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ARTICLE



# Intra-Group Epistemic Injustice

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## ABSTRACT

When an agent suffers in their capacity as a knower, they are a victim of epistemic injustice. Varieties of epistemic injustices have been theorised. A salient feature across these theories is that perpetrators and victims of epistemic injustice belong to different social groups. In this paper, I argue for a form of epistemic injustice that could occur between members of the same social group. This is a form of epistemic injustice where the knower is first a victim of historical and continuing oppression. Secondly, they internalise and appreciate the systems that harm them as a knower. This is possible because the victim subscribes to perniciously formed epistemic systems. This form of epistemic injustice is a valuable explanatory tool for non-standard and obscure instances of epistemic injustice where the victim a) accepts and appreciates the injustice they experience and b) is even the seeming perpetrator of the injustice against themselves.

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## 1. Introduction

Two salient features in most instances of epistemic injustice are differential power relations between the perpetrator and the victim and identity-prejudicial stereotypes.

First, differential power relations refer to the unequal power relation between the perpetrator and victim of epistemic injustice. This is usually a form of identity power. Miranda Fricker sees identity power as 'operations of power which are dependent upon agents having shared conception of social identity – conceptions alive in the collective social imagination that govern, for instance, what it is or means to be a woman or a man' (2007, 14). This means that identity power is at play in social situations where the dynamics of who is powerful vs who are powerless are dependent to some degree on the 'shared imaginative conceptions of social identity' (2007).

Second, identity-prejudicial stereotypes refer to

A widely held disparaging association between a social group and one or more attributes, where this association embodies a generalization that displays some (typically, epistemically culpable) resistance to counter-evidence owing to an ethically bad affective investment. (Fricker 2007, 35, author's italics)

Something these features make obvious is the perpetrator/victim dynamic in instances of epistemic injustice. The perpetrators of epistemic injustice are generally members of some socially privileged group, while the victims are usually members of some socially marginalised groups. This predominant way of understanding epistemic injustice in the literature shows that, in most cases, we think of epistemic injustice as a form of inter-group injustice.

However, what happens when the victim and perpetrator of epistemic injustice are members of the same socially marginalised group?

This intra-group epistemic injustice that I argue for is an obscure form of epistemic injustice where the oppressed in an oppressive epistemic system are unaware of their unjust situation and are ostensibly complacent. Here, the salient features of differential power relations and identity-prejudicial stereotypes that we find in instances of inter-group epistemic injustice are absent. Instead, we have a complacent and even appreciative victim/perpetrator of epistemic injustice.

I proceed to make my argument as follows. In §2, I go through different varieties of epistemic injustice and cognate bad epistemic practices identified in the literature. I show the relation between these epistemic practices to highlight silencing as one of the central harms that results from them. I show how in instances of these epistemic injustices identified in the literature, the victims have a resistant response to their situation or, at the very least, they are aware of the oppressive situation. This occurs in typical cases of inter-group epistemic injustices. In §3, I argue that there are instances where this expected resistant response is not present. Here, victims of these epistemic injustices are neither aware of nor show resistance to the injustice they face. This is because they subscribe to perniciously formed epistemic systems that oppress them. This is what makes intra-group epistemic injustice possible. I use examples of colonisation and coloniality to show how this is possible.

## 2. Epistemic Injustice

Epistemic injustice happens when an agent is wronged in their capacity as a knower – either as a source of knowledge or as a recipient of knowledge (Fricker 2007, 20). In the central case of epistemic injustice, this wrong results from prejudicial stereotypes held against the agent or members of the agent's social group. For instance, if my testimony that the police unlawfully harassed me is not given the credibility it deserves because I am Black and Black people are (wrongly) 'known' to exaggerate or lie about instances of police violence, it is an instance of epistemic injustice. This wrong 'knowledge' about Black people guides the level of credibility I am given as an epistemic agent.

But what guides credibility judgements? Goldberg (2013, 2015) argues for at least four elements that inform our credibility judgements. These are information about the speaker's track record of saying true things, the speaker's demeanour (confident or not), the hearer's background knowledge about the topic, and the reputation of the speaker's sources. To this list, I add elements like the speaker's accent and social group (gender, race, sexuality, social class, et cetera). To the extent that these and similar elements negatively affect the credibility we give to a speaker's testimony, it is an instance of 'testimonial injustice' (Fricker 2007).

This is just one of the many possible epistemic injustices an agent can face due to prejudicial stereotypes.

