Hypatia (2026), **41**, 189–210
doi:10.1017/hyp.2024.88

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

A Performative Feminist Hinge Epistemology: Making Room for Feminist Hinges

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(Received 6 April 2023; revised 20 August 2024; accepted 14 September 2024; first published online 04 December 2024)

Abstract
In this paper, we propose a performative account of hinge epistemology to make the case for a feminist hinge epistemology. We characterize it as follows: 1) there are hinges that enable and govern our ordinary epistemic practices, functioning as rules; 2) these hinges are enacted and actualized in the specific actions of agents that participate in such practices; 3) this makes room for the transformation and emergence of hinges; 4) against this background, we argue in favor of the possibility of feminist hinges. This novel account opens the way for hinge epistemology to be useful for feminist goals in epistemology, which we believe is the ultimate criterion for hinge epistemology to be legitimately feminist.

1. Toward a feminist hinge epistemology in an unexplored direction

Hinge epistemology (HE) encompasses a series of contemporary epistemological proposals which focus on Ludwig Wittgenstein's last writings, especially *On certainty* (1969, hereinafter *OC*), where Wittgenstein reflects on G. E. Moore's (1925, 1939) common sense propositions, like "I have a hand" or "The Earth has existed for a very long time" (Coliva 2015, 2022; Coliva and Moyal-Sharrock 2016; Pritchard 2016; Sandis and Moyal-Sharrock 2022). Although Wittgenstein recognizes the singular nature of such propositions, his characterization is different from Moore's. From Wittgenstein's perspective, such propositions entail commitments which are beyond doubt, but this is not because they are reasonably justified or self-evident, but because they constitute an essential part of our epistemic practices, in such a way that the latter rely or are dependent on such unquestioned background assumptions:

> That is to say, the questions that we raise and our doubts depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were hinges on which those turn.

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> That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are indeed not doubted.
>
> But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just can't investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. (*OC* §§341–43)

The hinge metaphor that appears in these paragraphs plays a predominant role in HE. The term "hinge" (*Angel*) is understood as synonymous with the word "certainty" (*Gewissheit*), the most common expression used by Wittgenstein to refer to what Moore called "common sense propositions." Precisely because hinges are beyond doubt, Wittgenstein calls them "certainties." Hinges regulate our epistemic practices tacitly, "[lying] apart from the route travelled by inquiry" (*OC* §88), serving "as channels for . . . empirical propositions" (*OC* §96). For example, for empirical research on geology to take place, from a propositional account of hinges, a hinge proposition like "The Earth has existed for a long time" must be in place as a taken for granted presupposition (Coliva 2016, 82). However, the relationship between hinges and empirical propositions is approached in different ways within HE.[1] Although for heuristic reasons we often use a propositional formulation of hinges, we endorse the idea that hinges are ultimately not propositional in their nature: "Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;—but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is *our acting* [our emphasis], which lies at the bottom of the language game." (*OC* §204).

Let us give you a brief overview of how we understand the connection between hinges and our acting. The process by means of which we acquire these hinges is described by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical investigations* (1953, hereinafter *PI*) (§§27, 157, 206) as a kind of training: we are trained into practices that presuppose some tacit commitments or hinges and assimilate such commitments or hinges in the process (*OC* §143), in such a way that they will guide our future actions. The tacit feature of hinges becomes especially noticeable when we consider them from a normative point of view. Wittgenstein compares them with rules of a game: "their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules" (*OC* §95). Similarly, we are not usually aware of the rules that govern our ordinary behavior but, nonetheless, it is to the extent that we act in accordance with them that our behavior becomes intelligible to others. However, hinges are not mere assumptions, from which we can easily detach ourselves. They are non-optional elements that belong in a constitutive manner to the structure and dynamics of our rationality (Coliva and Pritchard 2022, 83). It is this conception of hinges as rules that we endorse and we understand them as performative. By "performative," we mean that hinges constitute actions and govern our epistemic practices while being constituted themselves in the actions that they regulate. In this manner, hinges are *performed*, that is, they are actualized and manifest themselves in the actions of individual agents.

Our main objective is to critically examine the possibility of a feminist hinge epistemology (FHE). Our primary point of reference will be the pioneering proposal of N. A. Ashton (2019). To bridge the gap between HE and feminist epistemologies, Ashton discusses the possibility of an FHE, arguing that it is both possible and desirable. Calling attention to essential theoretical similarities between HE and feminist epistemologies, Ashton argues that it would be beneficial for HE to use the resources

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of feminist epistemologies, as this would allow HE to overcome some of its shortcomings. However, as Ashton (2019, 161) herself acknowledges, she has neither developed the details nor explained the benefits that this project could have for feminist epistemologies. In other words, what Ashton truly does is make a case for the synthesis of feminist epistemology and hinge epistemology, but she does not either do the work of showing *how* or look at it from the perspective of feminist epistemologies. By contrast, we shall examine the possibility and the legitimacy of an FHE from the point of view of feminist epistemologies as well as its workings. That said, our paper is motivated by Ashton's critique of the shortcomings of HE as well as her insight that HE, if oriented towards feminism, could overcome some of its dogmatic and harmful assumptions.

In our journey, therefore, we take the opposite direction than Ashton. While addressing theoretical affinity is necessary, we also need to focus on the critical and creative scope of feminist epistemologies keeping in mind their essential methodologies and goals. A philosophical standpoint must be useful for feminist purposes to be considered *feminist* with legitimacy. This means that the set of conceptual tools offered by Wittgenstein's late philosophy on which HE is inspired must be put at the service of feminist goals in epistemology, namely: on the one hand, to identify and criticize the structures and dynamics that reproduce inequality in epistemic practices and, on the other hand, to offer new conceptual horizons from which to investigate further the complex ways in which gender intersects with the production and transmission of knowledge. This latter dimension goes beyond the domain of criticism and deepens into the creation and exploration of new conceptual and hermeneutical resources, which in turn seeks to enable the normative objectives of feminist epistemologies.

To do this, we will critically analyze some Wittgenstein-inspired contributions to the literature on epistemic injustice, one of the areas in which the feminist perspective in contemporary epistemology is most fruitfully developing. First, we will consider the proposals of Coliva (2019) and Boncompagni (2024), who use the conceptual framework of HE to interpret the basic dynamics of our testimonial exchanges to shed light on testimonial injustice (TI). Secondly, we will point out some limitations of their proposals that must be overcome for HE to satisfy some of the fundamental requirements of feminist epistemologies, such as anti-individualism or the situated, non-idealized character of knowledge. With the purpose of addressing these limitations, we will explore the performative dimension of the hinges shared by a community, that is, the bidirectional constitutive relationship that exists between hinges understood as rules and their instantiations by individuals, as elucidated in Carmona (2023a, 2023b). We argue that this performative approach opens the door for the possibility of a positive reading of HE from a feminist perspective. In the resulting FHE, the concept of "feminist hinge" (FH) plays a crucial role. By FHs we mean those assumptions that govern epistemic practices aimed at establishing and maintaining gender equality.

