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TWO CONCEPTS OF EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

ABSTRACT

I describe two concepts of epistemic injustice. The first of these concepts is explained through a critique of Alvin Goldman's veritistic social epistemology. The second is closely based on Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice. I argue that there is a tension between these two forms of epistemic injustice and tentatively suggest some ways of resolving the tension.

Miranda Fricker begins her recent book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* with some discussion of what the book is not about:

> Given how we normally think of justice in philosophy, the idea of epistemic injustice might first and foremost prompt thoughts about distributive unfairness in the distribution of epistemic goods such as information or education. In such cases we picture social agents who have an interest in various goods, some of them epistemic, and question whether everyone is getting their fair share. (2007, 1)

Having given this intuitively appealing account of what "epistemic injustice" *might* mean, she immediately makes it clear that this is not what she means, claiming that on this way of understanding the concept, "there is nothing very distinctively epistemic about it, for it seems largely incidental that the good in question can be characterised as an epistemic good." Instead, she sets herself the task of explicating another form of injustice that is "distinctively epistemic in kind" and that consists in a wrong done to someone "specifically in their capacity as a knower".

Later in this article I will return to Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice, which is also employed by others, including Jane McConkey (2004) and Nancy Daukas (2006), but first I will try to articulate a concept of epistemic injustice of the kind Fricker dismisses (i.e. injustice in the distribution of epistemic goods). I hope to make it clear that it is not at all incidental that epistemic goods, such as information and education, can be characterised as epistemic, and that questions about their just distribution, like questions about the just distribution of other social goods (for example, economic goods, such as income and wealth), are distinctive as well as important.

I will then return to the phenomena that Fricker and other contemporary philosophers discuss under the heading "epistemic injustice" and argue that there

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is a tension between these two kinds of epistemic injustice, which has important implications for social epistemology as well as political philosophy.

INJUSTICE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF EPISTEMIC GOODS: UNJUST IGNORANCE OR ERROR

In thinking about the distribution of epistemic goods (such as information and education), it would make things pleasantly simple if all but one of them could be thought of as instrumental goods that tend to promote a single intrinsic epistemic good. It would be nice also, given the etymology of the word "epistemic", if that good turned out to be knowledge. Alvin Goldman has argued, as part of his *veritistic social epistemology* (from now on VSE), that there is indeed a single intrinsic epistemic good, and that it is indeed appropriate to call this intrinsic epistemic good "knowledge". A discussion of Goldman's VSE is therefore a good starting place for thinking about epistemic injustice, understood as an injustice in the distribution of epistemic goods.

Goldman introduces the concept of VSE in the following passage:

> The structure here is perfectly analogous to the structures of consequentialist schemes in moral philosophy. One type of state, such as happiness or utility, is taken to have fundamental or intrinsic moral value, and other items, such as actions, rules, or institutions, are taken to have instrumental value insofar as they tend to produce (token) states with fundamental value. (1999, 87)

It is important to note that although he calls the one and only state that, according to him, has intrinsic epistemic value "knowledge", he is using the term in a way that will seem strange to many epistemologists (especially those influenced by him). Epistemologists are accustomed to thinking of true belief as a necessary but insufficient condition for knowledge. This has led to a vast literature, to which Goldman has contributed extensively, about what extra ingredients are required to turn mere true belief into knowledge (justification, causal or counterfactual relation, or whatever). Goldman side-steps this debate by saying that in the context of VSE knowledge should be understood as simply being true belief. No further conditions are required, and in particular "justification" is not required. Goldman argues (persuasively in my opinion) that this "thin" conception of knowledge does have a place in ordinary language and thought:

> The sentence "You don't want to know what happened while you were gone" seems to mean: You don't want to have the truth about what happened in your belief corpus. It does not seem to require the translation: You don't want to have a *justified* belief in the truth about what happened. So I believe there is an ordinary sense of "know" in which it means "truly believe." (25, original emphasis)

But although Goldman is right that we sometimes use the expression "knowledge" to mean nothing more than true belief, he would be wrong to claim (and, as we shall see, he does not claim) that knowledge, understood in this way, *necessarily* has

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intrinsic value. To return to Goldman's analogy, the project of happiness (or utility) maximisation pretty clearly has *some* intrinsic value, whether or not you think it is the only thing that has intrinsic moral significance. By contrast, the project of maximising true beliefs seems at best to be valuable for those who want to do well in the game of *Trivial Pursuit*. While there is some antecedent plausibility to the view that all happiness (or utility) is intrinsically valuable, there is no plausibility at all to the view that all true belief is valuable, still less that it is all intrinsically valuable.