Peet (2017) argues for another form of epistemic injustice related to the agent's testimony called 'interpretative injustice'. According to Peet, the same prejudicial stereotypes that lead to testimonial injustice can generally lead to the false interpretation of an agent's utterances. For example, suppose I say, 'the police are not doing a proper job', and I am interpreted as meaning 'I will disregard the authority of the police' because I am Black and Black people are 'known' to be anti-police. This is different from cases of testimonial injustice because, with testimonial injustice, it is an issue of credibility deficit regarding my testimony. By contrast, with interpretative injustice, the focus is first on my utterances (not just testimonies) more generally. Secondly, I am given some credibility as an agent, but what I say is interpreted in ways I do not intend due to prejudicial stereotypes held against me. Hence, my utterance fails to get the desired uptake.<sup>1</sup>

While these above forms of epistemic injustice have to do with speech acts broadly construed, other forms have to do with the epistemic resources available to members of marginalised groups and how the resources from these groups are treated. Suppose, for instance, that I am treated strangely by the police; I notice this treatment to be peculiar to members of my racial group, and I know something is wrong with this kind of treatment but cannot say what is wrong because I lack the linguistic resources to do so. This is an instance of 'hermeneutical injustice'. Hermeneutical

injustice happens when members of marginalised groups cannot make sense of a significant aspect of their lives owing to a gap in the shared tools for social interpretation (Fricker 2007, 149). It is an instance of hermeneutical injustice, as this gap is caused by hermeneutical marginalisation. This is the idea that members of socially marginalised groups can be hermeneutically disadvantaged in their ability to participate in some significant aspect of their social experience (Fricker 2007, 153). These instances of hermeneutical marginalisation are generally structural and aid in maintaining the undue advantage that members of socially dominant groups possess.

Since hermeneutical marginalisation is mainly a structural phenomenon, its remedy, at the very least, should involve a structural element. Samaržija and Cerovac (2021, 623) provide one such argument by proposing four institutional measures that could amend our epistemic environments. I will not go through these four measures here. Still noteworthy is that a common feature they share is an emphasis on the need to involve the marginalised in forming our collective epistemic resource. This makes sense when considering that hermeneutical injustice happens precisely because this involvement is lacking. When this involvement is lacking, there is a gap in the collective hermeneutical resources that is beneficial to the dominantly situated (at least in maintaining their undue position of advantage).

This leads to the dominantly situated accumulating various epistemic privileges, and these privileges lead to credibility excess and other related cognitive benefits. Rather than being positive, this becomes negative insofar as members of these privileged groups are arrogant in their possession of these cognitive benefits. This is because it leads to them being closed-minded in their epistemic lives, and they, thus, become breeding grounds for ignorance rather than knowledge. This process is what Medina (2013, 27) refers to as ‘active ignorance’.

Another wrong of this credibility excess that members of socially dominant groups enjoy is that it usually goes with the credibility deficit that socially marginalised groups suffer. Although Fricker (2007, 19–20) argues that this way of understanding the credibility economy is wrong since credibility is not a limited resource, I support Medina’s (2011, 20) qualified objection to Fricker. Medina agrees that credibility is not a finite resource that can be depleted but argues that the credibility excess members of socially dominant groups enjoy translates to a disproportionate credibility deficit for socially marginalised groups. For instance, if my identity as a man means I am viewed as more credible, we can see how having a different identity might mean having limited credibility. What is important to note from the epistemology of ignorance for the argument I make is the creation of ‘active ignorance’ by members of socially dominant groups and how this ‘active ignorance’ gains traction due to the credibility excess possessed by members of these socially dominant groups.

Connecting the epistemology of ignorance to epistemic injustice and pushing my above scenario further, I report that the police have brutalised me. Suppose members of my social group understand what I mean when I say this. However, my testimony is still being deliberately obscured from the collective social understanding by members of the dominant social groups. In that case, it is an instance of ‘willful hermeneutical ignorance’ (Pohlhaus 2012). Gaile Pohlhaus argues that ‘willful hermeneutical ignorance’ is a form of epistemic injustice that occurs when dominantly situated knowers disregard the epistemic tools of the marginally situated knowers. This allows the ‘dominantly situated knowers to misunderstand, misinterpret, and/or ignore whole parts of the world’ of the marginally situated knower (Pohlhaus 2012, 715).