The structure of the paper goes as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of our understanding of hinges as rules that are manifested and performed in the practices they regulate. Section 3 presents the idea of an FHE by comparing the general features of HE and feminist epistemologies and critically examining Ashton's case for an FHE. In order to examine what an FHE would look like, section 4 is devoted to the analysis of some Wittgenstein-inspired proposals from the literature on epistemic injustice which combine HE and a sensitivity toward gender inequality. We show that there remains work to be done for that kind of approach to be true to some fundamental assumptions and goals of feminist perspectives in epistemology. Section 5 solves these tensions by

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putting forward a performative account of FHE and the concept of "feminist hinges" (FHs). Finally, section 6 draws attention to the need to be trained in FHs.

2. Hinges as rules

Ashton (2019, 155) identifies two claims that all hinge epistemologists take from *OC*:

> Lack of Evidential Support: There are some propositions/commitments that we take ourselves to know, and which are importantly connected to other propositions/commitments which we take ourselves to know, which lack evidential support (in some sense).
>
> Legitimacy: Nevertheless, these propositions/commitments are legitimate (in some sense).

Ashton uses the expression "in some sense" to unify different proposals within HE. These two claims are also shared by our approach, which rests upon the normative role of hinges, and as such belongs to the so-called "framework" interpretation. According to this reading, hinges are neither true nor false; being non-evaluable in epistemic terms, they cannot constitute knowledge (Coliva 2010). This is because, ultimately, they are not propositions, but *rules* of conceptual and linguistic representation, as well as rules of "evidential significance," i.e. criteria for defining what counts as evidence. They contribute to the constitution of rationality itself and therefore it is rational to *act* in accordance with them (e.g., cf. Coliva and Pritchard 2022, 149).

Wittgenstein used another expression to refer to hinges which brings more insight into their praxis-oriented character: the term *Sicherheit*, which is often translated as "certainty" in English, though it would be better translated as "security." This security elucidates an aspect of the concept of "hinge" which is not evident when the word is translated as "certainty" and directly connects it with the notion of form of life: "Now I would like to regard this certainty (*Sicherheit*),[2] not as something akin to hastiness or superficiality, but as a form of life (*Lebensform*)" (*OC* §358).

We follow Boncompagni (2015) in understanding the expression "form of life" as a heuristic tool by means of which Wittgenstein referred to the web of interconnected and overlapping practices into which a community is trained. For example, Wittgenstein shows how children are trained in language games (*PI* §§5–9): teaching a creature to interact with their environment, i.e. touching, throwing, assembling, and disassembling objects, involves training in practices ruled by certain hinges, i.e. the existence of the object in question (and of the external world). This training provides a community's people with a common ground not grounded on something more fundamental: a set of possibilities for action and a sense of security that prompts them to act in those ways. For instance, if I notice that a glass is about to fall down, I try to grab it before it breaks into pieces, instead of doubting its existence or wondering whether I should trust my eyesight.

By training, Wittgenstein had in mind that this common ground is something one acquires "by means of observation and instruction" (*OC* §279). In Jeff Stickney's words, "[B]ackground and training set the stage for meaning. ... Sharing a form of life means being socialized into accepting certain customs or commands ..., giving us also shared 'agreement in judgments'" (Stickney 2017, 53). Consequently, the expression *Sicherheit* draws our attention to everyday performance, in particular to the freedom from doubt

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and general feeling of confidence that is there in ordinary actions (*PI* §212). Ultimately, what lies beneath our language games of the true and the false is agreements in actions, practices, namely, agreements in ways of living (*PI* §241). Wittgenstein makes explicit that agreement in form of life is agreeing in how we *measure*, in our judgments, in how we apply rules (*PI* §242). As mentioned in section 1, the path is bidirectional. Our judgments are, in turn, determined by "the whole hurly-burly of human actions," namely, the form of life, "the background against which we see any action" (Wittgenstein 1967, *Z* §567).

We are at the bedrock of practice, which, from this perspective, is in itself a standard of justification. This idea is captured well in Wittgenstein's expression that "practice speaks for itself": "Not only rules, but also examples are needed for establishing a practice. Our rules leave loopholes open, and the practice has to speak for itself" (*OC* §139). From this perspective, a rule does not exist separately from its correct use. In fact, there comes a point at which one can only say "This is how we judge" or "This is how we follow the rule": "Once I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'" (*PI* §217). As learnt from *OC* §204, justification comes to an end, and the end is *our acting*.

Tracy Bowell (2017, 647) reflects upon "the epistemic difficulty we may confront in accepting that our forms of life are the only available source of normativity within our rule-governed practices." It is "our form of life that keeps our practices," and our actions and judgments as a result, "on track"; in such a way that "criteria of correctness are, and can only be, generated internally to those practices" (Bowell 2017, 647). In fact, there is no other criterion for the way a formula is meant that "the way we always use it, the way we were taught to use it" (Wittgenstein 1964, *RFM* I. 1–2). This insight is behind Wittgenstein's widespread maxim that "meaning is use": "To know its meaning is to use it *in the same way* as other people do. 'In the right way' means nothing" (Wittgenstein 1976, LFM, XIX. 183).

This picture of the relationship between meaning and use might lead to the belief that there is no room left for contestation. However, as Stickney (2017, 54) explains, "[i]nstead of closing space for contestation, training establishes its possibility: pre-conditional avenues for later self-regulation and improvisation within-and-against the rules." Furthermore, given that hinges do not exist independently of their instantiations, in other words, that they constitute action *while being constituted themselves* in the actions that they regulate, our performative account makes room for the transformation of existing hinges and the emergence of new hinges and, consequently, for feminist change. Given this combination of the structural and the agential perspectives, our normative understanding of hinges can be useful for feminist epistemologies to identify and criticize the structures and dynamics that reproduce gender inequality. Sections 3.1, 4, and 5 shall explore this further.

3. The idea of a feminist hinge epistemology

3.1 At the intersection between Wittgenstein's late philosophy and feminist philosophy

Despite the debates regarding the "quietism" or "conservatism" of Wittgenstein,[3] his last writings have inspired feminist epistemologies because of their critical attitude toward some fundamental epistemic assumptions that characterize the traditional conception of knowledge:

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- Anti-transcendentalism. Justification and knowledge entail hinges that enable our epistemic practices and yet we have no ultimate justification for adhering to them.
- Anti-individualism. The hinges acquired by our participation in practical contexts of use constitute a background that is shared; they presuppose a community (*OC* §298).
- Anti-essentialism. The meaning of words lies in their use (*PI* §43) and should not be understood in correspondence with a kind of eidetic reality that harbors essential, eternal, unchanging, and incontestable truths.
- Contextualism. Empirical propositions depend on the hinges that are at stake in practical contexts of use (*PI* §217; *OC* §§88, 105).
- Plurality. Language games vary according to practical contexts of use (*PI* §23), so it is to be expected that the hinges on which they acquire meaning also vary.

