pre-read workshop on ████████████ Miranda Fricker's

Epistemic Injustice

09 & 10 September 2020

presentations

by and discussions with —

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The aim of this workshop is to explore the concept of epistemic injustice, which reveals an ethical dimension of epistemic life. We will read Miranda Fricker's book *Epistemic Injustice - Power & the Ethics of Knowing*. She investigates testimonial injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a giver of knowledge, and hermeneutical injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a subject of social understanding.

Program

09. September 2020 - Institute of Philosophy, University of Bern

09:00 - 9:30	Introduction
09:30-11:00	Discussion Chapter 1, 'Testimonial Injustice'
11:15 - 12:45	Discussion Chapter 2, 'Prejudice in the Credibility Economy'
12:45 – 14:15	Lunch Break
14:15 - 15:45	Discussion chapter 7, 'Hermeneutical Injustice'
16:00 - 16:30	Conclusion

10. September 2020 - Institute of Philosophy, University of Bern

09:00 - 10:30	Recapitulation Chapters 1,2 and 7
10:45 - 12:15	Input Presentation by Dr. Deborah Mühlebach, Free University Berlin
12:15 - 13:45	Lunch Break
13:45 - 15:15	Input Presentation by Dr. Melanie Altanian, University of Bern
15:30 - 16:30	Conclusion
16:30	SW*IP (Society for Women* in Philosophy) Networking Apéro

Registration until August 31 to sarah.heinzmann@students.unibe.ch Upon successful registration you will receive all relevant literature.

Glossary

(Social) epistemology: Epistemology can be defined as *the study of knowledge and justified belief*. Until recently, epistemology was heavily individualistic in focus. Social epistemology seeks to redress this imbalance by investigating the effects of social exchange and situatedness to our understanding of truth, knowledge and belief. [1]

Epistemic Injustice (EI): A distinct form of injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a knower. There are two forms of EI: Testimonial and hermeneutic injustice.

Testimonial Injustice (TI): TI occurs when prejudice cause a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word.

Hermeneutic Injustice (HI): HI occurs when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences.

Distributive (In)justice: Principles of distributive justice structure the distribution of benefits, goods and burdens in societies.[2] EI is a distinct epistemic, *not* distributive, kind of injustice.

Exercise

Work with a partner. Try to reflect the following questions, using the glossary:

- *What do you understand by epistemic / testimonial / hermeneutical injustice?*
- *Why is it important to discuss these concepts?*
- *What was your reading experience with the text?*

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[1] Alvin Goldman and Cailin O'Connor, 'Social Epistemology', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2019 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/epistemology-social/.

[2] Julian Lamont and Christi Favor, 'Distributive Justice', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/justice-distributive/.

Testimonial Injustice –

Main Thesis

Testimonial injustice is an epistemic practice in which due to missing social imagination and prejudice, identity power does not allow the hearer to give a justified amount of credibility to the testimony of a speaker.

Glossary

Social Power: A practically socially situated capacity to control others' actions, where this capacity may be exercised (actively or passively) by particular social agents, or alternatively, it may operate purely structurally.

Identity Power: An operation of social power which is dependent upon a shared imaginative conception of social identity – for example, shared imaginative conception of the identity of women, queer folks, Black or Hispanic communities, etc.

Credibility: Someone is given credibility if their statement is considered true and the speaker is thus perceived as a giver of knowledge:

The central Case of testimonial Injustice

Credibility: Prejudicial dysfunctions lead either to credibility excess – where the speaker, due to their social position, receives more credibility they otherwise would have, or to a credibility deficit – where the speaker receives less credibility.

➔ Credibility deficit, and not credibility excess, is the primary characterization of testimonial injustice

Prejudice: Prejudice can either incidentally or systematically lead to a testimonial injustice. When a prejudice operates systematically, it tracks the subjects through different dimensions of social activity. It is connected with other kinds of actual or potential injustice and is therefore called identity prejudice.

➔ Systematic testimonial injustice is the central case of TI

Exercise: Divide into four groups. Discuss one of the following concepts and conceptualize your findings on a flipchart. Present the outcomings and fill out this chart.	
Power	**Identity Power**
TI and Credibility	**TI and Prejudice**

Group Exercise – Chapter 1 (60-70 min.)

