Epistemic injustice and colonisation

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As a site of colonial conquest, sub-Saharan Africa has experienced colonialism's historic and continuing harms. One of the aspects of this harm is epistemic. In the analytic philosophical tradition, this harm can partly be theorised in line with the literature on epistemic injustice, although it does not fit squarely. I show this by arguing for what can be understood as a colonial state's specific manifestation of epistemic injustice. This manifestation takes into account the historical context of colonisation and the continuing coloniality of sub-Saharan African countries. From this, I argue for an approach to remediating this epistemic injustice that relies on the fair-minded pursuit of knowledge. This approach, I briefly argue, gains valuable insights from African epistemological traditions and can be beneficial to other epistemic injustice instances that result specifically from historical cases of oppression.

Introduction

"Social epistemology proceeds on the commonsensical idea that information can often be acquired from others" (Goldman and O'Connor 2019). It concerns the role others and our social situatedness play in our knowledge acquisition. This move changes the narrative from "knowledge per se" to "situated knowledge". The concept of situated knowledge was introduced to the lexicon of social epistemology by Donna Haraway (1988). This is simply a way to understand knowledge and knowers as arising from a particular social milieu and to acknowledge the influence that this might have on knowledge formation. This introduced a pragmatic dimension to the field of epistemology. It gave new meanings to traditional questions like "how do we know?". The concern is not simply about the "evidence" that we have for what we know, but how social factors influence what we know.

These pragmatic considerations of social epistemology, coupled with the intuitions of virtue epistemology, are in many ways foundational to the relatively new field of epistemic injustice (if we take Miranda Fricker's seminal work in 2007 to be the catalyst for this field). According to Fricker (2007), epistemic injustice occurs when a person is harmed in their capacity as a knower due to prejudicial stereotypes held against them. Fricker (2007) identifies two forms of this injustice: "testimonial injustice" and "hermeneutical injustice". Testimonial injustice occurs when this harm to the knower is due to a credibility deficit. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when this harm is due to a lack of hermeneutical resources caused by hermeneutical marginalisation.

Varieties of epistemic injustice have since been proposed that either expand on or point out a different phenomenon from Fricker's initial two. These include, but are not limited to, "wilful hermeneutical ignorance" (Pohlhaus 2012), "contributory injustice" (Dotson 2012), "interpretative injustice" (Peet 2017), "epistemic trust injustice" (Grasswick 2018) and "affective injustice' (Srinivasan 2018). Without going into detail on the nuanced differences between these forms of epistemic injustice, it is noteworthy that just as with Fricker's varieties, these forms of epistemic injustice aim to identify instances where an epistemic agent is treated unjustly as a knower due to prejudicial stereotypes against them. Cognate phenomena like "epistemic violence" (Dotson 2011), "epistemic oppression" (Dotson 2014) and "epistemic exploitation" (Berenstain 2016) have also

been theorised to varying degrees. One theme that is salient to these forms of epistemic bad practices is that an epistemic agent is harmed in their capacity as a knower. The harm in these epistemic bad practices is generally an offshoot of historical harms – patriarchy and colonisation, for example. An adversely affected site of this sort of historical harm is sub-Saharan Africa through colonialism.

My aim in this article is to argue for the unique manifestation of epistemic injustices in past colonial states and how these sites might provide valuable insights for remedying epistemic injustices. I achieve this aim through two paths. First, I analyse the specific manifestations of epistemic injustice on the African continent. Drawing on Kristie Dotson's (2014) third-order epistemic exclusion, I argue that epistemic injustices in past colonial states are a third-order phenomenon with a distinctly epistemic element irreducible to the social situation responsible for it. Second, I argue for the change required to attend to these epistemic injustices. This change is a sort of fair-mindedness in our pursuit of knowledge. From these, I argue briefly for an African epistemology-inspired, ubuntu epistemic approach that holds valuable insights that enable fair-mindedness.