This sentiment on the connection between epistemic injustice and the epistemology of ignorance is echoed by Dotson (2012) in her concept of ‘contributory injustice’. Dotson (31) defines contributory injustice as a form of willful hermeneutical ignorance that maintains and utilises structurally prejudiced hermeneutical resources to harm the epistemic agency of a knower due to ‘situated ignorance’. Situated ignorance, here, refers to ignorance that is an offshoot of one’s social situatedness insofar as this social situatedness fosters closed-mindedness to other epistemic and social realities. So, in the same way that knowledge can be influenced by social situatedness, ignorance can also be influenced by social situatedness. What Dotson shows here is that the situated ignorance of

one group makes it possible for them to ignore parts of the world that they do not find relevant. This leads to the formation of prejudiced hermeneutical resources.

A central feature of epistemic injustice highlighted so far is that the members of socially marginalised groups are being wronged and harmed in their capacity as knowers. These epistemic wrongs and harms largely stem from prior social wrongs and harms that the marginalised already experience. The relationship between social and epistemic wrongs and harms is symbiotic. They are 'two sides of the same coin [that are] mutually supportive and [reinforce] each other' (Medina 2013, 27). When we see privilege and underprivilege in society, it is often a symptom of some historically persistent instance of violence and oppression (colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, heteronormativity, et cetera). When these social injustices lead to epistemic injustice, it also carries their epistemic brand of violence and oppression.

## 2.1 Epistemic Violence

Dotson (2011, 238) defines epistemic violence as 'a refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance'. I break down Dotson's definition of epistemic violence into two parts. The first is communicative reciprocity, and the second is pernicious ignorance.

Dotson draws on Hornsby's (1995, 134) conception of communicative reciprocity. According to Hornsby, communicative reciprocity is the condition that enables the successful performance of speech acts. When an audience understands and recognises the speech act of the other as it is meant to be, we have an instance of reciprocal communicative action.

This is similar to the idea of the 'responsible hearer' argued for by Fricker (2007, 67). Suppose I, a Black person, say, 'I have been unlawfully profiled and harassed by the police'. If my audience understands this as a racially motivated case of police brutality, then the reciprocal terms for my communicative act have been met. However, if my audience considers this a case of yet another Black person exaggerating and lying about police brutality, then the reciprocal terms of my communicative act have not been met. Communicative acts are successful when the audience adequately understands the speaker's intention. Dotson (2011) clarifies that not all cases of failed communicative exchange result in epistemic violence. The critical element is what she calls 'pernicious ignorance'.

Dotson defines pernicious ignorance as reliable ignorance that leads to harm. '*Reliable ignorance* is ignorance that is *consistent* or follows from a predictable epistemic gap in cognitive resources' (Dotson 2011, 238). So, if I say, 'Black Lives Matter' and my audience fails to understand that what I mean is Black lives matter *too* rather than *only* Black lives matter, it is an instance of epistemic violence caused by pernicious ignorance.<sup>2</sup> The pernicious ignorance in this scenario is due to the harm I face as a Black person and the effect of my audience's epistemic pushback. 'Epistemic pushback'<sup>3</sup> refers to a form of resistance that members of socially dominant groups show towards the epistemic resources of the socially marginalised. This is especially the case when these epistemic resources of the socially marginalised threaten to disrupt the undue privileges that members of socially dominant groups enjoy. Like in the cases of wilful ignorance I have already highlighted, this epistemic pushback leads to the creation and sustenance of ignorance among the socially dominant groups. This wilful element makes it a form of reliable ignorance by creating a predictable epistemic gap in the cognitive resources of my audience (2011). That is, my audience's lack of knowledge about the social peculiarities of a Black person's experiences, and their lack of openness to conversations that might prevent this ignorance, is one of the reasons why this gap exists in the knowledge economy.

According to Dotson, the failure in reciprocal linguistic exchange and pernicious ignorance lead to epistemic violence in testimonial exchanges. These features and how they are evinced are similar to the forms of epistemic injustice I highlighted above. Recall that testimonial and interpretative injustices occur due to prejudicial stereotypes that guide the credibility we give to testimony and our

interpretation of it. These stereotypes and the dynamics within testimonial and interpretative injustice are manifest in communicative exchanges – or failures thereof. So, when my testimony is given low credibility or misinterpreted due to stereotypes against me, there is a failure in communication. This is due to the hearer's inability to meet the condition of communicative reciprocity. They fail to hear me as I intend to be heard. In cases of epistemic injustice, this failure is due to prejudicial stereotypes against me.

