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REPLIES TO ALCOFF, GOLDBERG, AND HOOKWAY ON
EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

ABSTRACT

In this paper I respond to three commentaries on Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing. In response to Alcoff, I primarily defend my conception of how an individual hearer might develop virtues of epistemic justice. I do this partly by drawing on empirical social psychological evidence supporting the possibility of reflective self-regulation for prejudice in our judgements. I also emphasize the fact that individual virtue is only part of the solution – structural mechanisms also have an essential role in combating epistemic injustice. My response to Goldberg principally concerns my perceptual account of the epistemology of testimony, which I defend as being both well-motivated and best categorized as a species of non-inferentialism. I also explain its relation to the reductionism/non-reductionism contrast, and defend my resistance to casting it as any kind of default view. In response to Hookway, I contrast discriminatory with distributive forms of epistemic injustice, and defend the basic taxonomy I present in the book, which casts testimonial and hermeneutical injustice as the two fundamental discriminatory forms of epistemic injustice.

It is a pleasure and an honour to be responding to three such stimulating commentaries from esteemed colleagues; I am grateful to Linda Martin Alcoff, Sanford Goldberg and Christopher Hookway for their scrupulous and generous critical engagement with my work.¹

One of the main ideas advanced in the book is that when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker’s word, a distinctive sort of injustice is done – a testimonial injustice. In my discussion of what hearers can do to avoid committing this kind of epistemic and ethical offence, I emphasize the role of self-critical reflection. In particular, I emphasize the self-regulatory potential of cognitive dissonance between our standing beliefs in relation to speaker trustworthiness on the one hand, and our spontaneous perceptions of speaker trustworthiness on the other. Taking proper responsibility for our judgements of credibility demands that we (a) notice that we are in a situation in which the credibility we spontaneously give the speaker is likely to be deflated by

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prejudice, and (b) correct for any such deflation, either pre-emptively or after the
fact of initial judgement, or, indeed, by suspending judgement in some measure. 
Linda Alcoff’s first question for me is whether conscious critical reflection on our
parts as hearers is really up to the job of detecting the operation of prejudice in
our testimonial sensibilities. This worry is at its most vivid in cases where prejudice
threatens to enter in not by way of our beliefs, but more surreptitiously by way of
the social imagination.

While I would never say that the neutralization of prejudice in our credibility
judgements is an easily achievable ideal, my emphasis on critical self-reflection
as an effective means of self-regulation for prejudice finds significant support
in the empirical literature. There are social psychological studies that show how
critical reflection can help us to monitor ourselves for prejudice (Monteith 1993,
Monteith et al. 2002). This work suggests the mechanism for controlling our use
of prejudicial stereotypes is one of alertness to ‘cues for control’, affectively backed
up by negative self-directed emotions (principally guilt) associated with awareness
of having fallen below a certain subjectively approved standard. One example used
to demonstrate the general phenomenon is that of a white person shopping in the
supermarket who asks for assistance from a black person he assumes works there,
when in fact the black person is a fellow shopper; the white shopper experiences
a feeling of guilt about his stereotyped assumption, and learns to be sensitive
in future to cues that he is in a similar situation – a situation in which, he has
learned, he must be alert to the risk of spontaneously employing a stereotype he
will feel bad about. This mechanism of alertness to cues for control can work for
conscientious and non-conscientious subjects alike, though the trigger for the
negative self-directed emotion will differ. For a conscientious person, it may be a
matter of catching herself engaged in a stereotyped perception of a speaker, and
the cognitive dissonance is between her perception and her own doxastically held
standards for good epistemic conduct. In such cases it is her own conscience that
is enabling the self-regulation. But the same mechanism can work for someone
who is not conscientious in this respect (perhaps she has prejudiced beliefs, or just
doesn’t care about issues of stereotyping). In such cases the trigger for the negative
affect must come from some external source, such as an institutionalized sanction
or disincentive for display of prejudice. Here, what drives the self-regulation will
not be conscience but rather some form of self-interest.

This empirical work supports the approach I take, which emphasizes the
role of self-critical reflection in individual hearers’ capacity to self-regulate for
prejudicial stereotypes in their credibility judgements. However, I am not wedded
to reflective self-regulation as our only hope. In institutionalized competitive
situations (such as appointments procedures, examinations, and so on), structural
mechanisms – such as anonymization and double-blind marking and refereeing –
are clearly indispensable. Further, it is entirely possible that the lesson of critical
reflection in some range of cases might be that one would do better to stop
reflecting on one’s likely prejudices and instead go in for some sort of unreflective

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psychological work-out involving anti-prejudicial priming techniques. One can imagine a corporation or other institution adopting a policy according to which all members of appointments or promotions panels should go through such an anti-prejudicial priming routine before engaging in the business of the panel. If the empirical evidence were secure enough, that might be a good policy. We should do whatever works, within the bounds of practicality; but still the initial step towards improved, less prejudiced forms of social perception can only be a step of critical reflection. Thus the initial moves towards finding ways to neutralize the impact of prejudice in our judgements have to be self-reflective in the first instance.

