**The Complexity of Epistemic Injustice**

Galway 3/4/24

1. **Preliminaries**.

I will explain the idea of epistemic injustice, then note some of its complexities.

1. **The original account of epistemic injustice**.

Miranda Fricker in her book *Epistemic Injustice* (2007) described two kinds of epistemic injustice: **testimonial** and **hermeneutical**.

‘Epistemic’ means anything to do with knowledge and knowing.

An injustice is something both **harmful** and **unfair**.

**Testimonial injustice** – relating to our ability to tell other people, to share information.

Some kinds of testifying include *describing*, *explaining*, *reporting* – in everyday and formal contexts.

Key ideas:

* **Credibility**
* **Negative prejudice / stereotype**

In testimonial injustice, your credibility is deflated or denied due to the influence of a negative prejudice or stereotype against the kind of person you are, or are seen to be.

**Hermeneutical injustice –** relating to our ability to understand our own experiences, or the experiences of others, and to communicate this understanding to other people.

Key ideas:

* **Hermeneutical resources**.
* **Hermeneutical marginalisation** (Mason).

Models of hermeneutical injustice:

* **absence accounts** absence of good hermeneutic resources (Fricker)
* **presence account** presence of bad hermeneutic resources (Falbo)

1. **The complexity of epistemic injustice**.

Whenever a concept ‘goes viral’, there are risks to recognise and avoid:

1. A tendency to overextend the concept of an epistemic injustice, applying it to cases where nothing epistemically unjust is happening.
2. A tendency to use simplistic, distorted accounts of the nature, causes, harms, and wrongs of epistemic injustices.
3. A tendency to default to the original 2007 Frickerian account without considering her later amendments or alternative kinds of epistemic injustice. There are lots of other kinds of epistemic injustice, and different ways to think about testimonial or hermeneutical injustice.

We should also understand that epistemic injustice takes different forms in different contexts:

1. **Illness** – people with somatic (bodily) and psychiatric illnesses often report things that sound like epistemic injustices.

Carel and Kidd call these **pathocentric epistemic injustices** (‘illness-centric’).

Project EPIC at Bristol, Birmingham, and Nottingham is a study of pathocentric epistemic injustices.

1. **Neurodiversity** – negative stereotyping, bad theoretical models of neurodiversity, and other factors can cause credibility-deflations (= testimonial injustice) and block our ability and willingness to understand the experiences of neurodiverse persons (= hermeneutical injustice) – see Chapman and Carel.

There are lots of other context-specific kinds of epistemic injustice, too (see the essays in Part 5 of Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus).

IJK

**REFERENCES**

The best place to start reading about epistemic injustice is the introduction to Kidd, Medina, and Polhlhaus.

Chapman, Robert and Havi Carel (2022) ‘Neurodiversity, Epistemic Injustice, and the Good Human Life’, Journal of Social Philosophy 53.3: 614-631.

Crichton, Paul, Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd. 2016. Epistemic Injustice in Psychiatry. *BJPsych Bulletin* 41(2): 65-70.

Falbo, Arianna (2022) ‘Hermeneutical Injustice: Distortion and Conceptual Aptness’, *Hypatia* 37: 343-363.

Fricker, Miranda (2007) *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Kidd, Ian James, and Havi Carel (2016) ‘Epistemic Injustice and Illness’, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* *3*(2): 172–9 0.

Kidd, Ian James, José Medina, and Gaile Jr Pohlhaus, eds. (2017) *The Routledge Handbook to Epistemic Injustice* (New York: Routledge).

Mason, Rebecca (2011) ‘Two Kinds of Unknowing’, *Hypatia* 26.2: 294-307.

Here is an online bibliography of work on epistemic injustice, illness, healthcare, and disability:

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Here is information on Project EPIC (Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare):

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