www.londonukrainianreview.o rg/posts/vertical-occupation (16/3/2024).

magazines as well as in her book Ukrainian Night. Kateryna Mishchenko lives and works in Kyiv. She is currently a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

Victoria Amelina is a Ukrainian writer, war crimes researcher. On 27 June 2023, she was injured during the Russian attack on Kramatorsk. The restaurant was hit by an Iskander missile. Amelina died due to her injuries. Amelina was a member of PEN International. In 2018, she took part in 84th World PEN Congress in India as a delegate from Ukraine and gave a speech on Ukrainian filmmaker and political prisoner in Russia Oleg Sentsov. From 2015, when her first book The Fall Syndrome: about, or Homo Compatiens was published, she dedicated her time solely to writing. Her debut novel deals with the events at Maidan in 2014; the foreword was written by Yurii Izdryk. The novel has received several literary awards, and was welcomed by critics and scholars from Ukraine and wider Europe.

Hito Steyerl is a German filmmaker and author who deals with questions of postcolonial criticism and feminist critique of representation in essayistic documentary films and texts. Her works operate at the interface between film and the visual arts as well as between theory and practice. In the field of art, she works as a commentator, critic and teacher – currently as Professor of Media Art at the Berlin University of the Arts.

Jacques Rancière is a philosopher specializing in political philosophy and aesthetics.

Lesia Khomenko is an artist, co-founder of curatorial Union HUDRADA, a self-educational community based on interdisciplinary cooperation. Since 2004 member of R.E.P. group. Her works have been shown in several solo and group exhibitions.

Nikita Kadan is an artist, author and activist. Nikita Kadan studied at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Kiev. His artistic repertoire ranges from installations, graphics and painting to wall and poster design in public spaces. His interdisciplinary collaborations with architects, human rights activists and sociologists are as diverse as his media.

Sasha Kurmaz studied at the Faculty of Design of the National Academy of Culture and Art Management in Kiev. In his artistic work, he uses photography, video and public intervention to trace social contexts that touch on poetic and political themes. In most of his works, he plays with the disempowerment of power structures, explores the changing relationship between people and the modern world and examines the tension between citizens and the state.

Svitlana Matviyenko is an Associate Professor of Critical Media Analysis in the School of Communication and Associate Director of the Digital Democracies Institute. Her research and teaching, informed by science and technology studies and the history of science, are focused on information and cyberwar, media and environment, critical infrastructure studies and postcolonial theory. Matviyenko's current work on nuclear cultures and heritage investigates the practices of nuclear terror, weaponisation of pollution, and technogenic catastrophes during the Russian war in Ukraine.

Polina Stohnushko is a PhD student and scholarship holder of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation as well as a graffiti researcher. She specialises in graffiti with social and political messages in Berlin. In addition to her academic work, she creates urban interventions.

Epilogue/Afterword

Bijoy H. Boruah

It sounds counterintuitive – doesn't it – to talk about the possibility of injustice and violence occurring in the contemplative realm of "love of wisdom," granted that the intellectual practice of wise thinking – or thinking in the language of wisdom – is held aloft by the sacrosanct rationality of Kantian pure reason. But this "grantedness" has not only been questioned and "ungranted" in recent times; rather, this very belief about "wisdom" has been alleged to be a foundational epistemic prejudice, a massively self-certifying pretension of rationality about itself, and consequently a perpetrator of injustice and violence. There has been a fervently critical movement of academic decolonization against Ivory-Tower academic philosophy, erected on the so-called foundation of impeccably unencumbered reason. This anthology is one of the latest incarnations of this critical trend, but its manifestation is appreciably far more unconventional both in its tenor and vehicle.

A reactive critique of the epistemic superstructure of Ivory-Tower academy gathers extra momentum when it is patterned as a considerably demonstrable work by practical illustrations of alternative modes of knowledge production and non-standard proliferation of the culture of academia. This anthology is a testimony to this non-conformist format of a critique in that it is brought about by contributors of heterogeneous positionality: academic as well as non-academic, discursive as well as artistic, autoethnographically experimental and revelatory, and instances of toying with tools for dismantling epistemic injustice and violence, conducting interviews about theatrically enacted embodied practices of philosophy, and even enacting alternative ways of conceptualizing intellect itself. The format of demonstration also includes citing sites of philosophy as (dis)playing the cultural politics of so-called sacred narratives about ultimate liberation in perpetuating social injustice of caste and class.

This is a book that invites its readers into an open field of interactive participation, a kind of epistemic multiculturalism, for a collective learning process and a call for solidarity in the face of a logocentric, universalist epistemic power and dynamics.

Appendix

Authors' Biographies

Nela Adam and participants playing a scene in the forum theater workshop at the Munich School of Philosophy in 2022.
© Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn.

Nela Adam is pedagogue of theatre and dance. She studied dramatics, film and media in Vienna, worked with different body theatre groups in Vienna, Paris and Valencia. She did further education for puppeteering & mask playing, body therapies. She is in the process of becoming a Gestalt-therapist. She is organising for Contact Improvisation events and seminars for self-development and therapy.

Sylvia Agbih is a qualified nurse, holds a Master in Philosophy and worked on refugee migration and health for her dissertation at Bielefeld University. Since 2021, Sylvia is a research assistant at the Institute for Ethics and History of Health in Society (IEHHS) at the University of Augsburg. Sylvia loves creative teaching and is trained in scenic role play for nursing education.

Baiju P. Anthony is a PhD research scholar at the University of BITS Pilani, India. He received his Master's degree from the University of Pondicherry and MPhil in

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Francesca Greco is former research member of "Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective" (DFG-Project 2019–2024) and PhD student at the University of Hildesheim in intercultural philosophy. She co-edited *Transitions. Crossing boundaries in Japanese Philosophy* (2021) and her last publications include *Radical Relationality. A Philosophical Approach to Mindfulness Inspired by Nishida Kitarō* (2024).

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Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn has been exploring architecture and the forms of expression of the human body both graphically and photographically for many years; alongside his profession in the real estate industry and his voluntary work in "his" district of Hanover-Linden. The focus of his photographic work in recent years has been on dance. https://lindenfoto.de/

Jelena Jeremejewa is a media artist, writer and director of documentary films. Most recently, she finished a collaborative film essay. Her published PhD deals with the invisibility of trauma in the post-soviet context and the war diary reports on the Russian War on Ukraine. Her current work is at the intersection of research and art, questioning the power of counterfactual narratives in Eastern Europe.

Cara-Julie Kather (she/they) is a PhD candidate at Leuphana University in the field of feminist and decolonial epistemologies. Her PhD work revolves around critical analysis of mathematics as a discipline and as a way of thinking. Her writing aims to question existing narratives and modes of thought and to create new ones in midst of all the chaos that is marginalization. In this, her writing is not limited to traditional academic writing but also involves a book of personal essays ("Liebe, sagt er") and a lyrical short-novel ("Warme Kerne Spucken").

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Paloma Nana moves through and with the entanglements of art, theory, activism and personal reflection in all of her works. She can be understood as singer, songwriter, writer, independent researcher, theorist, activist and all the inbetweens and

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