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EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE IN PRACTICE

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Epistemic injustice gives a name to experiences that we struggle to articulate due to the injuries of hegemonic speech. This normative grammar seeks to enable social philosophers and activists alike to name experiences of injustice that have not been previously addressed as such. This includes experiences that we cannot make sense of because the society we live in does not provide a vocabulary to make them intelligible or because we are not entitled to give them a name due to our specific identity position, which supposedly disables us from judging matters objectively. By looking at epistemic injustice in practice, this scholarly endeavor is aimed at making experiences of marginalized groups readable, pointing to hidden practices of power, and detecting silences of what is not on the agenda in public discourse – forms of domination and exclusion that a conventional vocabulary of social critique cannot grasp so easily and oftentimes is itself complicit in reproducing.

The debate triggered by Miranda Fricker's pioneering monograph entitled *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (2007) has resulted in manifold layers of discussion. It is now time to investigate "epistemic injustice" in different realms of social life within contemporary societies. The aim is to examine how this normative grammar – stemming from social philosophy, critical race studies, and feminist epistemology – can be used to identify, investigate, and critique a range of injustices experienced by a variety of people(s). Reflecting on the workings of "epistemic injustice"

promises to be a radical tool – if used, multiplied, and adapted to the needs and experiences of people in different cultural settings, social locations, and with divergent epistemological underpinnings of their respective life worlds. The vocabulary itself, hence, shall remain a permanent locus for a struggle over just representation.

On a level of theorizing, it appears timely to ask: In which ways must the grammar of justice be adapted (and not merely extended or assimilated) in order to grasp a diversity of cases of epistemic harm? How can scholars, as well as activists, appropriate this vocabulary in order to express their non-hegemonic subject positions? In which ways can the theoretical debate around “epistemic injustice” be pluralized in order to account for a variety of cases without, however, getting blurred, voided of sense, thereby losing its critical force?

In her 2007 monograph, Miranda Fricker bases her conception of epistemic injustice on cases of race, class, and gender discrimination. She develops a conceptual vocabulary within justice theory that moves beyond the established frames of distributive accounts of economic disparities or political accounts of proceduralism at the institutional level. Moreover, Fricker’s theory focuses on the level of representation and participation in knowledge production. She warns of two cases of epistemic injustice: First, testimonial injustice, according to which the testimonies of certain agents are not granted credibility due to their social identity status and prevalent negative stereotypes in society. People inhabiting such identity positions are made objects of knowledge formation rather than taken seriously as subjects of knowledge in their own right. As speakers, persons suffering from testimonial injustice, are invisible.

Second, hermeneutical injustice refers to cases in which a person can neither articulate nor adequately make sense of the harm experienced due to a hermeneutical gap between her linguistic means of expression and her lived demeaning experience. For example, we can only shame cases of sexual harassment if we can name them as such and if the concept is accepted by large parts of our society.

As a remedy for testimonial injustice, Fricker suggests the intellectually- and ethically-demanding virtue of testimonial sensitivity, which takes into account the unfair disadvantages of marginalized groups in order to actively counteract epistemic marginalization and exclusion by means of careful listening. As a remedy to hermeneutical injustice, she calls for a greater sensitivity by members of the majority population in order to be aware of the lack of hermeneutical resources that hampers a person's capacity to fruitfully socially interact. Both virtues demand "reflexive social awareness" (ibid., p. 170).

Critiques have underlined that these individual virtues are aimed at counteracting forms of injustice, which are structural by nature (Anderson, 2012; Medina, 2013). It is, hence, not enough that single individuals act virtuously. Moreover, structural forms of injustice demand structural remedies. This implies changing institutions relevant for shaping epistemologies, such as the educational system, political institutions, or the media (Fraser, 2008). Thus, epistemic justice does not only aim at "including" the epistemically-marginalized subject. What it rather strives for is to create spaces for counter discourses and alternative avenues of knowledge formation. If subjects simply stick to what is accepted as conventional wisdom within established loci of knowledge formation – thereby concealing discourse from challenges from the margins –, they become complicit with structural injustice. Dotson (2012) dubs this behavior "contributory injustice" and circumscribes the corresponding habitus as a kind of "situated ignorance", prevalent in many spaces of privilege and power (p. 31).

