Interview with Kristina Lepold, forthcoming (in German) *WestEnd: Neue Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* -- to mark the cancelled Adorno Lectures, Frankfurt 2020

Kristina Lepold: Miranda Fricker, currently Presidential Professor of Philosophy at The Graduate Center, City University of New York, was scheduled to give the Adorno Lectures in 2020. Unfortunately, like so many other events in 2020, the Lectures had to be cancelled due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This is why it's particularly nice that she agreed to do this interview for WestEnd. Although the interview can certainly not replace the Lectures, it nevertheless gives us the opportunity to get to know Miranda's work a bit better.

Miranda, thank you so much for taking the time. It's so sad that we couldn't welcome you in Frankfurt. I for one am a long-time reader of your highly original work and like many others would have loved to attend your Lectures. To give readers who do not know your work yet some context to begin with, I think it's fair to say that within academic philosophy most people know you because of your ground-breaking work on "epistemic injustice", a concept you developed in a book with the same title that appeared with Oxford University Press in 2007. More recently, you have started to work on blame and forgiveness which you think play a central role in our moral life, and which would have been the subject of your lectures. Would you like to start by telling us a bit about this more recent interest of yours?

Miranda Fricker: My current work on blaming and forgiving, which I would have presented for the Adorno Lectures, initially started some years ago with an interest in the question how far blame is an appropriate response to historically distant wrongdoing. I was writing a paper on Bernard Williams' 'relativism of distance' at the time, and assessing how far I found his distinctive form of ethical relativism to be well motivated. He argues that moral appraisal is inappropriate over a certain kind of historical distance; but I found myself wishing to argue that there is really no principled reason to confine moral appraisal to one's own culture, or indeed any specific range of moral cultures. It is true that a first priority should always be to try to understand distant cultures we are imaginatively confronted with, and that this involves trying to understand that culture's own morality in its own terms. But I would argue that the effort to understand another culture's morality does not rule out *also* morally appraising it

oneself, from the perspective of one's own moral outlook. One of the appropriate objects of our critical scrutiny, after all, might be the moral system that distant others have lived by—its specific concepts and values. We might judge it negatively in some respects, perhaps learn from it in others. It is perfectly appropriate to try to understand, for instance, the medieval period, gaining familiarity with medieval moral consciousness, its deep religiosity, its patriarchal institutions, the variously brutish, devout, gentle, or oppressive nature of specific practices or actions attributed to known historical figures, and so on. This seems to me entirely appropriate, and there is no sense in which we ought to be switching off our own moral radar in this endeavour of historical understanding. What it would however be inappropriate to do, I believe, is to *blame* those historical figures for the actions we find brutish or oppressive, except insofar as they can reasonably be expected to have applied these forms of understanding to themselves in terms of their own moral concepts. If our judgement of their actions depends exclusively on a distinctively modern ethical concept or outlook that was genuinely not available to the medieval knight, nun, courtier, midwife, friar or serf, and where no analogue was available to them either, then it makes no sense to blame them. If the moral thought we regard them as failing to have was culturally unavailable to them, then blaming them for failing to have that thought would be mere moralistic imposition from the present.

This idea grew into a more general thesis I called the relativity of blame, and the key idea is that it is only appropriate to blame someone for something (a bad act or omission, a bad motive or disposition) if we can *reasonably expect them to have had the requisite moral thought.* We often express this colloquially in terms of whether someone 'could have known better'. Now this question of what we can reasonably expect of figures from the past in terms of their moral sensibility is itself not something that philosophy alone can decide. It is something we need historical knowledge and social understanding of the past culture in order to adjudicate. (Perhaps, like many areas of the essentially contested terrain of morality, it cannot always be adjudicated and will sometimes remain somewhat indeterminate.) But what philosophy *can* do is offer clarity concerning what to focus on when we are confronted with presumed wrongdoing in historically distant cultures. The relativism of blame says that what we should focus on is this question of how far we can reasonably expect the relevant figures from the past to have had the requisite moral thought. Philosophy can show us that this question supplies the criterion of appropriate blame, but actually answering the question is not something philosophy can do. To answer the question one needs a close historical familiarity

with the past moral culture, its concepts, values and background beliefs, so that we can come to an informed and nuanced view of the moral resources of the time.

