PART 1

Core concepts
1

VARieties of ePistemic inJustice

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The idea of “epistemic injustice” draws together three branches of philosophy – political philosophy, ethics, and epistemology – to consider how epistemic practices and institutions may be deployed and structured in ways that are simultaneously infelicitous toward certain epistemic values (such as truth, aptness, and understanding) and unjust with regard to particular knowers. Examining the ethics and politics of knowledge practices is, of course, not new; for example, feminist, critical race, and decolonial philosophers have done so for quite some time (Anderson 2017; Babbitt 2017; Collins 2017; Pitts 2017; Tuana 2017). As Patricia Hill Collins notes, where there is oppression, there is also resistance to oppression (1991: 12–13, 2000: 22). Likewise, where there has been epistemic injustice there has also been resistance to epistemic injustice. One form of this resistance has been the explicit identification and analysis of epistemic injustices offered by those experiencing them. For example, as Vivian May notes, Anna Julia Cooper, writing in 1892, highlighted the suppression of Black women’s ideas through epistemic violence and interpretive silencing (May 2014: 97). Sojourner Truth, speaking in 1867, highlighted the denial of Black women as knowers via asymmetries in cognitive authority and via men’s habitually constrained imaginations (May 2014: 98). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, writing within a (post-)colonial context, identifies what she calls ‘epistemic violence’ in claims to know the interests of subaltern persons that preclude the subaltern from formulating knowledge claims concerning their interests and speaking for themselves (Spivak 1988). These examples are part of a broader history of epistemic resistance through identifying and calling attention to ways in which knowers have been wronged in their capacities as knowers.

Importantly, there is often an implicit sense that these kinds of wrongs are perpetuated from within epistemic practices or are the result of how epistemic institutions are structured. Epistemic injustices can therefore be understood as epistemic in at least three senses. First, they wrong particular knowers as knowers, for example by suppressing a knower’s testimony (Dotson 2011) or by making it difficult for particular knowers to know what it is in their interest to know (Fricker 2007: 147–175). Second, they cause epistemic dysfunction, for example by distorting understanding or stymieing inquiry. Third, they accomplish the aforementioned two harms from within, and sometimes through the use of, our epistemic practices and institutions, for example, when school curricula and academic disciplines are structured in ways that systematically ignore, distort, and/or discredit particular intellectual traditions (Minnich 1990; Mohanty 2004; Outlaw...
Consequently, an epistemic injustice not only wrongs a knower as a knower, but also is a wrong that a knower perpetrates as a knower and that an epistemic institution causes in its capacity as an epistemic institution.

Given that epistemic injustices are something that occur within the activities and institutions knowers engage in order to know, and given that a chapter that seeks to convey knowledge concerning the varieties of epistemic injustice does, by definition, engage in epistemic activity, we would do well to consider at the outset the ways in which this essay might itself participate in and perpetuate epistemic injustice. With this concern in mind, I will begin by first considering some specific ways in which a chapter on the varieties of epistemic injustice might perpetuate or contribute to epistemic injustice. In doing so, I provide an argument for why I will not offer readers an exhaustive list of the varieties of epistemic injustice nor prescribe a definitive set of categories with which to classify them, but rather provide some initial examples of epistemic injustices so that readers may begin to understand the grammar of the term ‘epistemic injustice’ for future and new uses. I will then sketch four (although not the only) lenses with which to think about varieties of epistemic injustice. I do so with the aim of giving readers a sense of some ways epistemic injustices can take shape without foreclosing the possibility of thinking about epistemic injustices along other trajectories, and especially along trajectories that may be more readily noticed by those who are differently located than I am.

