EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY: ON THE RELEVANCE OF FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY TO MAINSTREAM EPISTEMOLOGY

by

Emily Venita Bingeman

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To my Father, who gave me grit.
To my Mother who gave me kindness.
And to all those who have embraced me as their chosen family,
I have been incredibly fortunate in this regard.

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to build a concept of epistemic responsibility that takes seriously insights from feminist epistemology, addiction studies, and disability theory. I use John Greco's knowledge-as-achievement account as a starting point, and demonstrate how an ability-centred account such as Greco's can be undergirded with these insights to create a concept of epistemic responsibility that better captures the complex social and political nature of our epistemic practices.

I begin in Chapter 1 by outlining the contours of the project and making an argument for the importance of projects that create porousness between feminist epistemology and mainstream epistemology. In Chapter 2 I outline five key insights in feminist epistemology that I use both in assessing Greco's theory and in guiding the reconstruction. I argue that accommodating these insights will require, at a minimum, a thoroughly social/non-individualistic concept of epistemic responsibility.

The strategy that I take to build such a concept is threefold. First, in Chapter 3, I provide a theoretical background of currently existing social/non-individualistic concepts of responsibility that serve to lay a groundwork for my notion of epistemic responsibility. The goal is not to provide a comprehensive survey of the work on responsibility, but rather to draw out tools and frameworks that are helpful in thinking through epistemic responsibility. Second, in Chapter 4, I develop an extended analysis of a concrete phenomenon that I take to be a thoroughly social/non-individualistic context of responsibility ascription: responsibility for addiction, or rather for the harms associated with drug use. And finally, in Chapter 5, taking all of the insights and tools that I have gathered in Chapters 2-4, I embark on the project of theory reconstruction. I begin by outlining the strengths and weaknesses in Greco's theory with respect to the insights I have highlighted. I then bring in disability theory in order to shore up the notion of ability operative in Greco's account which I argue allows us to better account for the social and political complexities of epistemic practice.

List of Abbreviations

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
ARESLD	Alcohol Related End Stage Liver Disease
BC	British Columbia
BCAPOM	BC Association of People on Methadone
BDMA	Brain Disease Model of Addiction
BP	The British Petroleum Company
CASA	National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
CCE	Critical Contextual Empiricism
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CERN	The European Organization for Nuclear Research
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DDM	Doxastic Decision-Making
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manuel of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition
DTE	Vancouver BC's Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood
EP	Epistemic Practice Related
ESLD	End Stage Liver Disease
KAA	Knowledge-As-Achievement
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
MMT	Methadone Maintenance Treatment
MP	Moral Practice Related
RE	Reflective Equilibrium
SEP	Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SSRI	Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor
SUD	Substance Use Disorder
VANDU	Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users
WHO	World Health Organization

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academic life. I feel incredibly lucky to have had you as a mentor and advisor in this process.

I have always enjoyed this passage from Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature (1739):*

> "The intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? and on whom have, I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, invironed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty. Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther." (§VII)

My thanks to all those who helped me to obliterate my own chimeras over these years of dissertating, but especially: Tariq Ahmed, Derek Andrews, Lindsay Balkwill, Federico Burdman, Steven Burns, Alexander Campbell, Maria Camila Castro Maldonado, Sarah Dainty, Deandra Doyle, Jason Earle, Tiffany Gordon, Ariane Hanemaayer, Nathan Haydon, Rob Hern, Nikki Lockington, Andrew Lopez, Ian MacDonald, Kate McNeil, Rob Michacci, Juan Diego Morales, Ana Maria Restrepo, Chris Reynolds, Bailey Robinson, Kat Rogers Hern, Janet Ross, Joey Seaman, Steph Shaw, Lissa Skitolsky, Jordan Stein, Katie Stockdale, Jen Tamse, Ryan Truong, Curtis Wezenbeek-Williams, and Heather Whitfield.

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Preface

> "Hermine Wittgenstein tells of the bewilderment of the family over Ludwig's determination, immediately upon his return home at the end of World War One, to rid himself unconditionally of his whole fortune; and of her own dismay at his decision to become a country schoolteacher. She protested to him that his teaching in an elementary school would be like 'using a precision instrument to open crates'. She was silenced when he replied: 'You remind me of someone who is looking through a closed window and cannot explain to himself the strange movements of a passer-by. He doesn't know what kind of a storm is raging outside and that this person is perhaps only with great effort keeping himself on his feet.'" (Malcolm, 1981)

This is one of my favourite Wittgenstein anecdotes/quotes. It is both something that I try to apply in my daily life when dealing with others, and speaks to the major theme of this project. It speaks to the importance of attending to forces that are not immediately apparent when trying to understand the behaviours of others, and perhaps also of ourselves. And it asks us to craft our explanations with generosity, epistemic humility, and appropriate complexity. It speaks to an ethics of explanation.

Some of the themes in this project, such as addiction and disability, may seem to be out of left field in terms of answering questions in epistemology. These themes have come into my work organically over time, but it is also not an accident that they play a prominent role in my work. I connect personally with each of these themes. I grew up in a family with two alcoholic parents. I also grew up with a father whose primary method of supporting our family was, let's just say, involved in the illegal drug economy. And my youngest brother is a Disabled man. I grew up watching him be variously mistreated, discriminated against, and socially excluded. He and my parents did not have access to the conceptual resources or social capital that were necessary to advocate for his rights to education and equality. Nor did they have any other narrative than the one that says Disability is a tragedy.

At the close of this project it has become evident to me that a part of the work of this dissertation and my areas of focus more broadly, has been work to understand myself and challenges that me and my family have faced. Some might find this admission problematic—they might conclude that the convergence of these interests in my work reflects a lack of objectivity and invalidates the project. I have two things to say about this. First, I have faith that the work speaks for itself. Arguments are arguments and people can agree or disagree with the conclusions I draw here on their merits regardless of their origin. Second, and stronger than that, I have come to embrace these challenges as sources of knowledge. The confluence of factors that make me who I am has allowed me to make connections that others might not see. This is not to give some kind of "whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger" bullshit narrative. I adamantly believe that some things that don't kill you harm you irrevocably, and it would be better if they had not occurred.[1] But once they have occurred we can try to find our own strength within them. Writing this dissertation has been incredibly challenging for me emotionally—it has pushed me to the very ends of my self-esteem and strength. But it has also become a strange therapy for me, a way of understanding my own experiences. It has allowed me to start to see more clearly the storms that raged around me and my family when I was a child, and to begin to connect the contours of these storms with the contours of many others.

It is also my hope that this dissertation contains the still germinating seed of a change in my own writing. Although I don't make a lot of direct reference to Gloria Anzaldúa in this project, her work has inspired me to think about writing and

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[1] I emphasize this because I think it is important to be aware of the dangers of "toxic positivity", which can, amongst other things, function to silence and diminish the experiences of trauma survivors.

language differently. The combination of raw vulnerability and unnerving strength in her writing has been a huge inspiration for me. The work of María Lugones, Karyn Freedman, and Andrea Warmack have also been influential on me in this way. Another important thread of this project is the meta-epistemological/ meta-philosophical one. This too has an important personal connection for me. I have, like many others, never felt very at home in this discipline. I come from a rural poor family and I am a first-generation university student—I have what is commonly referred to as "redneck" origins. It has been very hard to place myself in this discipline, and frankly still is. I believe that this has contributed to the ways in which I have struggled with meta-philosophical issues, in particular questions about the practical value of philosophy, the ethical obligations of philosophers to others, and the goals that philosophers ought to have for their work. When I finished my Master's I vowed that I would never study philosophy again—I couldn't understand how I would make a contribution that would justify the time and effort spent on these studies, and I worried about the financial instability and risks of trying for an academic career. I worked in several other jobs for a few years, but I missed philosophy. Even though it's something that kinda drives me mad and challenges me more than feels manageable at times, there's something about it that I can't give up.

I have continued to struggle with these tensions throughout the PhD, but it is through teaching that I have begun to resolve some of this tension. I can say with confidence that without my education and without philosophy I would be in a worse place and probably a worse person. Through this work I have been able to begin to educate myself about the legacies and current realities of anti-black racism, colonialism, ableism, transphobia, and other structural oppressions. I believe in the

importance of critical thinking skills and in developing them in myself and of teaching them to others. I hope that I can find a place in the discipline of philosophy and that I can be a part of the shift towards making philosophy a more hospitable place to the rich diversity of people in this world. That is not the discipline that we have now. But I have optimism that we can move in that direction.

Lastly, I want to make a note about my positionality and the topics that I cover in this project. Throughout the course of the dissertation I engage in discussion about disability, colonialism, and drug use. I am white, settler, non-disabled, and not a drug user. There are important and live debates about the ethics of writing about groups of people to which one does not belong. And while I think it is absolutely necessary to undertake this kind of work with thoughtfulness and care, I worry about the choice to remove myself from writing on these issues at all, for at least two reasons: a) it further contributes to the silence on issues that we ought not be silent on in the philosophical community; and b) it creates a situation where people who do not come from marginalized positionalities fail to build the requisite knowledge and skills to engage these issues. This is important for the adequacy of our philosophical work, but also more importantly because, in failing to build these skills, all of the weight of this important work is placed on marginalized folks. So here I do my best to work within the limits of my perspective, and to be mindful of the harms that can be done in this kind of writing. It is possible, if not probable, that I have not been entirely successful in this regard, but I believe that it is worth trying.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Preamble

I begin by situating the project of this dissertation within my larger research goals.

My larger goal is to explore ways of illustrating the fruitfulness of connecting work in

mainstream analytical epistemology with feminist and other critical epistemologies. I

am most interested in making connections between mainstream analytical social

epistemology, mainstream analytical virtue epistemology and feminist epistemologies.

These three discourses are ripe for connection for a variety of reasons. First, all three

of these fields of study developed around the same time (roughly the early to mid

1980s) and, as we will explore below, were responding to much of the same

impetuses for change in epistemology. Second, all three of these fields share much in

common in terms of subjects of study and metaepistemological commitments. Social

and feminist epistemologies in particular share a main priority in attending to the

complex social aspects of our epistemic practices. And virtue and feminist

epistemologies share a commitment to producing theoretical frameworks that

interrogate the ethical aspects of our epistemic practices and can contribute to

improving "epistemic flourishing." While there have been many instances of cross-

pollination between these fields, there is still a significant amount of work to be done

with regards to integrating feminist insights into mainstream social and virtue

epistemologies.

The specific project of this dissertation is a contribution to this larger research

project. For this purpose I chose a particular theoretical framework that sits at the

intersection of mainstream analytical social and virtue epistemology—John Greco's

"knowledge-as-achievement" theory—and explore fruitful connections with work in feminist epistemology. In particular I focus on the concept of responsibility in Greco's theory and the related concept of ability. I have chosen to focus on responsibility because it is a concept that already plays a key role in mainstream analytical epistemological theorizing, but also because it is a concept that provides rich ground for connections with the ethical and political aspects of our epistemic practices identified by feminist epistemologists.

In the remainder of Chapter 1 I give some background on this larger research project and explain why I think it is important (§1.2). I then outline the specific project of the dissertation, including background on Greco's account and why I have chosen it as my specimen for analysis (§1.3). Finally, I set out a plan for accomplishing the task of the dissertation project that will be executed in Chapters 2-5 (§1.4) .

1.2 The Larger Project

In outlining the larger project my aim is to motivate the significance of the specific project of my dissertation, both for myself and for its contribution to the contemporary epistemology discourse. The larger project deals with metaphilosophical questions about how we ought to approach doing epistemology. This is of obvious significance to me as an epistemologist, and part of my motivation for exploring these issues is clarifying them for myself. Therefore, I want to start by taking the reader on a personal digression for a moment, and ask that you bear with me—it will be relevant to getting clear on the shape and significance of the my larger research goals.

1.21 Sensing the Boundaries of Epistemology

For most of my time in philosophy I have understood myself as an epistemologist. This is the identity category that feels most at home for me. In part this was a simple matter of lineage—I started my undergrad degree with grand plans of becoming a theoretical physicist (my dream was to work at CERN). I first dipped my toe into philosophy by taking any philosophy of science class I could find, which included fascinating courses on the philosophy of superposition, emergence and genetics. But I quickly realized that understanding philosophy of science was going to require some epistemology.

When I took my first course in epistemology, something deep inside me seemed to click into place, I had that feeling of finding something that you didn't know you had been needing. And while some of this feeling surely had to do with the content and questions of epistemology, to be honest, some of it had to do with the professor. In encountering Karyn Freedman, a young, interesting, tough and brilliant philosopher, I saw for the first time the possibility of a career in philosophy for myself. Because, while she was much cooler, and more educated and more interesting than me, I could kind of imagine myself being like her one day. I had never considered the possibility that I could be a professor before this. From then on I took every epistemology course I could, and through Karyn I learned about feminist epistemology. This set me on a path to learning about feminist theory more broadly, which has shaped me and my work in ways I could not have predicted.

But as I have continued on in philosophy, this identity of epistemologist has received some pressure both from internal and external sources. External sources have

ranged from snide comments or sheer ignorance from other epistemology grad students at conferences who "have never heard of feminist epistemology" and seem sceptical that it could be anything legitimately epistemological, to an encounter with a junior professor epistemologist who became deeply offended when, at his request, I explained the critical aspects of feminist epistemology (which he took to be a personal attack on his own work), to an encounter with a well meaning senior epistemologist who told me that while my work was interesting and surely valuable, it would not be understood as epistemology and might better be categorized as social theory.

And then, in the last several years I have started to question my self-identification as an epistemologist. A lot of my research is in feminist theory, bioethics, disability theory, decolonial theory and metaphilosophy. The truth is, I don't read a tonne of "straight-up" epistemology these days. And my project could easily be described from the perspective of metaphilosophy, ethics or social theory. So what is my insistence on continuing to identify as an epistemologist? The amateur psychologist in me worries that I feel safer in epistemology because it is one of the legitimated sub-fields of philosophy, unassailable as an important field of study. And I won't deny that there could be something to this critical theory of myself. However, I think there is some deeper resistance to dis-identifying with epistemology, and this resistance is to the excessive boundary policing that sometimes happens within our discipline, the often unhelpful, and sometimes damaging, questions about whether something *really is* philosophy, or whether it *really is* epistemology, etc. I think that this type of boundary policing often unnecessarily cauterizes interesting points of intersection that could be fruitful for many of us.

For me (at heart a Wittgensteinian of sorts) the validity of a definition needs to be assessed in relation to the purposes and practices for which it is used. And it is often not clear to me what keeping precise boundaries on philosophy broadly speaking, or epistemology or other sub-fields in philosophy has done, or could do, for us that is beneficial. And in fact, historically, such boundary policing has been used, and/or has functioned to, preserve homogeneity in philosophy. This is bad for the epistemic success of our discipline, but more importantly bad for the people that have been excluded and marginalized because of that boundary policing. I believe that part of the process of opening up our discipline to change is opening up our ideas about what counts as philosophy broadly speaking, what counts within the sub-disciplines of philosophy, and even what counts as a philosophical text.

For my part, I think of myself as an epistemologist because I primarily think about questions related to knowledge and ignorance (and related concepts). I understand my purpose as an epistemologist to be to provide tools for understanding epistemic concepts and hopefully also tools for improving epistemic practices, i.e. practices related to knowledge and ignorance. I use a different set of materials than some epistemologists to examine these questions, but I don't believe that means that what I do is not epistemology. I have decided to take up space in epistemology in the way that makes the most sense to me. I have, of course, inherited this approach from my feminist progenitors.

To be clear, that is not to say that I want to abolish all the boundaries indiscriminately. Of course there is always room and need for stipulative precision, i.e., stipulating boundaries for particular purposes. But in those cases we can make those purposes transparent to ourselves. For example, I can study all the Latina

feminism that I can get my hands on, and write about Latina feminisms, but that does not make me a Latina feminist, nor does it mean that I do Latina feminism. I am a white person, and my engagement with that literature is structured by my history and identity. There are reasons to be thoughtful about the boundaries of literatures in philosophy and to be mindful about how we interact with them.[2]

So, this long digression is, believe it or not, relevant to the project of this dissertation. I am beginning from the qualified assumption that making the boundaries between our sub-fields porous is beneficial and even necessary. I focus primarily on connections between social epistemology and feminist epistemology, but also on how these two sub-fields can be fruitfully engaged with moral theory, disability studies and addiction studies, amongst others. Perhaps the reader will find this kind of porousness natural and wonder why I bother to comment on it at all. All the better for me. But it is my understanding that this is not the case for everyone. Rather, as I will demonstrate in what follows, there is still quite a bit of work to do to dissolve what are, for some, the hard edges of these boundaries.

In the next section I want to explore some explanations for why the divide between feminist and mainstream epistemology has persisted for as long as it has. I believe this is an important first step because understanding how the gap arose will allow us to see where there are legitimate reasons for it and where there are ones that we should challenge and move past. I focus on mainstream social epistemology because it already shares a close kinship with feminist epistemology.

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[2] Thank you to Chike Jeffers for helping me to clarify my thoughts on this.

1.22 Haslanger's Challenge

Feminist epistemologists have been hard at the work of dissolving the hard edges of epistemology for some time. This is something that they have in common with mainstream analytical social epistemologists, which is what makes it so curious that there is not more overlap between feminist epistemology and social epistemology. In this section I explore the various ways in which social epistemology and feminist epistemology have both connected and diverged over the last few decades as they have both come into full bloom.

In her 1999 paper "What Knowledge Is and What it Ought to Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology" Sally Haslanger argued that mainstream epistemologists sometimes ignore the work of feminist epistemologists, not necessarily because they don't see the work of feminist epistemologists as valuable, but rather because they see feminist epistemologists as working on different types of projects. Haslanger argues that not only is it untrue that feminist epistemologists are working on different kinds of projects, but that as a result of this confusion mainstream epistemologists sometimes miss out on insights that would be significantly beneficial in developing their views. Haslanger challenges epistemologists to incorporate feminist insights into their theory building, in particular focusing on how theories of knowledge can be shaped by our values and purposes.

More than twenty years later, while some progress has been made in connecting feminist epistemology with mainstream epistemology, there is still a lot of work to be done to meet Haslanger's challenge. Feminist epistemologists, with some exceptions, tend to be less interested in classical questions about *what knowledge is*

and so don't often pursue projects in these areas.[3] And there are many good reasons, some of which I will go into in Chapter 2, for why this is the case.

We might broadly characterize many projects in feminist epistemology as exploring the social and political dynamics of our epistemic practices. By "dynamics" of epistemic practice I mean here a broad range of topics including how power structures affect what is known and not known, how social identities affect one's credibility, authority and knowledge acquisition, how social-political arrangements affect knowledge and knowers, and how one's epistemic status affects them in other areas of life (e.g. health, wealth, social power etc.). For feminist theorists the project of understanding these complex dynamics is a central part of the epistemological project. As Heidi Grasswick notes, one thing that tends to distinguish mainstream social epistemologists from feminist epistemologists is the latter's explicit commitments to centring social and political goals in the their theorizing projects (Grasswick, 2018, p.10).

I think it is fair to say that many mainstream epistemologists have still not taken up the project of integrating feminist epistemology into their theory building in a robust way. This is especially a missed opportunity for social epistemologists who aim to study the social dynamics of our epistemic practices as well as the virtue epistemologists who aim to study the normative aspects of our epistemic practices, and the interconnections between our epistemic and moral virtues/vices. As we shall see below in Chapter 2, these are topics that feminist epistemologists have been exploring in rich detail for at least the last three decades.

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[3] There are some notable exceptions, including Lorraine Code's *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location (2006)* and Linda Martín Alcoff's *Real Knowing: New Versions of Coherence Theory (1996).*

Despite the obvious overlap between feminist epistemology and mainstream social epistemology there has been a persistent dearth of work exploring how feminist epistemology might inform mainstream epistemology projects in theory of knowledge. For example, John Greco's *Achieving Knowledge* (2010) (which will feature heavily into our analysis later) has, as far as I can tell, not a single reference to a work in the feminist epistemology literature. Prichard, Millar and Haddock's book on the nature and value of knowledge (2010) contains only a single reference to Miranda Fricker's work on testimonial sensibilities in a footnote (p. 173). And Wayne Riggs' paper documenting the rise of interest in the value of knowledge (2008) makes no reference to feminist epistemologies. Prichard and Vincent Hendricks' edited volume entitled New Waves in Epistemology (2008) is in the same boat. And while the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP) entry on "Feminist Social Epistemology" (Grasswick, 2018) characterizes feminist epistemology as broadly falling under the social epistemology umbrella, the *SEP* entry on "Social Epistemology" (Goldman & O'Connor, 2019), does not include the word "feminist" except in the "related entries" at the end. To be fair there is some reference to the work of feminist epistemologists (though they are not identified as such). Donna Haraway, Helen Longino and Sandra Harding are referenced in a section on epistemic diversity. And Miranda Fricker's work on epistemic injustice is given a brief description in a final section entitled "Moral Social Epistemology." However, strangely this section opens with the following sentence: "Some recent writers seek to expand the notion of social epistemology by incorporating moral or ethical elements." (Goldman & O'Connor, p. 41). It should strike us as odd that the incorporation of moral and ethical elements into social epistemology would be cast as "recent" when

feminist epistemology and social epistemology developed in the same time frames, and feminist epistemologists have been doing this work since the beginning. And it should also strike us as odd that these theoretical developments have been shorn away from their feminist roots (more on this in a moment).

So, what is going on here? Why do many mainstream epistemologists, whose goals and concerns seem to overlap substantially with those of feminist epistemologists, seem to be missing out on feminist epistemology? It seems highly implausible, though not impossible, that they simply are not aware of what is going on in feminist epistemology, i.e. perhaps they just haven't come across this kind of work. Or, perhaps, as Haslanger (2002) suggests, they are aware of the feminist work, perhaps even see it as valuable in its own right, but do not see it as relevant to what they are doing. Or, more worryingly, perhaps, as Phyllis Rooney (2012) suggests, some of these omissions could represent a pernicious appropriation of the work of feminist epistemologists, i.e., social epistemologists might be benefiting from the conceptual developments coming out of feminist epistemology without acknowledging their sources (Rooney, p. 360-61).

I suspect that the explanations for these omissions vary widely. However, for my purposes I am most interested in the omissions of the second kind— omissions that result from a misunderstanding of the relevance of feminist concerns to mainstream problems in epistemology. My project is an experiment in taking up the challenge of remedying these omissions. I want to show the richness that feminist epistemology can bring to these classical questions about what knowledge is and why it's valuable.

1.23 Defending Boundaries, Breaking Boundaries

To understand how these kinds of omissions come about we need to understand a bit more about the history and development of both feminist and social epistemology. Both of these discourses developed around the same time and both are now receiving significant attention in the philosophical community.

Social epistemology developed, in part, as a reaction to sociologies of knowledge practice of the 1960s and 70s, notably the work of Thomas Kuhn (1962), Michel Foucault (1978, 1979), and David Bloor and his "Strong Programme" (Barnes & Bloor 1982). All of these thinkers highlighted the variety of ways in which social factors can shape epistemic practice in both positive and negative ways. Early social epistemologists, such as Goldman, attempted to show that the social character of knowledge production that was highlighted in this work did not require the abandonment of traditional problems in epistemology or of truth as a central component of theory of knowledge (Goldman, 1999). This approach is often contrasted with the historical dominance of individualistic investigations of knowledge such as those found in Descartes and Locke (Goldman & O'Connor, p. 2-3).

Over the past three decades social epistemology has developed into a rich body of literature that engages the sociality of knowledge in a wide variety of topics and practices. Goldman & O'Connor's *SEP* "Social Epistemology" (2019) entry lists the following as its central topics: testimony, peer disagreement, the epistemology of collective agents, judgement aggregation, group justification, and identification of experts (Goldman & O'Connor). There are at least two highly ranked journals dedicated specifically to exploring topics in social epistemology: *Episteme* and *Social*

Epistemology. Social epistemology has been influential to, and integrated with, other epistemological approaches including virtue epistemology, value-driven epistemology and formal epistemology.

But the development of social epistemology did not come without hurdles. Like feminist epistemologists, early social epistemologists faced criticisms that they were not doing "real epistemology" but something more akin to the sociologies of knowledge that they were (in part) reacting to. In 2010 Goldman published a paper called "Why Social Epistemology is Real Epistemology". The title alone is an indication of a need that some social epistemologists (even prominent ones like Goldman) have had to fit themselves into the mainstream epistemological discourse. In this paper we see Goldman distancing himself from what he refers to as the "debunking orientation", which he often associates with the work of Steve Fuller and the *Social Epistemology* journal, of which Fuller was the founder (Goldman & O'Connor, p.6). The main task of Goldman's paper is to draw a clear line around what kinds of work he wants to keep within the bounds of epistemology and what should be considered, in his words "beyond the pale" of epistemology proper (Goldman, 2010, p. 2). He begins with the following rough approximation:

> What is social epistemology? Or what might it be? According to one perspective, social epistemology is a branch of traditional epistemology that studies epistemic properties of individuals that arise from their relations to others, as well as epistemic properties of groups or social systems. A simple example (of the first sort) is the transmission of knowledge or justification from one person to another. Studying such interpersonal epistemic relations is a legitimate part of epistemology. A very different perspective would associate

'social epistemology' with movements in postmodernism, social studies of science, or cultural studies that aim to replace traditional epistemology with radically different questions, premises, or procedures. Although these enquiries examine the social contexts of belief and thought, they generally seek to debunk or reconfigure conventional epistemic concepts rather than illuminate the nature and conditions of epistemic success or failure. Under the first construal social epistemology is a bona fide part of the mainstream, and hence 'real' epistemology. Under the second construal, it is not part of epistemology at all. If protagonists of the latter-day movements marketed their products under the guise of epistemology, they would be imposters. Their products are not real epistemology. (Goldman, 2010, p. 1)

There are a couple assumptions that can be read into this passage that I want to bring into question here. First, there seems to be a tacit assumption here that the project of "*debunking or reconfiguring epistemic concepts*" is mutually exclusive with the project to "*illuminate the nature and conditions of epistemic success or failure.*" The project of this dissertation is, in part, to show that we have reason to challenge this assumption. That is, I hope to show that illuminating the nature and conditions of epistemic success or failure can include debunking and reconfiguring our conventional epistemic concepts, amongst other things. My project is, in this sense, a *revisionist* project, but more on that later.

The second assumption is that there is a need to defend the borders of "real" epistemology. Goldman seems to be concerned to defend the borders of epistemology in a very particular way, i.e., in such a way that he finds himself and others who do similar work on the inside of those boundaries. And the reason he is concerned to do

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this is because, as he outlines in his paper, there were those within mainstream

epistemology in 2010, and perhaps to a lesser degree today, who wanted to class

social epistemologists as the interlopers into the bounds of "real" epistemology.

Goldman's strategy here is to class purported social epistemologies into three types:

revisionist, preservationist and expansionist. The latter two are determined to be

within the bounds of "real epistemology" and the first is deemed to be beyond those

bounds. Goldman adjudicates these boundaries by reference to what he takes to be the

"core assumptions" of mainstream epistemology:

> (A) The epistemic agents of traditional epistemology are exclusively
>
> individuals. (B) Epistemology focuses on the study of epistemic evaluation or
>
> normativity, represented by such evaluative concepts as justifiedness,
>
> rationality, and knowledge. […] (C) Traditional epistemology assumes that the
>
> normative standards of rationality and justifiedness are not merely
>
> conventional or relativistic, but have some sort of objective validity. (D) The
>
> central notions of epistemic attainment—knowledge and justification, for
>
> example—either entail truth or are closely linked to truth. […] (E) Truth is
>
> assumed to be an objective, largely mind-independent, affair. (F) Traditional
>
> epistemology takes its central business to be the critical examination of
>
> doxastic 'decision-making' (DDM): adopting, retaining, or revising one's
>
> beliefs and other doxastic attitudes. (Goldman, 2010, p.3)

Into the first category of revisionist he puts "postmoderism, deconstructionism, social

constructionism, and various social studies of science" (Goldman, 2010, p.3).

Goldman seems to take these sorts of theories as violating at least assumptions C-E,

using sociologists of knowledge such as Stephen Shapin and Bruno Latour as two of

his main examples of revisionists. The main offending sin here is an ascription of kind of relativism about truth. It may be reasonable to apply a relativist frame to Shapin and Latour's analysis, or more precisely to suggest that they are speaking about a different thing in their analysis of truth than mainstream epistemologists are. It is important to pay attention to how we use concepts differently across disciplines so as to avoid miscommunication and confusion. But it is not so clear to me how this relativist critique applies to social constructionists. One might argue that gender is socially constructed, but that does not imply that we cannot speak of truths about gender, but rather offers an explanation of how those truths came to be true, and perhaps suggests that it is possible (and as it turns out is possible) for that truth to change. Truths about gender can still be mind independent and objective even if socially constructed, just not in a platonic sense. But surely that is not what is required for doing epistemology broadly speaking?

More concerning for our purposes is Goldman's categorization of those who offend against assumption A as revisionist, and therefore outside the bounds of real epistemology. Here he gives the example of Lynn Hankinson-Nelson's view that we should understand the subject of epistemic assessment to be the community and not the individual (Goldman, 2010, p.17). As we will see below in Chapter 2, challenging the individualistic notion of knowers and knowledge (in more or less radical ways) is a key part of many feminist epistemological projects, and one gets the sinking feeling that this would similarly disqualify much of feminist epistemology as "real" epistemology. This suspicion is only strengthened by Goldman's later assertion that there is nothing social about "the central business of traditional epistemology " (DDM above): "Belief-forming and belief-revising processes are not themselves inherently

social, and evidence used as a basis for forming and revising beliefs need not involve subject matter (i.e. content) concerning other people either." (Goldman, 2010, p. 6). Again, as we will see below, this characterization of epistemic functioning would likely exclude many feminist projects from being in the "central business" of epistemology.

Acceptable preservationist projects are ones that preserve the "core assumptions" while bringing in social considerations, e.g. C. A. J. Coady's (992) work on testimonial knowledge and Edward Craig's (1990) work on the origins and function of knowledge concepts. And acceptable expansionist projects are ones that are "sufficiently continuous with traditional epistemology" but have yet to be addressed within traditional epistemology (Goldman, 2010, p.15). Such projects include projects on "collective doxastic agents" that presumably still preserve core assumption A, and projects on "epistemic evaluation of social systems". In the former category he discusses work in legal systems, freedom of speech and democracy. It should not go unmentioned that very few feminist projects show up in the discussion of preservationist and expansionist categories. And, in fact the term feminist does not show up in this paper at all. And while Goldman does discuss Elizabeth Anderson's (2006) work on democracy, and the role "situated knowledge" (a key term in feminist epistemology) might play in an analysis of democracy, he is quick to note that this sort of work is best understood as "applied epistemology" rather than "epistemological theory" (Goldman, 2010, p. 25). And while he does say that we

should be "prepared to recognize" applied social epistemology as "real"

epistemology, this is at best a half admission into the bounds of "real epistemology."[4]

My worry about this approach is that it has a significant chance of serving to

reify boundaries that are functioning only to preserve a problematic homogeneity

within epistemology and philosophy more broadly. And reifying these boundaries has

consequences because of the power that gets held within the bounds of mainstream

epistemology, power that cannot be easily broken. Even Goldman seems to

acknowledge this fact implicitly when he suggests that one could call revisionists

social epistemologists by "social courtesy" (Goldman, 2010,p.4). There is a status to

the moniker of epistemology that Goldman is clearly aware of here.

To be fair to Goldman, he does not paint himself as a full fledged realist about

the boundaries of epistemology. For example, while he explains the general

argumentation surrounding the rejection of revisionist projects on the grounds that

they are relativist, he notes in footnote that he is not intending to voice this hard

boundary division in his own voice, but rather to reconstruct the arguments made by

other epistemologists (Goldman, 2010, p.4). As he later qualifies his project:

> In short, with respect to a body of work in the social sciences and the
>
> humanities that is sometimes dubbed 'social epistemology', epistemologists
>
> are well within their rights to deny it the status of real epistemology. If one is
>
> in the demarcation business, there are reasonable boundaries to be drawn. (p.
>
> 5).

---

[4] The term "applied" unfortunately has a history of being used as a dog whistle for "not real" in our discipline. This is a difficult claim to substantiate with evidence, but it is a phenomenon that I've heard many feminist theorists discuss and have experienced myself.

But the question is, should we be in the demarcation business? And if so, what grounds the "right" that certain people have to be the arbiters of these boundaries? As Linda Martín Alcoff cautions on the dangers of such projects: "Let those of us working in the United States never forget that border control has no intrinsic value." (Alcoff, 1996, p.4). We should ask ourselves what is the utility in keeping these boundaries and weigh that utility against the possible harms that boundary vigilance can and has done? If there are other strategies that don't carry these risks then we should explore those. And as we will see in the section, there are indeed other strategies for dealing with being annexed out of "real epistemology".