Discuss in groups one of the following concepts and write their findings on a flipchart paper. (15 min.)

Social Power

➔ Can operate actively or passively: How do they relate to each other?
➔ Agential and structural power
➔ Social situatedness and social alignment of power

Identity power

➔ What are shared imaginative conceptions of social identity?
➔ How is identity power operated actively, how passively?
➔ How is identity power related to material power?
➔ How can identity power be operated structurally?

Credibility - Testimonial Injustice: Part 1(P. 17-22)

➔ Excess / Deficit: Why is the focus here on credibility deficit?
➔ Why is credibility a *distinct* good? Why is a credibility deficit not a matter of distributive injustice?
➔ Why are innocent errors no clear sign of testinomnial injustice?

Prejudice - Testimonial Injustice: Part 2 (P. 23-29)

➔ Explain the example (Courtroom scene in *To kill a Mockingbird*). How is this linked to a prejudicial credibility deficit?
➔ What is the systematic connectedness of testimonial injustice?
➔ What is an identity prejudice?
➔ What is the central case of testimonial injustice?

For each topic, there is 10 min. Presentation / Discussion time.

Main Thesis

i. An unjustified deficit of credibility to the testimony of a speaker due to negative identity prejudice will tend to go most unchecked when it operates by way of stereotypical images held in the collective social imagination. Social images can operate beneath the radar of our ordinary doxastic self-scrutiny, sometimes even despite beliefs to the contrary.
    (p. 40)

ii. Persistent and systematic testimonial injustice results in serious, broad and deep going ethical and epistemic harms and is as such a face of oppression – either as explicitly repressive or as a silent by-product of residual prejudice. (p. 58)

Glossary

Stereotype: stereotypes are widely held associations between a group and an attribute. (p. 31) Stereotypes are used as heuristics to facilitate the judgement of a hearer's credibility. (p.36)

Negative identity-prejudicial stereotype: A widely held disparaging association between a social group and one or more attributes (stereotype, p.31), where this association embodies a generalization that displays some (typically, epistemically culpable) resistance to counter-evidence owing to an ethically bad affective investment. (p.35)

Internalized residual prejudice: the influence of prejudicial images from the social imagination persist in a hearer's patterns of judgement even where their content conflicts with the content of her beliefs. (p. 37)

Double testimonial injustice: First being wronged in one's capability as a knower in a concrete situation of testimony and subsequently receiving little to no credibility when giving account of this incident. (p.48)

The Wrong of Testimonial Injustice

1. TI can inflict a social or political form of **purely epistemic harm**: knowledge that would be passed on to a hearer and thus into the overall epistemic system is not received: testimonial injustice as harm to the epistemic system and as a serious form of unfreedom in our collective speech situation. (p. 43)

2. TI can inflict a **primary ethical harm**, as a form of harm to the essential human value of one's capacity as a knower and giver of knowledge. In consequence one is being wronged as a subject in one's capacity for reason, hence being undermined in one's humanity and personhood. (p.44)

This primary ethical harm issues in further **secondary harms** (p.46), falling broadly into two categories…

2.1 **practical harms**, i.e. far-reaching ramifications, such as physical, professional, socio-economic, etc.;

2.2 **epistemic harms**, i.e. a subject's loss of epistemic confidence causing e.g. loss of knowledge, prevention from gaining new knowledge, and hindrance of gaining intellectual courage or other epistemic virtues.

➔ **Self-fulfilling power of prejudicial stereotypes:** TI through its social constructive power can constrain who a person can be(come) and therefore be harmed in her personhood. (p. 55)

How to Resist

-   The attempt to correct for one's own spontaneous and unreflected identity prejudice through testimonial sensibility and a cultivation of a critical awareness regarding the prejudice that is distorting one's perception. (p. 89)

- The virtue of **testimonial justice**: A distinctly reflexive social awareness of the impact of a speaker's and one's own social identity on one's credibility judgement to neutralize the impact of one's prejudice. (p. 91)
- How: (i) by way of active reflection or (ii) more spontaneously by personal familiarity or (iii) by an ideal of full possession of the virtue of testimonial justice.

Exercise:

Group Phase (ca 60 min):

Divide into 4 groups and discuss the following four topics. There are four flipchart-papers corresponding to the topics. You can take the questions as suggestions and entry points for your deliberations.