**On the dangers of defining the field of epistemic injustice**

In her essay, “A Cautionary Tale,” Kristie Dotson warns that “when addressing and identifying forms of epistemic oppression one needs to endeavor not to perpetuate epistemic oppression” (2012a: 24). For Dotson, epistemic oppression occurs when exclusions produce deficiencies in social knowledge that unjustly infringe upon particular knowers’ “ability to utilize persuasively shared epistemic resources within a given epistemic community in order to participate in knowledge production and, if required, the revision of those same resources” (2012a: 24). In other words, epistemic oppression occurs when particular knowers are precluded from making an impact, not just with shared epistemic resources, but also on shared epistemic resources. The danger of perpetuating epistemic oppression in this manner seems significant in a discipline that seeks to define concepts of concern to all knowers (such as “truth,” “knowledge,” and “reality”), but is oriented by a culture of justification. Following the work of Gayle Salamon, Dotson defines a culture of justification as one that “requires the practice of making congruent one’s own ideas . . . with some ‘traditional’ conception of philosophical engagement” (2012b: 6), and argues that this kind of culture is pervasive in philosophy. To this I would add that while one is encouraged in philosophy to make one’s own ideas congruent with those that have already dominated the field, the “best” kind of philosophy is often defined as establishing and preserving norms to which others must now make themselves congruent, where those persons regarded as capable of establishing norms worth preserving have historically been dominantly situated (Cherry and Schwitzgebel 2016). As Amy Olberding points out, this dynamic, as it is embedded in philosophical institutions, puts non-dominant philosophers and non-dominant philosophical traditions in a double-bind: if their philosophical contributions conform to what is already established, they appear to be an unnecessary addition to philosophy as typically conceived, but if they do not conform to what is already established, they are deemed un- or less than philosophical (Olberding 2015: 14–15). Either scenario frames European and Euro-American philosophical traditions as wholly representative of experienced reality toward which all other experiences of reality must bend – surely a kind of epistemic injustice insofar as it simultaneously hierarchizes without warrant what is epistemically significant or worthy of epistemic attention (i.e. the world as experienced by this...
Varieties of epistemic injustice

particular set of knowers and not another) and who counts as an ideal epistemic agent (i.e. those who experience the world in this particular way, not another). With these initial cautions in mind, there are at least two dangers I should like to avoid in introducing the reader to particular varieties of epistemic injustice. First is the danger of participating in what Kristie Dotson calls a “rhetoric of beginnings” (2014b: 3). The second danger is of generating what David Owen calls “aspectival captivity” (2003: 88). These two dangers, which I will explain below, are related insofar as engaging a rhetoric of beginnings is one way of generating aspectival captivity. Nonetheless, it is not the only way. Both dangers carry the risk of wronging particular knowers as well as distorting epistemic activity. Explaining how will help to illustrate some of the ways epistemic injustices can manifest.

In her introduction to the special issue of Hypatia on Interstices: Inheriting Women of Color Feminist Philosophy, Dotson challenges the notion that the issue represents a beginning or entry of women of color into philosophy, indicating that to frame the intellectual work contained in the volume as a beginning would ignore (and encourage readers to ignore) the history of women of color thought that precedes its publication and upon which authors within the volume draw (Dotson 2014b: 3). Moreover, to frame the issue as an epistemic beginning would treat an historically white epistemic institution (i.e. the journal) as that which confers legitimacy to women of color philosophers, a move that Dotson actively resists in her introduction. A “rhetoric of beginnings” also carries the pitfalls associated with “coinage” discussed by Patricia Hill Collins in this volume. For example, when epistemic practices and resources honed within communities resistant to social oppression move from those communities into institutions that have been shaped to serve the interests of those with social power, they can become distorted and made to serve dominant interests in these distortions (Collins 2017).

The danger of “beginnings,” then, is that in offering an account of the varieties of epistemic injustice I might proceed by, or be taken as, offering an “origin” story that represents a “new” development in philosophy beginning to be explored. Proceeding in this manner disrespects and perpetuates harm against particular knowers in ways that can be considered epistemically unjust. First, it perpetuates ignorance regarding the prior existence, as well as the resilience and creativity, of those who have historically experienced and called attention to epistemic injustices, thereby disrespecting whole groups of knowers and encouraging habits of attention that disregard certain knowers as knowers. Second, in failing to acknowledge the epistemic labor that precedes me, I would encourage habits of mind that deflect attention away from the interdependence of knowers, while simultaneously relying upon that interdependence, thereby exploiting the epistemic labor of others to perpetuate the appearance of my own epistemic labor as singular. I can only think and communicate the thoughts I offer here owing to the epistemic labor of those who have worked so hard before me to call attention to injustices in our practices of knowing. Finally, an “origin” story would likely distort understanding of at least some epistemic injustices insofar as it would encourage readers to view all epistemic injustice solely in relation to the account given here, thereby establishing my own account as primary or central. There is a presumption in thinking that the wide range and long history of various groups of marginalized knowers’ resistances and protestations concerning epistemic injustices could be captured in one essay or by one sort of person or within one particular frame. Instead, I encourage readers to read this essay alongside the multiple accounts of epistemic injustices offered in the section on liberatory epistemologies with the knowledge that even these accounts are not the final word on the forms that epistemic injustices might take (Anderson 2017; Collins 2017; Hall 2017; McKinnon 2017; Pitts 2017; Tremain 2017; Tuana 2017).