1.24 Blurring/Breaking the Boundaries: Feminist Epistemology

A different reaction to being placed on the outside of a boundary is to fight to remove that boundary entirely, or to make that boundary more porous, or just sit happily on your side and flip the boundary builders the bird (so to speak). Feminist epistemologists have been taking these various strategies in their work for more than three decades now, and they are not asking or waiting to be let into the castle walls of "real epistemology." For example, we can look at Linda Martín Alcoff's (1996) take on how epistemologists should react to the types of sociologies of knowledge coming from Kuhn, Foucault, and the Strong Programme, etc.:

> The dawning recognition that such elements as desire and power are always involved in the determination of validity conditions for knowledge does not entail the claim that they are all that is involved. At the same time, there is a pressing need to produce epistemologies that will acknowledge the ubiquity of these elements in all processes of knowing. The task of epistemology is

therefore not outdated; it just has become more difficult. (Martín Alcoff, p.2,

original emphasis)

Early feminist epistemologists, like Martín Alcoff, Lorraine Code, and Patricia Hill

Collins, instead of re-drawing the boundaries of epistemology to include themselves

in the wake of boundary threatening developments from the outside, chose to embrace

the fact that epistemology could be moulded and changed to meet this new

information and to meet the needs of their communities:

> Far from being the apolitical study of truth, epistemology points to the ways in
>
> which power relations shape who is believed and why [...] Epistemological
>
> choices about whom to trust, what to believe, and why something is true are
>
> not benign academic issues. Instead, these concerns tap the fundamental
>
> question of which versions of truth will prevail." (Hill Collins, 1990/2008, p.
>
> 252)[5]

Hill Collins now canonical book *Black Feminist Thought* (1990/2008) redrew the

boundaries of what we call epistemology, and at the same time drew attention to the

fact there is no universally valid standard of good epistemic practice, but rather a

plurality of them, and some that seem universal only because held by those in

positions of dominance and power. Twenty-five years later, in her paper "Inheriting

Patricia Hill Collins's Black Feminist Philosophy (2015) we see Kristie Dotson,

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[5] Hill Collins gives this example to illustrate her point: "For example, various descendants of Sally Hemmings, a Black woman owned by Thomas Jefferson, claimed repeatedly that Jefferson fathered her children. These accounts forwarded by Jefferson's African-American descendants were ignored in favor of accounts advanced by his White progeny. Hemmings's descendants were routinely disbelieved until their knowledge claims were validated by DNA testing." (p.252)

arguably one of the most original and influential leaders of contemporary feminist epistemology, embracing Hill Collins expansion of epistemology:

> What the knowledge project of *Black Feminist Thought* reinforced for me, as an epistemologist who was, in many ways, still coming of age, is that knowledge has no proper subject. No matter how much people will try to construct 'proper' epistemic domains and 'improper' uses of 'epistemology' and the 'proper' parameters for 'knowers', *Black Feminist Thought* helped me see more clearly the lie of those lies." (Dotson, 2015, p.2324)

In fact, a common response I have had from other feminist theorists over the years regarding my work on integrating feminist insights into mainstream theory of knowledge is somewhere in the realm of: "Why bother?" And I completely understand this response. Feminist thinkers, along with other thinkers "at the margins" have had to build their own spaces and traditions in the face of discrimination, ignorance and sometimes outright exclusion. I absolutely affirm the necessity and importance of building discourses (and spaces) that are independent and insulated from toxic environments.[6]

However, there are three reasons that I think justify making the effort to bother to bring feminist epistemology into conversation with mainstream theory of knowledge: 1. I believe that we are at a time where there is a critical mass of mainstream epistemologists and other scholars who are open to learning from and

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[6] I want to be clear that when I say I support "building discourses (and spaces) that are independent and insulated from toxic environments", this should always require meaningful inclusion of those people who are most vulnerable in our communities due to their existence within multiple axes of oppression. It is important to say this because of histories of exclusion of, for example, women of colour, trans women, gender non-binary people and sex-workers from "women's" spaces.

listening to feminist epistemologists; 2. Mainstream epistemologists themselves wield social and economic power in our discipline (they get large grants, are influential in shaping disciplinary norms of teaching, research, etc.) and for this reason it is important that they understand the importance of these insights and use their power to amplify those voices; and 3. Conceptual tools matter. What feminist epistemologies have taught me is that epistemic frameworks, as part of our larger hermeneutical frameworks (or social imaginaries), have concrete and significant effects. For example, as I will go on to illustrate in Chapter 4, how we think about responsibility matters in concrete and significant ways to the lives of drug users. Developing concepts that shift our thinking when necessary matters.

So, I am starting with the premise that building and strengthening bridges between feminist and mainstream analytic philosophy is a valuable project, and furthermore that building theories of knowledge is a valuable project. That is, something related to "the project of analysis" that has been pursued in mainstream analytical epistemology to come up with conditions of, or criteria for, knowledge is a valid and valuable project. Now, this does not mean that answers to these questions need to come in the form of eternally unchanging sets of necessary and sufficient conditions, nor does it mean that I aim to pursue a single true account of knowledge. What is important to me, as an epistemologist, is to develop tools that can help us understand our epistemic practices, and with that understanding hope to improve those practices. And those tools needs not come in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions or singular concepts of knowledge. It may be, and from my perspective likely is, the case that we need something more complex to capture the rich complexity of these practices.

My project here is about asking and answering questions about what knowledge is, more specifically about what epistemic responsibility is. I believe that having conceptual tools to talk about epistemic responsibility is useful for the project of assessing and improving our epistemic practices. While I am here treating these kinds of projects as valid and valuable pursuits, I am bringing into question how we should judge whether we have been successful in these endeavours. I propose that one way to bring feminist epistemology together with mainstream analytic epistemology is to allow feminist considerations and insights to enter into the success conditions that we employ in shaping and evaluating theories of knowledge. So, in addition to testing our theories on how well they can handle Gettier cases, barn facade cases, skepticism and all of the other accreted standards of evaluation, we can test our theories against how well they handle, for example, epistemic oppression and active ignorance. This is a question not just about what theories are correct, but also what theories provide us with tools that are useful for evaluating and analyzing problems related to the practice that is being evaluated. To be clear this is not to say that I am not worried about truth, or implying a relativism about truth. On the contrary, as I believe is the case for most feminist epistemologists, I care very much about the truth. Rather, I am saying that what we can and can't do with a theory is one thing, amongst others, that can recommend a theory to us.

1.3 The Dissertation Project

The project that I describe above is quite obviously too broad for the purposes of writing a contained dissertation. But what I can do here is make a contribution to this larger project of forging connections between feminist epistemology and mainstream

epistemology. I accomplish this task by focusing on a particular concept that plays a

central role in theorizing in both feminist and mainstream epistemology, and

exploring how this concept can be augmented with feminist insights within a

particular theory of knowledge located within mainstream epistemology. The concept

is responsibility and the theory is John Greco's knowledge-as-achievement.

1.31 Responsibility Across Conceptual Borders

In this project I choose to focus on the concept of *responsibility* and how that concept

fits into theories of knowledge, or more specifically, theories of *what knowledge is*. I

choose to focus on epistemic responsibility in part because of the practical necessity

of narrowing the scope of my project of responding to Haslanger's challenge.

However, the choice is not arbitrary. Responsibility is a key concept in moral and

political thought, and focusing on the concept of responsibility across epistemic,

ethical and political borders provides rich ground for the project of integrating

feminist insights that I will explain in the following section.

With that in mind I want to begin with a broad distinction between two

conceptions of *epistemic responsibility*: one that is more obviously ethical and one

that is more obviously epistemic. But I want to be careful not to imply that there is a

clean distinction between the ethical and the epistemic in these concepts. Rather, it is

better to think of the difference as a matter of emphasis along these two dimensions.

So, the first more obviously ethical sense of *epistemic responsibility* is the

sense that is operative when we are talking about what kinds of ethical responsibilities

we have as knowers or, in other words, what kinds of epistemic responsibilities we

have as ethical agents. For example, there are many cases where ignorance

predictably leads to bad moral behaviour: If I don't educate myself about Canada's colonial history, then I will be unaware of the legacies and continuing machinations of colonialism in Canada today. For example, I will fail to understand how disproportionately high rates of child seizure in Indigenous communities relates to the legacies of residential schools and the 60s scoop. And this ignorance might lead me to support policies that are insensitive to that history and that continue to cause harm to those communities. My ignorance, in this case, contributes significantly to my moral failure. And, depending on my context, I might be culpable for that ignorance, i.e., I could have *known better.* This sense of epistemic responsibility recognizes that our success as moral agents is dependent on our success as epistemic agents. And the study of this kind of epistemic responsibility might most obviously be understood as the study of the ethics of our knowledge practices. Because this sense of epistemic responsibility relates more directly to our moral practices, going forward I will refer to this as *moral practice related epistemic responsibility* or MP epistemic responsibility for short.

The second sense of *epistemic responsibility* that I have in mind is related to conceptions of what knowledge *is*. This sense of epistemic responsibility relates to what are often considered to be some of the oldest and most central questions in epistemology: what is the difference between someone who comes to merely believe something truly and someone who *knows* something? Why should we value knowledge more than true belief? The distinction can be cashed out in terms of something like responsibility: someone who comes to believe X truly by mere lucky coincidence does not know, whereas someone who is responsible for coming to believe truly has earned the honorific of knower. For ease of reference I will refer to

this as *epistemic practice related epistemic responsibility* or EP epistemic

responsibility for short.

I want to be careful to note that in making this distinction between MP and EP

epistemic responsibility I am not intending to imply that epistemic and moral

practices can be understood as distinct practices. In fact, I'm interested to explore the

ways in which these practices intersect and overlap. One way to understand the

overarching goal of the narrow project is that it is an attempt to understand how these

two senses of epistemic responsibility relate together, i.e., how the ethics of our

knowledge practices shape our theories of knowledge and vice versa. Epistemic

responsibility in the moral sense is dependent on epistemic responsibility in the

epistemic sense: in order to hold people morally accountable we need to be able to

hold them epistemically accountable. I have not as of yet come across an account of

moral responsibility that does not have an epistemic component—it's not enough (in

most cases) to be blameworthy to have done the wrong thing. On most accounts, you

need also to have had some inkling that it was wrong or be culpably ignorant of such

facts. And then, as we will explore in Chapter 2, feminist epistemologists have done

significant work to establish that our epistemic success is dependent on our moral and

political success—when we have unjust moral and political arrangements we can

reasonably expect to have negative epistemic consequences.

My project is best characterized as focusing on EP epistemic responsibility

because that is the notion that is most active in Greco's account. However, because of

the interconnections between EP and MP already mentioned, in exploring the former

we will sometimes encounter the latter. Additionally, I want to begin this project with

the guiding principle that the notion of epistemic responsibility that I develop has

some level of coherence with other notions of responsibility. I take this kind of broad coherence to be a relatively uncontroversial criterion of success in many corners of philosophy. While it may not be a definitive criterion of theory success, coherence with other similar concepts and theories from other conceptual domains speaks well of a candidate theory because, at a minimum, it broadens the possible scope of application of that theory, and recruits theoretical allies so to speak. However, perhaps more importantly, if we are concerned about the potential ethical implications of our theories, then it is prudent to be concerned with what our notion of responsibility in one domain would imply if it were carried over into another domain. And, similarly, it is prudent to consider how our candidate theory coheres with existing theories in other domains that we want to preserve.

1.32 Why Greco's Knowledge-As-Achievement?

Now we have narrowed in on a particular concept of focus: EP epistemic responsibility. We can now narrow in even further down to a particular theory that employs this concept: Greco's knowledge-as-achievement theory. While Greco does not, as far as I know, seek out connections with feminist epistemology, I argue that his account has several features that make it well suited to be adapted and expanded for this purpose: 1. Greco explicitly builds his account with the intention of capturing the dynamics of epistemic practice[7] and of epistemic normativity in particular, which, at least prima facie, should make his account amenable to assessments against the feminist insights that I highlight, which focus explicitly on the dynamics of actual practice; 2. Greco centres the concept of explanatory salience in his theory building.

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[7] See §1.22 for discussion of the term "dynamics of epistemic practice".

This makes his account at least prima facie amenable to incorporating the infrastructure of multiple levels of complementary responsibility that we will build in Chapter 4; 3. Greco's account, like many others, is "ability-centred", i.e., ability is part of its central and defining concept. However, unlike some accounts of ability, Greco's account already contains a contextual undergirding that can be exploited to import feminist insights. I will use this contextual concept of ability as a fulcrum point for leveraging the social and contextual constitution of our knowledge practices when assessing and reconstructing Greco's theory.

I will elaborate on these points in more detail as we delve into the knowledge-as-achievement view. But before we can make any more progress in our task, an overview of Greco's account, including the criteria he uses to assess his own account is required.

1.33 Knowledge-As-Achievement

In his book Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity (2010) Greco develops a detailed theory of knowledge which characterizes knowledge as a kind of success resulting from ability, i.e., as a kind of achievement. In this section I will give a brief summary of Greco's theory that will help to provide context for Chapters 2-4, where we will develop tools for the project of reconstructing Greco's account in Chapter 5. I begin in §1.331 by outlining the criterion by which Greco judges his own theory success. Then in §1.332 I give a brief summary of the major features of the knowledge-as-achievement account. And finally in sections §1.333 and §1.334 I outline how the concept of ability plays a central role

in Greco's account, and how this centring of ability fits within the broader context of mainstream epistemological developments.

1.331 Context: Virtue Epistemology

While virtue theory is generally considered to have its roots in various ancient sources, most obviously Aristotle, its contemporary resurgence in epistemology is often credited to the work of Ernest Sosa starting in the 1980s. In particular, Sosa's paper "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence vs. Foundations of Knowledge in the Theory of Knowledge" (1980) is typically cited as providing the seed for the growth of contemporary virtue epistemology. In this paper Sosa argues that the two main theories on offer in epistemology at the time—coherentism and foundationalism—are fatally flawed. Roughly, Sosa argues that there are no viable candidates that can provide the foundations for foundationalism, and that coherentism fails to account for the highly intuitive justified status of simple perceptual beliefs, which he argues can be relatively free floating in their relations to our larger belief sets (p. 19). Sosa suggests a way out of this dilemma is to adopt a form of virtue theory, which in his description involves moving the object of justification from beliefs to "intellectual virtues":

> Here primary justification would apply to *intellectual* virtues, to stable
>
> dispositions for belief acquisition, through their greater contribution toward
>
> getting us to the truth. Secondary justification would then attach to particular
>
> beliefs in virtue of their source in intellectual virtues or other such justified
>
> dispositions. (Sosa, 1980, p. 23)

And, in parallel to developments that were beginning to happen in social and feminist epistemology around the same time, Sosa notes briefly that such a shift requires greater attention "..not only to the subject and his intrinsic nature, but also to his environment and to his epistemic community." (Sosa, 1980, p. 23). As we will see subsequent accounts in virtue epistemology emphasize different elements of this initial brief formulation. Quite quickly after *The Raft and The Pyramid* was published, this challenge of building virtue epistemologies was taken up vigorously by serval philosophers. These projects developed roughly along two theoretical pathways described early on by Lorraine Code as "virtue reliabilism" and "virtue responsibilism."[8]

The virtue reliabilist path is the one suggested by Sosa himself in *The Raft and the Pyramid*. Virtue reliabilists have tended to focus on epistemic virtues in the form of "…stable qualities that reliably attain true beliefs." (Battaly, p. 2), along the lines of the "stable dispositions" suggested by Sosa. Greco has arguably been one of the most enthusiastic pursuers of this path, publishing dozens of papers, and several edited volumes on the subject over the last 30 years. The project of Greco's *Knowledge As Achievement* book, which is the central text of my analysis, can be best understood as the culmination of this project, although he has continued to publish refinements and corrections on the subject in the intervening years. The following sections (§1.332-1.225) will supply a summary of this line of thought.

The second path of the virtue responsibilists is, as far as I have discovered, traced back to the work of Lorraine Code, which we will return to in some detail in

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[8] According to Battaly, Code was the first person to draw this distinction in these terms (Battaly, 2019, p. 2).

Chapter 3. Broadly speaking virtue responsibilists have tended to focus on epistemic

virtues in the form of "…acquired motivation for truth or other epistemic goods, for

which the agent is partly *responsible*." (Battaly, p.2). This approach can be understood

as focusing more on Sosa's suggestion on the shift of focus to subjects embedded in

communities and environments. In 1984 Code published a paper "Toward a

'Responsibilist' Epistemology" which prefigures her 1987 book *Epistemic*

Responsibility. In the former, Code takes *The Raft and the Pyramid* as her explicit

jumping off point. While acknowledging the potential promise of the virtue reliabilist

approach, Code see a different way forward. In Sosa's discussion of foundationalism

and coherentism, Code sees the seed of a new orientation—a move away from seeing

the knower as a "fleshless abstraction" and towards a knower as inhabiting an

"epistemic location." (p. 30). Again, in a similar vein to Sosa, Code also describes

this shift as a move from "seeking propositions to ground other propositions" towards

looking to "practices in which a belief shows itself justified." (p.31-2). On the view

that Code develops in this paper, and then later in her book, epistemic responsibility is

"a central virtue from which all others radiate." We will come back to Code's notion

of epistemic location in Chapter 2 and to her notion of epistemic responsibility and its

later development in Chapter 3. Several other "virtue responsibilist" approaches

emerged and were developed in significant detail by Linda Zagzebski, John

Montmarquet and Jason Baehr.

This difference between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism is cashed

out in various ways. For example, Susan Dieleman, in discussing Guy Axtell's

characterization of the difference, suggests that the difference can be understood as a

difference in the object of praise and blame: "According to responsibilism, it is the

endeavour itself, the manner in which the task of producing beliefs is carried out, that is evaluated, rather than the consequences of that endeavour." (p. 7). Where the virtue reliabilist is interested in any faculty or ability that produces true beliefs reliably, the virtue responsibilist is interested in how agents themselves shape the faculties or abilities that produce true beliefs. The epistemic agent in the virtue reliabilist sense can be understood as a passive participant in the production of true beliefs, whereas the epistemic agent in the virtue responsibilist sense must be an active participant (Dieleman, p.8). In their SEP entry, "Virtue Epistemology" (2019), Turri, Alfano and Greco characterize this difference as correlating with an externalist vs. an internalist orientation (p.5). This translates into a difference in what sorts of things are candidate virtues. For the externalist oriented virtue reliabilist virtues "…include faculties such as perception, intuition, and memory; call these 'faculty-virtues'." (p.5). For the internalist oriented virtue responsibilist virtues "…include cultivated character traits such as conscientiousness and open-mindedness; call these 'trait-virtues'." (p.6). In particular, they highlight that virtue responsibilism shares with internalism a deep concern with "cognition's ethical dimensions and implications" (p.6), which presumably they don't ascribe to virtue reliabilism.

Most commentators on the field of virtue epistemology seem to agree that this distinction between virtue responsibilism and virtue reliabilism is best understood as a difference in matter of emphasis and subject matter rather than as different theories of epistemic virtue all together. For example Battaly argues that it is better to understand the two virtue epistemologies as complementing rather than competing with each other. She argues that both approaches may be useful in understanding epistemic praiseworthiness, and that we can understand each approach as helping us to

understand different kinds of virtues that may be associated with different kinds of knowledge: "Reliabilist virtues may do a better job of explaining involuntary knowledge (e.g., perceptual knowledge) than responsibilist virtues do. And, responsibilist virtues may do a better job of explaining active knowledge (e.g., scientific knowledge) than reliabilist virtues do." (Battaly, p. 2). Turri, Alfano and Greco also argue that there are reasons to combine what they called "faculty-virtues" and "trait-virtues". First, they argue that trying to adjudicate what counts as the "real" epistemic virtues is likely counterproductive and distracting from the project of virtue epistemology itself, i.e. promoting epistemic flourishing. And second, similarly to Battaly, they suggest that each approach might allow us to understand different aspects of our epistemic practice:

> Faculty-virtues seem indispensable in accounting for knowledge of the past and the world around us. Trait-virtues could be required to account for the full range of richer intellectual achievements, such as understanding and wisdom, which might presuppose knowledge but which arguably also exceed it. (Turri et al., p.6)

I emphasize this consensus about the utility of considering these two approaches together because I think it speaks in favour of bringing tools from these sorts of projects to bear on each other. And in fact there may be more porousness between these approaches than is generally recognized. In the discussion of Code's work in Chapter 3, and later the integration of the ecological lens with Greco's account, we will see an option for how these two approaches might come together.

1.332 Greco's Success Criteria

Now that we have at least a partial picture of the context from which Greco's account has emerged, we can get into the gritty details of Greco's theory. One thing I really appreciate about Greco's book is that he is explicit about his goals and his own criteria for theory success. Greco's motivation for developing his 'knowledge as achievement' account is to provide a normative framework for a reliabilist account of knowledge. The shape of Greco's account, and the criteria he employs to assess it, reflect this goal. His main criteria can be summarized as follows:

1. Provide an account of epistemic normativity.

Greco argues that what holds most people back from accepting externalist/reliabilist accounts is that they don't seem to provide an adequate account of the normative force of our knowledge attributions (Greco, 2010, p.6).[9] The sort of normative force that Greco has in mind is an evaluative force: "Knowledge is supposed to be a superior state. There is supposed to be something good or praiseworthy about the person who knows, as opposed to the person who has only opinion." (Greco, 2010, p. 6).[10]

2. Provide an answer to the value problem.

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[9] Laurence Bonjour's famous example of the reliable, but seemingly epistemically irresponsible, clairvoyant whom we wouldn't want to count as having knowledge, captures this intuition (Bonjour, 2008, p. 368).

[10] Greco also gives the following clarification on how he understands "normativity" in a footnote on pages 17-18: "The sort of normative status I am interested in here is often labeled "epistemic justification." But as Alston and Wolterstorff both note, that term has been used to name a variety of normative properties, including (a) what I am calling "epistemic normativity," (b) narrower normative properties entailed by epistemic normativity, and (c) normative properties not entailed by knowledge at all. In the interest of clarity, therefore, I have decided to use the term "epistemic normativity" to label my present topic – that is, the full normative status required by knowledge." (Greco, 2010, pp. 17-18).

The value problem, broadly construed, is the problem of explaining why knowledge is valuable/more valuable than other epistemic states such as true belief.[11] Value-driven epistemologists, such as Greco, Kvanvig (2003), and Prichard, Millar & Haddock. (2010), take answering the value problem to be an important criterion for measuring the success of any epistemological theory, and Greco takes up this challenge in his project.[12]

      3. Provide an explanation of the pragmatics of epistemic practice.
Wayne Riggs argues that there is a growing consensus among epistemologists that much of the post-Gettier literature has become too complex and abstracted to be appropriately related to the ways in which we do or should evaluate knowledge (Riggs, 2008, p.28). In keeping with these ideas, Greco puts a large emphasis on the pragmatic functions of our actual epistemic practices. Greco states that any account of knowledge, in order to be successful, must also be able to explain "what knowledge ascriptions are for and how our practices of evaluation achieve their purposes." (Greco, 2010, p.5).

      These criteria overlap significantly with ones that I am interested in. Building a theory that takes insights from feminist epistemology into account and is sensitive to considerations of non-individualistic responsibility certainly requires an understanding of epistemic normativity and the pragmatics of everyday practice. And understanding the ways in which knowledge is valuable to us is an important part of those dynamics. However, as I will illustrate, even with this overlap we may differ in what counts as success in meeting these criteria.

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[11] See Greco, 2010, p. 98 for various other ways that the value problem is construed.

[12] See Riggs 2008 for an overview of "value-driven" epistemology.

It is important to note that these first three criteria are not the only ones that are operative in Greco's theory construction. He tests his theory against many of the criteria standardly operative in mainstream analytic epistemology, such as: preserving the objectivity of knowledge; answering the skeptic; preserving the "proper subject" of knowledge i.e., preserving the idea that there is a coherent, unitary and therefore "theorizable" phenomenon of knowledge; and showing that the theory can be tested against a wide range of "industry standard" intuitions about what counts as knowledge in the form of Gettier cases, barn facade cases, etc. It is not within the scope of this project to give an assessment of how well Greco's theory fares in regard to all of these standards. However, I have selected his theory as my central starting point in part because his book presents an extremely detailed and thoroughly defended account of knowledge.

1.333 Knowledge-As-Achievement (KAA)

To construct his account Greco employs Edward Craig's (1990) argument that one of the main purposes of our knowledge concepts is to identify reliable informants in order to gather information for use in practical reasoning contexts. According to Greco, the way that we assess the reliability of an informant is by determining whether their belief is the product of the exercise of a cognitive ability. So, more specifically, when I say that someone knows I indicate that they have an achievement or success that results from a cognitive ability attributable to them (Greco, 2010, p. 12), which Greco formalizes as follows:

S knows that p if and only if: 1. p is true; 2. S believes that p; and 3. S believes the truth because S's belief is produced by intellectual ability. (Greco, 2010, p. 12)

Knowledge attributions, on this account, have normative force because they are successes resulting from ability as opposed to *mere* lucky successes (Greco, 2010, p. 4). Greco argues that this normative force is explained by the fact that we value achievements, in general, for their own sake.

Greco's definition suggests that to have knowledge is to have a belief that is true *because* it was produced by an intellectual or cognitive ability. The terms 'because' and 'ability' are important to Greco's definition. On his account 'because' indicates that the abilities of the knower are part of a causal explanation for why someone believes truly, rather than falsely or not at all, that p. This causal relation is cashed out in terms of the explanatory salience that an intellectual ability has in that person coming to believe *truly* that *p*. This allows Greco to exclude Gettier style cases where the person believes from ability and has a true belief, but their belief is not true *because* it was caused by the exercise of ability, but rather by a lucky coincidence.

As for ability, Greco's account relies on the idea of reliability of performance over relevant possible worlds. Greco formalizes his concept of ability as follows:

S has an ability A(R/C) relative to environment E = Across the set of relevantly close worlds W where S is in C and in E, S has a high rate of success in achieving R. (Greco, 2010, p.77)

E here represents the stable conditions that set the scope of relevant close possible worlds, whereas C represents the conditions that might shift from relevant close possible world to world. For example, Jane has an ability to play soccer well in

suitable conditions (for example, it's not a hurricane, she's not in the arctic, and she has no broken bones, etc.) when she has a high rate of success at playing soccer well across the set of relevantly close possible worlds (i.e., worlds where Jane is playing soccer in suitable soccer conditions). On this view, in order for someone to count as having an ability she need not have actually been consistently successful in exercising this ability in the past, since she could have just had bad luck and been prevented from being successful due to circumstances not related to her ability. And vice versa: having a good track record does not guarantee that she has the ability, since she could have a successful track record only due to luck and not ability.

Greco notes that ability alone can never provide a sufficient condition for knowledge, since environment must be part of the causal story as well (Greco, 2010, p.140). For example, I cannot gain knowledge about what street I am on through my vision if it's midnight on a new moon, and there has been a blackout. Greco describes these kinds of factors as 'luck,' but argues that they do not represent the kind of luck that interferes with responsibility and therefore do not interfere with proper credit attribution (Greco, 2010, pp.140-141).

This account of the roles of luck and ability in knowledge production implies that if a person fails to get knowledge it is either because they lack the appropriate ability or they are simply unlucky because their circumstances were not appropriately enabling of their ability. In other words, if you fail to get knowledge you are either incompetent or unlucky.

The contextualist semantics comes into Greco's theory because of the importance of the concept of the explanatory salience of one's ability in a knowledge ascription. In order to provide the infrastructure for this part of his account Greco

builds his theory around an understanding of the relative truth of an explanation in respect to various contexts:

> Consider, for example the cause of a car crash at a major intersection. The police deem that the car crash was caused by excessive speed, and accordingly, they issue the driver a summons. Later in the year, city planners consider the crash along with several others that occurred at the same location. They determine that the crash was caused by difficult traffic patterns and recommend changes to the Board of transportation. Who is right, the police or the planners? (Greco, 2010, p. 106)

Greco argues that the same thing applies to ascriptions of both epistemic credit and moral responsibility because both require causal explanations, and causal explanations are always true or false relative to a particular context (Greco, 2010, p. 107).

Greco's account, then, seems to fit his own criteria quite tidily. In defining knowledge as a kind of achievement, or as 'success from ability,' Greco connects an external feature of the knower (i.e. their cognitive abilities) with the normative force of our credit attribution practices in general. Greco argues that this normative force is explained by the fact that we value achievements, in general, for their own sake. Therefore, knowledge is more valuable than true belief, because achievements are more valuable than lucky coincidences. And finally, with respect to the third criterion of explaining the pragmatics of epistemic practice, in casting knowledge concepts as integral parts of our informant identification practices, Greco is able to give plausible answers to what the purposes of our knowledge practices are and how our knowledge concepts meet those purposes.

1.334 Ability in KAA

Now that we have a sense of Greco's knowledge-as-achievement account, the task for the rest of this chapter is to see how this account fares in terms of engaging the five insights from feminist epistemology that I will identify in Chapter 2. Something that gives Greco's account potential for the kind of engagement with feminist epistemology that I am looking for is that he places epistemic normativity within larger contexts of normativity. As we saw, Greco considers epistemic normativity to be a subclass of the larger category of achievements more generally. This groups knowledge with moral achievements, athletic achievements, aesthetic achievements, etc. However, I will argue that much of this potential remains unfulfilled because Greco does not consider the rich resources available for thinking through the ethical and political aspects of achievements.

In order to see why this is the case we will begin by focusing on a concept that is central to Greco's notion of achievement: *ability*. Recall that, on Greco's account, in order to be categorized as having an achievement and therefore as having knowledge, one's abilities need to be appropriately *salient* with respect to all of the other factors that contributed to one coming to believe truly. Much hangs in this account on how we understand what abilities are, which ones have the potential to be salient, and what it is for something to be appropriately and sufficiently salient and to whom. How do our concepts of ability relate to our concepts of disability? In fleshing out these notions in richer detail with ethical and political considerations in mind, we can explore the potential for engagement with feminist insights.

1.335 The Centrality of Ability More Broadly

First, a bit of background on how ability has become a central concept in contemporary epistemology broadly speaking will help us to situate the concept of ability that is operative in Greco's account and also the wider importance of ability concepts for the discipline.

Questions about what abilities are knowledge relevant go back to the earliest explorations of epistemology. Aristotle, Hume, and Descartes, amongst others, were keenly interested in what kinds of abilities are conducive to knowledge acquisition. More recently, in the aftermath of Edmund Gettier's 1963 paper, there has been an increasingly explicit focus on using cognitive or intellectual abilities to carve out genuine cases of knowledge from merely lucky true beliefs. Gettier (in)famously argued that justified true belief can't be a complete description of knowledge because we can have accidentally justified true beliefs that don't seem to count as knowledge. Gettier's paper not only challenged the commonly accepted tripartite (justified, true, belief) account of knowledge, but also made epistemic luck central to epistemological theorizing. More specifically, it triggered a requirement for epistemologists to explain what role luck plays in our epistemic practices and what is required to be ascribed epistemic credit/responsibility if being justified isn't enough.

Ability showed up fairly quickly in the long line of responses to the Gettier problem. For example, one line of thinking developed by Alvin Goldman attempted to solve the Gettier problem by focusing on causal processes. In the earliest version Goldman argued that in order for a true belief to count as knowledge there must be an appropriate causal connection between the fact that p and the belief that p (Goldman, 1967, p.369). Goldman argued that acceptable causal connections would include

perception, memory and inference (about causal chains) (Goldman, 1967, p. 369). In later works, Goldman continued this line of thought to develop several iterations of a reliabilist account of knowledge that ditched the requirement that there be a causal connection between the fact that p and the belief that p in favour of the requirement that one's belief be formed by a reliable cognitive mechanism or process (Goldman, 1976, p. 771). The reliabilist position grew into a massive literature, and continues to be a dominant approach to theory building in contemporary epistemology. And this focus on ability has only been strengthened with a resurgence of virtue theoretical frameworks and their application to questions about knowledge practice. Greco's account, being both reliabilist and virtue theoretical, doubly centres the importance of ability.

This brief summary will be enough for the purposes of contextualizing the narrow project. We will look into some aspects of Greco's theory in more detail as they become relevant when we get to Chapter 5.

1.4 Plan

My project is to reconstruct a concept of EP epistemic responsibility, building from Greco's knowledge-as-achievement framework, that takes feminist insights into account (the narrow project). And, in doing so, I hope to contribute to building further porousness between the internal boundaries of epistemology (the broad project). The following four chapters are dedicated to this task, and they are designed to approach it in importantly different but complementary ways.

I begin in Chapter 2 by outlining five key insights in feminist epistemology that can be used as tools for assessing already existing theories, and for guiding our

reconstructive project. I argue that the key insight that needs to be captured in the account of epistemic responsibility that I will build is that we are situated knowers, i.e., we are looking for a *thoroughly social* and *non-individualistic* notion of responsibility. The strategy that I take to build this notion is threefold.

First, in Chapter 3, I provide a theoretical backing of currently existing *thoroughly social* and *non-individualistic* notions of responsibility that serve to lay a groundwork for my notion of epistemic responsibility. Much interesting work on this topic has been done in moral, political and MP epistemic responsibility. Similarly to the task of Chapter 2, the goal is not to provide a comprehensive survey of theoretical work on responsibility, but rather to draw out tools and frameworks that will be helpful in thinking through EP epistemic responsibility.

Second, in Chapter 4, I develop an extended analysis of a concrete phenomenon that I take to be a *thoroughly social* and *non-individualistic* context of responsibility: responsibility for addiction, or rather for the harms associated with drug use. This juxtaposition is a methodological choice that I believe is important. I want to make tangible for myself and for the reader what hangs on our lived experiences of ascribing responsibility within communities. I believe it is important to go into a theory building project with these considerations in mind. So, the reader must bear with me on what may seem like a tangent into a crash course on issues related to the harms of drug use. I believe the insights we can draw from this will be worth the journey.

And finally, in Chapter 5, taking all of the insights and tools that I have gathered in Chapters 2-4, I embark on the project of conceptual reconstruction. I use John Greco's knowledge-as-achievement account as a starting base, outlining its

strengths and weaknesses in accounting for the insights I've gathered. I then bring in

disability theory in order to shore up the notion of ability operative in Greco's account

in order for it to account for the ethical and political complexities of epistemic

practice.

CHAPTER 2

Key Insights from Feminist Epistemology

2.1 Preamble

The task of this chapter is to give a relatively detailed outline of what I take to be

some of the most important insights developed by feminist epistemologists that can be

applied as success criteria in the way I suggest above. The key insights I will focus

and expand on below are as follows:

1. **Knowledge and knowers are best understood as *situated* rather than *atomistic*.[13]**

2. **Ignorance is of vital importance to knowledge in theorizing our epistemic practices, and should not be presumed to be sufficiently described as a simple lack of knowledge.**

3. **Our epistemic practices are sites of significant injustice and oppression.**

4. **Because epistemic injustice and oppression are systemic they require systemic analyses and interventions, i.e., attention to hermeneutical frameworks.**

5. **The hermeneutical frameworks that scaffold epistemic injustice/ oppression are *structurally resilient,* i.e. are resistant to change because of structural features.**

To be clear, *this is not meant to be a definitive list* of all important insights coming

from feminist epistemology, *nor is it meant to be a comprehensive summary* of the

history of feminist epistemology. There are several excellent volumes (e.g., Grasswick

2011, Crasnow & Superson 2012) and *SEP* entries (Grasswick 2018, Anderson 2020)

that tackle this task. Rather, the goal is to provide material for a later experiment in

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[13] I am using the word 'atomism' here as used by feminist epistemologists (e.g. Grasswick 2018) which I will expand on below (p.50). This use of 'atomism' is distinct from other uses of the term 'atomism," e.g., Bertrand Russell's logical atomism, Epicurean atomism, etc.

conceptual reconstruction —in Chapter 5 we will examine what it looks like when we ask that our theories be successful in these dimensions with respect to the purposes of examining the ethical and political conditions of our epistemic practices.

2.2 Context

It will be helpful before going into the detailed outlines of the insights I have selected to give a more general and brief background on the development of feminist epistemology. To begin we can start with saying what feminist epistemology is not: an epistemology of "women's ways of knowing." It is true that feminist epistemology has a genealogical connection with women's knowledge and knowledge of women: historically, feminist epistemology grew out of wider feminist movements and was integral to the development of feminist philosophy and activism (Rooney, 2012, pp. 340, 347; Tuana, 2006). However, feminist epistemology has grown into a rich and varied methodology for approaching questions about knowledge. Like feminist methodologies in philosophy more broadly, many contemporary feminist epistemologists focus their work on topics and concerns that are relevant for theorizing oppression in a wide array of intersecting forms and in aiding concrete activist aims (Grasswick, p.10), i.e., as intersectional feminists.

