

# Knowing How and Epistemic Injustice<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

In her *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), Miranda Fricker argues that people can be distinctively wronged in their capacity as knowers. Perhaps the most obvious type of epistemic injustice occurs when people are unfairly prevented from obtaining knowledge because of their lack of access to education, resources or social networks. But Fricker brings other types of epistemic injustice to our attention, focusing especially upon ‘testimonial injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as giver of knowledge’. (7)

In central cases of testimonial injustice, a speaker’s assertions are given unduly low weight because of a listener’s prejudices about a social group to which the speaker belongs. If I don’t take what you say seriously because you’re a woman, or because you’re Jewish, then I perpetrate a testimonial injustice. People can of course suffer in practical terms when they are not properly listened to – for example, they may receive lower-quality health care, fail to advance their careers, or be wrongly sentenced to jail. But Fricker argues that, in addition to practical harms, people sometimes suffer distinctively epistemic harms from testimonial injustice, because they are wronged as knowers.

What sort of harms are epistemic harms? One aspect of being a knower is being a giver of knowledge – ‘The capacity to give knowledge to others is one side of that many-sided capacity so significant in human beings: namely the capacity for reason.’ (2007, 44) So wronging someone as a giver of knowledge – by perpetrating testimonial injustice – amounts to wronging that person as a knower, as a reasoner, and thus as a human being.

Fricker does not explicitly discuss knowledge how in the course of her rich and interesting book. This is unsurprising for two reasons. First, knowledge how is rarely the

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centre of epistemological attention outside the context of debate about its relationship with propositional knowledge. Second, Fricker's discussion is framed in relation to the mainstream literature on testimony, which is itself focused upon the verbal transmission of articulated propositional knowledge; some of the *prima facie* differences between knowledge how and (other) propositional knowledge turn on the distinctive ways in which practical knowledge is taught, learned and transmitted.

Nevertheless, given the significance of Fricker's ideas, and given that knowledge how is surely some or other form of knowledge, it is worth exploring the ways in which ideas about epistemic injustice may apply to knowledge how. This project is potentially illuminating on several fronts. First, the ways in which Fricker's ideas can or cannot encompass knowledge how may tell us something about their scope or limitations. Second, this gives us an opportunity to investigate aspects of knowledge how without focusing on its relationship with propositional knowledge. Third, if Fricker is right that there are practical, political and ethical consequences of epistemic injustice, then this in itself gives us good reason to explore whether such injustice can arise in the context of practical knowledge.

## **2. Inquirers and Apprentices**

Why is testifying, or the capacity to give knowledge to others, so central to knowing? In addressing this question, Fricker draws extensively upon Edward Craig's (1990) 'genealogical' approach to epistemology; both Fricker and Craig are concerned with the practical role played in our lives by the concept of knowledge, and Craig in particular is concerned about how that concept might have arisen in response to our basic epistemic needs in the 'state of nature'.

What might those basic epistemic needs be? Bernard Williams accuses epistemologists of paying undue attention to

'what might be called the *examiner* situation: the situation in which I know that *p* is true, this other man has asserted that *p* is true, and I ask the question whether this other man really knows it, or merely believes it. I am represented as checking

on someone else's credentials for something about which I know already. That of course encourages the idea that knowledge is belief plus reasons and so forth. But this is far from our standard situation with regard to knowledge; our standard situation with regard to knowledge (in relation to other persons) is rather that of trying to find somebody who knows what we don't know; that is, to find somebody who is a source of reliable information about something.' (1970, p.146)

Our standard situation is that of the inquirer rather than that of the examiner: I am interested in whether S knows whether p, because I myself would like to know whether p, either for practical purposes or for its own sake. Building on this, Craig argues that our concept of knowledge serves primarily 'to flag approved sources of information' (1990, 11). For Craig, the notion of the inquirer – and the related notion of the informant, who can help the inquirer – are key to understanding our concept of knowledge.

Admittedly, there are other reasons for seeking out people who know. Sometimes we seek knowers not because we ourselves want information, but because we seek someone who can teach others. Sometimes we seek knowers because we want them to act as examiners, to evaluate whether others know. And sometimes we seek knowers because of the prestige they may possess, regardless of whether the knowers will in fact provide information to anyone. Nevertheless, the perspective of the inquirer is central to this approach to epistemology.

Following his discussion of the inquirer, who seeks propositional knowledge, Craig develops a parallel notion of the 'apprentice, who wants either (i) someone to tell him how to do A, or (ii) someone to show him how to do A. What we want, as apprentices, is to be able to do A ourselves.' (1990, 156) Apprentices seek to acquire knowledge how (or perhaps ability – Craig does not dwell on the difference), either for its practical value or for its own sake.