A brief overview of the general features of feminist epistemologies will suffice to understand to what extent both perspectives share theoretical affinity. Though the nature of feminist epistemology is not settled even among feminist epistemologists,[4] we find in the literature (Anderson 2020; Baghramian and Coliva 2020, 163) some consensus about a core of fundamental assumptions that would be present in any samples of feminist epistemologies, which makes sense in relation to the historical feminist critique of the traditional concept of knowledge. According to the latter, justification is independent of social and individual factors and standards of justification are universally applicable, regardless of context. By contrast, feminist epistemologies have generally argued that research activity is situated in a particular socio-cultural and historical context (Haraway 1988) and that, as such, is permeated by a set of norms and values that guide it at every step, such as the choice of hypotheses, cognitive goals, or theoretical frameworks. This call for attention to the "non-epistemic" factors in the domain of knowledge, championed by gender as a central category of analysis, not only implies the need to understand our statements about knowledge as context-dependent, but also presupposes a critique of methodological individualism insofar as gender and values are understood only in the context of a community. Likewise, a plurality of perspectives about the same phenomenon (such as knowledge, in this case) is not merely a fact, but can also be a *valuable* fact: the confrontation of heterogeneous perspectives in academic research is understood as fostering a critical approach to methodological biases that otherwise may go unnoticed (Longino 1990).

Although we do not find in Wittgenstein's late philosophy an explicit discussion of the impact of gender on knowledge, the characteristics mentioned at the beginning of this section can motivate the following feminist points (Scheman and O'Connor 2002): gender categories, and the social practices that reproduce and legitimize them, would not have an essential and incontestable character, since they rest on hinges that are ultimately unjustified and unjustifiable, being normative yet contingent. A fundamental feature for a satisfactory encounter between feminist epistemologies and Wittgenstein's late philosophy relies on the temporal and mutable nature of language games and the hinges they presuppose (*PI* §23; *OC* §§96–97). The possibility of changing the dynamics and epistemic structures that are harmful to gender equality in our epistemic practices is crucial for the move beyond criticism that is essential to the creative enterprise of a feminist epistemology.

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3.2 Ashton's case for a feminist hinge epistemology

To motivate the proposal of an FHE, Ashton (2019, 159) argues that:

A) it is plausible, which she shows by highlighting theoretical affinity between the two traditions, and
B) it is desirable, since feminist epistemologies have resources from which HE can benefit with the purpose to overcome some difficulties.

As far as A is concerned, Ashton compares the general features of HE with those of feminist epistemologies, in particular feminist standpoint theory (FST). She focuses on the thesis of situated knowledge and the so-called "epistemic advantage thesis," which holds that the standpoints of traditionally marginalized and oppressed identity groups can be epistemically advantageous (Wylie 2003). The explanation that serves as a basis for the second thesis is a consequence of what is entailed by the concept of "situated knowledge": our social position delimits a range of experiences that we can have, which affects the production and legitimation of knowledge. Because dominant social groups do not need to routinely question their position whereas oppressed groups suffer injustices arising from their social position, the latter are best placed to identify dominant biases. That is, due to their social position, oppressed groups have access to epistemic resources that give them advantage in certain contexts, which is considered legitimate insofar as these resources are put at the service of a more objective investigation, in the sense of Harding's (1992) notion of "strong objectivity," and therefore of an epistemic good. This is the case despite their lack of "evidence-based support" (Ashton 2019, 159–60). Given that lack of evidential support and legitimacy are the two features that all HEs attribute to hinges, Ashton, consequently, observes that oppressed groups' marginalized yet epistemically lucid epistemic resources bear at least these two similarities with the nature and role of hinges.

As regards their lack of evidential support, we learn from Ashton that, despite the fact that "[d]ifferent authors [coming from FST] offer different accounts of what these resources are," there is "[o]ne thing that all of these accounts of epistemic resources have in common": "that they are comprised of components which are not responsive to evidence—or at least not *in the usual way*" (Ashton 2019, 159, our emphasis). Additionally, Ashton merely points out the need to study their lack of evidence-based support in more detail.

Though section 5.3 expands on this, for the time being let us say that, on the one hand, a person of color experiences the existence of racism as surely as they experience the existence of their own hands, and the same is true of women and their experience of sexism; and that, on the other hand, such insights are not subject to evidence in the sense that they are not questioned by those for whom they function as hinges. In order to fight specific battles, i.e. gender parity in academia, the conviction that gender inequality exists and that such a state of affairs is oppressive must stay firm. Going back to Wittgenstein's notion of *Sicherheit*, we could say that we need to approach the issue of gender parity in academia with the security that gender oppression exists and that its tentacles can reach everywhere, including academia. It is in this sense that we understand that marginalized lucid epistemic resources are not responsive to evidence *in the usual way*.

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In respect of B, Ashton (2019, 160–61) argues that feminist epistemologies have resources that can be beneficial for HE in order to overcome a series of criticisms that she herself outlines:

1. A feminist perspective can help HE to achieve a more complete picture of justification, one that is not primarily focused on making a defense against skepticism and, by contrast, can work for the goals of feminist epistemologies, which "are concerned with securing an account of justification that is useful for science (e.g. Harding 1991) and politics (e.g. Anderson 2006) as well as for emancipatory projects" (Ashton 2019, 160).
2. HE has ignored the literature on the influence of pragmatic factors on knowledge. To the extent that for feminist epistemologies this is fundamental, HE could learn much from them.
3. Although the characteristics of Wittgenstein's late philosophy favor a clear relativistic approach to knowledge, the norm has been rather resistance against such an interpretation (cf. Coliva 2020). Though Ashton (2019, 160) acknowledges that this attitude[5] is also present in feminist epistemology, she argues that "some feminist standpoint theorists have offered more creative treatments of relativism" and that this creativity could help HE to question its general opposition to relativism.

Ashton's proposal is ultimately based on the benefits that HE can obtain from such a joint perspective. However, as Ashton (2019, 161) herself acknowledges, she neither shows how they can be synthesized nor explains the benefits that this project could have for feminist epistemologies. We intend to examine the possibility and the legitimacy of an FHE from the point of view of feminist epistemologies as well as its workings. In our journey, therefore, we take the opposite direction than Ashton. Besides addressing theoretical affinity, we need to focus on the critical and creative scope of feminist epistemologies, keeping in mind their essential methodologies and goals. That said, our paper is motivated by Ashton's critique of the shortcomings of HE as well as her insight that HE, if oriented towards feminism, could overcome some of its dogmatic and harmful assumptions.

The next section elucidates to what extent it is possible to put the conceptual tools of HE at the service of feminist objectives in epistemology by looking closely at the literature within HE dealing with epistemic injustice.

4. Hinge epistemology and epistemic injustice

4.1 Proposals addressing epistemic injustice from hinge epistemology

Fricker (2007) identifies the concept of epistemic injustice, an ethical-epistemic injustice inflicted on people as knowers. She distinguishes two types: testimonial injustice (TI), in which the hearer does not give proper credibility to the speaker due to a negative identity prejudice, and hermeneutical injustice, which occurs due to a gap in shared hermeneutical resources that prevents marginalized social identities from articulating their experiences.