Another common supposition is that feminist epistemology is a branch, type or form of social epistemology (Anderson, 1995), or that at least this is true of most feminist epistemology (Grasswick, 2018, p.2). While there is, as discussed above, significant overlap between the goals and starting assumptions of social epistemology, there may be reasons to refrain from subsuming feminist epistemology under social epistemology. Phyllis Rooney cautions against trying to categorize feminist

epistemology under any one sub-category within epistemology, arguing that doing so has often been a step towards containing and thereby obscuring and/or dismissing feminist work. In her paper "Feminist Philosophy at 25" (2012) Rooney argues that what makes feminist epistemology distinctive is not just about what feminist epistemologists do, but also what mainstream epistemologists don't do. Rooney argues that what keeps feminist epistemology distinctive from mainstream epistemology is that mainstream epistemologists "...remain hostile to, dismissive of, or notably ignorant of [feminist epistemology]." (Rooney, 2012, p.347). In other words, what makes mainstream epistemology distinctive from feminist epistemology is that mainstream epistemologists do not employ the methods or incorporate the insights of feminists.[14]

On this sort of view, feminist epistemology would be any epistemology that does take up feminist methods and insights. Perhaps not surprisingly given the shape of my project, I am inclined to take this more expansive view of feminist epistemology, to not limit it by restricting it to projects in social epistemology. However, I am aware of the controversial nature of such a description, and I think that, regardless of how we draw the boundaries, we can still look at the general trends in how feminist epistemology has in fact developed and how these developments foreground the insights I aim to highlight.

The development of feminist epistemology has been closely tied to the development of feminist scientific reform and feminist philosophy of science. In the

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[14] Rooney does argue that one thing that is distinctive of, though not exclusive to, feminist epistemology is this focus on meta-epistemological questions that call attention to our social and historical position not just as knowers, but also *as epistemologists* (Rooney, 2012, p.348).

1970s feminists began to uncover and assert the deeply sexist nature of historical and contemporary scientific practices (e.g., the use of almost exclusively male test populations, see Liu & Dipietro Mager 2016), theories (e.g., sexist assumptions undergirding studies of human intelligence, see Okruhlik 1998) and communities (e.g., sexist biases in science remained largely undetected until women began entering the ranks of scientists in larger numbers, see Grasswick 2011). As evidence of the deeply sexist, racist and otherwise prejudicial practices of science grew, a pressing question presented itself: what is the best way to reform science? Sandra Harding (1986, 1991) outlined a tripartite taxonomy of feminist responses to this question that is still influential today and has been expanded beyond questions about science to questions about knowledge more generally.

First, there was the "feminist empiricist" answer, which asserts the validity of methods of science and argues that bias needs to be removed by holding scientists and scientific practice more strictly to already existing standards and values—i.e., to remove bias is just a part of better executing the practice that we already have. (Harding, 1986, p. 24). In this way, efforts to promote equity in society more broadly contribute to the improvement of our scientific practice, because they allow scientists to notice biases that they should, by the lights of their own values and methods, be interested in eliminating.

Second, there is the standpoint epistemology response which is developed both on shared insights with, and in opposition to, feminist empiricism. Feminist empiricists recognize that women and others from marginalized identities are better positioned to identify biases that are compromising the practice of science. Feminist standpoint theorists argued that this "standpoint" of the marginalized offers a

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"...morally and scientifically preferable grounding for our interpretations and explanations of nature and social life." (Harding, 1986, p. 26). This suggests that the objectivity of scientific research is intimately and ineliminably tied with the identity of the researcher. And therefore scientific practice can only be improved by centring these standpoints, e.g., perhaps by giving epistemic deference to people who inhabit such standpoints. However, feminist standpoint epistemologies drew criticism both for their unintuitiveness with respect to the tie between social identity and objectivity (from the empiricist perspective), and for their seeming reliance on a unified notion of a female standpoint, which is widely deemed problematic.

This second criticism is taken up in the third type of response identified by Harding, namely feminist postmodernism. If we accept that there are no unified standpoints from which to ground scientific knowledge, but many fractured and complex standpoints which produce different understandings of the world, then rather than attempting to produce a unified and objective practice of science, we should embrace the plurality of these perspectives, e.g., we might move away from hierarchical notions of knowledge that place scientific knowledge at the top, and move to a more casuistic notion of knowledge that gives equal credence to traditional/ cultural, spiritual or experiential knowledge. This sort of response suggests that the primacy that is afforded to science, rationality, and objectivity is a product of Western/ androcentric biases that should be abandoned (Okruklik, p.32).

While Harding's taxonomy provided a useful conceptual map and shared vocabulary for early feminist epistemologists and philosophers of science, these lines of thought have criss-crossed and developed sophisticated iterations that cannot be easily categorized amongst these three categories. For example, Helen Longino's

highly influential critical contextual empiricism (CCE) (1990, 2002) arguably incorporates or is consistent with insights from all three strands. Longino's project grounds the objectivity of science in the social practices of scientific communities (Longino, 1998, pp. 179-180). Objectivity in science is a function of the social practices that scientific communities have developed and refined, e.g., robust criticism of other scientists' work, and standards and practices for reproduction of experiments. Longino therefore argues that working towards objectivity requires ensuring that there are shared avenues for criticism, norms of response to such criticism, shared values and standards that can be drawn from to facilitate criticism, and a commitment to ensuring equality of intellectual authority (Longino, 1998, pp. 174-184). While CCE clearly is designed to preserve empiricist intuitions about the objectivity of science, it also requires placing a high value on diversity of standpoints in the scientific community (Borgerson, 2011).

As we will see below, elements of these approaches can be gleaned in many of the contemporary theories in feminist epistemology. For now, we have enough of a background to get into the details of the five key insights that I want to highlight.

2.3 Key Insights

While I have delineated five key insights here, they should not be understood as robustly distinct, but rather in many cases additive and mutually supportive. In particular, the first insight that challenges individualism can be thought of as a core insight upon which all others are built. Or, to put it another way, we might easily understand insights 2-5 as further elaborations of insight 1. This will become more clear as we proceed.

2.31 Challenging Individualism & Universalism

Key insight: *Knowledge and knowers are best understood as situated rather than atomistic.*

This is one of the earliest and perhaps most central insights from feminist epistemology (Grasswick 2001, p. xvi; Anderson 2020, p. 2). The move towards a concept of situated knowing tracks larger developments within feminist theory more broadly, i.e., the move away from individualistic and universalizing conceptions of human beings and our practices. Like the early roots of social epistemology that we explored in Chapter 1 above, early feminist epistemologists were also motivated to challenge the individualistic foundations of traditional epistemology. The frame of contemporary mainstream epistemology has historically, and continues in many cases today, to analyze knowledge and knowers through the highly individualistic "S knows that P" formula; the job of the epistemologist within this traditional frame is to find the necessary and sufficient conditions for any particular person "S" to know any particular proposition "p". This view of knowledge and knowers assumes that there is a universal standard that could be applied to all knowledge and all knowers, i.e., that we can just plug in any individual and any proposition in and our formula will yield the right result. Early feminist epistemologists characterized this mainstream approach as "atomistic" in the sense the knowers and knowledge appear to be discreet and interchangeable, i.e. that we can examine individual pieces of knowledge and individual knowers outside of their particular contexts.

This atomistic conception was challenged by early feminist epistemologists along at least three main dimensions: 1. That the proper subject of knowledge is an individual; 2. That individuals qua knowers are fully interchangeable; and 3. That

individuals qua knowers have the Cartesian sort of power to gain knowledge just through their own private rational deliberation without reliance on others (SEP, Grasswick, p.12). Lorraine Code (1991), Sandra Harding (1991) and Lynn Hankinson Nelson (1990) were amongst those that argued that in addition to the traditional "S knows that P" framework not being descriptively adequate, it is also not normatively adequate because it obscures the ways that varying social identities affect knowledge acquisition and attribution. If we are looking to understand not just how people in fact acquire or ascribe knowledge, but also for how they ought to acquire and ascribe knowledge, an atomistic model will not do the job because it will leave untouched key features of our knowledge practices. In contrast to seeing knowers as atomistic, feminist epistemologists characterize knowers as "situated", i.e., embedded within particular social identities, communities, physical circumstances, etc. On this view we must start with the epistemic subject as robustly socially, politically and physically situated and build our theories from there.

In her groundbreaking book *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (1991) Code challenged the individualistic and universalist notions of knowledge and knowers presented in most mainstream epistemologies at the time. In particular she begins with an exploration of the ways in which the sex/gender of the knower is epistemologically significant.[15] This was a question that was at the front of many people's minds at the time, in particular because of the wave of work from feminist scientists and philosophers identifying and critiquing sexist biases over the preceding few decades. This phenomenon, for

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[15] Code's use of the term "sex" in 1991 would probably correspond better in contemporary usage to term gender or, more likely to the complex of both sex and gender.

example, seems to indicate that the gender of the knower is epistemologically significant. The fact that science had been dominated by male perspectives shaped what scientists got right and what they got wrong. What is taken to be a neutral perspective is actually a male perspective, i.e., it matters very much epistemologically for science who is doing and evaluating the science. Code's analysis is much broader than science. She argues that we can see this same phenomenon in theory of knowledge, in philosophy more broadly, amongst other epistemic domains.

The development of intersectional feminism is key for fleshing out the meat of this insight. While much early talk of situated knowledge focused on the social category of gender, gender is only one aspect among many others that fills out the specificity of our situated knowing. Race, class, ability status, sexuality, amongst many other factors interact in complex ways for every unique individual. Early intersectional feminists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins argued that there is no such thing as *the* women's perspective, or *the* black women's perspective or *the* disabled black women's perspective (for example). While we can, and sometimes need to draw commonalities among groups for reasons of creating political solidarity or coordination, we cannot forget that when we attempt to universalize these perspectives, even on a granular level, we are likely to leave someone out. And equally importantly, when we consider one aspect of oppression at a time, we are missing something important. The way black women experience sexism in their communities cannot be read off of the experiences of non-black women added to the experiences of black men. For this reason intersectional feminism, critical race theory, disability studies, prison studies and other discourses

that examine oppression in other forms are required for feminist epistemology to have any robustness.

It is important to point out that the commitments to situated, social and/or non-individualistic conceptions of knowledge and knowers is not a commitment to relativism. Most, if not all feminist epistemologists share with mainstream epistemologists a commitment to truth and objectivity, even if they sometimes differ on how to conceptualize and/or ground that objectivity. Helen Longino's social conception of scientific objectivity discussed in section 2.2 above is one such grounding, and there are various others.

This insight about the situatedness is very complex. As mentioned above, I understand the following four insights to give further elaborations of this complexity. But broadly speaking, to say of knowledge and knowers that they are *situated* is to say that we cannot give a sufficient analysis of what knowledge is without paying attention to the context of the knower. It is to say that we cannot represent our knowledge practices properly with interchangeable universal agents. Nor can we analyze the justification of a particular belief, or isolate a particular knowledge claim, from the knower and their context. Both knowledge and the knower are situated.

2.32 Epistemologies of Ignorance

Key insight: *Ignorance is of vital importance to knowledge in theorizing our epistemic practices, and should not be presumed to be sufficiently described as a simple lack of knowledge.*

A notable theoretical innovation that sits at the intersection of feminist epistemology and critical race theory is the development of *epistemologies of ignorance*. Early work in this area came from Marilyn Frye's The Politics of Reality (1983) and Charles

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Mills' *The Racial Contract* (1997). Frye argued that ignorance that whites have about

racism and oppression in their history and in their present should be thought of as

active rather than a passive lack or absence. Rather, it is "a complex result of many

acts and negations." (Frye, p.118). Mills, drawing inspiration from both critical race

theory, feminist theory, and traditional social contract theory develops an extended

account of "epistemologies of ignorance" in describing his notion of "the Racial

Contract". Mills' elucidation of this contract cleverly repurposes the notion of a

"social contract" developed over centuries of philosophical history through Hobbes,

Locke, Rousseau and then John Rawls more recently. In his classic thought

experiment, Hobbes imagines a "state of nature" where all people are free and equal

(Hobbes, 1651). This state, Hobbes argues, is a state of war of all against all. Hobbes

argues that it is our interest in avoiding this state of nature that justifies our being

signatories in a "social contract" that requires us to give up some of our freedoms for

the sake of our own survival. And even to submit to an authoritarian rule that ensures

that this contract be kept. While it is not in our interest as individuals to be punished

for transgressions of such a contract, it is in our interest that the contract be enforced.

However, as Mills points out, the social contract is based on the idea of equal

signatories, and historically this has not been how social contracts have formed:

> But the peculiar contract to which I am referring, though based on the social
>
> contract tradition that has been central to Western political theory, is not a
>
> contract between everybody ("we the people"), but between just the people
>
> who count, the people who really are people ("we the white people"). So it is a
>
> Racial Contract. (Mills, p. 3)

While traditional social contract theory attempts to discover an "ideal" social contract, that is beneficial for all, Mills focuses on the real social contracts that in fact undergird our social relations. While notions of "equality of all persons" have been popular among white political theorists for centuries, the notion of who counts as a person, and as such can enjoy this status, has often been extremely limited, i.e., to white, property owning men. The Racial Contract is an expression of the social and political arrangements that uphold white supremacy in contemporary North America and beyond. On this view white supremacy is itself a political system that protects whites in a variety of complex ways (Mills, p.3), primary of which is to uphold their dominance over non-whites to their own social, political and economic benefit. While Mills' characterization of the Racial Contract shares a similarity to traditional contract theory in the sense of delineating parallel moral and political contracts within the overarching idea of a "social contract", Mills also emphasizes the importance of understanding the "epistemological contract" that makes up the larger Racial Contract:

> ...the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made. (Mills, p. 18)

Included in this set of cognitive dysfunctions is a commitments to the reality of a clearly demarcated class of white people against a clearly demarcated class of non-white people. And the further understanding that white men were the originators of civilization and the only ones capable of civilizing non-whites (Mills, p.13). Amongst

the many other fictions about non-whites, this agreed upon delusion about the inferiority of non-whites and their need to be aided through the natural civilizing powers of whites were (and continue to be) required for the justification of projects of colonization, exploitation, enslavement and genocide over the past several centuries (Mills, p. 18).

It will be helpful to note, in order to avoid future ambiguity, that there is an interesting variation in the use of the term "epistemology" in "epistemology of ignorance" here. In the more traditional sense of the word, "epistemology" is taken to refer to the study of knowledge broadly speaking, or to some area of knowledge, e.g., the epistemology of testimony or the epistemology of perception. Using this sense, at first blush one would assume that "epistemologies of ignorance" delineates a line of study that centres on ignorance broadly speaking or ignorance in specific domains, i.e. an area of study that produces theories of ignorance. While it is true that Mills' work can be understood as producing a theory of ignorance, Mills is using the term "epistemology of ignorance" in a substantively different way. The "epistemology of ignorance" that Mills refers to in The Racial Contract refers to sets of practices, norms, hermeneutical structures, etc., that function to preserve ignorance for specific groups of people. In this sense "epistemologies of ignorance" are the objects of study themselves.

One of the key insights in Mills' characterization of "the epistemology of ignorance" that sustains the Racial Contract is that this contract of shared ignorance is "psychologically and socially functional", i.e., it serves to perpetuate political, economic and social dominance for whites and to insulate them from the moral atrocities they enact and/or are complicit with. This is an important conceptual

innovation because it disrupts a naive clear cut distinction between knowledge being broadly good and functional for humans and ignorance being bad and broadly dysfunctional.

The conceptual framework of epistemologies of ignorance have since been developed and expanded in a variety of different directions. Nancy Tuana and Shannon Sullivan guest edited a special issue on ignorance for *Hypatia* in 2006 (*Special Issue: Feminist Epistemologies of Ignorance*, Vol 21, No.3) and a year later they co-edited an anthology titled *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (2007).

Tuana's work (2004, 2006) has been influential in developing the discourse around epistemologies of ignorance, and in particular for developing the concept of "constructed ignorance" as opposed to ignorance as a mere lack of knowledge. Relevant for the purposes of this project, Tuana starts from the assumption that at least one of the goals of epistemology is to account for the dynamics of our epistemic practices, and argues that from this stated goal (which at least social epistemologists seem to endorse) we can derive the imperative to pay equal attention to ignorance:

> [I]f we are to fully understand the complex practices of knowledge production and the variety of factors that account for why something is known, we must also understand the practices that account for not knowing, that is, for our lack of knowledge about a phenomenon or, in some cases, an account of the practices that resulted in a group unlearning what was once a realm of knowledge. (Tuana, 2006, p. 2)

Tuana's treatment is compelling particularly because she fleshes it out with many specific and detailed examples. In a set of two papers—"The Speculum of Ignorance: The Women's Health Movement and Epistemologies of Ignorance" (2006) and

"Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance"(2004)—Tuana explores various issues related to ignorance about women's bodies and health, including lack of knowledge about female anatomy, female orgasm, and male birth control, and documents the way the women's health movement creatively mobilized to combat these epistemologies of ignorance.

In the 2004 paper Tuana outlines a "taxonomy of ignorance" that it is helpful to flesh out in more detail what is at stake in philosophers paying attention to ignorance as much as they have been paying attention to knowledge. Tuana's taxonomy includes six species of ignorance, though she does not take this to be an exhaustive list: 1. "Knowing that we do not know, but not caring to know" 2. "We do not even know that we do not know"; 3. "They don't want us to know"; 4. "Willful ignorance"; 5. "Ignorance produced by the construction of epistemically disadvantaged identities"; and 6. "Loving Ignorance". I won't go into detail on all of these here, but going into some detail on some of the main examples that Tuana explores will be useful.

"Willful ignorance" we already covered above in our discussion of the "Racial Contract." The first entry in the taxonomy shares quite a bit of similarity with the concept of willful ignorance, but perhaps captures a broader swath of our knowledge practices. While some instances of this sort of "not caring to know" ignorance are likely benign (e.g. not knowing how many individual hairs there are on average on the human head) others are not. Tuana gives the example of the persistent failure to develop a form of birth control for males. She argues that there is evidence that there were promising candidates for male birth control being developed in the 1960's, but that they were eventually dropped out of any substantial research programs because of

the belief that "men would be less motivated than women to use such a contraceptive and less willing the accept the side effects…" (Tuana, 2004, p. 4). In particular, there were concerns about the possible side effect of libido loss in males, whereas similar side effects in females, plus a whole host of others including life-threatening blood clots and depression, were not seen as relevant to the continuance of birth control development for females (Tuana, 2004, p. 5). While there is some recent development in the science of male contraceptives, there is still no widely available option that has been adopted by males on a large scale. Females remain the ones who have to carry the risks and burdens of being responsible for birth control. This example illustrates nicely the idea that what sorts of ignorance persist can be in large part a function of the interests of those in positions of dominance and social value.

Another case of widespread ignorance that resists attempts to know about it is the widespread phenomenon of child sexual abuse. Despite widespread testimonies and physical evidence (e.g. rates of gonorrhea infection among children) of such abuse, there have been a wide variety of practices and conceptual frameworks employed to suppress such knowledge (Tuana, 2004, p. 12). While this sort of suppression clearly requires a certain amount of willful ignorance, Tuana argues that it also requires the creation of "epistemically disadvantaged identities." Tuana argues that the construction of the concept of "false memory syndrome" has historically functioned to preserve ignorance of child abuse. Rather than take the testimony of abuse as valid, the concept of "false memory syndrome" allowed for the denial of such abuse in favour of the construction of the testifiers as "not being epistemically credible because they are constructed as being suggestible, gullible, or vengeful." (Tuana, 2004, p. 13). Rather than believe that there exists a widespread

epidemic of child sexual abuse, in many cases perpetrated by what are considered to be "up-standing" men, it has been common to take the testimony of victims of such abuse as evidence of an epistemically unreliable character.

While Tuana does not cover this, it is worth noting that this problem is significantly worse for people with disabilities, who are both at high risk for being constructed as "epistemically unreliable" and who statistically face some of the highest risks for sexual violence of all social groups. Conservative estimates suggest that children with disabilities globally experience sexual violence at rates three times higher than the non-disabled population (WHO), and in the US there is evidence that for those with intellectual disabilities rates of sexual violence are more than seven times as high (Sharpiro, 2018). These issues are further complicated by the widespread sexual disempowerment of people with disabilities, who are often treated by non-disabled people as asexual or as "perpetual children". People with disabilities are often denied education about their own sexuality because of these false conceptions of asexuality. To put it another way there are active "epistemologies of ignorance" that perpetuate ignorance for both disabled and non-disabled individuals about disabled sexuality. And this ignorance arguably contributes to further vulnerability to sexual exploitation and assault.

All of these issues have come to sharp focus in the debate over the validity of "facilitated communication", a method of communication for non-verbal people developed in the 1970s by Australian teacher Rosemary Crossley. Facilitated communication involves a facilitator who guides the arm of a person who otherwise has limited capacity for verbal communication to type on a keyboard. The method has been controversial since its inception, and remains highly controversial today. But

what first raised suspicion about the method was the emergence of wide-scale

allegations of sexual assault that were gathered through facilitated communication.

What is striking about this controversy is the type of pushback that these allegations

received. When facilitated communication yielded a large number of allegations of

sexual assault immediate reactions were that this must be a sign that the method is not

working. As one commentator on the historical development of facilitated

communication puts it: "But almost from the beginning, strange things began to

happen: Some [facilitated communication] messages said - or were interpreted by

facilitators to say - that disabled [facilitated communication] users had been abused

by family members or caregivers." (Green, p. 75). There are many legitimate reasons

to challenge the efficacy of the facilitated communication method, but the report of

wide scale abuse of children with disabilities is not, by itself, one of those legitimate

reasons. In fact, given what we know statistically, it is sadly something that we should

expect were the method working properly. We will revisit questions about the

construction of epistemically disadvantaged identities in the context of sexual

violence in section 2.35 when we talk about the resilience of hermeneutical

frameworks.

The examples discussed here have been largely about very problematic ways

in which ignorance can be produced, maintained, enforced, etc. It is also worth

mentioning Tuana's construction of "loving ignorance," which speaks to a kind of

ignorance that is desirable and/or beneficial. Drawing from Frye's and Lugones' work

on "loving perception" Tuana notes Lugones' invitation to white/Angla women, in the

context of solidarity building, to recognize that there are things about the experiences

of women of colour the white women will never understand. This does not mean

giving up on understanding altogether or on stopping the conversation, rather, it means being actively cognizant of the limitations of one's ability to know. This idea can be expanded further to incorporate critiques of the way in which people in positions of dominance demand the stories of marginalized people's lives, sometimes in order to justify providing aid.

Two main points stand out as larger takeaways from looking at all of the cases that Tuana explores. First is the disruption of the naive dichotomous understanding of ignorance as a bad thing and knowledge as a good thing. While we may, in general want to avoid ignorance, we must be careful about the impacts we can have on others and on the world around us when seeking knowledge. And second, we need to recognize the importance of attending to patterns of ignorance and knowledge, to what causes these patterns, and whether they are hindering or contributing to our epistemic, ethical and political flourishing.

Feminist theorists continue to refine and expand on conceptual frameworks related to epistemologies of ignorance (e.g., Gaile Pohlhaus, 2012; Allison Bailey, 2020) and to explore how these tools can be fruitfully employed to understand a wider variety of topics including epistemologies of ignorance in the use of evolutionary psychology in philosophy (Hall, 2012), Arizona's education system (Cabrera 2012), and self-ignorance (Pitts 2016), to name a few.

Studies of epistemologies of ignorance have helped to establish the tight connection between our epistemic failures and our ethical failures, and have shown that in trying to understand these failures we need to look not just at what knowledge is and how to acquire it, but how systemic features structure what is known and what

is not known. In this way, as much as our ethical success is dependent on our epistemic success, so is our epistemic success dependent on our ethical success.

It is hard to overstate the potential for change that embracing this insight in our epistemological theorizing has. There is so much work in epistemology that takes what looks like a one-sided focus from the perspective of epistemologists of ignorance. This means that we have an enormous body of literature that we can reevaluate with the equal importance of ignorance to knowledge in mind. To take an example that will be helpful for us later in Chapter 5, we could look at Edward Craig's influential project in *Knowledge and the State of Nature* (1990) that we saw Greco relies heavily on in his theory of knowledge, as does Fricker in her book on epistemic injustice (2007). Craig's book is now arguably a classic of social epistemology. In it he runs an experiment of thinking through how our knowledge related practices might have developed along with the rest of our evolutionary history:

> Human beings need true beliefs about their environment, beliefs that can serve
> to guide their actions to a successful outcome. That being so, they need
> sources of information that will lead them to believe truths ... So any
> community may be presumed to have an interest in evaluating sources of
> information; and in connection with that interest certain concepts will be in
> use. The hypothesis I wish to try out is that the concept of knowledge is one of
> them. To put it briefly and roughly, the concept of knowledge is used to flag
> approved sources of information. (Craig, 1990, p. 11)

Let's accept for the moment Craig's account about the function of knowledge concepts in our practice. How might we apply a similar lens to questions about the function of ignorance concepts and of ignorance itself? It's not my intention to

develop such an account here, as that is a whole other project in itself. However, we can suggest a few possible directions such a project could take given our discussion of ignorance above. Recall, the important insight from Mills that ignorance can be highly "functional" for certain individuals and communities. It is often in the interest of those in power, if their goal is to maintain that power, to control not just the "flow" of knowledge, but also the "flow" or ignorance. While truth is certainly valuable to human social relations, ignorance can be equally prized, even if problematically so. And recall, that on Tuana's taxonomy, not all ignorance is negative either. Understanding your own ignorance, or failing to, can have profound social consequences. These are just a few points of possible connection, and this is just one theory. The larger point is that epistemologies of ignorance, especially in the context of epistemologists who are interested in capturing the dynamics of our everyday knowledge practices, provide fertile ground for expanding our ideas of what matters for these practices.

2.33 The Ethical & Political Significance of Knowledge Practice

Key insight: *Our epistemic practices are sites of injustice and oppression.* The recognition of the intimate ties between our ethical success and epistemic success has been explored in a variety of ways beyond attentiveness to ignorance. There is an increasingly large and diverse body of literature that explores the ways in which our epistemic practices can be understood as sites of injustice and oppression. "Epistemic practices" is a broad term, and its contents cannot be easily enumerated. However, when I am talking about our epistemic practices as sites of injustice and oppression I am speaking of, at least, our practices of gaining knowledge (E.g. scientific practices),

our practices that support active ignorance (E.g. education practices), and our practices of credit ascription and knowledge ascription (E.g. in political discourse). To say that these practices are sites of injustice and oppression is too say that these practices can be organized in such a way as to cause injustice and oppression.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000)[16] articulated one of the earliest and most influential accounts of the ethical and political dynamics of epistemic practices and their associated harms in her 1990 book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. In the quote highlighted in section 1.4, Hill Collins argued for an expansion of the boundaries of epistemology, a focus on the power dynamics of epistemic practice, and an attentiveness to how those dynamics affect black women in particular, as well as people inhabiting other marginalized identities. Hill Collins points out that black women, because of their location within intersecting forms of oppression, have been excluded from contributing to the collective process of building knowledge validation processes in many domains, and therefore these processes have tended to reflect the interests of elite white men (p. 253). Hill Collins argues that black women have had to develop their own knowledge validation processes, or alternative epistemologies, that suit the needs and experiences of black women (p.254). Hill Collins identifies harms experienced by Black women academics who attempt to bridge the gap between these conflicting epistemologies. Black women are required to navigate multiple standards of validation, and when speaking in ways that would be intelligible to one group may often seem unintelligible to the other. In the face of such challenges, challenges not faced by white male peers:

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[16] 10th anniversary revised edition of the 1990 original.

Some women dichotomize their behaviour and become two different people. Over time, the strain of doing this can be enormous. Others reject Black women's accumulated wisdom and work against their own best interests by enforcing the dominant group's specialized thought. Still others manage to inhabit both contexts but do so critically, using perspectives gained from their outsider-within social locations as a source of insights and ideas. (p.268)

And while Hill Collins recognizes that these tensions can create sites of creativity, working within these tensions rarely comes "without substantial personal cost." (p. 268). We will build on some of these ideas more in the following two sections that centre around hermeneutical frameworks in discussing Maria Lugones' contemporaneous work on the concept of "world-travelling" and Kristie's Dotson's more recent work on epistemic oppression (which draws on and expands the work of Hill Collins).

In recent years there has been a huge blooming of literature on the ethics of knowledge practices (including work on epistemologies of ignorance touched on above). However, Miranda Fricker's formalization of the concept of an "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2007) in particular has triggered an explosion of literature on harms done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower (Fricker, p.1). Fricker's book identifies two broad categories of epistemic injustice: First, a testimonial injustice which occurs when a less powerful speaker is given a lower credibility assessment than she deserves due to prejudice on the part of a more powerful hearer (Fricker, p.28); and second a hermeneutical injustice, which occurs when someone is unable to secure uptake on an expression of their experience that it

is in their interest to express due to a gap in the dominant interpretive resources (Fricker, p. 155).

Fricker argues that these injustices not only have negative ethical consequences, but also have negative epistemic consequences in that they cause the potential attributor, and therefore also the larger community, to miss out on knowledge from reliable informants (Fricker, p. 43). And she also emphasizes the gravity of the ethical harms of epistemic injustice due to the ties between epistemic agency, rational agency and personhood. Fricker's framework has been expanded and critiqued along a variety of dimensions. Some of the most compelling critiques concern lack of acknowledgement of women of colour progenitors such as Hill Collins and Lugones, and I think relatedly an underlying problematic individualism in the construction of the concept of epistemic injustice and in the virtue theoretical framework that she proposes to address it. Many of these critiques focus on Fricker's failure to recognize the full import of the sorts of hermeneutical injustices that she describes and their role in testimonial injustices. We will explore some of these critiques in the following sections.

2.34 The Importance of Hermeneutical Frameworks

> **Key insight:** *Because epistemic injustice and oppression are systemic they require systemic analyses and interventions, i.e., attention to hermeneutical frameworks.*

I like the term hermeneutical frameworks, but you might also call these things "social imaginaries" as does Lorraine Code.[17] Hermeneutical frameworks, as I understand

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[17]"An imaginary thus conceived is (distantly) analogous to a Kuhnian paradigm or a Foucauldian epistêmê in shaping, framing, conferring legitimacy and/or its opposite, on quotidian knowing in its particularity and generality." (Code, 2017, p. 94)

them here, are sets of practices, ways of seeing, norms, values, emotional attitudes, concepts (etc.) that individuals and groups employ to understand experience and guide behaviour. Hermeneutical frameworks can be consciously developed and employed for a particular purpose, by a particular individual or group. But most often hermeneutical frameworks are deeply historically and socially constituted; they evolve over generations and millennia, some aspects of them are incredibly resilient and some are more transient.

Hermeneutical frameworks are therefore dynamic and not static, they are plurally overlapping and not monolithic (even when they may seem to be so). They do not need to have hard defined edges or internal coherence, and often they don't. Hermeneutical frameworks can be incredibly harmful, especially when they interpret or categorize some individuals as worthy of moral consideration and others as not. And they can be incredibly empowering, especially when they provide tools for asserting one's worth in the face of oppressive structures. For good or for ill, we need hermeneutical frameworks, we cannot do without them, because we need them to understand and interact with the world, and to coordinate those understandings and actions with others.

And for this reason we are always in need of finding new ways to improve our hermeneutical frameworks, to make them better for our understanding of, and interaction with, the world. Pride activist movements of various kinds (queer, Black, Disability, fat, etc.) can be understood, amongst other things, as movements to change hermeneutical frameworks. Disability activists, for example, have been working to change the public perceptions of disability for decades—to bring new interpretive

frameworks from Disability communities that understand disabilities not as inherently tragic or negative, and as potential sources of joy, insight and value in life.

A compelling example of this kind of work comes from disability activist critiques of the construction and use of "inspiration porn"[18] by the non-disabled population. Inspiration porn comes in in a variety of media (e.g., posters, memes, videos, and news stories). In one of its most popular iterations, which Jane Grue (2016) calls "Everyday Hero" inspiration porn, it depicts a disabled person involved in an everyday activity (e.g., out on a date with their partner) that would typically not be noteworthy and is accompanied by a narrative slogan that suggests to a presumed non-disabled viewer that the disabled individual is heroic for their participation in that activity (e.g., "if he can get this pretty girl, so can you!"), or perhaps for their very existence. And this phenomenon of "inspiration porn" is just the smaller instance of similar narratives that many disabled people experience on a daily basis. For example, the late Disability activist and comedian Stella Young, in an article she wrote for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Ramp Up* series, recounts the following incident:

> I was on a train with my earphones shoved in my ears completely ignoring my fellow commuters (as is my want early in the morning) while reading inane things on twitter. A woman on her way to getting off at her stop patted me on the arm and said "I see you on the train every morning and I just wanted to say it's great. You're an inspiration to me." Should I have said "you too"? Because we were doing exactly the same thing; catching public transport to our

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[18] As far as I know Young was the first person to popularize the term, but it is unclear (at least to me) where the term originated.

respective places of employment. I was just doing it sitting down. Should I

have pointed out that, in many ways, that requires less effort, not more?

(Young, 2012).

Critiques of inspiration porn and the attitudes that underlie it from disability activists,

scholars and bloggers are various and multi-faceted.[19] But one of the general points

argued against inspiration porn is that it serves to reinforce the idea that disabled lives

are not, or not as much, worth living as non-disabled lives. In this way it serves as an

expression of non-disabled dominance. But as disability activists have been arguing

for decades, this view of disability is patently false. Many of the challenges that

people with disabilities face come from the built, social and economic systems that

are hostile to disabled bodies, identities and lives. This tension has been forcefully

highlighted in the 2016 *Rights not Games* protests in the UK, which contrasted the

celebration and economic support of Paralympians with lack of social and economic

supports for people with disabilities more broadly (Pepper, 2016).

Critiques of this kind, in combination with Disability pride movements that

celebrate disabled experiences and lives, push non-disabled people to shift their

interpretive frameworks about what it means to have a disability, and what kinds of

expectations can be had for disabled people's lives.

This example illustrates the complexity of the sorts of things that make up

interpretive frameworks, and the kinds of work it takes to shift them. Let us now

return to some of the critiques of Fricker's work that I hinted at above. Several

philosophers (E.g. Mason 2011; Medina 2011, 2012a; Ayala & Valisyeva 2015,

Manne 2017) have contended that Fricker's characterization of epistemic injustice is

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[19] See, for example: Kasper, n.d.; Vance, n.d.; Grue, 2016.

too individualistic, and therefore fails to recognize the full significance of the systemic features of epistemic injustice and of hermeneutical structures themselves. These critiques have been developed in some detail along (at least) two main lines: 1. Fricker fails to recognize the significance of how credibility excesses contribute to testimonial injustice, and 2. In centring testimonial injustice, Fricker fails to notice that hermeneutical injustice is a necessary (or near necessary) condition for testimonial injustice. Examining these critiques in some detail will help to explicate the importance of hermeneutical frameworks for understanding epistemic justice/ injustice.