Admittedly, there are other reasons for seeking out those who know how. Sometimes we seek knowers-how not because we ourselves want to know how, but because we seek someone who can teach others. Sometimes we seek knowers-how because we want them

to act as examiners, to evaluate whether others know how. And sometimes we seek knowers-how for their prestige, regardless of whether they will in fact teach anything to anyone else. Nevertheless, the perspective of the apprentice seems central.

Is the apprentice's situation genuinely similar to that of the inquirer? Typically, someone who knows whether  $p$  is well-placed to tell an inquirer whether  $p$ , even if she is unwilling to do so. But one might think that someone who knows how to  $X$  is often poorly-placed to tell an apprentice how to  $A$ , even if she is willing to try; knowledge how is often thought of as tacit or inarticulable knowledge. Acknowledging this point, Craig suggests that attributions of knowledge how have 'informational' and/or 'capacity' aspects – someone who knows how to  $A$  will typically either be able to tell the apprentice how to  $A$ , or else be able to do  $A$ , and thus transmit know-how by demonstration. Hence the two clauses in Craig's account of the apprentice (quoted above).

Craig is surely right that we would hesitate to attribute knowledge how to someone who could neither say what to do nor perform, unless her inability to perform was due merely to physical deterioration. But, as he notes (158), witnessing a successful performance will not always enable an apprentice to emulate the expert, and so those who know how are not always able to teach. Yet the same goes for knowledge more generally: even willing, sincere experts are not always capable teachers. In real situations, the inquirer may not know what questions to ask – there are the unknown unknowns – and the expert may not know where best to start. Sometimes the expert may be unable to articulate her knowledge in ways which enable her to transmit it to novices, even if she can articulate it to other experts. (Goldman 2001 explores issues in this area.) There are no clean distinctions to be made around here – what knowledge can be transmitted, and how, depends not just upon the form of what is known but upon the background knowledge, skills, physical agility, learning (or teaching) style and vocabulary of both teacher and learner.

In these respects, the situation of the apprentice is relevantly like that of the inquirer. Similarly, both may have difficulties with uncooperative knowers. Any knower might

refuse to cooperate with an inquirer or apprentice, either by withholding information or by refusing to demonstrate. Indeed, a malicious knower can actively do damage by lying or by intentionally performing badly. Finding a knower is no guarantee that you will get what you want as inquirer or apprentice. But what other choice is there?

If I want to know whether  $p$ , or how to A, someone who knows whether  $p$  (how to A) may refuse to tell (or show) me, or else deliberately mislead me – I have no guarantees. But someone who *doesn't* know whether  $p$  (how to A) is very unlikely to give me what I want. There is some debate about whether it is possible to gain testimonial knowledge that  $p$  from a speaker who says that  $p$ , but does not know that  $p$  (e.g. Lackey 1999). However the purported cases of this kind involve speakers who have good evidence that  $p$ , yet do not believe that  $p$ , yet despite this testify that  $p$ . Even if such speakers can provide testimonial knowledge to listeners, this situation is hardly the norm.

So whilst finding a knower is no guarantee of success as an inquirer or apprentice, it is still overwhelmingly the best strategy where information or skills are not otherwise readily available. The only preferable alternative is to seek a cooperative knower, but this is to narrow the search within the field of knowers, not to abandon the search for a knower altogether. The existence of uncooperative knowers does not diminish the importance of the inquirer's and the apprentice's situations to thinking about knowledge.

Fricker's discussion of testimonial injustice draws significantly upon the inquirer's perspective; the close parallels between the inquirer and the apprentice suggest that her discussion might quite easily be extended to encompass knowing how. The inquirer seeks to acquire knowledge from others, and may treat them unjustly by unfairly failing to recognise reliable informants; the apprentice seeks to acquire knowledge how from others, and may treat them unjustly by unfairly failing to recognise reliable showers or tellers. Yet there are a couple of reasons to hesitate here. First, the kind of interaction involved in the transmission of knowledge how is not always distinctively epistemic – I will return to this point towards the end of the paper. Second, Craig overlooks a further

perspective on knowing how, one which may be just as central as that of the apprentice: this is the client's perspective.

### **3: Clients**

I have followed Craig in exploring similarities between the inquirer and the apprentice. There is, however, a further kind of motive for seeking someone who knows how, a motive which may be very central to our thinking about knowledge how. When I seek an plumber, hairdresser or architect, usually this is because I need the drains fixed, my hair cut, or a building designed. I need have no interest in learning how to do these things myself, nor in finding someone who can either teach or assess others. Perhaps I know how to do such things already, but am too busy or too lazy to get them done myself (and I can't reach to cut my own hair). I will call this 'the client's situation', in contrast to the inquirer's and the apprentice's situations.