As I have stated, hermeneutical injustice, wilful hermeneutical ignorance, and contributory injustice are forms of epistemic injustice that occur due to an intentional or unintentional lack of linguistic resources. In the case of hermeneutical injustice, this lack is caused by hermeneutical marginalisation. In the case of wilful hermeneutical ignorance and contributory injustice, it is caused by the dominantly situated knower's efforts to obscure and ignore the epistemic resources of the marginally situated knowers from the collective social understanding. The ignorance created by these forms of epistemic injustice is 'reliable ignorance'. Reliable ignorance 'is the ignorance that is *consistent* or follows from a predictable epistemic gap in cognitive resources' (Dotson 2011, 238, author's emphasis). So, when I struggle to make sense of my experience due to hermeneutical marginalisation, or when, even though I make sense of my experience, the resources with which I do so are obscured from the collective social understanding by the dominantly situated knowers, a predictable epistemic gap is created. This is what creates reliable ignorance. Any society where certain groups are the consistent recipients of these injustices and violence is an oppressive society. At its core, these epistemic injustices and violence aim at sustaining oppressive regimes, both socially and epistemically.

## 2.2 A Central Harm

In very general terms, I have shown how epistemic injustice and violence are forms of epistemic wrongs that harm an agent in their capacity as a knower. But what exactly is the nature of this harm? And is there a way to capture the entirety, or at least the majority of this harm in a single concept?

Fricker (2007, 43) notes a purely epistemic harm that might arise from instances of testimonial injustice. That harm is that 'knowledge that would be passed on to a hearer is not received'. A gap is created in the knowledge economy when a listener allows their prejudicial stereotypes to distort their credibility judgement of a speaker. What would have been known is thereby obscured. This harm to the knowledge economy affects the speaker, who experiences a credibility deficit due to prejudicial stereotypes. The speaker is prevented 'from successfully putting knowledge into the public domain'. Fricker sees this as an 'unfreedom of our collective speech situation'. While Fricker (2007, 44) further focuses on the ethical dimension of these harms, I will remain with this epistemic dimension. This 'unfreedom of our collective speech situation', coupled with the lack of uptake that Fricker mentions, summarises some of the debates on silencing. As Maitra (2009, 331) puts it, 'when a speaker is communicatively disabled, she is thereby deprived of ... [the] benefits that speech can offer'. Suppose we understand silencing (as the literature rightly does) as a form of communicative disablement. And we know testimonial injustice is an instance of deficit in credibility judgment due to prejudicial stereotypes, which communicatively disables the epistemic agent. In that case, we can see silencing as one of the primary epistemic harms caused by testimonial injustice.

This sentiment that sees silencing as a primary harm of epistemic injustice is shared by Peet (2017, 3425). Peet understands cases of interpretative injustice to be a case of silencing, 'since if one misinterprets the content of an utterance then one thereby fails to recognise the illocutionary act being performed, or the speaker's communicative intention'. The correlation between interpretative injustice and silencing that Peet draws is based on Maitra's (2009) conception of silencing, which relies on Grice's (1989) conditions on speaker meaning. For Maitra, a speaker is silenced when they are communicatively disabled. This communicative disablement happens

iff [the speaker] is unable to fully successfully perform her intended communicative act, because her intended audience fails to satisfy either the second or the third of her (Gricean) intentions. (Maitra 2009, 327–328)

These intentions, according to Grice's conditions on speaker meaning, are as follows:

A speaker *S* means something by uttering *x* iff, for some audience *A*, *S* utters *x* intending:

- (i) *A* to produce response *r*;
- (ii) *A* to think (recognise) that *S* intends (i); and,
- (iii) *A*'s fulfilment of (ii) to give him a reason to fulfil (i). (Grice 1989, 92)

Simply, when an agent fails to get their intended uptake from an audience, they are silenced on Maitra's account. When this failure is caused by prejudicial stereotypes and leads to a wrong interpretation of a speaker's word, they are victims of interpretative injustice on Peet's account. As with the case of testimonial injustice that I have mentioned, this epistemic injustice leads to the silencing of an epistemic agent, which creates a gap in the knowledge economy. This gap in the knowledge economy is what the hermeneutical strands (hermeneutical injustice, wilful hermeneutical ignorance and contributory injustice) of epistemic injustice try to highlight or remedy. Apart from the silencing that leads to this gap, the gap in the knowledge economy further leads to silencing. When a group lacks the resources to make sense of their experiences or finds their epistemic resources obscured from the collective understanding, they fail to participate successfully in epistemic exchanges. Their epistemic capabilities are disabled to a large extent. This disablement amounts to a communicative failure encapsulated in Dotson's (2011, 236) conception of epistemic violence, which I have already highlighted. It is a 'failure, owing to pernicious ignorance, of hearers to meet the vulnerabilities of speakers in linguistic exchanges'.