Coliva (2019) employs the tools of the so-called "framework reading" within HE[6] in her interpretation of our testimonial exchanges. According to her propositional reading of hinges, the source of testimonial justification is a hinge proposition that takes the

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form of a basic presupposition of trust: "people are generally reliable informants," so that the belief generated in the hearer is justified insofar as they assume that the speaker is reliable. Sharing the tacit feature of certainties, this "testimonial hinge" goes unnoticed in our usual testimonial exchanges, since we do not constantly question the reliability of speakers.

Similarly, Boncompagni (2024, 293), drawing from the framework reading, proposes the following interpretation of prejudice: "A hinge that associates a social group and certain disparaging attributes, regulates judgment towards that social group, and displays some (typically epistemically culpable) resistance to counterevidence owing to an ethically bad affective investment." Like the "testimonial hinge" in Coliva's proposal, a hinge prejudice constitutes the frame of reference from which credibility assessments are made, in the sense that it determines what counts as evidence for a belief: "hinge identity prejudices, in other words, decide whether what a person says has evidential significance" (Boncompagni 2024, 294). However, unlike the testimonial hinge, identity hinge prejudice would not provide justification for believing a given testimony. By contrast, it would interrupt the functioning of the testimonial hinge by anticipating it, preventing justification from taking place. Accordingly, not everyone would be reliable due to their social identity.

Boncompagni (2024, esp. 289–298) has carried out substantial work in arguing that the hinge account of prejudice is more attractive theoretically than Fricker's. We agree with Boncompagni that what we find in Fricker is an explanation based on moral and psychological factors. We also concur with Boncompagni's claim that, in addition, we need a conceptual clarification of "[the] normative role [of prejudice] in the structure of justification" (Boncompagni 2024, 287) and that this can be produced by the hinge account. In particular, Boncompagni argues that the hinge account of prejudice clarifies three conceptual aspects that remain underdeveloped in the literature on prejudice and testimony: i) the role of prejudice in the structure of testimonial justification, ii) the resistance of prejudice to counterevidence, and iii) the different steps involved in overcoming prejudice.

As regards the role of prejudice, Boncompagni (2024, esp. 294–296) argues that the hinge interpretation of prejudice enables us to account for its implicit nature while explaining its relation to other kinds of propositions. Not only do we take for granted hinge propositions such as "Physical objects exist," but we also question the justification or veracity of other empirical propositions by means of this type of hinge. Extending this insight to the role of prejudice in the context of TI, we could say that it generally regulates our credibility assessments without our awareness. In this manner, hinges help us grasp the "silence or invisibility" surrounding prejudices "as aspects connected with their normative role" (Boncompagni 2024, 296).

As far as resistance to counterevidence is concerned, as in the case of hinges, Boncompagni (2024, esp. 296) argues that it is not possible to offer evidence against prejudice. In fact, presenting empirical evidence to dismantle a negative identity prejudice has been shown to be ineffective, as it usually results in defensive reactions that end up reaffirming the prejudice in question (e.g., see Abrams 2010, 72). We agree with her that HE provides a normative explanation that is missing in Fricker's notion of prejudice. In her words, "counterevidence is not effective because it is simply not perceived as evidence due to the normative force of the hinge-prejudice" (Boncompagni 2024, 296).

Finally, Boncompagni puts forward that we become aware of our prejudiced attitudes only when someone points them out, this being a necessary step to overcome prejudice

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(Boncompagni 2024, 297). It is the contact with communities with other hinges that makes us aware of the basic presuppositions that regulate our prejudiced epistemic behavior. Boncompagni uses Medina's (2013) concept of "epistemic friction" to explain how contact with alternative hinge propositions hinders the implicit and unnoticed manner in which hinge prejudices operate and forces us to detect them and, ultimately, discard such tacit justifications.

The encounter between the epistemology of testimony and HE in Boncompagni's proposal exemplifies how HE can be useful for feminist epistemologies when it assumes their critical goals.[7] Let us read from this perspective Anthony Minghella's screenplay *The Talented Mr Ripley*, in which Tom Ripley kills Dickie Greenleaf and, despite existing evidence, the father of the deceased, Herbert Greenleaf, neglects the insight of his son's fiancée Marge Sherwood into what has happened: when Marge tells Herbert that Dickie might have been killed by Tom, Herbert discredits Marge's testimony owing to a negative gender prejudice, as his "habits of hearer response are saturated with the sexist constructions of gender" (Fricker 2007, 90). Instead of trust, what she obtains from him is the following disdainful remark, which is indicative of her being discredited as a knower: "Marge, there is female intuition, and then there are facts."

Applying Coliva and Boncompagni's HE tools, this instance of TI would conceptually unfold as follows: a (negative identity) hinge prejudice about women (e.g., "they are intuitive rather than rational") blocks the usual functioning of the testimonial hinge, normatively anticipating it, in such a way that Herbert is not justified to believe Marge. His prejudice against women prevents him from considering Marge's words as evidentially significant for the belief that his son was killed by Tom. However, in Boncompagni (2024, 289)'s words, "[w]ere his judgment not guided by prejudice, Mr. Greenleaf would consider this belief justified based on Marge's testimony [for which she in fact had some evidence] and by virtue of the basic trust presupposition." By contrast, as Boncompagni (2024, 289) herself argues, Fricker's depiction of the functioning of prejudice in terms of moral and psychological factors is unable to explain "what role does prejudice play in the justification of testimonial belief."

4.2 Limitations from a structural point of view

Ayala and Vasilyeva (2015) question the extent of the explanatory power of prejudice in cases of TI. While stressing that they do not dispute the existence and the defining role that prejudice might play in our testimonial exchanges, they argue that focusing solely on what they call "biased minds" cannot account for the following two phenomena because of its individualism:

- There are injustices owing to conventions that cannot be explained by what goes on in the biased mind of an individual: i.e. a non-native English speaker whose speech act is understood as a request to enter a conversation rather than as a contribution to the conversation as such. This is what Ayala and Vasilyeva (2015, 132) call "speech injustice": the speech act is distorted, so that the speaker cannot do with their words what they intended to do.
- The rhetoric of individuals' mental contents proves ineffective to address the study of injustices because it situates the individual in social reality only partially, assuming a certain disconnection between individuals and the "social dynamics and structural forces that shape their behavior," when, in fact, "[t]here are conventional norms about what counts as a speech act of a particular type in a

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given context, together with conventional ways to invoke those norms" (Ayala and Vasilyeva 2015, 133).

A fundamental intuition of Ayala and Vasilyeva (2015) is that injustice can occur for reasons other than a hearer being individually prejudiced. There are also cases of injustice owing to social conventions, in such a way that we are trained in discriminatory and oppressive discursive conventions and execute and apply these norms appropriately. Making use of Wittgenstein's conceptual toolbox, we could say that we are trained in forms of life that presuppose a set of hinges, which, like a kind of mythology (*OC* §95), shape our epistemic practices normatively. For example, when (identity negative) hinge prejudices regulate our evaluations of women's testimony, we are acting in accordance with the norms in which we have been trained, which explains why those who engage in such prejudiced practices unsuccessfully appeal to common sense to justify themselves instead of providing real evidence. On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are people who do not adjust to such norms, who are constantly questioned and required to justify their behavior.[8]

This poses a problem for Boncompagni's proposal insofar as it is mainly limited to offering a hinge account of the role of prejudice in our testimonial exchanges.[9] If HE wants to address the shortcomings identified by Ayala and Vasilyeva, it should be able to explain that an epistemic injustice can occur for reasons other than a hinge prejudice operating in the mind of an individual. In other words, HE must avoid methodological individualism to offer a complete account of injustice in our testimonial exchanges, which is an essential feature of feminist epistemology.