Epistemic injustice in past colonial states

One of the harms of colonialism is epistemic. The "civilising mission" defence of colonialism embodies this harm. The civilising mission was premised on a false epistemic superiority of the colonisers over the colonised (Pekanan 2016). This led to the formulation of colonial systems that aimed to "civilise" and "teach" the colonised. In this process, the colonised were subjected to epistemic injustices, harms and wrongs (Maringe 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Tobi 2020). These have been widely theorised and are incontestable as historical events. When we look at colonisation as a historical event with its accompanying epistemic harms, the epistemic injustices of colonialism are apparent.[1] However, after this stage of active colonisation, what follows is a stage of coloniality.[2] This is where the structures and systems put in place by colonisation persist because they are hegemonic to the collective understanding of the colonised. We cannot simply focus on particular instances to flesh out epistemic injustices at this stage. Instead, we must also focus on how the prevalent epistemic systems are formed in a way that was initially biased and pernicious to the colonised. The site of epistemic injustice in past colonial states is, thus, not simply in the actual epistemic practices themselves, but in elevating one epistemic practice over another. Hence, identifying epistemic injustice at a foundational level requires an answer to the question: What makes epistemic system A superior to epistemic system B (supposing that epistemic system A is the epistemic system of the colonisers and epistemic system B is the epistemic system of the colonised)?

An obvious answer could be that epistemic system A gets us closer to the truth than epistemic system B, or epistemic system A is rational in a way that promises objectivity which epistemic system B lacks. I find this answer unproblematic if these and other similar distinctly epistemic reasons are our grounds for considering one epistemic system over another. However, something obvious but not willingly admitted about the above answer is that epistemic system A is usually the epistemic system of the socially dominant group. Taking this into account, two factors can make the superior status of epistemic system A problematic. The first is if the dominant situatedness of members of epistemic community A plays a role in the superior position of their epistemic system over epistemic system B. The second is if prejudicial stereotypes about, and the marginal situatedness of, members of epistemic community B play a role in the inferior status that their epistemic system occupies. These two factors make the superiority of epistemic system A problematic because they are not epistemic grounds for superiority. Instead, they are *oppressive* social grounds.

It is problematic in cases where these two or other similarly pernicious factors are responsible for the superiority of an epistemic system. However, the social dominance of members of epistemic group A means that their epistemic system dominates that of other groups in a systemic way and, with time, becomes hegemonic to all. This happens with epistemic systems when historical and

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1   See Tobi 2020 for an analysis of this.
2   See Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) for an analysis of how coloniality is a continuing project that persists even after colonization as a historical event.

continuing systems of oppression like colonisation influence them. What this system of oppression does is that it combines its social domination with the epistemic domination of the marginalised. When this oppressive system gets normalised, the oppressor's standards become the standards by which everything is measured. This is where epistemic injustice in past colonial states is located – in the elevation of one epistemic practice over the other, not solely on epistemic grounds but for pernicious social reasons, among others.

To reiterate, by saying that the often-accepted epistemic systems (epistemic system A in this instance) are usually those of the socially dominant group, I do not mean to claim that all epistemic practices that arise from socially dominant groups involve epistemic injustice. My claim is that if the conditions for the superior status of the epistemic system or practice of socially dominant groups over socially marginalised groups are not purely epistemic but are also influenced by pervasive factors such as maintaining social positions of dominance, it constitutes an instance of epistemic injustice. Hence, a hegemonic epistemic position is unjust if:

a) it is the position of the dominantly situated and is accepted by all and considered to be superior to others; and
b) the reason for its superiority and dominance are pernicious non-epistemic considerations like the socially superior status of those from whom this epistemic position arises, or prejudicial stereotypes about the marginally situated, among other such pervasive considerations.

The socially superior status that members of dominant groups hold, combined with the dominance of their epistemic practices, means that societal structures will be guided by the hegemonic practices arising from these groups.[3] Take the case of colonisation in a country like Nigeria, for instance. After colonisation, the exit of the colonisers did not mean a change in the epistemic practices of Nigerians. This is because structures had been built in such a way that the epistemic practices of the colonisers were seen as superior, desirable, objective and irreplaceable. An alternate example of how the oppressed can internalise these oppressive systems is how a notion of feminine beauty is dominant and accepted by all in certain societies. What is not evident about the formation of these notions of feminine beauty is that they represent the heterosexual male's notion of what feminine beauty should be.