This last concern is connected to the second danger, generating what David Owen calls “aspectival captivity,” by which he means the tendency to repress alternate ways of reflecting on
a given topic (2003: 85–88). Calling attention to particular epistemic activities and institutions, necessarily downplays and omits others. Doing so, even in the service of identifying particular epistemic injustices, has the potential of fixating attention in ways that might render inconceivable other epistemic injustices as yet unarticulated and best understood by attending to altogether different aspects of epistemic life. For example, if focusing on epistemic injustices that pertain to propositional knowing, I might neglect those that pertain to knowing how (Hawley 2011) and other forms of non-propositional knowing (Shotwell 2011, 2017). Or, if focusing on the acquisition and transfer of knowledge, I might draw attention away from injustices that pertain to other sorts of epistemic activities such as attending, perceiving, questioning, imagining, and acknowledging (Hookway 2010). As Kristie Dotson has argued, one way of navigating these sorts of difficulties is to utilize open conceptual structures “that signify without absolute foreclosure” (Dotson 2012a: 25). Still even adding the proviso, “and there may be other forms, too,” leaves the possibility that other forms of epistemic injustice may be misperceived if rendered in the terms established by my own account (Lugones 2003: 68–69), particularly given the homogenizing tendencies often operative when regarding multiple resistances to dominance (Roshanravan 2014: 41–42). Any account of the varieties of epistemic injustices must, therefore, be rendered polyvocally or with what José Medina calls a kaleidoscopic sensibility (Medina 2013: 297–308).

This need not, however, lead to an epistemic relativism where an injustice is only an injustice if one cares to envision our epistemic lives one particular way and not another. Attending to these difficulties does call attention to the situatedness of the philosopher and to the fact that her accounts will be useful in some ways while not at all useful in others. Even so, the very idea of epistemic injustice entails the notion that knowers can be harmed or wronged in their capacity as knowers, suggesting that knowers owe and ought to be able to reasonably expect some things from one another insofar as they are knowers. In other words, our epistemic lives are fundamentally intertwined with one another such that one cannot simply ignore other knowers and know well. Hence my attempt to avoid establishing a set of definitive categories of epistemic injustice is motivated precisely by a desire to leave my account open to other knowers with the understanding that as finite temporal beings, “we simply do not have the capacity to track all the implications of our positions on any given issue” (Dotson 2012a: 24–25). Whether any given knower engages in epistemic activities (such as knowing, inquiring, imagining, and considering) well is not up for grabs, but rather navigated and evaluated within the thick of our epistemic lives together.

Holding onto both concerns (that we ought to attend to epistemic injustices and that we ought not consider any one approach to understanding epistemic injustice as foundational or definitive of all), I instead discuss varieties of epistemic injustice through four possible lenses. Each lens provides a way to distinguish and trace relations among ways that epistemic agents and institutions can simultaneously harm knowers and distort epistemic values. However, these four lenses are not the only way to do so.” In addition, it should be noted that some epistemic injustices appear within more than one lens; however the light shed on them will refract differently depending upon the lens with which they are viewed.

Social contract and coordinated ignorance

One lens with which to think about varieties of epistemic injustice is to consider how persons may be systematically subject to injustice generally speaking and to understand epistemic injustices as intertwined with (and reinforcing) relations of dominance and oppression. Charles Mills’ analysis of the nonideal conditions that maintain white supremacy in the United States as a racial contract provides such a lens. In the Racial Contract, Mills notes that typically philosophers
Recognize the moral and political dimensions of social contract theory, but neglect its epistemic dimensions: that signatories and beneficiaries of (real or hypothetical) social contracts not only submit to political institutions and oblige themselves to standards of behavior for mutual benefit, but also bind themselves to epistemic institutions and habituate themselves to standards of epistemic behavior, so as to mutually recognize and maintain the terms of the social contract (Mills 1997: 17–18). With this lens, epistemic injustices take the form of epistemic institutions and cognitive practices that maintain and enforce unjust power relations.