There is another issue regarding the distinctions drawn by Boncompagni between *global/local* and *de facto/de jure* hinges. By means of the global/local distinction, Boncompagni explains how a hinge prejudice can anticipate the testimonial hinge, interrupting its usual function before justification can take place. From this perspective, the hinge prejudice is a local hinge that varies according to place and time (e.g., "Man has never been to the moon"), while the testimonial hinge is a global or universal hinge that is constitutive of our rationality. The problem, acknowledged by Boncompagni (2024, 299), is the following: how can a local hinge interrupt the function of a universal hinge that is an essential part of human rationality? While Coliva (2019) considers that prejudices can be understood as defeaters, Boncompagni's move is to draw attention to the local dimension of the testimonial hinge, which would also be local insofar as the universal hinge always applies locally.

The local/global distinction falls short in addressing Ayala and Vasilyeva (2015)'s critique that the general rule in which we are trained and according to which we behave is that of a (hinge) prejudice (rather than the testimonial hinge). Consequently, the role of a hinge prejudice would not be to defeat a generalized trust in other people's testimony (Coliva 2019) or to prevent justification from taking place by disrupting the function of the testimonial hinge (Boncompagni 2024). Rather, it would fulfill a discriminatory function, justifying the positive or negative evaluation of someone's testimony in response to the prejudiced dynamics of social identities.

We observe the same shortcoming in Boncompagni's distinction between *de jure*/*de facto* hinges. She argues that *de jure* hinges are those that cannot be questioned without renouncing the basic assumptions of discourse and research methods, while *de facto* hinges would be those that may be questioned over time (Boncompagni 2024, 299). However, from a structural perspective, the problem needs to be addressed in very different terms, as testimonial discrimination, rather than a basic presupposition of

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trust, is identified with the general rule. Accordingly, the testimonial hinge is seen as a regulative ideal rather than as an implicit rule proper to the structure and dynamics of testimonial justification, that is, something that *should* be an essential part of justification in our testimonial exchanges, without being necessarily the case.

Finally, this analysis brings to light one more shortcoming that threatens proposals within HE that seek to tackle social and political problems, especially those addressed by feminist epistemologies: the idealized and abstract rhetoric that surrounds the theoretical debate on the nature and the role of hinges—i.e., picturing hinges as cornerstones that regulate our behavior, from some recondite yet indispensable part of our rationality—seems quite alien to the discourse of feminist epistemologies, which is rooted in the situated and embodied concept of knowledge, and the social relations in which it is produced and legitimized. Consequently, we need to undertake a de-idealization of HE that brings it closer to the presuppositions of feminist epistemologies.

5. A performative account of a feminist hinge epistemology

5.1 Understanding hinges beyond the dichotomy between the individual and the structural

The task of de-idealizing the feminist interpretation of hinges from a structural perspective might seem impossible. After all, an exclusively structural perspective may end up hypothesizing a self-sufficient and intangible entity, the structure, which would determine individual behavior. As for individualism, it also seems inappropriate to abandon it altogether. Although it is necessary to situate individual practices in a broader social context, we do not simply reproduce social norms and conventions. There is room for originality, creativity, and dissent; in fact, this is essential for the transformation of oppressive social structures. However, we learn from the Wittgenstein-inspired proposal put forward by one of us with the purpose of dealing with epistemic injustice that it is possible to combine de-idealization, individual agency, and a structural perspective (Carmona 2023a).

Carmona (2023a, 339) characterizes a phenomenon that she calls "binarism grammatical lacuna" (BGL), which occurs "when a non-binary person is forced to choose between inappropriate grammatical options to refer to themselves" because of a socially enforced gender binary. Looking at it from the point of view of Ayala and Vasilyeva (2015), we could reformulate it as follows: there are social norms committed to binarism that frame the actions of specific individuals. At this point, we would be running the risk of idealizing the phenomenon by addressing prejudice independently of the framework of individual epistemic agency.

By contrast, Carmona draws our attention to the role that individuals play in cases of injustices that appear to be exclusively structural in nature. Building on the maxim that "the meaning of a word is its use in language" (*PI* §43), Carmona (2023a, 351) claims that "in each application of a word speakers contribute to determining its field of application," that is, discursive practices contribute to the actualization and transformation of social norms, in the sense that these norms do not precede action but are constituted in it. Carmona (2023a, 351) quotes Brandom (2019, 9): "Discursive activity, understood as judgements, and these as the application of concepts, commits us as speakers since we undertake doxastic and practical responsibilities by binding ourselves to rules in the form of concepts."

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Regarding BGL, Carmona (2023a, 352) summarizes this idea as follows: "By committing myself to binarism in my use of grammar, I attribute authority and assume responsibilities, granting recognition to binary identities. Additionally, by not giving uptake to nonbinary uses of grammar, we fail to recognize non-binary perspectives . . . In the process, we contribute to strengthening the sex/gender binary." Carmona's way of understanding the dynamics between the individual and the structural is a satisfactory option from which to escape individualistic and idealizing obstacles and, as we will argue, an adequate perspective from which to think about the way in which HE can be adapted to the presuppositions of feminist epistemologies. Making use of Bourdieu (1990, 131), we could say that neither does it fall into individualism, insofar as the actualization of norms in language uses "is not carried out in a social vacuum, but . . . it is subjected to structural constraints" (namely prejudicial hermeneutical resources), nor does it make use of an abstract and idealizing structuralism insofar as "the structuring structures, the cognitive structures, are themselves socially structured, because they have social origins." Additionally, Carmona's interpretation satisfies feminist epistemologies' insight that social norms are not substantive ideals that determine practices from an abstract, immutable, and necessary normative dimension. In Judith Butler's (2004, 48) words,

> The norm only persists as a norm to the extent that it is acted out in social practice . . . and reinstituted in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life. The norm has no independent ontological status, yet it cannot be easily reduced to its instantiations; it is itself (re)produced through its embodiment, through the acts that strive to approximate it.

In our terms, *hinges*, that is, norms in Butler's jargon, manifest and actualize themselves in the actions and practices that they regulate and constitute. We are back at the bidirectional constitutive relationship between hinges and their instantiations in the actions of individual agents mentioned in sections 1 and 2.

5.2 Further characterization of the performative account

Our performative account of hinges has three main features: 1) there are hinges that enable and govern our ordinary epistemic practices, functioning as rules; 2) these hinges are enacted and actualized in the specific actions of agents that participate in such practices; and 3) this makes room for the transformation and emergence of hinges. Let us expand on them.