The sustenance of dominant epistemic practices is due to their hegemonic status. Again, these epistemic practices constitute epistemic injustice because their superior position over other epistemic practices is based on the social status of their proponents. Based on these social statuses, privileges and preferences are given to certain epistemic practices in society. This doling out of privileges is primarily along the lines of the social dominance of certain groups. As a result, socially marginalised groups' epistemic practices are neglected due to prejudicial stereotypes against members of these groups. The historically persistent nature of these oppressive systems that led to the formation of hegemonic intuitions means that the epistemic injustices in these cases are structural and not merely an issue of personal vice.

The value of understanding the epistemic injustices in these scenarios as a structural issue is that it avoids the trap of individualising responsibilities. It makes it apparent that changing individual ethical or epistemic flaws is insufficient for attending to these epistemic injustices. This is not to say that changing personal moral and epistemic flaws is not valuable. To the extent that an agent is aware of the harmful hegemonic nature of certain epistemic practices, they can actively refuse to participate in solidifying those practices. However, the hegemonic nature of epistemic practices that perpetuate epistemic injustices means that they shape how we see the world and understand our experiences in a way that is not necessarily transparent to us. These epistemic practices are so ingrained in society that they form the norms by which society is guided; hence, their hegemonic nature. Understood in this light, epistemic injustices in colonial settings need to be negotiated by every member of society – the marginalised and the dominant – either by acting out the role it prescribes, taking its assumptions for granted, or reinforcing it in social structures and institutions.

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3   See Tobi 2022, 2023 for more on this.

Irreducible to social oppression

Epistemic injustices' foundational and structural nature in colonial settings makes it a third-order phenomenon. It has similarities with third-order phenomena like Kristie Dotson's (2014) third-order epistemic exclusion. Three elements that are crucial to Dotson's (2014, 116, 129) third-order epistemic exclusion are:

1. it is irreducible to social oppression;
2. it follows from a feature of epistemological systems themselves; and
3. the change required to remedy third-order epistemic exclusion is for the agents within an epistemic framework to look outside their current framework for alternative epistemic resources.

Elements of epistemic injustices in colonial settings are similar to these three elements of Dotson's third-order epistemic exclusion, albeit more nuanced. Let me focus on these nuances.

Dotson (2014) argues that third-order epistemic exclusion is irreducible to social oppression. This means that, unlike first- and second-order epistemic exclusion that generally follows from social and political oppression, third-order epistemic exclusion stems from features of epistemological systems themselves. The main feature of such exclusion is the resilience of an epistemological system. Epistemological resilience is the "resistance-to-disturbance" of an epistemological system before the need for change or adaptation (Dotson 2014, 121). This resilience becomes a significant source of inertia against recognising third-order epistemic exclusion. Insofar as the resilience of an epistemological system is responsible for the oppressive nature of the system, the oppression is irreducible to social oppression on Dotson's account. This is because epistemological resilience is an immediate feature of epistemic systems. If, for example, I complain about police brutality as a black person and the response is statistics and legal backing to show that my complaints are unwarranted, the resilience of the dominant epistemic system is at play. The epistemic system here relies on these methods (statistics, laws, etc.) to justify its claims of supposed superiority. The disturbance is my claim that something is wrong with this system. And the resilience is the ability of this system to strip my claim of all legitimacy without needing to change itself.

What is important to note is that for Dotson, the irreducibility of third-order epistemic oppression is because the oppression follows from a feature of epistemological systems themselves – epistemic resilience. With epistemic injustice in the colonial setting, I argue that although social issues are at their core, it follows from a feature that has become epistemic. This feature is the hegemonic intuitions that make the colonisers' epistemic systems superior to those of the colonised. Let me turn to one way this can happen.