The relativism of blame, and its criterion of how far we can reasonably expect the person to have had the preferred moral thought, does not only apply to historically distant moral cultures, but also to distant cultures in the present. In everyday life I believe we do it all the time, and among philosophers I am far from alone in embracing some version of the idea. But a further distinction we should make here is between what we can reasonably expect from a particular individual, considered *personally* in the light of her character and circumstances, as opposed to what we can reasonably expect *structurally*, as a matter of what moral thoughts were/are sufficiently culturally available to them. It is this latter question, and not the first, that we must focus on when determining whether or not blame is appropriately directed at an individual, whether in the past or the present. Allow me to give an example to illustrate what I mean by this idea of a moral thought being structurally (un)available in a culture or at a time. Until 1986, corporal punishment was legal in British state schools, after which time it quickly became widely regarded as inappropriate and brutal (though it took more than a further decade to be outlawed for private schools). A schoolteacher whose training included the practice of corporal punishment might have long practised caning, or equivalent, and considered it an acceptable way of keeping discipline in schools. But supposing he changed his attitudes with the times, and in the early eighties started to feel morally queasy about the practice, eventually agreeing wholeheartedly with its being outlawed in 1986. Instead of concepts such as 'discipline' or 'character-building' being applied to the practice, now the more typically applied concepts by general consensus were 'brutal', 'cruel', or 'abusive'… Such a teacher might look back on his past career with some sense of moral bewilderment, asking himself 'How could I have done this and thought it was okay?'. I would argue that a teacher whose attitudes changed with the times in this way has nothing to blame himself for, and that this is because it would be unreasonable for us (or himself post-1986) to expect that his past self should have known better. Only unusually morally progressive and clear-sighted individuals knew better and pushed the common opinion forwards into new attitudes and a change in the law. But it is not blameworthy to fail to be a moral visionary; it is only blameworthy to fall below reasonable expectation. I would say of the pre-1986 teacher that he was engaged in a bad practice, but that he cannot be expected to have known better at the time, and is therefore not blameworthy for his past participation in corporal punishment. This exemplifies the phenomenon I describe in terms of the new conceptualizations of corporal

punishment being ‘structurally’ unavailable to the schoolteacher at the time, yet gradually becoming sufficiently available through the early eighties…

The structural availability of a given moral thought remains a matter of degree, of course. For the most part there is surely no specific moment at which a new conceptualization suddenly becomes sufficiently available to qualify such a schoolteacher as clearly and manifestly culpable if he continued to regard corporal punishment as morally acceptable. It is necessarily a blurry distinction, then, but the difference between moral thoughts being fully structurally available for routine moral thinking, and moral thoughts requiring some more exceptional moral thinking to reach them, is I believe an important one. It governs the appropriateness or inappropriateness of blame. Just as a colour chart shading from green to blue may not provide a particular shade transition at which greeny-blue clearly becomes bluey-green, still the distinction between green and blue can do a lot of work for us.

These ideas concerning the relativism of blame then brought me to thinking about the moral-social function of blame quite generally, or rather the function or point of *blaming*. What is it for? What good does it do? Need it be a punitive response? Would we be better off evolving away from blame and cultivating some other sort of response to wrongdoing? It is with these sorts of questions that my current book project began.

KL: I think you use a distinctive philosophical method in the current book, based on the State of Nature method often used in political philosophy. Could you explain how you draw on that method?

MF: That’s right. Inspired by Edward Craig’s book *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, and also Bernard Williams’s *Truth and Truthfulness*, I found myself thinking about how exactly State of Nature method is supposed to work. It can seem rather mysterious, even suspicious, that a manifest fiction made up from the armchair might deliver genuine philosophical illumination. But actually I think both Craig and Williams are entirely lucid about the explanatory power of the method, if one reads them carefully enough. Finding analytic epistemology at something of an impasse as regards the strict definition of ‘knowledge’, Craig proposes we try the method of ‘practical explication’ instead. This involves asking what the concept does for us, what practical role it plays in our lives. In order to do this, he employs the fiction of the State of Nature, more typically used in political philosophy. He imagines a

stripped down, minimal human society, and observes that in any such society it will be advantageous to rely not only on the deliverances of one's own eyes and ears, but to be able to pool information from the group. Pooling information immediately requires a practice of distinguishing good informants from bad ones, and this need to flag good informants, Craig claims, is what the concept of knowledge most fundamentally does for us.