Alcoff expresses her concern particularly in relation to what a virtue-theoretical model can deliver, by saying that 'developing a virtue approach that operates in the volitional, conscious sphere will only be able to provide a very partial antidote to testimonial injustice' (132). But it's no part of my conception of virtue that it need operate exclusively in the volitional, conscious sphere. Admittedly, the broadly Aristotelian model I've adopted in the book is motive-based; but motive-based virtue incorporates a reliability condition (reliability in achieving the end of one's good motive) and there is no reason why this reliability should not be achieved by way of sheer habit or other sub-personal mechanism. Indeed, that is a form of ideal, full-virtue spontaneity. That said, let me however take this opportunity to add that I do not have any exclusive commitment to the motive-based model of virtue. The Aristotelian conception happens to facilitate my notion of a testimonial sensibility as a capacity for epistemically enriched (theory-laden) perception of speakers as more, or less, credible in what they’re saying, for I explain it as a capacity that is acquired and honed through experience, habituation, and example – just like the Aristotelian notion of a virtuous sensibility or moral perceptual faculty. But I remain entirely uncommitted to the idea that all virtues are motive-based. On the contrary, my own view is that the Platonic conception of virtues as skills is thoroughly apt for many virtues. I suspect it is nothing but unhelpful to continue to think of these two models as competing exhaustive accounts of virtue. Instead, I believe we would do well to allow that some virtues (both ethical and intellectual) are such that the inner element of motive or good will is paramount – here the virtues of kindness, charity, and compassion come to mind; while for other virtues it is the outer element of performance that matters most – as in the case of honesty, accuracy, or justice. I can remain open-minded, then, about exactly what psychological form the virtue of testimonial justice might take. But my inclination is to assert a likely role for motive in sustaining the virtue. While what matters most in this virtue of justice is performance (success in reliably neutralizing the impact of prejudice in one’s credibility judgements), it is hard to envisage achieving that reliability without some considerable motivational impetus on the part of the hearer, especially given the prevalence of atmospheric prejudice in the social imagination. For all these reasons, I maintain that hearers being motivated to self-critical reflection, so that they may modify their credibility judgements in response to ‘cues for control’, remains the order of the day.
This connects with a second point, raised at a later stage by Alcoff, that I would like to address. She raises the interesting question of how far testimonial justice calls for an epistemological ideal of neutrality (the kind achieved when individuals neutralize the threat of prejudice in their credibility judgements) and how far it calls for actual social diversity in bodies that aim to achieve testimonial justice. I think the answer to this is broadly empirical. First, I can say that obviously in the case of individual hearers, neutrality must be the aim. We cannot reconstitute ourselves in the plural, though of course in cases where hearers have time and resources to do so, seeking advice from differently situated others might be one of the strategies to employ as we seek to neutralize the impact of prejudice in our own judgements. But, second, the question of social diversity only applies directly in relation to the question of how various institutional bodies should be constituted – teams of scientific researchers, juries, appointments panels, and so forth. It may be that the best way to achieve testimonial justice is indeed to aim for, or require, actual social diversity. As I say, I regard this as an empirical question, so I don’t believe philosophy alone can deliver the answer, though I strongly suspect that in many cases the answer would be yes.