As we saw above, Fricker describes her central concept of testimonial injustice as follows: "...a speaker suffers a testimonial injustice just if prejudice on the hearer's part causes him to give less credibility than he otherwise would have." (p.4). Fricker briefly considers whether credibility excesses might also be able to count as testimonial injustice, but concludes that "On the whole, excess will tend to be advantageous, and deficit disadvantageous." (p.18). She considers two main cases of credibility excess. She first considers a case where someone gets a credibility excess due to their accent. She argues that:

> "At a stretch, this could be cast as a case of injustice as distributive unfairness —someone has gotten more than his fair share of a good—but that would be straining the idiom—credibility is not a good that belongs with the distributive model of justice. Unlike those goods that are fruitfully dealt with along distributive lines (such as wealth or health care), there is no puzzle about the fair distribution of credibility, *for credibility is a concept that wears its proper distribution on its sleeve. Epistemological nuance aside, the hearer's*

obligation is obvious: she must match the level of credibility she attributes to

her interlocutor to the evidence that he is offering the truth. Furthermore,

those goods best suited to the distributive model are so suited principally

because they are finite and at least potentially in short supply. [...] Such goods

are those for which there is, or may soon be, a certain competition, and that is

what gives rise to the ethical puzzle about this or that particular distribution.

By contrast, credibility is not generally finite in this way, and so there is no

analogous competitive demand to invite the distributive treatment. (Fricker

2007, my emphasis 19–20)

I will come back to this notion of distribution in a moment, but first I want to note the

other case that Fricker considers at some length. She imagines a fictional person who

is given credibility excess due to the fact that they are a member of the "ruling elite."

She imagines that a person who is persistently accorded credibility excesses might

"...develop such an epistemic arrogance that a range of epistemic virtues are put out of

his reach, rendering him close-minded, dogmatic, blithely impervious to criticism and

so on." (p.20). Of this case Fricker says "...yes perhaps we are confronted with an

interesting and special case of testimonial injustice…"(p.21), but she dismisses it

from consideration because of what she describes as the "cumulative" nature of the

injustice that is described in what she deems a "semi-fanciful" case (p.21).

Testimonial injustice as she has formulated it focuses on, in her words, "token" cases

of epistemic injustice, that is injustices that occur in "particular moments" (p.21).

    This dismissal is quite odd to my ears given that Fricker will later argue that

the most problematic kinds of testimonial injustices are the ones that follow speakers

across many social contexts, i.e., those that are systemic and persistent. But I think

that this dissonance comes from the kinds of cases that figure most prominently in Fricker's framework. I agree with Fricker that the kinds of injustices that we ought to focus on are not cases where the ruling elite is deprived of the capacity to be epistemically virtuous by their compromised epistemic situations. But that this is how the injustice gets narrated here is a function of the way in which Fricker narrows her focus to the kinds of harms that can be done to individual speakers by individual hearers in one-off interactions. I don't see the case that Fricker describes as "fanciful" at all. In fact I see it as mundane in the sense that privilege epistemically stunts many people, and it is through this ubiquity of the kind of stunting that privilege is both consciously and unconsciously maintained. This is part of what I take Charles Mills to be arguing in his work on white ignorance.

Jose Medina, amongst others (e.g. Manne 2017), has criticized the individualism in Fricker's framework as well as her dismissal of the role that credibility excesses might play in epistemic injustice. Medina (2013) argues that Fricker's dismissal of this is a symptom of Fricker's tendency to look for injustice and harm in one-off testimonial exchanges. In contrast, he argues that: "...epistemic injustices are typically not direct and immediate harms; they have a temporal trajectory and they reverberate across a multiplicity of contexts and social interactions." (p. 59). Medina argues that in order to understand the phenomenon of epistemic injustice we have to pay attention to the ways in which credibility excesses can harm the other interlocutors of a speaker because "Credibility never applies to subjects individually and in isolation from others, but always affects clusters of subjects in particular social networks and environments." (p. 61).

However, Medina concurs with Fricker that "Credibility is not a scarce good that should be distributed in equal shares..." (p. 63). Rather, Medina argues that epistemic injustices, whether due to credibility excesses or deficits, need to be understood as violations of proportionality. He describes his notion of proportionality in two subtly, but I think importantly, different ways. First, he states that we need to "aspire to making our credibility judgments as proportionate to epistemic deserts and credentials as possible." (p. 63), or in other words to the "epistemic merits" of the subject. And second, he says that proportionality is determined by contrast and "comparison with what is deemed to be a normal subject and knower." (p. 63).

While I agree with Medina's critique of Fricker's individualism, I have some worries about how Medina cashes out what it is to have a proportional allocation of credit. On the first description credit seems to centre around individual merit: proportional credit is about giving the right amount in relation to the "epistemic desert" and credentials of an individual. I worry about the use of a merit based system for assigning appropriate credit, because of the need for distributing resources to address past unfair distribution and stigma. As Medina himself notes, our complex time-extended epistemic economies have these same and many more systematically and historically unjust systems. Simply "giving credit where credit is due" may not be enough to address the problems of epistemic injustice.

And I don't think adding the comparative and contrastive dimension is going to help here, since on Medina's view we are comparing and contrasting against what he refers to as the "normal subject and knower." But who is this "normal" subject and knower? Are they the people who are currently getting the "correct" amount of credit? But who are these people? In an epistemic and moral economy that is shaped by

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systemic oppression and privilege where do we find these normal subjects? My worry

is that this framework simply duplicates Fricker's individualism by continuing to

forward individual merit-based credibility assessments even while attempting to

recognize the greater relational complexities of how credit and discredit are parts of

larger dynamic systems with histories and observable patterns. And I think this

tension is borne out in the way that Medina, similarly to Fricker, spends a large part of

his work expounding on the individual virtues that we can develop to combat

epistemic injustices.

It is notable that at times Medina seems to recognize this exact tension. For

example, in a 2011 paper on the same topic he writes, when speaking of the much

diagnosed *To Kill a Mockingbird* example used by Fricker, "The jurors' ignorance of

their own prejudices—more than the absence of any particular virtue—is what got in

the way of epistemic justice." And then later on he writes:

> The problem is both social and personal. And the personal failure is both—and
>
> simultaneously—cognitive and emotive: it involves the inability to see the
>
> relevant epistemic saliences and also the inability to feel the interpersonal
>
> relation of trust required for the transmission of knowledge. Trust can be
>
> characterized as a relation that has both a cognitive and an affective
>
> dimension. As Karen Jones (1996) has argued, trust requires the capacity to
>
> have certain affects, in particular, empathy. (Medina, 2011, p. 31)

So here, Medina acknowledges that without appropriate empathy and without

awareness of our biases, little can be expected in the way of progress towards

addressing systemic epistemic injustices. And indeed, we might similarly worry, that

without epistemic justice, that is, without more fair distributions of credit, we won't

be able to make much progress on empathy or awareness of our biases. All this is to say, we may need to take Medina's framework further away from Fricker's individualism if we want to capture the complexities of our evaluative attitudes in both the epistemic and the moral realms.

The general point I want to make in this critical analysis of Fricker's and Medina's view, is that taking up the problem of epistemic injustice requires a thoroughly social and political understanding of epistemic practice, and that this requires paying explicit attention to the role that hermeneutical frameworks play in maintaining and resisting those practices. In the next section we focus on Maria Lugones' and Kristie Dotson's complex and rich work on this subject, and on the sorts of resources that Medina's account has to address the tensions that I identify above.

2.35 The Resilience of Hermeneutical Frameworks

Key insight: *The hermeneutical frameworks that scaffold epistemic injustice/ oppression are structurally resilient.*

This insight is prefigured in the literature on epistemologies of ignorance discussed in §2.32: epistemologies of ignorance, such as the Racial Contract described by Mills, function structurally to obscure themselves from the people who benefit from them.

In her "Playfulness, "World"-Traveling, and Loving Perception" (2003/1987) María Lugones develops a rich conceptual framework that is useful for describing the resilience of hermeneutical frameworks. She argues that people inhabit and travel between multiple "worlds". Lugones deliberately refrains from giving these worlds a strict definition, but arguably her "worlds" share similarities with what Code calls social imaginaries and what I have called hermeneutical frameworks. In these worlds

Lugones argues that we can, and sometimes have to, take on different properties. For example, in some worlds Lugones understands herself and is understood by others as playful, and in others she is understood as starkly serious. And she argues that people who come from subordinated groups are often required to be world travellers, to move in between different worlds and adjust themselves accordingly. Privileged people do not take on this burden as much, and therefore are in some ways epistemically less well positioned than those world travellers who must understand and move through many different worlds. This view obviously shares similarities with notions of standpoint epistemology discussed above. However Lugones' picture is richer in a variety of interesting ways. Firstly, her picture captures the ways in which these "worlds" or hermeneutical frameworks stand in relation to each other, and affect each other, even to the point of destruction:

> A traditional Hispano construction of northern New Mexican life is a "world." Such a traditional construction, in the face of a racist, ethnocentric, money-centered Anglo construction of northern New Mexico life, is highly unstable because Anglos have means for imperialist destruction of traditional Hispano "worlds." (p. 88).

And not only do these worlds have world-destructive capacities, they also have capacities to produce certain kinds of agents, and in particular, in some cases, to produce agents who will perpetuate the dominance of their world, in ways similar to what Mills described as epistemologies of ignorance:

> There is a maximal way of being at ease, viz., being at ease in all ways. I take this maximal way of being at ease to be somewhat dangerous because it tends

to produce people who have no inclination to travel across "worlds" or no experience with "world"-travelling. (Lugones, p. 90).

Lugones argues for the importance of building these world travelling skills, and for developing a playfulness with such travelling, in order to work towards removing relations of dominance between these worlds and towards producing agents who are not "dangerously at ease" in only one or very few worlds. As we will see below, this work prefigures some of Medina's work on the importance of "epistemic friction". On Lugones' account because people with privilege tend to be, though are not necessarily, more apt to be "dangerously at ease", they are therefore less likely to travel to other worlds whether by necessity or inclination. In fact they might not even have a sense that more than one world exists, or resist violently the cognitive dissonance created by such a realization.

This kind of cognitive dissonance should not be trivialized. For example, Karyn Freedman in her book *One Hour in Paris* (2014) talks about the kinds of toxic reactions to cognitive dissonance that people often have when being asked to acknowledge the experience of rape survivors, and often the challenges that survivors themselves face in acknowledging and understanding their own experience. Freedman argues that in the aftermath of a rape, many survivors are often subject to what she calls the "shattered worldview". This shattering comes from a disruption of a dominant interpretive framework: "...we are brought up to believe that the world is basically a safe place and that so long as we are dutifully careful we can protect ourselves from any serious harm...Unfortunately this is at best only partially true— that is, only true for adult men." (p. 109). A rape survivor cannot hold this narrative with the truth of their own experiences. And Freedman points out, this in part explains

why some rape survivors blame themselves for their own rape. The costs of accepting a new worldview where one is not safe from such violence are very high (p. 73). And then, if a rape survivor does try to communicate their experience to others there is often intense pushback that attempts to reaffirm the dominant narrative: questions about what the survivor could have done differently, what they were wearing, why they were there, about their past sexual history, about their general trustworthiness, about the reliability of their memory etc. These reactions, in both legal and non-legal contexts, serve to preserve the dominant framework, or at least to preserve it for some and enforce it on others.

It is important to clarify that Freedman's description above needs to be augmented with an intersectional lens. As has been made abundantly clear by the Black Lives Matter movement, Black people in North America are often by necessity raised with an understanding that they are in fact not safe in this world. And many Indigenous women in Canada know that they are more likely to experience sexual violence and murder than non-Indigenous women. Indigenous activists advocated for many years for action and information gathering on the highly disproportionate levels of violence, murder and disappearance of Indigenous women in Canada, and in 2016 their efforts saw some payoff with the landmark *National Inquiry in Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.[20] It is important to be specific about this because it is not the case that everyone absorbs dominant narratives in the same way. While Black and Indigenous women may be well aware of the dominant narrative of safety that Freedman described, and that it will be used to victim blame them should

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[20] See the report here: https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report

they experience violence, this should not be taken to mean that they believe this narrative.

It is important to keep these considerations in mind when analyzing the resilience of dominant hermeneutical frameworks. If we analyze the complexity of Freedman's account through Lugones' framework, we can say that men are often "dangerously at ease" in their "worlds", but this does not apply to all men in the same way. Race, class, ability status, age and many other factors affect what worlds we are at ease in and what worlds we are on edge in, and in some cases, in grave danger in. For some people, those who experience multiple overlapping forms of oppression, there might be no safe "world" in Lugones' sense. And these patterns of ease and unease contribute to the structural resilience of dominant frameworks and worlds. This is in part because these patterns make it harder, though not impossible, for those in power to develop the skills and knowledge they need to travel between worlds.

Kristie Dotson's work on epistemic oppression can be used to further develop this notion of resilience of hermeneutical frameworks. In her paper "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression" (2014) Dotson outlines three kinds of epistemic oppression that correspond with three kinds of change that can be made to an epistemological system: *First-order epistemic oppression* is a systemic epistemic exclusion that results from the "incompetent functioning of some aspect of shared epistemic resources with respect to some goal or value" (Dotson, 2014, p. 123); *Second-order epistemic oppression* is a systemic epistemic exclusion that results from interdependent epistemic resources being skewed in favour of historically privileged groups' experiences and to the detriment of historically marginalized groups (Dotson's idea then shares similarities with Fricker's hermeneutical injustice) (Dotson, 2014, pp.

126-7); *Third-order epistemic oppression* is a systemic epistemic exclusion that results from "a compromise to epistemic agency caused by inadequate dominant, shared epistemic resources." (Dotson, 2014, p. 129).

Dotson argues that the difficulty of addressing these three kinds of oppression is increased with each successive order. Addressing first-order oppressions requires pointing out existing shared goals and values and persuading epistemic peers that their epistemic practice is not supporting these goals/values. Addressing second-order epistemic oppression involves pointing out gaps in interdependent hermeneutical resources to those for whom it will be difficult for these gaps to be intelligible as well as likely addressing the first-order oppressions that support the second order oppressions. Addressing third-order epistemic oppressions involves getting community members to notice that they have implicit epistemic frameworks that exclude other community members, as well as addressing the first and second-order oppressions that might support the third-order oppression.

Dotson argues that addressing any of these kinds of oppression will be challenging because epistemic systems are extremely resilient, that is, they tend to be able to withstand a lot of countervailing evidence before members are motivated to revise them (Dotson, 2014, p. 120). However, Dotson argues that third-order oppressions are differently and more recalcitrant than first and second-order oppressions. While first and second-order oppressions can be detected from within the epistemic system itself, Dotson argues that third-order epistemic exclusions can only be detected from "outside" the shared epistemic framework and that this requires a more taxing epistemic shift in that it destabilizes the entire epistemic system (Dotson, 2014, p. 129). Combined with Lugones' "world"-travelling framework, we can see the

importance of having skilled "world "-travellers, i.e. those people who are aware of a multiplicity of "worlds" or epistemic/hermeneutical frameworks and have the ability to move between them and gain different vantage points. This sort of framework explains why marginalized standpoints might be more likely to be epistemically advantageous, but not necessarily so. Someone from a very privileged position could develop world travelling skills, and someone from a highly marginalized position could fail to develop them. But there are structural features of the ways that privilege and marginalization interact with hermeneutical structures that makes it the case that those who have the least power and are accorded the least credibility, are the ones most likely to have the skills to be able to challenge problematic hermeneutical structures. This contributes to the resilience of these types of structures.

Medina develops a set of related concepts in his book *The Epistemology of Resistance* (2013): meta-blindness, meta-lucidity, epistemic friction and kaleidoscopic consciousness. Building on the work of many of the thinkers already mentioned above (esp. Fricker & Mills), and using a virtue theoretical framework, Medina argues that while privilege seems to generally afford many advantages to the privileged, when it comes to epistemic success, privilege might actually be a liability. Medina catalogues a variety of epistemic vices that can accompany privilege and a variety of virtues that can accompany oppression.

The first vice that Medina discusses is *epistemic arrogance*, or the vice of a person being unable to "...acknowledge a mistake or limitation, indulging in delusional cognitive omnipotence that prevents him from learning from others and improving." (p. 31). Medina argues that this vice can come in various degrees of severity from the pathological extreme described above to lesser but still damaging

levels of arrogance about one's epistemic abilities. In its pathological extreme Medina refers to the intense epistemic arrogance of slaveholders in the American South who raised their children to command enslaved people without the possibility of resistance (p. 31). We can also think of the less pathological but still problematic phenomenon of "mansplaining" that has gained significant public recognition in recent years. While "mansplaining" can come in somewhat innocuous forms of a man explaining to a woman what she already knows, it can also come in potentially more damaging forms where men who have access to the fact that a woman has comparatively more knowledge than him on a subject aggressively contradict her expert opinion, and because of prejudicial credibility assessments, end up being taken as the authority on the subject. Again, as with testimonial injustices more generally, this kind of epistemic arrogance has negative consequences for almost everyone involved. In the case of the mansplained woman she likely loses social capital and is degraded in her capacity as a knower. In the case of the mansplainer, he himself loses knowledge, though importantly the incident may in fact be advantageous for him in the sense of gaining social capital or just generally having things go his way. And given that we think knowledge is generally a good thing, it is bad for the broader community, especially at systemic levels, because the community loses out on knowledge it could benefit from.

The second epistemic vice that Medina describes is *epistemic laziness*. This vice relates directly to the sorts of "active ignorances" discussed by Mills and Tuana. Epistemic laziness problematically limits the scope of things that one thinks they need to know about. It is described by Medina as a "...socially produced and carefully orchestrated lack of curiosity..."(p. 33). For example, Medina points to the fact that it

has been, and still is, the case that many people (many men from all socio-economic classes, and people in high socio-economic classes in general) do not have to know about the details of domestic labour, i.e., household chores, cooking, cleaning, caring for children, etc. (p. 32). Epistemic laziness in this sense captures the ways in which white privilege protects white people from needing to know about racial injustice, whereas no such option typically exists for people of colour.

Medina also notes the ways in which epistemic laziness can be active rather than passive. For example, in cases where systemic oppression and even genocide are kept hidden, to certain extents, from public view, Medina argues that:

> ...the machinery of oppression is rendered invisible: it is literally put out of sight to protect some members of the privileged class, either because they are depicted as unable to handle it, or just to spare them unnecessary troubles. Thus despite their greater access to the facts of social life, privileged subjects often ignore the most violent and hard-to swallow aspects of social confrontation. (p. 33).

And when the would be knower takes an active role in this kind of obstruction of knowing, we find the third vice identified by Medina: *close-mindedness*. Close-mindedness is the active residence to information and testimony that conflicts with a person's understanding of the world, or that would cause that person to lose privilege, favour or benefit of some kind. The denial of the experiences and testimonies of rape survivors as discussed by Freedman above is an example of this kind of close mindedness in action. This is especially the case when these denials are made by

people who are close to the perpetrator, and have self-interested reasons in preserving

a positive narrative about the perpetrator.[21]

Medina further argues that the combination of these vices, and the active

ignorance that is produced by this epistemically vicious character, leads to a very

serious problem for privileged epistemic agents. These agents become "meta-

insensitive", i.e., they become insensitive to their own insensitivities.[22] Agents that are

meta-insensitive are not able to feel the "epistemic friction" required to notice the

ways in which they are failing epistemically; these agents become insulated from the

very experiences, cues and testimonies that would allow them to see that they getting

something wrong.

Taken together these three vices and the resulting meta-insensitivity that they

foster emphasize the type of problematic resilience that we saw described by Lugones

and Dotson. Medina's vices of privilege share a structural similarity with Lugones's

sense of "dangerous ease" in a world. And his notion of meta-insensitivity shares

similarities with Dotson's third order epistemic oppressions.

Medina also highlights three contrasting epistemic virtues that often

accompany oppression: humility, curiosity/diligence and open-mindedness (p. 43).

Embodying these virtues, Medina argues, can lead to a "subversive lucidity", i.e., an

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[21] See Kate Manne's discussion of the Brock Tuner case (Manne, 2018, p. 198).

[22] Medina primary uses the term "meta-blindness" in his book, despite concerns that
he acknowledges about potential ableism inherent in this term. While he seems to see
meta-insensitivity as equivalent to meta-blindness (p.24), he chooses to persist in
using "meta-blindness" for the sake of continuity with discourse (p.xi-xiii). However,
I don't take this to be a sufficient reason. There are other ways to indicate continuity
without participating in language norms that we have good reason to think are
harmful. For example, by simply making reference to those with whom one wants to
be continuous and specifying the reasons for one's change of terminology.

ability to notice one's limitations in a way that gives one the ability to "...question widely held assumptions and prejudices, to see things afresh and redirect our perceptual habits, to find a way out or an alternative to epistemic blind alleys, and so on." (p. 45). Lucidity requires the ability to pay attention and respond to "epistemic friction". Medina then develops the notion of "meta-lucidity" which is "the capacity to see limitations in dominant ways of seeing." (p. 47). Medina's concept of meta-lucidity dovetails nicely with Lugones' concept of "world"-travellers. Those who have high levels of meta-lucidity are in Lugones' terms expert world travellers, they are people who have not gotten caught in the dangerous ease of inhabiting one world. And it is arguably only with meta-lucidity or "world"-travelling skills that we can expect to identify and address Dotson's third order epistemic oppressions.

What Dotson's, Lugones', and Medina's work requires us to recognize is that we need to understand ourselves as epistemic agents and communities as always in the grip of hermeneutical frameworks that we cannot see, ones that seem so natural to us that they are "like breathing air" so to speak. We have to, as individuals and communities, cultivate strategies for learning and discovering these frameworks, of listening specifically to those who sound unintelligible to us, especially when they tell us that they are suffering. This is, in some sense, a fundamental value that exists within intersectional feminist practices—the feminist methodology is that you should be prepared to recognize that you not only might be, but very likely are, complicit in harms that you cannot see or understand. And you must be prepared for this so that when these harms start to appear in your vision, when you start to feel the friction, as Medina puts it, you are not overcome by the cognitive dissonance and react in fear and defensiveness to maintain your current worldview. That this practice is necessary

is explained by structural features of our knowledge practices that Lugones, Dotson and Medina highlight.

2.4 Building from Feminist Epistemology

So, we have our five insights:

1. **Knowledge and knowers are best understood as *situated* rather than *atomistic*.**

2. **Ignorance is of equal importance to knowledge in theorizing our epistemic practices, and should not be presumed to be sufficiently described as a simple lack of knowledge.**

3. **Our epistemic practices are sites of significant injustice and oppression.**

4. **Because epistemic injustice and oppression are systemic they require systemic analyses and interventions, i.e., attention to hermeneutical frameworks.**

5. **The hermeneutical frameworks that scaffold epistemic injustice/ oppression are *structurally resilient,* i.e. are resistant to change because of structural features.**

In thinking about how we will use these insights to build a concept of epistemic responsibility, we will need to look for conceptual resources that can provide the infrastructure for a contextual and thoroughly social concept of responsibility, and also one that it is sensitive to the political context of responsibility, i.e., that is sensitive to the idea that our responsibility ascriptions carry heavy weight for justice and injustice in our practices. This is the task of the following two chapters. In Chapter 3 I explore existing theoretical frameworks that construct "ecological" conceptions of responsibility which allow them to capture complex social, ethical and political dimensions of responsibility practices in a variety of domains. And then in

Chapter 4 I look at the dynamics of responsibility practices related to the phenomenon of addiction and the gravity that different types of responsibility ascription hold.

CHAPTER 3

Responsibility, In Theory

3.1 Preamble

It is an important part of this project that the theory building process engages not only abstract theoretical constructs, but also concrete and consequential practices that involve the concepts in question—in this case responsibility. This is the main focus of Chapter 4. However, this is not to say that I do not see the value of abstract theoretical constructs. I am, after all, an analytic philosopher. Responsibility is a complex concept with various different senses. It will be useful at this point to outline in some detail how I understand these different senses and where I am placing my project within them. There are various domains where we apply the concept of responsibility. So we can narrow in on our topic here—epistemic responsibility—but we can also think of causal responsibility, legal responsibility, moral responsibility and political responsibility (amongst others). It is an assumption of this project that all of these senses of responsibility are deeply interrelated, although not necessarily unified. Therefore, to develop an account of epistemic responsibility, I need to be attentive to how the concept of epistemic responsibility fits with other significant notions of responsibility. I take a three-pronged approach in this task. First, I give a broad overview of several facets of the concept of responsibility in general (§3.2). Next I explore two revisionist methodologies in order to think through how to approach reconstructing the concept of epistemic responsibility (§3.3). And last, I explore some

non-individualistic/socially robust theories of responsibility (§3.4) that will help me situate the theory of epistemic responsibility that I develop later.

3.2 Responsibility As a Concept

The reader will recall that in §1.1 I made a broad distinction between two conceptions of epistemic responsibility: one that is more obviously ethical and one that is more obviously epistemic. The former concept concerns our ethical obligations as knowers, and the latter concerns distinctions between accidental true belief and true belief attributable to the agent. We can keep this distinction in mind when thinking through the concept of responsibility more broadly below.

3.21 Diachronic & Synchronic Responsibility

We can make a distinction between diachronic senses of responsibility that are related to dispositions and/or character traits, and synchronic senses of responsibility that express relations between particular events/states of affairs and particular persons/ groups/actions/entities. Diachronic senses of responsibility track the stable properties/ tendencies of an individual/group over time—what we have observed of them in the past and what we are reasonable to assume about their behaviour in the future. So, in this sense, we can say of some particular individual/group that they are responsible (or irresponsible) in general or that they are responsible (or irresponsible) with respect to some scope of activities, contexts, communities, etc.

In contrast, in the synchronic sense, we can say of a particular event/state of affairs that some entity (person, group, thing) is responsible for it. If we deem this state of affairs to be a morally good one, we might praise and/or reward the

responsible party for it. And, if we deem this state of affairs to be a morally bad thing we might blame and/or punish them for it. Generally speaking we think someone has to be sufficiently causally connected in the right way to the event/state of affairs in question to be ascribed this kind of responsibility.

These two senses of responsibility can be understood as intimately connected. The diachronic sense of responsibility can be understood as depending on the synchronic sense because dispositions may be determined by looking at the accumulation of individual incidents of behaviour in one's history and/or across possible worlds. And the synchronic sense might be understood as depending on the diachronic, since whether someone is responsible for a particular event might be related to their stable character traits. For example we might be inclined to dismiss morally bad behaviour and decline to ascribe responsibility if we think that someone's bad actions resulted from a momentary lapse in otherwise good judgement, an illness, coercion, etc., i.e., in cases where we don't think the action was properly connected to their agency/stable moral character.

3.22 Being & Holding Responsible

In the literature on moral responsibility, blame and praise there is a common distinction made between ascribing someone responsibility and holding someone responsible by concrete means. For example, Nelkin and Brink (forthcoming) make a distinction between being blameworthy and the ethics of blame. This distinction is in part made on the recognition that our blaming practices serve multiple functions, e.g., moral education, reconciliation, forgiveness, punishment (Nelkin & Brink, p.1). So, it might be appropriate to ascribe responsibility to someone (in the sense of them being

blameworthy) without it being appropriate to hold them responsible in concrete ways. There might be cases where holding someone responsible would be reasonably predicted to do more harm than good. For example, holding someone responsible might lead to life-threatening consequences that far outstrip the gravity of the wrong done. For example, it is arguably more harmful than good to hold someone responsible for a non-violent offence by calling the police if that person is from a social group that is regularly brutalized by the police.

And, it might be appropriate to act as if someone is responsible, even when it is inappropriate to ascribe them responsibility. For example, we might, for the purposes of education, hold a child responsible for their actions, but we might at the same time think that they don't yet have sufficient cognitive capacities to count as responsible (in the sense of being blameworthy or praiseworthy) in a robust way.

In the ascription sense, when we ask if someone *is* responsible, we are asking a question about their metaphysical status as an agent, i.e., about what relation their actions have with respect to a certain state of affairs. We are asking if their actions are connected to that state of affairs in the "right way" that would make them responsible. In contrast, when we ask about the appropriateness of holding someone responsible in concrete ways, we are asking about the pragmatic or ethical implications of us holding them responsible in our actions and/or attitudes. While, as I mentioned above, these ways of assigning responsibility can come apart, they too are intimately related. Typically being responsible gives us a reason to hold someone responsible in our actions and/or attitudes.

3.23 Backward & Forward Looking Responsibility

There are at least two ways that this distinction gets cashed out in the moral responsibility literature. First, the distinction between backward and forward looking can be used to characterize what justifies our responsibility practices. Backward looking accounts would typically argue that what justifies holding someone responsible is the fact that they are responsible. Retributivist accounts of responsibility are paradigmatically backward looking in this sense. And then there are forward looking accounts of responsibility that typically argue that what justifies holding someone responsible is the positive moral outcomes that might result from doing so. Free will skeptics like Derk Pereboom have such forward looking accounts. But you can also have accounts that consider both forward and backward looking considerations, such as Manuel Vargas's revisionist account of responsibility in his *Building Better Beings* (2013). Vargas argues that our responsibility practices are justified by their potential for building better beings, but that any individual ascription of responsibility is backward looking in the sense that it is a question of whether the individual in fact conformed to the norms of the practice that build better beings.

Iris Marion Young, who we will revisit shortly, makes slightly different use of these terms in her book *Responsibility for Justice* (2013). Young associates backward looking responsibility with what she calls the liability model, which ascribes responsibility on the basis of sufficient causal connection to the state of affairs plus knowledge that one's actions would lead to/contribute to bringing about that state of affairs. So far, this is similar to how I characterized the backward looking model above. But Young contrasts this backward looking liability model with a forward

looking responsibility in the sense of one taking up responsibilities for future redress, reconciliation, repair, etc. In this forward looking sense we can take up responsibilities as individuals or groups. In taking up this responsibility we ask others (including possibly our future selves) to hold us accountable for an outcome with respect to a particular person, thing, state of affairs, etc. This sense of responsibility is closely related to the notion of duty. And in this sense we can take up or acquire responsibilities for persons or states of affairs that we have no causal connection to. So for example, I might decide to take responsibility for a child's welfare even though I have no familial connections to that child, maybe because I see the need or there is no one else to do it. Young combines both of these senses of responsibility into her notion of collective responsibility, where individuals who are not strictly liable for an unjust state of affairs, but who are nonetheless causally connected to that state of affairs, may collectively take up responsibilities for working towards justice.

3.24 Responsibility, Ability & Luck

Responsibility ascriptions, whether in their positive valence or negative valence, in most cases involve some kind of assessment of one's abilities and their causal relation to the outcome/state of affairs of interest. This typically requires some kind of understanding of the role that one's abilities played in bringing about the state of affairs in relation to what role other factors, such as luck, played in bringing about the state of affairs. This is a rather long-winded way of saying that it requires determining what kind or level of agency someone had with respect to a particular state of affairs attaining.

With respect "EP epistemic responsibility" specifically, we see that a primary project for many analytic epistemologists—especially since the advent of the (in)famous Gettier cases which highlighted the connections between luck and true belief—has been finding a systematic way to sort out the influences of luck vs. the influences of the agent on coming to believe truly. As others have noted, luck is not a normatively neutral concept (Prichard 2005, Greco 2010). We can begin to carve this idea out by noting that something being lucky is distinctive from something being simply "by chance." When we talk about chance or contingency we are usually talking about the probability of events. In order for something to be lucky it has to be both unlikely and of significance to someone/thing.[23] And the significance of any lucky event is bivalent and contextual, i.e., when we say something is lucky we typically specify or imply whether we mean that it is good or bad luck, and these valences of luck can depend on who you are, what your values are, when you are living, etc. When we are deciding whether to credit or blame someone, which in the context of knowing means either crediting them with knowing, or merely happening to stumble upon a true belief, or conversely whether to hold them accountable for their ignorance (i.e., to see them as culpable) or to see their ignorance as a result of unfortunate circumstance, we are making these kinds of judgements.

This feature of the centrality of ability-luck relation in responsibility ascriptions will become relevant in Chapter 5 when working towards a conception of epistemic responsibility informed by insights from feminist epistemology.

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[23] Duncan Prichard (2005) gives the following example to illustrate this point: "…it many be a matter of chance that a landslide occurs when it does (or occurs at all), but if no one is affected by this event (either adversely or otherwise), then it is hard to see why we would want to class this occurrence as lucky (or indeed as unlucky for that matter) (p. 126).

3.25 Responsibility & Explanation

Because I am interested here in the ethics of our epistemic practices and concepts, I am interested in the connection between responsibility ascriptions and explanations. And this is because of the way that both responsibility ascriptions and explanations can (and often do) function to licence attitudes and behaviours. This is not to say that it is the only function of responsibility ascriptions or explanations, but it is a significant one. In particular, I also am interested in how both explanations and responsibility ascriptions can be *pluralistic*, which is a concept I will explore in more detail in Chapter 4.

For example, when I say that BP was responsible for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, I suggest that their actions played a significant/salient role in bringing about the spill. I say that their actions (including negligence) are a significant or salient part of an *explanation* for the spill and resultant environmental and social consequences. Depending on the context of my claim about their responsibility, I imply that specific moral stances (e.g., condemnation) and legal actions (e.g., financial sanctions) are appropriate to take towards them. And I imply that they have obligations with respect to addressing those consequences.

Now of course there were other factors involved in the BP oil spill: the dependence of global economies on fossil fuels; lack of regulation of rig operations; public apathy about environmental degradation, etc. Depending on the context of my responsibility ascription, I might see one or more of these factors as primarily salient. For example, if I am a policy maker who is concerned with preventing future oil spills, I might focus my explanation on the laxity of regulation within the oil industry.

If I am a historian who is interested in tracking the larger impact of fossil fuel dependence on environmental degradation, I might argue that the rise of Western imperialist and capitalist attitudes and structures explain the BP spill and are ultimately responsible for it. And if I am an anarchist protester I might point to the aforementioned lack of public interest with respect to environmental degradation. And what explanation is given, if sufficient authority and credulity is attached to that explanation, determines what sorts of attitudes and actions are licensed, and towards what and/or whom.[24]

So, there is not, generally speaking, one correct answer to the question of who or what is responsible for a particular event/outcome just as there is not one correct explanation. Rather what is the correct explanation/ascription depends on the context, purposes and goals for which you are giving the explanation/ascription. This is not to say that some explanations are not better or worse than others. For example, if, in a legal context, BP tried to pin the responsibility for the spill on a particular employee who made a single maintenance error we would likely find this an insufficient explanation. But the appropriateness/correctness of an explanation/responsibility ascription cannot be judged independently of the context and/or goals and purposes to which the explanation/ascription is indexed.