As you may notice, not all knowers actually make good informants! since a person can know something and yet withhold it, or lie about it. Craig duly supplies an explanation why the extension of 'good informant' is not the same as 'knower'. This explanation principally involves the claim that as social relations and modal awareness become increasingly complex, there is less need for a proto-concept that picks out someone right here right now who can tell me whether p, and a greater need and intellectual capability for a fully objectivized *concept*—a concept of something that exists independently from our subjective awareness. Such a concept would pick out those who are in possession of the information that I or someone else might need at some later time or different circumstance. It is this change in practical pressures that re-shapes the proto-concept 'good informant' (someone I can recognize right here and now as able and willing to fix my ignorance as to whether p) to the full-fledged concept of a 'knower' (someone who possesses the information whether p regardless of my own subjective epistemic needs or capacity to recognize them as such). Through this process of what Craig calls 'objectivization', the proto-concept of 'good informant' evolves into the concept of 'knower'. What knowers possess is knowledge, and thus the concept of knowledge is generated as a modally complex artefact of the basic human need to pool information.

My own current interest is not so much that practical explication of concepts but rather practices: the practices of blaming and forgiving through which we respond to wrongdoing. In the spirit of practical explication, then, I ask what role these practices play in our lives. I am focussed on the diversity of the practices themselves, and my purpose in exploring their role in our lives is more normatively driven than anything in Craig's project. I want to explore not only the roles or functions of blaming and forgiving, but also ask how far they are ethically valuable. Do they contain elements that we would do better to evolve beyond, morally speaking? And how do they fit together, functionally and normatively? In order to take up this normative practical stance towards blaming and forgiving I take my first inspiration from the State of Nature approach used by Craig and Williams, but transform it in order to distil its explanatory value without actually employing the fiction of the State of Nature itself. I observe that the explanatory power of the State of Nature scenario comes from the idea that in

characterizing the non-actual State of Nature one is picking out those features of actual practice that strike one as explanatorily basic for the reason that they serve fundamental human needs. (Thus I ask, 'What is the *basic* moral-social function of blaming/forgiving?', 'What are these practices *for*?'). I then offer a brazen hypothesis, such as: 'The basic point of blaming a wrongdoer is to bring them to appreciate the moral significance of what they have done'. And I go on to 'test out' this hypothesis philosophically by seeing how far my proposed basic function of blame can be discerned even in kinds of blame that do not themselves seem to perform that function (for instance, because the blame is not communicated at all, or only communicated to third parties). I name the kind of blame that strictly performs this basic function 'paradigm blame'. It is second-personal and communicative; it aims to align the moral perspectives of wronged and wrongdoer. It may or may not succeed in doing so, of course, and the communication of blame is only ever the start of a conversation whose conclusion might involve a shift of perspective by both parties. But the aim, the function, the point and purposes of what I label Communicative Blame—paradigm blame—is to achieve a shared moral understanding of the wrong done so that the moral perspectives of the two parties become more nearly aligned. This seems to me not only the plausibly fundamental function but also a morally excellent one. Achieving a reestablished shared moral understanding between parties to a wrongdoing is surely the best sort of rationale for a practice of blaming. I argue that it is plausibly the explanatorily basic case of blame inasmuch as non-communicative forms of blame and non-second-personal forms of blame can be accounted for as derivative versions of it. (I will not load up the details of those sub-arguments here.) But Communicative Blame's normative credentials also qualify it as a kind of gold standard in relation to which other styles of blame—such as retributive, retaliatory, or passive-aggressive practices of blame—might re-emerge as positively undesirable. Compared to a practice that aims at achieving or restoring shared moral understandings, these less honest and more punitive practices of blame look tawdry, and we should culturally evolve away from them as fast as we can. Thus the normative bite of paradigm-based explanation: the explanatorily basic case, when clearly identified and functionally characterized, may also emerge as an appropriate normative standard by reference to which the shortcomings of other versions of the same practice may become clearly visible.

My method of paradigm-based explanation really operates on the same principles as Craig's and Williams' State of Nature scenarios, except that whereas they make use of the State of Nature fiction in order to represent certain basic practices or proto-concepts as practically

necessary for human social life, I am free to experimentally try out a *hypothesis* about what version of blaming or forgiving is explanatorily basic, because I have no stake in claims of necessity *per se*. My interest is more normative than theirs, and so I make the more modest claim that it is necessary only in the sense that given human beings seem to naturally go in for some version of blaming, it will be a good thing if we can shape and cultivate our practice of blaming so that it takes a morally positive form rather than a cruel or counter-productive one. (Accordingly I take as a useful moral psychological starting point P. F. Strawson's idea of the humanly necessary 'reactive attitudes and feelings', which include responses of blame and forgiveness. But I remain neutral as to whether such responses would be found in a State of Nature.)