First, just as the racial contract creates two classes, one of persons and the other of sub-persons (Mills 1997: 16–17), so too does it create two epistemic classes, one of (purportedly ideal) knowers, the other of sub-knowers. In other words, the racial contract establishes terms under which white European men are regarded as “generic” prototypical knowers collectively on a progressive path toward knowing the world and deems those it categorizes as non-white as incapable of intellectual achievement and progress (Mills 1997: 44–46). Feminist philosophers have also identified and discussed the manner in which systems of dominance and oppression create two distinct classes of knowers, arguing that patriarchy relies upon and sustains networks of asymmetrical authority that harmfully position women as less than competent knowers (e.g. Code 1991; Collins 1991; Jones 2002; Tuana 2006). Because the feminist literature on these harms often emphasizes the interpersonal aspects of epistemic activity, this same literature will appear in a different light in the next section; whereas I draw attention here to the structural aspects of these relations. Practices and institutions that create and maintain a class of sub-knowers are clear candidates for the label epistemic injustice insofar as they wrong those knowers deemed “sub-knowers” and constitute an epistemic dysfunction in their treatment toward them. A classic example of this form of epistemic injustice within an institution would be laws prohibiting blacks from testifying against whites in a court of law as was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in Blyew vs. U.S. (1871). A corresponding cognitive practice to this institution would include implicit biases that render certain groups of people less credible than others, i.e. as sub-knowers (Saul 2017). Long-standing practices of this type of epistemic injustice would include the systematic dismissal and ignorance of Black American intellectual traditions as properly philosophical (Outlaw 2007).

All of these examples, insofar as they create a class of sub-knowers in the service of oppression, harm and disrespect particular knowers as knowers from within dominantly sanctioned epistemic institutions and practices.

Second, in service of the unjust social contract, the epistemic contract creates what Mills’ calls “an inverted world” in which those who have created and benefitted from injustice remain largely ignorant of the unjust arrangements through which they benefit (1997: 18). The creation of a sub-class of knowers goes a long way toward achieving this goal, for one way to remain ignorant of injustice is to disqualify those in a position to call attention to it from doing so. In addition to disqualifying those who suffer from injustice from calling attention to it, under the terms of the racial contract, dominantly situated knowers are encouraged to ignore structural injustices through the cultivation of particular habits that direct their attention away from racial injustice through epistemic vices. For example, those dominantly situated may be encouraged to develop a kind of epistemic arrogance in order to maintain that their experience of the world is generalizable to the entirety of reality, a close-mindedness to the possibility that others may experience the world in ways they cannot, and an epistemic laziness with regard to knowing the world well in light of those oppressed by the racial contract (Medina 2013: 30–40). These vices may manifest in and be supported by what I have called “willful hermeneutical ignorance,” or the propensity to dismiss whole aspects of the experienced world by refusing to become proficient in the epistemic resources required for attending to those parts of the world well (Pohlhaus, Jr. 2012). Importantly, this is a matter of not only individual vice, but also epistemic institutions and
collective behaviors that enable, encourage, and incentivize particular epistemic vices in groups of individuals. Targeted ignorances are only sustainable when they are collective and supported by the kind of social power dominant institutions confer.

**Interdependence and epistemic relations**

While the lens of the racial contract highlights the ways in which knowers can be unjustly treated and harmed by epistemic institutions and practices in a systematic way, it does not highlight the degree to which knowers are intersubjectively constituted. In other words, just as feminist philosophers have noted that social contract theories eclipse the degree to which nurturing relations are necessary in order to become rational agents capable of ascertaining to a social contract, so too have traditional epistemologies typically neglected to acknowledge the degree to which knowers become knowers in relation to those who raise them and teach them how to know (Code 1993). If care is the relation that binds moral agents, trust is the relation that binds epistemic agents. To the degree that infants trust (and are able to trust) those who nurture and cultivate them into beings capable of engaging mutually relied upon epistemic practices and institutions, they become epistemic agents (Code 1993). Moreover, mutually relied upon institutions and practices are integral to our knowing (Code 2006; McHugh 2017; Nelson 1990, 1993). As Lorraine Code notes, “[e]ven the simplest of observational knowledge claims depend, more than people ordinarily realize, on corroboration and acknowledgment” (1991: 216).

Through this lens, epistemic injustices fall into two broad categories: first, exclusions that keep epistemic agents isolated from one another without warrant and, second, fractures in epistemic trust. Examples of the former include formal and informal refusals to allow certain knowers to participate in various areas of communal epistemic life, such as education, healthcare, politics, and science (Carel and Kidd 2017; Grasswick 2017; Kotzee 2017). Such exclusions wrong the individual knowers excluded and stymie the development of knowledge along particular trajectories. For example, participation in a wide variety of epistemic practices is necessary for developing one’s capacities as an epistemic agent (Hookway 2010), such that unfair exclusion from them can impede individual epistemic growth. In addition, epistemic communities from which certain knowers are unfairly excluded lack the beneficial epistemic friction that might be provided by their participation (Medina 2013). The need for epistemic friction in such cases will be complicated when considering epistemic injustice through the lens of epistemic labor, bringing this lens in tension with the fourth lens I discuss below.