When I focus on silencing as the primary harm that arises from instances of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, I do not in any way mean to suggest that this is the only harm or even the worst potential harm. It is easy to imagine cases where the harms that result from these epistemic vices have severe physical and moral implications, including death. My decision to focus on silencing as the primary harm here is that, on the epistemic level, it does the most damage to the agent and the knowledge economy. The agent experiences epistemic frustration when their testimony fails to get the required uptake. And a gap is created in the knowledge economy when this lack of uptake results in deficiencies in our hermeneutical resources.

### 3. Intra-Group Epistemic Injustice

So far, I have given an overview of various arguments on varieties of epistemic injustice. Beyond the connections I have highlighted, one key feature is that the victims and perpetrators of epistemic injustice are, traditionally, members of distinct social groups. This makes the perpetrator/victim dynamic clear to understand. In these cases, the perpetrators are members of socially dominant groups, while the victims are members of socially marginalised groups. However, how can we understand cases of intra-group epistemic injustice, especially within socially marginalised groups?

I intend to answer this in what follows but first, a point of clarification. My central example is groups/societies that have experienced colonisation. The reason for this is twofold. The first is that they are a group that are victims of a collective form of epistemic injustice and, in some cases, can physically live distinctly from the perpetrators. It represents a more explicit example of when intra-group epistemic injustice might happen. The second is that these cases are proximate and intuitive to me. However, the general idea of intra-group epistemic injustice can be applied to other groups that have experienced a different historical injustice.



### 3.1 Epistemic Harms and Wrongs of Colonialism

Mengara (2019) uses Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* to illuminate what he considers to be the five stages of colonialism.<sup>4</sup> They are exploration, expropriation, appropriation, exploitation, and justification. Briefly, exploration refers to the initial encounter between the colonisers and the colonised (37). Expropriation refers to the 'political and administrative takeover of the coveted land or territory by the colonizer' (39). Appropriation refers to the stage where the colonisers undertake to 'transform' the colonised (42). Exploitation refers to the stage of material exploitation (44). Justification refers to the stage of 'ideological rationalization of colonialism as a humanitarian endeavor organized for the sole benefit of the colonized' (47) – the civilising mission defence for colonisation, for instance (Tobi 2020, 258). These five stages are self-explanatory and have been theorised in different forms in the literature. I have started with these social stages of colonialism to appeal to our base intuition on the social injustices of colonialism. There is also an epistemic variant to these injustices, which I now turn to.

I argue elsewhere (Tobi 2020, 259–261) for the epistemic variant of the stages of colonisation. For this epistemic variant, what happens at Mengara's stage of expropriation is the first stage of epistemic colonisation. At this stage, the epistemic framework of the colonised is ignored. Think of epistemic framework here as 'a historically generated, collectively sustained system of meanings and significance, by reference to which a group understands and evaluates its individual and collective life' (Bhargava 2013, 414). The second stage of epistemic colonisation happens in Mengara's stage of appropriation. Here, the epistemic framework of the coloniser is imposed on the colonised as desirable. At the third stage of epistemic colonisation (Mengara's exploitation), this imposed perspective becomes the new epistemic perspective of the colonised.<sup>5</sup>

This colonisation process, as we know, is socially oppressive and unjust to varying degrees. Looking at the above stages of epistemic colonisation, we can see how it constitutes various epistemic injustices. For instance, we see the testimonial injustice in the first stage, where the epistemic framework of the colonised is ignored – read ignored, think credibility deficit. We can see the hermeneutical strands of epistemic injustice at the third stage of epistemic colonisation, where the colonised are now expected to utilise epistemic resources that are foreign to them due to the marginalisation of their epistemic resources. In all, these processes constitute various epistemic injustices.

### 3.2 Resistance and Non-Resistance

In all the epistemic injustice cases that lead to silencing, the victims are understood to offer some resistance to the injustice they face or, at the very least, are aware of it. This resistance and awareness can come in expressed anger, fear, despair, et cetera. Movements for and literature on decolonisation exemplify instances of this resistance. Medina (2013, 3) defines epistemic resistance as 'the use of our epistemic resources and abilities to undermine and change oppressive normative structures and the complacent cognitive-affective functioning that sustains those structures'. This resistance is only necessary when we are in a social or epistemic situation that fosters injustices.