From our performative point of view, hinges do not govern behavior from some transcendental or eidetic dimension; rather, they manifest and actualize themselves in the practices that they regulate: like rules, hinges constitute action while being constituted themselves in the actions that they regulate. Boncompagni (2019, 178) has already drawn attention to the intimate relationship that exists between actions and hinges:

> It is habits, actions and know-how that, in the end, constitute hinges and keep them alive. . . . the latter are or embody ways of habitual acting rather than propositional attitudes. Wittgenstein indeed affirms that it is acting that lies at the bottom of language games, and "not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true" (*OC* 1969: §204); in his view, hinge certainty as well as doubt is shown in our

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> actions (*OC* 1969: §§342, 360), and certainty is learned by doing things (*OC* 1968: 476). ... It is by becoming habitual that ways of doing and thinking shape the "channels" or the "bed of the river" along which the water flows, to use Wittgenstein's famous image of the river and the riverbed of thought (*OC* 1969: §§96–99).

We learn from Carmona's (2023b) discussion of the interdependence between language use and certainties that, when using language—i.e., when judging the credibility of a speaker—we take part in the actualization of the words and concepts that constitute the rules that govern our epistemic practices. That said, "the particular use [of a word] that we make on a given occasion is not independent of 'a certain constancy' in the uses of the word, that is, of how that word has been used up to now, a constancy that at least in part stems from the certainties shared within a form of life, from those beliefs that we simply take as true and that articulate how we live"[10] (Carmona 2023b, 311). We also need to consider that "how we live, how we organize our lives, in turn, constitutes those certainties: what we do not doubt and by means of which we discriminate between the true and the false has a crucial impact on the use of language by a given community" (Carmona 2023b, 311). She makes explicit that it is a bidirectional, or even multidirectional, process:

> Accordingly, changes in our conception of the world affect how we live, our practices, including their linguistic dimensions, the way in which we use language. Similarly, those changes in language use contribute to the transformation of how we conceive of the world and organize our lives. (Carmona 2023b, 311)

We agree with Carmona (2023a, 352) that "[t]o agree on certain uses of language is to attribute recognition to the experiences and sensibilities behind such usages"—by committing ourselves to binarism in our use of grammar, we attribute authority and assume responsibilities, granting recognition to binary identities; similarly, "by not giving uptake to non-binary uses of grammar, we fail to recognize non-binary perspectives; for instance, when instead of responding to such usages we ignore them, adhering to canonical grammar." In the process, the sex/gender binary is reinforced and actualized. Likewise, when accepting as invalid certain testimonies for the mere fact that they come from a person with a specific social identity, we downgrade the people who belong to that group as inept knowers whose perspectives don't matter as much as those of "first rate" knowers. That is what Herbert does to Marge in *The Talented Mr Ripley*. By contrast, if instead of disbelieving Marge, Herbert had given the credit to her testimony that it deserved, he would have contributed to altering the status quo regarding gender relations in the America of the 1950s. But it is precisely the impact of such gender relations and the hinges behind them organizing people's lives in their historical context that made that move on Greenleaf's side unlikely.[11] In the America of today, by contrast, the friction between oppressive and fair hinges in respect of gender would have made it less unlikely for Greenleaf to discredit Marge.

This performative dynamics sheds light on the way hinges can change over time and differ in different communities (*OC* §§96–97, 609). Making use of Wittgenstein's metaphor, we could say that the "riverbed" can shift: the propositions that solidify and function as channels for empirical propositions can become fluid and ultimately transform into empirical propositions. Likewise, empirical propositions can solidify and

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function as channels. Our performative account can address this transformative dimension in an intuitive manner: hinges hold their status if they are actualized smoothly in our daily practices. By making hinges dependent on practices, the situated and social nature of knowledge comes to the fore, which paves the way for a feminist interpretation of HE.

We are not necessarily aware of this transformation. In fact, we are usually unaware of the norms that govern our behavior. We abide by the norms tacitly, inadvertently, because we have been trained in them, and in this act of abiding by the norm we also position ourselves in relation to them, legitimizing and reproducing them. If we happen to become aware of them, in the presence of evidence against those hinges, we often reaffirm them as a "natural" response, which explains the resistance to counterevidence in the context of hinge prejudices (Boncompagni 2024, 298).

Language use and, in turn, the credibility dynamics of our testimonial exchanges, play, therefore, an inescapable role in our performative account. However, as we shall see next, the conception of FHs that we have in mind is not restricted to credibility.

5.3 Toward epistemic justice: the idea of feminist hinges

Hinges are generally approached in a negative sense. We saw that Boncompagni (2024) uses hinges to understand the role played by negative identity prejudices in the structure of testimonial justification. She concludes that prejudice prevents the habitual exercise of the testimonial hinge and thus justification from taking place. Drawing from Ayala and Vasilyeva (2015), we argued that unfair hinges can be understood as the norm that guides mainstream hermeneutical resources, in such a way that fair hinges, such as the testimonial hinge, are exceptions that prove the rule. That said, Ashton's (2019) proposal, tacitly, makes room for hinges that do not play a negative role; to be precise, for hinges that articulate marginalized experiences which cannot be made intelligible from the mainstream hermeneutical resource.

This section explores the idea of a positive understanding of hinges and argues that hinges, besides governing oppressive practices, also function as channels for those that are fair, for both fair and oppressive practices must follow rules. If fair practices were not governed by rules, they would not be intelligible and therefore would have no practical impact on the social fabric. In particular, we will address the rules governing feminist practices and refer to them as "feminist hinges."

Recall that the epistemic resources of traditionally marginalized and oppressed identities share characteristics with hinges insofar as they are both immune to evidence and yet legitimate (Ashton 2019, 159–60). We examined their legitimacy in section 3. We are entitled to avail ourselves of such epistemic resources because of both ethical-pragmatic and epistemic factors. The ethical-pragmatic factors are somewhat explained by the epistemic ones: by implying an epistemic advantage, the development and use of marginalized epistemic resources can put research on the way to achieving greater objectivity, a strong objectivity that takes into account the inescapable influence of values ("non-epistemic factors") in the field of knowledge (Harding 1992), and might contribute to foster a more equal participation of traditionally oppressed identities in our epistemic practices.

However, the related aspect of the role of evidence in justification requires explanation in the case of FST. In particular, we need to make sure that the expression used by Ashton (2019, 155), "lack of evidential support," is not misunderstood. We don't take the expression to mean that providing evidence for the belief that there exists

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gender inequality in the domain of knowledge is an impossible task. Rather, the expression should be examined under the light of how hinges work at the level of perceptual justification. In FST, the experience of inequality serves as a springboard for acquiring a strong reflexivity and developing an epistemic advantage. In HE's terms, we could say that for the perception of injustice to count as evidence in favor of a certain empirical belief, for example, that there are fewer women in academia or that women are paid less than men, a FH must stay firm, for example, the conviction that gender inequality exists, that such a state of affairs is oppressive, and that, therefore, gender equality is desirable and needs to be achieved (in short, "gender inequality exists").