When we conceive of a society, some of the core characteristic features we think of are a shared understanding developed over time in the society. This shared understanding forms the epistemic framework of each society and informs the norms that guide the society. With time, this epistemic framework becomes hegemonic in that society, and it (a) gets internalised by most without question, (b) becomes the cornerstone for future decisions, and (c) any intuition that is informed by these hegemonic epistemic frameworks is accepted, or, at the very least, seen as acceptable by most in the given society. These epistemic frameworks are not equally representative of the views of every member or section of the given society. It informs and simultaneously is informed by the power structure in society. And since, in most societies, power structures accord privileges to some while oppressing others, the epistemic frameworks formed in these societies also employ these pervasive systems. This is one way of understanding how hegemonic intuitions are formed in societies. Also, think of the literature on epistemic injustice. Those negatively impacted by systems such as racism, colonialism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, etc. are victims of credibility deficits. At the same time, those who have benefited from these oppressive systems also benefit from credibility excess.

The privileged and the oppressed have disproportionate access to resources and are mainly divided across economic lines. In the epistemic space, they are granted disproportionate levels of credibility and are split across the lines of credible versus untrustworthy epistemic agents. As with material resources, when an epistemic agent experiences excess credibility, it is at the expense of another.

We do not offer excess credibility to an agent in isolation. For example, suppose I grant a white man excess credibility because of their race and other factors like their tone of voice or how articulately they speak. In that case, I do this concurrently with the limited credibility I grant to someone with the opposite characteristics. In other words, when we create epistemic standards that are socially influenced or not equally accessible to everyone, we skew the credibility economy in favour of those who readily possess these markers or have these markers advantageously accessible to them. Fricker (2007) argues against this understanding of the credibility economy. For Fricker, the excess credibility we offer to an agent has no direct correlation with the credibility deficit that another receives. This is because she employs an understanding of epistemic injustice that focuses solely on the specific moment of testimonial exchanges. She argues that when we offer excess credibility to members of the ruling elite, they do not suffer testimonial injustice in that specific communicative exchange since they do not get sufficiently wronged (Fricker 2007). At best, they might suffer a cumulative wrong over time due to the epistemic arrogance and ignorance they might develop due to the excess credibility they have been attributed. On Fricker's account, this excess credibility that they receive does not amount to a credibility deficit to others since "credibility is not generally finite [and]…there is no analogous competitive demand to invite the distributive treatment" (Fricker 2007, 20).

Medina (2011) offers a qualified objection to Fricker's position. He argues that while credibility is not a rare commodity like water, its distribution is more complex than Fricker's analysis. For Medina (2011), it is an issue of proportionality where social conditions of privilege and underprivilege lead to the disproportionate distribution of credibility. In this view, an epistemic agent who enjoys excess credibility can develop epistemic vices like arrogance that lead directly to an instance of epistemic injustice towards another (Medina 2011). For example, if I enjoy excess credibility due to my social standing, I develop an epistemic arrogance that makes me impervious to criticism. In cases like this, I will not give the deserved credibility to the testimony of anyone that voices an opinion contrary to mine. Hence, my excess credibility in this instance is a direct cause of another's credibility deficit.

In line with Medina's model, my position is that this disproportionate distribution of credibility that starts as purely social leads to the formation of hegemonic intuitions that become crucial parts of our epistemic systems. Hence, while most of these intuitions are socially influenced initially, the hegemonic nature they develop over time makes them a feature of our epistemic systems. If you agree with this, it is apparent how: 1) epistemic injustice in the colonial setting is irreducible to social forms of injustice; and 2) the problem is a feature of the epistemic system formed by colonialism.

The change required

Dotson (2014) argues that the primary difference between reducible and irreducible forms of epistemic exclusion is the change required to remedy them. For reducible forms of epistemic exclusion, the change required can come from within the defaulting epistemic system. All it needs is for members in that epistemic system to abide by the dictates of their epistemic system. For third-order epistemic exclusion, however, the problem "can only begin to be addressed through recognition of the limits of one's overall epistemological frameworks" (Dotson 2014, 116). I agree with Dotson's general claim that the change required to attend to third-order phenomena (epistemic injustice in the colonial setting in this instance) needs to come from outside the defaulting epistemic system. However, I disagree with the claim that this is required because the defaulting epistemic system lacks the appropriate resources to make this change – at least in the case of epistemic injustice in the colonial setting. This is because cases that eventually become third-order phenomena start from an agent or group's misuse of the available epistemic resources. This ultimately compounds and becomes a part of the epistemic system in a way that is irreducible to the initial social phenomenon that causes it.