Craig builds his epistemology through consideration of the inquirer; he extends this to encompass knowing how through consideration of the apprentice (1990 section XVII), but he overlooks the client. Does this oversight matter? Can consideration of the client's situation tell us anything about knowledge how? You might think not, especially if you think, like Stanley and Williamson (2001), that there can be knowledge how without the corresponding ability, or if you think that ability does not suffice for knowledge how. The client primarily seeks performance, and the bigger the gap between ability to perform and knowledge how, the less central is the client's perspective to our understanding of knowledge how.

Let us suppose that knowing how is not necessary for ability to perform. Why then would the client search for a knower-how rather than settling for a competent performer? This challenge applies distinctively to the client's perspective, and not to those of the inquirer or the apprentice. After all, we can explain why the inquirer seeks an informant who knows, not just someone who has a true belief, given that the inquirer seeks knowledge not just true belief, and that testimonial knowledge presupposes a knowing testifier. Similarly, perhaps we can explain why the apprentice seeks someone who

knows how, rather than someone who merely has ability, if the apprentice seeks to obtain knowledge how not just ability (though see Hawley *forthcoming* for discussion of the limits on strictly testimonial knowledge how).

The client is not an apprentice: she primarily seeks performance, not knowledge. Why then should she make the detour via knowledge? First, the client seeks someone who can control her ability, exercising it at will, repeatedly, and in line with the client's wishes, so far as that is possible. Even if knowing how is not necessary for bare ability or occasional success, it may well be necessary for this kind of intentional, responsive, controlled ability. Second, it may be that knowledge how is easier to detect than is bare ability. Craig makes a similar point in arguing that the inquirer, who seeks information as to whether  $p$ , must rely on detecting some property of informants which correlates well with the property of having a true belief as to whether  $p$ , because detecting such a property is easier than directly detecting a true belief (1990, 18-19). I will return below to issues about how we recognise knowledge, ability or true belief in others.

So the client may have good reason to seek a knower-how, even if knowing how is not necessary for bare ability. What if knowing how is not sufficient for ability? I have already discussed uncooperative experts who refuse to perform; here the concern is experts who cannot perform. Someone who knows how to fix drains may be unable to do so even if she is willing – perhaps she has lost her plumber's licence, her equipment or her eyesight.

But even if knowledge how is not sufficient for ability there remains a link between the client's situation and knowledge how – even if some knowers cannot perform, this is no reason to prefer non-knowers. Rather, it is a reason to focus one's search for a knower to those knowers who are able (and willing) to perform, just as the existence of insincere or silent knowers is a reason for the apprentice or the inquirer to narrow the search for a knower to those knowers who are sincere and willing informants, not a reason to look for someone who lacks knowledge.

In this section so far I have made an initial case for the importance of considering the client's perspective on knowledge how alongside that of the apprentice, which is the perspective more closely analogous to the perspective of the inquirer. We may seek knowers-how for the same reasons we seek knowers more generally – we may want to increase our own knowledge, to arrange for others to acquire knowledge or have their knowledge assessed, or we may simply value knowledge in others for its own sake. But in addition as clients we often seek knowers-how for their ability to perform; I have argued that even if there are gaps between ability to perform and knowledge how, consideration of the client's situation may provide insight into knowledge how, alongside consideration of the apprentice's situation.

Once we have recognised the client alongside the apprentice, it is natural to return to our starting point, and ask whether there is an analogous perspective on knowledge *whether*, one which should be recognised alongside the inquirer's perspective. Knowledge *whether* is often a central part of knowledge how: the bomb disposal expert knows how to defuse the bomb partly in virtue of knowing *whether* to cut the red wire first, whilst knowing how to fit in at a formal dinner involves knowing *whether* to start eating as soon as your food is served. So the client who needs a bomb-defuser or an inconspicuous guest needs someone with appropriate knowledge-*whether*, regardless of whether the client already knows how to defuse bombs, how to fit in at dinner, *whether* to cut the red wire first, or *whether* to start eating immediately. Similarly, we may seek someone who knows *where* to buy cheap but reliable cars, or someone who knows *when* to invest in the stock-market not because we want to acquire this knowledge ourselves (perhaps we already have the knowledge, but are short of time), but because we seek an agent who will buy a car or shares on our behalf. Again, this perspective is akin to that of the client rather than that of the inquirer or apprentice.

The distinction between client and inquirer/apprentice is reflected in a phenomenon discussed by John Hawthorne (2000) and taken up by Jason Stanley (forthcoming). There are plenty of situations in which we attribute knowledge *whether/where/who/etc* to someone else, but the pragmatics are such that we focus merely on *whether* the person

has a true belief, rather than demanding full-blown knowledge. If I'm interested in whether John knows where to find decent coffee, this may be because I want him to fetch some for me; in such a situation, it's enough that John have a true belief about where to find decent coffee (and that he be willing to help). Stanley writes that 'the pragmatics of situations in which we ascribe knowledge-wh often places the focus on true belief, rather than justification' (p.16 in MS). In my terms, at least some such situations are ones in which we adopt the client's perspective rather than that of the inquirer.

