Remembering Together: Examining Epistemic Injustice Through the Lens of Relational Remembering.

by

Claire Rose French

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

© 2023
Claire Rose French
Abstract

I argue that causes of epistemic injustice as well as the project of working towards epistemic justice can be understood through the lens of relational remembering. In Chapter 1, I offer a brief overview of the project. In Chapter 2, I discuss Sue Campbell’s account of relational remembering, which holds that good remembering aims to get something correct about the meaning of the past. In Chapter 3, I examine Miranda Fricker’s formulation of epistemic injustice as a uniquely epistemic form of injustice that occurs in relation to a subject’s status as a knower. I then build on critiques of Fricker by José Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. to highlight relational features. Chapter 4 expands on the preceding chapters, drawing them together to argue that conditions for epistemic injustice are created through the failures of the epistemically privileged to correctly discern the meaning of the past. In Chapter 5, I argue that practices of good remembering can disorient the epistemically privileged in ways that can generate new awareness of relationships of oppression and injustice as well as create the space to begin cultivating epistemic virtue. Chapter 6 offers a summary of the arguments that this thesis puts forth as well as a brief discussion of what can be developed going forward.
Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by offering my most sincere gratitude to Christine Koggel for her immense help with this project. Not only would it have not come together at all without her guidance, she introduced me to the ideas that inspired it in the first place. I am also tremendously grateful to my internal examiner Professor Alexis Shotwell and to my departmental examiner Professor David Matheson for taking the time to read my work and participate in my defence. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Melissa Frankel who has not only graciously agreed to chair my committee but has also been an inspiration since my undergraduate years.

I must also offer my thanks to my family for their unwavering support. I’m especially indebted to my parents for all the love and wisdom they’ve imparted over the years. My mother, Heidi, taught me that the world is never as simple as it seems and my father, John, taught me to always move forward. I’m also grateful to my sister, Piper, for teaching me that we make our own luck in this life.

Finally, must thank my beloved Ally for their patience. I long ago lost count of the number of times that I ran ideas past them over dinners, on walks, or while laying in bed. Our conversations are the first draft of every page that I write. Without them, I would have long ago lost myself in a dark wood. From the icy depths of Cocytus to the fixed stars above, they have been my light.
**Table of Contents**

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................................ iii

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................ iv

Chapter 1: Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Why Remembering?.................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2: The Value of Remembering ....................................................................................... 4
  2.1 Introduction............................................................................................................................ 4
  2.2 How do We Remember? ....................................................................................................... 4
  2.3 Relational Remembering....................................................................................................... 18

Chapter 3: Conceptualizing Epistemic Harm ............................................................................ 35
  3.1 Introduction............................................................................................................................ 35
  3.2 Epistemic Injustice ............................................................................................................... 36
  3.3 Critical Engagement with Epistemic Injustice ................................................................... 51

Chapter 4: Epistemic Justice and Good Remembering ............................................................. 62
  4.1 Introduction............................................................................................................................ 62
  4.2 Epistemic Injustice, Remembering, and Narrative ............................................................... 63
  4.3 A Virtue Account of Epistemic Justice ............................................................................... 72
  4.4 Good Remembering as a Virtue of Epistemic Justice ....................................................... 79
  4.5 Distraction, Disorientation, and Epistemic Virtue ............................................................... 82

Chapter 5: The Necessity of Public Epistemic Virtue ............................................................... 91
  5.1 Introduction............................................................................................................................ 91
5.2 Expanding Our Account of Disorientation ................................................................. 91
5.3 Public Memory, Disorientation, and Epistemic Justice .............................................. 104
5.4 Reconciliation as a Model of Public Epistemic Virtue ............................................ 111

Chapter 6: Epistemic Justice and Good Remembering ..................................................... 116
  6.1 Looking back ........................................................................................................... 116
  6.2 Looking Forward ................................................................................................... 117

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 120
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Why Remembering?

The act of remembering is one that permeates every aspect of our lives. I wake up and I try to remember where I left my slippers. A judge asks a witness to remember what they saw the night of a crime. A teacher asks their students to remember content for the next test. A grandmother remembers and relates a story of what life was like in the old country. Remembering is so much a part of life that we are not apt to give it much thought unless prompted. This is in part because we generally don’t encounter too many difficulties that stem from our memory on a moment-to-moment basis. If I don’t remember where I left my slippers, my life goes on with the only consequence being cold feet. However, the centrality of remembering to our experience of the world is occasionally thrust into the spotlight when there are moral dimensions to what is or is not remembered.

When the decision to assign moral blame comes down to a pair of contradicting testimonies about the past, the moral stakes of remembering are thrown into stark relief. Misremembering can be the difference between helping a victim find justice and causing an entirely new injustice to occur. In the courts, a witness’s memory can be the deciding factor between imprisonment and freedom, the difference between moral blame and moral vindication. In private, our relationships can be made or broken by remembering. The revelation that an aunt has swindled a retired grandparent out of thousands of dollars may cause an irrevocable break within a family. Likewise, an estranged friend trying to make amends for past mistreatment can breathe new life into a dormant friendship. In all
of these cases, the past is made imminent upon the present in ways that are unavoidably moral in character.

An aim of this project is to take observations about relatively mundane social phenomena such as remembering, testimony, interpretation, or disorientation and use them to understand particular kinds of injustice. Remembering and interpretation are the key themes of Chapter 2, which discusses Sue Campbell’s account of relational remembering and the ways in which remembering is central to how we relate to one another. This chapter also expands on Campbell’s account of memory through Paul Ricoeur’s work on narrative and self construction to understand the ways that remembering together creates self identity. In Chapter 3, I turn to Miranda Fricker’s account of epistemic injustice and develop an understanding of interpretation through Fricker’s concept of shared interpretive resources, a shared hermeneutical framework through which worldviews develop. I also discuss critiques of Fricker by José Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. that aim to expand on the relational aspects of epistemic injustice.

Chapter 4 builds on the previous chapters by arguing that these shared resources develop through shared activities of remembering. In turn, I contend that the capacity for shared hermeneutical resources to produce epistemic injustices is a result of the kinds of remembering that we engage in together. This leads us to the question of how remembering can be used to affect epistemic justice and in turn the necessity to that process of what Ami Harbin refers to as disorientation. Chapter 5 elaborates on the utility of disorientation as way of understanding what is necessary for structural epistemic injustices to be addressed. It concludes with some discussion about what epistemically just collective memory activities can look like and a brief account of reconciliation as a
model for public epistemic virtue. In the concluding Chapter 6, I summarize central insights and arguments and end by gesturing in the direction of the ongoing work that is needed for cultivating epistemic virtue in contexts of oppression and injustice.
Chapter 2: The Value of Remembering

2.1 Introduction

In order to understand the relationship I want to draw between remembering and issues of epistemic justice in Chapters 4 and 5, we need to rethink what remembering is, how it functions, and why it matters. In this chapter, I will interrogate the history of how memory is conceptualized as well as the nature of memory itself. In so doing, I will argue that the value of remembering is fundamentally hermeneutical. This is to say that remembering is a kind of meaning making activity through which the past is made present and the self is put into contact with the other. I will draw most heavily on the work of Sue Campbell, who wrote extensively on the relational nature of memory. In arguing for the hermeneutical nature of remembering, I will also build on Paul Ricoeur’s work on narrative in order to emphasize the role that memory plays in constructing narratives about ourselves, each other, and our world. However, before we can discuss the relationship between remembering and narrative, we must first discuss how memory has been conceived and is currently understood to function.

2.2 How do We Remember?

In her book *Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars*, Campbell provides a brief account of a series of legal, philosophical, and psychological debates about the nature of memory, often referred to as ‘The Memory Wars.’ The heart of these debates is a skepticism about the reliability of memory, in particular adult women’s memories of childhood sexual abuse (henceforth referred to as CSA) (Campbell 2003, 1). Out of these debates, a new empirical and philosophical consensus about how memory works began to
form. This consensus moved from accepting an archival model of memory toward a reconstructive one. However, this shift was not, Campbell argues, accompanied by a shift in consensus about the nature of good remembering, thereby leaving both the historical archival model and the more recent reconstructive model flawed (Campbell 2014, 11-12). In this section, I will use Campbell’s account of the Memory Wars to frame a discussion of the accounts these models provide of how memory works.

2.2.1 The Memory Wars

The Memory Wars have a surprisingly definite starting point. Both Campbell and journalist Katie Heaney identify this starting point with the formation of The False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF) in 1992. The False Memory Syndrome Foundation was born out of a tragic conflict between Peter and Pam Freyd and their daughters. A few months before Christmas in 1990, Gwen Freyd informed her elder sister Jennifer that she would not be joining their parents for the holidays. During the conversation, Gwen asked Jennifer if she was aware that their father had been sexually abused. In Heaney’s report in *The Cut*, the elder Freyds were relatively candid about Peter’s past abuse, though it’s not made clear how Gwen learned about it. For her part, the revelation cast Jennifer’s entire childhood in a new light and she started seeing a therapist not long afterwards. As part of the intake process, the therapist asked if she had ever been sexually abused herself. It was only after answering in the negative that Jennifer began to remember. In the article, Heaney does not provide any more detail than to say that Jennifer remembered being molested by her father from when she was a toddler until into her teenage years. The Christmas visit was cut short when Jennifer,
unable to bear the worry about her sons’ safety, took her family and fled from their home in the middle of night (Heaney 2021). Heaney recounts:

In the morning, at Jennifer’s request, JQ [Jennifer’s husband] called her parents and told them they had to leave. Pam, blindsided, demanded to know why. Eventually, JQ blurted it out: Jennifer says Peter molested her as a child, and we can’t have him around our children. Peter denied his daughter’s claims, but JQ found his response unsettling. He was neither disoriented nor outraged but oddly prepared, almost as though he had been expecting it. Pam and Peter left, cutting their visit short. (Heaney 2021, her emphasis)

Tensions between Jennifer and her parents escalated in the year that followed.

Heaney again:

Although Pam Freyd believes otherwise, Jennifer wasn’t interested in making her accusations public, much less in taking her father to court. For several months after her disclosure, Jennifer kept up an email correspondence with her mother. She hoped for reconciliation and never expected an admission of guilt from her father. All she wanted was her mother’s love and emotional support.

At some point, though, the tenor of their messages changed. To Jennifer, Pam seemed frantic and defensive. To Pam, Jennifer seemed hostile. According to Pam, a university colleague of Jennifer’s told the Freyds that Jennifer had identified herself as a “survivor” in her classes — something Jennifer strenuously denies. Even now, she isn’t particularly comfortable with the term. To publicly use it to describe herself at that time, she says, would have been “career suicide.”
As tensions grew, Jennifer wrote her parents to ask for a brief break in communication. She was not, she assured them, attempting to sever their relationship; she just needed a little space to allow her to process. Pam ignored the request, and Jennifer felt something shift. “The content of your letters … suggests to me that you are putting effort into a legal defense,” she wrote her mother in a letter dated September 6, 1991. “I do not have any intention of attempting to use the legal system to heal wounds from years ago.”

Jennifer’s suspicion was correct: Her parents were, in fact, developing a legal defense and then some. (Heaney 2021)

The defence that Heaney references would ultimately take the form of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation.

The FMSF casts a long shadow over the discussions and debates about memory that followed in the wake of its creation. As of now, it no longer exists, having been dissolved in 2019 (Heaney 2021). However, by the publication of Relational Remembering in 2003, the Foundation’s effect on memory discourse was clear to Campbell. Early in the book, she writes:

The group most directly responsible for encouraging the recent unprecedented distrust of memory is the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF), founded in 1992 as a lobby for parents whose adult children have accused them of some abuse after a period of having not remembered. The FMSF has claimed that the number of women who allege abuse on the basis of pseudomemories resulting from suggestive therapy is a serious and prevalent enough problem to deserve the label of a syndrome. “False memory syndrome’ is now part of a popular and legal
discourse of skepticism when women claim memories of sexual harm. (Campbell 2003, 2)

The contention of FMSF was that cases in which an alleged victim of CSA only comes forward years later after having seemingly forgotten the abuse until receiving therapy are likely not genuine cases of abuse. They are instead instances of their proposed syndrome. It is worth noting that False Memory Syndrome was not recognized by the wider psychiatric community (Campbell 2003, 3).

Campbell’s text does not go into detail about the Freyds or their daughter when discussing the origins of the Memory Wars. I’ve elected to engage with this story in order to better ground the discussion that follows. Memory can be a somewhat abstract topic. However, that abstraction serves to distance us from the reality that understanding how memory functions is motivated by practical and moral concerns, as noted earlier. Going forward, I will refer to the Freyd case in order to better illuminate some of the more abstract concepts being discussed. It also serves as a reminder of what was at stake during the Memory Wars and what remains at stake in debates about memory. That is to say, Jennifer Freyd’s story is a tangible reminder of the moral dimensions that certain models of memory might encourage us to be skeptical of.

2.2.2 Models of Memory

It seems intuitive to imagine that memory works much like photography. In *Our Faithfulness to the Past*, Campbell describes this view of memory:

> The reliability of daily memory may have encouraged me to think of my mind as both a recorder and as a storehouse for the records made. I may naïvely think that my perceptual and cognitive systems automatically record and encode information
about experiences, which information is stored in some form at some location in my brain. I intentionally retrieve this information when it is needed, or my mind automatically retrieves it when appropriately cued by subsequent environments.

(Campbell 2014, 13)

We can rather intuitively imagine our memory as being akin to a storehouse or archive. In other words, it is taken to be in a space devoted to the storing of discrete and complete artefacts of the past. However, as Campbell notes, this intuitive ‘storehouse’ model is somewhat naïve, because, “there are two phases of activity that result in my remembering, only one of which contributes to the content of memory” (Campbell 2014, 13).

On the storehouse model, the content of the memory is created at the time of its encoding. Once encoded, it shouldn’t change in the process of retrieval. Any content added after the original encoding is not authentic to the experience as it occurred and thus degrades the quality of the memory (Campbell 2014, 14). Campbell describes the conventional standard of ‘good memory’ as, “its reproductive fidelity to a past experience through its development via a process in which the experiences alone determines what is remembered” (Campbell 2014, 14). Good memory is both detailed and accurate to the past. The more correct the detail, the better the memory is because it has higher reproductive fidelity. In other words, the storehouse model promotes the idea that the resolution of a memory determines its quality.

Like the storehouse model itself, there is something intuitive about this view of good memory. A good memory should be like a good picture. A good memory and a good picture should both contain enough details to verify their authenticity. If things are
missing or seem out of place, we have good reason to suspect the authenticity of the memory or the photograph in question. And much like a photograph, nothing is added or subtracted in the process of retrieving the data contained within. We expect that nothing in the image should change substantially in the process of printing a photograph and we expect that a retrieved memory should be substantially the same as the one that was stored.

We now have a relatively cohesive model of how memory seems to intuitively work. Our senses capture our experiences, which are then encoded into our memory. Memories are stored until they are needed, at which point they are retrieved. Encoding and retrieval are distinct processes. Good memories are those that have a high resolution of correct details. Bad memories lack resolution and correctness. While the simplicity of this model is appealing, it became clear during the Memory Wars of the 1990s that the storehouse model was flawed.

The storehouse model serves us well enough when we apply it to mundane, everyday scenarios. Which jacket did I wear to lunch today? My leather one. What time did my partner get home last night? Around 22:30. These memories can be easily corroborated such that if I’m afraid that I’ve misremembered which jacket or what time, I can double check with another party who was present. However, if you ask me which jacket I wore to lunch last Tuesday, I would have to admit that I’m not even sure if I left my apartment for lunch last Tuesday. I’m fairly certain I went to campus and worked in my office, but distance from that date has made the memory hazy. Nothing of note happened last Tuesday, so the day has begun to blend in with all the other anonymous
Tuesdays I’ve lived through. Have I simply forgotten the events of last Tuesday? Not quite.

The present, post Memory War consensus is that memory is actually reconstructive. This is to say, that there is no clear and distinct relationship between encoding, storing, and retrieving memory. Campbell writes:

Scientists now recognize a variety of influences on the format and content that together determines what we remember. First, our history determines how we encode the past. […] Although there is a sense in which you and I might be said to perceive the same event, our histories as individual organisms will guarantee that we will remember it differently. Second, the continual processing of new information transforms the information that is stored. For example, we frequently condense autobiographical memory; one memory is comprised of the details of many similar episodes and represents them. […] Third, our present thoughts and interests, the network of expectations determined by our experience, and the overall nature of the context of retrieval shape the content of what is recalled.

(Campbell 2014, 14-15)

My attempts to recall the events of last Tuesday are confounded by that day’s events having been as mundane as many other previous Tuesdays. I have no real need to recall these events either, which further confounds my attempts to do so. My perception of last Tuesday as it happened was that it was as unimportant as any other Tuesday, which meant that I didn’t bother to “encode” much about my goings on that day. Further, my continued belief that nothing of note happened makes recollecting last Tuesday all the more difficult. If I were faced with the suggestion that something extraordinary had in
fact occurred that day, I might be better able to retrieve some details about what I saw, who I spoke with, or what I was thinking. But absent a more compelling motivator, my memory of last Tuesday will remain hazy until it inevitably disappears into an undifferentiated collage of other, similarly mundane days.

This reconstructive model seems to be much better at accounting for the ways that memories seem to shift over time. An embarrassing memory can become endearing and even nostalgic as repeated recollections and re-contextualizations change the way we remember events in question. Even further than that, the content of a memory is liable to shift as we change our perspective, as we fold memories into each other, and as our motivations for remembering change. In my memory of the Volvo my parents briefly leased when I was a child, the car is pinkish. But when I offhandedly mentioned this to my mother, she informed me that it was beige. Now, when I see a Volvo of a similar vintage on the road, I occasionally remember ours being pinkish and occasionally remember it being beige. So, which colour was it? Well, I was quite young at the time, so I feel as though I ought to defer to my mother’s version of the car. However, I am still unable to completely shake my recollection of the car having had a cheerful rose hue. So the answer is that I am unable to speak with confidence about what the true colour of that Volvo was. I am left with uncertainty about the quality of my own memory.

If I cannot be sure what the colour of my parent’s Volvo was, how can I be sure that more important memories happen exactly how I remember them happening? With the shift in models, we are forced to reconsider the fundamental beliefs we have about memory. As Campbell puts it, “We are asked to repudiate our faith that memory is reliable and accurate, and to replace this faith with concern that memory is malleable and
prone to distortion; our repudiation is a part of rejecting the archival model, a part of the
dialogical process through which we arrive at a new view” (Campbell 2014, 19). In so
doing, Campbell argues, that the result of the Memory Wars wasn’t a matter of modifying
the storehouse model but rejecting it as well as the values we ascribed to it. Taking on the
reconstructive model means that we can no longer conceive of memory as reliable and
objective, but instead must ascribe to it the opposing values of mutability and
subjectivity. Resolution ceases to be a coherent metaphor for memory quality because
memory is liable to change in ways that a photograph might not. In acknowledging this
fluidity, we are left with a sort of default skepticism regarding the reliability of memory.

As Campbell sees it, the consequence of the shift to a reconstructive model of
memory has been the proliferation of the false memory syndrome hypothesis, which has
been used repeatedly over the past three decades to discredit women’s memories of
abuse. She writes early in Relational Remembering:

Feminist have been deeply concerned about the ramifications of the false memory
debate: about its general undermining of women’s credibility and about its threat to
the possibilities of therapeutic, legal, and public support for women with abusive
pasts. Some FMSF and advisory board members have reanimated stereotypes of
women as easily influenced, narcissistic, and vindictive; they have cast doubt on
the competence of women therapists and counsellors; and they have reinforced a
public perception of feminists as zealots with little concern for evidence or fair
procedures. (Campbell 2003, 7)

Campbell’s concern for the credibility of women is well founded. The creation of
FMSF and its advocacy for the existence of False Memory Syndrome was more or less a
direct attack on the credibility of Jennifer Freyd. In the years since the founding of the FMSF, false memories have frequently been invoked by those accused of sexual abuse.