My formulation of Dotson's general claim is that the change required to remedy epistemic injustice in the colonial setting needs to come from outside the defaulting epistemic system – specifically from resistant epistemic systems. In cases where these are unavailable, an epistemic system or an aspect of the defaulting epistemic system that actively seeks epistemic justice should

take precedence. This is for two simple reasons. The first is that resistant epistemic systems are formed out of recognising epistemic injustice; thus, they consciously think about epistemic justice. The second is that members of socially marginalised groups that form a resistant epistemology are privy to the oppressive and resistant epistemic systems. Hence, they have a "double consciousness" that is a source of greater epistemic wealth (Du Bois 1903). Let me develop a model of what this might resemble. This model is not in any way meant to be definite or objection-proof. It aims to highlight the key features that ought to be considered if we are to remedy epistemic injustice in the colonial setting.

Fair-minded pursuit of knowledge

Fair-mindedness[4] in the pursuit of knowledge here is an epistemic disposition in which an agent prioritises the need to be epistemically faithful and just in their epistemic practices. This epistemic disposition has two elements to it – faithfulness and justice. Being epistemically faithful entails valuing epistemic ends over the advancement and sustenance of a pernicious non-epistemic agenda. For example, suppose an epistemic agent can be either faithful to furthering epistemic ends or furthering a specific pernicious political agenda. In that case, the fair-minded agent will prioritise promoting epistemic ends. Being epistemically just entails privileging the virtues of epistemic justice over the vices of epistemic injustice. For example, suppose an epistemic agent can either suspend judgement to avoid testimonial injustice or proceed with judgment with a high chance of testimonial injustice. In that case, the fair-minded agent will suspend judgment to avoid an instance of testimonial injustice.

As I have mentioned above, when unjust and hegemonic epistemic positions in the colonial setting are formed, this is not done solely from the epistemic merits of holding such positions. Instead, social considerations come into play. They do so not in a way that recognises the situatedness of the agent (which would be good), but rather in a pervasive manner that seeks to sustain the position of social and epistemic privilege already held by a social group. This is the wrong kind of motivation that an epistemic agent should have in their epistemic lives. Suppose an agent possesses the disposition of fair-mindedness in their pursuit of knowledge. In that case, they are motivated by epistemic ends since fair-mindedness, in this sense, entails being faithful and just to epistemic rather than pernicious social considerations.

I understand the disposition of fair-mindedness here as a cognitive character trait of an epistemic agent that orients them towards knowledge to minimise error – both epistemically and ethically. This means that a fair-minded epistemic agent prioritises at least two character traits in their epistemic life. The first is that they prioritise epistemic goals over pernicious non-epistemic goals. The second is that when faced with a situation where their "normally" epistemic instincts might cause moral or epistemic wrongs and harm, they must re-evaluate their epistemic practices and adjust accordingly.[5] So, for example, imagine that I, a black man, complain about experiencing brutality from the police. If the uptake I get from a white person who hears this is guided by the prejudicial stereotype that black people always complain (falsely) about police brutality, I have experienced epistemic injustice. However, if my listener listens to me with a fair-minded disposition, they will seek to be epistemically faithful and just. This requires that they engage with me in a way that focuses on the epistemic merits of the claims I make. In contrast, when I am listened to and judged based on prejudicial stereotypes, pernicious non-epistemic considerations are at play.

Suppose the white person "ignores" their prejudicial stereotypes about me and engages with me in a way that seems appropriate only to discredit my claim with legal injunctions and statistics. I accept this paradigm for truth because it is hegemonic to me. This is an instance of epistemic injustice that can occur in a former colonial state. The harm I face here is evident in the white person's epistemic advantage through their unjustly formed and now hegemonic epistemic framework. However, if they have the disposition of fair-mindedness, the need to be epistemically faithful and just will

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4   See Tobi 2020 for an argument that epistemic colonisation is a form of epistemic injustice that is antithetical to the fair-minded pursuit of knowledge.