Let us explore the idea in the context of the Black Lives Matter Movement. A Black Lives Matter supporter and a Blue Lives Matter supporter might *see the same thing* when they look at a video of police brutality, but the hinges that they actualize in their seeing the video are altogether different and lead them to understand it in completely different ways: the former sees violence and injustice and the latter sees self-defense, as a result of being respectively trained in anti-racist and racist rules. The hinge "race inequality exists" and, in particular, "in today's world black lives still don't matter as much as white lives," needs to stay firm to make sure that an event such as the death of unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown at the hands of armed police officer Darren Wilson in 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, is interpreted as a case of police brutality instead of as a case of self-defense.

Let us go back to gender. We could dream of a day in which gender oppression ceases to exist or at least ameliorates enough for the FH in question to be transformed; in less oppressive circumstances, a FH could be: "we ought to be alert if we do not want gender inequality to become a structural phenomenon again." In addition, contrary to the idealist conception of hinges, the performative account reminds us that change at the level of hinges does not happen by itself, but by means of the actions of epistemic agents who take for granted that equality does not exist and act to change the status quo.

Returning to the interpretation of FST from the insights of HE, the experience of inequality that motivates the development of epistemic resources by oppressed identities would gain its justification insofar as the FH "gender inequality exists" holds firm. The security surrounding this presupposition is what ultimately defines a feminist way of life: living according to a conviction that manifests itself in our ordinary activities and affective relations; i.e., by being the "feminist killjoy" (Ahmed 2017) who challenges the comfort and values of non-marginalized identities.

Though not expressed in the terms of HE, the idea of an FH implicit in the work on trans philosophy of Talia Mae Bettcher (2019) is a good example of the kind of security [*Sicherheit*] enabled by an FH. While arguing that what is essential to trans philosophy is that it starts by assuming the truth of trans people's gender identity claims, she points out an analogy with feminist philosophy: what would make something count as feminist is that it starts by taking for granted that women are oppressed by patriarchy. Bettcher (2019, 653) extends the analogy to queer theory:

> Trans philosophy is much like queer theory, feminist theory/philosophy, and critical race theory/philosophy. There are certain presuppositions, that is to say, *starting points* [our emphasis]. For example, it would be odd if the question whether homosexuality was immoral were a "hot topic" in queer theory. It would be bizarre to see the question whether women ought to be subjected to the rule of men as the central area of discussion in feminist philosophy. And similarly, the question whether trans people are who we say we are should not be central in trans philosophy.

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Accordingly, Bettcher (2019, 653) states that she understands "as a necessary starting point that we take trans self-identities as at least presumptively valid." If we write "hinge" where Bettcher wrote "starting point" both in this quotation and in the one immediately above, we have the reading that we propose. In our terms, we could say that the ultimate trans hinge is to take for granted that trans self-identities are valid. Instead of arguing in favor of this trans hinge, Bettcher *states* it, that is, she *writes from* that conviction; it is that particular trans hinge which leads her to practice trans philosophy and act in academia and the social world in general as she does. Her philosophical and political practice is a good example of how hinges function as *channels*, as margins along which we operate while they have such a normative status. Bettcher (2019, 648) also puts forward another trans hinge: the assumption that trans philosophy is *truly* philosophy. The assumption of such trans hinges differentiates between trans philosophy and mere philosophizing about trans phenomena.

A substantial part of Bettcher (2019, 653–54)'s argumentation deals with the naïve idea that "the acceptance of starting points runs against the spirit of philosophical investigation." She claims that "[i]t ought to be plain to philosophical practitioners that we invariably rely on starting points in order to conduct our investigations," that doing philosophy without them is impossible (Bettcher 2019, 653). In this respect, the benefits of using an FHE approach is that we already have all the work done at our service in theoretical terms to explain this fact.[12]

Though again using a different terminology, Deborah Tuerkheimer's book, *Credible: Why we doubt accusers and protect abusers* (2021), sheds light on the bidirectional constitutive relationship that exists between hinges and the actions of individuals that characterizes our performative account of hinges. Tuerkheimer argues that, with respect to the prosecution of sexual assault, we need to fight what she calls the "credibility complex": "a cluster of forces that . . . corrupt our judgments, making us too prone to both discount the credibility of accusers and inflate the credibility of the accused" (Tuerkheimer 2021, 3). On her view, culture (in our terms, the hinges governing our practices and social institutions) "is refracted . . . through the behaviors and attitudes of individuals" and "the credibility complex is powered by people" (Tuerkheimer 2021, 3–4). It is precisely because it is powered by people that we need to work on ourselves to make sure that our future actions, instead of reinforcing the credibility complex, contribute to dismantle it.

Before concluding, let us address the objection to our depiction of FHs that they are reducible to cases of credibility excess.[13] Coliva's testimonial hinge, discussed in section 4, aims to shed light on how we acquire justification in ordinary testimonial exchanges. From her perspective, the testimonial hinge functions as a basic presupposition of trust that allows epistemic agents to justifiably believe the testimony of others. However, FHs from our perspective are not, in principle, hinges that deal specifically with credibility, as Coliva's testimonial hinge does. Our conception of FHs concerns inequality in a general sense and not inequality specifically in our testimonial exchanges, but they might also govern our testimonial exchanges (and hopefully they will do so widely enough one day).

However, even when actualized in our testimonial exchanges, FHs cannot be reducible to cases of credibility excess as understood by Fricker for at least three reasons. First, Fricker understands that the identity prejudice that is at play in cases of credibility excess is positive, in the sense that *inflated* credibility is afforded to a *privileged* speaker. However, FHs would work in favor of marginalized social identities, in particular of women and other oppressed gender identities. Secondly, FHs would not contribute to inflated credibility assessments in favor of marginalized gender identities. Rather, they

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would try to make sure that marginalized gender identities receive the credibility assessments that their testimonies merit on given occasions. For example, Tuerkheimer, in her discussion of the need to alter the status quo in cases of sexual assault committed by men against women, does not advocate for an arrest in *every* case. Rather, she draws our attention to the need to fight prejudices that construct female accusers as non-credible and as a result of which police investigations are not conducted and, accordingly, the relevant evidence to support the victim's testimony is not searched for (Tuerkheimer 2021, esp. 68, 82–84). In this respect, the FH that we can extract from her book is not "all accusers tell the truth," but that "to classify an accuser's word as something *less than evidence* is to mischaracterize it, and to ensure that the allegation will be dismissed" (Tuerkheimer 2021, 83). The third difference between the two phenomena is intimately related to the second one. Credibility excess harms otherwise privileged knowers, but FHs are not harmful to knowers as they aim at fostering equality and therefore don't contribute to discrimination towards specific knowers.

In summary, from this perspective, therefore, the hinge prejudices described by Boncompagni (2024) would be part of the prejudiced hermeneutical resources in which we are trained as members of a community; for instance, the prejudice that women are (epistemically) inferior to men. That said, this very situation would give rise to a hinge that enables dissident practices aimed at achieving equality and eliminating structural prejudices; in the case of gender, "gender inequality exists." What is at stake, therefore, is, on the one hand, to make room for the contributions and testimonies of people whose practices are governed by FHs and motivate epistemic friction, and, on the other hand, to understand the responsibility entailed by acting in accordance with taken for granted presuppositions that enable practices that reproduce and legitimize inequality.