The third point I would like to pick up from Alcoff’s commentary first comes as a brief remark to the effect that we need to ask how far identity prejudice tends to result from ignorance and deficient rationality, and how far from non-rational processes. She goes on to develop this question in relation to my avoidance of the concept of the ‘social imaginary’, rightly pointing to other broadly psychoanalytic resources that might help explain identity prejudice in any given case (she suggests, for instance, one might imagine Herbert Greenleaf having conflicted motives relating to the preservation of his own self-image when it comes to finding out the truth about his son’s disappearance). As she says, pointing to these possibilities does not show up any disagreement between us; but she takes herself to be calling for an expansion of my account. Well, yes and no. Of course there’s always room for further exploration of the various unconscious motives and impulses that can skew credibility judgement, producing a testimonial injustice in so far as they introduce prejudice. But I would say there is plenty of room for this in my existing account. I can readily agree about the possibility of Greenleaf having conflicted motives, and in the book I emphasize the general point that truth-orientated motives are always in potential competition with conscious or unconscious counter-veridical motives. The reason I do not adopt the concept of the ‘social imaginary’ is not that it pertains to unconscious influences on judgement, but rather that I could not see any need to adopt a notion so tightly wound up with a body of psychoanalytic theory when there was a perfectly serviceable, non-theoretical notion available; namely that of the social imagination. This was no sign of general scepticism about the existence of unconscious non-rational forces in our relations and judgements. Not at all: I assume the influence of the social imagination to be broadly non-rational and unconscious; and I explicitly theorize negative identity prejudice as a form of motivated irrationality, where the motivation
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carried is likely to be a visceral, non-rational negative affect of some kind that may also be unconscious. My opting for the concept of the social imagination was simply a question of fidelity to a general methodological principle according to which, when faced with a choice between a highly theorized concept and a relatively non-theorized concept, it is better (simpler, clearer, and in this case perhaps less restrictive) to opt for the less theorized concept. If I had used the concept of the social imaginary, my reply to anyone asking what I meant by it would have been that I meant the social imagination; so that’s the concept I used.

Alcoff’s final point relates to hermeneutical injustice, and she raises the question how far it is part of my conception that ‘changes in the terms by which we bring experiences under a description can affect the actual things themselves’ (136). There is no doubt in my mind that this is true. Social experiences are inter alia experiences of the significances of things that happen to one, and where there is a change in the communally understood significances, there will be a change in the quality of the experience – perhaps it will be more sharply or differently focussed. A man being ‘bullied’ in the workplace by a female boss may now use that concept to describe his experience and expect his grievance to be understood and taken seriously (at least in many workplaces), whereas once upon a time he would simply have been laughed at if he’d tried to protest his misery. He could not have used the term ‘bullying’ with any communicative success, and would have doubtless felt confused and upset not only by the experiences he was putting up with but also by the cognitive and communicative frustrations caused by the mismatch between his experience and the collective hermeneutical resources available to render it intelligible. While I think the quality of such an experience of workplace bullying is notably different – less confused and more sharply focussed – if it is experienced in a context where that concept is readily available to characterize the experience, still I am committed to the reality of his being bullied even prior to the advent of that concept as a ready collective hermeneutical resource. This, however, does not entail that he was having an experience of workplace bullying before there were any conceptual resources to frame its meaning. On the contrary, we can picture his social consciousness as drawing implicitly on existing meanings (the concepts perhaps of school-bullying, scape-goating, humiliation, together with an awareness of recognized norms governing workplace behaviour such as professionalism, respect between colleagues, and so on) without reflective awareness on his part. The conceptual resources for understanding workplace bullying for what it is were immanent in our collective hermeneutical resources long before we succeeded in rendering them explicit by coining the succinct label ‘workplace bullying’. This is the sense in which I would gladly describe myself as a realist about social experience: it is entirely possible to have experiences whose content is shaped by meanings that we are not yet (individually or collectively) able to make explicit in sharply focussed reflections or communicative exchanges. Our collective resources for social interpretation are not a fixed set of meanings, but rather a hive of hermeneutical potential, only some of which is communicatively realized at any
given time. Ideally, we realize the meanings we have a use for as our interpretive needs evolve with other kinds of social change (the advent, for instance, of female bosses who may or may not be good colleagues); the unjust hermeneutical gaps open up when unequal relations of power cause some needs to stay unmet for longer than others.

Sanford Goldberg’s comments are addressed to the account of the epistemology of testimony that I advance. His first point is that I run together the issue of justification for acceptance and conditions for acquiring knowledge by testimony. I do tend to discuss them together, though in my defence I don’t think it is ever unclear which I’m focussed on at a given time, and, further, no confusion arises nor point of argument depends upon my treating them together. I certainly agree that no argument should depend on a thoughtless assumption that justification for acceptance is necessary for testimonial knowledge, not least because it is indeed possible to hold a view according to which knowledge by testimony does not require justified acceptance. But nothing I argue for depends on such an assumption. Simply, I tend to discuss them together because I take it that within the epistemology of testimony, our primary interest in discussing justification is that on most views it is assumed that knowledge requires some kind of justification or entitlement; and the ultimate interest is to address the possibility of knowledge by testimony, and, indeed, to differentiate views partly by reference to the sort of knowledge they deem to be available (direct and basic; or mediated and derivative…). Indeed, this is why it is entirely commonplace to intertwine discussion of the two issues. In a critical discussion of inferentialism, for instance, C. A. J. Coady writes that according to inferentialism, the hearer’s ‘assent must be mediated by a consideration of the veracity of the witness, his reliability… and so on. Thus mediated, our belief in what he says must count as inferentially based and likewise for our knowledge, where it is knowledge’ (1992, 143; italics added). Here Coady is combining discussion of the conditions for justified acceptance and of knowledge in the familiar way that I also combine them – and justifiably so, for on most views they are closely linked.