A quick internet search reveals articles like this *Guardian Science* column by Chris French from 2009, “Families are still living the nightmare of false memories of sexual abuse,” which outlines the supposed phenomenon, ‘explains’ that therapy is the cause, and is generally sympathetic the to accused (French 2009). More recently, *Wired* published, “False Memories and False Confessions: the Psychology of Imagined Crimes,” which details how criminal psychologist Julia Shaw identifies false memories in witness or victim testimony (Bryce 2017). I lack the academic background in psychology of French or Shaw and I cannot help but notice, much like Campbell before me, that the weight of their skepticism falls on the women whose memories are in question. It’s been two decades since Campbell published *Relational Remembering* and the background conditions of women’s oppression has remained such that we continue to use skepticism about memory *itself* to call into question their credibility as witnesses to their own lives.

While the reconstructive model has the advantage of strong support from empirical memory researchers, its attitude of skepticism towards the reliability of memory has noticeable social, moral, and political consequences. In the context of the Memory Wars, it means taking a default skeptical stance towards the memories of women like Jennifer Freyd who, for what ever reason, seem to recover traumatic memories of CSA. As we’ve seen, the practical reality of this skepticism is that it makes dismissing women’s accounts of abuse quite easy regardless of how well founded they are. On the reconstructive model, memory’s unreliability makes it questionable at best as a source of evidence for such accounts. In such cases, finding the truth let alone ensuring justice is served
becomes nearly impossible. As Freyd herself says in Heaney’s article, “No one can know what happened in my childhood, given that every single memory I have is me alone with my father” (Heaney 2021). For those with an interest in either preserving memory’s epistemic value or ensuring that justice can be done in cases that lack any physical evidence, the consensus regarding this particular reconstructive model is disheartening.

After taking stock of the positions held by participants in the Memory War debates, I, like Campbell, am rather concerned by how easy it is to dismiss ‘inconvenient’ memories of abuse like Jennifer Freyd’s when we operate under a purely reconstructive model. To simply settle this issue with the notion that memory is reconstructive and thus unreliable is not only incorrect, but troubling. In order for us to be able to say that we believe women like Jennifer Freyd when they come forward, we need to be able to argue that despite being reconstructive, memory can nonetheless reliably tell us truthful things about the past.

2.2.3 Campbell’s Critiques of the Archival-Reconstructive dichotomy

Is it even possible to preserve a belief in the reliability of memory in the aftermath of the Memory Wars? Campbell believes there is and that to find it, we have to follow a contradiction she sees as arising during the shift from the archival model to the reconstructive model. According to Campbell, “many theorists now explain either their own move to a reconstructive model or its current preeminence as an acknowledgement of memory inaccuracy and distortion” (Campbell 2014, 20). The assumption that memory is unreliable arises from an implicit assumption that reconstruction implies distortion. Campbell does not believe this to be the case. In discussing memory researcher Daniel Schacter’s work on reconstruction, she writes:
He introduces the turn to constructivism by detailing how “cognitive psychologists during the 1970’s exhibited increased interest in reconstruction and distortion.” A particularly illuminating set of remarks occurs in his description of the work of Richard Semon, who coined the word “engram.” For Semon, every act of encoding information took place while retrieving thoughts, images, and memories “activated by the current situation. Thus a newly created engram is not a literal replica of reality but always an interpretation that includes retrieved information… If the input to the memory system is not an accurate reflection of reality, then the output will necessarily be distorted.” There is nothing in Schacter’s description of Semon’s theory to suggest that it is an extraordinary commitment to memory as inevitably distorted. The unremarkable pairing of construction, change, and interpretation with distortion occurs in conjunction with the view that memory is reconstructive; and it occurs in the absence of compensatory remarks on good reconstructive remembering to contest the synonymy of construction and distortion. Schacter is thus challenged to say why he has not left room to talk about good remembering. (Campbell 2014, 20, emphasis mine)

The conventional reconstructive view, Campbell suggests, implies a connection between reconstruction and distortion that is not a logical necessity. This leaves open the possibility that good remembering - remembering that can reliably recall the past accurately - can exist in a reconstructive model. However, as Campbell points out towards the end of the quoted passage above, this possibility is not often examined.

That the possibility of good reconstructive memory goes unexplored makes a certain amount of sense given the aforementioned reality that the shift towards
reconstruction has been motivated by a negative perception of memory’s reliability. This negative perception is reinforced by the language we still use to discuss the nature of memory. Despite the shift towards a reconstructive model of memory, there has not been an accompanying shift in the language through which we articulate this conceptual model. Campbell writes, “That our minds store or preserve the past is deeply embedded in our understanding of memory. Scientists have been unable to dispense with storehouse imagery and continue to talk about encoding, storage, and retrieval as three phases of memory processes; they use this language to map how memory works” (Campbell 2014, 21). The images and analogies of the storehouse model make memory an intelligible concept to us, even after we’ve evolved our understanding of the underlying operating principles of memory. As a result, the language through which we conceptualize good and bad remembering is still rooted in the storehouse model.

The result of this combination of a reconstructive model and archival language is that those discussions of good remembering that do occur are muddled. On the archival model, the concern about distortion arises when a recollected memory differs from the experiences as they were encoded. On the reconstructive model, this concern is somewhat incoherent as encoding is dynamic process which occurs repeatedly after the relevant experiences. By default, reconstructive memories will not be one-to-one identical with the experiences they initially encode. Despite this, the archival language still used to discuss memory retains archival standards for what good memory looks like (Campbell 2014, 22). Thus, resolution is still the quality used to judge the reliability of memory even after it’s been agreed that it is incoherent to ascribe the quality of resolution to memory. Given how deeply intertwined our understanding of memory seems to be with the
language of storage, it may be impossible to do away with it altogether while still retaining some notion of good memory. Campbell thereby argues that the idea that these two models are oppositional ought to be rejected, writing:

We should regard the archival and the reconstructive as complex and often complementary dimensions of memory activity rather than as competing models of mental processes. In so doing, we’ll have hope of a better understanding of memory value including values of accuracy and integrity, than talk of model replacement will allow. (Campbell 2014, 24)

Instead of picking one or the other, a new model that reconciles the two extremes is needed to give a better account of what good reconstructive remembering should look like. In the next section, we will discuss Campbell’s proposed relational model that aims to do just this.

2.3 Relational Remembering

In the introduction to her essay “Our Faithfulness to the Past,” Campbell discusses Paul Ricoeur’s use of the word ‘faithfulness’ in describing the relationship between memory and the past. She quotes Ricoeur as writing in his 2004 book Memory, History, and Forgetting, “To memory is tied an ambition… that of being faithful to the past” (Campbell 2014, 30). This idea - that the aim of memory is to be faithful to the past - forms the core of Campbell’s relational model of memory. It gives both the essay and the collection in which it was published their names. Examining what it means to be faithful in this way will occupy a good portion of the remainder of the chapter with a final coda on how we can rethink the imagery we use to describe remembering.
2.3.1 The Hermeneutical Utility of Remembering

In describing the first of the further facts, Campbell argues that, “good remembering often involves getting something right about the significance of the past” (Campbell 2014, 31, emphasis mine). I previously described good remembering as recalling memories which contain a high resolution of clear and correct details. By contrast, Campbell focuses not on the contents but rather what they mean to us. The difference is slight, but notable in that it gives us leeway with regards to how detailed our memories are. The connection between reconstruction and distortion is made because reconstruction seems to obscure details, thereby compromising resolution. However, those details do not necessarily change the meaning that memory has to us. As an example, we can return to the issue of my parents’ car.

There really is no significance to that Volvo’s paint colour, at least to me. However, that I remember the car at all is in part because we leased it not long after my mother was in an accident that totalled our previous car and left her with lasting back pain. The Volvo is contextually related to a landmark event in my childhood. I have few actual memories that directly relate to that car, yet I do have a fondness towards it. As I think back to that time in the present, I try to reconstruct the past in a way that puts that fondness into a meaningful context. I remember in order to give that fondness significance. The details do not necessarily help me in this process, so it seems incoherent to say that my memory of the Volvo is ‘bad’ because I can’t remember its colour. As far as I’m concerned, that detail isn’t wholly relevant to the actual significance of the car. The Volvo is significant to me because it marked a point of transition in my youth. It is significant because its novelty distracted me from remembering what had happened to the previous car and, by
extension, my mother. When I see a similar vehicle, I now recall the conversation about
the colour of the car more than I do the actual colour. By remembering the car together
with my mother, its significance to me shifted slightly. Our memories of the Volvo feed
into and are changed by each other as the act of remembering itself becomes part of its
narrative. The colour is less important to my mother and I than the way discussing it
serves as a means through which we can share in a collective narrative about the past.
This kind of autobiographical remembering plays an important role in constructing not
just my memory of the past but who I take myself to be. Ricoeur contends that our very
identity is grounded in narratives we construct about who we are.

Harkening back to Aristotelian poetics, Ricoeur asserts that plot imitates action.
From this assertion, he borrows the Greek term *mimesis* to describe a threefold
(mimesis₁, mimesis₂, and mimesis₃ respectively) process by which action is made
intelligible and thus narratable. Ricoeur first contends that we are prefigured to view the
world through a narrative lens, which he refers to as mimesis₁ (Ricoeur 1984, 52-53). He
writes:

> Whatever the innovative force of poetic composition within the field of our
temporal experience may be, the composition of the plot is grounded in a
preunderstanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic
resources, and its temporal character. These features are described rather than
deduced. But in this sense nothing requires their listing to be a closed one. And in
any case their enumeration follows an easily established progression. First, if it is
true that plot is an imitation of action, some preliminary competence is required:
the capacity for identifying action in general by means of its structural features. A
semantics of action makes explicit this competence. Next, if imitating is elaborating an articulated significance of some action, a supplementary competence is required: an aptitude for identifying what I call the symbolic mediations of action, in a sense of the word "symbol" that Cassirer made classic and that cultural anthropology, from which I shall draw several examples, adopted. Finally, these symbolic articulations of action are bearers of more precisely temporal elements, from which proceed more directly the very capacity of action to be narrated and perhaps the need to narrate it. (Ricoeur 1984, 54)

For our purposes, mimesis₁ explains how we are able to understand actions in the social world narratively. Mimesis₁ describes the social subject as one that is already always engaged in and with narratives. If we understand the social world as being that space in which relationships between subjects act, then the social subject is one that is prefigured to view those actions through the lens of plot. However, actually emploting a given action and thereby rendering it intelligible is the providence of mimesis₂.

The second form of mimesis describes emplotment itself. The social subject, already prefigured to understand action through plot, gives meaning to a set of events or occurrences by emploting them. Ricoeur explains, “A story, too, must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them into an intelligible whole, of a sort such that we can always ask what is the ‘thought’ of this story” (Ricoeur 1984, 65). A further function of emplotment is bringing together, “factors as heterogeneous as agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results” (Ricoeur 1984, 65). It allows us to understand a diversity of things as being related to one another through the particular action being emploted. In so doing, it creates meaning where previously there
had been none. Additionally, the emplotment that occurs in mimesis$_2$ orders these heterogenous factors temporally (Ricoeur 1984, 65). This is the stage at which the social subject applies their prefigured disposition towards narrative construction to some action within their social life.

In mimesis$_3$, the subject becomes able to engage with the emploted meaning. Ricoeur writes:

Generalizing beyond Aristotle, I shall say that mimesis$_3$ marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader; the intersection, therefore, of the world configured by the poem and the world wherein real action occurs and unfolds its specific temporality. (Ricoeur 1984, 71)

At this intersection, the emploted action can ‘read’ insofar as its meaning is made available for communication and analysis. The reader, already prefigured to engage with actions through the framework of plot, approaches the narrative in order to find the significance conferred by emplotment upon the otherwise disparate factors that it orders. Ricoeur further argues that self identity is itself narrative. In *Time and Narrative, Volume III*, Ricoeur writes:

To state the identity of an individual or a community is to answer the question, “Who is this?” Who is the agent, the author?” We first answer this question by naming someone, that is, by designating them with a proper name. But what is the basis for the permanence of this proper name? … The answer has to be narrative. To answer the question “Who?” As Hannah Arendt has so forcefully put it, is to tell the story of a life. The story told tells about the action of the “who.” (Ricoeur 1988, 246)
Naturally, these narratives must be constructed out of our autobiographical memories, which in turn means that memory plays a significant role in our very self construction. Through remembering, we give meaning to the past by contextualizing it through emploted narrative. Campbell’s key insight here is that we undertake this mimetic process in relation to others. My memory of the Volvo as well as its place within my personal self narrative is defined through and by my mother’s memory of the same. The story I tell that becomes who I take myself to be cannot only refer to my memory of the past in isolation because my memory is so heavily informed by the memories of others. Who I am, who I’ve been, and who I will be are defined narratives that are constructed through and for my relations to others as much as they are through and for relation to myself.

I should note here that the narratives we construct out of and about the past are not static. As Ricoeur notes later in *Time and Narrative*, “narrative identity is not a stable or seamless identity. Just as it is possible to compose several plots on the subject of the same incidents, so it is always possible to weave different, even opposed, plots about our lives” (Ricoeur 1988, 248) Likewise, it is possible to recall a series of events more or less veridically but nonetheless use them to construct an incoherent or incorrect narrative. What Campbell therefore means when she invokes Ricoeur’s notion of faithfulness in the context of good remembering is that good remembering produces narratives about the past that lend appropriate significance to past events in relation to others.

This version of good remembering is more subjective (and, arguably, intersubjective) in its character than the typical archival model of good memory. It places epistemic value on the meaning of something rather than the absolute truth of it. This
meaning is subjective in the sense that it is created by subjects and thus requires interpretation. The epistemic value of good memory is in what the past is interpreted to mean as opposed to what is purely factually evident. Remembering has a hermeneutical utility as it allows us to link the past to the present through the interpretation of narratives. This in no way means that the factual and the evidential are not important to good relational memory. As Campbell says, good memory is getting something right about the significance of the past, which implies that it is possible to misinterpret the past. An example that she gives of bad memory - memory that is not faithful to the past - is nostalgia.

On nostalgia, Campbell writes:

Nostalgia is a defect of memory accuracy: nostalgic memory is not faithful to the past. […] When nostalgic, certain details of the past are remembered - those that contribute towards its idealization. Finally nostalgia is regressive. To remember faithfully is to properly capture its significance to the present and future. We must regard the past as “open to revision.” (Campbell 2014, 25)

Memory that is faithful to the past captures the significance of the past as it relates to the present and the future while nostalgia can only look backwards. She describes it as a kind of willful forgetting, one that limits us to remembering the most idealized version of the past against which we negatively compare the present (Campbell 2014, 25-26). Nostalgia misinterprets and therefore distorts the past for reasons that appeal not to a rational desire for truth, but rather an emotional need for sentimentality towards the past. In so doing, it distorts the truth of relations between people. A nostalgic individual may, as Peter Freyd does, down play or even justify the actions of an abuser (Heaney 2021).
a nostalgic society, the historical suffering of marginalized groups is ignored in favour of memories of past glories.

Campbell is acutely aware that there is a perception in the post Memory War consensus that emotion and distortion are linked with regard to memory (Campbell 2014, 23-24). In the case of nostalgia, this is quite obviously the case. Popular nostalgia for the 1980s focuses on pop culture ephemera and middle-class economic stability while blissfully forgetting horrors like the AIDS crisis. The memories of queer communities most affected by AIDS are omitted from popular memory altogether. Likewise, amongst those who do remember losing friends, family, and lovers there is little room for nostalgic remembering. Painful memories are painted over by idealized memories of happier times. Our emotions lead us to distort our recollections of the past in order to avoid discomfort. However, emotions do not necessarily need to distort our memory in this way.

According to Ricoeur, emotion can actually help us remain faithful to the past. In *Time and Narrative*, he argues that history is itself fictionalized insofar as communities structure themselves around the narratives they weave out of history. Communities define themselves around ‘epoch-making’ events which they interpret as founding or reinforcing their narrative identities. These are moments that “generate feelings of considerable ethical intensity” which historians are typically expected to set aside when recounting history (Ricoeur 1988, 187). However, Ricoeur questions the desirability of emotional neutrality in the face of epoch-making events like the Holocaust. Here, he delineates between the emotional neutrality of historiography and the emotional intensity of remembering (Ricoeur 1988, 187).
Ricoeur invokes Rudolf Otto’s notion of the *tremendum fascinosum* in order to describe two emotions we invoke in remembering. The Sacred, according to Otto, is encapsulated by the *tremendum*. It represents the awe and terror that Otto believes the Sacred to evoke in us. For Ricoeur, the awe is the reverence and admiration we have for certain figures and events in the past. He is skeptical of the ultimate value of this admiration, but concedes that eliminating it would be neither possible nor entirely desirable (Ricoeur 1988, 187). There are historical figures and moments worth admiring, and thus worth remembering, because we can learn from their example.

The other side of the *tremendum* is what Ricoeur calls horror. He writes, “Horror is the negative form of admiration, as loathing is of veneration. Horror attaches to events that must never be forgotten” (Ricoeur 1988, 187). When something horrifies us, we are obliged to remember it lest we allow it to happen again. The Holocaust is Ricoeur’s archetypal example of a horror that must never be forgotten for exactly this reason. In this case, the emotion evoked by remembering obliges us to be faithful to the past instead of distorting it. As Ricoeur demonstrates, emotion’s effect on memory is not so simple as a one-to-one correlation with distortion. Rather, emotion distorts memory when we give up our commitment to be faithful to the past. As we will see throughout the rest of the thesis, emotion can be among the most powerful motivators for getting something right about the significance of the past.
2.3.2 Relational Remembering and Oppression

As mentioned earlier, Campbell’s motivation from the outset of *Relational Remembering* is to defend the idea that memory can get something correct about the significance of the past. The significance that she is in no small part concerned with is the significance of experiences of oppression. The idea of being ‘faithful to the past’ necessarily entails acknowledging experiences of oppression and placing them in their appropriate contexts. To do else wise would be to fail to recognize the significance of those experiences to the present. Through this lens, the entire framing of the Memory Wars becomes suspect. As the Heaney article makes clear, the FMSF was - if nothing else - an attempt to deny the significance of Jennifer Freyd’s remembered experiences. Wittingly or no, the debates about memory that ensued were defined by this act of denial. The result is a consensus about the nature of memory that promotes a default position of skepticism towards the significance of experiences of oppression.

Campbell argues that the virtue of lending proper significance to the past is integrity, a virtue that the reconstructive consensus leads us to doubt can be achieved. She builds her definition of integrity on that of Cheshire Calhoun, describing it as the virtue of fidelity to the principles one holds. This is not merely a personal virtue to Calhoun and by extension to Campbell, but a social one. On this view, integrity consists in cultivating a right relationship to oneself and to others (Campbell 2014, 44-45). When used in the present tense, this is essentially a virtue of accountability. One is said to have integrity if the principles they hold are consistent with the actions they take. As rememberers, integrity relates to the ways in which we understand our past in relation to self construction and to our responsibilities to others. Campbell explains:
The integrity with which we remember has to do both with how we understand our own past in ways that contribute to self-knowledge, identity, and the shape of personal responsibilities and possibilities, and also with whether others can rely on our memories not only for what they do no know but also as a contribution to a social grasp of the significance of a shared past. All these demands together form the circumstances of recollection, not in the sense that we direct our recollections to meeting all of them at all times, but in the sense that what and how we remember is answerable to them. Finally, if the importance of integrity in memory is partly grounded in how we contribute to other people’s grasp of the past, integrity is an epistemic virtue that serves the complex notion of memory accuracy.