Use keywords, short phrases or other (graphic) means to document your ideas to each topic on the flipchart-posters. Feel free to comment on ideas already written down.

Plenum phase (ca 20 min)

We will take a look at the collected thoughts together. Ideally each group can comment on their findings to open the discussion. Are there any open questions, ideas, or comments that you would like to discuss or share in the plenum?

Topic 1: The 'heuristic premise'

Stereotypes as "shortcuts" or heuristics to facilitate the hearer's judgment of the speaker. (p. 36) How deep do stereotypes run and how can we make sense of them in terms of 'images that express associations between a social group and one or more attributes? How does this shape our judgement and perceptions?

Topic 2: How can we make sense of residual internalization?

Why, after all, should one suspect that, despite everything one believes, one's judgements might in fact be shaped by ideas to the contrary? (p. 37)
Social stereotype as an image (p.37). What are the implications of this?
What about our habits? What does Fricker mean when she says that we can perpetrate testimonial injustice *despite* and *because* of our beliefs? (p. 36)

Topic 3: Exploring forms of harm inflicted by TI

- primary ethical harm: discuss the ramifications of the harm done to a person in her capacity as a knower. How and why is it an attack on a capacity essential to human value? What about the capacity for reason?
- secondary practical aspect of the harm: What consequences are implied by this concept? Which consequences are mentioned by Fricker? If possible, try to find your own examples.
- secondary epistemic aspect of the harm: loss of confidence in one's belief of knowledge about a particular topic (one-off TI) or loss of belief in one's intellectual abilities, one's authority in a specific social role (persistent TI) or just generally experiencing TI. Discuss the example Fricker makes on p. 48 (Chicana professor) and the ramifications of 'double TI'.

Topic 4: Counterstrategies – Testimonial Justice?

We have not read Chapter 4, nevertheless try to come up with a notion of 'Testimonial Justice'. What could it look like and how could this help to mitigate the wrongs of TI on an individual and on a collective or institutional level? How would it help us with residually internalized prejudice?

Hermeneutical Injustice – Chapter 7

Main Thesis

Guiding Intuition: There is another form of epistemic injustice which consist in a lack of collective hermeneutical resources required for a group to render significant aspects of their social experience communicatively intelligible.

➔ One suffers a hermeneutical injustice (HI) if one has some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutical marginalization.

- E.g.: Being confronted with the difficulty of understanding and expressing the social experience of sexual harassment prior to it being named, owing to an exclusion from those practices by which collective social meanings are generated.

Glossary

Hermeneutical Marginalization (p.152-154): Being in a social position of powerlessness causing unequal hermeneutical participation with respect to some significant area(s) of social experience;

Systematic HI (p.154-156): A HI, where the gap in the collective hermeneutical resource is caused and maintained by a wide-ranging and persistent hermeneutical marginalization;

Incidental HI (p.156-158): A HI, where the hermeneutical marginalization happens only fleetingly and/ or in respect of a highly localized patch of the subject's experience;

Double EI (p.159-160): Suffering an intertwining of TI and HI potentially leading to a runaway credibility deflation.

The Wrong of Hermeneutical Injustice

HI can inflict severe harm, primarily consisting in…

- a situated hermeneutical inequality, i.e. the subject is unfairly disadvantaged in rendering something communicatively intelligible which is strongly in their interest to be able express (p.162);

- the construction of the subject's identity, i.e. the subject is socially constituted as something they are not or do not want to be seen as (p.163-168).

The primary harm issues in further secondary harms, consisting in…

- practical harms, i.e. far-reaching ramifications, such as physical, socio-economic etc. (p.162-163);

- epistemic harms, i.e. a subject's loss of epistemic confidence causing e.g. loss of knowledge, prevention from gaining new knowledge, and hindrance of gaining intellectual courage (p.163).

How to Resist

Fricker proposes several approaches to counter HI, namely…

- sharing half-formed understandings of social experiences in order to collectively reach epistemic confidence and realize resources for rebellion (e.g. p.148);

- being sensitive to the possibility that the difficulty one's interlocutor is having rendering something communicatively intelligible is due to some sort of gap in collective hermeneutical resources (p.169-174);

- shifting the unequal relations of power that create the conditions of HI (namely, hermeneutical marginalization) by group political action (p.174).