I have so far talked only about the paradigm case of blaming—Communicative Blame. So let me move to practices of forgiving to see how the method of paradigm-based explanation applies there. Here the question of identifying the hypothesized paradigm case is a matter of choosing between two broad kinds of forgiveness, recognized by all: conditional and unconditional. Conditional forgiveness is a practice of forgiveness according to which one does not forgive the wrongdoer until they have expressed remorse; and unconditional forgiveness is a practice according to which one forgives regardless, no matter whether or not the wrongdoer has expressed remorse. So which is the paradigm case? Which is the explanatorily basic variety of forgiving? Let us look more closely at the moral psychological exchange that the latter involves. Unconditional forgiveness (let us use the label 'Gifted Forgiveness' in order to allow for the possibility that there are other kinds of unconditional forgiveness) involves an astonishing gift on the part of the wronged party. They forgive the wrongdoer without the usual expression of remorse or apology, and in doing so the wrongdoer is aware of receiving something that is normally earned, but on this occasion is given for free. This norm-busting generosity of Gifted Forgiveness is what confers its special value, and it is what can make this kind of forgiveness deeply moving—and on occasion controversial. Both parties are aware that the wronged party is entitled to an apology or similar expression of remorse, and that the forgiver is generously waiving that entitlement by forgiving ahead of time, so to speak. What this reveals is that Gifted Forgiveness is *conceptually parasitic* upon conditional forgiveness. The moral meanings that comprise the psychological exchange between forgiver and forgiven are dependent upon those moral meanings at work in conditional forgiveness. Its status as a piece of extraordinary moral generosity depends on the idea that ordinarily an apology is required before forgiveness is forthcoming. Ergo, the explanatorily prior formation of forgiving, the paradigm case, is conditional forgiveness; and

Gifted Forgiveness is revealed as a culturally contingent evolution of the conditional formation.

This result delivers what I call an ordered pluralism regarding forgiveness. It is wonderful to have more than one kind of forgiveness available to us, and many of us may sometimes practice conditional forgiveness, yet other times practice Gifted Forgiveness, depending on the context and depending on what level of moral generosity one is capable of summoning. Both of these practices as I picture them are morally positive responses to wrongdoing. They both tend to restore relationship, and they both restore shared moral understandings too, since conditional forgiveness insists on the requisite remorseful moral appreciation up front as the condition of being forgiven, and Gifted Forgiveness tends to promote it for the future—though this can only happen by way of a 'proleptic mechanism' whose complexities I will need to explain.

KL: Let me take you up on that. This notion of a "proleptic mechanism" is something I believe you develop from Williams, who proposed it specifically in relation to blame. Can you explain what this means?

MF: I find the whole idea of what Williams calls a 'proleptic mechanism' really fascinating. And I suspect that something like this mechanism is fundamental to living moral life in temporal extension (as we necessarily do), influencing one another's attitudes over time by holding each other to standards we think should be common between us... Let me explain. Williams was something of a sceptic about many aspects of moral life, including blame. For him, blame was often an expression of a wishful fantasy—the fantasy that the person who lacked a reason to treat me better really did have such a reason, deep-down. Williams thought that ethically very bad people really did *not* have reasons to treat others with greater respect—indeed that very lack of such reasons was what made them so ethically bad. (This is a corollary of his 'reasons internalism', according to which having a reason to do anything depends upon what motivational states one has, or would have once errors of fact and reasoning are removed. A very bad person may have no motivational state to treat me with respect, and assuming that lack of motivation is not founded on an error of fact or deliberation, then he really does not have a reason to treat me with respect. For Williams an amoralist would have no moral reasons.)

However, Williams later came to a less sceptical view of blame. He schematically proposed the idea that expressions of blame might have a more constructive role in interpersonal moral relations by way of a 'proleptic mechanism'. If you are confronted with a very bad person, so arrogant and callous that he really does not have a reason to treat you with respect, then still he might have a more basic disposition of openness towards you such that he may yet be susceptible to your admonitions when you communicate your blame to him. That is, his stance towards you might leave him open to being somewhat *changed* by your communication of blame. This raises the following possibility: you communicate blame to him, he comes to feel moved by it and thereby acquires the reason which he formerly lacked. And it is your act of blaming him that has brought this about. In effect, you have treated him *as if* he already had a reason (which at the time he lacked), and in doing so you have caused him to *actually* come to have the reason. Williams does not say so, but this is effectively an interpersonal process of social causal construction: in treating X as having feature F, you cause him, over time, to come to have feature F. In the case of proleptic blame, one treats the wrongdoer as if he already has reason R, and thereby cause him to come to have reason R. We might re-express this in a way that brings out the temporal aspect: In treating him as if he were already a certain future version of himself, you cause him to become that future version of himself.