Let me say something in defence of how I set up the general debate, in response to Goldberg’s second question concerning how it relates to current discussions in the epistemology of testimony. In order to make plain what I take to be the underlying dialectical situation, I set up the debate according to its historical form, as a contrast between a broadly inferentialist approach, historically associated with Hume, and a broadly non-inferentialist position, historically associated with Reid. As Goldberg rightly says, this is rather different from the terms of much of the contemporary debate, which has grown more complex, and has most notably developed a primary contrast between reductionism and anti-reductionism. I certainly do not assume these are the same contrasts: they are not. The first contrast turns on the question whether justification for acceptance requires that the hearer makes, or is able to produce, an inference from testimony that p to p — inferentialists say justification requires this, and non-inferentialists say it doesn’t. The second
contrast, between reductionism and anti-reductionism, is similarly concerned with conditions for justified acceptance, but is orthogonal to the first. Reductionists are primarily concerned that the hearer’s justification should avoid circularity, so they require that it have some significant basis in a non-testimonial species of evidence – usually some kind of empirical evidence that the speaker is likely enough to be speaking the truth. Anti-reductionists, by contrast, do not regard justification for acceptance as requiring non-testimonial evidence. One might characterize the inferentialism/non-inferentialism contrast as concerned with the kind of process that is required for justification, while the reductionism/anti-reductionism contrast is concerned with the kind of evidence that is invoked in the justification.

The other reason why I did not present my view in relation to the reductionism/anti-reductionism contrast is very simply that the contrast does not illuminate the contours of my account. For what it’s worth, I am not myself much exercised by the question of circularity in the hearer’s justification of acceptance. (If one imagines a case where a hearer’s testimonial sensibility is drawing exclusively on other testimony as to whether to accept the speaker’s word, such a case does not strike me as one in which the justification to accept is necessarily undermined.) What matters, however, is that the perceptual view I advance remains neutral on this score. Someone committed to reductionism could easily adopt my account, simply tagging on the reductionist proviso that the deliverance of the hearer’s testimonial sensibility must not itself depend too much on testimonial evidence. On the other hand, let me acknowledge that my account might legitimately be read as in tune with a certain Humean spirit of independent-mindedness that motivates reductionism, in so far as much of the evidence that shapes the hearer’s testimonial sensibility over time is bound to be of just the sort that Hume was at pains to demand: individual and collective past experience of the (un)reliability of different sorts of testimony. The overriding point to be made about all this is that the distinction between reductionism and anti-reductionism simply plays no role in either motivating or characterizing the perceptual account as I advance it, for the mystery my view purports to solve is not the what of justified acceptance, but the how; not the species of evidence drawn on, but rather the mechanism of justification. Reductionists and anti-reductionists alike might adopt the perceptual model of credibility judgement and, indeed, the virtue-account of justified acceptance in which it is naturally (though not necessarily) embedded.

Now what of Goldberg’s worry that my view is not so well-motivated as I make it seem because the shortfalls of inferentialism and of existing non-inferentialist positions are not actually so bad as I make out? First, my general criticism of inferentialism: I complain that it doesn’t match the spontaneity that is characteristic of the phenomenology of acceptance. Goldberg is right to think this is not a knock-down argument, and I don’t intend it as such. The reason it is not a knock-down criticism is indeed that inferentialism is a view in epistemology, not in psychology; so in principle the psychology of justified acceptance might be quite different from the epistemology. Well, yes, on some views it might. Still, there
are two powerful constraints, one general and one specific, to standard forms of inferentialism. First, the specific constraint, which derives from the fact that epistemology and psychology can only be separated on a broadly externalist view of justification. Inferentialism is standardly an internalist view, inasmuch as it requires that the hearer either rehearses the justifying inference, or at least has after-the-fact psychological access to it. The inferentialist epistemological story therefore makes considerable demands on the hearer’s psychology, so epistemology and psychology cannot here be kept apart in the way Goldberg envisages. Second, the general constraint, which is methodological. Philosophers need a strong reason to posit an epistemological story of justification that strikes no chord whatever with the phenomenology. I assert this on the basis that it is an epistemological desideratum to find an account that enjoys a degree of psychological plausibility, for if one’s epistemology enjoys no such plausibility, it will have to draw its net plausibility from somewhere else. Of course that’s possible, but the first philosophical move must surely be to look at the human practices and experiences of testimonial exchange to see what epistemological story they suggest. Other things equal, an epistemological account that chimes in with the phenomenology is preferable to one that doesn’t. It is on that basis that I describe us as repelled away from inferentialism and towards some kind of non-inferentialist account.