So, now that we've gotten a handle on the contextualist/purpose indexed notion of responsibility/explanation, we can think about how this applies to the concept of epistemic responsibility. The parallel is perhaps most obvious when we

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[24] There is an extensive literature on explanation in the philosophy of science. See for example, Bas van Fraassen's classic piece "The Pragmatics of Explanation" (1977). However, I have chosen not to wade into the water of these debates here for fear of getting caught in the weeds.

look at externalist epistemologies in general, and reliabilist epistemologies particular. On an externalist account of justification we say that someone knows when they both: a) believe truly; and b) are responsible for their true belief, i.e., their abilities/actions played a significant role in them coming to believe something truly. In other words, it is required that, that their belief is true is creditable to them rather than some other factors including luck. The same can be said of ignorance. When someone is culpably ignorant we might say that their false belief/lack of true belief is attributable to them, i.e., their abilities/actions played a significant role in them coming to believe something falsely or not at all.

3.3 Revisionism

I understand myself to be developing a revisionist conception of epistemic responsibility, and I would describe most of the other work that I draw on for resources and inspiration as revisionist projects. Therefore, before getting into the details of theories of responsibility I discuss below, it will be helpful to give a clear idea of what I mean by revisionism broadly speaking and how I approach revisionism in this project.

Revisionism as an approach to theory building starts from the assumption/ recognition/assertion that an important folk or "ordinary" concept (or set of concepts) is problematic or inadequate in some way, and therefore in need of revision. There is revisionism about gender (Haslanger, 2000), about illness (Carel, 2008), about the identity category Latinx (Gracia, 2013), about moral responsibility (Vargas, 2013), about misogyny (Manne, 2018), and many other revisionisms besides.

Revisionism can be understood as a middle ground between two extremes.[25] At one end there is *eliminativism*, i.e., the total rejection of a dysfunctional concept in favour of the creation of a new concept or concepts or the outright elimination of that concept and its functions from our language and practices. And at the other end there is conservatism[26], i.e., the attempt to conserve a folk concept by justification, correction, argument etc. Religious apologetics are paradigm examples of conservative projects.

The motivations for conservatism in the realm of theory building can be diverse. Without some conservative force in our theory construction we risk creating theories that don't connect to reality as most people understand it, i.e., we might find ourselves theorizing about things that only our small cadre of fellow theorists understands or believes exists. Conservatism, as I am describing it here, might be used as a criterion to keep theorizing grounded in our actual practices and language use. Another common reason given for conservatism is that some concepts are ones that we are simply unable to give up. This concern is related to the first, but more specific. We might desire to conserve a concept because we don't think we can live without it, either for practical reasons or because we see it as an inherent part of our constitution as human beings.

Revisionist projects can lean closer to one of these extremes or another. A revisionist project might be undertaken with a conservationist spirit, i.e., only making

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[25] To be clear, I am saying that this is one way that revisionism can be understood, not the only way.

[26] 'Conservatism' should be understood as a technical term here, and not in reference to the use of the word conservatism in politics. This is not to say that conservatism as a theoretical consideration is not related to political conservatism, just that it is not identical with it.

those revisions that are absolutely necessary to address a specific error. Or, a revisionist project might be undertaken with a radical revolutionary spirit. What any form of revisionism has in common is a decision to not take conforming to the folk concept as a condition of success combined with the desire/recognized need to preserve some aspects of the concept or its function. To narrow in on how I want to think about revisionism I am going to juxtapose two approaches to revisionism that overlap and differ in interesting ways: Manuel Vargas's revisionism about moral responsibility and Sally Haslanger's revisionist project for epistemology as discussed above.

3.31 Vargas' Revisionism About Moral Responsibility

In his book *Building Better Beings* (2013) Vargas proposes a revisionist theory of moral responsibility. He spends the first four chapters, and close to half the book, outlining the motivations for, and shape of, his revisionism before outlining his own theory of moral responsibility. In the section below on moral ecologies I will discuss more about Vargas' theory, but first I'm interested to draw out his methodology.

Vargas' revisionism is motivated by what he understands to be a stalemate between Libertarian and Compatibilist accounts of moral responsibility. On the one hand, he argues that it is generally accepted that Libertarian accounts of responsibility are not naturalistically plausible, i.e., they don't fit with our current best body of relevant scientific knowledge.[27] On the other hand he argues that our folk concepts of moral responsibility contain incompatibilist intuitions, i.e., "…part of our shared

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[27] I won't go into details for Vargas' argument for this claim here, because it will take us too far afield, and it is not relevant for understanding his methodology. See Vargas, 2004 & Pereboom 2014 (Chapter 3) for discussion of these topics.

conceptual framework for thinking about moral responsibility and free will has elements in it that entail that we cannot have these things if the world is deterministic." (Vargas, 2013, p. 23). Therefore, on Vargas' account, given that we are barred from accepting a Libertarian account by respect for naturalism, we are have two options. We can adopt moral nihilism, i.e., the view that no one is free in the sense that is required for moral responsibility, and therefore no one can be blamed or praised for the rightness of wrongness of their actions. Or, we carry out a revision on our folk concept to make it more in line with our naturalistic understanding.

Vargas pushes back against moral nihilism by using what he calls the "principle of philosophical conservatism," which he summarized as follows: "…we ought to abandon our standing commitments only as a last resort." (Ibid, p.73). And further than this, he argues that what revisions we do make should be minimized as far as is possible. As justification for this principle he gives the following two considerations: 1. Preserving doxastic stability—the more extensive the revision the more the equilibrium of our doxastic stability is upset; 2. The costs of revisionism —"…revision disrupts entrenched dispositions and patterns of concern." (Ibid, p.74). It seems to me the first concern collapses into the second, i.e., that the costs of revisionism are threats to doxastic stability and the practical consequences of doxastic instability. In any case, this seems like reasonable common sense—don't rock the boat if you don't have to, or any more than you have to. However, the question is how do we know how much the boat needs to be rocked? What considerations do we have for determining this? Vargas is clear that this a presumptive principle, i.e., it can be overridden, for example when "large swaths of beliefs might be in error" (Ibid, p.74) or when a concept is sufficiently isolated from other beliefs thereby reducing the

threat of doxastic instability. But these are the only examples he gives. Later in the book he expands on why he favours the more conservative approach:

> It is conceivable that someone could pursue systematic revisionism in a less conservative mode. One could for example, proceed on the supposition that the entire framework of the responsibility is to be overturned, not because of concerns about the involved picture of agency but because one independently regards as problematic the framework of responsibility statuses and judgements ("is responsible," "deserves blame"). Radical replacement can be fine if you have powerful—really powerful—independent considerations fueling the theory. However, we shouldn't underestimate what is needed to justify our walking away from comparatively fundamental aspects of our shared normative discourse. I am inclined to think that there are no such considerations in play, at least pending the results of serious engagement with a more conservative approach to revisionism about responsibility. (Ibid, p.131, my emphasis)

There are a few things to note here that will help us to think through what it means to take on a revisionist project and what would count as a "radical" revision. First, we might reasonably wonder what can count as a "really powerful independent consideration" for overriding the conservative principle? As saw above, the presence of many significant false beliefs that would invalidate the concept up for revision is given as an example of a legitimately powerful independent consideration. But Vargas does not give much guidance beyond this. We might also consider whether pragmatic, ethical and political considerations could also act in this same capacity. We will come

back to this question shortly when we discuss Haslanger's revisionist project in the next section.

I also want to note the special care that Vargas takes with the phrase "our shared normative discourse". Vargas is careful to be specific about his scope for the word "our," which he limits to "...at least the "we" of, roughly, the Anglophone members of NATO countries and their allies." (Ibid, p. 5, footnote 2). This kind of qualification is important and well-taken—it is dangerous to assume that the reader's "we" and the author's "we" refer to the same set. But, we should perhaps be even more careful here, since it is not likely the case that there is a homogeneous conception of responsibility even within the more limited context that Vargas picks out. I suspect the it is more likely that what Vargas intends to pick out is something like the *dominant* conception of responsibility in that context. This is an important detail in the context of revisionism, since dominant and shared do very different work when we're trying to decide what ought to be preserved and what ought to be revised.[28] As we saw in our discussion on perceptions of safety from violence in §2.35, it is possible to be aware of a dominant concept, be aware that it will be applied to oneself, but to not *share* that concept.

What counts as a really powerful independent consideration for some may not be so for all. And similarly, what looks radical to some may seem obvious and necessary to others. Radicality is a concept that admits of many degrees that may shift significantly with context. In fact, from the perspective of the incompatibilist libertarian, Vargas' revisionism could look very radical indeed. What I am interested

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[28] See Mason (2011) for an excellent discussion on the significance between shared and dominant conceptual/hermeneutical resources.

in mainly here is not whether or not a revision is radical, but where and how we locate the considerations that ground that revision. I return to Haslanger's project as touched on in Chapter 1 for some help in this task.

3.32 Haslanger's Revisionism

Haslanger is well known for her revisionist and eliminativist approaches to gender and race. However, she also has revisionist proposals for approaching epistemic theorizing. In "What Knowledge Is And What It Ought To Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology" (1999) Haslanger suggests that much of 20th Century epistemology was been structured around responding to epistemological skepticism.[29] She argues that a general consensus that has come out of this work is that epistemologists ought to take an 'immanent' rather than a "transcendental' approach to epistemology:

> The broad suggestion is that we should reject a "transcendental" epistemology that imposed conditions on knowledge that presume a standpoint outside of our practices, and should instead pursue what we might call an "immanent" epistemology that undertakes to elucidate the conditions on knowledge embedded in our everyday language, thought and action. (Haslanger, 1999, p. 461)

This trend towards what Haslanger calls "immanent epistemology" can be seen most prominently in the work of social and virtue epistemologists over the last four decades. However, with this new focus on "our" epistemic practices, or even our "ordinary" or "day-to-day" epistemic practice, Haslanger points out that feminist

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[29] The push towards a more robust connection to "actual" epistemic practice is likely a response to a wider variety of pressures than just the threat of skepticism (see §1.23 & §1.331 for my discussion of other factors).

epistemologists have given us ample reasons to question the validity of these practices. There has been much work done exposing the sexist, racist and classist structures that are embedded in many (if not all) epistemic communities. What should epistemologists do with this information? We might consider ourselves to be in a similar position to Vargas above. As we discovered in our discussion of feminist insights in Chapter 2, the concepts and frameworks that are provided in mainstream epistemology aren't adequate to describe the considerations that feminist epistemologist raise. So we need to make revisions.

Haslanger proposes what she calls a "critical epistemology" in order to address this issue.[30] She argues that in order to take account of our epistemic practices without reinforcing the practices that we know are defective we need to pay explicit attention to the normative component of our epistemic practices, but to not assume that the kind of normativity that we in fact have is the kind we ought to have (Haslanger, 1999, p. 467). In order to do this, says Haslanger, we need to ask what the goals and purposes of our epistemic concepts are, and then ask if the concepts that we have do in fact, or could be expected to, fulfill these purposes. If they do not then we are in a position to begin to *stipulate* concepts that, though they may not match up with our actual practices, do match up with our meta-epistemological goals and values.

As suggested above in Chapter 1, Haslanger thinks that the work of feminist epistemologists is particularly relevant to the critical approach because they have developed conceptual tools to recognize where our epistemic practices need to be

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[30] Haslanger variously refers to this as a 'normative,' 'analytical, and 'critical' approach (Haslanger, 1999, p. 467). I chose to use critical here because it avoids causing confusion with the other uses of 'normative,' and 'analytical.'

improved, and to create alternatives to our current epistemic frameworks (Haslanger, 1999, p. 468). Haslanger's assessment here plausibly provides a starting point for fleshing out Vargas' "independent considerations." If, when we look at our responsibility related practices, we find that they are not working for us, then we have independent considerations for revision, for revision that doesn't just do the thing that disturbs the doxastic ecosystem the least, but rather to ask for an overhaul. That is, it is not just about a repair project, but rather about asking ourselves what is and is not working for us, and how we might change our concepts to help to change our world.[31] This is not to say that we give up on the "conservative principle" entirely, but we employ it for different purposes, the purposes that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—for the purposes that we ensure that we are still speaking the same language as the people that we want to talk to, i.e., to be accessible and useful.

My project aims to take Haslanger's challenge seriously. I want to ask, before taking on the project of theory building, what are the goals and purposes that I have, and that I should have? From the perspective of my feminist methodology the purpose of theory is to provide tools for making the world better, for addressing and illuminating oppression, harm, and erasure. Therefore, I propose to take the five insights from feminist epistemology that I gathered above, those insights that describe the ways in which our epistemic practices contribute to oppression, harm and erasure, and allow those insights to guide my theory building. To be clear, this is not to say

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[31] An important thing to note about this critical approach is that it does not imply that we can stipulate whatever kinds of values and practices we like. We are still restricted by the kind of beings we are. For example, Haslanger suggests that truth is valuable to us because "we have certain capacities (for representing the world and acting on our representations), and the exercise of these capacities is intrinsically good." (Haslanger, 1999, p.472).

that I don't care about the truth in theory building, it is only to say that I don't only

care about the truth, or perhaps more strongly that our ability to get to the truth is

inexorably connected to our ethical and political success. This is what I take to be the

implication of the key insights from feminist epistemology taken together.

3.33 Revisionism & Reflective Equilibrium

The revisionist methodology might look at first glance a lot like reflective equilibrium

(RE), a method of theory building made popular by John Rawls in his *A Theory of*

Justice (1971). Roughly, the method of reflective equilibrium is the process of

bringing our beliefs, intuitions, and principles into coherence with each other to form

a theory, model or conclusion. This often involves a back and forth process of

weighing our intuitions about various cases against our presumptive principles and

theoretical criteria. So for example, in considering one's views about abortion one

might weigh our intuition that killing is bad (a general principle) against cases of

killing for self-defence or to save the life of another. If we judge the cases to be

compelling cases of non-bad killing, we might revise our general principle and make

room for the possible moral permissibility of abortion. Or, we might keep our general

principle and try to revise our intuitions about the cases.

Both of the revisionists that I take inspiration from explicitly distance

themselves from RE. Vargas (2013) eschews the RE label on the grounds that the

method is not sufficiently precise to be useful for justifying one's position. For

example, it does not provide specific guidance on how to decide which commitments

to choose to hold stable and which to let go (p.108). He argues in most cases the use

of the term is so broad that it would apply to most philosophical reasoning, which is to say, it's not a very useful label at all (p.109).

Where Vargas worries that RE takes on too little such as to become practically meaningless, Haslanger (1999) worries that RE takes on too much. She argues that accounts of RE tend to assume that our folk concepts are monolithic and coherent when in fact they are often pluralistic and messy. But more importantly for Haslanger's purposes, she argues that RE, because it relies so heavily on folk intuitions, is likely to risk leaving problematic intuitions formed under oppressive structures unchallenged (pp. 455-457). In the parlance I set out above, Haslanger worries that RE leans too far on the conservative side.

I am inclined to agree that we should be cautious about employing the method of RE in the context of the sort of revisionist project we are aiming at here. The worry is that RE may not give us enough of what we want (real guidance on selecting the parts of our folk conceptual discourses that we ought to hold onto) and it may give us too much of what we don't want (for it preserves assumptions about the value and coherence of our folk concepts). The challenging task is to ask ourselves with a critical eye what purposes and values are at play in operating, evaluating and designing "our" concepts, and then deliberating not just about what concepts make sense for the practices that we have, but also what concepts would make sense for the practices we want (or should want) to have. However, I do not want to take a hard line on the method of RE here. If it helps the reader to orient the project along the lines of this method, so be it.

3.4 Ecological Theories of Responsibility

In this section I give a brief overview of some theories of responsibility that I gather from ethical and epistemological discourses under the heading of "ecological theories". While I categorize and gather theories together under the moniker "ecological", I do not take them to make up a unified theoretical framework. Rather, in a very broad sense, all of these theories emphasize the complex social and political aspects of responsibility, and to do so they use varying notions of the term ecological. For my part, I like the term ecological because it has the resources to capture the complexity not just of the social-political relations of human beings to each other, but also their relations to their environments broadly construed. This will become important for thinking through questions about epistemic ability as it relates to epistemic responsibility, because abilities are formed through complex interactions between physical, social and political environments.

It will be useful to begin with a brief reflection on the more colloquial/ technical use of the term "ecological" in the sciences before moving onto the way that it has been repurposed to various philosophical ends. The *Ecological Society of America* offers the following definition of ecology that will provide us with a sufficient jumping off point:

> Ecology is the study of the relationships between living organisms, including humans, and their physical environment; it seeks to understand the vital connections between plants and animals and the world around them. Ecology also provides information about the benefits of ecosystems and how we can use Earth's resources in ways that leave the environment healthy for future generations. (Ecological Society of America, n.d.)

The first part of this definition is a pretty standard descriptive definition of a scientific domain: ecology is the study of the complex relations between organisms and their environment. However, the second part of the definition speaks to a normative dimension of ecology, i.e., not just to gain an understanding of these relations, but gaining an understanding of how these relations can be optimized or improved where need be. A couple things strike me about this definition that we can keep in mind in the following discussion where we bring this concept out of science and into use for various philosophical purposes. First is the idea of understanding the "vital connections" within an ecosystem. Vital connections are sets of relations that determine whether individuals and communities can survive and thrive or suffer and perish. Second, is the idea that this normative component is baked right into the study itself. The job of an ecologist on this account is not just to understand the ecosystem, but to understand if the ecosystem is "sick" or "well." And third, that we are always talking about *ecosystems* plural. While we might think of the whole world (or perhaps even the whole universe) as one giant ecosystem, we can at the same time always focus in on smaller scope ecosystems. We might look at the ecosystem of a particular pond or forest, or at the ecosystem of a larger geographical area such as the Arctic. And we can also talk about how two or more ecosystems interact with one another. We don't always need to draw sharp boundaries around ecosystems; but we can and do draw such boundaries, most often with specific purposes and interests in mind.

With this very basic concept of ecology in mind, we can start to imagine how we might creatively appropriate this term to talk about moral, epistemic and political ecologies. So, for example epistemic ecologies could include social and political relations between people, but also with environments both physical and socially

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constructed. That is, they could include things like hermeneutical frameworks and the individuals and communities embedded in them, as well as relations to natural and built environments. In this way, the concept of "ecology" provides conceptual resources for discussing the kinds of multiple and complexly overlapping and intermingled "worlds" in Lugones' sense as well.

So my aim, as with my survey of feminist epistemology, in the following two sections is not to give a comprehensive survey of ecological concepts of responsibility, but rather add to the conceptual toolkit we'll be taking with us into our analysis and reconstruction project in Chapter 5.

3.41 Epistemic Ecologies

In her book E*cological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location* (2006) (referred to as *Ecological Thinking* going forward)*,* Lorraine Code develops the concept of "ecological thinking". Ecological thinking, as far as I understand it, is a way of thinking about practices and problems that attempts to capture the complexity of the interrelations between out epistemic, ethical and political lives. *Ecological Thinking* does not present a theory of epistemic responsibility, but rather an approach to looking at questions in epistemology, including questions about epistemic responsibility, that does not limit our scope of interest to epistemic factors alone.

In order to get a better understanding of Code's project in *Ecological Thinking*, we need to contextualize it against her earlier work. Understanding the social, ethical and political aspects of our epistemic practices has been, as we have seen, a central task of feminist epistemologists over the last several decades. Code has been a powerhouse in these sorts of projects since day one. As we saw in Chapter 2,

she was an early trailblazer in developing the core concept of situated knowledge/ knowers. And, as we saw in Chapter 1, she is also considered to be a trailblazer in the field of virtue epistemology with her book *Epistemic Responsibility* (1987). As discussed in §1.331, the contemporary emergence of virtue epistemology is often located as starting in the early 1980s with Ernest Sosa (e.g. Sosa, 1980, 1991). And, Code, initially responding to Sosa's dilemma, had also begun working on virtue epistemology around this same time, publishing a paper in 1984 ("Toward a 'Responsibilist' Epistemology") which prefigured her 1987 book. While Code's early work in virtue epistemology is generally seen as falling into the category of "virtue responsibilism," her later work in *Ecological Thinking* is much more difficult to classify. In order to understand the complex picture that Code presents in 2006 it will be useful to compare and contrast it with her views in 1984/87.

While arguably understudied compared to some of her other books that came out shortly after (e.g. *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*, 1991), Code's 1987 book was highly innovative and in the last decade or so has been seeing more sustained analyses in feminist discourse. For example, Susan Dieleman argues that the framework presented in Code's *Epistemic Responsibility* can be used to dissolve the much discussed (see §1.23) divide between Alvin Goldman's "analytical social epistemology" and Steve Fuller's "sociological social epistemology" (Dieleman, 2016).

Almost 20 years after she first published *Epistemic Responsibility* in 1987, in 2006 Code delivered her magnum opus in *Ecological Thinking*. I refer to *Ecological Thinking* as a magnum opus because Code's project in it is incredibly ambitious. The first line of the introduction to the book reads as follows: "In this book, I propose that

ecological thinking can effect a revolution in philosophy comparable to Kant's Copernican revolution, which radically reconfigured western thought by moving "man" to the center of the philosophical-conceptual universe." (p. 4). And while this sounds intensely ambitious, the reader quickly discovers that Code is quite serious. The concept of "ecological thinking", while in some sense centred around epistemic practice, in fact works to dissolve the boundaries between the epistemic, the ethical and the political realms, or rather to demonstrate that these boundaries never existed, and have been upheld to serve the interests of the privileged and to the detriment of the oppressed.

While is some ways radically different in style and content, Code characterizes her 2006 book as a "revised, refigured and refined" continuation of the original 1987 project. At the same time, in tone reminiscent of Wittgenstein's reflection on his *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1922) in his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953)*,* Code is brutally critical of her earlier work. In the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein wrote, of the Tractatus, "…I have been forced to recognize grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book." (Wittgenstein, 1953, p.x). And, he suggests, on the relation between the *Investigations* and the *Tractatus,* "… that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking…" (Ibid, p. x). In a similar vein, Code positions her project in *Ecological Thinking* against the background of successes and failures of *Epistemic Responsibility:*

> While its would-be knowers are as responsible for promoting and sustaining
> habitable epistemic community as they are to the evidence, the knowers who
> populate the pages of *Epistemic Responsibility* are caught within an ethos of

the very liberal individualism I would eschew were I to rewrite the book.

These are generic knowers, ethologically undifferentiated by their diverse

"capacities for affecting and being affected" […] or by their positioning in a

social order whose radical divisions along lines drawn by gender, race, class,

materiality, ethnicity, sexual difference, and the myriad other asymmetries of

epistemic situation are constitutive of the politics of knowledge. Implicitly, in

the 1987 book, I assume their unmediated access to the "stuff" of which

knowledge is made, imagining a self−transparency and epistemic−doxastic

voluntarism, together with a faceless interchangeability of knowing subjects,

firmly lodged within the social−ecological imaginary of a liberal society

where cognitive autonomy is a universal possibility, and the acknowledgment

upon which knowledge depends is unfettered by constraints consequent upon

asymmetrical distributions of power and privilege. (Code, 2006, p.viii).

This passage sets quite clearly by contrast, what sorts of epistemic agents we should

not expect to find in *Ecological Thinking*.

To be fair to Code, it was a huge undertaking in 1987 to give flesh to such a

"fleshless abstraction" that existed in the mainstream epistemological discourse at the

time. We can think of *Epistemic Responsibility* as beginning the process. Recall from

Chapter 1 (§1.331) that Code, taking a cue from Sosa, aims to shift the

epistemological discourse from focusing solely on *the known* to also looking closely

at *the knower* (Code, 1984, p.30). This requires an epistemology not just of the

relationships and justifications of beliefs or propositions (individuated pieces of

knowledge), but also of the characteristics, practices and environments that lead to

justified beliefs and knowledge (Ibid, p.32). On this account, what grounds the

justification of a particular belief is that it was arrived at through "virtuous cognitive conduct", and it is the virtue of "epistemic responsibility" that grounds all virtuous cognitive conduct. As opposed to the possibly passive reliabilist agent, who can be a reliable indicator of the truth in the same way as a thermostat is, the responsibilist agent that Code describes is importantly active (Ibid, p.40). She describes this activeness as: "primarily a matter of orientation toward the world, and toward oneself as knowledge-seeker in the world." (Ibid, p. 44). This orientation importantly includes valuing knowledge not just instrumentally, but also as a good in itself. However, while the epistemically responsible person is a person who cares about knowing the truth, they are not therefore concerned just with collecting the largest quantity of facts. Rather, the epistemically responsible person is interested in knowing those truths that can allow them to gain greater understandings of themselves and their world.

What was radical and innovative about Code's view at the time, and perhaps still today, was the importance she gave to community and environment for understanding epistemic responsibility. As Code points out, one's epistemic character is a product of their environment and community. What we can and cannot know is certainly limited by our locations in time and space. And the different roles that we play in our communities necessitate different levels of epistemic responsibility (Ibid, pp. 45-7). For example, a doctor has different responsibilities when making claims about the efficacy of a medicine than does a layperson.

While Code criticizes herself for not moving far enough away from the abstract individualism of traditional epistemology in *Epistemic Responsibility*, Dieleman argues that *Epistemic Responsibility* was more radical in this regard than

Code gives herself credit for. For example, Dieleman points out that Code even explores how we might evaluate systems, such education systems, for "how well they meet their epistemic tasks (and obligations)." (Dieleman, p. 11). While this is not the central focus of her early project, it shows and early attentiveness to features and fitness of *epistemic systems* that we see in her later work.

That being said the shift from *Epistemic Responsibility* to *Ecological Thinking* is quite dramatic. As will already be clear from the preamble I've given above, it would be a challenge to summarize *Ecological Thinking* into a neat and digestible theoretical framework. In fact, the book is arguably designed to elude such characterizations. As Phylis Rooney describes it:

> Code develops a significant part of her overall argument […] by structuring her discussions and positions around real-life examples that refuse the kinds of dichotomies and divisions that structure many traditional approaches in epistemology. The result is disruptive and unsettling for epistemological imaginaries still more comfortable with examples that lend themselves to easier separations between reason and emotion, objectivity and subjectivity, or theory and practice. (Rooney, 2008, p. 172)

Luckily, my task is not to provide such a summary, but rather to draw attention to some aspects of Code's framework that will be useful for my project. However, an initial concern might be raised that my use of a radical framework like Code's to shore up a relatively traditional framework like Greco's might be antithetical to Code's project. I cannot speak to what Code herself would say to such a project, but I myself (not surprisingly) do not find the undertaking antithetical. I am very sympathetic to Code's overall project, and to the sorts of shifts that she wants to make

with ecological thinking. However, I am a pluralist about philosophical tools, and I believe that we need a multiplicity of them to work towards the project of epistemic flourishing. As I mentioned at the outset, my project is best understood as an experiment, an exploration of what fruit can be born from new cross-pollinations. I believe that this is in the spirit of Code's project of becoming aware, and being critical when necessary, of our social imaginaries.

Code's concept of ecology is heavily drawn from the iconoclastic ecologist Rachel Carson. Code gives this general definition:

> [Ecology] is a study of habitats both physical and social where people endeavour to live well together; of ways of knowing that foster or thwart such living; and thus of the ethos and habitus enacted in the knowledge and actions, customs, social structures, and creative−regulative principles by which people strive or fail to achieve this multiply realizable end. (Code, 2006, p. 26)

This definition bears a similarity to the one I gave at the outset, in that it has both a descriptive and a normative dimension. Whereas in *Epistemic Responsibility* Code focuses on the epistemic flourishing of individuals within environments and communities, in *Ecological Thinking* the focus is shifted to the complex epistemic-moral-political ecologies that knowers and their knowledge practices are embedded in.

In a move that is very much reminiscent of Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought* (2000), Code emphasizes the importance of understanding that we are always inhabiting a particular social-cultural perspective when we assess knowledge and our knowledge systems themselves. The Western scientific knowledge paradigm seeks to make itself into the singular valid frame for understanding all empirical

knowledge, or in Code's terms it produce an "epistemic monoculture." (Code, 2006, p. 9). Code calls the epistemologies that produce these sorts of monocultures "epistemologies of mastery". By contrast, the notion ecological thinking that Code develops is meant to preserve the diversity of epistemologies that we find in the world, and to always be conscious of which of these epistemic ecosystems is flourishing and which is struggling. As Rooney (2008) points out, ecological thinking requires the "ecological thinker" to become aware of themselves as a knower (Code, 2006, p. 5), but for them to take up for themselves the role of the epistemologist, in Rooney's words "a putative knower of knowledge(s)." (Rooney, 2008, p.175). The responsible knower is one that can be aware of the "social imaginaries" or hermeneutical frameworks that are dominant in their epistemic-ethical-political ecologies and also who is flourishing within and benefitting from that dominance. And, in contrast, or perhaps in compliment, the ecological thinker also needs to be aware of various non-dominant hermeneutical frameworks, and how those frameworks can be brought to the fore and allowed to flourish. This framework bears many similarities also to Lugones's "world"-travelling, Medina's meta-lucidly, and Dotson third-order epistemic oppressions above. Cultivating skills as an ecological thinker might be understood as cultivating skills in "world"-travelling, in detecting epistemic friction through meta-lucidity, and in becoming aware of various levels of epistemic oppression.

More broadly speaking, and to connect *Ecological Thinking* back to *Epistemic Responsibility*, cultivating skills in ecological thinking is cultivating skills in *epistemic responsibility*. This concept of epistemic responsibility that Code develops in *Ecological Thinking* probably fits most closely with the concept of MP

responsibility that I described in Chapter 1. However, as I mentioned when describing this distinction between MP and EP responsibility, it is not taken to be a hard boundary but something like a matter of emphasis. Code's framework does not admit of neat distinctions between epistemic, moral and political agents. The agent is always all of these things as once. This is a view with radical implications, perhaps as radical as Code implies in her Copernican reference. But for my purposes, what I am most interested to bring forward into the following Chapters from Code's project is the inherent plurality of epistemic ecosystems. This is not something to be afraid of on Code's account, not sometime to be reduced, but rather something to be embraced and used to facilitate ecological flourishing of the whole and the parts. Embracing this plurality requires embracing one's role as an "everyday epistemologist", which requires noticing the hermeneutical frameworks that structure our experiences and that structure the way we understand the world. This includes, in the case of this project noticing that hermeneutical frameworks that structure how we understand what it is to be responsible, and relatedly what it is to have an ability.

3.42 Moral Ecologies

Before moving on to this next task I wanted to note that the term "ecology" has also been put to use in several recent works in moral theory. Kevin Timpe, in his paper "Moral Ecology, Disabilities, and Human Agency" (2019), argues that "...human agency is best understood as a socially and ecologically dependent agency." (Timpe, 2019, p.18). Timpe is particularly interested in developing an ecological notion of agency because he argues that it is important in accounting for cases of what David Shoemaker calls "marginal agency." Timpe is interested to show that by ignoring the

agency of "marginal cases", such as the agency of people with disabilities, we fail to notice the deep dependence that is involved in all forms of agency, including "typical agency". This project has both descriptive and prescriptive goals for Timpe. He notes that social accounts of agency have been gaining steam in various disciplines such as social epistemology, social ontology, and philosophy of language. But he argues that philosophy of action has been slower to pick up on this trend, and for the most part has yet to substantively challenge the atomistic and individualistic nature of most accounts of agency employed by philosophers of action. Creating an ecological account of human agency is in this sense, bringing theory of action up to speed with conceptual developments in other discourses.

But Timpe also motivates a normative goal as well. He points out, in the vein of Eva Feder Kittay's work, that "Overstating the independence of those without disabilities can increase the disenfranchisement of those with disabilities." (Timpe, forthcoming, p. 7) This fits well with what we noted above about the dual nature of the job of an ecologist. Timpe is pointing out that in coming to understand the ecologies of our agency we can not only understand ourselves and the world better, but we can see the way forward to improving it, i.e., we can see that our ecosystems are causing some to flourish and others to suffer. When we fail to notice that this is due in large part to environmental factors in the broadest sense, then it can often appear that this flourishing of some and suffering of others is due to properties or actions of individuals, rather than properties of the larger environment.

Timpe outlines two possibilities for developing a social-ecological account of agency. First a modest approach:

...the various capacities involved in agency are intrinsic to the agent, but the

agent's exercise of those capacities depends on the social or environmental

setting the agency takes place in. On this understanding, what the agent can do

is a function of just the agent, but what they will do depends on the social or

environmental situation. (Timpe, 2019, p. 21)

And second, a more ambitious approach:

...the capacities themselves, or at least a significant sub-set of those capacities,

depend on social or environmental factors. That is, what an agent can do

depends, at least in part, on those social or environmental factors. On this

understanding, we can change what the agent is able to do by changing either

factors intrinsic to the agent or the environment the agent is in. (Timpe, 2019,

p.21)

Timpe takes the more ambitious approach, and it is the more ambitious approach that

will be of most interest to us when we come back to focusing on the concept of ability

Greco employs in his account of epistemic responsibility.

Timpe highlights Manuel Vargas' and John Doris' accounts of agency as two

examples of the sort of social-ecological account that he is aiming at. Vargas, whose

conception of revisionism we explored above, develops a notion of ecological agency

and responsibility in his paper "The Social Constitution of Agency and

Responsibility: Oppression, Politics, and Moral Ecology" (2018). Vargas' approach in

this paper is relevant to the discussion of plurality above. Vargas is interested to sort

out a problem for understanding the the agency and associated responsibilities of

people who experience oppression. On the one hand, if oppression severely limits the

agency of those who experience oppression, as seems to be the case at least

sometimes, then how can we hold oppressed people responsible for what they do? To put it another way, if we cannot understand oppressed people as having the freedom to do otherwise in a robust sense, then why should they be held accountable for what they do? But, at the same time, to deny agency to people who experience oppression is to disrespect them as agents (Vargas, 2018, p. 110).

Vargas aims to solve this puzzle with by developing a "socially constituted" picture of agency. Vargas begins by noting that the effects of oppression on agency should not be understood as are not uniform:

> …we tend to think about culpability in the wrong way, as almost exclusively settled by intrinsic features of the agent and her actions. Culpability is a function not just of agents, but of the agent's relationship to circumstances and the governing normative practices. The foundations of culpability are as much political and normative as meta- physical. Oppression is particularly interesting because it has varied effects on culpability: sometimes it eliminates it, sometimes it makes it harder to do the right thing, and other times, it enables responsible agency. The upshot is that the nature of culpability under oppression—and what we can do about it—is complex. (Ibid, p.111).

On this socially constituted view of agency we do not need to have a singular understanding of the role that oppression has in shaping our agency. Rather, we can see that at times the agency of the agent becomes salient when ascribing responsibility and at times the circumstances which the agent is embedded in become salient. There is not one fact of the matter as to how oppression affects responsibility. As Vargas puts it: "Rather, it seems to be a matter of one explanation trumping another." (Ibid, p. 112). Allowing for this movement back and forth between various explanations allows

for us to persevere the agential capacities of the agent, while at the same time giving appropriate weight to the restrictions they experience due to oppression.