I find this a fascinating possibility. But what fascinates me in particular is not so much the idea that in an extreme case of this kind one individual could cause another to acquire a moral reason he formerly lacked; rather what fascinates me most, I think, is the idea that perhaps all blaming is at least a little bit proleptic. (This is not Williams' view, I should say.) My own sense of how prolepsis works has led me to the thought that all blame is more or less proleptic, because whenever we blame another person for some moral failure, we are in a situation of confronting someone whose cognitive and/or motivational grip on some aspect of morality has become loosened to some degree. In doing a morally bad thing, they reveal themselves to have drifted away from morality, just a little, and in communicatively blaming them for their conduct we bring them back into closer psychological relation with the values from which they have slightly strayed. Communicative blame is therefore a moral-social *force* that makes itself felt by pulling wrongdoers back into the sphere of morality when they stray from it. It is in this sense that I see the proleptic possibility that Williams discusses as something we should regard as operative, more or less, all the time in interpersonal blame.

Seen in this light, our capacity to blame each other communicatively involves a powerful *moral-constructive* energy. It is how we restore each other's commitment to morality moment by moment in our interactions. In holding each other accountable through blame, we reaffirm and renew those shared moral understandings that constitute our shared morality. But it is also how we change and renegotiate our shared moral understandings, our shared values. Going back to our imagined schoolteacher whose early career involved meting out routine corporal punishments to his pupils, we can imagine him engaged in conversation at the time with more progressive teachers and campaigners who are trying to change his mind about the practice, and bring him to see it in a newly critical light. Before he has changed his mind in any way, or become convinced that the practice is cruel, they might blame him for engaging in it ('You're a good teacher, you should know better than to think violence is a decent model of discipline!') and since *ex hypothesi* he does not yet possess a reason to desist, they would be blaming him proleptically. If successful, their proleptic blame will cause him to change his mind about the moral credentials of corporal punishment, so that he actually acquires a reason to desist and reject the practice. This exemplifies how proleptic blame can function not merely so as to reaffirm established moral values from which someone has strayed, but also to change and renegotiate the moral values that people actually hold. Here we see how the proleptic function of blame can be a powerfully progressive and transformative force in moral consciousness. It not only aims to reestablish shared moral understandings; it can also construct new forms of shared moral understanding.

KL: You mentioned earlier that this idea of a proleptic mechanism is also applicable to forgiveness. Could you explain that for us?

MF: Yes, with the model of proleptic blaming in hand, we can return to forgiving and see if it finds any application there. Recall that proleptic blaming involves treating the wrongdoer as if he had a feature he currently lacks, and thereby causing him to come to have that feature. Isn't this what we saw happening in the case of Gifted Forgiveness? In Gifted Forgiveness the wronged party elects to forgive ahead of time, regardless of the fact that the wrongdoer has expressed no remorse or apology. And it is a remarkable feature of Gifted Forgiveness that its norm-busting generosity tends to have a humbling effect on the wrongdoer so that she is rendered more likely to be morally honest about what she has done, and more likely to feel and express remorse. (I don't say this always happens! But it is the narrative arc of Gifted Forgiveness that the extraordinary gift moves the culprit to moral honesty about what she has

done—honestly with herself first and foremost, but which flows into honesty with those she has wronged.) In electing to forgive upfront in this way, the forgiver effectively treats the wrongdoer *as if* she already has a certain feature—remorsefulness—and thereby causes her to come to have it. Thus Gifted Forgiveness is revealed as a proleptic evolution of conditional forgiveness. The key elements of conditional forgiveness after the wrong is perpetrated—the expression of remorse, and then the forgiveness—are rearranged in time so that the temporal order is reversed. The wrong is perpetrated, but then the forgiveness is immediately forthcoming, so that instead of waiting for the condition of remorse to be fulfilled, that condition is lobbed into the future as a hoped-for outcome. The psychological cause of conditional forgiveness becomes the hoped-for effect of Gifted Forgiveness; and the normative condition of the first practice becomes the retrospective rationale of the second. Conditional forgiveness is thus revealed as the basic or paradigm case, for Gifted Forgiveness can only be understood as the secondary formation of forgiving.