Of course, Craig does not claim that the inquirer's situation provides the only possible perspective on knowledge whether, and nor does he claim exclusivity for the apprentice's perspective on knowledge how. And the somewhat elusive quasi-empirical status of his genealogy makes it hard to see whether these ideas about clients conflict with Craig's views, or merely suggest possible extensions of them.

My ultimate goal is not to pass judgement upon the genealogical account, but rather to explore ideas about epistemic injustice and knowledge how against that genealogical backdrop, as Fricker does for articulated propositional knowledge; the following points are relevant to that goal. First, the client's perspective on knowledge how seems at least as significant as the apprentice's perspective. Second, there is a client-like perspective on knowledge whether (and on knowledge when, knowledge where, knowledge who, etc). It is not clear how central or significant this is, nor whether this always arises from a situation in which the client seeks someone who knows how (partly in virtue of knowing whether, etc). But it is clear that there is a distinction between perspectives on others' knowledge available only to those who lack that knowledge themselves, such as inquirers and apprentices, and perspectives available to those who already possess that knowledge, such as clients (and examiners). As we will now see, this distinction makes a difference to the ways in which we can identify knowers, and this difference can result in different varieties of epistemic injustice.

#### **Section 4: Who Knows?**

One central motive for seeking a knower is the desire to acquire knowledge for oneself. The inquirer and the apprentice begin from a state of ignorance, and seek informants (or demonstrators) who can provide them with knowledge. As Craig and Williams emphasise, when an inquirer seeks someone who knows whether  $p$ , the inquirer does not know whether  $p$ , does not know what constitutes a true belief as to whether  $p$ . This presents a challenge – how can the inquirer identify someone who has a true belief as to whether  $p$ , when the inquirer does not already know the truth of the matter?

This question underpins the distinction between the inquirer's situation and that of the examiner, and it is crucial to Craig's genealogy of our concept of knowledge. The inquirer cannot directly check whether the informant has a true belief as to whether  $p$ . The inquirer can, however, check whether the informant is well-placed to find out about facts such as whether  $p$ , whether the informant has plenty of evidence to hand, whether the informant has a good track record in matters like this, and so on. '...we need some detectable property – which means detectable to persons to whom it is not yet detectable whether  $p$  – which correlates well with being right about  $p$ ; a property, in other words, such that if the informant possesses it he is (at least) very likely to have a true belief on that matter.' (1990, 19)

What about knowledge how? As the inquirer stands to knowledge more generally, the apprentice stands to knowledge how. The inquirer wants to acquire knowledge, so seeks someone who has the relevant knowledge; the apprentice wants to acquire knowledge how, so seeks someone who has the relevant knowledge how. The know-how informant may resort to demonstration and nonverbal communication to get her knowledge across, but so too informants more generally may need to provide exemplars or draw diagrams in order to transmit their knowledge.

The inquirer cannot directly check whether the informant has a true belief as to whether  $p$ ; if she could, she would no longer need to rely upon the informant's testimony. The apprentice, however, may be better placed to check whether the supposed expert really

knows how to *A*, for it is often possible to detect whether someone else knows how to *A* even if you yourself do not know how to *A*.

I do not know how to drive; nevertheless I know full well that my mother knows how to drive, because she picks me up at the train station every time I visit. A sceptic could challenge my claim to knowledge about my mother – perhaps I'm being driven by a mule cleverly disguised as my mother, perhaps the car is radio-controlled and my mother merely pretends to drive. But setting these scenarios aside, it seems I know as well as I know most things that my mother knows how to drive. Yet I don't know how to drive.

Or so it seems; perhaps I know that my mother is *able* to drive, because I have often seen her do so, but since ability can fall short of knowledge how I do not thereby know that my mother knows how to drive. This objection is misguided, even if ability can indeed fall short of knowledge how. If I can't tell from seeing my mother drive that she knows how to drive, that is presumably because I need to make further investigations into the source of her ability, the degree to which she can control her ability and adapt to changing circumstances, or (following Craig) her capacity to either show or tell others how to drive. None of this further investigation would require me to learn how to drive myself.

So we can in some cases directly check whether a purported expert knows how to *A* even though we do not know how to *A* ourselves. It is true that there are plenty of cases in which someone who does not know how to *A* also cannot recognise competent performance of *A*. I do not know how to play the gamelan, and moreover I cannot even recognise competent gamelan playing. So if I seek an expert gamelan player I must rely on indirect means such as recommendation and reputation. Yet presumably there are gamelan connoisseurs who can recognise competent performance but do not themselves know how to play the gamelan.