In addition, epistemic justice theory does not only focus on the majority society and high academia as possible agents for change: Epistemic resistance means creating frictions, identifying the gaps between hegemonic discourse and other ways of reading lived selfhood. People inhabiting marginalized subject positions have privileged access to non-hegemonic ways of conceiving the world, thus developing a "double consciousness" (Du Bois, 1996; Medina, 2013, p. 104) and calling into question mainstream narratives. Epistemic resistance calls for counteracting epistemic vices, such as arrogance, closed-mindedness, or intellectual laziness, thereby

seeking to break with epistemic concealments (Medina, 2013, p. 40).

On a transnational scale, epistemic justice not only confronts marginalization and exclusion within a community of more or less shared discourses, but it has to deal with the injustices of unequal standing along different systems of knowledge formation and linguistic systems vis-à-vis others. Cognitive injustice (Santos, 2007) designates the ways in which systems of thought and cultural practices relate to one another. Colonialism and neo-colonialism widely destroyed indigenous peoples' epistemes, made them invisible, or adapted them to the needs and interests of the former colonial power (Hountondji, 2002). This process of cultural imperialism (Young, 1990) can lead, in the worst case, to "epistemicide" (ibid., p. 16), the extinction of entire cultures of knowledge.

Epistemic injustice also shapes international development cooperation, based for a long time on theories of modernization, which presuppose that expert knowledge coming from the Global North is superior to local experiences and knowledge systems (Dübgen, 2012; Timmermann, 2013; Ziai, 2016). The neo-colonial way of continuing epistemic subjection is equally manifest in epistemic "extroversion", designating the extraction of knowledge in the Global South by a research apparatus based in the Global North, wherein people from the Global South are relegated to the status of informants serving the interests and careers of researchers abroad (Bhargava, 2013; Hountondji, 2002). Decolonizing knowledge, hence, means analyzing the power nexus that shapes knowledge formation and identifying how far the research apparatus that we inhabit – including publishing mechanisms, teaching curricula, and institutional features of university life – is complicit in re-enacting a global South-North divide within scientific systems of knowledge production (Keet, 2014).

Epistemic injustice is entangled in a complex web of power and domination (Bohman, 2012), intertwined with other forms of subjection, such as global geopolitical power asymmetries, economic exploitation, military interventions, and biopolitical means of control. Finally, a political reading of the theory of

epistemic injustice seeks to understand the implications of epistemic justice for strengthening democratic practices (Dielemann, 2015). Lately, Fricker (2013) herself shifted focus to the interconnection between epistemic injustice and political freedom. If we consider epistemic justice as being relevant for political institutions, we need to pay attention to epistemic justice as a central feature of non-domination, enabling free contestation among world citizens. Any kind of deliberative space nurturing democratic decision-making needs to make sure that it remains open and self-reflexive – minimizing the epistemic violence inherent in politics (by setting boundaries and claiming decisions for the polis).

In this special issue we focus on different identity positions and fields of social interaction in order to explore whether and how the grammar of epistemic injustice can be fruitfully applied and how it needs to be adapted in light of the singular case studies. The contributions look at transgender, disability, race, law, and global social inequality as arenas for struggles over just representation. The authors analyze the kinds of harm produced in each field of social interaction and inquire what epistemic justice would require instead.

In his/her article, “Epistemic Injustice and the Construction of Transgender Legal Subjects,” B. Lee Aultman investigates how the dominant normativity of sex/gender is inscribed in the juridical interpretations of transgender experiences in US-American case law. Case decisions concerning discrimination in the workspace generally rely on models of interpretation that do not take into account the specificities of transgender knowledges, but rather rely on comparisons to similar cases of sex stereotyping based on a classical gender dichotomy. Hence, even judges who rule in favor of transgender claimants enforce hermeneutical injustice by taking a heuristic that excludes and invisibilizes the transgender experience and its non-normative diversity. Doing justice to such experiences would require to carefully listen to transgendered discourses in order to make them enter the hegemonic grammar of juridical discourse as autonomous expressions of lived selfhood.