KL: I believe the key concepts you develop in your book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* are "testimonial injustice" and "hermeneutical injustice", and that these play a role in your current work on blaming and forgiving. Your work on epistemic injustice made you famous and started a whole new discussion in academic philosophy with tons of research articles, edited volumes, handbooks etc. Could you explain your two concepts of epistemic injustice?

MF: In *Epistemic Injustice* I basically tried to put forward an analytical theoretical structure that articulated some phenomena that had long been recognized—in real life, in novels, in movies, and in some philosophy too—but which I did not find to have received a satisfactory theoretical articulation in philosophy at the time. Different ideas about the relation between power and reason had long been elaborated in Marxist terms, then Foucauldian terms, and these discourses are illuminating and interesting in all sorts of ways. But I did not find them satisfying when it came to theorizing the phenomena I wished to bring out. I felt that in these traditions, and in the feminist work that grew out of them, there was a tendency to exaggerate the constructive power of social power, and that one of the most important ways in which knowledge is related to power actually requires a theoretical stance according to which knowledge is robustly independent of power in significant respects. For instance, in a context where a member of an oppressed group knows that p, yet nobody around her believes her, she has very little social power, and no power to be recognized as knowing that p; *and yet she*

knows that p. In a situation where the explanation why nobody believes her word that p is a prejudice of some kind, then she is not only frustrated in her attempt to bring others to know that p and to recognize her as knowing it, she is also subject to a distinctive kind of injustice that involves her being wrongfully undermined regarding her status as an epistemic subject. That wrong seemed to me to be distinctive, and worth theorising as such, and yet it could not be made visible on any background philosophy that elided knowledge and power. If knowing that p is nothing more than a function of having the social power to be recognized as knowing that p, then there cannot be a situation in which someone is epistemically wronged in not being recognized as knowing that p. Thus an epistemology that underplays the independence of knowledge from relations of social power actively vanishes the possibility of this kind of epistemic injustice. I am not saying I read Foucault exactly this way, but very often he writes in a provocative manner that makes it sound as if he regards knowledge as a mere function of relations of power, and certainly in certain philosophical circles in the late 90s and early 2000s it could feel somewhat heretical to affirm the robust independence of knowledge from power. But anyone who believes that there are distinctively epistemic injustices, where power relations are such that someone is unfairly undermined in their status as a knower, must affirm it.

I hoped to show that issues of epistemic injustice were questions internal to analytic social epistemology (the very idea of 'social epistemology' was at that time merely nascent, but for me it was immensely helpful). My impression was that among social epistemologists questions of power were considered marginal. But if one focuses on the social practices through which knowledge is created and shared, relations of power and prejudice are entirely central to analytic concerns. A perennial analytic ambition is to account for functional epistemic practices ('how is knowledge transmitted through testimony?' and so on), and yet we cannot answer that question without an awareness of which tendencies to dysfunction are being successfully staved off by the norms of a well-functioning practice. In the case of testimony, for instance, a successful practice is one where knowledge flows freely from testifier to hearer, and it is immediately obvious that this will fail if prejudice blocks the flow. Therefore, in order to characterize the norms of the ideally functional practice once needs to capture anti-prejudicial measures of some kind. It falls entirely within the proper remit of social epistemology to attend to the norms that stave off endemic tendencies to epistemic dysfunction, and yet somehow this set of concerns had been deemed marginal. I tried to show that it was in fact central by offering a framework within which two basic kinds of epistemic injustice are shown to be related. Testimonial injustice happens when someone's word

receives a prejudicially reduced degree of credibility; and hermeneutical injustice happens when someone's capacity to render a significant area of their experience intelligible (either to themselves and/or to others) is reduced owing to hermeneutical marginalization. (To be hermeneutical marginalized is to under-contribute to shared social concepts and meanings.) The first kind of epistemic injustice involves an unjust deficit of credibility; the second involves an unjust deficit of intelligibility. This, in a nutshell, is that theoretical map I put forward in order to delineate what I considered to be a distinctive and dramatically widespread stratum of injustice: epistemic injustice. I tried to make it as epistemologically and meta-ethically non-partisan as possible, casting the phenomena in terms that someone could accept regardless of their views about the epistemology of testimony, and regardless of whether they had Kantian, consequentialist, or virtue ethical predilections in moral philosophy. I did, however, prioritize a virtue idiom in much of the book, because I found that to be the best fit for what I wanted to say, and because the idiom is unique in applying naturally and smoothly across both epistemology and ethics, whose substantial overlap was an important part of the picture.