(Campbell 2014, 45)

As this passage illustrates, integrity is the virtue that allows us to place the significance of the past into an appropriate context. A rememberer can be said to possess the virtue of integrity with relation to their remembering if they can recognize the significance of the past to not only their internal self construction but also the construction of shared pasts. In a sense, we can think of integrity as the virtue of being faithful to the past in our remembering with and for others.

This concept of integrity gives us an evaluative lens through which we can interpret the narratives about the past as being more or less faithful to it. Where Campbell’s faithfulness to the past takes a step beyond Ricoeur’s is in highlighting the ways in which integrity explicitly demands we recognize the contextual significance of experiences and relationships of oppression. Remembering the past with integrity means engaging with the ways that experiences of harm shape persons and communities, and
collective narratives. It is a commitment to integrity that compelled me to begin this chapter with a discussion about the origins of the Memory Wars and False Memory Syndrome Foundation. Remembering Campbell’s work - which is not an insignificant aspect of what this chapter is - requires putting it into the appropriate context to understand its significance. That context shaped Campbell’s work, which has in turn shaped this discussion in the present. As we will see later, especially in the final chapter, simply having the integrity to recognize contexts of oppression in our shared past is a defining aspect of how good remembering can become a force for justice.

2.3.3 Acts of Remembering

As we’ve seen, memory has a hermeneutical function. It places the past into contexts that allow us to construct an intelligible narrative about its meaning. This idea is drawn in part from the work of Ricoeur, who is quite clear that he believes that remembering can create collective narratives to which entire communities relate and with which they identify. Put another way, communities are constructed through collective narratives. Without them, a group of individuals remains as such an abstraction from the social and political context in which they exist. Remembering together is therefore an essential part of forming a community as it is a necessary meaning making activity required to construct a collective narrative.

We’ve thus far discussed memory as ‘a feature of our interiority’ but Campbell argues that remembering, “also takes place through action, narrative, and other modes of representation in public space and in the company of the others” (Campbell 2014, 31). Humans create meaning through a wide variety of activities and thus it stands to reason that a wide variety of activities might be thought of as memory activities. “To
Remember,” is not a verb that refers exclusively to the internal, reflective process through which an individual recollects a past experience. Rather, it is a verb that contextualizes certain actions as being related to the process of remembering. For her part, Campbell is especially interested in applying performance theory to remembering.

The definition Campbell uses (itself derived from the work of performance theorist Diana Taylor) understands performance as, “the live embodied communication of information in the here and now.” (Campbell 2014, 76). This gives performance a broad scope, but one that suits the issue at hand. Things we traditionally think of as performance - dancing, singing, acting, and so forth - are included alongside a myriad of other embodied forms of communication that we might not immediately think of as performance - protest, testimony, teaching and such (Campbell 2014, 76). It is through these performances that we share our pasts with each other and create collective meanings out of them.

Campbell herself offers a moving account of a personal experience she had with embodied remembering:

I recently went hiking with a colleague in the Nova Scotian woods. Attending to the material environment and his embodied presence and movement within it were important to sharing his past—the granite boulders where we rested and the vistas that I followed the turn of his body to locate became the setting of his valued recollections. He had walked and run over the uneven ground so often that he moved without conscious attention to where he stepped. I was aware of walking with someone who had been there many times, and my attention to his embodied ease and familiarity with the trail helped me to experience it as part of his past. My
own presence shaped his experience of the past into which I was drawn, as many of the people who became present to him as we walked, those who had accompanied him on past hikes, were people that I knew as well. It was easy to move into joint reminiscence about them. My being there, part of the act of transfer, contributed to how, who, and perhaps why he remembered, as he tried to make me comfortable in an unfamiliar environment by drawing me, at the same time, into a comfortable world of mutual friends. (Campbell 2014, 77)

Campbell describes a dialogue of actions between rememberer and witness. The presence of both creates a unique and dynamic exchange of meaning. The past is remembered through the act of hiking and it is conveyed through the specific ways in which the hiker moves through the space. This too is good remembering. This too expresses faithfulness to the past.

This particular example of a performative view of memory is both relational and embodied. It holds that we can remember through reference to another by acting in concert with them. The past is comprehended and interpreted through these actions in a dialogue between the parties. Testimony is one such performance, one that most are likely familiar with and one that is held in high regard by our legal systems. However, testimony is not the only action through which we can express faithfulness to the past, as Campbell’s hiking example demonstrates. In that case, the faithfulness of the hiker to the past is subconscious. It is demonstrated in every sure step he takes and the familiarity Campbell feels he has with his environment. No testimony is needed for Campbell to interpret and understand his past experiences in and with that place. They are remembering simply by doing something in a particular place together.
2.3.4 Revisiting the Photograph Analogy

Earlier in this discussion, I dismissed the notion that good memories are like good photographs in so far as good photographs are defined by resolution. In drawing close to the conclusion of this chapter, I want to return to the photograph analogy and attempt to rehabilitate it. As Campbell argues, we tend to describe and understand memory through the analogies and imagery of the archival model. Familiarity with photographs makes them useful analogical tools. The weakness of the analogy is that, as I formulated it early, it doesn’t accurately capture how memory works. Ricoeur allows us to reformulate the analogy into something that actually can capture some of how memory and good remembering does work.

The photograph is a remarkable piece of technology. While humans have always attempted to reproduce the sights, emotions, and sensations we experience through artifice, the camera was the first tool which could so accurately reproduce the world as it seems to the eye. Because of this, it is tempting to assume that photographs are objective snapshots of the world as it truly is. When we think about photographs in these terms, then the quality of a photograph is likewise bound to be objective. A good photograph is one that clearly captures the subject with enough resolution to reproduce the relevant details. Indeed, open a copy of Henry Carroll’s *Read This If You Want to Take Great Photographs*, and you find that the first step to taking great photographs is learning how your camera works so that you can take clear photographs (Carroll 2014). However, if you keep reading Carroll’s book past the first few pages, you will rather quickly learn that what the author means by a great photograph is hardly so simple as one described as clear and of a certain resolution.
In truth, a photograph is far more like a painting than we realize. Like paintings, photographs are composed by a subject - the photographer. From the moment the photographer points their camera, they have already made a choice that defies our notion of photographs as objective records of the world. In choosing to photograph this as opposed to that, the photographer makes a subjective judgement about what is worth photographing. From there, the subjectivity piles on further. The photograph is composed - even if only hastily - so as to highlight the subject. The photographer chooses how the photograph should be lit, chooses how the colour will appear, and chooses the degree of implied motion to capture. These choices are deliberately made to tell a story.

Even after the photograph is created, it does not remain static. A printed photograph will fade. A digital photograph will degrade. Both exposed film and digital files can be intentionally and unintentionally corrupted in ways that obscure their subject matter. The story told within the photograph by the photographer’s choices is compounded by the story of the photograph as an object extant in the world. The contents of the photograph and its physical or digital existence are inextricable from one another and the ways in which we interpret them can be more or less faithful to their subject matter. The problem with the photography analogy for memory is not that it is empirically incorrect but rather that its formulation is often confounded by a fundamental misunderstanding of what makes photographs and memories valuable. A photograph can fail to be faithful to the past just as a memory can. We can cherish photographs that are imperfect just as we can cherish memories that are incomplete or in somehow lacking. This is because the value of both is defined by the significance we lend them in constructing narratives. Good memories are, in fact, like good photographs, they are both faithful to the past.
With this new image of what memory is like, we can put aside our discussion of remembering for now. In the next chapter, I will take up the question of epistemic injustice before we return to Campbell and remembering in the final two chapters in order to draw these two subjects of remembering and epistemic injustice together.
Chapter 3: Conceptualizing Epistemic Harm

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I framed a discussion about Campbell’s relational model of memory through her concern about the particular ways in which accounts of false memories have been employed to discredit women speaking up about childhood sexual assault. That particular framing focused on the particular assumptions about the nature of memory that underpin the logic of the so called Memory Wars. In this chapter, I want to refocus our discussion on harm and specifically on the notion that certain harms should be understood as uniquely epistemic in nature.

If we accept Campbell’s model of memory as relational, then we are at least somewhat encouraged to accept Ricoeur’s notion of the narrative self. In section 2.3.1, I argued that remembering is one way in which we create ourselves. Through emplotting our memories, we construct a narrative about who we were, who we are, and who we want to become. The result is not just a story about a self, but it is, Ricoeur argues, meaningfully recognizable as a self. Per Campbell’s insights about the relational nature of remembering, we can further extrapolate that the narrative self is constructed within the context of our relationship to others with whom we share in memory activities. Put another way, no self narrative is constructed in isolation but rather in collaboration with and with reference to those we share social spaces with. The purpose of a self narrative is ultimately interpretive as we use it as reference point for understanding who we are in relation to ourselves, each other, and the world. Disrupting this narrative would therefore
have consequences for those aspects of our lives that depend on having a stable understanding of who we are relative to everything else.

This chapter focuses on the concept of epistemic injustice as described by Miranda Fricker in her 2007 book of the same name. Through this discussion, I will argue that the harms that Fricker ascribes to epistemic injustice work to destabilize self narratives through undermining a subject’s credibility and epistemic confidence - their confidence that they are capable of knowing. Our interest in the subject will be understanding how these epistemic harms affect not only the self constructing narratives of individuals but also communities. With this understanding in hand, we will return to the subject of relational remembering so that I can argue that a commitment to good remembering can be used in ways that can repair relationships damaged by epistemic injustice.

3.2 Epistemic Injustice

In the introduction to *Epistemic Injustice*, Fricker defines the uniquely epistemic characteristics of the injustices she aims to explore. The injustices she describes as being epistemic in character are not injustices of unequal distribution of epistemic goods. Rather, she is more interested in wrongs, “done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower” (Fricker 2007, 1). These injustices stand out because they deal with the specific ethical implications of epistemic activities such as conveying knowledge or interpreting experiences. The epistemic character of these injustices indicates that there are unjust ways of engaging in these kinds of epistemic activities. In particular, Fricker identifies two forms of epistemic injustice, testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. I will treat both forms in turn and then engage with a critic of Fricker who argues that the distinction she draws between them is perhaps too sharp.
3.2.1 Social Power

Fricker begins her exploration of testimonial injustice with a discussion about social power. She describes it as, “a capacity we have as social agents to influence how things go in the social world” (Fricker 2007, 9). In describing social power as a ‘capacity’ Fricker contends that social power can be both actively exercised or passively influential.

To illustrate this, she describes the power of an officer tasked with parking enforcement. The officer can actively exercise their power through the writing of a ticket but their power persists in a passive way even when they are not writing tickets. Their presence or even the implication that they may eventually be present can influence the behaviour of other social agents due to their capacity to actively exercise the power of ticket writing. Further, even if agents defy the regulations the officer is tasked with enforcing, their power does not cease to exist. Rather it is simply idle until actively exercised (Fricker 2007, 10).

This view of social power is *agential* in that it sees social power as a capacity of social agents - subjects who act within social relationships. Fricker argues that social power can also operate in a purely structural manner such that no individual agent needs to exercise it. Here she uses the example informal disenfranchisement to demonstrate the nature of structural power. In contrast to formal disenfranchisement, the informally disenfranchised group is dissuaded from voting not by legal prohibition but by a complex series of social relations. No individual is preventing them from voting yet they may still vote in reduced numbers due to the influence of social power through the social structure (Fricker 2007, 10-11).
Structural social power requires coordination between agents to operate. There is often an interplay between structural and agential social power that Fricker illustrates through the borrowed example of a professor’s relationship with a student. The professor has the agential power to grade a student, but that power derives from the structural power that confers value on a grade. The social power flows through the professor but is not wholly vested in them. Rather, they require the practical cooperation of agents distributed through the social system to give the grade they award meaning. The professor’s power is held in virtue of their place within a network of social relations (Fricker 2007, 12).

Alongside the practical coordination necessary for the operation of power lies a level of imaginative coordination. This is to say that certain operations of power are dependent upon agents sharing concepts or understandings about the world. Of particular interest to Fricker’s case for epistemic injustice are shared notions of identity. She describes a particular kind of power whose operation is dependant to a significant degree upon shared identity concepts as identity power (Fricker 2007, 14). Through she doesn’t draw an explicit connection between identity power and oppression, it nonetheless serves as an important oppressive vector. If we return to the story of Jennifer Freyd, we can see an example of how identity power can be exercised to further the conditions of oppression that tend keep women from speaking up against abuse.

Per the Heaney article, Freyd’s mother published an article entitled “How Could This Happen? Coping With a False Accusation of Incest and Rape” in 1991 (Heaney 2021). Pam Freyd, writing under the pseudonym Jane Doe, offers several possible reasons for why her daughter Jennifer elected to accuse her husband of CSA at age thirty-
three. These include: Jennifer feeling inadequate in her marriage, her son nursing past a year and half of age, stress due to being unable to find adequate childcare, envy over Pam’s recent academic success due to Jennifer’s failure to receive tenure, and an earthquake a year prior to the accusation had left her feeling vulnerable (Doe 1991). On their own, none of these ‘explanations’ quite make sense. Why would Jennifer’s son nursing for longer than might be expected be a reason for her suddenly remembering something as horrifying as a childhood sexual trauma?

In order for these ‘explanations’ to make sense, one must assent to an unstated assumption about Jennifer’s identity as a woman. The unstated assumption these ‘explanations’ seem to depend on is the stereotype that women are emotionally fragile and childishly act out for attention. Put another way, Pam Freyd’s explanation for her daughter’s allegations is essentially hysteria. Jennifer was hysterical - as women are wont to be, don’t you know - because her marriage is in shambles, because her baby nursed too long, because her mother is more successful than her, because an earthquake happened, and so forth. Invoking this unstated assumption about Jennifer’s identity invites us to be skeptical of her claims. Pam is leaning on the power of identity to discredit her daughter by invoking the stereotypical constructions of women as overly emotional attention seekers who cannot be trusted.

Through this anecdote, we can see how identity can be used to induce us to think about an individual in particular ways. It exists within our shared perceptions and understandings and thus depends on the coordination of ideas throughout the relational fabric of a society. Identity power is thus the power of shared concepts about a subject’s identity that then shape how that subject is perceived. The particular use of it in the Freyd
case plays on not just shared understandings of identity but reinforces negative ones. In so doing, it allows identity power to reinforce conditions of oppression. Pam’s article is clearly meant to discredit her daughter’s story, one which, according to Heaney, Jennifer had no intention of sharing beyond her immediate family. As we move forward to discuss both kinds of epistemic injustice Fricker describes, we will begin to see how identity power plays a significant role in enabling them.

3.2.2 Testimonial Injustice

In making her case for testimonial injustice, Fricker starts by discussing the attribution of credibility. She writes:

Unlike those goods that are fruitfully dealt with along distributive lines (such as wealth or health care), there is no puzzle about the fair distribution of credibility, for credibility is a concept that wears its proper distribution on its sleeve. Epistemological nuance aside, the hearer’s obligation is obvious: she must match the level of credibility she attributes to her interlocutor to the evidence that he is offering the truth. Further, those goods best suited to the distributive model are so suited principally because they are finite and at least potentially in short supply. […] By contrast, credibility is not generally finite in this way, and so there is no analogous competitive demand to invite the distributive treatment. (Fricker 2007, 19-20)

As this passage argues, credibility ought to be allocated in a way that correctly identifies truth. When a hearer fails to allocate credibility to a speaker in this way, we can thus understand the speaker as being wronged in their specific capacity as a knower. This is to say that the speaker’s capacity as a knower is unfairly demeaned when they are not
given due credibility. They have effectively been denied proper status as a knower by the hearer. Thus, it is incumbent upon the epistemically responsible hearer to *correctly* judge the credibility level of a speaker. Fricker argues that a key heuristic we use in making these credibility judgements is the use of stereotypes.

Fricker defines stereotypes as “widely held associations between a given social group and one or more attributes” (Fricker 2007, 30). She favours this definition for its value neutrality in so far as it allows for the attributes to be positive or negative in valence (Fricker 2007, 31). Further, these stereotypes are useful in so far as they enable us to make snap credibility judgements about speakers we know little about. Fricker writes:

Barring a wealth of personal knowledge of the speaker as an individual, such a judgement of credibility must reflect some kind of social generalization about epistemic trustworthiness - the competence and sincerity - of people of the speaker’s social type, so that it is inevitable (and desirable) that the hearer should spontaneously avail himself of the relevant generalizations in the shorthand form of (reliable) stereotypes. Without such a heuristic aid he will not be able to achieve the normal spontaneity of credibility judgement that is characteristic of everyday testimonial exchange. (Fricker 2007, 32)

The success of this stereotype heuristic is obvious when we consider simple testimonial exchanges. When speaking with a sommelier, I do not need to know much about their personal history or education to feel confident in assessing the credibility of their knowledge about the wine growing regions of Ontario. The stereotypical image of ‘sommelier’ I possess is of someone who is educated in the geography of winemaking.
thus it is natural to assume their credibility on the subject. On the contrary, if that same sommelier attempted to give me investment advice on Kazakh natural gas projects, I would be somewhat more skeptical. The social type ‘sommelier’ does not have much overlap with the fields of knowledge relating to primary resource extraction, investment, or Kazakhstan. My reticence to extend credibility to their knowledge in these fields is justified by my reference to the stereotype. It is possible that this sommelier is in fact a Kazakh national, a retired day trader, or perhaps both. If, in the course of the evening, I was to come to learn more about them, I might reassess my credibility judgement depending on my stereotypical image of retired Kazakh day traders. However, this heuristic is vulnerable to prejudice.

Imagine for a moment that my stereotypical image of Kazakhs is coloured by lingering feelings of fear and hatred towards citizens of ex-Soviet republics. This image may lead me to believe that Kazakhs are treacherous and untrustworthy, in which case I might unduly deflate the credibility of the sommelier’s investment advice on the belief that they are trying to deceive me. I may even deflate the credibility so low that I begin to question their knowledge of wine making regions in Ontario. In this case, my stereotypical image of Kazakhs is influenced by an identity prejudice. Fricker contends that identity prejudice can influence a hearer’s credibility judgement by distorting their perception of the speaker (Fricker 2007, 36).

The relevant form of testimonial injustice that interests us is of a kind found in my hypothetical bias against Kazakhs. In this form, testimonial injustice is motivated by negatively prejudiced stereotypes that serve to deflate the credibility of members of the relevant social type. If we consider our discussion of identity power, we can see how
testimonial injustices of this type rely on the exercise of identity power. The hearer leverages their prejudicial beliefs about the identity of the speaker to discredit them as a knower. We’ve already seen an example of this form of injustice play out in our analysis of Pam Freyd’s article. While lacking in certain elements of testimonial exchange, the end result is nonetheless still a testimonial injustice in so far as Freyd’s prejudiced view of her daughter results in a failure to adequately allocate credibility to her testimony.

We’ve not fully exhausted our discussion of testimonial injustice, however, until we’ve discussed the harms it entails. However, I want to address both of Fricker’s forms of epistemic injustice before discussing the specific harms she argues they entail.

3.2.3 Hermeneutical Injustice

Fricker names her second form of epistemic injustice *hermeneutical injustice*. In Fricker’s particular (and arguably extreme) formulation of the concept, a hermeneutical injustice arises when one’s lived experience cannot be interpreted through the shared interpretive resources of the collective. She argues that these gaps arise because the power to define these collective interpretive resources is structurally prejudiced against certain kinds of experiences. In this section, I will examine Fricker’s case for hermeneutical injustice as it relates to her concept of hermeneutical marginalization.

Fricker begins her discussion of hermeneutical injustice by asserting a feminist concern that relations of power unduly constrain the ability of women to understand their own experience. This is formulated as an understanding that the world is structured by the powerful to meet their own needs. The rest of us are thus made to live in a social world that ranges from indifference towards our needs to outright hostility towards them. She argues that an epistemological reading of this position suggests that, “the powerful
have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings” (Fricker 2007, 147). This is to say that those with social power shape the collective understandings through which experiences become intelligible with reference to their own experiences. By contrast, those lacking social power, “are more likely to find themselves having some social experiences through a glass darkly, with at best ill-fitting meanings to draw on in the effort to render them intelligible” (Fricker 2007, 148). This unequal hermeneutical participation is necessary for hermeneutical injustice to arise.