Vargas argues that we need an *ecological* concept of capacity in order to make sense of our socially situated agency. Briefly, this ecological concept of capacity allows that whether or not we can exercise a capacity is relative to our environment and circumstances. So, while on the one hand we might consider someone who experiences oppression to have all of the capacities that would be necessary to meet the threshold for moral responsibility (e.g. capacities to understand the consequences of their actions, capacities of self-control, etc.), on the other hand, we might accept circumstantial factors to be mitigating of their actual culpability if we deem them to be significantly hindered in exercising these capacities. As Vargas succinctly summarizes this point: "Coercive circumstances, for example, can alter the culpability of an agent even when the agent's intrinsic features remain the same." (Ibid, p.122). The upshot of this view for Vargas is that we can alter or enhance someone's agency not just by altering them, but by altering our "moral ecologies", i.e. by changing the social and political structures the create oppressive conditions that in some cases inhibit agency by mitigating it. This view echoes Code's concept of enhancing epistemic flourishing through awareness of epistemic-moral-political ecologies. And, we will see in Chapter 5, it also echoes some concepts from disability theory about the social constitution of abilities and disabilities.

CHAPTER 4

Responsibility, In Practice: Harms Associated with Drug Use

4.1 Preamble

It is indisputable that there are widespread and significant harms associated with illicit and/or illegal drug use.[32] I will go over some of these harms in detail below (§4.22). What is not so clear is who and/or what is responsible for these harms. And it matters very much who and/or what is responsible for these harms, because how we explain these harms, and where we ascribe responsibility for these harms determines how these harms get addressed, or if they get addressed at all.

The task of making these kinds of determinations is very complex. As I will attempt to demonstrate in this chapter, it requires looking at the histories and current realities of the harms of drug use, but also at histories and current realities of oppression and stigma more broadly and how they intersect with these harms. It arguably requires attending to the complexity of these harms in particular places and times, and in particular individual lives rather than assuming a unified phenomenon of "addiction" that can be analyzed at a general level to come up with a theory that can be applied later to particular cases.

I want to use this complexity of responsibility ascriptions for harms associated with drug use as a model for the kind of complexity needed to construct a concept of EP epistemic responsibility that is appropriately responsive to the feminist insights I outlined in Chapter 2. If we are to take the anti-individualistic critique of mainstream epistemology seriously, we need to explore the ecologies of our epistemic practices in

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[32] I discuss this distinction in more detail in §4.213

their full complexity. The idea here is to find tools for thinking about responsibility that are grounded in our concrete responsibility ascription practices. I will argue that capturing this complexity involves accepting a pluralistic approach to responsibility ascription, one where the appropriateness of a responsibility ascription is indexed to the specific purposes of the ascription, or in other words, is dependant on what role that ascription is playing in our practices. I will call this robust veridical pluralism.

I use transcripts from the *Crackdown* podcast (Jan. 2019-present) as my primary text for understanding the harms associated with drug use and the complexities of responsibility ascriptions for these harms. *Crackdown* is a podcast written and produced by drug user and drug user activist Garth Mullins. This podcast is a powerful, insightful and extremely rich documentation of the lives, struggles and triumphs of drug users in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTE) neighbourhood. The podcast gathers together the first hand testimonies of many individual drug users, drug user activists and their allies interested in promoting justice and saving the lives of drug users in the DTE specifically, and in wider communities beyond.

One reason for taking *Crackdown* as a primary text is that it allows us to narrow in on a particular concrete setting for responsibility practices that respond to specific histories, laws, social structures, etc., rather than looking at a larger scope of practice (e.g. Canada or North America) which would necessarily require more generalization. Or, if not requiring more generalization, would require a much longer treatise in order to contextualize the harms associated with drug use at these larger scopes. Keeping the scope narrow allows for the specificity that our task requires.

But it would be possible to narrow the scope as I have suggested without centring the testimonies of drug users. The more important reasons to centre these

perspectives are ethical and epistemic. From an epistemic perspective, it is important to centre the testimony of drug users because there is widespread and problematic stigma against drug users. Given our discussions of epistemic oppression and the resilience of hermeneutical frameworks in Chapter 2 above, we should be cautious about building or assessing hermeneutical frameworks about the harms associated with drug use that do not include the perspectives of those who are likely to be best positioned to experience the kinds of epistemic friction needed to see that flaws in those frameworks, i.e., drug users themselves. And from an ethical perspective, it is important to centre the testimonies of drug users in discussions of drug use because to fail to do so is to perpetrate and perpetuate what is arguably the long standing epistemic oppression of drug users. Crackdown is not just a documentation. It is a manifesto, a call to action, an ongoing demand that drug users be heard and that their lives be valued. It is, from my perspective, unequivocally a demand for an end to epistemic oppression, amongst other forms of oppression, for drug users.

So in addition to the forward-looking function of preparing tools for the project of theory reconstruction in Chapter 5, this Chapter has an important backward-looking function (so to speak): it serves to strengthen and contextualize the importance of the insights developed in Chapter 2. In particular, I will argue that *Crackdown* gives a vivid illustration of the functioning of epistemic oppression, the resilience of the hermeneutical structures that undergird that oppression, and how epistemic oppressions can contribute to serious and sometimes fatal harms. The backward-looking function is important because, while we looked at some more concrete cases in Chapter 2, we did not explore in detail concrete cases related to responsibility ascriptions particularly. I want to put at the front of the reader's mind

(and my own) that responsibility ascriptions, across a variety of domains, have very serious consequences for peoples lives. The theories of responsibility that we develop are themselves hermeneutical structures. And, as such, they have power to have systemic and very concrete effects on peoples lives. How we model who and/or what is responsible for the harms associated with addiction affects how we address those harms. And, how we model when someone can be considered responsible for the truth of their belief can have effects on how we treat that person, and whether we hold them accountable for their beliefs—both in the sense of ascribing them the honorific of knowing (and the attendant social privileges that come with this status) and in the sense of judging them to be blameworthy or praiseworthy for their actions that resulted from their knowledge or ignorance.

With respect to the forward-looking function, one might question the wisdom of translating conclusions or tools from discussions about responsibility for the harms associated with drug use to epistemic responsibility. It might be suggested that these two domains of our practices are very different, and that we might need different conceptual frameworks to analyze these practices. I want to acknowledge the need for care in this process. But I think that if we are taking feminist epistemologists seriously then we have good reasons to think that our epistemic practices are not neatly distinct from our ethical and political practices. Taking this insight seriously requires exploring these connections, albeit with appropriate attention and care to possible discontinuities.

4.2 Background

To begin, it will be necessary to give a brief overview on the broader context and concepts related to the harms associated with drug use. I restrict myself, for the most part, to speaking about the context of North America here, because this is the context I find myself in, and the one that I am most knowledgeable about. But of course there will be continuities and discontinuities with other geographical-cultural contexts.

4.21 Terminology

First I want to give a brief overview of the different terms commonly used to talk about drug use and what is colloquially referred to as the phenomenon of addiction. As will be evident when we look into models of addiction in more detail below, each of these terms carries a lot of conceptual baggage, i.e., it is often the case that different models create different terms to emphasize different features of the phenomenon or to distinguish themselves from previous or dominant models. We will explore this more below, but for now a brief overview will suffice to give context for the discussion.

4.211 Addict & Addiction

Colloquially 'addict' and 'addiction' are used to describe a large variety of behaviours. For example, someone might assert that they are addicted to coffee, shopping, sports, or a certain food item. Sometimes when we say we're addicted to something we mean it jokingly or quasi-metaphorically. Sometimes we are referring to physical cravings or emotional states or just strong preferences. But, much of the time, when most people are thinking about serious or paradigm cases of addiction,

they are thinking about drug addiction.[33] This is a significantly more narrow phenomenon, but, as we will see, one it takes some work to narrow in on. And this is the phenomenon that I will be focusing on this chapter.

It is important to note that 'addict' is a highly stigmatized term, and it was historically, and is still, commonly used as a pejorative. The terms 'addict' and 'addiction' are often associated with frameworks of drug use that cast drug use as a moral or spiritual failing or a general weakness of will/sign of bad character. And while some drug users will refer to themselves as addicts, I do not take this as an invitation to use that word myself. While I will at times refer to the phenomenon of addiction as it is described in various conceptual frameworks, I will generally use the term 'drug users' to refer to particular individuals and communities. I go into more detail on this below (§4.213).

4.212 Substance-Use Disorder

The technical term 'substance-use disorder' (SUD), as it is outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), is most commonly used in medical, scientific (neuroscience, psychology, sociology, etc.) and some policy contexts. SUD has various subcategories for specific substances such as Alcohol Use Disorder, Opioid Use Disorder and Tobacco Use Disorder. The DSM-5 summarizes the condition as follows: "The essential feature of a substance use disorder is a cluster of cognitive, behavioural, and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual

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[33] Sex addiction and gambling addiction are also commonly discussed types of addiction. However it is controversial what these phenomena share with drug addiction. I focus here on the phenomenon of addiction as it relates to drug use, and remain agnostic here on commonalities with other phenomena that are referred to as addiction.

continues using the substance despite significant substance-related

problems." (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). There are ten diagnostic criteria

associated with SUD, grouped into four subcategories: impaired control (e.g., #2:

"There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control use of the

substance."); social impairment (e.g., #5: "Recurrent use of the substance resulting in

a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home"); risky use (e.g.,

#8: "Recurrent use of the substance in situations in which it is physically

hazardous."); and pharmacological (e.g., #10a "A need for markedly increased

amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication or desired effect") (Ibid). While

various social and psychological factors are integrated into the diagnostic criteria,

SUD notably focuses on physical aspects of addiction such as "underlying change in

brain circuits." (Ibid).

Adoption of the term 'substance use disorder" functions both for technical

precision and communication within and across disciplines. But, many scientists and

medical professionals also acknowledge the harmful stigma associated with the terms

'addict' and 'addiction,' and prefer SUD to attempt to avoid perpetuating this stigma.

4.213 Drug User

'Drug user' is a term that is favoured in many activist communities and it is a term

that is generally preferable for a few reasons. First, as a general rule, it is better to

refer to someone by the words and identity labels that they themselves prefer. This is

not to say that drug users make up a monolithic grouping with one preferred parlance

for identity (something not true of any community that I know of), but that when in

need of a way to refer to a group of people, especially when that group is

marginalized or vulnerable, a good guideline is to look to community members who have taken up the position of fighting for that community from within that community. Second, depending on the context, the term 'drug user' is more precise. This is because some accounts of the harms associated with drug use do not construct drug use as a disorder, but rather a stigmatized or precaritized way of existing in this world (for example). Terms such as SUD make many assumptions about the ontology of drug use and its associated harms that need not, and sometimes should not, be made.

There is an obvious ambiguity in the term 'drug user', which is that many people use drugs in ways that don't seem to fall under the colloquial phenomenon of 'addiction.' For example, large percentages of the population use drugs like alcohol, marijuana, or coffee on a regular or even daily basis to alter their moods, help them get through the day, or for general enjoyment. And then most (if not all) of us have used pharmaceutical drugs for a wide variety of purposes. Some, like acetaminophen or ibuprofen, are used on a semi-regular basis to relieve minor aches and pains. Other drugs, like SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), are used to treat symptoms of clinical depression (for example), and are essential to daily well-being. This is to say, most of us (if not all of us) are drug users in some sense. What is implicit in the concept of 'drug user' is something like the concept of "illicit" drug use. However, this term does not have sharp borders either, and as far as I can tell drug use that is illicit tends to fall into one of four categories:

1. Drugs that are produced and sold illegally, and that are not legally prescribed by medical professionals, e.g., heroin (in most cases).

2. Drugs that are produced legally, sometimes prescribed by medical professionals, that are diverted from legal markets into illegal markets and or used in ways deemed inappropriate, e.g., benzodiazepines.

3. Drugs that are produced legally, sometimes prescribed by medical professionals, and purchased and consumed legally, but are sometimes associated with illicit drug use, e.g., methadone.

4. Drugs that are produced, purchased and consumed legally, but are used in a way that is clinically or socially determined to be problematic, e.g., alcohol.

So what makes drug use illicit may be related to the legality of the drug or its use, or to the social stigma surrounding certain legal drugs, such as methadone. And whether a particular instance of drug use counts as illicit will depend on the historical, social, political and legal context of the user.

Part of modelling the causes of the harms associated with drug use is understanding what this divide between licit and illicit drugs/drug use means, and what effects it has. What does this divide between licit (medicinal/recreational) and illicit drugs do for us? Is it legitimate? And what are the contours of this divide?

4.22 Harms

4.221 "The Facts"
There are the cold hard facts about the harms associated with drug use. The 2012 *Canadian Community Health Survey* reported that 21.2% of Canadians (~ 6 million) met the criteria for substance-use disorder in their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 2015). And *The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse* (CASA) at Columbia University estimates that 40 million people in America (~16%) struggle with SUDs and that only 1 in 10 of these people receive treatment. For those that seek treatment, there is very little provision of evidence based care. Many people still see Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) as the best available methods for

coping with SUD (CASA, 2012, p.10). While AA and NA provide important support networks for some who struggle with SUD, their faith based and abstinence only approach alienates a significant portion of people who struggle with SUD, and the efficacy rates for those who do join have been increasingly called into question in recent years. Rehabilitation centres are plagued with similar problems, they are often highly unregulated, and they are not required to provide evidence-based care, or to employ persons with education in drug user care.

In 2017 there were 4,108 recorded overdose deaths in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017), and in 2018 there were 67,367 recorded overdose deaths in the US (CDC, 2020). The United Nations reported that at least 585,000 confirmed deaths worldwide related to drug use in 2017 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019, June). The true number is probably much higher.

These numbers are staggering. In North America alone almost 200 people a day are dying from drug overdoses. Almost 6000 a month. And the momentum of this tide of death is not slowing appreciably. These thousands and hundreds of thousands of deaths are adding up year by year by year.

And while these cold hard facts tell an important part of the harms associated with drug use, they do not tell of the intimate, daily harms that drug users contend with. They do not tell us about how female drug users are often coerced into sexually exploitative and abusive relations in order to access and use drugs (Mullins, 2019, March 30). They do not tell us about the slumlords who take advantage of public apathy and contempt towards drug users in order to get away with appalling building conditions and emotional and physical abuse (Mullins, 2019, July 4). In other words, they do not tell us about the indignities and traumas, large and small, that many drug

users experience on a daily basis. I think it is important to understand the intricacies and intimacies of these harms when considering models of addiction and responsibility for the harms associated with drug use. And it is impossible to tell this story without telling the story of epistemic oppression. Epistemic oppressions are tied intimately with the forces that sustain these harms, and epistemic resistance is tied intimately with the ways these harms are fought against, or so I will endeavour to show. Therefore, the following section has an important dual function for our purposes here: it gives more grounding for the importance of understanding epistemic oppression by connecting it with real and concrete harms, and it gives us a grounding for understanding the various models of the phenomenon of addiction and responsibilities for the harms associated with drug use.

4.222 Epistemic Oppression and the 2014 Methadone Change

"People in power don't believe dope fiends."

- Garth Mullins (Mullins, 2019, October 31)

Crackdown testifies to a large variety of epistemic oppressions experienced by drug users in general and in the specific context of the DTE. And *Crackdown* itself can be understood as an attempt to challenge this oppression, by centring the voices of drug users and demanding that they be heard. I cannot summarize all of the rich documentary and resistance work that the *Crackdown* team has done here, but I will summarize in some length the events documented and analyzed by Garth Mullins and his team surrounding the 2014 methadone policy changes in the province of British

Columbia (BC), Canada, which stands out as a particularly harmful and obvious manifestation of epistemic oppression.

Crackdown covers the events of the policy change in detail from the perspective of drug users in two episodes entitled "Change Intolerance" Parts 1 & 2. According to Mullins, in BC in 2014, there were approximately 15,000 active methadone users (Mullins, 2019, February 27). Methadone is an opioid that is commonly prescribed for either aiding someone in gradual cessation from other opioids, or for the short to long term maintenance of withdrawal symptoms of regular opioid use. Doctors can apply to put their patients on a Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT), and it is typically required that patients jump through various hoops to access their medication, including regular urine drug tests and witnessed daily consumption of the dosage by a pharmacist. These measures are ostensibly designed to avoid diversion of methadone into the black market and to ensure safety of patients. However, many drug users report that these measures are often humiliating and can be prohibitively inconvenient (Ibid).

But there are many advantages of methadone. It is legal, which means that drug users can avoid the multitude of complications and harms that come with being involved in illegal drug use. In particular, there is a guarantee that pharmaceutical grade methadone will not be adulterated with drugs like fentanyl or other contaminants that heighten the risk of overdose. And because methadone can be taken by mouth, users can avoid the hazards of injection drug use such as contraction of HIV and various other complications. A safe, consistent, legal drug supply enables many drug users, including *Crackdown*'s Garth Mullins who has been on MMT for 16 years, to live productive and stable lives (Mullins, 2019, November 28).

Prior to February 1st 2014, most MMT patients in BC received their dosages of methadone as a powder mixed into a non medicinal liquid at a certain concentration by the pharmacist. After February 1st this method of dispersal was switched over to a proprietary formulation of methadone manufactured by Mallinckrodt pharmaceuticals and branded as Methadose®. Methadose® comes pre-mixed at a concentration that is 10 times the "old methadone", and unlike the old methadone, Methadose® does not require refrigeration (Mullins, 2019, February 27). Most MMT patients were not told about the switch. They showed up at the pharmacy for their regular dose of the old methadone, and they were told that they would be getting Methadose®, and that they shouldn't worry because it was the same drug (Ibid). No one consulted the various BC drug user advocate groups on this change, such as the BC Association of People on Methadone (BCAPOM) or the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) (Ibid).

Even if the various harms that resulted from this change did not happen, this would have been an egregious move on the part of the BC Provincial government and the BC College of Pharmacists. With the knowledge that drug users are a population that carry a complex variety of risks, and the knowledge that prescription changes can have unpredictable negative effects, there is no way to justify an abrupt and unconsulted change to methadone delivery. This alone shows a lack of respect for the knowledge and agency of drug users about their own communities and a lack of concern for the well-being of drug users.

And, unfortunately, as it happened, there were many harms that resulted from this change. First, there was the increased risk of overdose in the diverted methadone stream: because users of illegal methadone were not likely to be made aware of the

dosage change they were at high risk of taking more than intended. This was an outcome quickly predicted by drug user activists such as Laura Shaver, who made posters explaining the change and posted them around the DTE community just after the switch (Ibid).

Very quickly, many methadone patients reported that Methadose® was not the same as the old methadone, that it just didn't "have legs" (Ibid). People started experiencing symptoms of withdrawal, and consequently many patients, who had been stably using methadone for decades in some cases, went back to using illegal heroin. I'm going to quote at some length an exchange between Mullins and Shaver that I think is important for understanding the gravity of this change for them as individuals and as a community:

> **GARTH MULLINS:** Like, can you give me an average day, like what a day would be like before the switch for you?
>
> **LAURA SHAVER:** So, I would be up at 8:00 in the morning. I would, you know, do my thing get up and go to my pharmacy, drink my methadone and, then come back. But when I woke up, I woke up, I woke up not feeling like I needed to have methadone. If I didn't actually drink the drink...I wouldn't...I wouldn't... um...know, I guess.
>
> [...]
>
> **GARTH MULLINS:** And so, what did that mean for your life? Like what did you do during the day?
>
> **LAURA SHAVER:** Um, I came and volunteered here at VANDU and I was fighting for people's rights that were on drugs. I felt like I had gotten to where I wanted to be after being a heroin user and methadone consumer for 20 some-

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odd years. I believed what I was told, that the medication was going to be the same. That it would be fine and that I would be able to continue with the work and the life that I had. And I was so wrong. I didn't think...I never in my wildest dreams did I think it was going to be as bad as it was. [...]

LAURA SHAVER: So, I went into my pharmacy and I gave the prescription to my pharmacist. That day I didn't feel really any difference. It was the middle of the night, I think February 3rd. I woke up feeling like my legs were moving, I couldn't sleep, and I felt like...twitches.

GARTH MULLINS: So, this is like...these are the classic symptoms of dope sickness. And you might not have felt that for a long time. So, you're in bed and your legs are twitching and what are you thinking?

LAURA SHAVER: I'm thinking, "What the fuck?" Like, excuse my language but, "Whoa, what's going on?" I said to my partner, Martin, like, "I am dope sick...like, I am dope sick!"

SAM FENN: Do you remember what Martin said?

LAURA SHAVER: "Just relax, Laura. You know it's new, maybe it's just...part you thinking this, or..." And I was like, well I'm going to be doing heroin. That means I am going to be robbing jewelry stores. That means I am going to be in jail... [crying] that means I am going to remember the awful, awful things that I did. And this is not my decision. I didn't do this. I was trying so hard to keep my life together. And then somebody else decided for me what medication they were going to give me, and it was insufficient.

LAURA SHAVER: By the 6th of February I was really...my body really felt

it. It was bad. And I started to use heroin right then. Right away, because I

can't do withdrawal. It doesn't work for me.

GARTH MULLINS: No doubt. (Ibid).

While this is one individual's testimony, Mullins argues that it is representative of a

wide-scale return to illegal opioid use in among MMT patients, and a correlative

surge in overdoses and overdose related deaths, not to mention a return to the hazards

and harms that come with use of illegal injection drugs. It is hard to establish these

claims empirically due to the complexity of factors that affect drug use, overdose, and

overdose death rates. However, Mullins cites various anecdotal and scientific data to

support the claim that illegal opioid use spiked after the switch (Ibid). And in the BC

Coroners Service report on overdose deaths from 2010-2020 you can see that the

switch to Methadose® corresponds with the beginning of a massive uptick in

overdose deaths in BC from 2014 - 2018, where, at the height in 2017 and 2018, there

were ~1,500 deaths per year due to illicit drug toxicity in BC alone (BC Coroners

Service, August 2020).[34] That's almost 40% of the total of overdose deaths for all of

Canada in those years. That's an average of four people dying per day in BC due to

overdose in 2017/2018.

These numbers are disturbing, but they are more disturbing because many, if

not most, of these deaths are completely preventable. And to understand why this is

the case, we need to understand two things: 1. Overdose does not equal death; and 2.

Opioids, like heroin, do not inevitably lead to overdose. Overdose deaths, prior to the

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[34] Again, the factors that caused this surge in deaths are complicated. But that the
sudden switch to Methadose® was a contributing factor seems like a reasonable
hypothesis given the anecdotal and scientific evidence available.

COVID-19 pandemic, had been on a slow decline in BC since the peak in 2017/2018. However, Mullins argues that this is not due to a reduction in overdoses, but rather skill building in the drug user community that prevents overdoses from leading to deaths (Mullins, 2019, August 28). *Crackdown* chronicles many drug users who have become experts in administering naloxone, a highly effective drug that counteracts the effects of an opioid overdose. BC drug users have pioneered peer-staffed safe injection sites where drug users can use drugs hygienically and safely, and where they know that if they overdose someone will be there to save their lives. Drug user activists opened these sites illegally and pressed to have them given legal status against significant opposition. According to Mullins there has not been a single death due to overdose at any safe injection site in BC or elsewhere (Mullins, 2019, August 28).

The other major factor that leads to overdose death are the pressures of the illegal market. Illegally produced heroin is not medical grade and is often adulterated with various substances to either dilute or alter the effects of the drug. Drug users often don't have the knowledge or the social capital to determine what is in the drugs they have purchased[35], and with adulterations of high potency drugs like fentanyl, accidental overdoses have skyrocketed because of the difficulty of predicting drug strength. This factor is further exacerbated by the fact that drug users often feel pressured to use quickly and or to dose all at once, because they fear being caught with illicit drugs and being harassed or arrested, or having their drug supply confiscated. At safe injection sites users can try a smaller dose first to test the potency

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[35] There have been formal proposals for legal "buyers clubs" for drug users, and Mullins says that informally the practice of testing and educating others about toxic supplies does happen in drug user communities (Mullins, 2020, April 4).

of the drug, and possibly split the dose into several parts. This confirms what I said above: overdoses are not an inevitable feature of opioid use, and overdose does not inevitably lead to death. This is why drug user activists have been calling for legalization, more safe injection sites and a safe supply of drugs for many years (Mullins, 2019, August 28).

The background of all of these factors, and of all of the work that drug users have been doing for decades, not only within their communities, but in lobbying government at all levels and collaborating with scientists to produce peer reviewed studies, makes the sudden switch to Methadose® a blatant act of disrespect for the expertise and knowledge that exists in drug user communities and for lives of drug users themselves. And as it became increasingly clear that Methadose® was not functionally equivalent to methadone, drug user activists organized to call on the government to bring back the old methadone, and to apologize for the suffering and harm that the change caused (Mullins 2019, February 27 & October 31).

But even after being presented with evidence both from drug users and scientists, the government refused to comply. They persisted in suggesting that the reaction was psychosomatic, that the dose was the same, and that the perception of lessened efficacy was "in the head" as it were (Mullins 2019, February 27). Besides this being an unjustified dismissal of the experiences of drug users, it is a weak defence all things considered. Psychosomatic effects are real, and the general population is no more immune to them than drug users are, as is evidenced by the widespread and well-documented cases of placebo effects. A sudden shift in any prescription drug without the patient's consent is not advisable, especially given our knowledge of the unpredictability of psychosomatic effects.

It is only recently that the BC government has acknowledged that

Methadose® does not work for all methadone users, and that they have agreed on a

case by case basis, once the patient has demonstrated to a doctor's satisfaction that

Methadose® or another alternative *Metadol D* does not work for them, they can be

switched back to the old methadone (Mullins 2019, October 31). An apology has not

materialized. But the *Crackdown* team is still fighting for wider access and public

recognition. The episodes that chronicle the *Methadose®* switch, amongst the other

topics they cover, are a call to action but also a call to be heard, to be understood as

experts about their own communities and their own experiences.

The behaviour by the BC government in this matter presents a clear case of

what Fricker called testimonial injustice: government officials failed to ascribe

appropriate credit to drug users' testimony, arguably due to prejudice regarding drug

users credibility and knowledge with respect to their own experiences, health and

well-being and perhaps in general as epistemic agents. However, noticing the

testimonial injustice experienced by drug users here only scratches the surface of the

wider hermeneutical injustice/epistemic oppression that drug user communities are

subject to, because as discussed in Chapter 2, testimonial injustice by definition

captures injustices that occur in one-off interactions between testifiers and hearers.

Systemic or structural features of our epistemic practices, of which testimonial

injustice is arguably a symptom, are better captured by hermeneutical injustice and

epistemic oppression concepts.

Recall that on Fricker's account a hermeneutical injustice occurs when

someone is unable to secure uptake on an expression of their experience due to a gap

in the dominant hermeneutical resources (§2.33). And also recall Tuana's notion of

the creation of "epistemically disadvantaged identities" (§2.32) and our discussion of the resilience of hermeneutical frameworks (§2.35). While it is important to look at the way individual and specific epistemic injustices occur, as in the case of the BC government's failure to listen to drug-users, it is equally important to look at the wider pattern of epistemic injustice that this community (amongst other communities) experiences. Or, to put it in another way, it is important to consider why these kind of injustices are possible and in some cases probable in these communities. And in this case we are not just concerned with understanding the epistemic injustices that are perpetrated against these communities, but the conditions of epistemic oppression that lead to those patterns of injustice. Is seems plausible to suppose that drug users are, in Tuana's phrasing, subject to the creation of disadvantaged epistemic identities. As we will see in our discussion of models of addiction below, historically and in many contemporary contexts, concepts of "the addict" been have constructed as morally compromised, out of control and in extreme cases lacking free will. These widespread hermeneutical frameworks about drug users do not easily allow for the idea that drug users can speak for themselves, that they have unique knowledge of what is best for their communities, or that they have communities as at all. In fact, in the extreme, when drug users are understood as actors motivated only by their addiction, they are easily dismissed from the category of "agent" all together, since to be an agent requires at least some control over oneself and one's actions. It is arguably this gap in the dominant hermeneutical resources that allows for the complete lack of uptake of the testimony of drug users, even in the face of clear evidence of widespread death and suffering. These is a terrifying level of resilience in these hermeneutical resources.

The depth of the epistemic oppression experienced by drug users in BC has only been further emphasized by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. As the dangers of the pandemic became more evident in the months of March and April 2020, government officials scrambled to implement measures that decrease the spread of COVID-19 among the population of drug users in BC. This included some measures for which drug users had been asking for years if not decades, things that time and time again they were told were not possible: access to a greater variety of prescription grade drugs and dosages to serve individual needs (safe supply), reduction of supervision of ingestion of methadone/*Methadose*® (trust and basic dignity).

And while all this sounds good, it is at the same time very frustrating to the drug user activists that this is what it took for them to be listened to, for their lives to be cared about enough to listen. As Garth Mullins puts it, it is only when drug users are seen as disease vectors that their lives are worth saving, and that their testimony is deemed valuable:

> **GARTH:** No, I know what you mean. Like, like you and me had been pushing for something like this for a long time, right? That would have been a reasonable -- like a not radical, just a reasonable response to the overdose crisis that we lived through for the last five years. So we sat in all these meetings, we asked for this. And so I've gotten used to commenting on documents and writing little things and doing little meetings that really go nowhere. And so all of a sudden, this went somewhere fast. And I was like, I was like, Wow, that's great! But also God dammit, why couldn't we have done that before? I mean, what did you feel?

DEAN: Right. If that would have come out in response to the overdose crisis-- I think that would have been a big win. Listen-- all they're doing is they're trying to prevent themselves from getting COVID from the fucking dirty masses.

GARTH: Right, because, because they could, they could never see us as human beings before-- but now that they see us as disease vectors, they're scared and they want to do something.

DEAN: Exactly. We're still not people. We're disease vectors. It's because they're worried about fucking big hump here, in Downtown Eastside could cause it to fucking go crazy in the City of Vancouver. (Mullins, 2020, April 4)

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic began, the drug user community in BC has been experiencing a pandemic of epic proportions, and have been trying to tell their government and the world about it, have produced the numbers, have offered thoughtful and empirically supported solutions. The fact that government officials have begun to attempt to implement some of the measures suggested by drug users should not be seen as a radical shift in the dominant hermeneutical resources or an end to epistemic oppression of drug users. Rather, it looks more like drug users are being seen as sources of information rather than epistemic agents in their own right. This is itself a kind of objectification.

And, unfortunately, the response from authorities has been too little too late. BC reported a 93% spike in overdose deaths amongst Indigenous people from January-May 2020 when compared to data from last year (Bellrichard, 2020), and the province continues to record high fatality overdose rates during the pandemic with more than 170 deaths per month from May to July (Musset, 2020). It is very difficult,

if not impossible, to pivot an entire system of law, health care, social services, etc. in a matter of weeks or months in the midst of a global pandemic. But this is exactly the point: the COVID-19 pandemic, as with many other areas of life, is only exposing to view populations that have been suffering and calling for help, and that have been consistently and systematically ignored, yelled down, and in many cases left to die.

4.3 Models

So, I take it to be uncontroversial at this point to say that drug use is associated with significant and often life-threatening harms. What is not at all uncontroversial is what are the causes of these harms, and relatedly, what or who we should understand to be responsible for these harms, or, in other words, what is the correct explanation for these harms.

Very often these harms are talked about from within the frame of "addiction". As mentioned above, I want to be careful about how I use this term, because it is often employed with tacit assumptions about who and/or what is responsible for the harms associated with drug use. In particular, as we will see, concepts of addiction have tended to locate the source of these harms within the "addict" themselves.

While it will be necessary to talk about models of addiction, I want to flag that we must be careful about what assumptions we bring into the background when discussing these concepts. As we be began to see in §4.222, non-contextual and non-systematic conceptions of the harms associated with drug use do not cohere with the testimonies of drug users themselves. And, we have reasons (both epistemic and ethical) to take these testimonies very seriously.

So, in characterizing various models of 'addiction' I will be attending to the different explanations they give for the causes of the harms associated with drug use, i.e., by the different conceptions of who and/or what is responsible for these harms. There is by no means a consensus about the answer to these questions, and I will not pretend to give a fully comprehensive survey of options here. But it is my goal to give a sense of the broader contours of the debate as it spreads over various epistemic-ethical-political contexts, e.g., amongst scientists, policy makers, drug users, the general public and philosophers.

The point here is to demonstrate that while we can assess to what degree these models capture the realities of the causes of harms associated with drug use, we do not always need to see these models as competing for truth. Rather, we can understand these models as complementary and representing a pluralism of truths about who and/or what is responsible for these harms. This is not to say that we can't criticize these models, or even advocate for the elimination of any one of these models. We absolutely can and should do so when a model is contributing to the very harms that it attempts to understand. It is to say that we can critically endorse multiple models depending on what part of our practices we are attempting to capture, and for what purpose we a making this attempt.

Unlike in some philosophical debates about definitions or conceptual models, the impacts of how we explain the phenomenon of "addiction" are urgent and dire. I believe that most of the people who research addiction/SUD/drug use are well aware of this. They don't do research on addiction/SUD/drug use in order to get the truth

about the phenomenon. Rather, they want to get at the truth in order to save lives,

prevent suffering and make a difference in the lives of real people.[36]

4.31 Historical Models: Addiction as Moral Failure or Spiritual Corruption

I cannot not hope to, nor do I need to, give a fully comprehensive history of the

changing concepts of addiction over centuries of human history. But a brief

background will be helpful in setting the ground for how contemporary theories

developed in contrast to, or in some cases in line with, historical understandings of

addiction. Before the advent of medical models of addiction, which followed along

with the general development of epidemiological and evidence based approaches to

health, addiction had variously been understood as a kind of demon possession or

spiritual weakness and/or a moral failing in the form of an extreme weakness of will.

On these sorts of models the harms associated with drug use were understood to result

from something inherent to the person themselves, or in some cases from something

inherent to the corrupting drug itself. These models promote treatment of these

individual through in the form of spiritual or moral education/intervention and/or

prohibition of drugs deemed illicit. The idea being that we might eliminate the harms

associated with the drug use by eliminating the corrupting substance itself or by

exercising or eliminating the spiritual or moral sickness in the individual, as it were.

One of extremes of the application of these sorts of models was the American

temperance movements and the eventual prohibition of alcohol from 1920-1933.

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[36] to be clear I am not saying that all people who research addiction/SUD/drug use
have the best interests of drug users in mind. Likely there are many who don't. But I
do believe that there are a large number that do, even if they differ significantly in
how what they think is in the best interest of drug users, and how to go about
promoting the interests and preventing harm and death.

Amongst other things, women's temperance movements argued that alcohol was a root cause of a variety of problems for the family, including widespread domestic abuse. And while these movements arguably contributed significantly to women's liberation, it is not clear that they did so by prohibiting alcohol. Temperance movements afforded many women unprecedented social power, bringing them into the public sphere and into central roles of power within temperance organizations (Dannenbaum 1981). While alcohol provided a necessary focal point for women's activism, we can look back with a contemporary lens to see that alcohol itself does not provide the best explanation for the widespread domestic abuse, even if it does in some circumstances exacerbate it. Systematic inequalities and lack of basic human rights for women are a much better explanation of these particular harms.

These moral failure or spiritual corruption models are generally discredited and recognized as harmful among scientists, drug users and many others interested in ameliorating the harms associated with drug use. However, it is important to remember that these models permeated culture for many generations and arguably are still embedded deeply in our cultural consciousness. For this reason it is important to be vigilant about how the moral failure model might surreptitiously infect other models of addiction.

