

## **Preface to the German edition of *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing***

It is with gratitude and pleasure that I write this Preface to the German edition of *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. It provides, first, a perfect opportunity to thank Dirk Setton from C. H. Beck for the kind proposal, and Antje Korsmeier for her careful translation. It is some years since the publication of the original English version of the book, and the landscape of the analytical tradition in philosophy has changed in many ways. Every book is of its time and place, and *for* its time and place, whether or not this inevitability is in the mind of its author. My book grew from philosophical and feminist theoretical debates in the UK in the late 90s and early 2000s. But I hope that its themes are timeless enough, and their treatment abstracted enough, that the book might continue to find new significances in new contexts of readership.

The book endeavoured to limn the borders that, it seemed to me, artificially cordoned off the central concerns of analytic epistemology from salutary questions of power and social identity—questions that had long been debated in the frames of reference proper to Continental philosophy and feminist philosophy, let alone those outside academic philosophy. Back then, these matters of power were never allowed to enter into epistemology of the analytical tradition and style, which insisted on a self-conception that made it impossible for such questions to seem like *philosophical* questions, as opposed to empirical ones, so that raising them in a seminar could only be received as a naïve and slightly embarrassing overspill from a neighbouring, more sociological conversation. In truth, these different styles of conversation, with their distinctive aims and priorities, are continuous rather than naturally bordered, and I believe there are points at which their territories incorporate a substantial overlap. I found the constructed separation of these two sets of questions and styles of thought to be as needless as it was intellectually limiting, even while I had internalised it myself as an undergraduate, so that it was very much my own thinking that I wanted to liberate from a troubled oscillation. Thus it was my personal sense of perplexed disappointment with our discipline, and my own need to understand it, that jump-started the theoretical engine of the book: to show that, on at least one credentialled conception of what constitutes the concept of knowledge—where knowledge itself is still firmly understood as *factive*—matters of power, social identity, and prejudice are found at the core of what it is to know.

I remember to this day first reading Edward Craig's immaculate and quietly revolutionary book, *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, and realizing that it gave me my way

in. His book argued that the content of the concept of knowledge can be discerned by looking at the practices that generate its necessary core and more contingent layers of content, so that the ur-practice of *seeking needed information from someone recognizable as likely enough to deliver it* is found at the core. In Craig's account, all the contents of the concept of knowledge are generated and accrued not in history but in counterfactual space. That is to say, they are the product of different imagined non-actual scenarios in which an inquirer might need information on this or that, might be capable of recognizing this or that. What I inferred from his account—and perhaps I should emphasize that Craig himself may or may not have agreed with any of my inferences—was that if there is an immanent risk of prejudicial dysfunction in the ur-practice, as imagined in a State of Nature, then that same risk of dysfunction would furnish core content of the concept. Moreover, human nature being what it is, I argued, there were bound to be at least some simple in-group/out-group prejudices at work in the State of Nature, just as there are (uncontroversially) motivations to deceive or withhold information. Putting these thoughts together, we discover that our concept of knowledge secrets, at its core, content produced by a practice of information gathering that must already contain measures to resist the influence of prejudice. The State of Nature is a non-ideal place—a little more non-ideal than Craig envisaged—and the result is that our concept of knowledge necessarily incorporates anti-prejudicial measures to prevent Testimonial Injustice. *Voilà*—objects of feminist philosophical concern, formerly supposed irrelevant to epistemology proper, are uncovered as necessary features at the core of the concept of knowledge.

This concept-oriented ambition of the book was of course not its only theoretical ambition, for among other things it was also focused on elaborating a first-order theory of two basic kinds of epistemic injustice and their internal varieties. Not only varieties of Testimonial Injustice, then, but also of Hermeneutical Injustice. Whereas the former is a matter of an unjust deficit of credibility, the latter is a matter of an unjust deficit of intelligibility, either to self and/or in relation to others. I aimed throughout that first-order discussion to reveal the fundamental idea of an *epistemic injustice*—an injustice done to someone specifically in their capacity or function as an epistemic subject. And I wanted to show that this distinctive epistemic wrong was identifiable as a constant throughout 'systematic' cases that displayed a connectivity with wider relations of subjugation, oppressive ideology and social injustice, and 'incidental' cases in which little or no such connectivity was present. But I highlight here the former fundamental epistemological ambition because it was principally that ambition which enabled me to anchor my project in traditional analytical questions with a view to transforming them, or at least expanding them,

by relating them to the pressing concerns of the feminist philosophy that had energized the project.

Miranda Fricker

New York University

October 2022