Exercises:

1. Divide into 4 groups and split up around the tables. On each table you will find one flipchart-paper with one concept and related questions written on it. Spend 10 min per table and write down your thoughts. Switch tables until you were able to explore all 4 concepts.

   We will then take a look at the collected thoughts together. Are there any open questions, ideas, or comments that you would like to discuss or share in the plenum?

   (ca 60 min)

2. Divide into 4 groups, discuss possible approaches to counter HI, and write your ideas on the small papers at hand. We will then collect and discuss our ideas in the plenum.

   (ca 25 min)

Semantic Contestations and the Meaning of Politically Significant Terms

by Dr. Deborah Mühlebach – Freie Universität Berlin

1. Background

Neutral counterparts to slurs:

- They apply to the same objects as the corresponding slurring or pejorative term
- They are purely descriptive
- There could principally be a neutral counterpart to every slurring term

Discussions about so-called politically correct or incorrect terms

2. 'Black' as a Politically Significant Term

Politically significant terms: name parts of our reality which are frequently subject to political contestations, fights and changes.

E.g. 'white,' 'black,' 'woman,' 'boy,' 'Jewish,', 'disabled'

Focus on 'black':

- Especially suitable to exemplify semantic contestations in which (implicit) derogation plays a crucial role.
- Figures as one of the two most mentioned neutral counterparts to the highly derogatory n-word.
- It is not as narrow as 'African American' in that it also applies to Black people outside the USA.

3. Some Inferentialist Background

Inferentialism:

The meaning of a sentence is determined by its inferential role in a game of making assertions and giving and asking for reasons. The meaning of a term is determined by the different roles it can play in these sentences.

Perspectival theory of meaning due to the scorekeeping model:

A utters p "A ch·nk got the new job in our company."

The listener keeps score of what the utterer is committed to according to the conceptual norms of their discursive community.

- Commitments:
    o Listener treats utterer as being committed to a set of claims because of asserting p.

- Entitlements:
    o By asserting p, the utterer entitles the listener to believe that p is true (i.e. the utterer entitles the listener to be committed to p, too.)
    o If the listener believes that p is true, (s)he treats the utterer as being entitled to assert p.

4. 'Black' According to Various Discursive Sub-Communities

A discursive community is a community of practice which shares beliefs and values as well as ways of acting and talking. They share conceptual norms which are manifest in the use of the community's concepts.

Racialist sub-community:

'Black' is treated as a descriptive, categorising term for people which captures some of their biological features such as skin colour or their African ancestry.

→ The racialist sub-community is currently our dominant discursive sub-community

Highly racist discursive sub-community:

- The use of 'black' is governed by strong stereotypical background beliefs such as "x is black" licenses not only rather descriptive inferences but also evaluative inferences such as "x is likely to be lazy" or "x is inferior to white people".
- The use of 'black' comes close to the use of the n-word.

Historically and sociologically informed discursive sub-community:

- 'Black' in the sense of 'racialised-as-Black'
- Critique of the gap between the main discursive community's manifest and operative concept and thereby a problematisation of the dominant discursive community's social practices

5. Politically Significant Terms and Semantic Contestations

- Different meanings according to different sub-communities do not make the term 'black' ambiguous in the usual sense, these communities are *sub*-communities, not discursive communities of their own.
- The political fight about what 'black' should mean is a fight over which sub-group meaning is allowed to take centre stage in public discourse.
- This is a case of metalinguistic negotiation for a full understanding of which we need to theorise its relevant political aspects, i.e. different sub-communities and the power relations between them.
- The widely shared assumption that there are neutral counterparts to highly derogatory terms becomes dubious.
- Model of discursive sub-communities applicable to other instances of conceptual contestation and change such as appropriated uses of derogatory terms or disputes about so-called politically (in)correct terms.