Goldman avoids this difficulty by utilising a certain concept of interest to differentiate knowledge (i.e. true belief) that is intrinsically valuable from that which is not. Intrinsically valuable true beliefs are the answers to the following kinds of questions: first, questions the agent happens to find interesting, second, questions the agent would find interesting if he or she had thought of them, and third, questions that the agent has an interest in having answered (95). The project of veritistic social epistemology then becomes the project of maximising true interesting beliefs, where interest can be thought of in any of these three ways.

To get a sense of where this leaves us, consider an example Goldman uses to illustrate VSE (93). In this example there is a community of four agents, S_1–S_4. Suppose there is a certain question of interest Q(P/–P) and that P is in fact true. At time t_1 the agents have degrees of belief in P (identified with subjective probabilities) as shown in this table. A certain practice π is applied, with the result that the agents acquire new degrees of belief shown in the next column of the table:

	t_1	t_2
S_1	DB(P) = 0.4	DB(P) = 0.7
S_2	DB(P) = 0.7	DB(P) = 0.9
S_3	DB(P) = 0.9	DB(P) = 0.6
S_4	DB(P) = 0.2	DB(P) = 0.8

In this situation, the practice π has positive veritistic value (V-value), because it increases the mean degree of belief in the correct answer to the question of interest (from 0.55 to 0.75).

VSE is vulnerable to criticisms analogous to familiar criticisms of the consequentialist moral theories on which it is consciously modelled. In the first place, VSE can be criticised for focussing exclusively on the amount (or average amount) of the fundamental good (in this case interesting true belief), rather than its just distribution.[1] Just as traditional consequentialist moral theories have been criticised on the grounds that they ignore considerations of justice (or, more specifically, considerations about the just distribution of happiness or utility), VSE may be criticised for ignoring considerations of a distinctively epistemic form of justice (i.e. justice in the distribution of degrees of confidence in interesting true propositions).

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In thinking about what a just distribution of degrees of confidence in interesting true propositions might be, we could consider analogues of various responses to consequentialist moral theories in political philosophy. For example, an analogue of John Rawls's Difference Principle might say that the most epistemically just outcome would be one that maximised the knowledge of the least knowledgeable members of the community. So, for example, when comparing the veritistic merits of two practices, π and ψ, in a community of four people, we might decide that their outcomes, measured in degree of confidence in some interesting true proposition P, will be as indicated in the following table:

	π	ψ
S_1	DB(P) = 0.5	DB(P) = 0.7
S_2	DB(P) = 0.7	DB(P) = 0.9
S_3	DB(P) = 0.4	DB(P) = 0.2
S_4	DB(P) = 0.6	DB(P) = 0.8

In this situation, although ψ is to be preferred to π by the standards of VSE because it has greater V-value (the mean degree of true belief being 0.65, whereas the mean degree of true belief under π is 0.55), π is to be preferred to ψ by the standards of what we might call the Epistemic Difference Principle, because the least knowledgeable member of that community would be better informed as a result of π than as a result of ψ. Hence π, according to that principle, is more epistemically just.

Now, I am not advocating the Epistemic Difference Principle. It is open to some of the same objections that have been levelled against the original Difference Principle on which it is modelled (and perhaps others). For example, someone with libertarian sympathies, like Robert Nozick, might object to both the Epistemic Difference Principle and VSE, on the grounds that they seek to impose a pattern in the distribution of goods, and so ignore historical questions about where the knowledge in question came from and how it came to be distributed in the way it is. Specifically, they both ignore questions about whose intellectual property the knowledge was in the first place, and hence they have the potential to violate the rights of holders of intellectual property, who should be able to transfer their knowledge (or not to transfer it) to whomever they choose.