Are there skills for which it is impossible to recognise successful performance without oneself being a successful performer? This looks like an empirical question, one which is

complicated by the fact that many sophisticated skills, like gamelan playing, can be acquired at various degrees of excellence. Perhaps there are skills which a complete novice cannot recognise, but where highly-skilled practitioners can be recognised by those at less elevated levels of training.

The possession of knowledge-how may often be evident even to those who lack it, such as apprentices (who inevitably lack the relevant knowledge how) and some clients. This is worth remarking for at least three reasons. First, as I will discuss later, the relative accessibility of some knowledge how has consequences for the ways in which we can think about epistemic injustice in this area. Second, this accessibility contrasts with a common way of thinking about knowledge how. Those who take knowledge how to be distinctive often dwell upon its inarticulability, upon the difficulty of acquiring and transmitting knowledge how, upon the importance for both teacher and learner of practice and demonstration. (Notice how this line of thought focuses primarily on the apprentice rather than the client.) But as we have seen, knowledge how can be relatively easy to spot, if not always easy to transmit. Third, although I have developed this idea of accessibility by focusing on knowledge how, it also arises in connection with more obviously propositional knowledge, which raises new questions about the inquirer's situation, as I shall now explain.

I see that you brought a coffee to the meeting – now I know that you know *where* to get coffee round here (setting aside weird possibilities), yet I still lack that knowledge myself. I see you arrive on the train from London. Now I know that you know *whether* the train leaves from London Kings Cross or London Euston (setting aside weird possibilities) and I know that you know *which* station the train leaves from; I myself still don't know whether it's Kings Cross or Euston, don't know which station it is.

We can often work out that others have knowledge by inferring from the evidence of their successful action, even when we ourselves lack that knowledge, and don't gain it via this process – I argued this in some detail for the case of knowledge how, but the same seems to be true for knowledge where, knowledge whether, and so on. We cannot

directly attribute knowledge-that to others when we lack it ourselves: ‘she knows that  $p$ , but I don’t’ has the flavour of ‘ $p$ , but I don’t believe that  $p$ ’. But the same does not apply to knowledge-wh.

How does this point fit with the Craig-Williams point that the inquirer typically cannot directly detect true belief, and Craig’s argument that our concept of knowledge has therefore developed to include what Fricker (p.114) calls ‘indicator properties’, detectable properties of potential informants which correlate well with having a relevant true belief? Craig and Fricker focus on what we might call ‘upstream indicators’ of true belief, such as being in the right place to see what was going on, or, more generally, having a reliable method for acquiring beliefs in that sort of area. Fricker goes on to discuss how, for better or for worse, social status may come to act as a defeasible ‘marker’ of such indicator properties – we think people from one group are likely to have true beliefs about that sort of thing, and people from another group are not.

My discussion above placed more emphasis on ‘downstream indicators’ of true belief; these are typified by successful action of the sort which may best be explained by true belief (or, if we follow Williamson (2000), by knowledge). Your successfully fetching the coffee is good evidence that you have a true belief about where to find coffee near here; your successfully catching the right train is good evidence that you have true beliefs about where and when to catch the train. Such downstream indicators are very often available for knowledge how, but are not limited to that realm, as these examples show.

As Craig very nicely shows, the upstream indicators we might rely on to satisfy our basic epistemic needs are just those properties which various epistemologists have drawn upon in their attempts to give necessary and sufficient criteria for knowledge – knowledge as true belief acquired via a reliable method, for example. But downstream indicators are more naturally thought of as consequences of knowledge, not constituents of it: you successfully catch the train *because* you know when it leaves, which is why I can infer to your knowledge as the best explanation of your success. Your knowledge when the train

leaves is in no part constituted by your successfully catching the train (although success semantics might complicate this claim: Whyte 1990).

There is an asymmetry in the relationship between our concept of knowledge and upstream indicators on the one hand, and the relationship between that concept and downstream indicators on the other. Yet both upstream and downstream indicators seem to play a crucial role in helping us meet our basic epistemic need to identify an informant, as well as helping us meet our nonepistemic needs as clients. The challenge for Craig, then, is to explain the asymmetry: if downstream indicators are just as useful as upstream ones, why haven't they been incorporated into our concept of knowledge? I will not pursue this challenge further in this paper.