Anger and similar emotional responses are a form of resistance. They are emotional responses elicited by an instance of injustice. While these emotional expressions are generally seen after an instance of injustice, in most cases, they are also a result of some historical and continuing manifestation of injustices against a group.

So, when members of a socially marginalised group resist injustice, it is not *simply* about that *instance* of injustice. It is about all the historical and structural manifestations of injustices that members of that social group face. Their emotional responses and forms of resistance are generally so severe as to hold their own against the force of oppressive structures. This emotional response has a motivational power that can be geared towards fighting oppression. It is a form of resistance to powerful systems that seek to oppress those already on the margins of society. Anger, in these



instances, becomes the language of resistance. These are the sort of resistance that could positively affect oppressive epistemic situations.

Another sort of resistance that is not a beneficial epistemic friction is what Medina (2013, 56) refers to as 'resistance to know'. This is a sort of epistemic resistance utilised by members of socially dominant groups to maintain their position of privilege. This resistance leads to ignorance since parts of the marginalised lived experiences are ignored and prevented from being utilised within the collective knowledge economy. When this happens, it leads to the hermeneutical strands of epistemic injustice already identified.

In all I have discussed so far, we see how instances of epistemic injustices are generally understood. They are instances when an agent is wronged in their capacity as a knower. This wrong can be due to credibility deficits or insufficient hermeneutical resources for the marginalised to make sense of their experiences. When it is an issue of credibility deficit, it is due to prejudicial stereotypes against the agent and members of their social group. When it is an issue of insufficient hermeneutical resources, it is also because of the hermeneutical marginalisation of socially marginalised groups and some wilful ignorance from members of socially dominant groups. When these injustices happen, one of the primary harms is the silencing of the members of socially marginalised groups. As the literature shows, the victims of this harm are either resistant to the oppressive situation they face or, at the very least, are aware that something is wrong with their current situation.

However, what happens when an epistemic agent is unaware of the injustice they face because they have internalised their oppressive situation?

Let us consider another case of epistemic injustice.

**The Grateful Graduate.**<sup>6</sup> Peter studied and obtained multiple degrees from universities that adopt the Western curriculum. When asked what he attributes his success to in an interview, Peter talks about his childhood growing up in Nigeria. For Peter, the reason for his success is that as a child in Nigeria, he went to schools where he was taught 'correctly' (a Western curriculum) and taught to speak the 'proper way' (English), and was scolded when he spoke in his home language (Urhobo) which is considered to be 'vernacular', and 'uncivilised'. Peter becomes a teacher in a Nigerian school and asks his students not to speak in their mother tongue because it is unintelligible and uncivilised. Instead, they should all speak English because it symbolises civility and intelligibility. However, one of Peter's students, Amina, refuses to abide by this and claims that her local language is perfectly intelligible and civilised.

The example here is deliberate to emphasise certain features. The first feature is that Peter is within a society that was/is subject to a historical system of social and epistemic oppression (colonialism). The second feature is that Peter has internalised this oppression (considering how he sees it as the measure of success) and is oblivious to the pernicious ways this system came about.<sup>7</sup> The third feature is that Peter, an oblivious victim of this oppressive system, is now the perpetrator of epistemic injustice against Amina. Amina is silenced, and Peter *is* also silenced but in a distinct way from Amina. Of these three features, I have spoken about colonisation and some of the epistemic injustices accompanying it in §3.1. Let me now turn to the other two features.

First, while colonisation as a historical event ended with Namibia's independence in 1990, there is still a continual presence of the colonial legacy through coloniality. Of epistemic concern, 'Coloniality of knowledge directly addresses the crucial questions of how Western modernity spread through displacing other cultures, subordinating others and colonizing the imagination of the colonized peoples' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 20). 'Coloniality, then, is still the most general form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed' (Quijano 2007, 170). This influence of coloniality can be seen in the example above. Peter's belief in and reliance on the educational and epistemic perspective of the West over the ones indigenous to him speaks to the level of dominance this perspective has over him. Of course, within societies like Peter's, not everyone readily accepts the epistemic perspective of the West. However, there are people like Peter in these societies. This is because in these spaces, the closer you are to the Western 'right' standard, the more acceptable you are in society. Part of the story of colonisation that enables coloniality is the

mystifying of colonial knowledge and how access to it was available to a select few of the colonised. This process was essential to successfully reproducing colonial domination (Quijano 2000).