5   This is one point made by the literature on moral and pragmatic encroachment.

make them aware of the vices in their current epistemic practice, but not that alone. They should also be mindful of, and act against, the vices that inform their entire epistemic framework. In this way, fair-mindedness can be seen as an intellectual virtue. Let me explain how this is the case with an adaptation of Jason Baehr's (2016) "dimensions of intellectual virtues". My explanation of the principles that Baehr proposes as dimensions of intellectual virtues can be understood as characteristic features of an epistemic agent with the disposition of fair-mindedness.

The first dimension is the affective principle. For the fair-minded agent, they take pleasure (or experience other appropriate affections) in being epistemically faithful and just. This requires that an agent possesses the disposition of fair-mindedness and conceives of it as the proper disposition. The fair-minded agent must conceive of it as the appropriate epistemic disposition because it helps differentiate between genuine epistemic engagements and cases of epistemic pushback. The second dimension is the competence principle. This requires that an agent be competent in the activities characteristic of fair-mindedness. The agent must be competent in their ability to be epistemically fair and just in their pursuit of knowledge. This, intuitively, will be difficult for an epistemic agent that operates based on oppressive epistemic systems. This is because such systems are unjust and are already influenced by prejudicial stereotypes that are neither faithful nor just to the fair-minded pursuit of knowledge. When an agent operates based on an epistemic framework that is intrinsically prejudicial, nothing in that framework readily gives them the resources to fight against that prejudice. So, there is a need to move outside of this prejudiced epistemic framework to find resources that have the potential to ensure fairness and justice in their epistemic pursuits. This feature further motivates my claim that remedying epistemic injustices in a colonial setting requires an agent to seek resources from an epistemic system other than the defaulting one. The third dimension is the judgement principle. This requires that an agent possesses the prudence to know when an activity that characterises fair-mindedness would be appropriate. It requires that an agent knows when to be faithful and just in their epistemic pursuit.

I have proposed the disposition of fair-mindedness to help mitigate epistemic injustices in the colonial setting. This disposition of fair-mindedness ensures that the epistemic agent prioritises the need to be fair and just in their epistemic practice over the need to sustain a position of social advantage. Although I have hinted at a pragmatic dimension to the disposition of fair-mindedness, its focus is primarily epistemic. This is warranted because the vice it aims to remedy – epistemic injustice – is distinctly epistemic. Since instances of epistemic injustices are antithetical to the fair-minded pursuit of knowledge, as I have hopefully shown, the imperative to remedy it is a distinctly epistemic one.

This claim, as it is, requires some clarification. This is because an analogy can muddy the intuition behind my claim. For example, it may be that anything that contains noxious gas should be eliminated for moral reasons, but it does not follow that things containing noxious gas are moral things.[6] The needed clarification is in the point that I hopefully made when I argued about the elements of epistemic injustice in the colonial setting that are irreducible to social oppression. One point this argument aims to show is that in instances of epistemic injustice, there are distinctly epistemic wrongs that are irreducible to social oppression. If this is the case, then the need to remedy these distinctly epistemic wrongs is epistemic. Suppose the epistemic wrongs in a scenario are reducible to social oppression. In that case, we could have epistemic and other relevant reasons (social or moral, for example) to remedy that epistemic wrong.

An ubuntu epistemic approach[7]
In this section, I use the concept of ubuntu and other cognate concepts from societies in sub-Saharan Africa to develop an epistemic perspective that hopefully shows how an epistemic agent can be fair-minded in the way I explained in the previous section. The concepts I consider are the concepts of ubuntu and communitarianism. I do not claim that the core ideas of these concepts – in their

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6   Thanks to Veli Mitova for this point and the example.
7   What I have done here is provide a very quick overview of how intuitions from African Epistemological Traditions might aid in remediating instances of epistemic injustice. This is by no means a sufficient analysis, but it is what I have the space for in this paper.

particularities – are unique to and found in every society in sub-Saharan Africa, nor do I claim that the intuitions I put forward can be found in every sub-Saharan African society. My contention is that the concepts I put forward cover intuitions that can be found predominantly in most societies in sub-Saharan Africa, and they provide a good tool for conceptualising an epistemic practice that could help remedy epistemic injustice in the colonial setting. Let me begin with the concept of ubuntu before moving on to the concept of communitarianism.