Epistemic interdependence, while manifest in epistemic communities, is not reducible to them. Consequently, epistemic injustice is not simply remedied by allowing participation in epistemic communities. Where there are serious and systematic breakdowns in trust, epistemic injustice still prevails (Hawley 2017). This can be seen on the individual level, interpersonally, and on the level of institutions. As Karen Jones has argued, proper self-trust is both necessary for knowing the world well and something that is developed interactively with others (Jones 2012: 245). It is therefore something that may be seriously hampered by such things as epistemic gaslighting or the systematic denial by others of an epistemic agent’s lived experiences (McKinnon 2017). Moreover, disempowering structures of cognitive authority can make it difficult for those groups disempowered to place their trust wisely (Code 1991: 186); for example, when women are systematically taught to distrust their own instincts and to defer to the cognitive authority of men, it can be difficult not only to develop appropriate self-trust, but also proper trust in others. Finally, this lens brings into focus that even warranted distrust may signal a kind of epistemic injustice, for example in institutions that have historically failed particular populations such as the justified mistrust by women in psychiatric authority or by African-Americans in pre-dominantly
white medical institutions. In such cases, the problem is not the withholding of trust or improper distrust, but rather the breach of trust caused by the institutions, leading to the inability to trust (Carel and Kidd 2017; Grasswick 2017; Hawley 2017; Scrutton 2017). Communities that have historically been harmed in the past by specific epistemic institutions may understandably be less trusting of them and so less able to benefit epistemically from a trusting reliance on them that is available to others for whom there has been no historical breach in trust. In such cases, the breach of trust that leads to a population’s inability to trust in communal epistemic institutions constitutes an epistemic trust injustice (Grasswick 2017).

**Degrees of change and/in epistemic systems**

While the lenses provided above treat epistemic injustice as inextricable from social and political forms of oppression, Dotson utilizes a degree of change lens to argue that there are distinct forms of epistemic oppression that are not reducible to social and political factors, but rather derive from epistemic systems themselves (2014a: 116). In other words, there are features of our epistemic lives that can hold epistemic injustices in place independently of social and political relations of power. This need not mean epistemic injustices cannot serve or do not very often serve social and political injustice, including those that originate from epistemic systems. Nor does it mean that epistemic injustices that are irreducible to social and political injustices are somehow more worthy of our attention. Rather, it demonstrates the need to refrain from utilizing only one sort of lens when thinking about epistemic injustice. There are legitimate and important reasons for utilizing lenses that do focus on epistemic injustices that stem from social and political injustices. However, if these are the only approaches we take to epistemic injustice, we may very well miss other sorts of epistemic injustices such as those that can exist solely within the epistemic realm. In addition, Dotson’s account provides reason to refigure the field of epistemology insofar as her account brings attention to epistemic injustice as an ongoing contingent possibility, always to be determined in possibly new and unforeseen ways within any given social historical context, and not once and for all.

Dotson begins with some basic features of epistemic life: that our epistemic lives are social, that this sociality gives rise to epistemic systems from which individuals may be excluded to greater and lesser extents, and that epistemic systems must have a certain degree of resilience (2014a: 120–122). Given these features of epistemic life, Dotson asks: what are the various ways in which knowers can be unwarrantedly excluded from contributing to epistemic systems, and in each kind of exclusion what degree of change is necessary in order to rectify the exclusion? With a degree of change lens, she identifies three distinct levels of exclusions from epistemic systems that may occur, first-, second-, and third-order exclusion, each with a corresponding degree of change that would be necessary to rectify the exclusion (2014a: 123–133).

A first-order epistemic exclusion “results from the incompetent functioning of some aspect of shared resources with respect to some goal or value” (Dotson 2014a: 123). In other words, there are types of epistemic exclusions that do not signal anything wrong with the epistemic system; instead, what is needed to remedy the exclusion is to utilize the system more proficiently (Dotson 2014a: 125). Dotson identifies unwarranted devaluations of credibility and the creation of epistemically disadvantaged identities as first-order exclusions (2014a: 125). Examples of first-order exclusions include testimonial injustice, whereby knowers attribute less credibility to a knower’s testimony due to an identity prejudice (Fricker 2007: 28) and other sorts of exclusions from non-testimonial epistemic practices such as those involved in querying, conjecturing, and imagining, owing to deflated perceptions of competency (Hookway 2010). In such cases, an epistemic agent is unfairly prevented from participating fully within epistemic systems owing to
an unfair distribution of epistemic power due to unwarranted credibility deficits and assessments of competency. However, there is nothing about the exclusion that indicates a problem with the epistemic systems themselves. In such cases, actions like offering testimony and entertaining a possibility are still beneficial practices; indeed if they were not, then the exclusion from such practices would not so clearly be a wrong. What is needed to rectify the situation in first-order cases is to more faithfully and consistently engage the systems themselves, for example, by applying the rules consistently such that epistemic agents are not unfairly excluded from epistemic participation.