Hermeneutical marginalization, Fricker contends, is the condition of being coercively excluded from participating in collective meaning making. The source of this marginalization can be either material power, identity power, or often both. In cases of the former, material barriers like cost or education prevent the marginalized individual from engaging in collective meaning making activities. In the latter, prejudicial stereotypes about one’s social type create an atmosphere of hostility towards the marginalized person’s participation in collective meaning making activities. Her ultimate definition of hermeneutical injustice is:

[Hermeneutical injustice is] the injustice of having some significant area of one’s social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource. (Fricker 2007, 155)

Like testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice is systematic. This is to say that both injustices are linked by identity prejudices which tend to track a subject throughout the social system (Fricker 2007, 155-156). We can see this in both my fictional testimonial bias against the Kazakh sommelier and the Freyd case. The sommelier’s cultural heritage does not cease to exist when they clock out at the end of the night. If my
prejudiced stereotype of Kazakhs is socially inculcated, then it is likely that they are going to encounter this prejudice in other areas of their life. They may struggle to find landlords willing to rent to them or struggle to befriend members of the dominant social type due to this prejudice. They are also more likely to fall into hermeneutical gaps as the collective interpretive resources will be less likely to account for the specific experiences of Kazakh immigrants.

In the Freyd case, we have a more obvious case of hermeneutical injustice. In reference to recent developments in the empirical understanding of memory and trauma, Heaney writes:

But [Jonathan] Schooler’s work suggests that memories of childhood sexual abuse aren’t so much repressed as mischaracterized. Victims often remember what happened to them as children; they just don’t have the tools to understand it, let alone explain it to others. Once they gain information that casts the experience in a new light, as Jennifer Freyd did with her father, what was previously considered weird or uncomfortable is recognized as abuse. (Heaney 2021)

Victims of CSA may struggle to interpret their experiences as abuse because they lack the hermeneutical resources needed to do so. CSA is a taboo subject made all the more so by the quite reasonable notion that discussing it in public could be traumatizing for victims and the less reasonable reality that victims are often told to keep quiet. However, this lack of collective reckoning with the subject means that the shared hermeneutical resources are not equipped to help victims understand themselves as victims. In such cases, victims may not be able to formulate that understanding of their experiences as abusive until something occurs which reframes them as such. In Jennifer
Freyd’s case, it wasn’t until her sister informed her that their father was a victim of CSA that she began to rethink her own experiences. With victims of CSA and other forms of domestic abuse more broadly, we can see that the hermeneutical gap is large enough that members of this social type are often so lacking in hermeneutical bearings that they do not even recognize themselves as members of a distinct type.

As for understanding the structural nature of the identity prejudice at play in the Freyd case, we need only refer back Pam’s writing about her daughter. As discussed before, the article leverages identity power to attempt to discredit Jennifer. In the process, her mother implicitly argues that her testified experiences cannot be real because Jennifer’s social type lacks credibility. In this case, a testimonial injustice (Pam’s undue deflation of Jennifer’s credibility - compounds an insidious hermeneutical injustice) the denial that Jennifer’s trauma is real. This is enabled by the structurally prejudiced way in which woman are constructed as emotional, attention seeking, and unreliable. Further, it exemplifies the magnification of harm that occurs when testimonial and hermeneutical injustices coincide. For his part, Heaney suggests that Peter Freyd has never really bothered to acknowledge his daughter’s accusations or his wife’s actions anything more than tacitly (Heaney 2021). I imagine that he’s never seen a need to given the amount of default credibility men and especially white male academics tend to be offered.

3.2.4 Epistemic Harm

Having briefly discussed the concept of epistemic harm at the beginning of this chapter, we can return to that idea now that we’ve sketched out the outlines of both forms of injustice. I posited that there exists a form of harm that arises from the destabilization of a
subject’s self-narrative. In this section, I want to build this supposition into a proper argument using Fricker’s insights into the harms of epistemic injustice.

For her part, Fricker distinguishes between the primary harm of testimonial injustice and a secondary form of harm. She writes:

The primary harm is a form of essential harm that is definitive of epistemic injustice in the broad. In all such injustices the subject is wronged in her capacity as a knower. To be wronged in one’s capacity as a knower is to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value. When one is undermined or otherwise wronged in a capacity essential to human value, one suffers an intrinsic injustice. The form that this intrinsic injustice takes specifically in cases of testimonial injustice is that the subject is wronged in her capacity as 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. We are long familiar with the idea, played out by the history of philosophy in many variations, that our rationality is what lends humanity its distinctive value. No wonder, then, that being insulted, undermined, or otherwise wronged in one’s capacity as a giver of knowledge is something that can cut deep. No wonder too that in contexts of oppression the powerful will be sure to undermine the powerless in just that capacity, for it provides a direct route to undermining them in their very humanity. (Fricker 2007, 44)

This strikes me as a rather intuitive concept of harm. Testimonial discourse is a routine aspect of the human experience. We are constantly testifying to our knowledge whether it be complaining about a co-worker to a partner or attempting to teach students
about Aristotle’s categories. To be able to testify to a particular piece of knowledge and be taken as a credible knower is a profoundly human experience. As Fricker points out, there is an unsettling implication to this denial of credibility that the speaker is somehow less than human. If knowing is a distinctly human quality and testimonial injustice denies that a subject is a credible knower, then that subject cannot be participating fully in the human experience (Fricker 2007, 44). The denial of due credibility is dehumanizing because it implicitly withholds recognition of an aspect of a subject’s humanity from them. In turn, this further perpetuates relationships of oppression by reinforcing the identity power of dominant groups over marginalized ones.

Fricker further argues that being subject to the primary harm gives rise to two secondary harms, one practical and the other epistemic. To explain this distinction, consider her example of a subject whose experience of testimonial injustice results in their being found guilty of a crime. Being imprisoned, fined, or otherwise punished for a crime they did not commit are all practical consequences to their testimony not being given due credibility. By contrast, the epistemic consequences of being subject to the primary harm consist in a loss of epistemic confidence. For our innocent subject, this may manifest as a reluctance to even speak about their experiences at all, thereby ensuring that their side of the story is not heard. In a one-off experience of testimonial injustice, a subject may question the strength of their belief or the justification for it while those persistently subjected to this injustice may lose epistemic confidence to the point that they struggle with epistemic activities like education (Fricker 2007, 47-48). Another likely result of testimonial injustice not addressed by Fricker is bitterness, a subject which will be treated at greater length in Chapter 5. Through both the practical and epistemic
forms of secondary harm, testimonial injustice has a broad impact on a subject’s life because testimony itself is such an important aspect of life in general.

Broadly, the harms of hermeneutical injustice are similar to those of the testimonial kind. Its primary harm is what Fricker describes as *situated hermeneutical inequality*, or, “the concrete situation is such that the subject is rendered unable to make communicatively intelligible something which it is particularly in his or her interests to be able to render intelligible” (Fricker 2007, 162). She notes that in both forms of epistemic injustice, the harm is born out of excluding marginalized subjects from participation in the sharing of knowledge. In the testimonial case, the exclusion is motivated by an identity prejudice against the speaker while in the hermeneutical case it is motivated by a structural identity prejudice against what they are saying or how it is being said. The common factor in both is the prejudicial exclusion of marginalized knowers from collective epistemic life. The secondary harm of hermeneutical injustice also echoes that of its testimonial counterpart in that it too consists in the deflation of the subject’s epistemic confidence (Fricker 2007, 162-163). In both cases, by denying the marginalized subject’s capacity as a knower, they are left with a dissonance between their experience of knowing and their inability to communicate that knowledge intelligibly. In turn structures of oppressive identity power are maintained by suppressing the ability of marginalized groups to speak up *and* be heard.

This brings us back to the central contention of this chapter, namely that epistemic harm can destabilize self concept. In addressing the harm of hermeneutical injustice, Fricker takes a particular interest in this notion in terms of a distinction between constitutive self constructions and causal ones, as, “the former is a matter of what one
counts as socially, the latter is a matter of actually coming to be what one is constructed as being” (Fricker 2007, 166). These constructions are related in so far as internally motivated causal constructions can be informed by by externally imposed constitutive ones. However, there can also be dissonance between them when a subject’s causal construction is at odds with how they are socially constituted by others. On this dissonance, Fricker writes:

Authoritative constructions in the shared hermeneutical resource, then, impinge on us collectively but not uniformly, and the non-uniformity of their hold over us can create a sense of dissonance between an experience and the various constructions that are ganging up to overpower its nascent proper meaning. As individuals, some authoritative voices have special power over us, while others, for whatever reason, do not. (Fricker 2007, 166)

Like stereotypes, these constructions are generalizations and thus are unlikely to capture the breadth of a person’s experience. In the gaps between experience and constitution, the subject may find the critical courage to rebel against negative constructions. In so doing, new understandings about their own identity can be formed and potentially shared with other similarly constructed subjects in an act Fricker likens to consciousness raising (Fricker 2007, 167-168).

Taking on this understanding of how self constructions interact with shared interpretations of social subjects, Fricker offers a more robust description of the harm of hermeneutical injustice:

The primary harm of hermeneutical injustice, then, is to be understood not only in terms of the subject’s being unfairly disadvantaged by some collective
hermeneutical lacuna, but also in terms of the very construction (constitutive and/or causal) of selfhood. In certain social contexts, hermeneutical injustice can mean that someone is socially constituted as, and perhaps even caused to be, something they are not, and which it is against their interests to be seen to be. Thus, as we put the point previously in our discussion of the wrong of testimonial justice, they may be prevented from becoming who they are. (Fricker 2007, 168)

Put in the terms of our previous discussion of narrative, we can understand the harm of hermeneutical injustice as the specific harm of having one’s self narrative overwritten by a narrative imposed upon them from the outside. They are not taken to be who they take themselves to be but rather as they are interpreted to be by others. Their selfhood is withheld from the public sphere entirely in favour of a caricature of their social type. This too is the harm that hides beneath testimonial injustice, where the credibility judgement made by the hearer is based not on the speaker’s actual experience but rather a socially constructed narrative about their social type. Rather than judge the subject as a subject with their own self narrative, the hearer sees and then judges a caricatured image of them. The true harm of both forms of epistemic injustice seems to be caused by an inability on the part of dominantly situated knowers to recognize the capacity to know in marginalized subjects.

3.3 Critical Engagement with Epistemic Injustice

The final section of this chapter aims to address the critical response to Fricker’s ideas. My aim in doing so is to adopt a more robust analysis of epistemic injustice going forward. To that end, I will discuss two papers, José Medina’s “Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities” and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr.’s “Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice:
Toward a Theory of *Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance*.” Both writers broadly agree with Fricker’s analysis but suggest that a more relational account of the epistemic injustice would better capture certain epistemic realities.

### 3.3.1 Medina’s Critique

The argument of Medina’s that interests us most is his contention that Fricker’s analysis of hermeneutical injustice fails to adequately address communicative dynamics. In order to provide a more robust account of hermeneutical injustice, we must be present not just to failures to communicate intelligibly but also to the specific communicative dynamics between the empowered and the disempowered at play in those failures. His account draws a less sharp divide between testimonial and hermeneutical injustices, allowing for situations in which a speaker is subject to both injustices when attempting to communicate about an experience in some contexts but not others. On the distinction or lack thereof between the forms epistemic injustice, he writes:

> My communicative interactionalism suggests that these two types of injustice feed each other and deepen the effects of each other. On the one hand, hermeneutical injustices are maintained and passed on through testimonial dynamics that exhibit systematic failures of communicative and performative responsiveness: interpretive gaps among partners in communication are formed, maintained, and passed on because those who are *struggling to make sense* are persistently not heard and their inchoate attempts at generating new meanings are blocked or unanswered. In other words, these gaps emerge from and are supported by *testimonial insensitivities*. And, on the other hand, testimonial injustices take place when the persistence of hermeneutical gaps renders certain voices less intelligible
(and hence less credible) than others on certain matters, and their attempts to articulate certain meanings are systematically regarded as nonsensical (and hence incredible). (Medina 2012, 206)

In Medina’s view, the existence of hermeneutical gaps is in part attributable to the communicative dynamics at play in testimonial exchanges. Likewise, testimonial exchanges rely in part on shared interpretive resources in order to successfully assess credibility and share knowledge. By contrast, Fricker frames discussion of hermeneutical injustice in terms of intelligibility of experience with hermeneutically marginalized subjects struggling to not just communicate but also understand their experiences for themselves. Medina instead suggests that hermeneutically marginalized subjects are not necessarily unable to create or access hermeneutical resources that relate to an understanding of their own experiences. Rather, the defining trait of hermeneutical marginalization is the inability to communicate about those experiences regardless of how well the subject understands them (Medina 2012, 207). By focusing more narrowly on intelligibility of experience, Fricker fails to adequately capture the hermeneutical life of the marginalized knower.

Medina’s key insight is that meaning making happens within marginalized communities and between marginalized subjects. Indeed, he contends that oppressed subjects often have a rich hermeneutical understanding of their own lives. He writes:

We should be careful not to tie too closely people’s hermeneutical capacities to the repertoire of readily available terms and coined concepts, for oppressed subjects often find ways of expressing their suffering well before such articulations are available. […] Nascent meanings may be in an embryonic process of formation,
and their tentative expressions may not yet be accepted by the mainstream public (or even by most publics) within a culture. And this goes not only for negative experiences of suffering that are silenced, but also for positive experiences and life-affirming situations that new emerging publics may be struggling to make sense of, or simply struggling to convey to others. (Medina 2012, 208-209)

The model of hermeneutical life that Medina is describing is far more pluralistic and decentralized than Fricker’s. I believe his analysis is actually quite well supported by Fricker’s own analysis of authoritative constructions of the self. It’s reasonable to posit that hermeneutically marginalized subjects might be able to share amongst each other experiences of dissonance between constitutive and causal constructions without much difficulty because there will be comparatively less testimonial friction between like social subjects. However, attempts to communicate about that dissonance will occur as nonsensical to more dominantly situated hearers for whom those experiences are completely alien. Indeed, this is more or less the process of consciousness raising that Fricker describes towards the end of that discussion. As we move into our discussions about memory and epistemic justice, this particular pluralistic model of meaning making will become increasingly important.

3.3.2 Pohlhaus’s willful hermeneutical ignorance

Pohlhaus’s paper posits the existence of a third distinct form of epistemic injustice which she calls willful hermeneutical ignorance. Like Medina, she ascribes to a pluralistic view of meaning making that holds that marginalized knowers create and share hermeneutical resources through which to understand their own experiences. Pohlhaus contends that marginalized knowers develop their own hermeneutical resources that address these
experiences of oppression because the shared resources are lacking in that regard. However, because the experiences these resources are made to interpret are less likely to occur for dominantly situated knowers, the empowered are liable to dismiss their interpretive power. This dismissal is the substance of willful hermeneutical ignorance as Pohlhaus describes it.

Willful hermeneutical ignorance is the result of what Pohlhaus describes as the “dialectical relationship between situatedness and interdependence” (Pohlhaus 2012, 719). A knower’s situatedness describes the situations in which they are liable to consistently find themselves. Their situatedness defines the attentive habits they develop in order to navigate the social world by attuning them to the social relations that most define their lives. Situatedness further defines the degree to which the dominant hermeneutical resources can be useful in interpreting a subject’s experiences (Pohlhaus 2012, 717). Interdependence describes the reality that the hermeneutical resources with which we know ourselves and the world are shared between subjects. To quote Pohlhaus, “knowers are interdependent insofar as the epistemic resources or tools with which we know operate collectively, not individually” (Pohlhaus 2012, 718). As we’ve discussed previously, we use these shared resources to make sense of our experiences. The quality of these resources is determined by the relation they hold to our experiences. Good ones are responsive to our experiences while poor ones struggle to tell us anything of significance about them. Bad epistemic resources are liable to identify the significance of an experience in a way that prevents us from acting in our own best interests. When our shared resources fail to make sense of our experiences, we must create new ones. This process is a collective process as experiences are shared between individuals and
collective narratives about them begin to form (Pohlhaus 2012, 718). Pohlhaus describes situatedness and interdependence to capture the dialectical relationship between them. She writes:

On the one hand, in order to know the world in which she is situated the knower needs to make sense of her experiences via interdependently held epistemic resources; she cannot just hold true beliefs about the world without being able to demonstrate that they are true, let alone without being able to formulate the beliefs themselves. On the other hand, the standards and concepts that knowers hold interdependently are not de facto the right standards or adequate concepts for making sense of the experienced world; the right standards and adequate concepts must fit to and make sense of the experienced world. Using epistemic resources to make good sense of the experienced world and using the experienced world to develop better epistemic resources are both things we do in order to know well. When there is no tension between our epistemic resources and the experienced world, we simply use the language, concepts, and methods of evaluation that we have in the past. However, when there is a tension between the world of experience and the resources that we use to make sense of our experiences, for example when the proper language for describing an experience appears to be missing, or when our current concepts fail to track recurring patterns, we recalibrate our epistemic resources and/or create new ones until the tension between our resources and the experienced world is alleviated. This process can result in new possibilities for knowing, providing new tools for organizing and making sense of experience. (Pohlhaus 2012, 719)
Following from this dialectical relationship, Pohlhaus argues that marginally suited knowers are better placed to find gaps in the shared interpretive resources because they are necessarily more alive to the concerns of those to whom they are vulnerable. By contrast, the dominantly situated do not need to be aware of the concerns of marginally situated knowers because they are unaffected by them. This creates an almost paradoxical reality that despite their situation, dominantly situated knowers are actually in an epistemically disadvantageous position because the epistemic resources they have available to them are unsuited to certain parts of the experienced world (Pohlhaus 2012, 719-720). Further, the hermeneutical resources developed by marginalized knowers are better suited to that same experienced world because the vulnerability of marginalized situations requires more attentive interpretive resources (Pohlhaus 2012, 721). Pohlhaus’s analysis arises from a simple application of a standpoint epistemological framework to our understanding of shared interpretive resources.

This relationship between situatedness and interdependence can lead to instances where a dominantly situated knower comes into contact with resources developed to interpret experiences of marginalization and dismisses them. This occurs because being dominantly situated makes the relevant situations inherently alien to the dominantly situated knower. It is easier to simply dismiss them rather than learn to use them appropriately and being socially empowered allows them the privilege to do so. When a dominantly situated knower refuses to learn how to employ a resource or set of resources of this kind while continuing to engage with the world, Pohlhaus contends that they are being willfully hermeneutically ignorant (Pohlhaus 2012, 722). Rather than expand their
understanding of the world of experience, the willfully hermeneutically ignorant elect to privilege their more narrow and less truthful understanding of the same.

Much like the forms of epistemic injustice described by Fricker, willful hermeneutical ignorance operates in relation to identity prejudices which hold that marginalized subjects are not epistemically credible. The wholesale refusal to engage with these resources implicitly suggests that their creators are not capable of genuine meaning making. Much like the dehumanizing implications of denying that a subject can be a genuine knower, this injustice dehumanizes the subject by denying that they are capable of meaningfully describing their own experiences. In both cases, the result is the infantilization of marginalized knowers. Willful hermeneutical ignorance can also be understood as plausibly causing loss of epistemic confidence in marginalized subjects who are attempting to share their hermeneutical resources with more dominantly situated knowers.