I will not attempt to adjudicate these disputes here. Questions about what principles might be used to determine justice in the distribution of knowledge (in the sense of true belief) are beyond the scope of this paper. My intention has just been to argue that VSE neglects these questions, and that consequently VSE is deficient, because it is compatible with a particular kind of injustice, which it is appropriate to call "epistemic injustice".

Goldman might respond that VSE's neglect of these questions is not a deficiency at all. Although Goldman thinks that maximising true interesting belief

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is intrinsically valuable, he certainly never suggests it is the only intrinsic value. Indeed, he explicitly states that purely veritistic considerations may be "trumped" by other values. For example, he says that concerns for procedural justice might legitimately lead a court of law to exclude evidence that would be admissible on purely veritistic grounds (284).

This response would be right, as far as it goes, but it would miss the point of the current objection. For the kind of injustice under consideration is distinctively epistemic (indeed, it is specifically veritistic). To be clear, my objection is not that general considerations of justice can rightly trump considerations of maximising true interesting belief (though this is of course true), rather my objection is that considerations about the just allocation of such belief can rightly trump considerations about maximising it.

Am I doing epistemology or ethics here? There is a tendency to think that applied epistemology (including much that goes under the heading "social epistemology") is quite distinct from applied ethics, but this seems to me to be a mistake. In fact, normative epistemology, properly understood, is a branch of ethics; it is an evaluative inquiry into a specific good, namely knowledge.[2] Goldman's veritistic social epistemology is essentially an evaluative theory of this kind and hence a theory within ethics (in the broad and traditional sense). VSE does not attempt to identify the best social policies "all things considered", as a more general ethical theory would. Instead, it restricts itself to evaluating social policies from the point of view of their "knowledge impact". Goldman rightly says that this is a worthwhile enterprise, even though evaluations of the knowledge impact of social policies may be "trumped" by "other values" (6). The current objection, however, has nothing to do with any values other than knowledge; rather it concerns the just distribution of this value. Hence, this should not be treated as a separate issue, external to the project.

Suppose, by way of comparison, an economist examined various social policies for their impact on wealth, and provisionally endorsed policies that would maximise overall (or average) wealth. We may suppose that the economist's endorsement is only provisional because she accepts that non-economic values may sometimes trump her maximising project. Nonetheless, her position would certainly (and I think rightly) be criticised if it fails to address questions about the justice or otherwise of wealth distributions that would result from the social policies she has provisionally endorsed. This criticism would not be external to the economist's project, nor should it be dismissed on the grounds that it concerns ethics *rather than* economics. Normative economics is a branch of ethics, just as normative epistemology is.

So, the concept of injustice that I am addressing here is a moral concept as well as an epistemic concept. It is the kind of injustice that occurs when someone's right to know is violated. It seems clear that our ordinary thought about rights includes this concept, as when we say, for example, that a patient has a right to know his or her medical condition, that a soldier has the right to know the cause for which he

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is fighting, or that the public has the right to know about some of the activities of certain public figures.[3]

When we talk about a right to know, it seems that we are talking about nothing more than a right to true belief. Suppose, to take an entirely hypothetical example, that a soldier forms the true belief that the war he is fighting is being fought for the sake of oil, because he hears a voice on the radio that he takes to be the president saying just that. In this situation the soldier ceases to be a victim of this kind of epistemic injustice (i.e. his right to know this is no longer violated), because he has acquired the true belief that he is entitled to. And this would be the case, even if the voice on the radio were not in fact that of the president, but rather that of a comedian impersonating the president. So, the concept of knowledge employed when we speak of someone having a right to know seems to be the very concept that Alvin Goldman employs in his VSE, and which he takes to be the only state of intrinsic epistemic value.

So far I have criticised VSE on the grounds that it ignores questions about the just distribution of what it takes to be the single intrinsically valuable epistemic state. There are two further grounds on which it may be challenged. Some would query whether true belief (about matters of interest) really is intrinsically (as opposed to instrumentally) valuable. Others will accept the intrinsic value of such true belief, but question whether it is the only state of intrinsic value that deserves to be thought of as epistemic.