Hermeneutical Injustice and Ignorance

by Dr. des. Melanie Altanian, University of Bern/University College Dublin

1. Fricker's Central Case of Hermeneutical Injustice (Fricker 2007, 155–175)

Generic definition: "…the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to **hermeneutical marginalization**" (Ibid., 158)

- Purely **structural, epistemically non-culpable notion**: no identifiable perpetrator
- Background condition for hermeneutical injustice: **hermeneutical marginalization**
- Manifests itself in a more or less doomed attempt on the part of a subject to render a significant area of her social experience intelligible to herself and others → **"hermeneutical gloom"**

Definition of systematic, discriminatory hermeneutical injustice: "…the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a **structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource**" (Ibid., 155)

- Examples: **sexual harassment, postnatal depression**
- **Non-coincidental marginalization of women** "from participating on equal terms with men in those practices by which collective social meanings are generated" – most apparently: journalism, politics, academia and law
- Aggravating conditions: extant **distorting, positive re-interpretation** of mistreatment (i.e. sexual harassment) as flirting, complimenting, etc. by those with **dominating power**
- Unjust social background condition: **patriarchal/sexist ideology**

2. (Wilful) Hermeneutical Ignorance: Epistemic culpability revisited

"…defective knowledge practices among members of more powerful groups [that] can produce and maintain distorted understandings of the social experiences of marginalized groups despite contrary, and arguably better, interpretations that fail (through systematic hermeneutical marginalization) to gain voice in dominant discourses." (Mason 2011, 300)

- Ensues from socially dominant groups and their resistance to or denial of hermeneutical resources provided by marginalized groups → shifts attention to **privileged unwillingness, rather than inability, to comprehend marginalized epistemic inputs**
- **Recognizes marginalized hermeneutical agency**, i.e. capability of marginalized groups to adequately interpret their experiences and contribute to the collective hermeneutical resource
- **Recognizes culpable, motivated ignorance**: "…it is not in the immediate interest of the dominantly situated to acquire and maintain epistemic resources calibrated to the marginally experienced world, since doing so moves epistemic power away from dominant situatedness and can make clearer the injustices that maintain dominant privilege." (Pohlhaus 2012, 721)
- Protective, active/privileged ignorance (Medina 2013): pernicious ignorance when it leads to harmful epistemic practices (Dotson 2011)
- **Example "rape myths"** (Jenkins 2017): Distinguishing manifest, formalized concept of rape from **operative concept/working understanding of rape (based on widespread societal practice)**
    - o Leads to a definitional exclusion of certain situations from counting as rape
      → **hermeneutical injustice**, because collective hermeneutical resource of their society provides them only with a **partial and politically problematic concept of rape**
    - o **Hermeneutical marginalization**: victim-survivors are silenced because of **stigma attached to rape/victim-blaming**

III. Genocide Denialism as Hermeneutical Injustice

- Distortion of social, moral and epistemic norms at the level of their social articulation
- Suggests that not recognition, but denial of genocide is the right thing to do from the perspective of both morality and epistemology: **by resisting the application of the concept of genocide to the Armenian experience, one would stand in for humanity and the truth**
- Examples of such (conceptual) distortions:
    - Distorting/neglecting the historical context in which the concept was created
    - Rejecting the concept as an instance of "Western imperialism"
    - Systematic misinterpretation of claims to genocide recognition as expressions of radical Armenian nationalism, Turcophobia and Islamophobia
    - Misusing concepts of "cultural imperialism" and "oppression" by confusing actual power relations
    - Introducing a policy of "just memory"

- Portrayal of Armenians as **lacking the two virtues of "good remembrance"** (Campbell 2003)
    - **Integrity**: portrayal of Armenians as easily suggestible, naively giving in to Western imperialist narratives of genocide because they have no agency/sense of self, or are incapable of autonomous self-constitution – their identity seems to be dictated by others ("Armenians as puppets of Western imperialism")
    - **Accuracy**: portrayal of Armenians as irresponsibly selective rememberers who adopt inadequate hermeneutical resources to interpret the past for ultimately flawed purposes

- Genocide denialism **misrecognizes both the subject matter of genocide and rememberers**
- Reconstructive, self-constitutive (hermeneutical) practice of genocide remembrance requires not only adequate hermeneutical resources provided by our social environment – but **also an audience able and willing to hear us and to understand our words as we intend them**
- Members of the former victim group are confronted with **unwarranted, disrespectful challenges to both their memory and their attempts at testifying to the past**, which is traceable to unjust social background conditions (i.e. the ideology of Turkish supremacy, see e.g. Astourian 1992, 1999; Aktar 2010; Ünder 2008)

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Further relevant References can be found here:

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-social-epistemology/

Personal Notes