3.3.3 Relational Critiques of Fricker

A common thread through both Medina and Pohlhaus’s critiques is that Fricker’s approach to the subject of epistemic injustice neglects possible insights from feminist relational theory. While her work provides an excellent view of the concept of epistemic injustice in the abstract, these critiques aim to view epistemic injustice through a lens that is informed by the specific relations of power in which marginalized knowers find themselves. In Medina’s critique, a more relational view produces the notion that hermeneutical resources can be developed by and for marginalized groups to account for their experiences of oppression, while Pohlhaus offers up an entirely new form of
epistemic injustice altogether. Given that these critiques draw on relational theory, it seems worthwhile to take a relational lens to Fricker’s work on the whole.

For those who are unfamiliar or in need of a refresher, Christine Koggel, Ami Harbin, and Jennifer Llewellyn offer a concise definition of relational theory in the introduction to a special issue of Journal of Global Ethics. They write:

In general terms, relational theory can be contrasted with Modern and especially Western liberal accounts of the human being that take the primary unit of analysis to be the individual, who is owed certain rights and freedoms to pursue a rational plan of life without undue interference from the state or others. Along with other anti-oppression theorists, feminist relational theorists have entered these debates about the ontological status of human beings by offering relational accounts of people as necessarily born into and shaped by and acting in and through relationships. By using relationships as the focal point for the description and the unit of analyses for moral and political theory, these relational theorists have provided critical perspectives on accounts that have focused on either sociality as such or on individualism to describe human beings and they have teased out moral and political implications and applications. (Koggel, Harbin, and Llewellyn 2022, 1)

While Fricker’s account of epistemic injustice acknowledges relational theory to an extent, I believe that the Medina and Pohlhaus critiques indicate that she could have gone much further. In particular, there is room in her account to elaborate more explicitly on the nature of oppression as it relates to epistemic injustice and specifically the relations of power that produce oppression. To her credit in this regard, Fricker’s account of
hermeneutical marginalization does at least begin to address the underlying issue of oppression with regards to hermeneutical injustice. However, Medina’s assertion that there is a dynamic and negatively reinforcing relationship between testimonial and hermeneutical injustices better emphasizes the role that oppression plays in perpetuating epistemic injustice as a whole. Additionally, Pohlhaus’s application of standpoint epistemology to collective interpretive resources offers an explanation for the failure of hermeneutical resources developed to interpret experiences of oppression to be taken up by the socially empowered.

While Fricker asserts that hermeneutical justice is structural insofar as it tracks a subject through different aspects of their life, Medina’s circle of testimonial and epistemic injustice gives us a glimpse at that oppressive structure. It grounds the structural operation of hermeneutical injustice in testimonial relations between marginalized and dominantly situated knowers. In these relations, the power to interpret as well as the power to lend credibility are held by dominantly situated knowers by virtue of their experiences being privileged in the collective interpretive resources. This imbalance of epistemic power is a byproduct of structures that privilege certain groups either implicitly or explicitly. It is in these relationships of power and oppression that epistemic injustices arise as marginally situated knowers struggle to be heard and understood by those who control access to both epistemic resources and often much needed material ones as well. Even when a dominantly situated knower does hear and is made to understand, they may still, as Pohlhaus argues, elect to remain willfully ignorant so as to maintain some privilege or perception thereof at the expense of marginalized knowers. In all of these cases, the structural nature of epistemic injustice is embodied
within testimonial relations wherein a marginalized knower fails to receive something that is due to them as a knower, whether this is credibility or recognition. Fricker’s account of epistemic injustice does tacitly acknowledge this, but Medina and Pohlhaus bring the relational aspects of epistemic injustice into sharper focus.

For our purposes, a more relational understanding of epistemic injustice is useful for building on Fricker’s account using Campbell’s relational remembering. By placing epistemic injustice in the context of relationships in this chapter, we can now place it alongside Campbell’s ideas about bad remembering in the next chapter so as to produce novel insights into how the two are related.
Chapter 4: Epistemic Justice and Good Remembering

4.1 Introduction

One of the key insights that emerged from our discussion of Campbell’s account of relational remembering in section 3 of Chapter 2 is that the value of remembering lies in its capacity to help us determine what the past means to the present. The assertion that remembering is relational tells us that the meaning of the past is often defined in and through our relations to others. That is, we contextualize the relations we find ourselves entangled in through remembering. When these relationships are defined by power and oppression in the present, remembering offers us insight into how these relationships came to be and how the past functioning of those relationships define their function in the present. For instance, understanding the origins and historical function of Reserves in Canada is necessary for understanding contemporary issues regarding Indigenous land rights and systemic poverty in Indigenous communities. By remembering the past, we can learn about injustices in the present.

Epistemic injustices are no different in this regard. In order to understand epistemic injustices in the present, we must contextualize them through remembering. However, the nature of epistemic injustices means that the experiences of the marginalized communities who suffer from these injustices are not likely to be heard, and if they are heard they are liable to be misunderstood or simply ignored. This, in turn, further compounds the injustices as those experiences do not enter the collective narrative about the past, thereby preventing the interpretive resources necessary to understand the
conditions of marginalized groups from entering the dominant shared interpretive framework.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze this relationship between memory and epistemic injustice through the lens of relational remembering. As I will argue below, I believe there is good reason to hold that epistemic injustice is an operation of bad remembering. In turn, the harm of epistemic injustice relates to the harm of not having one’s memory taken seriously. Likewise, we will see how good remembering can be both a product of and an aid to a broader project of epistemic justice.

4.2 Epistemic Injustice, Remembering, and Narrative

In section 3.1 of Chapter 2, I discussed Paul Ricoeur’s theories on emplottment, narrative, and history at some length in order to come to a more robust understanding of Campbell’s account of relational remembering. Understanding our relationship to narratives allowed us insight into what it means to say the past has significance at all. Here, narrative theory offers us insight into epistemic injustice and particularly its relationship to how and what we remember. Ricoeur’s account of mimesis as a threefold process by which an action is narrativized and thus rendered intelligible to us. Narratives are, per mimesis1, something we are always already primed to understand. This prefigured capacity to understand narrative allows us to interpret the meaning of actions that have been narrated and thereby assign significance to them. However, “the listeners or readers receive it according to their own receptive capacity, which itself is defined by a situation that is both limited and open to the world's horizon” (Ricoeur 1984, 77). In other words, the significance of a narrative is not by necessity universally available but rather defined by the interpreter’s situatedness. Here we can begin to see the role narrative construction plays in creating the necessary conditions for epistemic injustice to arise.
4.2.1 Narratives and Injustice

The process of mimesis is one without a definite end. Ricoeur describes it as, “an endless spiral that would carry the meditation past the same point a number of times, but at different altitudes” (Ricoeur 1984, 72). Social life consists of an unceasing chain of actions which we must interpret. This requires us to forever be in the process of mimesis as we spiral through time, emploting, interpreting, emploting again, and reinterpreting. Thus, it is absurd to assume that some narrative about the social world or the social life of a subject or community is static. It is constantly being created and recreated, interpreted and reinterpreted through mimesis. As subjects share their experiences with one another, the narratives they emplot and the interpretations they devise affect those of everyone with whom they relate. A hermeneutical framework forms as certain narratives and interpretations come to dominate the network of relationships that composes the social world.

What Fricker identifies as hermeneutical injustice is the result of this dominant hermeneutical framework failing to identify the significance of certain actions. However, this failure of the dominant framework can only occur because of failures on the part of individuals to correctly identify the significance of those actions first. This happens in the stage of mimesis, where the situation of the individual interpreter leaves them ignorant of certain significant aspects of the emploted action. When these knowers are hermeneutically empowered by structural inequalities present in the social world, their experiences come to define the dominant hermeneutical framework. The result is that the dominant framework reflects their interpretive ignorance of experiences and situations.
that do not occur for them. These gaps in the framework further distort the interpretive resources of dominantly situated individuals.

As Medina suggests, these gaps in the dominant framework do not necessarily entail a complete lack of hermeneutical resources on the part of marginalized communities. While this certainly can and does occur (as Fricker demonstrates in her book), many gaps do have interpretive resources that could fill them. These resources are developed much the same way as the dominant ones are, but on a smaller scale and within communities that need them most. They are the result of marginalized people identifying and then interpreting together those significances that dominantly situated knowers are ignorant of. This means that even if a marginalized knower does have the resources to understand and communicate about an experience within their community, a hermeneutical injustice is likely to occur when circumstances force them to interact with and convey their experiences to dominantly situated knowers.

The spiral of mimesis shows us how malleable these narrative frameworks actually are. As subjects move forward through time, constantly emploting and reinterpreting the same actions, their understanding of the narratives they identify with, participate in, and uphold shifts. Thus it is entirely possible for dominantly situated knowers to seek out or even just passively accept that they have an incomplete understanding of the significance of certain narratives. Should they be presented with a new hermeneutical framework with which to reinterpret some narrative, they are fully capable of accepting it and allowing it to reframe their emploting and interpreting moving forward. Pohlhaus’s willful hermeneutical ignorance accounts for what happens when a dominantly situated
interpreter rejects a new interpretive resource developed to account for an experience of marginalization they are otherwise ignorant of.

In Fricker’s account of testimonial injustice, we saw how structural identity prejudice is a primary cause of testimonial injustice in the relevant form. This too is the result of a distorted interpretation of the social world. When dominantly situated knowers construct prejudicial and thus credibility deflating identities for marginalized knowers, they are still engaging in the threefold mimesis. These prejudicial constructions are interpretive frameworks that emphasize the significance - real or imagined - of traits that make the marginalized non-credible sources of knowledge. The result is a reflexive deflation of the credibility of their testimony on the basis of a distorted or even fabricated interpretation of the shared social reality. That is to say, testimonial injustice is the result of the collective hermeneutical ignorance of dominantly situated knowers.

It’s worth stressing that while individuals can and do develop personal hermeneutics, they only become shared resources when individuals participate in testimonial relationships with one another. While the narrative of a novel is shared through publication and then reading, the narratives we’re interested in here are largely experiential ones that describe social realities, relations, and interactions. They can be shared in book form, but they are nonetheless testifying to some aspect of the author’s lived experience. It is through testimonial exchange that new resources are shared. Pohlhaus’s account of epistemic interdependence from Chapter 3, section 3.2 further reinforces the same basic idea. We can thus build on Medina and go beyond Fricker and conclude that testimony is the basic medium through which interpretive resources enter the collective hermeneutical fabric.
4.2.2 Remembering Shapes Unjust Narratives

One of the key insights from Campbell’s account of relational remembering is the idea that the act of remembering connects the past to the present. It is a process by which we recall what has come to pass in order to learn something relevant to our contemporary experiences. Remembering is relational in so far as it occurs within and through the complex network of relationships in which social subjects are situated. We can rely upon these relationships both to help us recall the past and to identify which aspects of it are significant in the present moment. Good remembering - being faithful to the past - means correctly identifying what the past means within the context in which we are remembering. Faithfulness to the past both demands that we interpret what has come to pass in a way that is truthful to both what happened and what it means in the fullness of that context.

We can also understand remembering through reference to Ricoeur’s mimetic process. Being already prefigured to understand actions through emplotment, we emplot recollected actions so as to render them intelligible, which then allows us to interpret them. As Ricoeur posits with threefold mimesis, we are continually reevaluating our pasts in light of our present and our present in light of our recollected pasts. Per Campbell, this interpretative process occurs within and through the relationships we find ourselves in. In the process, our recollections and interpretations affect and are affected by those to whom we relate. Because we exist in relation to others, we wind up remembering together.

By remembering together, we shape collective narratives about the past. These narratives in turn contextualize our individual memories by giving us shared frames of reference. For instance, sharing that my parents leased their Volvo right before the 2008
Recession grounds that memory in a shared cultural moment. This particular contextual information doesn’t change the substance of the memory, but it nonetheless colours it slightly differently. Suddenly, my parents’ Volvo exists in relation to the first iPhones, the Obama Campaign, and *Hey There Delilah* by the Plain White T’s. If I instead tell you that my parents leased their Volvo not long after my sister’s second birthday in 2003, that frame of reference shifts and and narrows what is remembered, which may cause the memory to take on new shades of meaning. Conversely, my recollection of the Volvo may contribute meaning to a shared narrative about the time and place in which that memory is grounded. A leased Volvo in 2007 could be emblematic of a tragic middle-class indulging in luxuries beyond their means, buoyed by an artificially inflated economy. In 2003, it might represent the desire for security in a world that still felt rather insecure after September 11th, 2001. Through sharing this memory, it can both acquire meaning from and provide meaning to a collective narrative about the times and places to which it relates.

Grounding our collective narratives in memory reminds us that they are limited by the experiences of individuals. Whereas before we spoke in the abstract about a social subject’s situatedness defining which experiences are likely to occur for them, we can now ground those experiences much more concretely in what a subject remembers. A subject cannot remember what they have not experienced. That which is not remembered cannot be contributed to the collective memory and thus does not contribute to the collective interpretations of the past. What cannot be interpreted is rendered unintelligible. This is the very process by which hermeneutical gaps and the interrelated
injustices that follow from them arise. We have, in abstract, been dancing around the role of memory in epistemic injustice since the very beginning.

4.2.3 Bad Remembering as Epistemic Injustice

We can more specifically understand epistemic injustice as a function of bad remembering made structural. If we suppose that I am wrong to assert that the colour of the Volvo is trivial because, in fact, my mother chose a beige one for deeply sentimental reasons relating to the family history, I have gotten something wrong about the significance of the past. I have not only misremembered the colour, but because I misremembered, I have dismissed this memory as being insignificant when it evidently is not. This is bad remembering, but on a small and ultimately personal scale. There is no real structural aspect to this case of bad remembering because its causes and effects are limited to only the small circle of people who remember the Volvo at all, a circle which may not even include my younger sister given her age at the time. Bad remembering takes on a structural form when it occurs because structures of power incentivize it. We can here again turn to the Freyd case and Campbell’s concerns about the memory wars to illustrate what I mean.

Perhaps rather uniquely, Jennifer Freyd’s story offers us a case in which a single instance of bad remembering allows us to catch a glimpse of the ways in which structures of power influence how we remember. We will recall that Jennifer’s memories of abuse resurfaced after her sister re-contextualized their shared past in the light of their father himself having been abused. When confronted by her parents about her sudden unease with them being around her children, Jennifer’s memories of abuse were mooted and the quickly met with denial (Heaney 2021). If we take Jennifer at her word (which I think is
reasonable to do, in light of Heaney’s reporting) and suppose that her memories are faithful to the past, then this denial is bad remembering on the part of the elder Freyds. In turn, they crafted a counter narrative in the form of False Memory Syndrome. The sole purpose of this false hermeneutic interpretation was to deny the significance of an uncomfortable past. This act of bad remembering spiralled out of the small circle of people directly involved as Pam Freyd shared her interpretation of events. As a result, the interpretive resource they had created came to shape the collective narrative around memory to such a degree that theorists, scholars, and scientists began to rethink its fundamental nature.

If we recall Campbell’s original concerns about the framing of the memory wars, we encounter some familiar language. She was specifically worried, “about the ramifications of the false memory debate: about its general undermining of women’s credibility and about its threat to the possibilities of therapeutic, legal, and public support for women with abusive pasts” (Campbell 2003, 7). Writing four years before Fricker’s work on the subject, Campbell is expressing in more or less the same terms a concern about testimonial injustice. This concern stems from a single instance of bad remembering which grew into an interpretive tool that could be used to undermine the credibility of abuse victims and potentially threaten material resources they might need.

I think most epistemic injustices do not have such a clear cut genealogy. The social world is complex and the collective memory is often influenced by factors that stretch well past living memory. However, the example is illustrative of what I believe is an enduring relationship between memory and epistemic injustice. The inequitable distribution of social power ensures that memories of certain kinds of experience are
more able than others to define the collective memory and the interpretive resources derived therefrom. When bad remembering is elevated to the level of collective memory by dominantly situated rememberers, the collective memory becomes distorted and unable to be faithful to the past. In the process, we risk losing the truth of the past altogether as hermeneutically marginalized rememberers have fewer resources to ensure their memories are recorded and made ‘readable’ for future generations. This is perhaps another form of epistemic injustice altogether, one whose victims comprise the entire network of rememberers who are thus deprived of significant truth about their relations to one another.

In sum, epistemic injustices arise when the dominant collective narrative about the past is defined in such a way as to exclude significant truths about the past. These truths are contained within the individual and collective memories of hermeneutically marginalized rememberers who are shut out of collective remembering by structural barriers to participation. Their testimonies of their own experiences are either not heard or, as Pohlhaus argues, not listened to. In the absence of these memories, those who are engaging with the dominant collective memory are unable to develop the interpretive resources necessary to render those memories and the experiences contained within intelligible to the dominantly situated rememberer. Recalling again Pohlhaus’s assertion that the luxury of epistemic privilege is ignorance of marginalized situations, we can understand dominantly situated rememberers as epistemically impoverished by their position of epistemic privilege. They have undue power to inflate or deflate credibility due to their relative social power and are liable to misunderstand or even ignore experiences for which they lack an interpretive framework. Their relative power also
empowers them to willfully ignore new hermeneutical resources that do speak to some
significant aspect of the world of action if it is to their advantage to do so. In some cases,
like that of False Memory Syndrome, dominantly situated knowers may even go so far as
to devise counter hermeneutics that allow them to maintain their distorted and unfaithful
understanding of the social world, past and present.

4.3 A Virtue Account of Epistemic Justice

If we understand epistemic injustice can be a function of bad remembering, then it stands
to reason that the inverse should be true. That is to say, we might say that epistemic
justice can be a function of good remembering. However, making this claim would
require first an understanding of epistemic justice. In my previous treatment of Fricker’s
work, I left this issue largely unaddressed in favour of focusing on her account of
epistemic injustice. Here, I want to examine Fricker’s account of epistemic justice in
order to then apply insights from the previous discussions of memory.

4.3.1 Fricker’s Virtue Epistemology

Fricker’s account of epistemic justice is grounded in what we might call a ‘virtue
epistemology.’ Building on insights from neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, the aim of this
account is to argue that our epistemic sensibilities can be habituated in a manner similar
to our ethical ones. Towards the end of her discussion on testimonial injustice, she writes:

> There is a form of moral cognitivism in the virtue ethical tradition which advances
> the idea of moral perception. In this neo-Aristotelian tradition, the sensibility of the
> virtuous subject is conceived as ‘trained’ or socially educated, so that the subject
> comes to see the world in moral colour. By building an analogy with the idea of a
> virtuous agent’s ethical sensibility, we hope to arrive at an account of how the
> responsible hearer exercises rational sensitivity, without inference, so as to be
critically open to the word of others. Thus the account offered will supply the framework for a virtue epistemological account of testimony. The main idea is that where a hearer gives a suitably critical reception to an interlocutor’s word without making any inference, she does so in virtue of the perceptual deliverances of a well-trained testimonial sensibility. (Fricker 2007, 71)

While I will discuss some concerns with Fricker’s virtue centred approach later, I find her account compelling nonetheless. In comparing our moral perceptions to a ‘sensibility,’ she captures the pragmatic reality that we often make moral judgements instinctively. Just as we use our physical senses to understand the physical geography of our world, we use our moral sensibilities to understand the moral geography of the social world. This sensibility allows us to, as Fricker puts it, “see in moral colour” (Fricker 2007, 71). Like our senses of smell or balance, this moral sensibility is both spontaneous and unreflective, occurring to us as needed while we navigate through the social world. Just as our senses can be attuned to certain features of the physical world through training, our moral sensibility can be trained to be sensitive to the moral features of our social world (Fricker 2007, 72). Her account of virtue epistemology argues that we can apply the same logic to our epistemic judgements:

In the testimonial case, the parallel suggestion is that the virtuous hearer’s perceptual capacity be understood in terms of a sensitivity to epistemically salient features of the situation and the speaker’s performance. These epistemically salient features are the various social cues that relate to trustworthiness—cues relating to the sincerity and competence of the speaker on the matter at hand. This sensitivity is underwritten by a set of background assumptions about the trustworthiness of
different social types in different sorts of contexts—a socially situated ‘theory’ of trustworthiness, as I put it. Just as the morally virtuous subject’s perception is morally enriched, so the virtuous hearer’s perception is epistemically enriched.