Second-order epistemic exclusions require more than ensuring equitable participation in epistemic systems. In such cases, there is something wrong with the epistemic system itself: it is insufficient in a way that leads it to function less well with regard to certain experiences or aspects of the world as experienced by certain persons (Dotson 2014a: 126–127). The sorts of cases that Miranda Fricker identifies as hermeneutical injustice whereby a significant area of one’s experience is obscured from collective understanding (2007: 154–155) would be a second-order exclusion (Dotson 2014a: 127). However, there are other sorts of exclusions that result from the use of insufficient resources. For example, some (although not all) cases of what Dotson calls “testimonial smothering” would fall in this category. Testimonial smothering occurs when one “perceives one’s immediate audience as unwilling or unable to gain the appropriate uptake of proffered testimony” and so must truncate one’s testimony (Dotson 2011: 244). Those instances of testimonial smothering where one’s audience is unable to give proper uptake owing to a lack of particular epistemic resources would qualify as second-order exclusions so long as all that would be needed to rectify the situation would be an adjustment or addition to epistemic resources for proper testimonial uptake. In cases where more than adding and adjustment are required, we turn to third-order exclusions.

Third-order epistemic exclusions are exclusions that occur when an epistemic system is functioning properly and is sufficiently developed, but the system itself is altogether inadequate to a particular epistemic task (2014a: 129–131). As such, Dotson argues that third-order epistemic exclusions are irreducible to social and political factors given that these sorts of exclusions can be perpetuated by the very systems themselves, given the need for such systems to be resilient (2014a: 132–133). These sorts of exclusions require third-order change, or the ability to think what a given epistemic system does not allow one to think, revealing the system itself to be not just insufficient (and so remediable by adding and adjusting) but rather inadequate to certain epistemic tasks (and so in need of a new epistemic system). Dotson identifies what she calls “contributory injustice” as an epistemic injustice that requires third-order change (2012a: 31–32). Contributory injustices occur when knowers utilize epistemic resources that are inapt for understanding the potential contributions of particular knowers to our collective knowledge pool and thereby engage in a form of willful hermeneutical ignorance that refuses to employ more apt epistemic resources for receiving and appropriately responding to those contributions (Dotson 2012a: 31–32). In such cases, the knower who commits the wrong may treat other knowers as competent and trustworthy. Moreover, the knower who commits the wrong may be open to adjusting and developing currently shared epistemic resources. For example, rather than shift one’s conception of workers and the workplace to more adequately attend to workers who are also child-bearers, one might seek to understand the concerns of this group of workers by further developing already existing systems such as understanding maternity leave as a sort of disability leave. But these remedies mistake the problem. Instead, a whole new approach is required, one in which axiomatic features of the previous collective epistemic resources may need to be abandoned. Indeed, Dotson argues that in such cases, something akin to what María Lugones calls
“world”-travelling is necessary to rectify the exclusion (2012a: 35), otherwise the contributions of particular knowers will continue to be distorted and misapprehended.

**Epistemic labor and knowledge production**

Finally, we can view epistemic injustices through the lens of epistemic labor and knowledge production. This lens captures much (although not all) of what has been discussed with the previous lenses. Nonetheless, as I will demonstrate below, focusing on epistemic labor and knowledge production distinguishes among some cases that other lenses group together. In addition, thinking about epistemic injustices through the lens of epistemic labor draws attention to sorts of epistemic injustice not contained in the previous sections. By focusing on epistemic labor and knowledge production, we can discern (at least) three broad categories of epistemic injustice: *epistemic agential injustices*, those that directly and unfairly thwart epistemic labor; *epistemic labor invalidation*, those that disregard or systematically fail to acknowledge the epistemic labor of some; and *epistemic exploitation*, those that unjustly exploit epistemic labor.