Let me acknowledge that the phenomenological worry is obviously most powerful in respect of the most basic kind of inferentialism, which requires the hearer actually to rehearse (whether consciously or not) an inference. Clearly, modified brands of inferentialism may require no such thing, perhaps demanding only that the hearer be able to produce a suitable inference after the fact. (This captures Goldberg’s understanding of inferentialism, as the view that justification requires ‘that those reasons be accessible to the hearer, in the sense that she...could cite them as part of a would-be justifying inference, if the need to do so were to arise’ (141).) This modified form of inferentialism is clearly far less at odds with the phenomenology of acceptance. However, it is nonetheless similarly unattractive, for so long as one’s testimonial sensibility is functioning properly, what does it matter whether one can always produce the inference for imagined inspection after the fact? Normally one will be able to, for sure – epistemic subjects need to be generally reflective and self-critical. But it is not remotely desirable to build in the ability to produce such an inference as a necessary condition of justified acceptance, or, indeed, of testimonial knowledge. Inferentialism’s standing commitment to internalism is the problem here, and it should be avoided if possible. So long as we can make out an alternative account that avoids internalism but still explains how we can be justified in our patterns of spontaneous acceptance, such an account will be preferable on this score. I advance my own account in that spirit.

This brings me to Goldberg’s next critical point, which is his suggestion that my criticisms of non-inferentialism fail to hit home. I discuss only Reid and Burge in this connection, for my intention at this stage of the book is simply to set the scene and make clear the general dialectical position as characterized between
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ingerentialism and non-inferentialism. Goldberg picks up on my line of criticism against non-inferentialism, namely that it pictures the hearer’s faculties as in snooze mode just when she is at the point of accepting what might be knowledge. I am entirely ready to agree that there can be forms of non-inferentialism that do not leave the hearer’s critical faculties in snooze mode, and, further, I agree that it is no intended or explicit part of Burge’s account that this should be the case. On the contrary, I think it is clear that Burge assumes that the hearer will somehow remain sufficiently sensitive to the balance of reasons for and against acceptance, so that her epistemic conduct can be successfully geared to whether the default of acceptance is on or off. The chief point I aim to make in respect of Burge’s account is that if we are not left with the hearer’s critical faculties in snooze mode at the moment of acceptance, then that must be because she can be realistically represented as sensitive to the status of the default. But Burge offers us nothing by way of explanation how, if not by inference, the hearer is to achieve the requisite rational sensitivity. Furthermore, if the hearer is indeed to be so sensitive, then for Burge that can only be a matter of sensitivity to the balance of reasons for and against acceptance. In which case we are back to square one: we still need an account of the requisite non-inferential form of rational sensitivity, just as we did before any mention of an out-sourced entitlement to accept. In which case we may as well just focus on the original question: how is the hearer to be non-inferentially sensitive to the balance of reasons for and against accepting what she’s told? My account purports to explain just that: hearers with well-attuned testimonial sensibilities will respond (sometimes consciously, often unconsciously) to the plethora of epistemically relevant cues supplied by a speaker’s testimonial performance. But then, I argue, once we’ve seen that this is how we do it, we lose all local motivation to pursue Burge’s entitlement account (and no bad thing, given it has the considerable associated problem that there is a conceptual connection between rationality and lying that cuts against the connection between rationality and veracity on which the view depends). What I believe my account achieves is a picture of hearers as able to be rationally sensitive to epistemically salient cues, and so able to critically filter the word of others in a manner that is epistemically justified yet not by way of any inference. I maintain it is Burge’s view that proves less well-motivated than it first appears, not mine.