Second, in all the cases of epistemic injustice I have highlighted, the central epistemic harm can be understood as a form of silencing. When victims of injustice are silenced, they resist the injustice they face to varying degrees. This resistance is accompanied by emotional responses of anger, despair, frustration, and other cognate responses. However, there is another form of epistemic silencing that aptly makes sense of Peter's response to the injustice he faces. Appreciative silencing is a form of epistemic silencing that occurs when the epistemic resources of their oppressors deeply influence the epistemic resources of the oppressed. This process happens over time, and eventually, the victims of appreciative silencing accept and appreciate the epistemic efficacy of their new epistemic system. However, this epistemic system is foundationally riddled with epistemic injustices (Tobi 2022).

The historical persistence of the coloniality of knowledge and its dominant nature means that the epistemic standards it proposes are epistemically resilient. Epistemological resilience is an epistemological system's 'resistance to disturbance' before the need for change or adaptation (Dotson 2014, 121). So, for example, when Amina speaks about the benefits of her indigenous language and faces resistance from Peter (and his epistemic system more generally) that relies on the success of his epistemic system, the resilience of the dominant epistemic system is at play. The epistemic system here is that of coloniality and its claims to supposed superiority and universality. The disturbance is Amina's claim to the legitimacy of her indigenous language. And the resilience is the ability of this system to strip Amina's claim of all legitimacy without needing to change itself.

In this negative form, epistemological resilience (seen as a poor epistemic habit) leads to blindness to other 'social imaginaries' (Medina 2011, 28). That is, it leads to the creation of ignorance about the lived realities of the marginally situated among the dominantly situated. In its positive form, epistemological resilience gives our epistemic systems the stability that enables us to rely on them (Dotson 2014, 122). Its negative form leads to epistemic injustice in the **Grateful Graduate** example.

These features I have spoken about in this section point to one crucial way this scenario is different from traditional cases of epistemic injustice – resistance. Here, Peter does not resist the oppressive situation he finds himself in. Instead, *he appreciates this unjust system*. He thanks it for his success. He does not even show the affective response that seems appropriate in instances of injustice. Our current purview of epistemic injustice does not make sense of this counterintuitive response to injustice because it lacks a crucial signifier. That is resistance. This resistance is absent because Peter has internalised his oppressive situation.

### 3.3 Complacent Victims

One way to understand how agents can internalise and become complacent in their oppressive situation is through 'adaptive preferences'. Khader (2011, 42) understands adaptive preferences as unfavourable preferences that oppressed people have due to internalised deprivation. Khader (3–4) uses an example of women in rural Honduras who internalised limiting views about themselves, their gender roles, and their general capabilities as humans. They shaped their lives based on these internalised ideas. As a result, what counted as success and achievements for them were within the limits of these ideas. What seemed like flourishing then was, in fact, constraint. For the oppressed, oppression is no longer evident, and they become complacent in their oppression.<sup>8</sup>

This situation is possible in Peter's case for a few reasons. The first is the historical nature of colonisation. In Peter's situation, he lives within a society that has been colonised and understands itself primarily through the lens of the coloniser's epistemic system. In some post-colonial states (like South Africa, for example), clear structures remain from their colonial days (including descendants of the colonisers). However, there is almost no discernible perpetrator of colonisation in a state like Nigeria. Instead, what remains is a society that has accepted the coloniser's paradigm and now takes

it as theirs. When this happens, it is not always apparent to the oppressed that they are in an oppressive situation. Instead, they appear to be within a social and epistemic system they are responsible for. Hence, they cannot readily question the aspects of that system that might be oppressive to them.

The second is that part of the difficulty with Peter's inability to discern his situation as an oppressive one is because nothing within his accepted epistemic system is sufficient to flesh out the injustice within the system. This one-way intra-group epistemic injustice is similar to Dotson's third-order epistemic exclusion<sup>9</sup>. However, it is crucially different from Dotson's third-order epistemic exclusion because there is no resistant victim to the oppression. Instead, we have an accepting and appreciative victim of an oppressive system (colonisation). This is possible because Peter has internalised the ideas that are oppressive to him.

Recall that intra-group epistemic injustice is an obscure form of epistemic injustice where the oppressed in an oppressive epistemic system are unaware of their unjust situation and are ostensibly complacent. In these cases, identifying the epistemic injustice goes beyond simply looking at the perpetrators of epistemic injustice and determining how they can be better epistemic agents. Instead, the focus is on the victims of epistemic injustice. This focus attempts to understand how certain social situations (like coloniality) might obscure instances of epistemic injustice since even the marginalised would subscribe to these oppressive epistemic systems. In this sense, we can think of certain epistemic systems as inherently unjust.