Epistemic agential injustices, or those that unfairly thwart epistemic labor, may come in many forms. For example, some (although not all) testimonial injustices can be seen to do so. As I have argued elsewhere, within certain contexts, not only must knowers work together, but also they have a right to expect that knowers will work together to develop epistemic pursuits (Pohlhaus 2014). When one is subject to testimonial injustice in such contexts, this unfairly stymies epistemic agency insofar as it is through engagement with epistemic communities that one’s epistemic labor bears fruit. As Ishani Maitra points out, within the context of certain relationships (including, but not only, those pertaining to particular epistemic institutions such as a court of law), even simply suspending judgment (neither believing nor disbelieving) may constitute a kind of epistemic injustice (2010: 200–201). In addition, the phenomenon of stereotype threat, insofar as it has ill effects on epistemic activity by way of unfairly increasing epistemic labor for some and not others (Steele 2010), signals an epistemic agential injustice. In other words, pernicious stereotypes, or what Patricia Hill Collins aptly calls “controlling images” (2000: 69–96), add to the cognitive labor of particular groups, since these images bring to the knower’s awareness the potential unfair bias through which their epistemic activities may be received. Contending with this ever present possibility adds to the cognitive labor of those stereotyped in ways that can impede their epistemic activity in comparison to those who are not perniciously stereotyped and so do not need to engage in such additional epistemic labor. Consequently, the imposition of this extra epistemic labor for some and not others can be identified as an epistemic agential injustice.

In contrast to epistemic injustices that impede epistemic agency by making it disproportionately harder to complete epistemic tasks, there are epistemic injustices that disregard and devalue certain sorts of epistemic activity, invalidating the epistemic labor necessary for completing epistemic tasks; these kinds of epistemic injustice I will call “epistemic labor invalidations.” For example, epistemic labor that attends to affect and knowing people well is both expected of women while simultaneously downplayed as “real knowledge” or engaging in actual epistemic labor. As Uma Narayan points out, third-world scholars are often expected to be fountains of knowledge concerning the groups to which they are perceived as belonging in a way that disregards the actual cognitive labor necessary for knowing what is expected of them insofar as this knowledge is regarded as automatically present in virtue of group membership and not through actual cognitive effort (Narayan 1997: 121–157). Furthermore, as Lisa Heldke argues, hierarchies in what counts as worthy of being known may lead some people to be regarded as less competent precisely because of what it is they know (2006). Similarly, Amy
Olberding points out that knowledge of non-Western philosophy is invalidated within the discipline of philosophy to such an extent that knowing something about it can reduce one’s credibility as a philosopher (2016).

Finally, epistemic exploitation occurs when epistemic labor is coercively extracted from epistemic agents in the service of others. Attention to this kind of epistemic injustice highlights the Foucauldian insight that power not only suppresses, but also produces (Allen 2017; Hall 2017). Likewise, epistemic injustices can not only stymie epistemic activity, but also exploitively produce it. For example, epistemic and social coercion may be used to produce testimony that is subordinating. Rachel McKinney calls this form of produced testimony extracted speech (McKinney 2016). Examining cases such as the Central Park Five, in which five male juveniles of color were compelled to give false confessions and were consequently wrongly convicted of sexually assaulting and attacking a white woman jogging in New York City’s Central Park, McKinney shows how social and epistemic power may be used to extract or produce testimony from persons that is both untrue and self-damaging (McKinney 2016). Nora Berenstain calls attention to another sort of epistemic exploitation where those who are harmed by axes of oppression are continually called upon to educate those who benefit from their oppression. As Berenstain argues, the repeated calls to those who are oppressed to “prove” the harm they endure produce double binds from which it is extraordinarily difficult to extract oneself (Berenstain 2016). In other words, solicitations to “prove” that things like sexism and racism exist leave one with the choice of either engaging in fruitless and tiresome epistemic labor or appearing to be complicit in the view that one’s experiences simply do not exist. Moreover, responding to such solicitations can have the effect of reinscribing epistemic hierarchies insofar as the continuing effort to “prove” and scientifically document the harms of oppression reinforces the background assumption that the experience of harm by some groups is not plausible or reliable on its own (Schroer 2015). Epistemic exploitation can be maintained not only through credibility deficits, but also via credibility surpluses as when non-dominantly situated knowers are expected to act as epistemic tokens, being called upon continually to provide “raw experience” and to “represent” for the groups to which they are perceived as belonging (Davis 2016). Given the pervasive nature of epistemic exploitation, one form of resistance is for non-dominantly situated knowers to withdraw from epistemic interactions they justifiably assess to be exploitative (Henning 2015).