I think that Goldman is right that interesting true belief is an intrinsic value, which is neither reducible to any other value nor plausibly seen in entirely instrumental terms. Hence, Fricker is wrong to think that questions about the just distribution of *this* epistemic good are only incidentally epistemic.

The real question then is whether true belief is the only thing that is intrinsically epistemically valuable. The position that there is more that one intrinsic epistemic value is of course analogous to the position of philosophers like G. E. Moore, who criticised classical hedonistic utilitarianism on the grounds that there is more than one intrinsically valuable state relevant to moral evaluation. Goldman himself has considered this possibility in a later work in which he considers the issue of whether error avoidance is a second epistemic value, not reducible to the value of true belief. He answers in the negative, claiming that there "is a way to blend the two traditional veritistic values into a single *magnitude* or *quantity* of veritistic value" (2002, 58).

Goldman blends the two veritistic values as follows. First, the 'trichotomous' approach to epistemology, in which we talk of belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment (or having no opinion) is translated into an approach in which we talk only of degrees of belief (identified with subjective probabilities), as in the earlier examples. Belief *simpliciter* is identified with having a degree of belief close to 1, disbelief *simpliciter* is identified with having a degree of belief close to 0, and suspension of judgment (or having no opinion) is identified with having a degree of belief close to 0.5. Now, consider again a particular true proposition of interest, P.

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Having a high degree of belief in this truth is equivalent to having a low degree of belief in the falsehood not-P. So, the value of true belief (i.e. of having a high degree of confidence in a particular truth) is equivalent to the value of error avoidance (i.e. of having a low degree of confidence in its negation). Thus seeking truth and shunning falsehood are, Goldman argues, simply two ways of looking at the same thing.

Although Goldman concedes that there is no entirely unproblematic method for translating the trichotomous scheme into the degrees of belief scheme, his argument presupposes that such a translation is possible. Now, it is not hard to see in general terms why this might be doubted. There are two problems. The first is that the identification of "suspension of judgment" with having "a degree of belief at or near 0.5" is highly contentious. The second problem is that the identification of either of these states with "having no opinion" is clearly wrong.

To see why the first identification is contentious, consider the following example. After thinking about whether there is life on other planets, and finding virtually no evidence on which to base an opinion, I have suspended judgment about the matter. It seems wrong to say that I have a (roughly) 0.5 degree of belief that there is life on other planets. This, for me, is a situation of ignorance, not of chance. I not only cannot say whether there is life on other planets, I also cannot say, even approximately, how likely it is that there is life on other planets. There is no justification for me having any degree of belief in the proposition in question, hence there is no justification for me having a (roughly) 0.5 degree of belief in it.

I recognise that arguments of this kind are controversial. But no matter, for even if we could identify suspending judgment with having a (roughly) 0.5 degree of belief, we certainly could not identify having no opinion with either of these states. Someone who has never heard of Caracas will have no opinion about whether Caracas is the capital of Venezuela. But such a person has obviously not suspended judgment about the proposition in question, since that would require her to have considered the proposition. Furthermore, it would clearly be an abuse of language to describe this person as having a 0.5 degree of belief in the proposition that Caracas is the capital of Venezuela. Abusing language might be worthwhile for the sake of theoretical simplicity, if the difference did not matter. But the difference does matter. Having a 0.5 degree of belief in the proposition that Caracas is the capital of Venezuela seems to be, all else being equal, epistemically preferable to having no opinion about the matter.

Goldman's argument for the unity of the epistemic virtues of truth acquisition and falsehood avoidance presupposes that every agent has some degree of confidence – high, low, or in between – in every proposition. But this is not true. For each of us, there are many propositions that we neither believe nor disbelieve, and to which we do not assign any subjective probability either. And it is precisely because some strategies lead us to form more beliefs (probabilistic and otherwise) than others that there can be a conflict between the epistemic goals of truth-seeking and error-avoidance. Strategies that emphasise error-avoidance will tend

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to produce fewer beliefs than strategies that emphasise truth-acquisition. William James recognises this often overlooked point in the following passage:

> There are two ways of looking at our duty in the matter of opinion – ways entirely different, and yet ways about whose difference the theory of knowledge seems hitherto to have shown very little concern. *We must know the truth*; and *we must avoid error*, – these are our first and great commandments as would-be knowers; but they are not two ways of stating an identical commandment, they are two separable laws … Believe truth! Shun error! – these we see are two materially different laws; and by choosing between them we may end by coloring differently our whole intellectual life. We may regard the chase for truth as paramount, and the avoidance of error as secondary; or we may, on the other hand, treat the avoidance of error as more imperative, and let truth take its chance. (1897/1978, § VII, 726–7)

Goldman recognizes, of course, that an absence of true belief (being ignorant) is different from a presence of false belief (being misinformed). But his unified approach to veritistic value leads him to the counter-intuitive position that these "vices", though distinguishable, are of the same kind, and can be "ordered" in a way that implies that the former is less epistemically or intellectually vicious than the latter:

> Does this scheme of veritistic value accord with commonsense notions about intellectual attainments? I think it does. If a person regularly has a high level of belief in the true propositions she considers or takes an interest in, then she qualifies as "well-informed". Someone with intermediate levels of belief on many such questions, amounting to "no opinion", qualifies as uninformed, or ignorant. And someone who has very low levels of belief for true propositions – or, equivalently, high levels of belief for false propositions – is seriously misinformed. Since the terms "well-informed", "ignorant", and "misinformed" seem to reflect a natural ordering of intellectual attainment, our scheme of veritistic value seems to be on the right track. (2002, 59)

But it is not at all clear that common sense is on Goldman's side here. I will grant that being well-informed is, at least *prima facie*, a higher level of intellectual attainment than being either "ignorant" or "misinformed". But I see no justification for ranking being ignorant ahead of being misinformed. We have identified at least two forms of ignorance, having no opinion about a truth and suspending judgement about it.[4] Although suspending judgement about a truth does seem to be *prima facie* intellectually preferable to disbelieving it, having no opinion does not seem to be, even *prima facie*, preferable to disbelieving it. Should we say that someone who has never considered the proposition "Caracas is the capital of Venezuela", and so has no opinion about whether it is true, as having achieved more intellectually than someone who believes it to be false? I see no reason to think so. Indeed, it seems to me that without further context, our intuitions get no traction on the question. I conclude that Goldman is right to say that ignorance and error are distinguishable epistemic failings, but that he is wrong to suppose that they can be put on a single scale on which ignorance is epistemically preferable to error.

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This means that a person can have their right to know something violated in two distinguishable ways. They can be unjustly put (or left) in a position in which they are ignorant of something that they are entitled to know, or they can be unjustly put (or left) in a position in which they are wrong about something they are entitled to be right about. There seems no reason to think that either of these is inherently more of an injustice than the other.

I will now briefly draw some conclusions about one of the issues with which I began, namely injustice in the distribution of the epistemic good of education. It is plausible, as Goldman argues, that education is centrally, though not entirely, an epistemic good (1999, 349–74). It may well have non-epistemic benefits, such as the instilling of sociability. But to the extent that it is an epistemic good, it is not, contrary to Miranda Fricker, only incidentally epistemic. The epistemic good of education is not to be identified with the good of happiness, for example, or virtue; nor does it have to lead to either happiness or virtue in order to qualify as a good. Contrary to Goldman, however, the epistemic good of education is not a unity. There are in fact two epistemic goods education should promote, the acquisition of true belief and the evasion of false belief. Neither good can be reduced to the other. And, as we have seen, the pursuit of one may well come at the expense of the other.

Although Goldman discusses how VSE applies to education at some length, he confines his discussion entirely to questions about the curriculum. He does not discuss the issue of how to distribute the epistemic good of education. This omission is telling, since, as we have seen, VSE will tolerate any distribution of epistemic goods, providing that it maximises veritistic value. So, for example, Goldman's scheme would not condemn an educational system that promoted high levels of knowledge in a society at the cost of a small minority of students remaining utterly ignorant or mistaken about matters that they have a right to know, unless such a system could be condemned on non-epistemic grounds. But, one wants to protest, even if such a system could not be condemned on non-epistemic grounds (perhaps the unjustly ignorant or misinformed students would be perfectly happy), it should still be condemned as (epistemically) unjust.