6. We need training in non-oppressive hinges!

We have examined the idea of an FHE from the perspective of feminist epistemologies. In the process, we have proposed a performative account of hinges to make sure that HE shares their situated, non-individualist concept of knowledge and their anti-idealism. Additionally, we have put forward the concept of "feminist hinges" to address the existence of hinges that govern epistemic practices aimed at fostering and maintaining gender equality.

Our account is motivated by the insight that we need to address the positive, creative goals of feminist epistemologies if we want a proposal to be truly *feminist*, as these are as essential as their critical goals. We ought to work toward developing new conceptual tools from which to further investigate the complex ways in which gender intersects with the production and transmission of knowledge in contemporary societies. Having advanced the concept of FHs, the next step would be to think of strategies to foster gender equality in our everyday epistemic practices. By training ourselves into non-oppressive attitudes and actions, we can strengthen those hinges that unfortunately today only function as such for marginalized communities and contribute to the extension of their domain, such as FHs. Accordingly, they might come to play some day the role that they deserve in the mainstream social imagination. If we want to fight social injustice, including gender oppression, as one of us has argued, "we need to train ourselves to do what we fail to do" (Carmona 2024, 884). This is another insight that we might obtain from understanding prejudice (and hinges in general) as rules, which contrasts with the more widespread view that the remedy for epistemic injustice is to be found in the mere cultivation of epistemic virtues.

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Acknowledgments. This research has been conducted under the umbrella of four research projects founded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities in Spain: Sexed citizenship and non-binary identities: from non-discrimination to citizenship integration (BinaSex, PID2019-107025RB-I00); The nature of the evaluative and the perception of injustice (NEPI, PID2022-140562NB-I00); Meta-attitudes, deep disagreements and moral progress (METAPRODES, PID2021-124152NB-I00); The nature and normativity of inquiry (NANORIN, PID2021-123938NB-I00). Special thanks go to our two anonymous reviewers for their insights. Early versions of this paper were presented at the X Conference of the Society of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science in Spain (SLMFCE 2021), the X Conference of the Spanish Society for Analytic Philosophy (SEFA 2022) and the Seville Group for Social Epistemology (2023). We want to thank fellow participants for their feedback. Likewise, we want to thank Adam Carter and Jesús Navarro for their feedback on a very early draft of this paper. Any errors are our own.

Notes

1 Coliva (2016) characterizes the different interpretations of HE according to the response they offer to the skeptical challenge and observes that each of them focuses on some aspects of Wittgenstein's depiction of certainties in *OC*. She identifies the therapeutic, the naturalistic, the foundationalist, and the framework readings. On her view, their most characteristic representatives are, respectively, Conant (1998), Strawson (1985), Wright (2004), and Coliva (2010). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to develop an exhaustive taxonomy of the various ways of classifying interpretations of HE, it is necessary to mention that the focus of HE seems to be extending beyond the traditional battle against skepticism toward the investigation of the social and political dimensions of hinges (Sandis and Moyal-Sharrock 2022). Coliva (forthcoming) refers to this new trend as "social hinge epistemology" and identifies three main areas in which the conceptual tools of HE have been applied: the epistemology of disagreements, the epistemology of testimony, and feminist epistemologies. We find this change of historical narrative appealing because, since our objective is to critically assess the possibility of an FHE, our paper would belong to this last area of social and political research. In addition, it addresses Ashton (2019, 160)'s criticism that HE needs to be able to offer a more complete picture of justification so as to be useful for emancipatory projects (see section 3.2).

2 Added by the authors.

3 The debates originate from certain paragraphs in *PI* in which Wittgenstein could be interpreted as to be assigning a passive role to philosophy (Nyíri 1982, 1988, 1992), as in the following quote: "Philosophy cannot interfere in any way with the actual use of language; after all, it can only describe it. Because it cannot provide any foundation for it. It leaves everything as it is" (*PI* §124). It could be argued that, if philosophy can only describe, then it cannot be feminist, as the aim of feminism is to intervene in unjust social, political, and institutional practices (which also implies changing the use of language, as feminist studies on inclusive language show). However, the "quietist" or conservative interpretation of these paragraphs has been widely counterargued by Wittgenstein scholars (Janik 1985; Moyal-Sharrock 2017) and proposals seeking to make feminist interpretations of Wittgenstein's work (Scheman 2002).

4 We would like to thank a reviewer for encouraging us to be more explicitly mindful of this fact and drawing our attention to feminist epistemologists who cannot be said to refuse objectivism, i.e., Patricia Hill Collins's Black FST, which might be read as postulating objective truths and objective justification facts, though these can only be obtained through transversal politics across standpoints, and therefore the situated character of knowledge is nonetheless acknowledged.

5 Ashton uses the word "problem," but we prefer to speak in terms of "attitude."

6 See endnote n. 1.

7 We don't mean to say that Fricker's epistemology is a feminist epistemology. While Fricker's epistemology is clearly good for feminism, it does not imply standpoint theory, anti-individualism, anti-essentialism, or contextualism about epistemic status, features identified in section 3 as characteristic of feminist epistemology. Rather, we understand the application of HE to the domain of epistemic injustice as a good example of how the conceptual apparatus of HE could be used to identify and criticize the structures and dynamics that reproduce gender inequality in the domain of knowledge by means of conceptual clarification of the normative role played by identity prejudices in our testimonial exchanges, including those related to gender, and, consequently, as evidence of how HE could be useful for feminist epistemologies.

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8 Consider social surveillance and sanction towards women who do not conform to the social norms and conventions regulating female depilation (Fahs 2011).
9 However, it needs to be acknowledged that Boncompagni (2024, 298) incipiently recognizes that hinges can regulate people's behavior normatively. Moreover, her explanation of how to overcome prejudice is inescapably marked by such a structural or communitarian aspect insofar as she appeals to the epistemic friction produced by contact with "outsiders," presupposing a "we/us" and a "they/them," a typically Wittgensteinian stance (*OC* §§608–12, §§617–19).
10 All the citations from Carmona (2023b) are translated by the authors.
11 We say "unlikely" and not "impossible" on purpose, as, on this, we agree with Carmona (2022, 24–25)'s critique of Fricker (2007, esp. 100–03)'s understanding of Herbert Greenleaf's example as a case of epistemic bad luck. Understanding hinges as rules makes less room than in Fricker's model for the kind of testimonial injustice that she considers non-culpable.
12 After all, that idea is an essential feature of Wittgenstein's characterization of hinges. In addition, the concept of hinge solves many other problems; to give you a few examples, it explains how such starting points relate to practices, their performative character, or how they relate to empirical propositions, and all this from a normative point of view, as shown by Boncompagni (2024).
13 We would like to thank a reviewer for drawing our attention to the need to tease out the differences between the two phenomena.

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Cite this article: Carmona, C. and Gómez-Ledo, I. 2026. "A Performative Feminist Hinge Epistemology: Making Room for Feminist Hinges." *Hypatia* **41**, 189–210. https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2024.88

https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2024.88 Published online by Cambridge University Press