## **Section 5. Knowledge How and Epistemic Injustice.**

Recall that Fricker (2007) argues that people can suffer distinctively epistemic harms, when they are wronged in their capacity as knowers. She focuses in particular upon 'testimonial injustice, in which someone is wronged in their capacity as giver of knowledge'. (7) (She also discusses hermeneutical injustice, which occurs when people are unfairly prevented from accessing the conceptual resources required to make sense of their experiences in society.) Fricker often works within the Williams-Craig approach to epistemology, asking how and why we might have developed our epistemic concepts, and what purposes they might serve; in this paper I too have adopted this approach. Our shared framework indicates a number of ways in which ideas about epistemic injustice, and testimonial injustice in particular, might apply to knowledge how. In the remainder of this paper, I will draw upon my earlier discussions in order to begin this task; much of what I say is inconclusive, but I hope at least to outline the issues for further investigation.

### **5.1 Underestimating knowledge how**

Testimonial injustice can take a number of forms, but Fricker usefully distinguishes prejudice about ignorance from prejudice about deceit. I can fail to take you at your word because I think you may not know the truth, or because I think you may be lying;

different ethnic groups, for example, may be prejudicially characterised as ignorant (stupid), as deceitful (cunning) or perhaps via a confusion of the two. It is clear that unfairly underestimating someone's knowledge can constitute a distinctively epistemic injustice, since it involves wronging someone as a knower. This point transfers smoothly to knowledge how – if I unfairly think that you lack knowledge how, then this is a distinctively epistemic injustice, one which wrongs you as a knower.

I argued above that we often rely upon 'downstream' indicators of knowledge how, that these are often accessible even when we lack knowledge how ourselves, and that these two points apply also to knowledge whether, knowledge when, and the like.

Understanding this provides fresh insight into the various ways in which epistemic injustice may occur as a result of unfair underestimation of others' knowledge (I return to the issue of deceit below).

Fricker raises a number of legitimate concerns about the ways in which we unfairly rely on social status as a marker of knowledge in others (and underestimate others' knowledge when they lack this status) – in my terms, such markers are typically upstream (though attributes such as speaking confidently may be downstream). We might hope that our judgements about downstream markers – successful knowledge-guided action – would be held to more objective standards, and be less prone to prejudice and injustice. Surely, if someone gets to display her knowledge in action, it will be harder to ignore her epistemic achievement?

It is, of course, an empirical question how good we are at judging the extent of other people's knowledge how, and the extent to which prejudice or implicit bias can affect these judgements. But as philosophers we can begin to explore the ways in which these judgements and prejudices might arise and interact. For example, it may well be that successful action is sometimes less susceptible to objective measure than we might hope. As Goldin and Rouse (2000) show, when certain American orchestras introduced anonymous auditions – candidates could be heard but not seen – the proportion of women admitted rose significantly, compared to orchestras which continued to audition without

screens. It seems that assessors' gender prejudices were affecting their judgements of the musicians' success in performance (data on characteristics other than gender was not available for study).

Another possibility is that prejudice can affect the degree to which successful performance is attributed to underlying skill and knowledge, as opposed to luck or perhaps 'instinct'. In studies involving simulated job-applications, Biernat and Kobrynowicz (1997) found that women as compared to men, and black people as compared to white, 'must work harder to prove that their performance is ability-based'. Here, 'ability' and 'knowledge how' are interchangeable, and both stand in contrast with lucky or accidental success. But philosophers' recent work on the ability/know how distinction, and on the notion of epistemic value, could help us think more carefully about this. Fricker is concerned about specifically epistemic injustice because of the significance she attaches to knowledge and knowing; this ties up with the idea that the value of knowledge can outstrip its practical value. Against this backdrop, we may ask how and whether acting out of knowledge how is more valuable than succeeding via luck, or ability, or instinct.

I have briefly discussed two examples of epistemic injustice – underrating the performance of female musicians, and failing to attribute black and/or female success to underlying knowledge – and both of these focus on knowledge how. However they illustrate possibilities for epistemic injustice where we use downstream indicators to make judgements about someone's knowledge more generally; knowledge how is often assessed via downstream indicators involving successful action, but as we have seen, other knowledge can also be assessed in this way. So for example in witnessing a colleague's teaching, we may fail to recognise successful classroom interaction, or, recognising this success, we may attribute it to the students' talent rather than the colleague's knowledge when to intervene and when to let discussion run its course.

None of this conflicts with Fricker's claims, but it helps broaden them out. Fricker's work focuses on the opportunities for epistemic (in)justice which arise when we rely

upon upstream indicators to assess others' knowledge; we should be equally alert to our prejudices when we judge others epistemically by what they can manage to do.