4.32 The Brain Disease Model of Addiction

The predominant view in many scientific, academic and policy contexts is the *Brain Disease Model of Addiction* (BDMA). This model is endorsed by major organizations such as The National Centre on Addiction and Substance Use (CASA), The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), and The American Society of Addiction Medicine.

The BDMA developed in concert with the larger shift in understanding of mental disorders towards a biomedical model, in opposition to the moral failing model discussed above, and to the extreme lack of evidence-based care available for SUD treatment. The model is argued for along two main lines.

First, proponents of the BDMA hypothesize that studying the neurobiology of SUDs will eventually allow scientists to pinpoint a biological etiology for the disease and provide targeted treatments. Second, proponents of the BDMA argue that the disease model will decrease stigma associated with addiction and therefore allow for more people to be treated, more cooperation from medical doctors in recommending evidence based treatments, and better access to funding for research. The logic here seems to be that if addiction could be understood as similar to a disease like cancer or Parkinson's disease, then stigma would be significantly reduced. The basic idea being, as far as I understand, that bringing SUD under the same umbrella as diseases like cancer suggests that, like cancer, someone does not choose to have an SUD. And therefore, given that they did not choose to have their SUD (as opposed to moral failure models) they are deserving of public aid in the same way as cancer patients are deserving of public aid.

The consequences of this kind of shift of perspective can be very significant. It has long been argued that people with alcohol related end stage liver disease (ARESLD) should be given lower priority for liver transplants that people with non-alcohol related end stage liver disease (ESLD). For example, Walter Glannon (2009) argues that this lower priority is justified because people with ARESLD "not only causally but also morally responsible for liver failure." (p. 24). Glannon's arguments are largely premised on the idea that most people alcohol use disorder (AUD) at some

point made autonomous choices that led to their AUD, and that these choices make them responsible for their later physical states, even if at some point their use of alcohol is not properly understood as a free choice due to their physical dependency. And there is empirical evidence to suggest that lower prioritization of liver transplants for people with ARSELD receives widespread public support across many geographical and cultural contexts (Neuburger, 2007).

However, these sorts of arguments have less force when one adopts the brain disease model. While it maybe be true that individuals make choices that lead to SUDs, the same can be said for other environmentally triggered diseases and injuries. Many of our actions lead to harms, and sometimes we undertake those actions knowing about the risks of those harms.

So, when it comes to an explanation of what and who is responsible for the harms associated with addiction, the BDMA primarily focuses on the neurobiological states of drug users, and therefore is associated with attempts to develop therapeutic interventions for individual drug users with the aim of aiding full cessation of drug use. In this way the BDMA works in concert with the DSM-5 conception of addiction as primarily a biological condition of individual bodies associated with adverse social and psychological outcomes. This is not to say that proponents of the BDMA don't recognize the importance of other factors—e.g., social factors such as poverty, histories of oppression and trauma—but they don't centre them in the explanation for the harms associated with addiction.

Coming back to our example about ESLD and ARESLD, up until recently most transplant programs in Canada have required a mandatory six months sober rule before becoming eligible for a liver transplant. This rule is generally justified on the

basis of claims that those who cannot complete the required period of sobriety have a higher likelihood of returning to a level of alcohol use that could cause complications for the success of the liver transplant or lead to reoccurrence of liver disease (Harnanan, 2019). However, this rule has come under criticism from various parties in the last several years. For example, The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs and David Denis, who was denied eligibility for a liver transplant in 2019, argued that such rules discriminate against Indigenous peoples because they have higher rates of SUDs due to intergenerational trauma resulting from colonial oppression, and in particular the Canadian residential school system (Nair, 2019).[37]

4.33 Biopsychosocial Models

While the BDMA is a dominant model in many scientific and policy contexts, there is an increasing body of critique against it. The hypothesis that the BDMA will reduce stigma is empirically unsupported and there have been several empirical studies that speak against it (Kvaale et. al 2013, Schomerus et. al 2011). Some have even argued that the BDMA is more likely to increase stigma and reinscribe a view of "the addict" as an inherently lesser kind of person—what Hammer et al. refer to as the "secular possession" model.[38]

     Another critique is that the focus on neurobiological factors has not borne fruits in providing etiology for SUDs or more effective treatments and that the

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[37] BC Transplant did issue an apology to Denis and stated that the denial of eligibility was based on a miscommunication because the policy had actually been changed months before. However, the argument from Denis and the The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs still applies to six months sober policies more broadly.

[38] See also Reinarman p.315.

excessive focus in funding and research on these factors ignores the psychological, social, economic and political factors that could be engaged to address the harms of addiction (e.g. Deacon, 2003; Hall, 2015; Grifell & Hart 2018). To be clear, none of these critics suggest that there is no neurobiological component to addiction. Rather, they argue that the attention in terms of the amount of research and funding that is focused on neurobiological factors is disproportionate to the potential payoffs in addressing the negative consequences for individuals and communities who struggle with addiction.

In line with the critique above, many addiction scientists therefore argue for a more dynamic biopsychosocial model of addiction. For example, neuroscientist Carl Hart has been a prominent critic of popular models of addiction for decades. He argues that poverty and racism have historically played, and continue to play, a large role in patterns of addiction and the severity and types of harms associated with them. He points to the ways in which carceral systems perpetuate cycles of addiction and incarceration. He argues for a wider focus on changing social, economic and political conditions that would have a larger impact on reducing the harms of addiction at a population level. Hart often recommends a three pronged approach to addressing harms associated with addiction:

1. Provide economic opportunities for people in poverty.
2. Decriminalize all drugs.
3. Let science drive policy and education.
    E.g., We can regulate pharmaceutical companies to make drugs like naloxone, which block opioids in the case of an overdose, more affordable (In Canada there are increasingly common programs that provide free naloxone kits)
    E.g., We can also educate people about the dangers of mixing sedatives such as alcohol and opioids (which accounts for a large portion of overdose death). (Hart, 2014).

Scientists like Carl Hart, and other BDMA critics, advance a different kind of explanation for what is responsible for the harms of addiction. They bring different factors to the fore of salience: racism, poverty, trauma, education, legal structures, policy structures. And this shift of explanation leads to a shift of priority in addressing these harms.

4.34 Drug User Activist / Harm Reduction Models

I said at the beginning that I will be using the *Crackdown* podcast as a primary text, and I want to explore here what model or models of addiction/drug use can be gleaned within the testimonies and discussions of *Crackdown*. But what I don't want to do is assume that *Crackdown* aims to forward some kind of unified theory. On the contrary, the strength of the podcast is that it examines the causes of the harms associated with drug use from many different perspectives. And in some cases it challenges the listener to weigh these models against each other, and to notice the effects they have on drug users:

> The disease model of addiction really posits that addiction is a chronic relapsing brain disease. And what that effectively means is that treatment is focused on producing a range of biological outcomes that effectively address the impulse to use illicit drugs. Umm..and what that necessarily ends up doing is, much like moral approaches to drug use before it, ends up being focused primarily around disciplining the bodies of people who use drugs. And as we try to imagine a more humane drug policy that's aligned with what people actually want there's a whole separate conversation we need to have about what models of addiction make possible. And in turn, maybe we need to start

confronting the very serious limitations of those. (Ryan McNeil, from Mullins 2020, April 4)

There is a lot to unpack in the above quote, but the first thing I want to note about it is the continuity with revisionist approach I outlined above. The question that McNeil asks us to consider is: What are the consequences of holding one model of addiction vs. another? What kinds of behaviours, outcomes, policies, etc. do these models make possible? So, an underlying methodological assumption here is: it is possible to assess our models of addiction on criteria other than whether they are true, scientifically sound, etc. In addition to those things, we need to ask, what are these models doing for us? And, could they be doing something different and better for us? In the case of models of "addiction" could they be saving lives vs. enabling deaths? Could they be providing drug users with basic dignity vs. denigrating and disabling their agency? This work, the work that McNeil is doing above, and that the *Crackdown* podcast does more broadly, can be understood as attempts to overcome what Dotson calls third-order epistemic oppression. Dotson argues that third-order epistemic oppressions, epistemic oppressions that compromise epistemic agency, can only be addressed by getting dominant community members to notice that they are working with particular contingent hermeneutical frameworks, and that these frameworks advantage some people and disadvantage others. As Dotson notes, and as we discussed in Chapter 2, this is incredibly challenging work. It creates a kind of cognitive dissonance that many people are apt to resist. This is why the work of the *Crackdown* team is so important, because is provides to tools for this kind of shift. Though it remains to be seen how many people will be able to make such a shift.

While much of the time the perspectives presented in the podcast align loosely with what I've described as a bio-psycho-social model, I don't think that this model captures everything that the collective testimonies of *Crackdown* contain. Crackdown pushes against the idea that drug use is always something to be "fixed" in a medical context. Rather, some users do not want to quit, but want to be enabled to live a life of their choosing that includes drug use, but without legal and moral persecution.

And they also push against the idea that medical interventions are going to be equally available to everyone. There are some traumas, like the ongoing and intergenerational traumas of colonization, or the wide scale traumas of domestic and sexual abuse of women and children, that are structurally resistant to medical solutions because of historical and current trauma and re-traumatization practices within the medical context itself. While Canada imagines itself to have a universal health care system, it does not have a health care system that is equally accessible to all.[39] The harms of addiction must in some cases be addressed with language, land and cultural resurgence projects within Indigenous communities.

At times we can also see *Crackdown* as coinciding with self-medication models of drug use that would allow for the possibility of drug use as a valid and valuable choice for some drug users as a way of coping with trauma and mental illness. This is not to say that there are not cases (possibly many) where drug use is all things considered a negative in peoples' lives. Rather, it is to say that it can be a

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[39] For example, because of histories and current realities of Colonialism in Canada, including but not limited to non-consensual experimentation on Indigenous children in residential schools, forced sterilization of unknown numbers Indigenous people, and racial and cultural prejudice experiences in health care contexts, some Indigenous people do not feel safe accessing health care services in Canada. See, for example, Kurtz et al., 2008.

rational choice given the options that someone has. This model pushes against the socially and historically constructed line between medication and drugs, and asks us to be critical of how and why we are upholding this line.

These currents of thought run parallel to harm reduction approaches to drug use that have been developed in a variety of contexts in Canada and elsewhere at least as far back as the 1980s. Harm reduction models, initiatives and strategies are developed by many different stakeholders such as drug user activists, policy makers, scientists, and service providers. Harm reduction models prioritize reduction of harm and death in drug user populations by advocating for safe and legal supplies of currently illegal drugs, decriminalization of drug-related activities, the provision of safe places to do drugs with knowledgeable assistance, reduction of stigma against drug users, and social services that aid with housing, employment, mental health care, and social justice. Harm reduction models, like all of the models discussed above, work on the premise that there are serious harms associated with drug use, but they focus on the pragmatic and social factors that cause those harms.

4.35 Discussion

While the complaints against the BDMA are persuasive, it is worth considering why the BDMA has been, and continues to be, compelling for so many people. There are at least three important factors that appear to contribute to its popularity. First, pharmaceutical companies, who wield massive economic and political power, have an interest in preserving the biomedical model of mental disorder more broadly and therefore the BDMA as well, since they stand to benefit from the sale of any pharmaceutical treatments that are developed to address addiction/mental disorder.

Second, a recent study identified two major factors that push scientists to work within the BDMA paradigm. First, after interviewing 20 addiction scientists from a variety of disciplines, Rachel Hammer and colleagues (2013) found that there is a common perception among scientists that they are more likely to receive funding and resources for BDMA related research than research that focuses on "environmental" factors, i.e., social and political factors (p. 29). Second, some of the scientists expressed a concern about the ability to attract young researchers to work on non-BDMA projects on addiction—there was a common view that like addiction itself, research on addiction carries a stigma that might be lessened under the BDMA paradigm.

Last, the BDMA can, at least in some cases, provide a narrative that people who struggle with SUDs find helpful during recovery and in dealing with the shame and stigma surrounding addiction. In another study, Hammer et al. interviewed 63 patients at addiction treatment centres and learned that the majority of patients found the BDMA helpful for their recovery. One patient, referred to as Paige, said the following:

> I think understanding that it is a disease is what helps me take control over my addiction. It helps me to understand it, and if I understand it, especially, it takes away the guilt and the shame processes that we go through, and it is hard to carry that around and get into recovery. (Hammer et al., p.28)

Hammer et al. argue that the BDMA might allow for a person struggling with addiction to see themselves as "simultaneously responsible and not responsible" (p. 28) for their addiction, i.e., they are not the cause of their addiction (their brain

disease is) but they are empowered to take responsibility for maintaining their health given that they have that disease (see also Reinarman, p.315).

These first two factors that promote the popularity of the BDMA is obviously problematic. I do not need to argue here that pharmaceutical companies should not assert undue influence over research to the detriment of improvement of overall health outcomes. And then, it appears to me, that governments have something analogous to a conflict of interest when it comes to promoting the BDMA, since the BDMA does not prioritize recognition of, or work on, larger systemic economic and racial disparities within the US and Canada, i.e., it does not require the government to take responsibility for addressing these structures.

The final factor is more complex. Is there a way to make sense of the seemingly paradoxical notion that someone can be both responsible and not responsible for their addiction?

I think there is a possible concern that both the BDMA and the Biopsychosocial model, might, in their own ways, promote a kind of problematic fatalism at the level of individual agency. On the one hand, if addiction is indeed a brain disease, then it is something that "the addict" can never hope to live without—it is a permanent feature of who they are as an individual.

On the other hand, if we expand the causal story to include psychological, social, and political factors then there might still seem to be little room for individual agency due to a feeling of being determined by one's circumstances. It seems right, for both pragmatic and factual reasons, to pay greater attention to the larger factors that structure addiction—they often provide a better explanation than focusing on individual agency. But, what room does this shift of focus leave for empowering

individuals to take control of their own situations? We need notions of agency, responsibility, blame, and credit that can empower individuals while at the same time taking account of their larger social-political context.

The key is to recognize that what we need is not one model, but many models that we can draw on to suit the goals and purposes that we have. We need multiple compatible explanations for the harms associated with drug use that make salient different factors for different practical reasoning contexts. The thing that unifies these models is that they are drawn with the harms associated with drug use in mind. But the harms associated with drug use are so complex that we need a complexity of explanations to address them.

4.36 The "Philosopher's Addict"

I would be remiss if I did not make a note about another model of addiction that has gone unmentioned so far, and that is the model of addiction that we see presented often by philosophers of free will, action and responsibility. The term "whipping boy" means (loosely) someone who is punished or blamed in place of another. It might seem harsh, but I don't think it is unfair to say that "addicts" have been the "whipping boys" of philosophers interested in notions of free will and self-control for decades if not centuries. An "addict" is often held up as the paradigm case of a person who lacks control, free will and perhaps even agency and the capacity for responsibility. But if we take seriously the testimonies of drug users themselves, this picture does not seem accurate. What the testimonies of the Crackdown Podcast show us is that many drug users who would be classified as having substance use disorders, when given the opportunity to have stable housing, legal drug supplies, and safe use sites, can lead

stable lives as loving partners and parents and as powerful community advocates. This is far from the picture of the paradigmatically unfree addict.

This lack of understanding is not surprising when we are looking at philosophical work from earlier periods where moral failure models were still very dominant. But what about theories that still use "addicts" as a central foil for the project of delineating the free from the unfree? In the worst case scenario these models of addiction, perhaps unintentionally and unknowingly, promote harmful stereotypes that contribute to the harms associated with drug use. As moral philosophers well know, unknowing and unintentional does not necessarily mean non-culpable.

In the best case scenario you have someone like Carolina Sartorio (p. 111) who argues that addicts are different from free individuals because they are not reasons-responsive, but clarifies that she is not speaking about real life addicts, but the "philosopher's addict" (a term she borrows from Timothy Schreoder) a philosopher's creation similar to "philosophical zombies" or "swamp men". Does this qualification make this use of "addicts" as philosophical foils acceptable? As Sartorio points out, this sort of construction is not a model of the real phenomenon of addiction or of the psychological states of drug users. One might argue that it is evident that, contrary to the other models given above, the "philosopher's addict" is not indexed to an explanation of harms, and is therefore part of a different conversation all together, i.e. a harmless thought experiment. The problem is that this thought experiment draws directly from the same harmful stereotypes that pre-date the "philosopher's addict" construct, and in doing so is arguably complicit in reinforcing and in some sense benefiting from those harmful stereotypes. In the language of feminist epistemology

that we learned above, the notion of the "philosopher's addict" draws from the same hermeneutical frameworks that have historically, and continue to be used to justify the suffering, neglect and punishment of drug users. This is not something that I think (and hope) most philosopher's want to be complicit in.

4.5 Pluralism

The discussion of models of addiction has parallels with the discussion of explanation in §3.25 and the discussion of Code's pluralism in §3.41. I have tried to advocate for a *pluralism* about explanation with respect to the harms associated with drug use, and I want to consider how this pluralism can be applied to other sorts of responsibility ascriptions more broadly. The sort of pluralism I want to put forth here, and to apply later in Chapter 5, is what I would refer to as a "robustly veridical pluralism." As discussed in Chapter 2, feminist considerations and goals for social and political progress typically do not make them friendly to relativistic frameworks. Most feminist epistemologists that I am aware of are looking to be able to make robustly veridical claims, i.e. claims about what is in fact the case about states of affairs in the world, and about how we ought to go about altering those states of affairs. I take this veridical orientation to be consistent with the type of pluralism that I have so far described. But to flesh this idea of pluralism out further we can take some cues from another discipline in philosophy that has grown more accustomed to being purpose oriented in its evaluations, such as bioethics.

In her paper "Foundations, Frameworks, Lenses: The Role of Theories in Bioethics" (1999) Susan Sherwin argues that there are compelling reasons, partly based on the ways that we commonly carry our moral reasoning, to approach theory

building in bioethics not from a foundationalist approach that attempts to build an

solid and overarching theory that can be applied to all cases in all contexts, but rather

to develop multiple theories that can be applied as frameworks or "lenses" to

problems in bioethics. The reason this is important and compelling for bioethics is

that we need tools that we can use now to solve the pressing and concrete problems

that bioethical considerations present. This approach shares similarities with Code's

wider notion of ecological thinking. The ecological thinker needs to be aware of the

various hermeneutical frameworks that are, and/or could be, used to understand our

experience. But the point is not to select the correct one, but rather to notice which

ones we are using, and how they are affecting our epistemic-moral-political

flourishing.

How could we apply these tools to questions about EP responsibility? What

feminist epistemologists have demonstrated is that our epistemic practices do in fact

present us with pressing and concrete concerns. Perhaps it is time to approach the

subject matter of knowledge with as much nimbleness as bioethics has developed.

Recall that two of our central figures from feminist epistemology, Hill Collins and

Code, ask us, qua members of the epistemic community to be epistemologists in our

everyday lives. That is, they ask that we become aware of the epistemic/hermeneutical

frameworks that we employ in our lives, and where necessary, be critical of them. In

order to be both epistemically and ethically successful we need to accept that we will

always be working with a partial understanding of the world. The project of

attempting to find the one viewpoint or framework from which we can view all others

is, according, at least to Code, a losing project. In doing so we promote a problematic

"epistemology of mastery."

This type of pluralism is a big idea, in the sense that it requires deep metaphysical commitments and aesthetic intuitions about what counts as "truth." I want to avoid getting into the weeds of these discussions as much as possible, and stick to how this sort of thinking will play out for our purposes in Chapter 5. What is substantively different about this approach from a lot of mainstream projects in epistemology, but squarely in line with a lot of work in feminist epistemology, is the idea not just that there is the possibility of multiple correct theories and explanations, but rather that, in adjudicating these theories and explanations it is important to refer to pragmatic, moral and political considerations. This is exactly the project we saw suggested by Haslanger. But now we are going to attempt to apply this strategy to the specifics of a theory of EP epistemic responsibility.

4.6 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I laid out two main goals:

1. The forward-looking goal of preparing tools for the project of theory reconstruction in Chapter 5.

2. The backward-looking goal of strengthen and contextualizing the importance of the insights about epistemic oppression developed in Chapter 2.

The backward-looking goal was primarily accomplished through my discussion of the switch from methadone to Methadose® without the informed consent or consultation of patients on Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT) programs. I argued that this unconsulted switch, and the attendant lack of uptake of the many protests from drug user activists in the wake of a spike in return to illegal toxic drug supplies and the

predictable and avoidable co-incidental spikes in both overdoses and overdose deaths, constitutes a form of epistemic injustice that is a symptom of the larger epistemic oppression of drug users and their communities.

The forward-looking goal has been accomplished through the juxtaposition and analysis of various models of responsibility for the harms associated with drug use. I have demonstrated here the pluralist idea here that we can, and sometimes need to, affirm multiple explanations for the harms associated with addiction, and also for who and/or what is responsible for those harms. However, as I emphasized above, I take this pluralism to be robustly veridical, i.e. our plurality of explanations can be assessed critically against the world. For example, we looked at the moral failure model and the philosopher's addict and found both to be lacking.

Importantly, whether a particular ascription of responsibility/explanation of harms is appropriate will depend on what we are doing with that ascription. For example, if an individual drug user is attempting to make changes in their life with respect to their drug use then their individual behaviour and/or medical condition may be relevant in making responsibility ascriptions for harms associated with drug use. However, if we are assessing policy changes with respect to drug criminalization, for example, then individual behavioural and medical factors become much less salient than systemic features such as access to mental health care, economic support, and addressing systemic racism.

CHAPTER 5

Epistemic Responsibility, An Experiment in Theory Reconstruction

5.1 Preamble

It is finally time to take all of the tools that we gathered in chapters 2-4 and return to the main goal of this project, i.e., to demonstrate the ways in which we can incorporate insights from feminist epistemology into theories in mainstream social and virtue epistemology. More specifically, to show how we can incorporate the insights that we developed in Chapter 2 into John Greco's account of epistemic responsibility.

Recall the distinction I drew in Chapter 1 between two notions of epistemic responsibility. First, there is the more straightforwardly ethical notion of epistemic responsibility regarding our ethical responsibilities as epistemic agents (agents that know and fail to know things). I called this *moral practice related epistemic responsibility* or MP epistemic responsibility for short. And then there is the more straightforwardly epistemic notion of responsibility regarding the ways in which we can be said to be responsible for coming to believe truly for some belief x, and therefore know x as opposed to just stumbling across a true belief by accident. I called this *epistemic practice related epistemic responsibility* or EP epistemic responsibility for short. It is the latter sort of epistemic responsibility that we are primarily interested to explore in this chapter, and we will be using John Greco's (2010) knowledge-as-achievement theory as a jumping off point for this project. For brevity's sake, throughout this chapter, when I use the term 'epistemic responsibility' I will be referring to EP epistemic responsibility.

I understand my project as an *experiment* in theory building or theory reconstruction. And by this I mean, the project is not to come up with a terminal theory of epistemic responsibility here, i.e., the one correct theory. Rather, the project is to examine what the contours of a theory of epistemic responsibility, could be like when we give it the kind of thoroughly social and non-individualist foundation that insights from feminist epistemology suggest. Because *ability* is central to the concept of epistemic responsibility that Greco develops (see §1.334), much of the analysis in this chapter will focus on this concept.

The plan for this chapter is as follows: First, I take stock of the tools that we now have at our disposal to carry out my proposed experiment (§5.2). Second, I remind the reader about the basics of Greco's KAA framework, and expand on a few relevant points (§5.3). Third, I develop an account of the social character of ability (§5.4), and fourth I assess how well KAA can account for this social character (§5.5). Fifth, I consider how Disability Theory can be employed to better account for the social character of ability (§5.6). And last, I take stock of how a more thoroughly social account of ability might inform the concept of epistemic responsibility operative in Greco's KAA account.

5.2 An Inventory of Tools

In Chapter 1 I suggested that one way to approach the task of incorporating feminist insights is to allow them to function as success conditions for evaluating theories of knowledge. But, what exactly is it for these insights to function as success criteria? Roughly, it means that when assessing a given theory of knowledge, we will ask whether and to what degree the theory can account for these insights, whether it has

the conceptual resources to make sense of these insights. But we can also ask our theories to go beyond this first minimal standard. We can ask, along with Haslanger, whether or not our theories provide useful tools for addressing the complex ethical and political nature of our epistemic practices, for improving those practices. So, related to this role, our criteria of success can also play a more constructive role, they can help to guide us when considering how to revise our theories in light of the limitations that we identify, so that they suit the goals and purposes that we have, in this case that of creating more epistemically, ethically and politically successful epistemic communities.

It is useful here to remind the reader of the insights delineated in Chapter 2 that I intend to focus on in this project:

1. Knowledge and knowers are best understood as *situated* rather than *atomistic*.

2. Ignorance is of equal importance to knowledge in theorizing our epistemic practices, and should not be presumed to be sufficiently described as a simple lack of knowledge.

3. Our epistemic practices are sites of significant injustice and oppression.

4. Because epistemic injustice and oppression are systemic they require systemic analyses and interventions, i.e., attention to hermeneutical frameworks.

5. The hermeneutical frameworks that scaffold epistemic injustice/oppression are *structurally resilient,* i.e. are resistant to change because of structural features.

The reader will recall that the first of these can be understood as the more fundamental, or at least that it undergirds or supports insights #2-5. So, when thinking about how to assess Greco's theory and how to incorporate feminist insights, I will begin with this key insight about the social constitution of knowledge and knowers.

Another tool that we developed in Chapters 3 and 4 is what I have called a "robustly veridical pluralism" about responsibility. We will explore how this notion of

pluralistic complementarity can be used to think through social nature of epistemic responsibility, epistemic ability, and epistemic achievement.

5.3 Knowledge-As-Achievement

It will be useful here to give a brief reminder of Greco's theory before going into our analysis and reconstruction of it. After this brief reminder I will expand on some of the conceptual resources that this account has to offer that were highlighted only briefly in Chapter 1.

5.31 Reminder Summary

Recall that Greco's overarching aim is to provide a normative grounding for reliabilist theories of knowledge. He accomplishes this by casting knowledge as a kind of "achievement from ability" as opposed to a mere lucky success. The normative force of a knowledge ascription is then just a subspecies of the normative force of ascriptions of achievement in general. Just as, for example, athletic and aesthetic achievements are good things in general, so are epistemic achievements good things in general.

On this account when we say that someone knows something, we are saying that their abilities played a sufficiently salient role in them coming to believe truly, i.e., they didn't just get lucky as in a Gettier or barn facade case. Greco formalizes his account as follows:

> S knows that p if and only if: 1. p is true; 2. S believes that p; and 3. S believes the truth because S's belief is produced by intellectual ability. (Greco, 2010, p. 12).

I should note that, while he formalizes his account in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, Greco is careful in characterizing his project to be clear that he is not aiming to supply a traditional analysis of knowledge that requires necessary and sufficient conditions. He also notes that he is not aiming to provide traditional conceptual analysis, i.e., "to analyze some complex concept into more simple conceptual building blocks." (Ibid, p. 4). Nor is he aiming to provide an ontological argument, i.e., "...to analyze some property into ontologically prior parts." (Greco, p. 4). I note this because while Greco employs norms and language of traditional epistemology, he seems to prioritize less traditional criteria for judging the success of a theory of knowledge. As we saw in Chapter 1, in his conditions for success of a theory of knowledge Greco prioritizes grounding epistemic normativity, answering the value problem, and capturing the pragmatics of our epistemic practices. This orientation shares some similarities with the move towards situated knowledge that we discussed in §2.31. We saw that feminist epistemologists critiqued the traditional "S knows that P" formulation for being too individualistic for its focus on only individual discreet subjects of knowledge (the "S"s), and for assuming an interchangeability of knowers and propositions within a universalist frame.

While Greco appears to be working pretty squarely within this more traditional individualistic and universalist framework, he is also clearly open to subverting that traditional framework in favour of exploring more socially robust conceptions of knowledge. This is particularly evident in his employment of Edward Craig's argument that the function of our knowledge ascription practices is to secure information for use in practical reasoning. As we saw above in Chapter 2, there are some concerns with Craig's framework when viewed through a feminist lens.

However, the point I want to make here is that this attention to the social pragmatics of our knowledge practices provides a toehold for bringing in feminist insights, which we will explore shortly. Greco's own success conditions are at least amenable to the inclusion of feminist insights, even if he himself has not developed his account as such. It is therefore possible to show that, by the criteria of success that Greco already employs, he has an interest in including these insights. The project does not require that this be the case, but it is always an advantage when you can hope to get someone on board by standards that they already accept, whether that's Greco or other social epistemologists who share similar criteria.

5.32 Achievement & Responsibility

It is important before moving on to get clear on the relationship between the concepts of achievement and responsibility in Greco's account. While Greco tends to focus his language on achievement rather than responsibility, the notion of responsibility is central to his account and to the connections he makes between epistemic credit and moral credit. This is a first point where we can flag a disconnection with the second feminist insight about the importance of attending to ignorance. While Greco considers in detail how responsible true belief leads to knowledge, his main contrast is with true belief not arrived at responsibly. However, taking insight #2 seriously requires that we consider also the contrasts of false belief arrived at irresponsibly or by "bad luck", or perhaps simply beliefs not arrived at at all. So, we will want to be attentive to not just how we arrive at our epistemic achievements but also how we arrive at our epistemic failures.

And, additionally, we need to look not just at individual instances of knowledge and ignorance as objects of analysis, but also patterns of knowledge and ignorance and the interrelations of those patterns, i.e., we need to look at *epistemic ecosystems*.

5.33 Greco's Concept of Intellectual Ability

Tied to his use of virtue theory, Greco usually describes abilities as "person-level excellences" that take the form of cognitive or intellectual abilities.[40] Under the light of our feminist insights we can raise some immediate red flags for this sort of conception of ability. First, we want to be careful about characterizing abilities qua "person-level excellences" such that they are not inappropriately individualistic. This concept of excellences or intellectual abilities is central to have we understand whether or not someone is EP epistemically responsible. We want our conception of EP epistemic responsibility to be useful for thinking in terms of patterns of knowledge and ignorance. Therefore we will need more socially robust notion of abilities undergirding our concept of EP epistemic responsibility. This will be the task in §5.4 - §5.6.

I also want to briefly note that we should be concerned about the possible limitations of restricting knowledge-relevant abilities to those that can be neatly categorized as "cognitive" or "intellectual." Greco is not unique in this association. In her introduction to the *Routledge Handbook of Virtue Epistemology* (2019) Heather Batally notes that there is a broad assumption of interchangeability between epistemic virtue and intellectual virtue by virtue epistemologists (Battaly, p.1). I see two risks in

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[40] See Greco 2012, p. 2 and 2010, p. 10-11 & 61-62.

reinforcing this synonymy. First, we risk cutting off possibilities of engaging "know-how" rather than just "know-that". At least prima facie it seems that some cases of know-how, such as knowing how to ride a bicycle, are not straightforwardly cognitive or intellectual. Contemporary epistemologists have tended to separate these types of knowing from each other, but there has been increasing interest in exploring the connections between them. And, second, even if we wanted to just focus on know-that, we should be concerned about the limitations of circumscribing knowledge relevance to the cognitive or intellectual realm. I will not venture too far into exploring these concerns because it is too large of a project for present purposes. For now it is enough to flag this as a point for future exploration.

5.4 The Social Character of Ability

Despite this growing centrality of the concept of ability, and the concurrent rise of social epistemology, there has been little exploration of the deeply social and political character of the concept of ability, of how "knowledge relevant" abilities are developed, performed, attributed and valued. In this section I give a preliminary sketch to suggest the social and political character of ability along these four dimensions. However, before doing so I'd like to start with a distinction that will help avoid confusion in the rest of this discussion. I'm going to make a stipulative distinction between ability and capacity here. I emphasize that it's stipulative, i.e. made for the purposes of this discussion, because in natural language we use these words quite interchangeably. In the following I will use the word 'capacity' to refer to latent potential someone or something has to develop an ability and 'ability' to refer to the actual state of affairs regarding what one can do. For example, most humans 400

years ago arguably had the capacity for computer programming (i.e. they could be trained to develop this ability), but not the ability to program (since no computers existed). I am focused here on abilities for the most part, but capacities are relevant to abilities because we can point to capacities to notice a lack of ability and to question why it isn't there. For example, I might argue that men have the capacity to develop more emotional intelligence on average, but the current social circumstances don't consistently foster that capacity into a high level of ability. Capacity is a much more expansive notion than ability because capacity speaks of possibility whereas ability speaks of actuality. So, one might argue that humans have the capacity for flight. Perhaps it is possible to genetically manipulate the human body to grow functional wings. However, it would be a stretch to make such and assertion given current technologies. Note that this means that what capacities humans have, as well as what abilities they have, can change over time as their context changes.

5.41 Ability Development

I take it to be relatively uncontroversial to say that what physical abilities one develops can be influenced by social and political factors. There is of course the simple fact that applies to every person in every period of time that what abilities one develops are limited by the possibilities of imagination and infrastructure that are available in one's social-historical milieu. For example, you can't develop abilities in sports that have not been invented yet. Relatedly, the abilities that athletes develop within their sports are affected by how sports evolve over time. For example, the ability to make a 3-point shot has become increasingly important in the game of

basketball over the last decade, such that more and more basketball players are developing higher acuities in these kinds of shots (Young, 2019).

While these sorts of ability shaping forces apply somewhat indiscriminately, there are many examples where this is not the case. For example, some women, in some social-historical contexts, might fail to develop physical strength abilities at least in part due to various social pressures that discourage them from participating in certain kinds of tasks and prescribe norms of beauty that codify strength as masculine. Or, we might think of the ways that socioeconomic status (SES) shapes the sorts of professions and activities that are available as sources of income or recreation. For example people with lower SES may be more likely to develop abilities related to physical labour and less likely to develop abilities related to sailing.[41]

Another very interesting example of barriers to ability development is the development of human echolocation by people who are blind. Some blind children will begin developing echolocation skills through making clicking sounds with their mouths or objects. But they are often discouraged by caregivers because the behaviour is not socially acceptable (Miller et al., 2015). However there are many examples of blind individuals who have been able to develop this ability to a high level (see for example, Milne et al, 2016).

Echolocation in humans is arguably a knowledge relevant ability on par with our other perpetual capacities. However we might choose to circumscribe what knowledge relevant abilities are, they are not likely to be exempt from these types of effects. For example, in the early 1980's computer science was on its way to reaching

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[41] This is not to say that no people with lower SES develop sailing abilities, or that everyone with low SES develops abilities related to manual labour, etc. Rather it is just to say that we can notice how patterns of ability distribution vary with SES.

gender parity in academic programs and jobs in the United States (Margolis & Fisher, 2002). However, in the mid 1980's this trend began to reverse. In Canada for example, women made up about 18% of graduates from Computer Science and Information Science Programs in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2019). and currently representation sits at around 17%. Jane Margolis argues that this trend closely tracks the introduction of home computers, which were heavily marketed as "boys' toys." She argues that this trend effectively excluded women from computer science since their male counterparts got, amongst other advantages, a significant head-start on computer learning. This set of social conditions has led to a situation in which women have failed to gain abilities that pertain to computer learning, and these effects have persisted long beyond the time of this particular marketing trend.