Goldberg next poses the pregnant question of whether my account is truly best characterized as non-inferentialist. Let’s see. My perceptual account pictures hearers as capable of developing a virtuous testimonial sensibility whose evidentially conditioned reliability can justify acceptance in a given case, and so open the way for knowledge. (Recall that reliability in achieving the epistemically good end is built into epistemic virtue, whether on a skill-based conception of virtue or a motive-based conception.) The account effectively defends the possibility, indeed the normality, of hearers making spontaneous, unreflective perceptual judgements of credibility on the hoof, in response to speaker performance. I theorize such judgements as bona fide judgements that
are non-inferential in form because they are perceptual: hearers spontaneously form epistemically coloured perceptions of speakers as more, or less, credible in what they are saying. (Such perceptions are laden with a social-epistemic ‘theory’ about what types of speakers are to be believed about which kinds of subject matter in which kinds of context.) Now, if we ask whether this account is to be characterized as inferentialist or non-inferentialist, my answer is that it is clearly a non-inferentialist account, for it advances a model of justification for acceptance according to which the hearer need neither make an on-the-spot inference in favour of acceptance, nor be able to produce one after the fact. Goldberg rightly press the key question: What is the relation between a perception of credibility on the one hand, and justification of acceptance on the other? And the ‘natural suggestion’ he supplies delivers most of what I regard as the right answer: provided that the perception is the product of a well-trained (and so reliable) testimonial sensibility, it is a relation of constitution. On my account, if a hearer with a virtuous testimonial sensibility perceives the speaker’s word as credible, then that is what justifies his accepting her word.

But now comes our disagreement: Goldberg immediately dismisses that answer as no good for my purposes, on the grounds that ‘this would be a version of inferentialism’. No it wouldn’t. Not unless one were to customize it for an automaton hearer, adding an extra epistemological loop such that the hearer, upon perceiving the speaker as trustworthy, notes to himself that he so perceives her, that his perception is generally reliable, and proceeds on this basis to infer that he may accept what she’s telling him. Such an intellectualist customization of the epistemology is unnecessary, and thoroughly unnatural. The natural suggestion, which I take to be part and parcel of my account, presents the hearer as accepting with reason, but where that reason need not take the form of an inference. This is not an unfamiliar point with regard to related kinds of perception. Testimonial sensibility is capable of supplying inferences to be sure, but equally – and most typically for the everyday case – it supplies reliable filtering mechanisms, in the form of perceptual sensitivity to epistemically relevant cues. A seeing-as is not the drawing of a conclusion on the basis of a perceptual experience. The perceptual capacity that delivers a particular theory-laden perception is itself a species of rational sensitivity. It enables us to think and do things for a reason – for instance, to accept someone’s word – without doing so on the basis of an inference. I do hold to something close to Goldberg’s natural suggestion, and (customization for automata notwithstanding) it is fundamentally a non-inferentialist idea.

This leads to Goldberg’s final question for me, which derives from a dilemma he thinks I face between re-casting my position as inferentialist or re-branding it as a default entitlement view. I have already said why I maintain it is a non-inferentialist view. So now let me explain why I do not think it amounts to any kind of default entitlement view – and so why there is in fact no dilemma here in terms of how I should cast my position. Any case for a default entitlement to accept what one’s told requires a basis in something either empirical or a priori, for instance, à la Reid...
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or Burge. I argue that neither Reid’s twin principles of credulity and veracity nor Burge’s conceptual connections between intelligibility, rationality, and veracity are sufficient to generate the default they hope for. In Goldberg’s description of how my view might look as a default view, he casts hearers’ sensitivity to epistemically relevant cues as a matter of their being ‘sensitive to the presence of defeaters’ (146). Quite; but that is not how I cast it, for on my account our sensitivity to epistemic cues is not only a sensitivity to defeaters. In the absence of a Reid or Burge-style basis for a default, on what basis would one cast our sensitivity to the balance of reasons for and against acceptance in that lop-sided way? Rather, it is a sensitivity to positive and negative epistemic cues in relation to the trustworthiness of the speaker’s word. Contingently it may often be the case that the ‘theory’ with which our perception is laden will supply, in many contexts, a far greater likelihood of trustworthiness; but that is no basis for an acontextual epistemological default. As I said before in relation specifically to Burge, once one has got in view the sort of perceptual capacity I believe we all exercise more or less successfully (more or less virtuously), there is simply no need to start talking defaults. What the well-trained testimonial sensibility enables the hearer reliably to do is perceive that a given speaker is, or isn’t, to be trusted in what she’s saying, and this perception is achieved through the sensitivity to positive as well as negative indicators. For this reason, my view is no default view. It is a non-inferentialist, perceptual account of justified acceptance, and insofar as justification is required for knowledge, it makes way for a non-inferentialist account of testimonial knowledge.