UNJUST DEFICITS IN CREDIBILITY OR INTELLIGIBILITY

I noted at the beginning of this article that Miranda Fricker and others in the recent literature have a quite different concept of *epistemic injustice*. Fricker divides epistemic injustice into two categories – testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice "occurs when prejudice on the part of the hearer leads to the speaker receiving less credibility than he or she deserves" (2003, 154).[5] The most obvious case of this would be when the prejudice in question leads the hearer to disbelieve what he or she is told, even though the speaker deserves to be believed. But Fricker makes it clear that she means the concept to be understood more broadly to include situations in which prejudice, though not actually causing unjust disbelief, does cause an unjust lowering of the hearer's degree of belief.

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Nonetheless, most of Fricker's examples concern actual unjust disbelief, rather than mere unjust reduction of degree of belief. For example, she discusses at some length the jurors' failure to believe Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird* because he is black and they are prejudiced against black people. She also discusses Herbert Greenleaf's refusal to believe Marge Sherwood in *The Talented Mr Ripley* because she is a woman and he has another (somewhat more subtle) prejudice against women (2007, 9–29).[6] Fricker argues that in cases such as these, where the phenomenon is systematic, "it constitutes an important form of oppression" (2003, 154), the victims of which are those with relatively little social power.

Hermeneutic injustice, the other category of epistemic injustice that Fricker identifies, and which she describes as "occurring at a prior stage", is illustrated with the following two examples: "a woman suffering from sexual harassment prior to the time when we had this concept and word to name the experience" (2007, 151); and a homosexual man who is unable, because of a lack of collective conceptual and linguistic resources, to understand or explain his sexual experiences in positive terms (2006, 105–7).

I will not attempt to do justice to Fricker's concept of hermeneutical injustice here. What concerns me for now is one way in which it differs from testimonial injustice. In a case of hermeneutical injustice, the credibility of the victim is not at issue, because a precondition for questioning someone's credibility, namely their intelligibility, is not met. Epistemic injustice occurs when someone is unjustly not believed to the degree they deserve to be believed; hermeneutical injustice occurs when someone is not understood (perhaps even by themselves) to the extent that they deserve.

THE TENSION

I've discussed two forms of epistemic injustice: first, unjust ignorance or error and, second, unjust credibility or intelligibility deficits. I believe that they are both widespread forms of injustice, which, when systematic, as they often are, constitute a form of oppression that afflicts those with relatively little social power, particularly the poor, members of racial minorities, women, and gays and lesbians.

It seems to me that in the not-too-distant past, those concerned with social injustice have emphasised the former kind of epistemic injustice: calling for universal schooling and free university access, for example, to reduce unjust ignorance, or campaigning against propaganda in the media to reduce unjust error. By contrast, the more recent tendency, in academic philosophy and elsewhere, has been to emphasise the latter form of epistemic injustice: calling for greater numbers of women and minorities in science, for example, or calling for language reforms to make the experiences of marginalised groups more intelligible.

I suspect that part of the reason the former kind of epistemic injustice has come to be neglected or dismissed is that it appears to be in tension with the latter kind of epistemic injustice. To the extent that the former kind of epistemic injustice is a problem, the latter kind of epistemic injustice seems to be less of a problem, and

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perhaps less of an injustice. After all, if the relatively powerless group in question is ignorant or in error about the question at hand (however unjust it may be that they are), then it is surely just as well if they are not given much credibility, since they are likely to be wrong if indeed they have an opinion. It also seems to be no great problem if they cannot be understood, since if they are victims of the first kind of epistemic injustice, they are less likely to be in a position to speak the truth.

RESOLVING THE TENSION

There seem to be two ways out of the conundrum I have described while still emphasising the gravity of both forms of injustice. One way would be to say that the victims of the two sorts of epistemic injustice are different. One group is the victim of unjust ignorance or error, while another group is the victim of unjust credibility or intelligibility deficits. This may be a plausible strategy in some cases, especially when one considers that there are different ways of lacking social power. However, it is not entirely satisfactory. It is plausible to suppose that the poor, for example, are victims of both kinds of injustice. That is, they are unjustly ignorant and in error as well as unjustly not believed and misunderstood (note that to emphasise poverty is not to neglect entirely some of the other categories of social powerlessness, since women and racial minorities in particular tend to be disproportionately represented amongst the poor).