We can also think about the development of what we might group under emotional abilities that are knowledge relevant. For example, we could think about the ways in which boys in certain social-historical periods might fail to develop a variety of emotional skills due to cultural biases against male children expressing emotion. This lack of emotional abilities might prevent them from having important knowledge about both their own and others' mental states. White fragility presents another example of failures to develop certain emotional skills. We can think back to our discussion of Lugones' world-traveling here: people of colour and other marginalized groups are oftentimes required to develop acuities for managing the emotions of privileged white people out of a need for survival and protection from retaliation. Whereas white people often fail to develop these same skills and in many cases present a kind of emotional fragility when being challenged about their own racist behaviour, creating a situation where they cast themselves as the victims.

5.42 Ability Performance

Just as what abilities we develop can be shaped by our environment and social-historical circumstances, whether, when and how we are able to perform or execute on our abilities is also shaped by these factors. For example, some people with disabilities report that they are often hampered in performing everyday tasks, not because they are not able to do them, but because their method of doing them makes other people uncomfortable (similarly to the echolocation example). In the film *Examined Life* (2008), artist and disability activist Sunaura Taylor, in conversation with Judith Butler, describes this sort of experience of stigma:

> I could go into a coffee shop and actually pick up the cup with my mouth and carry it to my table. But then that...that becomes almost more difficult because of the... just the normalizing standards of our movements, and the discomfort that that causes when I do things with body parts that aren't necessarily what we assume they're for. That seems to be even more hard for people to deal with. (My transcription, Taylor 2008).

There are many similar examples of discouragement of "non-standard" actions or abilities, such as the discouragement of stimming behaviours that many autistic people use for emotional and sensorial regulation (Dunn, 2020).[42]

Another commonly discussed limiting factor on ability performance is stereotype threat, a phenomenon where awareness of negative stereotypes about a group of which one is a member negatively affects task performance. For many years, and at least as recently as 2000 (Ortner, p. 275), the common stereotype that males

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[42] Many people working within the neurodiversity movement have advocated for acceptance and celebration of "non-standard" behaviours. See the The Art of Autism project (the-art-of-autism.com) for more information.

have superior spatial abilities to females has been supported through scientific study. However, recent studies that attempt to control for stereotype threat suggest that males and females have effectively equal spatial abilities.

For example, in a recent study carried out in Austria (Ortner et. al., 2008), female and male participants were asked to read a narrative of either a stereotypically male or stereotypically female character and were told that they were being tested on their ability to put themselves in someone else's position. They were then given a spatial ability test. When females and males took the test after attempting to identify with the male character they performed on average at the same level. However, when females took the test after attempting to identify with the female character, they performed significantly worse. Males, after attempting to identify with the female character, performed only marginally worse. Similar, although preliminary, results have been found in bigender or multigender individuals who have what Case et al. (2012) refer to as "gender-switching dispositions", i.e., bigender or multigender people "experience involuntary alternation between male and female states, or between male, female, and additional androgynous or other-gendered identities." (p. 626). Case et al. found that bigender and multigender individuals will perform better when identifying with a male gender expression. Stereotype threat, in these and other cases, functions to obscure from view of both the individual and others, abilities that could contribute to knowledge-success.

5.43 Ability Attribution

Even when someone has a particular ability, and that ability is manifested in their performance, there is no guarantee that others will recognize them as having or

exercising that ability, and relatedly there is no guarantee that they will be attributed the knowledge that results from that ability. Therefore, disruptions can happen at multiple points between the exercise of an ability and the attribution of knowledge based on the exercise of that ability.

Disruptions to knowledge ascription of this kind can be understood through the lens of testimonial injustice that we saw in Fricker (§2.33). Recall, a testimonial injustice occurs when a less powerful speaker is given a lower credibility assessment than she deserves due to prejudice on the part of a more powerful hearer (Fricker, p. 28). In Chapter 4 we saw a vivid illustration of testimonial injustice described by the *Crackdown* team relating to the unconsulted switch from Methadone to Methadose© in British Columbia. Methadone Maintenance Treatment patients quickly protested that Methadose© was causing painful withdrawal symptoms and drug user activists warned that the switch would lead to a rise return to the use of illegal street drugs and would cause a spike in overdose deaths. But government officials did not see drug users as credible sources about their own experiences or about the risks associated with the switch. Prejudices against drug users and drug user activists disrupted knowledge ascription, i.e. drug user and drug user activists were not understood to be competent judges of their own experience and of their own communities.

Recent work on implicit bias provides further description of the malfunctions of credit-attribution that exist and suggests that these malfunctions must be addressed through changes to social structures. For example, Jennifer Saul (2012) cites studies that show evidence that female students receive higher grades when marking is anonymized (Saul, p.258), and that CVs with ostensibly white male names are judged

to be of higher quality than identical CVs with names that are perceived as female or black (Saul, p.258).

5.44 Ability Valuation

We have discussed the complex ways in which the development, performance and attribution of abilities can be shaped and in some cases disrupted by environmental and social-historical factors, and now we are ready to return the question that we set aside: what is a knowledge relevant ability? In other words, how do we decide which abilities are valuable for our epistemic practices and which are not? As we saw with Patricia Hill Collins (§2.33), standards of evaluation for knowledge are not neutral, they are indexed to particular communities and reflect relations of domination and subordination. In speaking of standards of evaluation that black feminists rely on that differ substantially from the mainstream academic tradition, Hill Collins writes:

> To be credible in the eyes of this group, Black feminist intellectuals must be personal advocates for their material, be accountable for the consequences of their work, have lived or experienced their material in some fashion, and be willing to engage in dialogues about their findings with ordinary, everyday people. (Hill Collins, p. 266)

Similar points have been made regarding epistemic norms in Indigenous communities. For example, many scholars have described Indigenous ways of knowing as distinct from Western or Settler ways of knowing in Canada and the United States (Whyte 2013; Yazzie Burkhart 2004). Indigenous knowledge-practices vary across different Indigenous communities and are not homogeneous. However, Rebecca Tsosie, among others, argues that many Indigenous knowledge-practices

share similar features. For example, in many Indigenous communities' knowledge is understood as place-based, intergenerational, and intimately tied with both the ethical & spiritual practices of the community (Tsosie, p. 1139-40; Hurlburt p. 16).

This understanding of knowledge acquisition does not always fit into the dominant view of Western standards of scientific knowledge, which typically compartmentalizes ethical, spiritual and scientific knowledge practices (Tsosie, p. 1137), and requires a supposedly objective observer who can dispassionately evaluate evidence from any social position.[43]

This conflict has been especially apparent in the context of public policy decisions on natural resource management. Tsosie divides these sorts of conflicts into two main categories. First there are conflicts that revolve around a difference in goals and values. This might involve disagreements over what resources need to be protected, etc. The second type is conflicts that arise over differences in standards of what counts as evidence or actionable knowledge (Tsosie, p. 1137). In this latter kind of instance, where indigenous knowledge is ignored or misappropriated to fit a Western scientific model, there is a failure on the part of Settler peoples to recognize the abilities of Indigenous people as knowledge relevant abilities. The identification of abilities, and validation of what counts as an ability, is restricted by the norms and practices endorsed by those in positions of power.

5.5 KAA and the Social Character of Ability

On Greco's account someone has knowledge when they have a true belief that results from the successful exercise of an ability. That people are hindered in the

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[43] A similar argument might be made about the failure of Settler Canadians to understand the value of oral history.

development of abilities, or that people sometimes fail to value the abilities of others, may not seem, prima facie, say anything against such an account. However, if we dig deeper into the structure of what Greco's theory implies about knowledge failures we'll find that it is in need of reformation.

Recall that Greco aims to capture the dynamics of our actual epistemic practices, and an important part of these practices is our ability-ascription practices, and relatedly, our credit ascription practices and their normative force. A knowledge ascription has a positive valence because it highlights the ability of the individual agent and ascribes an achievement to them. Therefore how we understand what an ability is is deeply relevant to whether to not attribute the honorific status of knower to them.

Our first two cases about ability development and performance demonstrate that ability and achievement are more complex than they might look at first glance. Both of these cases illustrate that when someone has an ability or an achievement that ability or achievement is not a sole property of the individual, but of the individual and their set of social conditions. When someone is able to manifest a cognitive ability, social factors have to cooperate in order for them to be able to develop abilities in the first place in some cases, and to be able to manifest those abilities in others.

Greco's account does have the basic structure to describe such cases—we can assess which kinds of environments/conditions are appropriately enabling of one's ability and which are not. However, these resources are not quite adequate to deal with the development and performance cases. Currently, on Greco's account, we would need to say that if your circumstances are not appropriately enabling of your

ability, then you have been subject to circumstantial bad luck. But "bad luck" does not seem to appropriately describe the kinds of systemic social conditions that hinder ability-development and performance cited above. This description does not do justice to the history of how such conditions came about.

What about the cases of implicit bias or where the Settler fails to recognize the abilities of the Indigenous person as knowledge relevant? Greco might describe both of these cases by saying that they represent cases of one party failing to identify another party as a reliable informant for use in practical reasoning. Given the framework that Greco proposes, we can see this failure as a matter of lack of competence on the part of the hearer, or as bad luck. If we call it a failure of competence, we would have to restrict the scope of competence to something like "x's ability to gain knowledge through testimony from persons like y." But this seems unnecessarily narrow and possibly ad hoc, since we can presume that with respect to other social groups these individuals are perfectly capable of getting knowledge through testimony.

Alternatively, we might say that the circumstances are just unlucky. For example in the salience case Greco might say that in other relevantly close possible worlds the Settler Canadian would have realized their mistake. However, again, we are going to have to provide a reason to think that relevant close possible worlds are those in which the same kinds of biases against Indigenous ways of knowing don't exist.

And again, similarly to the case above, if we take this route we end up having to say that it is a matter of luck that the Settler person failed to gain knowledge. Again, this failure is a part of a persistent and systemic social structure that precludes

Settler peoples from perceiving the abilities of their Indigenous peers as knowledge relevant. To call this unlucky would not only be a failure of assigning appropriate blame, but would also obscure from view an area of our epistemic practice that needs to be addressed in order for us to be more just as well as more epistemically successful.

In his current description of ability Greco neglects to consider the social factors that influence ability development, performance, attribution and valuing described above. Since Greco's own stated aim is to account for the functions, pragmatics and normativity of our epistemic practices, I think it is fair to say that his concept of ability is importantly under-described.

5.6 Ability, Disability & Ableism

I don't take my critique above to show that Greco's account should be thrown out. On the contrary, with appropriate enhancements from Disability theory, a dis/ability-centred theory of knowledge could provide both solutions to traditional problems in epistemology as well as integrate insights from feminist epistemology.

So, what should this revised account of disability/ability look like? I will begin by exploring where I want my approach to differ substantially from mainstream accounts. Greco's current account of ability offers a semantics of possible worlds to understand the complexities of ability. This allowed Greco to make sense of the relational nature of ability, and left room for luck in the causal story of how an ability is exercised. However, I argued above that Greco's account leaves us with either the difficulty of defining the scope of possible worlds in a way that appears ad hoc, or

with the undesirable consequence of having to describe unjust societal norms as matters of luck.[44]

A different starting point for understanding the dis/ability-luck-responsibility complex will be useful. Most epistemologists and moral theorists recognize that luck can affect one's responsibility. But there is generally thought to be a limit to how much luck can ameliorate one's responsibility. Luck is therefore commonly divided into two broad categories: pernicious and non-pernicious. If the agent is deemed to be subject to "pernicious luck," then they are not held to be responsible, or held to be less responsible. If the agent is deemed to be subject to "non-pernicious luck," then they are deemed to be responsible for whatever successes or failures they achieve. This broad categorization is used to draw a boundary between what is attributable to the individual agent and what is attributable to their circumstances. The cases that I explored above suggest that this boundary is a fuzzy one, and furthermore that drawing this boundary too sharply is detrimental to understanding our knowledge practice. Rather, I propose developing concepts of luck, dis/ability and responsibility that locate these not in an individual, but rather as properties that spread out over the individual, their environment, and their social circumstances.

5.61 Models of Disability & Ableism

Concepts of disability are tied, both pragmatically and conceptually, to ableism. Early models of disability, much like we saw with models of addiction, cast harms associated with disability either as moral punishments or as medical realities.

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[44] This is not to say that an account of ability cannot make use of possible use modal language, but that it must do so in a way that can be sensitive to the social issues that I raise.

However, in the 1960s, in concert with the civil rights movement and the women's rights movement, disability activists developed and promoted new models of disability. The model of disability that has had the largest reach is the *social model of disability*.

The social model of disability has gone through many different interpretations and augmentations since its inception, but its basic foundation relies on a distinction between an impairment, which describes a person's atypical and/or stigmatized physical characteristic, and a disability, which refers to how social and physical structures fail to accommodate morphologically/functionally minority/stigmatized persons, and thereby hinder them in their vital goals (Amundson 1992, Nordenfelt 1997, Shakespeare 2006, Scully 2008). On this view the harms that are typically associated with disability are not located within the disabled person, but rather arise from the physical and social structures that the disabled person is embedded in. Although this view has been widely adopted in many spheres, it remains radical and controversial in many mainstream contexts.

The social model of disability has come under criticism from prominent Disability scholars in the last several years. In particular Shelley Tremaine (2001) and Elizabeth Barnes (2016) have provided compelling and informative critiques of the standard distinction between an impairment and a disability. Tremaine argues that the social model sets up a false dichotomy between the purely biological features of an individual (their impairment) and the social conditions (some of them physically manifested) that cause their disablement. She argues that this neat separation is misleading, and obscures the ways in which bodies themselves are structured and viewed through the lens of power.

Barnes argues that the separation between disability and impairment is redundant. On her view, the concept of disability alone can be used to accomplish all of the important conceptual work that the impairment/disability duo has done, and therefore, for the sake of simplicity it would be easier and more accurate to use only the disability concept. While I agree with much of the force of both of these critiques, I don't take them to function as refutations of what is at the core of the social model of disability, but rather as important evolutions in the model. I suggest that though Tremaine and Anderson are correct that the boundary between these two concepts is not a hard one, once we acknowledge this fuzziness, we can still employ the concepts fruitfully in terms of their explanatory function.

5.62 KAA, Ability & Disability

Turning back to Greco's model of knowledge, if we understand abilities and ability ascriptions to be constructed (i.e., produced and sustained) by social norms, then the cases identified above can be more accurately described.[45] On this account an ability is not a property of the individual, but is a property of the larger set of environmental and social conditions that the individual is embedded in. The development, performance, attribution and valuing of one's ability is affected by luck (e.g., someone might accidentally take a psychedelic drug that affects their vision), but it is also affected by societal norms and structures that are not adequately described by the concept of luck (e.g., persistent gender norms about spatial ability).

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[45] I want to note that I am not saying that there is a perfect analogy between physical ability and disability and knowledge-relevant ability and disability. More exploration is needed to understand how closely these two domains match up. What I aim to establish is that the social model of disability provides the resources to supplement Greco's account of ability in the ways needed to account for the cases described above.

On this view, we should expect that people in disadvantaged groups whose abilities differ from those of dominant groups would suffer from an ability attribution and valuation deficits, as with the Indigenous and Western knowledge case. We would also expect that members of disadvantaged groups would manifest socially constructed knowledge relevant disabilities that hinder them in various aspects of life, as with the development and performance cases.

Thinking back to the cases about valuing abilities, it is important to recognize that there is no neutral way to denote what abilities are "knowledge relevant." In ascribing abilities and the requisite associated knowledge, or in failing to do so, we are contributing to upholding or challenging norms of ability. This is not an inherently bad thing, it is rather a part of how our shared hermeneutical practices work. And appealing to a transhistorical notion of ability is going to do us very little good if we are interested in situated knowledge, but especially if we are interested in improving knowledge practice. Epistemologists who are interested in improving epistemic practices and who hold a form of ability-centred theory of knowledge should be very interested in what sorts of ableism are structuring our knowledge practices.

A more recent and more expansive definition of ableism from lawyer and activist Talila A. Lewis will help to clarify this point:

Ableism: A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's appearance and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and

"behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism. (Lewis, 2020).

This definition of ableism helps to clarify the interconnections of racism and ableism in ability ascription—it is not just about the modal properties of abilities, but about what abilities can be understood as knowledge relevant, as valuable for knowing.

A concrete way this might affect Greco's project might be a need to revise the notion of stability that undergirds his story about what our knowledge practices do for us and therefore ultimately why they are valuable. In drawing from Craig's work, Greco writes:

> Likewise, as we saw in the case of standards for knowledge, the need for sharing knowledge across different practical environments creates pressure toward stability. Given the information-sharing function of our knowledge language, we can expect that the mechanisms by which explanatory salience is distributed will be largely stable across practical contexts." (Greco, p.117)

Whether this is an accurate description depends on the notion of stability that is operative here.

If the idea is that distributions will be stable in the sense that they will be applied relatively equally across domains, then we have reasons to be skeptical of this as a descriptive claim, since we know that prejudice can disrupt our ascription of explanatory salience across domains. And, if we think back to Hill Collins, we should be careful about assuming stability of epistemic standards across different domains. For example, recall that Hill Collins argues that Black women are often put in the difficult position of trying to meet incompatible epistemic success standards. For example, Hill Collins (2000) argues that Black women's epistemological standards, as

opposed to mainstream Western positivist standards, hold personal experience to be highly epistemically valuable (pp. 257-260). So for example, she argues that Black women academics are caught in a double bind. When they bring their personal history into their work they are not seen as credible in the eyes of their academic peers, but if they don't they are not seen as credible in the eyes of other Black women outside of the academy. There are many different "practical contexts" that have varying standards of what is epistemically relevant in the sense of being explanatorily salient.

Perhaps we could take explanatory salience distributions to be stable in the sense of structurally resilient as described in Chapter 2. This would allow us to account for the kind of variations that Hill Collins describes. The danger of this route is that structural resilience in this sense is not necessarily beneficial to everyone in terms of gaining information for use in practical reasoning. Some structural resilience, as in the kind of resilience that preserves white supremacist or misogynist beliefs and structures, can be extremely damaging to our collective abilities to gain information for use in practical reasoning. Structural resilience can build and maintain epistemologies of ignorance. Or, in Code's terms, structural resilience can cause some epistemic ecosystems to flourish while causing others to suffer.

Building this kind of complexity into Greco's account ability requires a framework that can handle the messiness of our overlapping and differently functioning epistemic ecosystems. For this task we can think back to the notion of veridically robust pluralism that we developed in Chapter 4. Recall that with a pluralistic notion of responsibility we can move between different scopes of concern, e.g. from the individual to the systemic. And, we can move between different purposes of ascription, e.g. from therapeutic purposes to policy-making purposes.

Greco, via Craig, wants to tell a story about what our epistemic practices do for us, and therefore why they are valuable, i.e. why ascriptions of knowledge function as honorifics. But our epistemic practices are not uniform and they typically do not function to the benefit of all. Capturing the pragmatics of our epistemic practice requires us to become more like the everyday epistemologist or ecological thinker that Code describes (see §3.4).

Recall that the job of the ecologist is not just descriptive but also normative. They are not just concerned with describing ecosystems, but discovering how they can flourish. With that goal in mind, we can begin to think of both ability ascriptions and their related responsibility ascriptions through the lens of robust veridical pluralism. We can look at responsibility ascriptions from an individual perspective and in a specific context, and we can look at responsibility ascriptions at a systemic level for a specific context. So, for example, if we are looking at widespread ignorance and thinking through questions about how to eliminate that ignorance through educational reforms, then the salience of the individual's abilities and their role in their own ignorance becomes diminished. But if we are interested in a more "therapeutic" context of helping and individual understand the harm that their ignorance has caused, then their individual abilities may become highly salient. Which is to say, that like in the case of harms of addiction, we can say both that an individual is and is not responsible for the truth (or falsity) of their belief.

5.63 Objection

An objection that might be raised at this point is that the cases I've pointed out don't require an amendment to Greco's theory, but rather simply point to the fact that the

current state of our epistemic community is severely dysfunctional.[46] Perhaps Greco's account is just right, and my examples point to reform of our epistemic practices, and not of Greco's account. This kind of objection captures the spirit of a common intuition in mainstream epistemology—that questions about epistemic injustice/oppression are interesting in their own right but don't have any relevance to the problem of the correct analysis of knowledge (Haslanger 1999, Rooney 2012).

Indeed, if we interpret the problem of analysis in a very narrow way, this objection might be valid. However as we saw at the outset, Greco and other value-driven epistemologists don't interpret the project of analysis in this way. Recall that one of Greco's main goals is to provide an account of epistemic normativity (Greco, p. 4). And Greco needs this account of normativity to achieve his further goal of vindicating reliabilism. Recall, furthermore, that Greco argues that our theories of knowledge should provide us with resources to explain the pragmatics of our epistemic practices, including the purposes of those practices (Greco, p. 5) and that Greco needs this explanation of pragmatics to get his answer to the value problem, i.e., that knowledge is valuable because it allows us to pick out informants for use in practical reasoning. I agree with Greco that these are important goals for any epistemic theory to achieve, but I want to push further and suggest that if we really take these goals seriously, then those interested in the project of analysis can no longer afford to ignore the work of Disability theorists and feminist epistemologists. This work provides powerful insights into the pragmatic function of our credit-attribution practices and into the function and import of epistemic normativity.

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[46] I owe this objection to Wayne Riggs, who graciously commented on an early version of this argument at the 2016 Pacific APA.

5.7 Epistemic Responsibility: Ecosystems of Knowledge & Ignorance

At the beginning of this chapter we set out to interrogate the notion of epistemic

responsibility in Greco's knowledge-as-achievement account. The idea was to assess

Greco's concept of epistemic responsibility in light of insights from feminist

epistemology. Through our exploration of ecological accounts of responsibility and of

the concrete context of responsibility ascriptions in the context of the harms of drug

use, we developed a particular orientation towards theory building than is not typical

within mainstream epistemology. Knowing that our epistemic practices are sites of

recalcitrant and widespread epistemic injustice and oppression, when we create and

assess theories of knowledge we can concern ourselves not just with whether or not

our theories are true, but also whether or not they are apt to promote epistemic

flourishing. In doing so we orient ourselves, as Lorraine Code suggests, more like the

ecologist, who looks not just to understand how the ecosystem they study works, but

also what makes it flourish or languish. And we can be more like some addiction/

SUD/drug use researchers, such as neuroscientist Carl Hart, who are interested in

finding out the truth about addiction/SUD/drug use, but are explicitly interested in this

knowledge for the purposes of helping individuals and communities who are

suffering. This methodology is in keeping with wider feminist methodologies, and I

would argue, is in keeping with the spirit, if not always that practice, of social

epistemology.

So, what could a concept of epistemic responsibility, embedded within a

knowledge-as-achievement type account such as Greco's, look like when oriented

towards the goal of epistemic flourishing?

It is the job of most theories of knowledge, including KAA, to provide a non-arbitrary way of separating out those true beliefs that count as knowledge from those that don't count as knowledge. KAA accomplishes this by sorting out the true beliefs that we are responsible for (where our abilities played a sufficiently salient role in our coming to believe truly) from the true beliefs that we are not responsible for (where our abilities did not play a sufficiently salient role). On Greco's account when we gain a true belief through through the exercise of our ability, i.e. we are responsible for believing truly, we have an epistemic achievement (knowledge). In cases where we gain true beliefs but our abilities weren't sufficiently salient, or not involved at all, we have a good thing (a true belief), but no achievement and no knowledge.

If we are interested in epistemic flourishing then we must be as interested in our epistemic failures (e.g. ignorance), as we are interesting in epistemic successes (e.g. knowledge). An epistemic ecosystem's health would not be judged only on the prevalence of knowledge, but also on the prevalence of ignorance, since, *in general*, ignorance would be expected to inhibit the flourishing of our epistemic ecosystems.[47]

In thinking through the role of epistemic responsibility in ignorance on a KAA account, we have to do some extrapolation, because it's not something that Greco focuses on. One way that ignorance differs most obviously from knowledge is that we arguably have a lot more ignorance than we do knowledge. Because of the sort of limited finite beings humans are, the corpus of an individual's knowledge is finite. This is not true of ignorance, since our finitude does not preclude us being ignorant of an (at least approximately) infinite amount of things. While knowledge is a smaller

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[47] However, it is important to recall that there may be some cases where ignorance is a preferred state, e.g. when recognizing the limits of our own ability to understand the experience of others (as in Tuana's "loving ignorance", see §2.32).

subset of the true beliefs we in fact have, ignorance encompasses not only false beliefs we in fact have (a finite set) but also the lack of true beliefs we could have (a potentially infinite set). This means that when it comes to determining what ignorance we are epistemically responsible for we have to sort through a set that is much larger, more heterogenous, and more amorphous than the set of true beliefs. And to add to this complexity we can consider not just whether you failed to exercise an ability that you have, but also whether you could have had an ability that you don't.

So, using a KAA type account how might we divide up our false beliefs/lack of beliefs into those that we are EP epistemically responsible for and those that we are not? The concept of culpable ignorance vs. non-culpable ignorance seems like a good starting point, because it is a division that we make between ignorance that we are responsible for vs. ignorance that we are not responsible for. However, this sort of distinction is typically drawn with MP epistemic responsibility in mind. And more specifically, culpable ignorance is usually attached to determinations about whether someone is responsible for an immoral action/inaction that was causally tied to their ignorance.

In broad strokes, someone is culpably ignorant when they fail to know something that they both *could have known*, and *should have known*. And, conversely, when someone fails to know something that they *could not have known*, we don't typically think it makes sense to say that they *should have known*.[48] Determinations of culpable ignorance therefore require the assumption that there are some things that we are morally responsible to know/that we are morally negligent if we don't know. We

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[48] See Sandford Goldberg (2015) for an argument that there are cases where someone should have know something even if they were "in no position to know it."

can notice here that there seems to be a notion of EP responsibility embedded within MP culpable ignorance. The set of things that we should have known is a subset of things that we could have known. This notion of "could have known" does not appear to be merely a modal notion, i.e. there is some possible world where you did know, even though in the actual world you don't. Rather, there seems to be a notion of agency or sourcehood lurking here, i.e., something about who you are or what you did is salient in an explanation for why you don't know.

On this view there are at least two types of *could have known*. The first is where one's circumstances are more salient in an explanation of why you don't know. To take an example from Tuana, there's a possible world where humans developed male forms of birth control in concert with female forms. In this modal sense I *could have known* how male forms of birth control work.[49] There also are many things that individuals don't know because of the time and place that they live in, but that they *could have known* were they in a different circumstance, e.g., knowledge that the world is (roughly) round rather than flat in 500 BCE.[50]

The second type of *could have known*, the one that is relevant for the moral notion of culpable ignorance, is where the actions, mental states, beliefs, abilities, etc. of the individual are salient in an explanation for why they don't know. For example, if a student skips a class, presuming that it was possible for them to go, then they *could have known* what happened in class. And if someone in 2020 fails to know that

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[49] There are now some advanced forms of male birth control, but they are still not widely adopted or well known.

[50] This is sort of a funny example because while most people would describe the shape of the earth as "round" or "spherical", technically it is ellipsoidal. But in this example the important contrast is that *it is not flat*. In any case, it is fair to say that the earth is roughly round or spherical.

the world is round, but rather believes that it is flat, this is (very likely) due to some bad epistemic behaviour on their part, i.e. they have the abilities and access to information abilities to "know better."[51]

The first thing to note here is that we can not simply carry out a "mirror image" procedure using KAA to sort out cases of ignorance that we are EP epistemically responsible for from those that we are not. That is, we cannot simply ask whether one's failure to exercise an ability is sufficiently salient in an explanation of why they are ignorant. In the example of the student who skips class, we could say that they failed to exercise their visual comprehension skills and that's why they didn't know what happened in class. But the more salient part of the story is that they chose (perhaps for legitimate reasons) to not put themselves in a position to exercise those abilities.

And to turn the mirror back to knowledge, we can also notice that the same is true for explanations of why we know something if we are looking at knowledge from the ecological perspective. For example, we can ask what is salient in me coming to know, for example, facts about drug overdose prevention. Surely my abilities (e.g. perceptual capacities, reading, comprehension) are salient in an an explanation of why I have true beliefs (let's assume) about drug overdose prevention. But it is also salient that I put myself in a position to know, perhaps because I value this information. And it is significant that I know this particular truth and not others, e.g. truths about the legal status of Substance Use Disorder as a disability. And we can ask this question from two different "levels" of evaluation. So we can ask, why does some particular

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[51] Of course it is possible in some extreme case that someone believes in 2020 that the earth is flat, e.g., they are raised in an isolated community, denied access to education, and inculcated with propaganda about the earth being flat.

person know a particular truth, e.g., how and when to administer Naloxone in the case of an overdose. And in asking that we can tell a story about the various events and choices that lead to this person gaining that knowledge. But we can also ask about how this knowledge fits into larger patterns of knowledge and ignorance. Why does this person, but not these others know how to administer Naloxone? We can ask how and why our epistemic successes and failures aggregate, and what consequences those patterns have.

For example, we might be interested in understanding the resurgence in recent years of the false belief that the earth is flat. Depending on what our interests are, the salience of the individual's choices and abilities might become more or less salient depending on what our purpose in asking the question is. So, we might be interested in how the evolution and prevalence of YouTube has influenced this resurgence of false belief on a larger scale. Or we might be interested in how some particular person failed to develop the critical capacities for evaluating online content. When asking about the individual's epistemic responsibility in failing to know that the earth is round, we will be interested to know about how their critical capacities developed and what lead them to be exposed to certain sources of information and not others. But this does not exhaust the question of epistemic responsibility, because when looked at from the ecological perspective there are circumstantial factors that become more relevant. And these two types or levels of epistemic responsibility are not distinct and unrelated. What abilities one has and how they exercise them is, as we saw above, dependant on complex social and political factors that cannot be understood fully at the individual level. And, conversely, the patterns of epistemic responsibility (both in successes and failures) are aggregates of individuals' behaviours and beliefs that can

be analyzed and differentiated in various ways to emphasize different commonalities and differences among populations.

In bringing the combination of insights from feminist epistemology and Disability theory into conversation with KAA we uncover a wider range of phenomenon to explore when thinking about epistemic responsibility in the context of epistemic flourishing. Epistemic flourishing cannot be just about how much knowledge or ignorance there is in an ecosystem, but also about the amount of epistemic agency that the members of the ecosystem have, e.g., whether individuals and groups are subjected to the kinds of epistemically disadvantaged identities that hamper their epistemic flourishing. And, relatedly we can also ask about what kinds of hermeneutical resources are available and who they are serving? How might altering and adding to this resources increase epistemic agency and both EP and MP epistemic responsibility? To get a full picture of our epistemic practices we need to understand how epistemic abilities are distributed and valued. And we also need to understand patterns of epistemic enablement and disablement. This matters for how we go about encouraging flourishing in our epistemic ecosystems. Or to put is more plainly, for how we go about getting more knowledge.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The reader will recall that I started out in Chapter 1 by delineating a broad project and a narrow project. The broad project is the exploration of fruitful connections between feminist epistemology and mainstream epistemology. And the narrow project is the exploration of how feminist insights might inform one specific mainstream theory of knowledge, i.e., it is a specific contribution to the broad project. I chose John Greco's "knowledge-as-achievement" account because of its deep roots in two major contemporary epistemological discourses: social epistemology and virtue epistemology. But I also chose Greco's project because in his contextualist and ability-centred approach I saw potential for rich engagement with feminist epistemology.

I spent Chapters 2-4 preparing the way for this "narrow project". In Chapter 2 I outlined a series of five philosophical insights drawn from the body of feminist epistemological work over the last 30 plus years. The key insight that I argued undergirds all of the rest of these insights was the first one: knowledge and knowers are best understood as *situated* rather than *atomistic*. The project of feminist epistemology as I see it has been to fill out what Lorraine Code called the "fleshless abstractions" of earlier epistemological models. And much exciting and innovative work has been done in the service of this goal. In Chapter 3 I laid a groundwork for talking about different aspects of responsibility concepts, explored how we can think about revisionary conceptions of responsibility, and looked at some theories of responsibility that deal with the social complexity of responsibility within an ecological framework. In Chapter 4 I developed a notion of robust veridical pluralism

about responsibility through an exploration of responsibility for the harms associated with drug use. I argued that we need multiple models of responsibility to deal with the plurality of purposes to which our responsibility ascriptions are put to use.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I undertook my experiment in theory reconstruction. Focusing on the concept of ability that is operative in Greco's account, and using the feminist insights I outlined in Chapter 2, I argued that his account does not have the resources to capture the complex social nature of ability. However, I argue that it is possible to undergird Greco's "knowledge as success from ability" account with tools from Disability theory and with the robust veridical pluralism developed in Chapter 4. In doing so, we can build an ability centred account of EP epistemic responsibility that captures the complexity of knowledge practices highlighted by insights from feminist epistemology.

I described the project of this chapter as an experiment. I prefer to frame it as an experiment because my idea is not to propose a competitor theory of knowledge or epistemic responsibility, but rather to explore how we might integrate insights from feminist epistemology into mainstream theory of knowledge more generally, and conceptions of EP epistemic responsibility more specifically. In this spirit, I don't take myself to be offering a refutation of Greco's Knowledge-As-Achievement theory, but rather a constructive critical engagement. As mentioned, I chose Greco's theory in particular because I think it has many strengths, both from the perspective of traditional success criteria in mainstream epistemology and from the perspective of feminist insights.

So, while it has been my aim to provide a critical engagement with Greco's knowledge-as-achievement theory and the concept of EP epistemic responsibility that

undergirds it, I have also aimed to demonstrate the broader fruitfulness of making connections between mainstream and feminist epistemologies. One of the key critical insights from feminist theory more broadly, and feminist epistemology specifically, is that many of our concepts and theories are problematically individualistic. And so work in feminist theory tends to focus on structural features of our practices. However, what we don't want in focusing on structural features is to lose sight of individuals. We need to have theories and tools for addressing structural issues that hinder epistemic flourishing at the ecosystem level, but we also need theories and tools for dealing with epistemic injustice that individuals are experiencing in the here and now. We need tools for speaking about both. And, we need these tools to be useful for us.

So, given that we have very different but equally important purposes for our theories, we need them to be pluralistic. We should not expect our explanation at the individual level to translate neatly to the structural and vice versa. Nor should we expect that there is a neat separation between these two levels. But we also need our theories to be robustly veridical. And this is because if we can't stand behind the truth of our theories they aren't very useful for us. I argue that we can retain veridicality in our theory by indexing our explanations to the purposes for which we are using those explanations. It is my hope that this approach can be carried forward into other projects that attempt to bridge the gap between feminist and mainstream analytical projects.

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