As I have mentioned, an example of where this sort of epistemic injustice might occur is in previously colonised states. As I said in §3.1, the process that leads to this typically involves three steps. The first is that the epistemic framework of the colonised is ignored as unintelligent. Secondly, as a result of this breakdown, the epistemic framework of the coloniser is imposed on the colonised. Thirdly, this imposed epistemic framework becomes the new epistemic framework that the colonised use (Tobi 2022). This is a process that has happened over many years.

When processes like this occur, we can quickly diagnose the epistemic injustices at the first two stages of this process. However, once this new epistemic framework has been internalised by the colonised, it becomes challenging to identify the epistemic injustices that the colonised face in their daily lives. This is because once these oppressive epistemic systems have been internalised by the colonised, they begin to understand them as theirs. However, once we know the whole process that led to the formation of this epistemic system, we see the initial epistemic injustice. This also gives us a starting point to understand how an epistemic system can *contain* injustice and be inherently unjust.

When epistemic systems are shaped in this way, members of these systems all seem to be equally included in the epistemic system. However, there is a sense in which we can think of epistemic inclusion as a bad thing. Pohlhaus (2020) argues for what she calls 'pernicious inclusions'. This is a form of epistemic inclusion that is not beneficial to the marginalised since they are included in an epistemic system that is primarily not structured to cater to their epistemic needs. Instead, the marginalised are open to being exploited within this epistemic system. Lackey's (2020) and Medina's (2021) argument for agential testimonial injustice also points to something similar in that the excess credibility given to the socially marginalised in those scenarios is pernicious to the marginalised but beneficial to the dominantly situated.

However, even in these cases highlighted by Pohlhaus, Lackey and Medina, the exploitation of the victims and the benefits gained by the dominantly situated is apparent. It is also evident in these sorts of situations that there is a victim who, for the most part, is aware that something is wrong with the situation they find themselves in. In cases of intra-group epistemic injustice, this is not the case. The victims in these cases are unaware of the pernicious epistemic situation they find themselves in because they primarily subscribe to this epistemic system. Peter is a victim of various epistemic injustices associated with colonisation. These form an oppressive situation that Peter internalises. Ultimately, this creates the situation where Peter commits intra-group epistemic injustice against Amina.

## Notes

1. This sort of instance where an agent receives some credibility has also been argued for by Lackey (2020) and Medina (2021). They argue for ‘agential testimonial injustice’ as a form of epistemic injustice that occurs when a marginalised agent’s testimony gets excess credibility because it is in service to the pernicious ends of the dominantly situated.
2. See also Atkins (2019).
3. Bailey (2017) uses this term in her analysis of ‘privilege-preserving epistemic pushback’.
4. Mengara notes that these stages are not necessarily linear and can happen simultaneously.
5. Similar progression of epistemic colonisation has been argued for in different ways by Ngūgī (1986), Wiredu (2002), Quijano (2007), Maringe (2017), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017).
6. I have used this example elsewhere (Tobi 2022, 3) to argue for ‘appreciative silencing’ – a form of epistemic silencing that could occur simultaneously with intra-group epistemic injustice.
7. Or, at the very least, does not consider this wrong.
8. As is, there are strong similarities between intra-group epistemic injustice and adaptive preferences. However, looking at Sen’s (1980, 1985) (and Nussbaum 1988) capability approach that influenced the literature on adaptive preferences, the primary focus is on human flourishing more generally. However, with intra-group epistemic injustice, the focus is on how internalised oppressive situations first constitute an epistemic injustice but can further perpetuate epistemic injustices. If we look at Peter through the lens of the capability approach, he arguably is flourishing. He is educated, he has a good job, et cetera. However, intra-group epistemic injustice shows that Peter remains in an unjust epistemic situation that cannot be offset by economic or social flourishing. So, while the general idea of how oppressive situations might be internalised for adaptive preferences and intra-group epistemic injustice are similar, there is a crucial difference when we look at their social vs. epistemic focus respectively. (Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me on this point).
9. Third-order epistemic exclusion are those instances of epistemic oppression where the problem ‘can only begin to be addressed through recognition of the limits of one’s overall epistemological frameworks’ (Dotson 2014, 116).

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