A better strategy is to identify (to a large extent) the victims of the two sorts of epistemic injustice, but argue that the propositions in relation to which they are victimised are (to a large extent) different. That is, schematically, they are unjustly ignorant or in error about p, but they are unjustly insufficiently believed or misunderstood about q. This seems more promising, since there seem to be some general things we can say about what propositions are likely to fall into the former category and what propositions are likely to fall into the latter category.

The victims of unjust ignorance or error are likely to be ignorant of or in error about propositions knowledge of which would allow them, individually or collectively, to become more socially empowered. For example, at an individual level, they may be denied knowledge that would allow them to become a doctor, or a lawyer, or an academic. At a collective level, they may end up voting in ways that are contrary to their interests because they have been fed falsehoods or had truths withheld from them.

By contrast, the examples of unjust credibility or intelligibility deficits that we have looked at suggest that these tend to involve propositions about the victims' own experiences. Tom Robinson's account of his *own* experiences with a white girl is not believed by the white jury in *To Kill a Mockingbird* because he is black. Marge Sherwood's account of Tom Ripley based on her *own* experiences is not believed in *The Talented Mr Ripley* because she is a woman. Many women had their *own* experiences of sexual harassment misunderstood (even by themselves) because there were insufficient linguistic and conceptual resources available to them to understand and explain those experiences.

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Unfortunately for this nice neat picture, there is clearly going to be quite a lot of overlap between these two categories. In particular, propositions knowledge of which would allow disadvantaged groups or their members to increase their social power include some propositions about the experiences that members of disadvantaged groups have in virtue of their membership of those groups. Nonetheless, I think enough has been said to make it clear that we can acknowledge the seriousness of both forms of epistemic injustice while recognising the possibility of tension between them.

CONCLUSION

I began by trying to articulate a conception of epistemic injustice understood as an injustice in the distribution of epistemic goods such as information and education. It was a precondition of such an account that the epistemic goods involved were distinctively epistemic, in the sense that they could not be identified with or reduced to any non-epistemic value such as happiness. To that end I endorsed Goldman's position that knowledge, understood simply as interesting true belief (with "interesting" understood in the way Goldman explains), is such a distinctively epistemic good. For two reasons, however, I did not endorse Goldman's VSE. First, it is compatible with what are intuitively unjust distributions of this epistemic good (though I admit I do not have any adequate account of what principles would guide a just distribution). Second, it implies that the acquisition of truth and the avoidance of error are a single enterprise. I have followed William James in arguing that although these are both enterprises that 'would-be knowers' should pursue, they are distinguishable enterprises and they can come into conflict with each other. Hence someone may be unjustly denied what they have a right to know in two distinguishable ways. They may be unjustly ignorant or they may be unjustly in error. So epistemic injustice, understood as an injustice in the distribution of the epistemic good of knowledge, can take either of these two forms.

The concept of epistemic injustice employed in contemporary philosophy is quite different. I have argued that there is a *prima facie* tension between it and the concept of epistemic injustice I have described. Although I have made some tentative suggestions about how to resolve this tension, it is clear that that there is more to be done.

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NOTES

1 Goldman does discuss the distribution of veritistic value, and acknowledges that maximising this value may not always be desirable (96). His discussion in this passage is not, however, about the justice or otherwise of various distributions, but about their efficiency given a certain goal, that of promoting "the community's interest". For example, considerations of efficiency may mean that some information should only be distributed on a "need to know" basis.

2 Sometimes Goldman also talks about the good of "error avoidance". I will address this shortly.

3 It has also been claimed that in some circumstances a person can have a right not to know something (such as information about their genetic code), and where that is violated this could be seen as yet another form of epistemic injustice, but I shall assume for now that this is a fairly marginal issue and say no more about it.

4 If you accept my earlier argument that suspending judgement should not be equated with having a roughly 0.5 degree of belief, then having a roughly 0.5 degree of belief in a truth is a third form of ignorance.

5 A differently worded but apparently equivalent definition appears in Fricker (2007, 1).

6 These examples are also discussed in Fricker (2003, 165–72).

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