**Conclusion**

Each of the four lenses used above to identify epistemic injustices leads to different ways of categorizing and understanding varieties of epistemic injustice. Beginning from the insight that under conditions of oppression “epistemic relations are screwed up” (Medina 2013: 27), the first lens sorts epistemic injustices into two broad categories: those that structure inequitable relations among knowers (for example, by creating a class of sub-knowers in relation to dominantly situated knowers) and those that divert epistemic attention in the service of dominance (for example, by actively ignoring the injustices that privilege members of dominant groups). If we begin from the insight that knowers are constituted in relation, different varieties of epistemic injustice emerge: those that stymie epistemic relations and those that manifest in breaches of trust. Using an order of change lens focuses attention not only to three distinct levels through which we can classify epistemic injustices, but also highlights that a fundamental aspect of epistemic systems, namely the resilience required for efficacy, can itself maintain some epistemic injustices (i.e. third-order) on its own. Finally, through the lens of epistemic agency as labor, other varieties of epistemic injustice emerge, not only those that stymie knowers, but also those that devalue particular sorts
of epistemic labor and those that exploitatively extract epistemic labor from particular knowers. Moving among these lenses demonstrates that attention to different aspects of epistemic life will bring different sorts of epistemic injustice in and out of focus. Moreover, shifting attention will highlight different ways of conceiving the relations among various epistemic injustices. It is, therefore, critical when attending to the ethical and political aspects of epistemic life neither to foreclose the possibility of identifying and tracking new forms of epistemic injustice nor to preclude other knowers from calling attention to them as they arise.

Related chapters: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 34, 37

Notes

1 I would like to thank Ian James Kidd, José Medina, Michael R. Hicks, and especially Madelyn Detloff for helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this chapter.

2 In this chapter, I take a broader sense of the term ‘epistemic injustice’ than forwarded in Miranda Fricker’s Epistemic Injustice: The Power and Ethics of Knowing in order to call attention to the larger body of work preceding the book that analyzes the political and ethical aspects of epistemic activity and to broaden epistemological attention to a wider range of epistemic activities than the acquisition of propositional knowledge.

3 In addition, as Kathryn Hutchison points out, since (unlike other disciplines) philosophy lacks “an independently accessible body of subject matter” (2013: 111), there is a high likelihood that implicit biases will lower the credibility of work by persons from traditionally underrepresented groups thereby making it even more difficult for such persons to be recognized as forwarding new and innovative ideas within the discipline (Hutchison 2013).

4 See Alcoff (2017) for a related but distinct argument concerning the epistemic injustice of the almost exclusive attention given to European and Euro-American thought in professional philosophy.

5 I owe thanks to Dotson, whose work has helped me to keep in mind that there have been Black women and other women of color practicing philosophy for centuries; one need only as capacious a view of philosophical when regarding the intellectual work of Black women and women of color as is granted to European men regarding their work to see that this is so.

6 Shannon Sullivan makes a similar observation when she notes that some ignorances are produced by knowledge. These types of ignorances she refers to as “ignorance/knowledge,” to keep in mind that ignorance is not always simply the absence of knowledge but can very much be produced by what one does know (2007: 154).

7 Because Miranda Fricker gave the name “epistemic injustice” to the various sorts of phenomena now being identified with the term, rehearsing her own lens here has the real danger of overdetermining the concept. It is for this reason that I do not do so, but rather situate the sorts of epistemic injustice she has identified, testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, where appropriate within the four lenses I discuss. Nonetheless, the impact of her work on bringing attention to the ethical and political dimensions of knowing has been enormous. For more detailed consideration of testimonial and hermeneutical injustices, I direct readers to the essays by Fricker (2017), Medina (2017), and Wanderer (2017).

8 Since the publication of Mills’ Racial Contract, there has been a growing body of literature that analyzes this and related sorts of active ignorance. See for example volume 21 issue 3 of Hypatia; Proctor and Schiebinger (2008); Sullivan and Tuana (2007).

9 Indeed, Dotson herself acknowledges that there are definite limitations to the order-of-change approach she develops in order to distinguish reducible from irreducible epistemic injustices (2012a: 35–36).

10 Jennifer Saul analyzes the convergences and divergences between stereotype threat and the forms of epistemic injustice identified by Fricker, testimonial and hermeneutical injustices (Saul 2017). Given her use of Fricker’s lens to think about the relation between stereotype threat and epistemic injustice, the convergences she finds differ from what I identify here.

References

Varieties of epistemic injustice


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