Chris Hookway argues that there are more kinds of epistemic injustice than the two I identify. I very much appreciate his development of the expanded category of epistemic injustice, and in a spirit of agreement would affirm that I always intended the idea of epistemic injustice as an umbrella category, open to further elaboration. In particular, I open chapter 3 with the following claim about the diversity and wide-ranging nature of testimonial injustice:

The phenomenon I call testimonial injustice is not in fact confined to testimonial exchange, even allowing that we intend testimony in its broadest sense to include all cases of telling. Prejudicial credibility deficit can, after all, occur when a speaker simply expresses a personal opinion to a hearer, or airs a value judgement, or tries out a new idea or hypothesis on a given audience. But telling is the parent case of testimonial injustice, since the basic wrong of testimonial injustice is the undermining of the speaker qua knower, and while other sorts of utterance may sometimes communicate knowledge, it is distinctive of telling that conveying knowledge is its most basic and immediate point – its illocutionary point, as we might put it. (66)

On the other hand, I also want to defend the commitment on which my method of exploration in the book is founded, namely that testimonial and hermeneutical injustice are basic kinds of epistemic injustice, from which most others (perhaps all others of the discriminatory sort) can been seen to stem; and with testimonial injustice being, at least genealogically speaking, the most basic of all.
First, let me address a background uncertainty regarding the intended scope of the term ‘epistemic injustice’, which I define as a species of injustice in which someone is insulted or undermined specifically in their capacity as a knower. On that broad definition, I hope it is clear we may think of the concept of epistemic injustice as an inclusive, generic notion, up for further exploration. In particular, it should be thought of as including distributive forms of epistemic injustice, such as unequal access to epistemic goods like information, or education. In this I agree with David Coady (this issue), who rightly affirms that distributive forms of epistemic injustice are, contrary to what I seem to say at the start of the book, *distinctively epistemic* injustices. It would have been better if I had placed the emphasis on my aim of unveiling forms of discrimination – epistemic discrimination – whose epistemic character meant that they were especially *well hidden* injustices, almost necessarily passed over in silence in the first instance, so that they were unlikely to come to light except by focussing on the distinctively epistemic cases. I think these kinds of epistemic injustice tend to be markedly more hidden than the distributive cases, which are already commonly recognized as forms of social injustice, largely because the positive advantages of access to education and information are manifest, and often featured in the explicit social goals of both rightist and leftist political thinking. That there might be such a thing as epistemic *justice* considered as epistemic non-discrimination, however, remains invisible until one draws attention to the contours and colourations of epistemic *injustice* of the specifically discriminatory sort. (This inversion of the normal order of understanding I find poetically condensed in the cover image of the book, which is of a sculpture by Rachel Whiteread: a casting in white plaster of the negative space of a library book casement, the colours and lettering from the spines staining the plaster in reverse image.)

Hookway rightly suggests that the forms of our epistemic activity are more diverse than testimony on the one hand, and the interpretation of social experience on the other. I entirely agree with the case he makes for recognizing the diversity of epistemic injustice, and in particular of those phenomena my own discussion tends to gather together under the head of testimonial injustice. I suppose it is possible that clarity would be served by our reserving the label ‘testimonial injustice’ for cases of prejudicial credibility deficit in testimony proper, and finding other labels to differentiate the other kinds of discursive epistemic injustice he explores, such as the case of the teacher who, owing to prejudice, tends towards a presumption of irrelevance in relation to suggestive questions posed by a given student. As Hookway explains, the teacher is failing ‘to respect the student as a potential contributor to discussion’ (155). I entirely agree that this is a case of epistemic injustice, and that it is not a strictly testimonial situation. But I would maintain the value of bringing such cases under the general head of testimonial injustice, on the ground that the basic form of all these variations of the injustice remains *prejudicial credibility deficit*. Now I admit I may be stretching not only the notion of ‘testimony’ here, but perhaps ‘credibility’ too. It may be said, after all, that it is...
not really a matter of unfairly deflated *credibility* that the student is suffering, but rather an unfairly deflated estimation of (of what?)… the epistemic skill of asking relevant questions. But now this seems too fine-grained a way of categorizing the phenomenon if we hope to retain a structured sense of its ethical-epistemic significance. What we want from an exploration of epistemic injustice is both a sense of its internal diversity, and a broad structure within which to place the variant types, one that is suited to relating them to their parent cases. I maintain that the most illuminating way to categorize the kind of discursive injustice Hookway highlights here is in relation to the broad category of testimonial injustice.