(Fricker 2007, 72)

As with the idea of a moral sensibility, we can understand the social subject as possessing a habituated epistemic sensibility. Through this spontaneous and unreflective sense, the world is imbued with a sort of ‘epistemic colour,’ rich with contextual details from which we can derive credibility judgements. Much like the virtue account of moral judgement, a virtue epistemology also accounts for the seemingly habitual way we make credibility judgements. Having been socialized into particular epistemic habits, we can respond reflexively to situations that call for such judgements. When our socialized epistemic habits produce epistemic injustices, such as by prejudicially deflating the credibility of marginalized speakers, we’ve developed vicious epistemic habits. The rectification of these habits then requires conscious cultivation of more virtuous habits.

There’s a relational aspect to a virtue account that further makes them appealing to this project. The first assumption of any virtue theory is that human action is fundamentally social. To act in the relevantly human sense is to act within the relational network of the social world. Our actions both virtuous and vicious are the result of the habits we form as part of our social upbringing. We can shape our habits through consciously training ourselves to behave differently until that behaviour becomes reflexive. Since the relevant actions are social actions, this moral or epistemic training must occur within social contexts. We must rely upon those to whom we relate to help us reinforce new habits just as we relied upon them to learn old ones.
A converse appeal to a virtue account is that it doesn’t entirely de-centre the individual. It places a subject within a relational context that doesn’t completely absolve them of responsibility for their individual choices and actions. Social habits are formed relative to the collective hermeneutical resources a subject has access to. The narratives and interpretive tools we have access to through our network of relationships shape and are shaped by the actions we take and the habits we form. A virtue account allows us to understand actions, habits, and judgements as being both informed by our social context as well as being entirely our own. Even if we are habituated to certain beliefs, actions, or judgements, a virtue account allows us to embody the spirit of hermeneutical rebellion by choosing to believe, act, or judge contrary to our socialized habits. We are not bound in the absolute sense by social conventions and thus can be held to account for virtuous and vicious actions, behaviours, and judgements.

4.3.2 The Virtue of Testimonial Justice

Taking on board a virtue epistemology allows us to frame the concept of epistemic injustice as being the result of specifically epistemic vices. In the testimonial case, these vices are the result of specific epistemic habits that result in unduly deflating the credibility of a hearer. In sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 of Chapter 3, I presented Fricker’s argument that these vices are born out of our uncritical or perhaps unknowing acceptance of identity prejudice. Under the influences of prejudicial views of certain social types, we are liable to develop maladaptive epistemic habits. In practice, a prejudiced epistemic sensibility prevents the speaker from being heard and prevents the hearer from learning from the speaker’s testimony. The results of testimonial vices are testimonial injustices and thus the epistemic harms like the deflation of epistemic confidence.
In a virtue account of epistemology, overcoming testimonial vices requires corrective actions that aim at a testimonial virtue. Fricker argues:

In testimonial exchanges, for hearers and speakers alike, no party is neutral; everybody has a race, everybody has a gender. What is needed on the part of the hearer in order to avert a testimonial injustice—and in order to serve his own epistemic interest in the truth—is a corrective anti-prejudicial virtue that is distinctively reflexive in structure.

Such reflexive critical awareness of the likely presence of prejudice, then, is a prerequisite in the business of correcting for prejudice in one’s credibility judgement. But what exactly is meant by ‘correcting for’ here? When the hearer suspects prejudice in her credibility judgement—whether through sensing cognitive dissonance between her perception, beliefs, and emotional responses, or whether through self-conscious reflection—she should shift intellectual gear out of spontaneous, unreflective mode and into active critical reflection in order to identify how far the suspected prejudice has influenced her judgement. If she finds that the low credibility judgement she has made of a speaker is due in part to prejudice, then she can correct this by revising the credibility upwards to compensate. (Fricker 2007, 91)

In the testimonial case, the virtuous hearer is thus one who is sensitive to the presence of prejudice in their credibility judgements. The corrective aspect of the virtuous behaviour is in reflexively identifying that presence and duly correcting one’s credibility judgement. Fricker further allows that seeking out further evidence or suspending judgement altogether may be necessary in cases where the virtuous hearer is
altogether lacking a frame of reference for what they are hearing. Regardless of whether or not the prejudice can be adequately corrected for by the hearer, the result should be that, “the virtuous hearer neutralizes the impact of prejudice in her credibility judgments” (Fricker 2007, 92, her emphasis). This is the virtue of testimonial justice.

4.3.3 The Virtue of Hermeneutical Justice

Hermeneutical justice too, Fricker argues, can be understood through the notion of virtuous hearing. However, the hermeneutical case differs somewhat from the testimonial case. While credibility judgements will still play a role in the testimonial exchange, the injustice itself occurs at the level of interpretation. Fricker explains:

In hermeneutical contexts, then, the responsible hearer’s credibility judgement is an assessment of the degree to which what is said makes good sense—the degree to which it is a truthful interpretation. Now, in cases where the speaker’s efforts are hindered by a hermeneutical injustice, the virtuous hearer will register this and make allowances, so that her initially low credibility judgement is revised upwards to compensate for the hindrance. Where possible, the virtuous hearer will achieve a credibility judgement that reflects the degree to which the interpretation the speaker is struggling to articulate would make good sense if the attempt to articulate it were being made in a more inclusive hermeneutical climate—one without structural identity prejudice. (Fricker 2007, 170, her emphasis)

Naturally, this too requires us to attune our hearing to the relevant epistemic hallmarks of the injustice. According to Fricker’s account, the relevant hallmark of hermeneutical injustice is the struggle for articulation. Drawing on the critiques levelled by Medina and Pohlhaus in section 3.3 of Chapter 3, we can further argue that relevant
hallmark is actually a struggle to be heard. Reframing hermeneutical injustice in this way accounts both for Fricker’s account of a struggle for articulation and Pohlhaus’s account of willful hermeneutical ignorance. Once the struggle to be heard is recognized, it falls upon the virtuous to, when possible, create, “a more inclusive hermeneutical micro-climate through the appropriate kind of dialogue with the speaker” (Fricker 2007, 171). I would further argue that doing so requires the virtuous hearer to step out of their reflexive epistemic habits and into a more engaged and socially conscious mode of hearing.

Pohlhaus’s account can be instructive here as it emphasizes the role of social situatedness in epistemic life. We can build on this insight to go a bit beyond Fricker to argue that virtuous hearers must be specifically attuned to their own social situation as it relates to the speaker.

Fricker acknowledges that this ideal of hermeneutical justice is not always practical. There are situations in which external pressures may prevent even the most virtuous hearer, having first recognized the struggle to be heard, from taking the necessary time to fully engage with the struggle for articulation. Here, Fricker notes that hermeneutical justice seems to stress the limits of virtue theory insofar as it seems possible that its virtue cannot always be possessed in a fully reflexive, unreflective way. The demands of hermeneutical justice seem to be such that we must occasionally take action by doing things like actively searching out new frames of reference (Fricker 2007, 172-173). Here, she contends that the spontaneous aspect may simply be the act of suspending judgement, in which case we can understand the mediate end of the virtue is, “to neutralize the impact of structural identity prejudice on one’s credibility judgement” (Fricker 2007, 173). As Fricker expounds later, the final end of the virtue is to balance our intellectual
pursuit of truth with our moral pursuit of justice by listening to and understanding marginalized knowers (Fricker 2007, 173).

**4.3.4 A Short Aside about Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance**

As discussed in section 3.3.2 of the previous chapter, Pohlhaus posits that willful hermeneutical ignorance constitutes a third distinct form of epistemic injustice. For the sake of argument, say we are willing to accept this analysis. It then stands to reason we should discuss it within the framework of Fricker’s virtue epistemology. Unlike the other two, which can be understood through the language of habit and reflex, willful ignorance is always chosen. It occurs when a subject is introduced to a new frame of reference and willingly chooses to ignore it. Despite this distinction, I think that in practice, the same epistemic vices that cause the other forms of injustice are at play in this choice too. The choice to ignore insights that were previously unavailable to the hearer is still informed by a social context which systemically devalues those insights and the communities that develop them, thereby disincentivizing dominantly situated knowers from taking them on.

**4.4 Good Remembering as a Virtue of Epistemic Justice**

So far, the image of epistemic justice we’ve been exploring is grounded very much in the present. That is, we’ve been interrogating what happens in the moment that a hearer exercises the virtues of epistemic justice. Certain situations demand certain kinds of epistemic actions of the virtuous hearer in the moment to mitigate the worst effects of an epistemic injustice. However, both these situations and the training necessary to recognize and act virtuously in them are defined by the past. We’ve already seen how bad remembering influences collective narratives and shared interpretive resources and therefore can enable epistemic injustices. Now, we can begin to go further beyond
Fricker’s account and discuss the role that good remembering can play in promoting epistemic justice.

4.4.1 The Virtues of Good Remembering

In section 2.3.2 of Chapter 2, we saw Campbell use the language of virtue to describe integrity as it relates to relational remembering, going so far as to refer to it specifically as an epistemic virtue. She argued that to possess integrity in the present is to be accountable for our actions and to possess integrity as a rememberer is to be faithful to the past. The virtuous rememberer is one who can correctly identify the meaning of the past within the context of their self understanding, within the context of other rememberers to whom they relate closely, and within the more general context of the shared understanding of the past (Campbell 2014, 44-45).

In other words, faithfulness to the past is still a sort of accountability. Insofar as we think of integrity as an epistemic virtue, possessing it as a rememberer means being accountable to the present through correctly identifying the significance of the past. In other words, integrity demands that we approach the act of remembering from the perspective of understanding what it means in a present situation. In this way, nothing short of the truth of the past will suffice for the virtuous rememberer and the truth of the past can be identified by checking a narrative about the past against its capacity to accurately contextualize the present. Thus, the present holds the virtuous rememberer accountable insofar as the degree to which it can be understood is determined by how accurate the rememberer’s interpretation of the past is. A byproduct of the demands of integrity is thus that virtuous rememberers must be willing to reinterpret the past in light of new recollections. This demand goes beyond what Fricker’s virtue of hermeneutical
justice asks. The virtuous remember must not only be willing to suspend judgement and possibly seek out new frames of reference, but also be willing to revise their narratives about what has happened in response. The act of reinterpretation (and its attendant mimetic operation) is a necessary part of virtuous remembering. Since remembering occurs within the context of our social relations, recall that Campbell points out that integrity can be thought of as a social virtue (Campbell 2014, 45). In other words, possessing integrity as a rememberer changes the way in which we interact with others in contexts that relate to remembering.

As noted earlier, epistemic injustice is bound up in bad collective remembering and the dominant narratives that have formed to interpret the shared past. I think that there are two primary places in which the virtue of integrity can relate to epistemic justice. The first occurs when engaging in memory activities. The virtuous rememberer, compelled by their commitment to integrity, can engage critically with shared narratives about the past. What responsibilities this exactly entails will differ depending on the relative dominance or marginalization of the rememberer. Dominantly situated rememberers will be obligated to revise their understanding of the shared past while marginalized rememberers are obligated to keep their shared understanding of the past from being forgotten. A responsibility to the present leads virtuous rememberers to question whether or not these shared narratives are faithful to the past. In so doing, they can attempt to correct these narratives by correctly identifying some significant aspect of the past they leave out or preserve extant narratives that already do so. A single individual cannot change a shared narrative in a day, but they can influence those to whom they are relating through shared activities of remembering. Moreover, the narrative is liable to shift as
more and more rememberers embrace more accurate narratives, regardless of the degree to which they are committed to the virtue of integrity.

Through understanding integrity as an epistemic virtue, we can see the cause of willful hermeneutical ignorance as an absence of integrity. Since the virtue demands interpretive accountability to the present, rejecting a new interpretive resource which offers genuine insight into the social world as it is constitutes a failure to act with integrity. Willful hermeneutical ignorance is a sort of hermeneutical nostalgia. Whereas nostalgia is the willful ignorance of certain significant aspects of the past, willful hermeneutical ignorance is instead the willful ignorance of the interpretive resources developed to understand those significant aspects of the past. Nostalgic remembering is thus likely to result in willful hermeneutical ignorance as the subject refuses to acknowledge aspects of the past that explain the necessity for new hermeneutical resources.

4.5 Distraction, Disorientation, and Epistemic Virtue

I am partial to Fricker’s account of epistemic justice as a function of epistemic virtue. However, it does not address the structural nature of epistemic injustice, which Fricker herself identifies. Rather, it offers individuals, especially those in relatively dominant social situations, an account of what personal epistemic virtue can be like. In this final section as well as the entirety of the next chapter, I want to go beyond Fricker’s account of epistemic justice and try to address some of the structural barriers to a more epistemically just society. My aim is thus to provide an account of what epistemic justice can look like at a structural level. An account of specifically structural epistemic justice is made necessary by the reality that no one person can alter dominate interpretive frameworks. However, those frameworks are nonetheless mutable and thus an account of
how to make them more just cannot be reducible purely to individual virtue. Rather, it must provide a framework which can guide and reshape shared epistemic habits. This account will build on the previous discussion of good remembering as an epistemic virtue by discussing what good remembering looks like in public contexts. The remainder of the chapter will be dedicated to arguing that distraction is a chief structural cause of epistemic injustice and that disorientation can be an effective means of addressing it.

4.5.1 Distraction

I’m drawing my understanding of distraction from Walter Benjamine’s essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” The essay itself is not about distraction, but towards its conclusion, Benjamin provides an account of the subject that I believe illustrates the issue as it pertains to epistemic injustice. His first insight is that an individual can form habits in a state of distraction. In the case of art (the central subject of the essay), there is a relevant distinction between the appreciation of art by the focused observer and consumption of art by the distracted one. He writes:

Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows:

A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. (Benjamin 1968, 239)

Benjamin’s chief example of the latter is architecture, which is interacted with through use. Unlike a painting, which one must stand before and focus on, a building is meant to fade out of our perception when in use. A tourist may stop to gawk at the Centre Block of Parliament, but a Member of Parliament will not as they go about their work.
day focused on the task at hand. They apprehend the building not through sight so much as touch, which guides them through it. The longer they spend working in the building, the more they become habituated to its tactile features. Navigation of the space becomes intuitive, a habit formed in a state of distraction as the MP (Benjamin 1968, 240). The building becomes absorbed by the masses who make use of it without paying it any real mind, while distracted. Benjamin explains, “The distracted person, too, can form habits. More, the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that their solution has become a matter of habit” (Benjamin 1968, 240).

We can apply Benjamin’s analysis of distraction to epistemic habits as well as. As we saw in section 3.3.2 of Chapter 3, Pohlhaus observes that marginalized groups often have to develop two sets of epistemic habits, one for themselves and one for interacting with dominantly situated groups (Pohlhaus 2012, 717-718). The privilege of assuming your epistemic habits work all the time is thus an epistemic privilege reserved for the most dominantly situated knowers. This means that the epistemically privileged can move through the social world in a state of distraction. They do not need to be attuned to the epistemic features of their testimonial exchanges to the same degree that marginalized knowers do. In turn, this means the dominantly situated have more work to do in order to cultivate the necessary awareness required by epistemic virtues. The perception that epistemic habits are at work may lead the distracted knower to assume that they do not need to reflect upon them, which can lead to instances of willful hermeneutical ignorance. In epistemic life, distraction leads dominantly situated knowers to assume that their position is the default. The project of structural epistemic justice must therefore
contend with the masses of distracted knowers who feel that they have never been given an adequate reason to stop and start paying attention.

Benjamin’s chief interest being art and the premier new medium of the day being film, he naturally takes an interest in the relationship between cinema and distraction. He writes, “The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one” (Benjamin 1968, 240-241). In his epilogue, he proposes that fascism takes advantage of the state of distraction to turn politics into an entertaining spectacle in which the masses play only that role of the absentminded examiner. He concludes that the solution to this problem is to render art political (Benjamin 1968, 241-242). Given the previous discussion of cinema, the implicit suggestion here seems to be that consuming political art can perhaps inoculate the masses to the aesthetization of politics by habituating them to the notion that art is political.

I think Benjamin’s prescription is sensible and it’s one that I want to return to. However, I think that there is more contained within this idea that political art can sway the masses than Benjamin allows. The masses are not actually a distinct entity in the way that Benjamin seems to describe them. Rather, they are a collection of individuals bound together by a common hermeneutical framework. The state of mass distraction is the result of individuals being distracted in such a way that they are content to trust the epistemic judgements to that shared framework. To speak of swaying the masses then is to really speak of changing the collective narrative, which requires a shift in how individuals relate to that framework. These changes can occur after an individual leaves
the passive state of being distracted and begins to actively reflect. What I think is missing from Benjamin’s account of distraction is the notion that it is necessary to disrupt that state, which politicized art aims to do.

A distracted subject orients themselves in the social world automatically, according to their habits. Their habits anchor them in a way that allows them to move through the social world while preoccupied with other matters. Forcibly disrupting the distracted subject’s habits prevents them from engaging in habitual behaviours while still distracted. They become disoriented. Returning to Benjamin’s architecture analogy, we can imagine our Member of Parliament trying to navigate around an ongoing renovation. The familiar space is rendered unfamiliar and disorienting by a change in physical space. When a familiar relationship is similarly rendered unfamiliar and disorienting, the distracted subject is forced to start paying attention to how that relationship is navigated.

In the state of disorientation, the subject is forced to seek out new bearings with which to orient themselves. A disoriented subject is one who can be more open to reflecting on their previously held understanding of the social world in light of that understanding having failed them. They may seek out new frames of reference to reorient themselves and once again find their social bearings. It is in this state of disorientation that I believe we are most able to see relationships of oppression in the social world, which can in turn make us more receptive to embracing the pursuit of epistemic justice.

4.5.2 The Value of Disorientation

I’m drawing my ideas about disorientation from Ami Harbin’s book Disorientation and Moral Life. At the outset of her argument, she acknowledges that disorientation can mean different things in different contexts. For her purposes and ours, she writes, “By
disorientation I mean, roughly, temporally extended, major life experiences that make it
difficult for individuals to know how to go on. They often involve feeling deeply out of
place, unfamiliar, or not at home” (Harbin 2016, 2). In the third chapter of the book,
Harbin takes an interest in the role that disorientation has in creating space for new
awareness of one’s position within the social world.

The first disorientation that Harbin examines is W.E.B. Du Bois’s *double
consciousness*. She describes the phenomenon like this:

A person of color may experience double consciousness by coming to see
themselves partly through positive self-perception (as someone who belongs, is
equally valuable, and trustworthy) at the same time as through the racist perception
of a white person (as Other, inferior, and dangerous). The individual becomes
unable to hold only a positive self-perception, but instead always partly sees
themself as a dominant other does—an object to be feared, exploited, or
dominated. (Harbin 2016, 68-69)

Experiencing double consciousness makes the racialized subject aware of the racist
norms contained within the white frame of reference and clarifies their place within them.
The disorientation of double consciousness is the constant reminder that the subject is
other, that they lie outside the norm and thus do not belong in certain places,
conversations, or roles. Conversely, the disorienting experience of being treated well
when one expects to be treated with prejudice can likewise make a racialized subject
aware of racist norms (Harbin 2016, 70). Pohlhaus describes the same phenomenon in
different terms when she writes about marginalized knowers taking advantage of
hermeneutical resources developed by and for dominantly situated knowers (Pohlhaus
In her account, we can understand double consciousness as what makes it possible for marginalized subjects to recognize that hermeneutical resources developed by dominantly situated groups are insufficient for understanding their own experiences. Harbin’s insight here is that marginalized knowers can come to apprehend these resources through disorientation. It is the disorienting recognition of one’s place within a stratified social world that creates awareness of that stratification.