## **5.2 Underestimating honesty**

Fricker distinguishes prejudice about ignorance from prejudice about deceit. It is clear that unfairly underestimating someone's knowledge involves epistemic injustice, and in the preceding subsection I explored some ways in which this might arise. But Fricker argues that unfairly treating someone as a liar is also a distinctively epistemic injustice, not just a character slur. This is because being a reliable informant, a giver of knowledge, is inextricably bound up with being a knower, and '[s]ince epistemic trustworthiness requires the conjunction of competence and sincerity, a wrongful attack on either component is sufficient for being wronged in that capacity [*qua* giver of knowledge].' (Fricker 2007 p.45)

Recall the apprentice and the client, each in search of a knower-how. How might epistemic (in)justice play a role in their searches? The apprentice seeks a teacher, and if she is prejudiced she may unfairly underestimate how likely someone is to know how to X, and/or unfairly underestimate how likely someone is to honestly teach her how to X. (You might think that women are poor drivers, and/or that they are devious driving instructors.) The client seeks someone to perform X, and if she is prejudiced she may unfairly underestimate how likely someone is to know how to X, and/or unfairly underestimate how likely someone is to employ that knowledge honestly on the client's behalf. (You might think that Polish builders are incompetent and/or that they cheat.)

As the peculiar notion of the devious driving instructor suggests, this attempt to apply Fricker's competence/sincerity distinction to knowledge how is not entirely successful. First, there is less scope for honesty or dishonesty, sincerity or insincerity, when it comes to knowledge how. Second, possessing knowledge how and being honest typically do not suffice to make someone a good coach or instructor. I will take up these points in turn.

First, honesty. Why, for Fricker, is honesty or sincerity central to being a knower? From the ‘genealogical’ perspective, the concept of knowledge is understood fundamentally in terms of our need to identify reliable testifiers. Fricker draws upon Craig’s distinction between sources of information and informants (Craig 1990 section V). When I find out that it is raining from seeing your wet coat, I treat you as a source of information; when I find out that it is raining from accepting your say-so – relying upon your accuracy and your sincerity – I treat you as an informant. Unfairly failing to treat others as informants objectifies them, reducing them to mere sources of information at best, undermining their status in the knowledge economy (Fricker 2007, 133). (Moran 2006 puts similar distinctions to somewhat different work).

Does the apprentice treat the teacher as a source of information, or as an informant? I have explored this question in some depth elsewhere (Hawley, *forthcoming*), and cannot recapitulate all the details here. But the short answer is that much of the know-how we gain from other people, we gain by treating them as sources of information – sources of information which obligingly make themselves clear to us, to be sure, but sources of information nonetheless.

One aspect of this is that there is less scope for deception in the transmission of knowledge how, and correlatively less need for epistemic trust. You may refuse to teach me how to ride a bicycle, but it is difficult for you to mislead me about how to do so; any such deception is likely to be exposed after I have fallen off a few times. I must trust you not to push me under a car whilst I’m learning, but after a while I will not need to trust that you have taught me how to ride a bike; it will be obvious that this is what you have done. This flows from the point I made earlier, that we are often in a position to recognise successful performance even before we can achieve this ourselves.

Another aspect of the fact that we typically gain knowledge how from sources of information rather than informants is this: when we learn by emulating an expert, it often doesn’t matter whether the expert is intentionally trying to communicate her skill, indeed it needn’t matter whether the expert realises she has an audience. It may be easier for us

to learn if the expert slows down her behaviour, but it doesn't matter whether she does this for our benefit, or just because she's tired or being extra careful.

I cannot here fully justify my claim that in acquiring knowledge how from other people we very often treat them as sources of information rather than informants, especially where we are capable of recognising successful performance ourselves. And the claim is not intended as an exceptionless generalisation – sometimes the transmission of knowledge how will require the expert to act as informant, not just source of information. But I hope the claim is plausible or at least interesting enough to justify my exploring its consequences for Fricker's ideas about epistemic injustice.

The apprentice or client may unfairly underestimate someone's knowledge how – this clearly constitutes epistemic injustice. But what about unfair underestimation of someone's honesty in transmitting knowledge how to an apprentice? As discussed, there is often little scope for dishonesty (or honesty) on the part of the teacher – if I ask you to teach me how to ride a bike, or drive a car, any attempts to mislead me will soon be evident, since I will be able to tell whether or not your instructions are helping me to succeed. Then in such cases there is no scope for distinctively epistemic injustice focusing on sincerity. (I do not claim that teaching how never leaves room for dishonesty, only that in many cases there is less scope for dishonesty than in typical cases of teaching that.)

What about the client? The client is interested in finding someone who knows how to X, and is willing to exercise that knowledge on the client's behalf. What scope is there for dishonesty in this relationship? Of course, a builder, lawyer or other expert practitioner may insincerely promise to work for a client and ultimately fail to do so, and there is plenty of scope for financial dishonesty here. In addition, if the client is unable to recognise good work – successful completion of the relevant task – then she must rely upon the practitioner's say-so about this (or call in an inspector). But in many cases a client can recognise good work, whether or not she possesses the relevant knowledge how. In such cases, there is no scope for honesty or dishonesty, only good or bad work.

Again, in such cases, this limits the scope for distinctively epistemic injustice in the client's relationship with the practitioner.