KL: What role do these concepts of epistemic injustice play in your current work on blaming and forgiving?

MF: My aim, as I said earlier, is to think about the practices of blaming and forgiving from a broadly functional point of view—the perspective of 'practical explication'. This means that the question naturally arises what kind of dysfunctions they are prone to. There are many. For instance, I consider a fundamental dysfunction in blaming to be our tendency to blame in a retributive spirit and with a vengeful purpose. If someone has been morally wounded, it is a vary natural response to retaliate with bitter blame of a kind designed to wound in return. I am far from alone in thinking this an unjustified, if understandable, response. Many philosophers of blame consider blame to be intrinsically retributive in psychological structure. I do not regard blaming as intrinsically retributive, but I believe we need to keep a lookout for how easily it deteriorates into a retributive form. This kind of emotional deterioration is an endemic risk internal to blaming and forgiving, and it is a major source of dysfunction relative to the purpose of finding shared moral understandings. But another source of dysfunction comes from a different source: the source of epistemic injustice. If you suffer a wrong, and you try to blame the culprit—whether to their face or to a third party—you may be believed, and all may go smoothly. But wherever there is prejudice, you may well not believed, and so

your communication of blame may be blocked from achieving its point. It may not be able to bring the culprit, directly or indirectly, to an appropriate remorseful understanding of the significance of their act. Prejudice, then, can block the transformative function of blaming just as it can block the flow of other testimonial epistemic goods.

What about hermeneutical injustice in our practices of blaming? Someone might suffer a wrong for which they have no clear concept; or perhaps they have the concept but cannot share it across social space because those to whom she needs to protest her treatment do not share the concept. Think of an early case of stalking or workplace bullying or transphobia before these concepts gained their currency. Someone might suffer one of these things, seek to point the finger of blame, and yet find a lack of a workable shared concept to convey the requisite meaning across social space. Blaming is a practice that is both absolutely fundamental to moral life, and also a practice that is very easily blocked by testimonial injustice and/or hermeneutical injustice. Forgiving is a little different because one's capacity to forgive does not require credibility exactly, though forgiving certainly does require that one do so free from hermeneutical injustice, since one cannot easily forgive that which one cannot grasp adequately in thought.

KL: You have explained how you use the State of Nature method in your current work on blaming and forgiving. I think you also used the approach briefly in *Epistemic Injustice* in relation to testimonial injustice. Could you explain the relevance there?

MF: In *Epistemic Injustice* there is a late chapter in which I use both Craig and Williams' State of Nature stories for a highly specific purpose. In the early chapters I had elaborated the idea of testimonial injustice as a wrongful affront to one's basic status as an epistemic subject. (I think in the book I mainly talk in terms of being undermined in one's 'status as a knower', but outside the specific project of that book I think it is probably more appropriate to talk in terms of being underrmined in one's 'status as an epistemic subject', since prejudice can reduce credibility not only in relation to one's knowledge but in relation to any ideas, opinions, reasons, hypotheses or doubts that one may put forward.) I primarily wanted to show that this was an intrinsic injustice, because in having one's status as an epistemic subject wrongfully undermined one is being undermined in a capacity essential to human value. But I also wanted to show that avoiding or correcting for this kind of intrinsic injustice was fundamental to our very concept of knowledge, and therefore central to the concerns of analytic social epistemology. In order to show this, I used Craig's practical explication of the

concept of knowledge. In his State of Nature scenario, as I mentioned above, he depicts a fundamental human practice of distinguishing 'good informants' as a means to the efficient pooling of information. He says nothing about prejudice in the State of Nature; but importantly some basic and epistemologically relevant aspects of human nature are mentioned, such as motivations to deceive or withhold information under conditions of presumed scarcity and competition for resources. I argued that equally deep in human nature is a tendency for prejudice, notably prejudice against outsiders. Accordingly we should fully expect to find in-group/out-group prejudice in the State of Nature, not least because on the presumed competition for scarce resources, being confronted with a member of an out-group is a key source of the motivation to deceive. Therefore, the need to reliably *correct for prejudice* in one's judgements of credibility is just as deeply situated in the State of Nature scenario as is the need to distinguish good informants. They serve the very same goal of efficiently pooling information. Thus the proto-virtue of testimonial justice is found in the State of Nature as part of our basic means to pooling information. Given Craig's overall picture according to which the notion of the good informant forms the 'core' of our actual concept of a knower, this enabled me to argue that cultivating the anti-prejudicial virtue of testimonial justice was likewise built in to the core of the concept of knowledge—you cannot reliably distinguish good informants without it. On these grounds I argued that the virtue of testimonial justice is built right into the practical core of our concept of knowledge.