Harbin also examines the disorienting experience of ‘white ambush,’ which occurs, “when white people experience a ‘surprise attack’ of becoming aware of our own racism” (Harbin 2016, 75). It is a disorientation that makes a subject aware of their privileged position in society and the way their actions reflect how their privilege leaves them unaware of marginalized experiences. Harbin notes that, “Being white in racist society is typically orienting” (Harbin 2016, 75). Because whiteness is privileged, white people do not need to consider their race when they move through the social world. Their experiences of race are assumed to be the default and thus not worth examining. White ambush occurs when that assumption is examined and the reality that a subject’s whiteness colours their experience of the social world is recognized (Harbin 2016, 74-75).

In cases of both double consciousness and white ambush, the subject is disoriented by the recognition of racist norms that permeate the social world. This disorientation can bring new awareness of those norms and encourage the development or adoption of different interpretive frameworks to address them. However, Harbin cautions that these disorientations do not necessarily entail a newfound awareness of racist norms. Disorientating experiences of race can be numbing or even psychologically harmful to
racialized subjects and can engender a resistance to recognizing privilege in white subjects. Further, racism isn’t necessarily disorienting. Rather, Harbin is interested in recognizing that there are situations in which disorienting experiences of race can bring about awareness of racist norms.

The next sort of disorientation that Harbin examines arises when learning about privilege and oppression. She places this discussion within the context of feminist education and in particular the consciousness raising groups of the 1960s. Beyond sharing experiences and building relationships with other women, Harbin argues that the experiences of disorientation these groups often engendered were a necessary part of generating new awareness. That their discussions aimed at understanding the intersection of gender and other forms of marginalization through the sharing of personal experiences were difficult and uncomfortable was a necessary aspect of these groups. That discomfort made participants aware of the ways in which their orientation in the social world had been constructed by systems of oppression. The result was often a lack of clarity about what comes next. In light of this new awareness, participants were left unsure of how to re-orient themselves (Harbin 2016, 79). Through being disoriented, participants came to a better understanding of their own experiences at the expense of losing the security of their previous orientation in the social world.

I would further contend that there is significant overlap among the disorientations Harbin describes and the experience of epistemic injustice. A moment of double consciousness might have one realize that one’s testimony is not being taken seriously because one is black. Fricker herself uses consciousness raising groups and feminist education to introduce the concept of hermeneutical injustice because they are aimed at
creating new hermeneutical resources to fill in interpretive lacunas (Fricker 2007, 148-151). In experiencing an epistemic injustice, one may become disoriented by the recognition of previously unnoticed epistemic features of the social world.

We can add Harbin’s account of disorientation to Benjamin’s account of distraction and begin to see how one disrupts the other. When we are disoriented, we are forced, at least to an extent, to pay attention. Habits formed in a state of distraction cease to be useful when we become disoriented as they lose their ability to anchor us when the social world ceases to be familiar. The structure of a socially stratified world means that dominantly situated individuals will develop similar epistemic habits as they share similar experiences of distraction. The power of disorientation is to disrupt the mass itself, allowing individuals to understand their place with the complex structure of power relations. In the next chapter, I will further elaborate on this particular relationship between distraction and disorientation in order to provide an account of disorientation in public life and the role it can play in an account of structural epistemic justice.
Chapter 5: The Necessity of Public Epistemic Virtue

5.1 Introduction

In the final section of the previous chapter, I argued that Fricker’s account of individual epistemic virtue is insufficient for dealing with the structural nature of epistemic injustice. To emphasize this, I presented Walter Benjamin’s account of the distracted masses as a structural barrier to epistemic justice that virtuous action on the part of individuals alone is incapable of overcoming. I also posited Harbin’s account of disorientation as a way in which distracted individuals can come to understand their place within the complex web of relationships that produce epistemic injustices. In this chapter, I want to argue that what is missing from Fricker’s account of epistemic justice is an account of shared or public epistemic virtues. The aim of these public virtues would be to shape the sorts of actions that can only be undertaken collectively either as a community or by institutions. In order to construct this account, I will expand on Harbin’s account of disorientation to argue that disorientating the distracted socially dominant is necessary to create the space in which public epistemic virtues can take root. Finally, I will return to Campbell’s account of relational remembering to argue that the personal epistemic virtue of integrity can be a model for a similar public epistemic virtue I call reconciliation.

5.2 Expanding Our Account of Disorientation

Before we can return to Campbell and relational remembering to construct our account of public epistemic virtue, we first need to expand on our truncated discussion of disorientation from the previous chapter. In this section, I want to explore in more depth what Harbin sees as the potential moral value of being disoriented. Echoing a discussion
from section 2.3.1, I also want to examine the relationship between emotion and disorientation in order to once more demonstrate the positive effect that emotion can have on moral life. The final discussion of this section will build on Harbin’s account in order to extend our understanding of disorientation into the public sphere.

5.2.1 Disorientation and Moral Awareness

The disorientations discussed in section 4.5.2 of the previous chapter generally do not generate the kind of awareness that leaves us with a clear sense of how to act next (Harbin 2016, 89). This is illustrated by cases of participants in consciousness raising groups becoming newly aware of the structures of oppression in their lives while remaining disoriented. Their new awareness did not make it immediately obvious as to how they should act in their relationships with family, friends, or employers going forward (Harbin 2016, 79). According to Harbin, what is required to move from awareness to action is the moral action that comes from being reoriented.

As discussed in previous chapters, one way of orienting ourselves in the social world is through collective narrative. The process of consciousness raising can thus be understood as one that disorients participants in a way that creates space for new narratives and new interpretive resources to be generated. In being disoriented by experiences of oppression or by sharing those experiences, new knowledge about the structure of the social world is gained. Through this knowledge, experiences of oppression can be interpreted and contextualized. In turn, participants construct new narratives about themselves, each other, and their social types. Through disorientation, new collective interpretive resources can be born. Harbin, borrowing a term from Jane O’Reilly, writes:
When understandings of oppression “click” into place, they can reorient us, bringing pieces of information together into a framework by which they confirm each other. “Click” experiences can indicate that I have found my experience (e.g., of what I did not know before to call sexism) clearly reflected in another person’s account, leading to a powerful feeling of recognition and, sometimes, a clear sense of what to do next. Such reorientations could lead to some new and important kinds of moral resolve. (Harbin 2016, 90)

Harbin here approaches the ‘click’ from the perspective of the marginalized, but I think it can also be used to describe relevant experiences of dominantly situated. Disorientations like white ambush can cause a ‘click’ moment in which previously unremarked upon features of the social world become suddenly and unmistakably remarkable for their role in creating conditions of oppression. Likewise, this abrupt reorientation can inspire a moral resolve that aims at alleviating or changing those conditions of oppression. Insofar as we’re interested in disorientation as a means of engaging the epistemically distracted, these ‘click’ moments are immensely valuable. The ‘click’ of reorientation may be what is needed to put a subject on the path towards epistemic virtue.

Within the context of this chapter, we can understand disorientation as a disruption of the state of distraction. In becoming disoriented, the familiar bearings of the social world fall away and one is no longer able to understand how to go on. In the absence of familiar bearings, habit alone can no longer carry the disoriented subject forward. Disorientation requires the social subject to focus in order to reorient themselves or at least to help them adjust to a world that lacks familiar bearings. The particular
disorientations outlined above occur when a subject becomes aware of features of the moral world to which they were not previously paying attention.

When a disoriented subject embraces the new awareness disorientation can bring, how they relate to the social world shifts to accommodate their new understanding of it. Harbin emphasizes that this new moral awareness represents a shift in the subject’s moral behaviour that is distinct from moral resolve. Disorientation does not necessarily create moral resolve, nor is moral resolve necessary for moral action (Harbin 2016, 63-64). Harbin writes, “The ways disorientations can be beneficial often have to do with the value of more tentative, sensitive, and less sure-footed ways of being” (Harbin 2016, 63).

In becoming more aware of morally salient features of the social world, disoriented persons are changed even if they are not resolved to choose some particular course of moral action over another.

This ambivalence towards moral resolve is compatible with the previously articulated virtue epistemology. Epistemic virtue starts with awareness of salient epistemic features of the social world that lead to injustice. If a subject is made aware of these salient features through becoming disoriented, they may embrace epistemically virtuous behaviour because it is reorienting. This is distinct from the moral resolve to pursue epistemic justice because it is motivated by a desire to once again find one’s way. Once that way is found, new moral resolve may also come about in a subject should they feel sufficiently moved by their experience of disorientation. However, even subjects who do not feel particularly resolved one way or the other can still be epistemically virtuous in ways that contribute to the larger project of epistemic justice. There can be moral value in remaining disoriented without finding resolve because disorientation itself
offers insight into previously unnoticed aspects of the social world. Disoriented subjects, being more attentive and ready to reflect upon the ways their prejudices affect their credibility judgements and capacity to understand others, will be more willing to embrace and encourage the changes to shared narratives and collective interpretive resources that are demanded by epistemic justice. The realization that they exist within a complex system of relationships and power imbalances will stay with them and inform the kinds of actions they take. The value of disorientation as a tool of epistemic justice thus lies in its capacity to disrupt the state of distraction by drawing attention to previously unrecognized epistemic features of the social world.

5.2.2 Disorientation and Emotion

As Harbin noted previously, experiences of oppression are draining for the marginalized and can reinforce prejudiced beliefs in the dominantly situated. The epistemic possibility that disorientation represents is often overshadowed by the emotional toll that it takes. Prolonged periods of hopelessness, unhappiness, anxiety, fear, and panic are possible reactions to disorientation. Harbin notes that being disoriented can even lead one to exhibit behaviours consistent with symptoms of mental illness (Harbin 2016, 12). Recognizing the plain reality that the emotions stirred by disorientation can overwhelm and consume us is necessary to ground this discussion. However, emotional reactions to disorientation in and of themselves do not necessarily constitute barriers to finding new awareness in disorientating moments and can actually be vital for helping disoriented subjects acclimatize to their new understanding of the world.

In her essay “Being Dismissed: The Politics of Emotional Expression,” Campbell offers an analysis of bitterness that we can understand through the lens of Harbin’s
disorientation. Campbell begins this analysis by writing, “The accusation of bitterness implicitly acknowledges that a great many people have never been granted the social goods likely to lead to the luxury of cultivating sympathetic emotional lives” (Campbell 1994, 49). She proceeds to argue that bitterness begins as an expression of anger. Anger becomes bitterness when that expression is denied validity. She writes:

Bitterness seems to be a particular mode of expression—the recounting of incidents of injury—only in a certain context of interpretation—one in which people no longer care to listen. Both the mode of expression and the failure of uptake combine to form bitterness. We do not typically call people holding bombs bitter. They are expressing their anger so forcefully that we cannot afford not to give them our attention. Further, people whose anger receives uptake are not, on that occasion at least, bitter. They are, instead, angry or even righteous. (Campbell 1994, 50)

As it concerns us here, bitterness exists in relationships of power between individuals in the context of injustice and oppression. It is an accusation made by those who are disinterested in an expression of anger and thereby discredit it. Campbell argues that bitterness works by shifting the responsibility for that anger from the behaviour that inspired it onto the subject expressing it (Campbell 1994, 51). To say that the bitterness that interests us exists in the public sphere is to differentiate it from the mundane form of bitterness that occurs when we feel personally wronged. Campbell’s account of bitterness is intended to draw attention to the particular way it is expressed and dismissed within relationships of oppression.

We can understand Campbell’s account of bitterness as having the hallmarks of an epistemic injustice. The accusation of bitterness rests on a judgement that the bitter
person’s emotional credibility is lacking. The embittered subject is one who has gotten something correct about the significance of some action and reacted appropriately only to receive no uptake. This is a testimonial injustice as the embittered party is not given due credibility. As established earlier, this sort of failure to receive due recognition can be a disorienting experience of a kind similar to double consciousness. Thus, we can add to Campbell’s analysis of bitterness by suggesting that the experience of being embittered - having one’s anger denied them - is disorienting in a way that can clarify particular relations of power. The embittered subject becomes aware of their place within a socially stratified society through the observation that their anger can be denied and a recognition of by whom. In such a case, the emotion of bitterness is a clarifying one that empowers the embittered to apprehend previously unrecognized features of their social world. In turn, bitterness can inspire moral resolve when a subject refuses to give up on the grievance that fuels their anger.

Rich emotional lives are defining characteristics of human experience and emotions themselves are a medium through which we relate to each other, ourselves, and the world. I’ve taken bitterness as an example of the role that emotion can play in turning disorientation into moral resolve because Campbell offers such an insightful analysis of it. However, it stands to reason that bitterness is not alone in providing fertile ground for disorientation induced moral resolve. In cases of white ambush, moral resolve may be inspired by guilt and a desire to make things right. The emotions we feel in response to recognizing structures of oppression and unbalanced relationships of power can encourage us to embrace a new outlook on the social that accounts for previously unrecognized social realities of oppression and injustice.
Returning to the notion that moral action does not necessarily require moral resolve, I would argue that emotions can play a role in reshaping our moral character during periods of disorientation. Since we relate to each other with and through emotions, changes in our understanding of the social world are liable to change how a subject feels about it. In turn, those feelings can come to define how a subject relates to others, especially subjects of oppression. Whether the disoriented subject is a member of an oppressed group, a member of a dominant one, or (as is often the case) both, reorientation can inspire feelings of solidarity and empathy which in turn can motivate a change in moral character regardless of whether the subjects find themselves with newfound moral resolve.

5.2.3 Disorienting Remembering

If we briefly recall section 2.3.1 of Chapter 2, remembering is part of the mimetic process through which we construct our self-concepts. Through remembering, we give ourselves the necessary context to construct a narrative that answers the question, “Who am I?” This self-narrative anchors us within our relationships and thus is an important way in which we orient ourselves in the social world. Through remembering the past, we define our relations to ourselves, each other, and the world itself. However, through the lens of relational remembering, we can also see how memory activities can be disorienting. “Being Dismissed,” prefigures much of Campbell’s later work on memory. At one point in the essay, Campbell draws an explicit connection between the accusation of bitterness and bad remembering, writing:

Finally, the accusation of bitterness not only refuses to grant authority to judgments of wrongdoing but also refuses to grant authority to what counts for
others as significant memory. Those most likely to be called bitter, moreover, belong to groups that already have the least support and validation for their personal memories and group history, groups for whom actively not forgetting may be the only way to establish a sense of history. The accusation of bitterness may further undermine the struggle for group memory by failing again to provide the uptake that leaves the recounting of incidents established as public record.

(Campbell 1994, 53)

This passage illustrates what I think is one way in which remembering can itself be disorienting. In the case of bitterness, the denial by those with power of the significance of a memory leaves individuals or groups disoriented with regards to the past. When anger is dismissed as bitterness, the power to self define through memory is denied. Instead, an interpretation of the past is imposed upon the embittered subject, thereby defining them, their emotions, and their past on someone else’s terms. Harbin offers the term *gaslighting* to describe this phenomenon. Gaslighting is the process by which, “individuals are made to question the trustworthiness of their own perceptions, memories, and judgments, making them increasingly filled with self-doubt” (Harbin 2016, 80).

Here, I want to go beyond Harbin and argue that in cases of bitterness, the embittered subject is gaslit through the imposition of historical narratives that do not align with their experiences. Thus, bitterness occurs when a subject’s attempts to be faithful to the past are met with hostility and denial.

The disorienting effect of being embittered can be frustrating, demoralizing, and even maddening. However, Harbin specifically notes that the experience of being gaslit can also create the fertile grounds for new insight. She writes:
The experiences of gaslighting can be unsettling, while also prompting new awareness: it is not that my perceptions cannot be trusted, it is that they are vulnerable to being made to look untrustworthy by dominant others. One becomes aware that these and other psychological manipulations could result from oppressions in the future, and that there are additional strategies needed in order to identify psychic results of oppression in oneself. (Harbin 2016, 81)

In this light, we can understand being embittered as a process of disorienting remembering that has the possibility to generate new and valuable insight. Bitterness serves as an excellent example of a way in which failures of remembering together can be disorienting. It points at the broader reality that structural inequality and oppression make it possible for socially powerful groups and individuals to disorient the oppressed through gaslighting. The structures of hermeneutical inequality that create epistemic injustice create the space in which feelings and narratives about the past can be denied and overwritten. Under such circumstances anger becomes bitterness, pain becomes hysteria, and memories become delusions.

Bitterness is an example of a failed attempt at remembering together that can generate disorientation. However, successful attempts at identifying some significant feature of the past can also generate disorientation. Through the natural process of reinterpreting the past in light of new experiences, new awareness, or new understandings, a subject may become disoriented by the recognition that some aspect of the past was not how they previously believed it to be. In such a case, new awareness may be generated about some aspect of the present, which in turn makes disorientation something of a fundamental aspect of faithfulness to the past. Being faithful to the past
can be disorienting because it occasionally means reinterpreting the significance of the past to the present in ways that disrupt our previously stable understanding of the world.

Jennifer Freyd’s story, as discussed in section 2.2.1 of Chapter 2, offers us examples of ways in which remembering is disorienting. She is first disoriented by the recognition that some of her childhood memories were memories of abuse, something she had not previously considered. This leaves her unsure how to interact with her parents and terrified to let them near her children. Per Heaney’s reporting:

The plan was just to get through it. Jennifer had told her husband, JQ, about her memories, and she thought she could temporarily set them aside. After all, she had lived without them well enough for years. But when her parents showed up, Jennifer found she couldn’t stop worrying about her sons. That first night, she asked her husband to sleep on a camping mat in the hall outside their bedroom. It wasn’t enough. In the middle of the night, Jennifer wrested her family from where they slept, and the four of them fled to the home of a colleague who had answered her panicked midnight call. (Heaney 2021)

As Harbin would put it, Freyd does not know how to go on after gaining a new understanding of the past. Further, when she attempted to engage her parents about what she remembered, she was met with complete denial, as was made evident by Pam Freyd’s article discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.2.1. While Heaney’s account doesn’t make it clear the degree to which this denial was further disorienting, it’s easy to see that it could have been. In both disorientations, there is room for insight into the nature of power. The relational nature of remembering also allows the disorientation of remembering to be
shared or passed on to those with whom one is remembering or who have access in some way to a subject’s recollections.

In reading Heaney’s article, I found myself disoriented by the sudden awareness of how much power is vested in certain academic institutions and structures. The elder Freyds were able to turn their denial of their daughter’s memories into a multi-decade project that has fundamentally changed how our academic and legal structures think about memory. Their position as respectable, white, upper middle-class academics allowed them broad access to the necessary hermeneutical power to do so. I sat for a moment after finishing the article for the first time, unsure what to do next. I was suddenly and acutely aware of just how unbalanced the relationship between victims and the entire conceptual framework that defines what the past means really is. In my case, a new understanding of past events disoriented me by making me aware of features of my present I had not previously been attentive to. Heaney’s article is a form of remembering together insofar as it enables readers to come to a new understanding of the significance of the past. By sharing Jennifer Freyd’s memories, the article shares their significance as well.

5.2.4 Disorientation and Public Life

Similar to how Fricker’s account of epistemic injustice focuses on individuals, Harbin aims to offer an account of disorientation as it occurs for and between individuals. However, by starting from Benjamin’s account of distraction as a phenomenon of public life, we can expand Harbin’s account into that sphere. While I noted earlier that a mass is composed of individuals, I think Benjamin is right in his view that a distracted mass can be thought of as a single, malleable entity. A distracted mass is composed of individuals
who are distracted in relevantly similar ways such that they develop overlapping epistemic, moral, and emotional habits through reference to a shared hermeneutical framework. The result is a collection of individuals who unreflectively act in similar ways because they have been habituated to do so. Harbin’s disorientations disrupt the functioning of the mass by forcing individuals to begin thinking and acting with greater knowledge of oppression. If we understand distraction to be a barrier to understanding what is needed for structural epistemic justice and disorientation as a means of possible constructive disruption, then it follows that we need an account of disorientation in public life.