I do not mean to downplay the role of trust in the relationship between teacher and apprentice, or between professional and client. In such situations, we often need to trust one another not to divulge sensitive information, not to cheat financially, not to laugh at our failures and so on. But unfair mistrust in these respects does not constitute a distinctively epistemic injustice. In addition, there are some situations in which we must take on trust the expert's claim to be providing us with knowledge how, or employing knowledge how on our behalf. But this is not an inevitable feature of these relationships, for often a client or apprentice can judge in other ways whether the expert is honestly acting out of knowledge how. Fricker's emphasis on sincerity as central to the transmission of knowledge arises from treating as central the case in which a purported informant says that *p*, and the listener must decide whether to believe that *p*; many situations in which we rely upon the knowledge of others do not fit that pattern.

### **5.3 Underestimating effectiveness**

Again recall Fricker's requirements of competence and sincerity. The good informant has relevant knowledge and expresses it honestly. As we have seen, there are opportunities for epistemic injustice where we underestimate someone's know-how, and I explored ways in which this might arise. In contrast, I have argued that there is relatively little scope for epistemic injustice focusing on sincerity in cases where we can recognise successful action for ourselves.

But thinking through the needs of the apprentice highlights a third kind of requirement. Not every honest expert is a good teacher. This is especially obvious for know-how experts, but the same is often true for obviously propositional knowledge. On a narrow interpretation of competence, what is required of testifiers is that they know the truth, and speak sincerely – that they avoid both ignorance and deception. On a broader interpretation, competence involves both possession of the relevant knowledge and the ability to express and articulate that knowledge in a way which makes it accessible to the

relevant audience. Though it's not entirely clear, Fricker's examples and explication of competence suggest the narrower reading. But if we are interested in genuine ability to give knowledge to others, and see this as a fundamental part of being a knower, then we should adopt the broader reading – really good testifiers are not just knowledgeable and honest, they are also talented teachers, writers, or public speakers. In the context of Fricker's book, this raises fascinating but very complex political issues: different social groups may use different styles of communication, allowing for mismatch of style between speakers and listeners from different groups, and different groups may differ in absolute terms in their levels of articulacy, but as a result of earlier injustice, hermeneutical or otherwise.

These thoughts are tailored to evidently-propositional knowledge, but what is the role of 'competence' in transmitting or exercising knowledge how? Again, on the narrow reading this simply amounts to possessing the relevant knowledge how, and so unfair underestimation of this clearly constitutes epistemic injustice. On the broader reading, 'competence' is a question of teaching ability (for the apprentice), or ability to act on knowledge how (for the client). Possessing knowledge how and being able to act on it are closely entwined (even if the relation between them is not identity), so it seems reasonable to count a client's unfair underestimation of someone's ability to act on their knowledge how as constituting epistemic injustice.

Matters are much hazier where an apprentice unfairly underestimates someone's ability to transmit her knowledge how. I may wrong you if I unfairly judge that, though you know how to drive, you are a poor driving instructor, but do I wrong you epistemically? The Craig-Fricker approach suggest that the wrong here is epistemic, because part of being a knower is being able to transmit your knowledge. But does the wrong you suffer when I unfairly judge that you are a bad teacher really differ in kind from the wrong you suffer when I unfairly judge that you are a poor cook or are bad at raising your children?

These questions put some pressure upon Fricker's notion of testimonial injustice as involving distinctively epistemic harm, which in turn puts pressure on Craig's distinction

between informant and mere source of information. There are lots of things we can do with our knowledge, lots of ways in which we can use our knowledge to guide our action – to fetch coffee, catch a train, defuse a bomb and so on. At a fairly high level of abstraction, testifying is just one more thing we can do with our knowledge – we can use our knowledge in order to speak truly and induce knowledge in our listeners. But for Fricker, using our knowledge in this way – acting as an informant – is a distinctively epistemic activity, unlike using our knowledge in other ways. This may seem plausible when we focus upon the simple case in which the informant knows that *p*, and says that *p* – the paradigm case in the literature on testimony – but it is less plausible when we consider cases involving the transmission of complex information, where being a good informant requires much more than simply possessing knowledge and being sincere.

## **6. Summary**

The purpose of this paper has been to explore how epistemic injustice may arise in the context of knowledge how, though many of the resulting ideas apply to knowledge-wh more generally. I have emphasised the varied purposes for which we seek knowledgeable others, the ways in which we may rely upon downstream as well as upstream indicators of knowledge, and the limitations of the ‘honesty’ requirement in our dealings with one another. Overall I hope to have illustrated the ways in which taking knowledge how as a case study can help us understand more about knowledge in general, opening up epistemological vistas which are easily neglected when we focus on whether *S* knows that *p*.

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