I hold this on the grounds that passing on knowledge – informing people of everyday things one happens to be in a position to know – is an utterly basic epistemic practice. More basic, in particular, than the related sorts of epistemic practice highlighted by Hookway, which are contributions to more complex, extended or open-ended forms of inquiry. I think this can be argued in uncontroversial terms, for instance, those given by Coady in his book on testimony, where he emphasizes just how much of our knowledge is, directly or indirectly, testimonial: in short, testimonial knowledge is ubiquitous and basic in human knowledge. I think a proper appreciation of this point should be enough to establish the taxonomical propriety of gathering diverse forms of prejudicial exclusion from discursive participation under the general head of ‘testimonial injustice’. But I should say there is also available a genealogical argument that some may find additionally persuasive, and this is something I give some time to in the book, particularly in the discussion of Edward Craig’s genealogy of the concept of knowledge. The thought here is that the very concept of knowledge arises, as a matter of basic human practical necessity, from our need to share information and, to that end, distinguish good from bad informants. In the state of nature, there are *good informants*; and then a certain explanation is given as to how that constructed concept is the ancestor of our actual, up-and-running concept of a knower. If something like this genealogical argument is right, so that the very concept of knowledge arises, of necessity, from an original practice of identifying good informants, then *informing people of everyday things* is in every way the most basic of social epistemic practices. From this, one may conclude, as I do, that the relevant category of epistemic injustice under which to gather a range of wrongful exclusions from the discursive practice of inquiry is indeed ‘testimonial injustice’.

On the other hand, I make this argument here as a defence of how I set things out in the book, where I was attempting to give two fundamental forms of epistemic injustice their debut philosophical outings. But now that’s done, perhaps the value of such categorization is fading. It may now be the time to say with Hookway that what’s needed is further investigation of the internal diversity of the broad category of testimonial injustice. (Indeed, we should no doubt apply the same logic to the other general category in my provisionally dualistic taxonomy, namely hermeneutical injustice.) He is entirely right that, for instance, posing a suggestive question can be a distinctive form of contribution to inquiry, and it
is a form of epistemic participation in which one can be unjustly hindered or excluded owing to prejudice. Hookway’s remarks encourage us to keep in view the diversity of forms of epistemic contribution, and accordingly the diversity of epistemic injustice. I value this not only from the point of view of understanding epistemic injustice in all its forms, but also from the point of view of working towards a broader understanding of its political significance. I think it would be good to explore the political dimension of epistemic injustice, and that project can make good use of a notion that Hookway’s remarks may point us towards: namely the maximally general notion of epistemic participation. Here the analysis of the epistemic-ethical wrong of epistemic injustice may help us see how to develop the idea in the political frame. I analyse it as both an intrinsic wrong (undermining someone in a capacity that is essential to human value), and also an extrinsic wrong (insofar as it tends to cause further epistemic and practical disadvantages – possibly as severe as an innocent being found guilty owing to prejudice on the part of the jury). This analysis may help one to argue, as I hope to in future work, that being blocked from full epistemic participation, whether by prejudice or indeed simply by social powerlessness, is to suffer an intrinsic political wrong – an unfair kind of epistemic inequality. Moreover, it is also a wrong that tends to have further unjust disadvantageous effects of diverse kinds – legal, economic, and political: being found guilty when one is innocent, being disadvantaged in getting a decent job, or in contesting ill-treatment to the relevant authorities. While I hope that my basic taxonomy of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice may stand the test of time when it comes to the ongoing usefulness of keeping the basic kinds in mind, I also hope that the internal diversity of these kinds may be further explored in their various dimensions of significance.

REFERENCES

NOTES

1 I am also very grateful to Elizabeth Potter and Alison Wylie, who organized the original APA author-meets-critics session on *Epistemic Injustice* in December 2008 from which these papers are derived.

2 There could be non-local philosophical motivations, of course: for instance, the motivation to vindicate the possibility of passing on a priori knowledge by testimony.

3 ‘One natural suggestion is that the hearer’s perceiving that the testifer/testimony that p is credible constitutes a reason that justifies her in accepting the testifer’s testimony that p’ (Goldberg, 145; italics original).

4 See, for instance, John Greco’s anti-sceptical argument, which rejects the assumption that evidential relations between perceptual experience and belief must be inferential in form (2000, ch. 4, especially pp. 97–101). And Quassim Cassam illustrates essentially the same point in respect of another brand of social perception, which we may regard as theory-laden rather in the manner of credibility perceptions: ‘Although I know that the Bursar is angry by how he looks, I do not use the way he looks as a premise for concluding that he is angry…. In general, there is a difference between having a reason for believing that b is P and concluding that b is P by some process of reasoning’ (2007, 164).

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