Laura Appeltshauser investigates, in her article “The Berlin Wall vs the European Border, OR #JeSuisCharlie vs #JeSuisNigeria - On the Workings of Epistemic Injustice in Race Matters,” different patterns of commemoration and grieving based on racial hierarchies. Whom do civil societies in the West identify and express solidarity with? Appeltshauser claims that the politics of memory work according to power asymmetries along racial lines that define whose life global (or rather: Western) publics find meaningful and whose is depreciated. As a matter of example, Appeltshauser identifies a gap between the public media attention given to the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France and the Boko Haram massacres in Nigeria, both happening in early 2015. She claims that testimonies that do not fit into the narratives of Western liberalism are easily excluded from the politics of mourning in the former metropolitan spaces. The epistemic neglect of the suffering experienced by Black/Brown/Muslim people deprives victims of giving their testimony. Appeltshauser reflects upon different strategies to resist testimonial injustice by making subjects audible, claiming their status as agents of knowledge production and as living a grievable life; requesting an ethical engagement with their humanness. On a theoretical level, the author urges future research to reflect more upon the nexus of subject formation and epistemic violence. Her analysis is particularly timely in the light of recent refugee politics in Europe and the racist epistemologies it partly relies on; judging whose life matters and whose does not.

The article co-authored by Hildur Kalman, Veronica Lövgren, and Lennart Sauer entitled “Epistemic Injustice and Conditioned Experience: The Case of Intellectual Disability,” analyzes through the lens of epistemic injustice the lived and gendered experience of people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and the kind of institutional epistemic injustice that shapes their hermeneutical understanding of self in society. People with ID are widely construed as childlike others with lessened creditability of judgement. Lacking the hermeneutical resources to express their experiences on their own terms, the analyzed material brings to light paradoxical discourses of an unfit between the language of normalized life styles and the specific circumstances of being subject to state-based care systems for

people with ID in Sweden. This reveals how epistemically concealed standards of what is regarded as a socially acceptable life (e.g. having a work and “normal” friends) undermine and deprive people with ID of the possibility of conveying (and consequently judging) their lives as rich and meaningful.

Elisabetta R. Bertolino’s contribution, “The Injustice of Justice: Feminist Ethical Reflections on Subjectivity,” focuses on the construction of subjectivity in Western legal discourse. She analyzes the legal subject as it is presupposed in Western Criminal Justice and legal philosophy. Imagining the liberal self as independent, autonomous, and necessarily resentful, this preconception shapes and limits the ways we can conceive remedies for injustice. Drawing on feminist and gender theories, particularly the phenomenological work of the Italian feminist Adriana Cavarero, the author explores different trajectories of subjectivity, taking into account the interrelatedness, vulnerability, and embodiedness of experience through “the voice”. Such kinds of alternative subjectivity promise to open up avenues that lead beyond the circles of violence inherent in criminal justice, which is based on the regulative idea of retributive justice and crude mechanisms of revenge.

Finally, Gottfried Schweiger’s article, entitled “Epistemic Injustice and Powerlessness in the Context of Global Justice: An Argument for ‘Thick’ and ‘Small’ Knowledge,” elaborates upon mechanisms of epistemic injustice in the field of academic knowledge production within philosophical theories of global justice. He exhibits how knowledge production on the “global poor” performs epistemic injustice if it relegates poor people merely to the position of objects of scientific inquiry instead of recognizing them as resistant and knowledgeable agents. Instead, epistemic justice requires considering materially-deprived people as proper bearers of social knowledge, best suited to tell what they suffer from and what they conceive of as relevant forms of domination. Consequently, theories of global justice remain limited and epistemically unjust if they exclude, invisibilize, and victimize poor people in their theorizing by relying exclusively on abstract “big” data generated in the centers of knowledge production in the Global North. In order to create

“windows into reality” and to contextualize theoretical inquiries, philosophers must engage with social agents in the Global South in a respectful and humble manner in order to make theories of global justice more just.

The articles exhibit a variety of directions that the debate on epistemic injustice can take if analyzed at the juridical level, at the level of academic knowledge production, at the level of theorizing, or at the level of public discourse and the media. The authors all request to respectfully interact with whoever is affected by a social interaction or a decision-making process. Henceforth, to imagine social change happening, wherever domination and misrecognition occurs, the social philosopher or activist needs to first analyze the intricacies of how power shapes and restricts what is thinkable, what is sayable, what seems reasonable – and to look for what is resisted or denigrated at the discourse level (Foucault, 1972; Forst, 2015). Measuring this silence, as Spivak (1988) requests, remains a very sophisticated endeavor (p. 286).

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