This line of argument was really designed to bring the message home that anyone interested in understanding the concept of knowledge was *thereby* already trading in matters of testimonial justice, because the very practice (information pooling) that forms the core of the concept of a knower includes the anti-prejudicial dispositions of testimonial justice. I felt this showed that questions of epistemic injustice turned out to be central to social epistemology, and not marginal at all.

KL: We're almost at the end of our interview now, but there is one more question I would like to ask. How would you describe the role of the kind of philosophy you're doing with regard to our actual practices? What in your opinion can philosophy do for us?

MF: Philosophy can obviously be done in many different styles, and it can do many different things. But the kind of philosophical activity I am personally drawn to is a kind of modelling of human interaction and social practice. This kind of theoretical modelling is less maximally abstracted than some other theoretical approaches, and yet it is still highly abstract. For me the

challenge is to achieve a philosophical model that is true to the complexities of human practices in the social world, and to the subtleties of human experience, while also being theoretically satisfying. I am drawn to philosophize because I find my thoughts about lived experiences naturally seek intellectual expression in philosophical terms. But human practices and real lived experience are often subtle and complex, even amorphous and indeterminate, and so the perennial challenge is to give an area of human life theoretical expression without over-purifying it. I'm not really a very critical thinker in the sense that I don't start with other people's views and try to say what's wrong with them. As a student I remember being told that criticizing others' views was what philosophy was all about, and I suppose I must have partially absorbed that message for a while, but I no longer accept it. It certainly is what a lot of philosophy is like – many papers are published whose principle mission is to criticize someone's view of X. But, speaking personally, and perhaps confessionally, I don't honestly find that sort of thing very interesting or helpful. (I also hate defending my own views. Who wants to read philosophers say they have been misunderstood and didn't quite mean X but rather Y? Not me, so I don't put it out there to bore others either. I'd rather move on.) My own impulse to philosophize is naively creative and experimental: the thought pattern is almost always 'Maybe it's like this?' For me that's the joy of it. One looks for conceptual refinements, satisfying distinctions, explanatory illumination, connections with others' views, and historical resonances along the way. That way philosophy grows from life, while also standing a chance of circling back to inform our experiences a little too.

As regards the idea of offering philosophical models of lived experience, in my work on epistemic injustice I did not take myself to be pointing out the existence of the phenomena I named 'testimonial injustice' and 'hermeneutical injustice'. I think people have known and experienced those things forever. Rather, I was offering philosophical concepts and models that I hoped would make that region of human experience clearer, that is, conceptually and normatively more articulate and manageable. I wanted to show that there was a distinctive family of injustices at work that we lacked (it seemed to me) a satisfactory way of naming. That's the sort of philosophy I personally enjoy doing, and in the current work on blaming and forgiving I am also offering models, this time functional models, in order to encourage the idea that we can step back from our most basic moral practices and ask ourselves whether they are taking a form that is ethically constructive and helpful. The view I urge is that the only ethically helpful form of blame—Communicative Blame—is not retributive in its normative structure and force, but rather constructive and educative. It is a form of blaming that aims to bring the wrongdoer to appreciate the moral significance of what she has done,

and thereby learn and be changed by the interaction. That's the ideal we should aim for, I believe. Otherwise what is the point of blame? Mere vindictive self-expression? I don't think that's a very dignified or helpful ideal. And the overall view in the book is that both blaming and forgiving should be seen as working together as responses to wrongdoing that function primarily to establish and renegotiate specific shared moral understandings. Communicative Blame aims to achieve shared moral understanding, and (by way of the proleptic mechanism) so does Gifted Forgiving; whereas conditional forgiveness insists upon the shared understanding in the form of remorseful appreciation, perhaps apology, before forgiveness is given. All three forms of response work to align the moral perspectives of the parties to the wrongdoing. I think these forms of blaming and forgiving do the lion's share of the interpersonal work of making a shared moral world. Through blaming and forgiving we address each other as capable of better, and so, with luck, we may cause each other to be the better versions of ourselves. These seem to me to be the optimal formations of blaming and forgiving that we should aim to live by.

KL: Thank you so much for this interview, Miranda!

MF: It's been such a pleasure – Vielen Dank!

Blaming and Forgiving: The Work of Morality is forthcoming with Oxford University Press.