Disorientation is a relatively common experience and Harbin’s account of it aims to understand what the experience of disorientation can tell us about relationships of oppression. To this end, her account is specifically interested in how disorientation reframes an individual’s relationship to the social world. I’ve already argued in section 4.5 of the previous chapter that disorientation can disrupt an individual’s ability to go along unquestioningly with the distracted mass. However, a disorientation that only affects an individual is insufficient for disrupting the mass as a whole. That requires what I call a public disorientation, which is a disorientation that affects an entire group, community, or other large collective body. Such a disorientation occurs at a magnitude that it disorients many individuals within a collective. The effect on individuals is largely the same insofar as they find themselves unsure of how to proceed, but it occurs at scale throughout a group. Necessarily, such a disorientation would have to occur within a shared space, either physical or social as such spaces are where collective interpretive activities occur.
I’m drawing this distinction because I believe that both the kind of disorientation that occurs for an individual and the kind that occurs for a group are relevant to the project of understanding structural epistemic justice. Just as individual disorientations offer the disoriented subject a chance to rewrite or reinterpret their personal narrative in order to reorient themselves, public disorientations provide an opportunity for a public to redefine itself in the process of reorientation. The rest of this chapter will explore ways in which public acts of good remembering enable both personal and public disorientations that create space for personal and structural epistemic virtue.

5.3 **Public Memory, Disorientation, and Epistemic Justice**

In this final section, I want to examine the ways in which public memory activities can be used to promote epistemic justice through creating both public and personal disorientations. Public memory activities are, for our purposes, any activity that takes place in the public sphere that aims to remember an aspect of the shared past. The scope of what constitutes public remembering varies depending on what is being remembered and by whom. Public remembering happens at every level of our society, from federal initiatives like the annual celebration of “Canada Day” to a community commemorating the death of a notable elder. The aim of these sorts of activities is to structure the present through reference to the past. By making these memory activities public, the implication is that the aspects of the past in question are of public concern. A public is formed in part by and through remembering together and defined by narratives formed by such activities.

We previously discussed the reciprocal relationship between personal and shared hermeneutical frameworks. Personal frameworks both inform and are informed by shared ones. Likewise, public memory activities can serve to reinforce a shared interpretive
framework or they can be aimed at redefining one. In cases of the former, memory activities are organized by individuals, groups, and institutions with hermeneutical power. They are influenced by the dominant narratives that define the shared framework and thus aim to reinforce it through shared memory activities. The hermeneutically powerful can and do use public memory activities to redefine narratives as well, but of more interest to us are the ways in which the hermeneutically marginalized can do so.

5.3.1 Hostile Remembering

The relationship Medina identifies between testimonial and hermeneutical justice suggests that structural epistemic justice requires shared hermeneutical frameworks to admit more diverse kinds of experiences and interpretations. Fricker’s formulation of epistemic virtue suggests that it requires a genuine amount of epistemic humility on the part of the epistemically privileged. However, the distraction of epistemically privileged social classes and types makes it difficult for them to see the necessity of epistemic humility, virtue, or justice to a functioning and just society. Their lack of awareness of these issues makes them liable to resist attempts to demonstrate that necessity because doing so would require giving up the privilege that being distracted affords them. Harbin’s disorientation can make the distracted classes more aware of the epistemic features of the social world that produce epistemic injustice. Per our discussion in Chapter 3, section 3.3.2, it is just as possible for that awareness to result in willful hermeneutical ignorance when the disoriented subject elects to reorient themselves using their previous bearings because it allows them to retain the privilege of distraction. In order to redefine the shared hermeneutical framework, marginalized communities and
individuals have no choice but to try and force the epistemically privileged to begin paying attention.

One way of doing this is what I will call *hostile remembering*. In practice, hostile remembering takes the form of public memory activities that aim to disorient the epistemically distracted through an attempt to be faithful to the past. This form of remembering is often read as being *hostile* by the epistemically privileged because it directly challenges the legitimacy of that privilege. Hence, the label ‘hostile remembering’ doesn’t so much refer to the actual intent of the memory activities in question, but the assumptions about that intent held by those in positions of epistemic privilege. By having the narratives they’ve ascribed to in a state of distraction challenged, they feel as though someone is *forcing* a new narrative on them, one that doesn’t conform to their experiences. Marginalized groups take to public memory activities precisely because they have few other methods for sharing their collective memories in a way that will be heard. However, the disorienting nature of this kind of remembering is liable to be read as hostility regardless of whether marginalized rememberers intend to be hostile or not. From the perspective of marginalized groups, what I’ve called hostile remembering is just being faithful to the past.

5.3.2 Remembering in Place

In Chapter 2, I related Campbell’s anecdote about hiking with a friend. One of the insights we can draw from it is that memory has spatial dimensions. The remembering they are doing is grounded in the particular place in which it occurs. That particular memory activity required her to access that space with that friend. By contrast, I can remember my parents’ Volvo anywhere, anytime, for any reason. I do not need to take
you to my childhood home or to the Volvo itself for you to understand its significance to me or to this thesis. As Campbell does in her anecdote about hiking, spatially bound memories can be related to others through being in and using that space together. However, some of the significance is lost in relating those memories through testimony alone. I can rationally apprehend Campbell’s assertion that she was experiencing the trail through the recollection of her friend, but I cannot participate in that remembering unless I too am walking alongside her and her friend. Remembering in particular places and spaces is one way in which marginalized groups can produce the kinds of awareness generating disorientation that are likely to be read as hostile.

Campbell offers an example of spatial remembering’s disorienting effects in the form of “Argentina’s Children for Identity and Justice Against Silence and Forgetting” and the performance of escraches. Drawing on the work of scholar Diana Taylor, Campbell recounts how the children of those disappeared during the years of the Argentinean Dirty War use space to bring attention to their demands for justice. The escrache is a form of boisterous protest aimed at bringing attention to particular individuals and places that were connected to disappearances and torture. In the lead up to the escrache, participants reshape the places in which they are protesting with maps indicating locations where victims were detained and tortured as well as the locations of perpetrators’ homes. Pictures of victims are carried during the escrache itself and chalk is used to list the crimes of perpetrators outside of their dwellings (Campbell 2014, 41-42). As Campbell puts it, “In mapping both where people were tortured and where the torturers now live, the protestors remake Argentinean space explicitly as a place of
memory, of the past experienced from the standpoint of the present” (Campbell 2014, 42).

The aim of the escrache is to disorient the people who move through a space by drawing their attention to its history. As Benjamin observes, spaces are one of the foremost places we are able to operate in a state of distraction. We move through them while preoccupied with other matters paying no heed to the space itself until we are made to. By bringing the past into the present through pictures, maps, and chalked accusations, the escrache changes the meaning of the space. A space that was once neutral, a background for daily life is made into the sight of unimaginable pain and horror. Inhabitants and passersby are confronted by this past and forced to reorient themselves in relation to familiar spaces. In the process, they are invited to reorient themselves in relation to the past itself, possibly creating space for a new understanding of the present.

Per Campbell:

What is clear is that the protesters, as well as shaming perpetrators, call on spectators to rewatch the events of their pasts in order to be appropriately guided by them. If we remember via stages in our life marked as places—“when I was in college”—in remarking space, the protestors re-periodicize memory, pulling our autobiographies into historical time. Their challenge is part of a critical activity whose object is the appropriate way to remember given that this activity shapes the possibilities for how we go on. (Campbell 2014, 43)

The escrache offers a compelling example of how remembering that is read as hostile by the epistemically privileged can disorient the distracted through reshaping and re-contextualizing a space. Public remembering allows hermeneutically marginalized
groups to make the past present in such a way that its significance cannot be ignored. It is one thing to be told that someone is a torturer. It is another to have someone come to your house and ask you, “Are you aware that your neighbour was a torturer? Or that the building across from you was a concentration camp?” In the wake of these sorts of questions, a previously unaware subject is forced to reckon with both the newfound significance of the space they inhabit and the incompleteness of their understanding of the social and physical worlds.

In grappling with their incomplete understanding of the spaces they inhabit, the privileged subject is presented with an opportunity for epistemically virtuous action. They can reflect on the reasons for their previous ignorance, embrace narratives about the past they were previously ignorant of, and listen to previously unheard voices in an effort to better understand their new and more complete understanding of the world. By recognizing the incompleteness of their understanding of the world, the epistemically privileged are given an opportunity to practice epistemically virtuous behaviour. This new awareness further encourages them to continue to practice epistemic virtues as they see the world in new epistemic colour.

5.3.3 Remembering and Disorientating Emotions

Public memory activities are often emotionally charged because remembering the past is an emotional experience. This is especially true when the past that is being remembered is defined by injustice and oppression. By engaging in public acts of remembering, marginalized groups can fill the public space with the emotions their shared past evokes. As in the case of Campbell’s account of bitterness, when the epistemically privileged are confronted with such emotional displays of remembering, they may just dismiss them.
However, their shared humanity creates an opportunity to share in the emotions that acts of public remembering inspire. While the epistemically privileged may not have the specific experiences that marginalized groups are remembering, their shared experiences of emotion can create space in which new awareness arises. We can consider grief as an example.

Loss is a relatively universal human experience. Death is an inevitable part of life and grief is the name we give to the emotion that arises in its wake. Grief itself is an emotion that is intimately bound up in remembering. When we grieve, we remember the person who was and who is no more. When we remember, our grief might change what the past means to us. Memories that involve the deceased take on a new meaning now that they are no longer around to share in them. Occurrences and experiences that we associate with the deceased may trigger memories of them in a way that didn’t happen when they were alive. Grief is also disorienting. The loss of a loved one leaves us unsure of how to go on. In this moment of disorientation, a grieving person might seek comfort in the presence of those who knew the deceased. In sharing memories about them, those who grieve can find catharsis and begin to find their way again. Grief generates a new understanding of the world, one that is coloured by the recognition that a loved one is no longer in it.

The experience of grief can also allow the epistemically privileged to empathize with the epistemically marginalized. In the Argentinian case presented above, public grieving over lost loved ones is just as important to the escrache as its spatial elements. The public display of grief is both a way to remember the missing and something with which witnesses can empathize. An epistemically privileged subject may find themselves
disoriented by the recognition that they can understand the emotion being felt but not its cause. In that moment of disorientation, they have an opportunity to gain a new awareness of their social world by engaging with the grief of those whose family members were disappeared. Shared experiences of grief become a point of entry through which epistemically privileged subjects can begin to learn about oppressive aspects of the shared social world. As in the case of spatial remembering this new awareness comes with the opportunity to take the first steps towards cultivating epistemic virtue by engaging in epistemically virtuous behaviour.

5.4 Reconciliation as a Model of Public Epistemic Virtue

At the beginning of this chapter, I posited that there exists a public epistemic virtue akin to integrity. Thus far, I’ve offered several examples of how shared memory activities can disorient distracted masses in a way that promotes epistemic virtue. However, these disorientations are still only creating space for individuals to act in an epistemically virtuous way. A truly epistemically virtuous public is one that would encourage these sorts of disorienting forms of remembering as a way to promote the individual epistemic virtues necessary to change the shared hermeneutical framework. I liken this virtue to integrity because it is also essentially a virtue of accountability. Encouraging critical engagement with the past to promote a more truthful understanding of the present social conditions is an attempt to be accountable to the conditions of oppression that produce epistemic injustices in the present. While I could probably label this public virtue a form of shared integrity, I want to borrow a term that already has a certain amount of public utility, at least here in Canada: reconciliation.

One of the conclusions I’ve drawn over the course of this project is that relationships of oppression between the powerful and the marginalized are embedded
within the very structure of our social fabric in such a way as to produce the conditions for epistemic injustice. These are relationships that are unjust as they allow prejudice to inhibit the capacity for marginalized groups to flourish with the same ease that dominant ones can. These relationships possess an epistemic dimension, as we saw Fricker argue in Chapter 2. If we wish to address the structural nature of epistemic injustice, then society must be restructured in such a way as to heal these unjust relationships. There must be a structural effort to reconcile the powerful and the marginalized.

I’ve specifically borrowed the notion of reconciliation from Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation process, as embodied by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC was specifically interested in reconciling one set of relationships, that of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. In providing an account of what reconciliation means to this relationship, the TRC’s Final Report offers an account of reconciliation that I think frames it as a public epistemic virtue. In its Final Report, the TRC determines that the Indian Residential School system was designed to systematically erode the cultural, historical, and personal memories of Indigenous peoples. From Volume 6:

One of the most significant harms to come out of the residential schools was the attack on Indigenous memory. The federal government’s policy of assimilation sought to break the chain of memory that connected the hearts, minds, and spirits of Aboriginal children to their families, communities, and nations. Many, but not all, Survivors have found ways to restore these connections. They believe that reconciliation with other Canadians calls for changing the country’s collective, national history so that it is based on the truth about what happened to them as
children, and to their families, communities, and nations. (TRC, Volume 6 2015, 157)

The project of reconciliation that’s being described here is a project of good remembering aimed at enabling epistemic justice at a structural level. It calls for reinterpreting the past with reference to Indigenous memories and experiences of oppression in order to fill in the gaps in our collective memory and, in turn, our collective interpretive frameworks. Changing the hermeneutical framework through which Canadian history is used to understand the present requires listening and deferring to the experiences of Indigenous people. On this view, reconciliation is a project of hermeneutical justice, one which seeks to fill in the gaps in our collective interpretive framework through acts of public remembering:

As Commissioners, we are governed in our approach to reconciliation with this thought: the way that we all have been educated in this country—Aboriginal children in residential schools and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in public and other schools—has brought us to where we are today: to a point where the psychological and emotional well-being of Aboriginal children has been harmed, and the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples has been seriously damaged. We believe that true reconciliation can take place only through a reshaping of a shared national, collective memory of who we are and what has come before. (TRC, vol. 6 2015, 161-162)

Reconciliation can be thought of not only as a historical process - one defined by the starting and ending of a commission, for instance - but as a way of life for those who live in societies defined by relationships of oppression. Again, quoting the Final Report:
Just as government, church, legal, and public education institutions in this country have been shaped by colonial systems, attitudes, and behaviours, so too have the media, sports organizations, and the business sector. Each has a role in supporting reconciliation moving forward. Non-Aboriginal citizens, those whose families settled here generations ago and those who are more recent newcomers, must also be active participants in the reconciliation process. National reconciliation involves building respectful relationships at the community level. (TRC Vol. 6 2015, 193)

Reconciliation is a set of attitudes about what the past means to the present and how that meaning can and should be derived. It is a set of epistemic behaviours that open us up to knowledge and meaning produced and derived from experiences that are different from our own. Reconciliation is bound to be disorienting for the distracted and the privileged as they grapple with the injustices of the past. However, it is a process that is engaged in together, one in which we are responsible for helping each other reorient ourselves.

In the concept of reconciliation, we find a virtue that transcends the actions and attitudes of individuals. No single person can fully embody reconciliation as a virtue. Rather, it is a shared process by which a society affirms its commitment to healing relationships damaged by structures of oppression. While integrity demands accountability of the individual to the past and to others, reconciliation demands accountability of the collective to its shared past and to the individuals that comprise it. The TRC’s specific articulation of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous
Canadians is one sort of example that offers us broader insight into how a commitment to reconciliation can restructure an epistemically unjust society.
Chapter 6: Epistemic Justice and Good Remembering

6.1 Looking back

By way of concluding this project, I want to briefly summarize what we’ve discussed thus far and offer some suggestions for ways in which the account I’ve presented here could be further elaborated or extended. In Chapter 2, I began with a lengthy discussion of Campbell’s account of relational remembering, which I expanded upon through reference to Ricoeur’s work on narrative. The ideas presented in this chapter go on to inform much of what came after as we returned over and over again to the ways in which remembering shapes our shared narratives and in turn our understanding of the world.

Chapter 3 focused on Fricker’s account of epistemic injustice. Additionally, I discussed some relational critiques of her particular formulation of the concept from Medina and Pohlhaus Jr. The result was an account of epistemic injustice more informed by the ways in which relationships of oppression produce injustices.

Using the ideas of relational remembering developed in Chapter 2 and epistemic injustice in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 argued that the conditions for epistemic injustice are produced by bad remembering. In failing to be faithful to the past, the epistemically privileged construct dominant hermeneutical frameworks that exclude the experiences of marginalized groups. In turn, this renders those experiences difficult for them to hear through a combination of unintelligibility and willful ignorance. While Fricker offers a virtue account of epistemic justice that encourages the epistemically privileged to engage more critically with their understanding of the world, I argued that an account of individual epistemic justice is unsuited to addressing the overarching structural
conditions that enable epistemic injustices. To emphasize this point, I presented Benjamin’s notion of distraction as a being a structural barrier which Fricker’s account struggles to overcome. In turn, I offered Harbin’s account of disorientation as a possible means of disrupting the state of distraction.

Expanding on the discussion of disorientation in the previous chapter, Chapter 5 explores the relationship between disorientation and remembering. In so doing, I argue that public acts of being faithful to the past are a means through which the epistemically privileged can be disoriented in ways that create the space for them to arrive at a new understanding of relationships of oppression and conditions of injustice. This led to a final discussion about reconciliation as a collective epistemic virtue. I argued that we can understand reconciliation as a form of virtuous collective epistemic behaviour which entails being faithful to the past in order to mend unjust relationships in the present. While the argument of this project ends at reconciliation, I think there is room to expand on the subject as I’ve presented it here.

6.2 Looking Forward

One of the key insights I want to draw out of my account of reconciliation is that addressing epistemic injustice requires a lot of work. On a personal level, cultivating epistemic virtue is a continuous process that requires conscious effort. Being disoriented can create space in which epistemically virtuous action is made easier, but the need for epistemic virtue doesn’t disappear once we’ve acclimatized to whatever new awareness disorientation might bring. A frustration I have with Fricker’s account of epistemic virtue is that it doesn’t offer any real idea of how to cultivate epistemic virtue. Chapter 5 of this project offers an account of how disorientation can help cultivate epistemic virtue, but I still feel there is room to expand on this topic further.
For now, I want to leave off with one last idea from Harbin. In a later chapter of her book, she offers an account of what she calls ‘doubling back.’ To illustrate the concept, she refers to the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. The injustices of the past have left an indelible mark on this relationship. Land that was appropriated by settlers cannot always be returned to the state it was once in and languages and cultural practices lost during cultural genocide cannot always be rediscovered (Harbin 2016, 140-141). As Harbin puts it, “New anti-colonial realities are important goals, but they cannot fully recover from the legacies of settler dominance and attempted cultural genocide of indigenous groups” (Harbin 2016, 140-141). Recognizing this means recognizing that there is no end state to the project of decolonization. Rather, it is a process, a way of being, and a goal to strive towards. In order to pursue decolonization, we must double back over the injustices of the past in order to continually renew and reaffirm our understanding of them in relation to our aim (Harbin 2016, 142-143).

In the context of this project, we can understand cultivating epistemic virtue as requiring us to engage in this kind of doubling back. By continually reminding ourselves of the aspects of the social world that epistemic privilege makes it difficult to understand, we can continually go back to that space in which the cultivation of epistemic virtue is made more accessible. In turn, reconciliation as a public epistemic virtue requires a collective commitment to doubling back so that the past and the awareness about present social realities of oppression and injustice it can create are not forgotten.

I wanted to spend some time discussing doubling back here because it’s an example of what I think is necessary for cultivating epistemic virtue at both levels of the
individual and within the broader social world. Looking beyond this project, I think there is a lot of room to explore what cultivating epistemic virtue looks like, what it requires, and how it can be encouraged on a collective level. Addressing epistemic injustice necessitates a robust account of what epistemic justice can and should look like. This project offers an account of this matter, but by no means a complete or exhaustive one.
Bibliography


https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2018.1506996

https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2022.2073702