The first concept I consider – ubuntu – premised on the aphorism *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("a person is a person through other persons") accounts for the way of life of sub-Saharan Africans as harmonious (Metz 2007). This account suggests that an action is right to the extent that it maximises harmony and is wrong to the extent that it promotes discord. Classic usage of this harmony account of ubuntu has typically served two functions: the descriptive and the normative. The descriptive role concerns the lived moral norms of African communities in the ubuntu paradigm. The normative role proposes moral theories in this paradigm and serves as a theory of right action. My application of ubuntu transposes this ethical application to an epistemic one. I examine general considerations that are predominantly intuitive to societies in sub-Saharan Africa. Based on these considerations, I point out the kind of knowledge-formation process in these societies (the descriptive dimension). In teasing out the knowledge-formation process, I rely on the decision-making process in these societies and how this process is integral to their ways of life. This move helps to show the key elements that I consider crucial to remedying epistemic injustice in the colonial setting. Here, it is the dialogical method of knowledge formation found in these societies (the normative dimension).

One consideration characteristic of societies in the ubuntu paradigm is that decisions are made consensually. The form of democracy facilitates the consensual decision-making process found traditionally in most African cultures. These societies consist, in most cases, of a monarch and a council of elders (representative of every group in the community) that has the duty of advising the monarch. This system of government is enabled by a need to live harmoniously and ensure a fair representation of all parties. The consensus in these ubuntu-based paradigms is based on the notion that knowledge is not monolithic. The practicalities of this system are shown in Edward Wamala's (2004) analysis of the traditional form of democracy found among the Ganda people, where the monarch rules through a council of heads of clans that represent the various levels in the society. This means a limited kind of monarchy where decision-making is based on consensus. Wamala attributes the Gandas' dedication to consensus to the "belief that knowledge is ultimately dialogical or social" (Wamala 2004, 437). This dialogical conception of knowledge is also applied to the so-called experts in this society (blacksmiths etc.). Knowledge formation in this society relies on the interaction of perspectives. He highlights this in some of the proverbs in the oral literature of the Ganda people:

> Knowledge is like firewood in the hearth, if you have none you fetch it from your neighbour, I am wise, only if others have informed you, belief in his intellectual self-sufficiency resulted in Magambo's failure to reach home. Magambo, a blind man, failed to reach home because of his arrogance and unwillingness to consult others (Wamala 2004, 437).

Beyond the Ganda people, this consensual system can also be found in other societies in sub-Saharan Africa. Joe Teffo (2004, 446) refers to consensus as "the hallmark of traditional political decision-making in many African communities" in a system he refers to as "communocracy".

The second concept I consider is communitarianism. This idea has had different applications in African philosophy, from the ontological (Ramose 2003) and the ethical (Ramose 2003; Metz 2007) to the political (Menkiti 1984; Gyekye 1997; Matolino 2014). However, central to all these uses is that this communitarian attitude exudes the idea that the good of the individual and the community are aligned. Regarding knowledge formation, the venture of a communitarian-based epistemic approach will be jointly inquisitive, which is congenial to the disposition of fair-mindedness in the pursuit of knowledge. Polycarp Ikuenobe (2018, 23) explains communitarianism in the epistemic context as "the idea of mutual dependence and organic relationships between community and individuals, and among individuals". Ikuenobe defines this communalism in the context of oral traditions in African societies and argues that the reliance on oral traditions in African communities is "based on the

principles of epistemic trust, epistemic dependence, and epistemic communalism" (ibid.). To the extent that an ubuntu epistemic approach and communalism, in Ikuenobe's construal, can facilitate an epistemic system that is justly inclusive, I believe that it holds great value in attending to the epistemic injustices that, among other pernicious things, were fostered by colonialism.

Acknowledgements

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